Knowledge, evidence and learning for development

Approaches to youth violence in Jordan

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Question

What is the evidence on:

- *The nature and scale of youth-state violence in Jordan;*
- *Factors driving youth violence;*
- *Other forms of marginalization, e.g. gender;*
- *Formal and informal community security mechanisms;*
- *Models being used in other countries for psychosocial support for youth.*

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The K4D helpdesk service provides brief summaries of current research, evidence, and lessons learned. Helpdesk reports are not rigorous or systematic reviews; they are intended to provide an introduction to the most important evidence related to a research question. They draw on a rapid desk-based review of published literature and consultation with subject specialists.

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1. Summary

Youth[1] violence, particularly targeting the state as well as engagement in violent extremism, has been a persistent feature in Jordan over the past decade. There are numerous factors driving this: economic, political and social marginalization of young people; a search for purpose (in the case of religious extremism); and ineffective youth policies on the part of the government. Other key forms of marginalization in Jordan are ethnicity (Palestinian Jordanians are most affected), gender and disability. With regard to community security mechanisms, Jordan has made efforts to introduce community policing. These link in with traditional tribal dispute resolution mechanisms, but the impact on youth is unclear. Psychosocial support for youth is important. Interventions will vary depending on needs and context, but sport and education (learning spaces) are especially effective avenues to reach young people.

This review drew on a mixture of academic and grey literature. While it found significant literature about youth protests in Jordan (in particular in the early 2010s) and on drivers of youth violence, as well as other forms of marginalization in the country, there was very little on community security mechanisms – whether formal or informal. The review identified several sources of recommendations for psychosocial support programming (for youth), but few evaluations of such interventions specifically targeting youth in other countries. Overall, there are gaps in the evidence base, highlighting the need for further research.

Key findings of the review are as follows:

Youth Violence in Jordan

- Anti-government protests by youth in Jordan in 2011 and subsequent years fall into two broad categories: Hirak movement among tribal youth, and protests among urban Palestinians – both demanded political reform, even challenging the monarchy. Both sets of protests were crushed by the government, albeit some promises of reform were made.
- Protests in Jordan began again on a significant scale in 2018 and have been ongoing. Triggers were the government's attempts to introduce a new tax bill, price hikes, and demands by teachers for increased pay. There has been large-scale participation by youth, but most have no affiliation to any political party or civic platform; the protests represent a rejection by young people of traditional parties and ideologies.
- Large numbers of Jordanian youth support or have joined extremist groups such as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Indeed, Jordan has one of the highest rates of per capita recruitment for ISIS volunteers going to fight in Syria and Iraq. There have also been a number of extremist attacks within Jordan.
- Youth violence is also being seen in universities, where campus clashes are increasingly common.

[1] Youth is defined in the literature as both an age group and a social construct. As an age group, youth is positioned across the boundaries of childhood and adulthood. The UN General Assembly has defined youth as aged between 15 and 24 years. However, this definition varies across organisations and countries; it can be used for those as young as 12, and those up to 35 years old.

Drivers of Youth Violence

- Economic marginalization – youth unemployment rates in Jordan are very high at 37% (over double the overall rate of 16%) (Yom & Sammour, 2017: 27). Youth form a large proportion of the population, but the economy has failed to expand to create jobs for them. Public sector jobs, the traditional route for educated Jordanians, have been curbed by austerity measures, while the private sector is hampered by regulations and weak investment. Other constraints on youth employment are reluctance by educated Jordanians to take 'menial' jobs, and the culture of *wasta* (connections) needed to obtain work in the country.
- Political marginalization – Jordan is an authoritarian democracy in which, despite elected legislative bodies, most power remains with the monarch. Opportunities for citizen voice are limited, and even more so for youth. Youth political participation is hampered by minimum age requirements for candidacy (30 years for parliament), and control of political parties and nominations by elders, especially in tribal communities. This has led to extensive voter apathy among young people.
- Generation gap - Jordanian culture is one in which respect and voice are accorded to elders, and to those who have a status in society. Youth thus occupy a lowly place in the societal hierarchy. Youth violence can be seen as a rejection of this traditional set-up.
- Religion: search for purpose – While unemployment and poverty are factors in youth involvement in violent extremism, this is also motivated by a desire to find meaning and purpose. Extremist groups have been very effective in exploiting vulnerable youth.
- Ineffective state response – Jordan's government claims to recognize the problem of youth alienation. It has introduced policies and diverse programmes to address it. These are implemented through multiple agencies – but not through the Ministry of Youth, which remains underfunded and lacking autonomy. The government has also fostered the mobilization of grassroots youth actors focused on local issues, as a strategy to prevent youth unification. In addition, youth activism has been suppressed by the security forces.

Other Forms of Marginalization in Jordan

- Ethnicity – Jordanian society is split between 'native' East Bankers or Transjordanians, and Palestinian Jordanians and their descendants. Traditionally the former constitute the bedrock of support for the monarchy, and dominate government, security forces and the bureaucracy, and have disproportionate legislative body seats. However, austerity measures have cut government largesse, leading to feelings of marginalization. Palestinian Jordanians are historically viewed with suspicion, denied positions of power, and can only access private sector jobs – also fuelling marginalization.
- Gender – Young women suffer greater marginalization than male youth. They are constrained by patriarchal norms, reflected in all aspects of law: women are discriminated against in law, in employment (despite high education levels), they have very limited political participation, and suffer gender-based violence, including so-called honour killings. The rise in religious conservatism in Jordan has fuelled patriarchal attitudes.
- Disability - Persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Jordan suffer from various forms of marginalization, e.g. the 2014 employment rate of PWDs was 16.1% with 82.2% not economically active, compared to 36.6% and 59% respectively in the total population (Thompson, 2018: 5). Women with disabilities are doubly disadvantaged. The discrimination faced by PWDs reflects negative cultural and societal attitudes towards disability. The

government has made efforts to address this stigmatisation, including legislative reforms guaranteeing rights to PWDs, but implementation has been weak.

Community Security Mechanisms

- The Public Security Directorate (PSD) is responsible for policing in Jordan, with its administrative police branch the most involved at community level. The Daraq (Gendarmerie) and the General Intelligence Directorate (GID) have key roles in maintaining public order/riot control, and counterterrorism.
- Community policing is a strategy of policing that focuses on building ties and working closely with local communities. It is intended to prevent crime before it happens, create a safe social environment, and encourage residents to participate in this. The Community Policing Department (CPD) was set up in Jordan in 2006, with CPD representatives attached to each police station. This review found nothing on community policing and youth in Jordan, or evidence of the CPD's impact. Repression (notably by the GID) has been a key feature of the government's response to youth protests.
- There is some intersection between formal and informal security mechanisms in Jordan. Police station commanders have the power to handle some cases without referral to the courts, working instead with community/tribal notables and the parties involved.
- Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in Jordan are widely practised, especially in tribal communities. Key principles in these are achieving a truce and compensating aggrieved parties. Led by community/tribal notables, these do not include youth as decision-makers. The review found no literature on how such informal mechanisms are used to 'police' youth specifically.

Psychosocial Support Programming for Youth

- The term 'psychosocial' refers to the dynamic relationship between the psychological and social dimensions of a person's life. Psychosocial support refers to the actions that address both the psychological and social needs of individuals, families and communities. It can be provided to facilitate resilience, coping and restoration of social cohesion. It can be preventive and curative, and aims to establish: sense of safety, calm, sense of self and community, connectedness and hope.
- Psychosocial support to adolescents is important because their brains are still developing and hence they are especially vulnerable, and to prevent long-term negative effects. Ignoring them can lead them to join gangs, violent extremist groups, prostitution and drugs. Among youth, girls are at greater risk than boys because of phenomena such as gender-based violence and child marriage.
- The specific interventions (nature and scale) will vary depending on the individuals and their needs. They can range from non-specialised community and family support for mild psychological distress, to professional treatment for severe psychological disorders.
- Factors considered crucial to the success of psychosocial programmes, particularly for young people, are: contextualized responses, children's/youth participation, involvement of parents and caregivers, combining community-based with school-based approaches, ensuring young people's safety and security, ensuring programmes are inclusive, and identifying referral services.
- Suitable psychosocial interventions for youth include access to safe spaces, opportunities to interact with peers, life skills programmes. Sport and play activities, and psychosocial

interventions in education settings are especially effective routes to promote youth psychosocial well-being.

- This review identified a number of recommendations specifically for psychosocial programming in Jordan, including: increased funding to expand services, tailored programmes, building capacity by training community/social/health workers to expand their roles, removing stigma around mental health and psychosocial support services, and integrating psychosocial support activities into the education sector.

2. Youth-state violence

History of youth protests

Jordan has a history of youth protests, notably in 2011 and again in 2018 (BTI, 2020). The 2011 protests emerged around the same time as the wider Arab Spring upheaval in the region, but were not simply the result of social media influence, or mirroring of events elsewhere: protests in Jordan had been underway for several years before, e.g. in 2009 the Gendarmerie (police) used force to break up a sit-in by workers at the cargo port in Aqaba. Section 3 details the factors driving the protests. There were two main strands to these in 2011, reflecting the main cleavage in Jordanian society between 'native' Jordanians, mostly living in the East Bank and referred to as 'East Bankers', and ethnic Palestinians mostly living in Amman and other urban centres.

The East Banker tribal communities have traditionally formed the bedrock of support for the monarchy and regime. However anti-government protests emerged in these communities in 2011, which collectively became known as the Hirak movement. At its height, the Hirak movement involved over 40 protest groups based in tribal communities and rural towns across Jordan (Yom, 2014). The average Hirak member was an East Bank Jordanian aged in his early 20s to late 30s, educated and employed (Yom, 2015: 291). Unlike traditional (older) East Bankers who sought material patronage, Hirak activists demanded political rights. They called for the powers of the king to be reduced, electoral law revisions, and an end to corruption. They openly attacked and insulted the king: 'Indeed, of all protesters they were most radical in violating unspoken redlines of dissent' (Yom, 2015: 292). Yom (2014: 230) sums up how the Hirak movement was different:

> Shattering stereotypes that tribal Jordanians cared first and foremost about economic welfare, most Hirak activists prioritized political reforms over material concerns. They were not indigent tribesmen pleading for jobs and services. The majority were educated and employed citizens advocating constitutional monarchism, a fairer electoral system, and an end to corruption. Most preferred a secular message and thus did not affiliate with Islamists. Moreover, unlike existing political parties, they did not wish to create formal organizations to compete in parliamentary elections. Instead, they identified themselves as representing the imagined tribal street, which also distinguished them from more elite-driven opposition groups. Finally, these young East Bankers exuded far less anti-Palestinian sentiment than their elders. While not perfect pluralists, they also did not make identity politics the basis of their solidarity.

While youth activism in East Banker communities led to Hirak, in Palestinian-dominated urban areas it spawned 'more informal and dispersed opposition networks' as they lacked an overarching ideology and eschewed establishment politics, preferring to be a social movement.

However, they demanded the same triumvirate of limits to the power of the monarch, electoral law reform and action on corruption. Their effective use of the internet and social media led to the government, in June 2013, passing a law banning access to some 300 popular websites (Idris & Laws, 2016). Yom (2015) notes that this youth mobilisation cut across the long-standing East Banker-Palestinian divide in Jordanian society. Thus Palestinian and East Bank youths worked together in urban areas, and 'ensconced their politics in broad principles of dignity rather than the localised language of identity politics'.

The Hirak movement subsided in 2013, felled 'by an armada of repressive initiatives' (Yom, 2015). The monarchy and General Intelligence Directorate (GID) urged tribal elders and councils to 'discipline' and demobilize youth in their communities; moreover, 'when communal pressures failed, state coercion filled the breach' (Yom, 2014: 235). The regime 'sought to smash hirak groups through sweeping dragnets and coercive assaults' (Yom, 2015: 293). The police and GID arrested hundreds of tribal protesters, and 'they were especially targeted for physical abuse due to their perceived disloyalty' as fellow East Bankers. Yom (2015) argues that the intensive efforts made by the regime to suppress Hirak indicate how threatening it appeared. However, the clampdown alienated more East Bankers.

Similarly, the GID was also able to debilitate the urban (Palestinian) youth movement through targeted arrests, political threats and infiltration activities (Yom, 2015: 295). Another factor was the informal nature of the movement, which made it difficult to have an organisational structure and strong leadership. However, the biggest factor, according to Yom (2015), was the conflict in Syria; 'Everyone is nervous because of Syria. They are afraid that too much protest and tension will bring fighting in Jordan, too.' Thus fear that Jordan could experience a civil war similar to that underway in Syria, leads people to favour retaining the monarchy.

Recent protests

Jordan has seen intermittent periods of significant youth (and wider society) protests since 2018. The 2018 protests had similar underlying causes to those of 2011 (see Section 3) but the immediate trigger was the government of Hani Mulki's submission of a new tax law raising income tax to parliament on 30 May. It came in the wake of austerity measures adopted by the government as conditions for IMF support, and aimed at curbing Jordan's massive public debt. The immediate reaction to the proposed tax bill was a general strike organized by over 30 trade unions on 31 May. However, the next day the government raised fuel and electricity prices in response to an increase in international oil prices. This led to protests in the 4th Circle in Amman, near the Prime Minister's offices, as well as large-scale protests in other parts of the country. On 1 June King Abdullah ordered a freeze on the price hikes, but protests continued until Mulki resigned as prime minister on 4 June. Omar Razzaz was appointed in his place, but again protests continued until the new prime minister announced the withdrawal of the new tax bill (Lindsey, 2020).

The literature highlights the diversity of those involved in the 2018 anti-austerity protests, and the fact that these were not led by 'traditional' opposition groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood or leftists. Nor were they affiliated to any political party or group (Qahwaji, 2018).

> Both traditional and Hirak forms of activism were well-represented in the 2018 Ramadan protests, but so were ordinary citizens who subscribed to no party, professional

association or Hirak movement. The protests were among the most diverse in Jordanian history, ranging across age, class, ethnicity, race and gender (Ryan, 2019).

While all age groups were involved, youth played a major role in the 2018 protests, including in the national strike led by the Professional Associations Union and initiating the protests in Amman's 4th Circle (Qahwaji, 2018). A Jordanian analyst noted the involvement of youth: 'These are younger, educated, middle-class people who have been commenting on what is happening on social media now translating this online protest into a physical protest' (Musa Shteiwi, cited in Luck, 2018). According to Qahwaji (2018): 'The large-scale participation of youth who are not affiliated with any political party was new on the Jordanian scene'. Luck (2018) echoes this: 'most are not affiliated with any political group….the absence of political parties is part of a wider rejection by young Jordanians of traditional parties and ideologies'.

A second round of protests started in November 2018. Yom and Al-Khatib (2018b) stress that these protests were driven by youth activists and argue that they represent the enduring legacy of the Arab Spring: 'This is no Islamist resurgence, or revival of civil society associations. Democratic parties remain a non-factor… Nor are these upswells of Palestinian nationalism….Instead, Jordan's turmoil reveals the raw power of generational identity in catalyzing contentious politics'. Youth activism in the end of year protests was striking for a number of reasons (Yom & Al-Khatib, 2018):

- While Islamists, unionists, and former MPs freely joined these protests, most youth participants had no affiliation with any formal group or civic platform. They were swayed not by ideological appeals but the emotive desire to publicly express their opinion.
- There was no single coherent issue. Different clusters of activists demanded varying economic or political reforms, from repealing the tax law to curbing royal absolutism. Such pluralism is difficult to stamp out….this new generation of activists must be suppressed individually.
- There was a geographic inversion of past revolts. While protesters congregated in the same public circle near the Prime Ministry, they originated from all over the kingdom. Many hailed from rural Hirak: whereas past tribal unrest rocked peripheral towns like Tafileh and Dhiban, now youths from those peripheries have learned to converge upon the capital to force political confrontation.
- These protests employed symbolic politics targeting the monarchy. For instance, many participants donned the red *kufiyah* headdress associated with tribal Jordanian patriotism. This broadcast a powerful message: these were not radical or foreign elements but tribal constituents loyal to the kingdom – although not necessarily to its leadership.

Other protests followed: the 'March of the Unemployed' in autumn 2018, and protests in June 2019 against the 'Deal of the Century' proposed by the Trump administration to resolve the Palestinian issue (Ryan, 2019). The border town of Ramtha saw volatile protests in the second half of 2019 after the government tried to curb illegal trafficking of goods to and from Syria. However, especially significant was the teachers' strike in October 2019.

The teachers' syndicate was formed in 2012 during the Arab Spring, and had some 100,000 members and an elected leadership (Lindsey, 2020). Shortly after the 2019/20 school year started, public school teachers went on strike demanding a 50% wage increase, something they

claimed the government had promised them three years earlier (Ryan, 2019). The government refused, citing the recession and IMF austerity measures which meant it could not afford such a raise. But after a month-long strike, which had widespread public support, the government conceded, agreeing to salary increases ranging from 35-75% (Ryan, 2020). However, in spring 2020, again citing the need for austerity, the government froze public sector raises, including the one for teachers. The teachers' syndicate planned action against the freeze, but a judge ordered its closure in July (as well as a gag order on media coverage) and police raided offices across the country, arresting its leaders (Lindsey, 2020). Teachers who tried to protest were beaten and arrested: at least 500 had been detained as of October 2020, with many others in hiding (Lindsey, 2020).

Other forms of youth violence

Large numbers of Jordanian youth have been drawn to support or join extremist groups such as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al-Nusra Front (Klingensmith, 2019). The country has among the highest rates of per capita recruitment in the world for ISIS volunteers who travel to fight in Syria and Iraq – this is on top of an estimated 7,000 followers of Salafist-jihadi ideals circulating in Jordan (Yom & Sammour, 2016; Klingensmith, 2019: 6). Salafists adhere to an ultra-conservative form of Sunni Islam, which sees Shia Muslims – and even non-militant Sunni Muslims – as infidels (CEP, 2020: 2). 'Jordanian youth have proven extremely vulnerable to the clarion call of Salafist-jihadism, with thousands joining IS and other radical groups' (Yom & Sammour, 2016).

There have also been a number of extremist attacks within Jordan. The largest was the 2005 triple suicide bombing at the Radisson, Grand Hyatt and Days Inn hotels in Amman by Al-Qaeda in Iraq in November 2005, killing 57 people (CEP, 2020: 8). Recent attacks have not been on that scale, but nonetheless are significant. In November 2015 a 28-year old police captain carried out a 'lone wolf' attack on the Jordanian International Police Training Centre near Amman, killing two American and one South African security contractor as well as two Jordanians (CEP, 2020: 8). In December 2016 four gunmen carried out a series of attacks in and around the city of Karak, and took several tourists hostage. Ten people were killed, including seven Jordanian security officers, a Canadian tourist, and two Jordanian civilians, and 34 wounded (CEP, 2020: 7). Other attacks that year, including on the General Intelligence Directorate (GID), took the total death toll to 35 (Klingensmith, 2019: 5). The latest Counter-Extremism Project report on Jordan claims that the country's Islamist groups are growing in numbers and are becoming increasingly violent (CEP, 2020: 2).

Another form of youth violence is being seen in universities, where campus clashes (e.g. between students from rival tribes) are increasingly common. According to a senior academic at the University of Jordan, 'Cohesion is breaking down among our students because the burdens on them are enormous and especially for young men as their frustrations are growing' (cited in Milton-Edwards, 2018: 9). [Violence involving women and girls is discussed under gender marginalization in Section 4.]

3. Drivers of youth violence

Economic marginalization

Youth form a high proportion of the Jordanian population, but rates of unemployment among Jordanian youth are also very high. Nearly two-thirds of the country's 7.5 million population are under the age of 30, almost evenly split between the 0-14 and 15-29 age brackets, with a median age of 22 years, while youth unemployment stands at 37% (Yom & Al-Khalid, 2018a: 42). This is more than double the overall rate of 16% (Yom & Sammour, 2017: 27). Moreover, these figures underestimate the true figure 'because they do not count those who stop looking for work after fruitless years' (Yom & Sammour, 2017: 27). Milton-Edwards (2018: 3) notes that: 'The Jordanian economy has failed to expand to allow for the number of young Jordanians entering the work force on an annual basis. Youth unemployment is one of the most pressing issues facing Jordan…It was a major factor in mobilizing youth in different forms of protest'.

Significant in this is that the traditional route of public sector jobs is no longer available to young people, as Jordan tries to restrict the size of its already bloated public sector - accounting for 55% of the workforce (Luck, 2018). Under the old 'social contract' the state provided public sector jobs, and 'in return' citizens did not challenge authoritarian norms. However, with the state no longer able to provide those jobs, not only does unrest emerge because of under/unemployment among youth, but also because of lack of democratic freedoms. East Bankers were the main beneficiaries of public sector jobs under the old social contract – Palestinians dominate in the private sector – meaning the former have been disproportionately hit by the loss of those jobs (BTI, 2020). While the public sector has 'long ceased serving as an absorber for the educated….the private sector still struggles to grow amidst excessive regulations and inadequate investment' (Yom & Sammour, 2017: 27).

In Jordan, education seems to add to the problem. Yom and Sammour (2017: 27) note that: 'university graduates have such few prospects that their unemployment rate is nearly double that of Jordanians with only a high school diploma. In effect, going to college penalizes young Jordanians because it reduces their likelihood of finding work commensurate with their skill level'. Such young people have aspirations for good jobs and are too educated/unwilling to accept 'menial' jobs, which are typically taken by Egyptian and Syrian workers. 'In this context, it is easy to grasp the deprivation felt by many youngsters, particularly those from middle-income families hit hard by rising prices and creeping poverty' (Yom & Sammour, 2017: 27). Education also has the effect of raising awareness of democratic norms – and of when rights are denied.

There are other challenges in Jordan that hamper youth employability. One is the 'prevailing cultures of corruption, nepotism and "*wasta*" – broadly defined as being reliant on networks of influence through family, friends and other social groups to access power' (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 3). Jordanian youth see *wasta* as a major constraint on their chances of finding work, with 85% of youth in a Gallup poll agreeing with the statement that 'knowing people in high positions is critical to getting a job' (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 3). Structural weaknesses in the Jordanian economy mean that the 'necessary economic "ecosystem" for youth employment coupled with entrepreneurial activity in Jordan continues to be absent' (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 3). This, in turn, has undermined efforts to promote private sector employment opportunities for young people. Looking at the bigger picture, Jordan's economy is amongst the smallest in the Middle East; the country has insufficient supplies of water, oil and other natural resources; it is dependent on

remittances and grants from richer Gulf states; it has massive budget and current account deficits; and regional crises (notably in Iraq and Syria) have disrupted trade routes, investment and tourism (Idris & Laws, 2016; Luck, 2020).

Political marginalization

Youth in Jordan suffer from political as well as economic marginalization.

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy headed by King Abdullah II; it has a parliament and government headed by a prime minister. The monarch holds extensive executive powers; after him, the palace bureaucracy and the General Intelligence Directorate (GID) are the most influential in policy-making. The prime minister, by contrast, 'is the public face of government but has the least authority….Even more visible but least influential of all is the parliament' (Yom, 2015: 287). The legislature consists of a 65-member upper house (Senate) appointed by the monarch, and a 130-member lower house (House of Representatives) voted in by citizens. 'Lacking basic legislative capacities, such as the ability to propose bills and prepare the national budget, its purpose is to ratify decisions already made from above' (Yom, 2015: 287). There are over two dozen political parties, but most are personality-based or represent narrow parochial interests. Most parliamentarians run as independents or represent tribal interests. Appointments to cabinet positions are made by the prime minister, who is in turn appointed by the king (BTI, 2020). Members of the government do not need to be elected sitting members of parliament - indeed, the majority of Jordanian cabinets have been composed of technocrats rather than parliamentarians (BTI, 2020: 9).

Clearly, there is a democratic deficit in Jordan, with limited opportunities for citizen voice in the running of the country. Milton-Edwards (2018: 2) stresses that for youth these are even more limited:

> Barriers to political participation are higher on young people than other citizens. Jordanian authorities offer little by way of invitation to draw its young population into participation and civic life. Youth are marginal in learning and playing a role in Jordan's deliberative and governing frameworks.

There is no youth quota in the Jordanian parliament and the minimum age to run for parliament is 30 years (though this was lowered to 25 years for local elections in preparation for the August 2017 elections) – by contrast, fellow monarchy Morocco does have a youth quota for its parliament and a minimum candidacy age of 23 (Yom & Al-Khalid, 2018a: 45; Milton-Edwards, 2018: 2). Parliamentary candidates in Jordan also require a deposit of US$700 – a further barrier to youth inclusion (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 2). Youth face similar barriers at lower levels: 'Lower order decision-making bodies such as civil society organizations, community groups, and school and university student councils, where youth could gain experience and engage in activism and stake-holding, have long been subject to such severe forms of control as to render them redundant in this respect' (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 2). According to Yom and Al-Khalid (2018a: 45): 'Policy change is absent not because regime power-holders lack the knowledge or capacity to implement it; it is absent because they simply do not allow it'.

The barriers to youth political participation are reflected in youth voter apathy: in the 2016 elections, for example, only 35% of those in 17-30 age group voted (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 5). Similarly very few young people stand in elections; even after the minimum candidacy age for

local elections was reduced to 25 years, of the 6,623 candidates competing for mayoral, municipal and governorate council seats in 2017, only 6% were under the age of 30 and 14% under the age of 40 (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 5). Milton-Edwards (2018: 5) concludes: ‘The youth appear to understand that their votes are redundant in a non-free political system’.

Young people are even constrained in student activism in universities. Milton-Edwards (2018: 2) notes that students are constantly monitored - even protests against issues such as fee hikes have led to suspensions and expulsions - and security forces have also targeted student leaders and organizations. According to one student leader, ‘They see us as the enemies of the state, not the active citizens of our future society’ (cited in Milton-Edwards, 2018: 2).

Generation gap

Jordanian culture is one in which respect and voice are accorded to elders, such as tribal leaders, and to those who have a status in society due to their position, wealth, marital status, and so on. As such, youth – especially those lacking jobs and unmarried – occupy a lowly place in the societal hierarchy. Among tribal communities, youth candidacy in parliamentary elections, for example, was rejected by their own elders (Milton-Edwards, 2018). Youth violence can be seen as a rejection of this traditional set-up: ‘They reject an obsolete social contract that culturally requires obedience from its youngest subjects’ (Yom & Al-Khalid, 2018b). Anti-government protests by teenagers and millennials, especially from traditionally loyal tribal communities, are an extension of this rejection of cultural norms and expected roles – ‘tribal youth are not only challenging the state but also their elders’ (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 6). Milton-Edwards (2018: 6) argues: ‘Hirak reflects important generational tensions and stratified hierarchies of power within and between tribes…. Their *(youth)* activism highlights inter-generational, class and social distinctions’.

The ‘generation gap’ between youth and older people in Jordanian society is clearly illustrated in a study carried out by Yom and Al-Khalid (2018a). When asked to describe their overall attitudes towards social and political life in Jordan, youth interviewees frequently invoked four emotions (Yom & Al-Khalid, 2018a: 43):

- Helplessness - fuelled by material deprivation like unemployment and poverty, and amplified by the belief that economic mobility is fundamentally determined by forces beyond their individual control, such as *wasta* and inherited privilege.
- Injustice - the perception that royal power holders and senior officials (including the coercive apparatus) perpetuate massive corruption and favouritism.
- Anxiety - anchored in profound uncertainty about the geopolitical environment, given the Syrian civil war and often triggered by Syrian refugees and resource scarcity.
- Indignation - embedded in the conviction that ruling elites do not want greater democracy, even after the Jordanian Spring protests.

By contrast, when public officials were asked about their attitudes towards youth, they described young Jordanians ‘through one of three paternalistic frames’ (Yom & Al-Khalid, 2018a: 43):

- misguided troublemakers, like Hirak tribal activists, who caused havoc during the Jordanian Spring;

- idle ingrates, especially Palestinian youths, who do not vote and care little about national security;
- sympathetic targets of Islamic State-style radicalization, who need to be guided away from non-approved interpretations of religion.

Religion: search for purpose

As noted above, large numbers of Jordanian youth have been drawn to violent extremist groups like ISIS. While unemployment and poverty are significant drivers in Islamist recruitment, Yom and Sammour (2016) argue that economics cannot explain everything:

> For one, the extremely poor are not joining radical Islamist networks. They are more likely to sell their kidneys than go to Syria. Moreover, many Jordanian fighters come from middle-class backgrounds…Finally, ground zero for Salafist-jihadi recruitment is no longer the impoverished southern town of Ma'an, but instead northern *(modernized)* cities like Irbid and Salt…Their youths targeted by Salafist-jihadi recruiters often have private-sector jobs and have seldom faced real destitution.

Instead, Yom and Sammour claim the turn to religion and extremism is motivated by a desire to find meaning and purpose. Such youths share 'a sense of desperation permeating their lives, having lost faith in government to fix the economy, provide services, and induce pride in citizenship'. It also stems from the country's 'broken education system' which robs young people of the ability to think critically, and reflects religious conservatism in wider Jordanian society – very different from the tolerant, liberal, pluralist image portrayed by the regime (Yom & Sammour, 2016). An International Republican Institute (IRI) study of violent extremism (sources of vulnerability and resilience) among communities in Mafraq and Zarqa, conducted in December 2017, found that potential sources of vulnerability to radicalization included an absence of community identity and belonging, a dearth of spaces for open and productive dialogue, and economic and political exclusion which breed dissatisfaction in citizens (IRI, 2018: 2). Klingensmith (2019: 20) writes of young people: 'They feel they are unable to change their situation and have to look to more extreme solutions for change. Extremist groups take advantage of these vulnerable people, promising them a sense of purpose and identity, financial security, and a place in paradise when they die'.

State response

The state's response to youth marginalization has been ineffective, at best, and at worst, aimed at undermining youth activism. Milton-Edwards (2018: 7) claims that, throughout Jordan, the government allocates only limited resources to tackle issues such as youth exclusion, unemployment and poverty, especially with respect to the most vulnerable youth within society. Yom and Al-Khalid (2018a: 43) describe efforts to address youth issues: 'The Jordanian government claims to recognize the depth of youth alienation**.** Over the past several years, it has undertaken a flurry of youth cultivation policies embodied in the 2018 to 2025 National Youth Strategy and other social projects'. However, they comment: 'Despite the discourse of youth cultivation, the Jordanian government's political strategies veer towards not engaging and empowering its youngest citizens, but rather fragmenting the social landscape and overloading residents with small-scale programmes' (Yom & Al-Khalid, 2018a: 45)**.**

Yom and Al-Khalid claim both strategies – fragmentation and overloading – are deliberate. Fragmentation, by mobilizing new youth actors focused on grassroots-level goals, which are pursued in relative isolation – is aimed, in particular, at preventing youth from bridging the East Banker-Palestinian divide. Such unified mobilization was seen historically in both the Hirak movements, which included Palestinian activists, and in Amman-based groups which had East Banker volunteers (Yom & Al-Khalid, 2018a). The regime wants to ensure such unity does not occur again. The second strategy – institutional overloading – 'means creating so many overlapping public organs and programs charged with policy interventions that youths are effectively enmeshed from above, and thus more oriented towards the *state* rather than *each other*' (Yom & Al-Khalid, 2018a: 45). They particularly highlight the fact that all youth-oriented official programming 'which metaphorically expresses the singular voice of a responsive state, bypasses the one institution created to be that official voice in the first place – the Ministry of Youth' (Yom & Al-Khalid, 2018a: 45). The Ministry of Youth was set up in 2015, after revamping the Higher Council of Youth, but promises of a larger budget and greater autonomy remain unfulfilled. 'The existing Ministry of Youth is an afterthought in terms of both budget and priority' (Yom & Sammour, 2017: 28).

Jordan's policies towards youth must also be seen in the context of the government's response towards protests in general. This has entailed a combination of repression (e.g. detention of activists, restrictions on social media), 'scapegoating' certain officials (notably prime ministers: a number have been dismissed to appease protestors, even though they are appointed by the king and act on his behest), and making commitments to reform – which typically are not fulfilled (Idris & Laws, 2016). A further key strategy used by the regime is to highlight the devastating effects of the civil war in Syria – and thus the importance of stability (keeping the monarchy) in Jordan. It is clear that neither youth policies nor the government's overall response to public protests is likely to address the drivers of youth violence in the country.

4. Other forms of marginalization

Ethnicity

The biggest cleavage in Jordanian society is between 'native' East Bankers (also referred to as Transjordanians) who are considered the country's original inhabitants, and ethnic Palestinians who came into Jordan during periodic refugee influxes and have since settled there. Ironically, both have reason to feel marginalized in Jordan.

As noted earlier, East Bankers traditionally form the bedrock of support for the monarchy with loyalty rewarded with government largesse. They dominate in positions in government, the military and the bureaucracy, and have disproportionate seats in legislative bodies. For example, while over two-thirds of Jordan's population – mostly Palestinian - live in urban areas, these are allocated less than a third of assembly seats (Idris & Laws, 2016). Similarly, the twelve governorates of the country are each managed by a governor - 'generally an East Jordanian appointed by the central government from outside the governorate's region' (Mango, 2016: 14, cited in Idris & Laws, 2016).

However, Jordan's high levels of public debt and large fiscal deficits, coupled with austerity measures imposed by the IMF, mean the regime is no longer able to provide tribal communities the same largesse it used to. The relative isolation of tribal centres like Maan and Al-Shawbok

from the capital, have further contributed to a sense of marginalization among tribal communities – as manifested in the Hirak protest movement. In addition, East Bankers fear becoming a minority in their own country – both because of the massive influx of Palestinian refugees who, along with their descendants, are now settled in Jordan, and through the more recent arrival of large numbers of Syrian refugees. Indeed, ethnic Palestinians are estimated to comprise 55-70% of the population (Sharp, 2016: 6, cited in Idris & Laws, 2016). Such fear has fuelled a xenophobic nationalism which 'frames Palestinians as alien to Jordanian society' and which has 'permeated the education system, political discourse, and hiring practices' (Yom, 2015: 290-291 & 294).

Hence, it is not surprising that Palestinian Jordanians also feel marginalized. As described above, they have been kept out of the government, military and bureaucracy; this has led to the police and security forces, dominated by East Bankers, targeting Palestinians. The latter also have limited citizenship rights: Palestinian Jordanians who entered the country before 1967 have been granted citizenship, but not those coming after. Palestinian nationalism increased during the 1960s, culminating in 'Black September' in 1970, when Palestinian militants made several attempts to assassinate King Hussein, hijacked planes and fought with the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) - spurred on by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) – but were defeated and the PLO expelled from Jordanian territory (Idris & Laws, 2016). With public sector avenues closed to them, Palestinians have dominated the private sector and commerce (Lindsey, 2020). Concentration of Palestinians in cities such as Amman and Irbid has led to the emergence of a Palestinian urban middle class, distinct from the East Banker political elite. But power remains in the hands of East Bankers.

Gender

As seen, youth in Jordan suffer economic, political and social marginalization, but young women are worse off still. 'State and society continue to constrain and limit the potential of Jordan's young women even more so than their male counterparts' (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 2).

Perhaps the biggest obstacle facing young women – indeed, women of all ages – are patriarchal norms and conservative values. In its most recent report on Jordan, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) expressed its concern over the 'persistence of deep-rooted discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, which overemphasize the traditional role of women as mothers and wives, thereby undermining women's social status, autonomy, educational opportunities and professional careers' (cited in IRCKHF, 2019: 1). These 'traditional' attitudes to women and their role are reflected in many aspects of life.

Women are discriminated against in law. For example, women are unable to transfer their citizenship to their children, so a child born to a Jordanian mother and non-Jordanian father does not automatically receive Jordanian citizenship – Jordanian men, by contrast, can transfer citizenship (BTI, 2020: 13). Similarly, in Shariah courts which adjudicate personal status disputes, women's testimony is not equal to that of men (BTI, 2020: 13).

With regard to decision-making and power, there is some reservation of legislative body seats for women: 15 quota seats in the lower house of parliament, 7% of senate seats and 25% of municipal council seats (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 5). However, young women's political participation is constrained by the age restrictions on electoral candidacy in Jordan, while women

as a whole are held back by social attitudes and patriarchal norms. 'Institutionalized patriarchy along with the resilience and reification of tribal networks further excludes young women and reinforces social attitudes that tend to either inhibit or banish them from the public space' (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 5). Milton-Edwards (2018: 5) concludes that gender marginalization 'leaves young women virtually invisible from the public debate beyond symbol or token'.

Education levels among Jordanian women are very high: the literacy rate is over 95% and there are more women in the country's universities than men (Freedom House, 2016). Despite this, rates of labour force participation for women are very low: overall only 14.6% of women are economically active (IRCKHF, 2019). This figure rises to 26.2% among women aged 25-39, far less than the 89.5% of men in the same age group who are economically active (IRCKHF, 2019). While education is clearly not a barrier to women's employment, they face other challenges: low wages, lack of childcare provision, poor public transport infrastructure, as well as cultural and societal constraints including a culture of impunity around sexual harassment – these combine to discourage or stop young women from achieving their economic potential (Freedom House, 2016; Milton-Edwards, 2018: 5; Burke, 2018).

Again, patriarchal norms are reflected in law: Article 61 of the Constitution states that a woman requires the permission of her husband to work outside the marital home - if she does so without his consent, or is 'disobedient' in some other way, she loses the right to financial maintenance (IRCKHF, 2019). Those women who do make it into the workforce face more problems: they earn 41% less than men in the private sector, and 28% less in the public sector (Milton-Edwards, 2018: 5). Requirements for employers to, for example, give maternity leave, have only served to further discourage the hiring of women (Burke, 2018).

Girls and women suffer from gender-based violence. In 2019, 6,965 women were victims of violence, though the actual figure is likely to be much higher as many incidents are not reported to the police (Euro-med, 2020: 5). Rates of violence against married women range from a high of 36% in the governorates of Balqa and Zarqa (in the west and east respectively) to 10% in Ajloun and Kerak; the capital has a rate of 27% (Euro-med, 2020: 5).

As well as domestic violence, the concept of 'honour killings' is widespread in Jordan. An average of 20 women are killed annually in Jordan by male family members in so-called honour killings because they supposedly disgraced their families (CEP, 2020: 1). Human rights groups believe the actual number is higher as not all incidents are recorded. Moreover, though the penalty for murder in Jordan is death, the courts often commute sentences for honour killings (CEP, 2020). Article 340 of the Jordanian legal code states any man who kills or attacks his wife or any female relative while she is committing adultery receives a reduced sentence (in 2001 the same protection was extended to female attackers against their husbands) (CEP, 2020: 5). Article 98 of the legal code allows for the reduction of penalties for offenders who commit crimes in a 'state of great fury' due to unlawful or dangerous behaviour by the victim (CEP, 2020: 5). Thus, a Jordanian court in February 2014 reduced the sentence of a man convicted of killing his daughter for leaving the house without her husband's knowledge from life in prison to 10 years (CEP, 2020: 5).

The rise in support for extremist interpretations of Islam in Jordan, has led to a rise in honour killings in the country (CEP, 2020) The most recent CEDAW report on Jordan noted that 'patriarchal attitudes are on the rise within State authorities and society, and that gender equality is being openly and increasingly challenged by conservative groups' (cited in IRCKHF, 2019: 1).

Disability

Figures for prevalence of disability in Jordan vary: census data from 2015 reported a disability prevalence rate of 2.7%, although testing of a disability module supported by UNICEF reported a disability prevalence rate of 13% (Thompson, 2018: 3). The majority of persons with disabilities (PWDs) (84%) are found in urban areas (Thompson, 2018: 3).

Persons with disabilities in Jordan suffer from various forms of marginalization. Data from 2014 suggests the employment rate of PWDs in the country was 16.1%, while 1.7% were unemployed and 82.2% were not economically active (Thompson, 2018: 5). For the total population these ratios are 36.6%, 4.4% and 59% respectively. More men with disabilities (23.8%) are employed than women (4.8%) – highlighting the 'double' disadvantage faced by women with disabilities. These figures reflect negative cultural and societal attitudes towards disability. Stigma surrounding disability – whereby this is seen as defective, shameful and burdensome - leads to people with certain types of disabilities being hidden away. Thompson (2018: 29) describes the situation:

> The majority of people with disabilities face discrimination and face a lack of accessibility in public places, schools, universities, and streets ….both men and women with disabilities are marginalised, prejudged, and discriminated against in Jordan, but women with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse and more stigmatised than their male counterparts. Impairment is often synonymous with disability. It is considered that it causes shame that might extend to the entire family. With regards to education, children with disabilities face many barriers, including attitudinal barriers with parents.

The Jordanian government – and specifically the royal family – has made significant efforts to address this stigmatisation, increase the visibility of persons with disabilities, and promote disability rights. The country is seen as a regional leader on disability issues (Thompson, 2018: 6). In 2017 the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities replaced a 2007 law of the same name, and enshrined a number of critically important rights, including the right to education, health care, and protection against exclusion from work (BTI, 2020: 13). The law forbids any educational institution from excluding a person on the basis of a disability, and in the event of inadequate accessibility to the premises, requires the Ministry of Education to provide alternatives (BTI, 2020: 13). However, implementation has been weak: 'one of the persistent obstacles to greater integration and participation remains public awareness and acceptance' (BTI, 2020: 13).

The other issue is lack of funding. An analysis of the 2018 and 2019 ministerial budget reports by Human Rights Watch found that, for the two years, several ministries – including the Ministries of Interior and Transport – did not allocate any funding for disability rights initiatives (HRW, 2019). While the Ministry of Education has an official inclusive education policy, it was found to have allocated no specific funding to inclusive education in 2018 and 2019; rather, 0.4% of its budget went to 'special education' – education of children in disabilities in segregated settings (HRW, 2019).

5. Community security mechanisms

Community policing

In Jordan, the Public Security Directorate (PSD) – operating under the Ministry of Interior - is responsible for public security and policing. National headquarters are in Amman, below which there are ten regional directorates, eight for the governorates, one covering Amman and its suburbs, and the last covering the desert region. The PSD has three functional divisions: administrative police, judicial police and operational support. The administrative police are the most involved at community level, being responsible for routine crime prevention and the maintenance of public security. Also relevant, particularly in the context of maintaining public order/riot control, is the Daraq (Gendarmerie); and the General Intelligence Directorate (generally known as Mukhabarat), which reports directly to the king and is responsible for domestic and international security, espionage and counterterrorism.

Community policing is a strategy of policing that focuses on building ties and working closely with members of the local community. Key features of community policing are[2]:

- Intended to prevent crime before it happens rather than responding to crime after it occurs
- Focuses on creating a safe social environment
- Engages residents to determine which criminal activities they are most affected by
- Encourages residents to participate with law enforcement in order to keep their own community safe.

In sum, community policing creates a partnership between law enforcement and residents. In 2006 a Community Policing Department (CPD) was set up in Jordan, with CPD representatives attached to every police station in the country's 12 governorates. The CPD has been active in community engagement and supporting mainstreaming of policing at local level – however, this review found no evidence about the impact of these efforts. In addition, no literature was found specifically on community policing and youth. One article referred to a PSD initiative to engage young people as active members of local councils set up by PSD directorates to assist police in fighting crime and serving the public.[3] But no further details were given about the initiative or its effectiveness.

Community policing in Jordan is facilitated by the fact that there is some intersection between formal and informal security mechanisms. The latter entail involvement of local tribal and/or religious leaders to achieve a truce and/or settlement/compensation for an aggrieved party (victim of crime) (see below). In Jordan police station commanders have the power to handle some complaints without referring them to the court, but within specific conditions and controls, e.g. complaints involving disputes or quarrels between two or more parties, and if no injuries were reported. In such cases, 'the police can work with the involved parties and tribal notables if needed to resolve the problem without having to refer them to the court of law. This form of discretion is widely accepted and practiced in Jordan' (Service & Al-Rafie, 2020). Moreover, when major crime occurs, the police seek the assistance and intervention from community and

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[2] https://www.everbridge.com/blog/what-is-community-policing/

[3] 'Crown Prince urges better police-youth cooperation'. *Jordan Times,* 11 January 2018. https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/crown-prince-urges-better-police-youth-communication

tribe notables, in order to prevent aggravation and to avoid random revenge by the victim's family immediately after the crime has occurred (Service & Al-Rafie, 2020).

It is important to highlight, as described earlier in this report, that the general response by the security forces to youth activism and protests has been one of repression, with youth subject to arrest, imprisonment and physical abuse, restrictions on public gathering and on internet access/social media. The GID have been especially involved in these measures. Other GID activities in the Arab Spring uprisings included: financing pro-regime rallies, bribing journalists to write pro-regime stories and parliamentarians to denounce the opposition, infiltrating youth opposition movements and spreading anti-Islamist rumours in loyal tribal communities. Also as noted earlier, security forces have engaged with tribal elders to persuade them to 'control' their youth and 'deradicalise' them.

Informal mechanisms

Jordan is one of the countries in which informal justice and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are widely practised, especially in tribal communities. Key features of such informal mechanisms are the need to achieve a truce (end conflict/prevent revenge attacks), reach settlement through consensus, and to provide appropriate compensation for aggrieved parties – thereby ensuring long-term resolution. A third feature can be collective punishment, e.g. asking an entire household/clan to move away to another location, in response to the actions of one member of that family/clan.

In the context of the intersection between formal and informal legal/justice systems in Jordan, it is relevant to add that formal law, tribal law and Shariah (Islamic) law coexist (Furr & Al-Serhan, 2008). Shariah courts generally handle cases of divorce, custody, support and inheritance; the formal legal system deals with serious cases and can impose prison sentences and even the death sentence; the tribal system does not impose either, but has more flexibility in finding solutions through consensus. Furr and Al-Serhan (2008: 23) explain the links between formal and tribal legal systems:

> Jordanian law recognizes two rights in criminal matters, a public right (Al-Haq al'am) and a personal right (Al-Haq Al-sakhzay). These rights acknowledge the interconnection of the state and tribal law. If a person is convicted in the state system the public right is satisfied. If the victim's family agrees, usually through the tribal recognized procedures and the payment of "blood money" to relinquish its private right, the court can reduce the sentence to the minimum required by the state. The courts can reduce capital cases to imprisonment under this system.

This review found no literature on how such informal structures are used to 'police' young people. But, given the social marginalization of the youth in Jordanian society, they will not have a decision-making role in such processes, and are unlikely even to have a voice, e.g. to express their desires. As noted earlier, the Hirak movement could be seen in part as a rejection of traditional tribal leadership and hierarchy.

6. Models of psychosocial support for youth

Psychosocial support: definition and importance

The term 'psychosocial' refers to the dynamic relationship between the psychological and social dimensions of a person's life. The two dimensions influence one another and are very closely linked. They can be described as follows (IFRC PS Centre, 2014: 18):

- Psychological dimension - internal, emotional and thought processes, feelings and reactions
- Social dimension - relationships, family and community networks, social values and cultural practices.

Psychosocial support refers to the actions that address both the psychological and social needs of individuals, families and communities.

Psychosocial support can be provided to facilitate (IFRC PS Centre, 2014: 19):

- Resilience - the ability to bounce back after something difficult has happened, or to get through difficult experiences in a positive way
- Coping mechanisms - the ways people deal with challenges and difficult situations
- Restoration of social cohesion - reinforcement and strengthening of social networks and structures.

Psychosocial support can be both preventive and curative (IFRC PS Centre, 2009: 26). It is preventive when it decreases the risk of developing mental health problems. It is curative when it helps individuals and communities to overcome and deal with psychosocial problems that may have arisen from the shock and effects of crises.

Psychosocial support activities can vary depending on people's needs, but all aim to establish the following five elements (IFRC PS Centre, 2014: 19):

- Sense of safety
- Calm
- Sense of self and community
- Connectedness
- Hope.

Banati and Jones (2019) stress the need to provide psychosocial support to adolescents in crisis settings. Noting that around a quarter of the world's 1.8 billion young people live in areas affected by armed conflict and organized violence, they argue that most adolescents get caught up, not in violent extremism, but in violence manifest in their everyday lives (at home, when accessing services, spending time with peers, etc.). This has immediate and long-term effects (Banati & Jones, 2019):

> These exposures risk fracturing young people's aspirations and identities and limiting their future opportunities. If this alone were not enough to spur urgent action, there is an economic imperative too: unless young people receive the psychosocial support they need, mental health disorders that emerge before adulthood can cost 10 times more to deal with than those that emerge later in life.

They add that adolescents are at greater risk than older people because their brains are still developing, a point echoed by Mercy Corps (2017): ‘Brains that are still developing are especially vulnerable at a time when the foundations of cognitive and social development are still being laid, defining the future choices and coping mechanisms young people use to navigate their lives. Psychosocial programs can mitigate this, a growing body of evidence attests’. The IFRC Psychosocial Centre (2014: 37) also describes youth engagement (in crisis situations) as a necessity: ‘Ignoring youth might lead some towards gangs, militias, prostitution and drug rings. These types of groups have unfortunately proven how effective young people can be in the service of armed conflict and exploitation’. Among youth, girls are at greater risk than boys because they can be exposed to adversities such as school drop-outs, sexual and gender based violence, and child marriage (Banati & Jones, 2019).

Psychosocial approaches

The specific interventions – both nature and scale or intensity of interventions – will vary depending on the individuals and their needs (INEE, 2016: 19):

- In cases of mild psychological distress, interventions should be geared to providing community and family support, e.g.:
    - Supporting community structures and cultural activities/traditions and rituals
    - Support groups, e.g. widows, teenagers, older people, women
    - Peer networking programmes for children, adolescents, caregivers
    - Positive parenting programmes
    - Vocational training programmes
    - Formal and non-formal education
    - Parents/community meetings to address their own and their children’s psychosocial well-being
    - Child-to-child or mentoring programmes
    - Life skills programmes
    - Family tracing and reunification
- For mild to moderate mental health disorders individual, family or group interventions are needed to provide focused, non-specialised support, e.g.:
    - Psychological first aid
    - Lay counselling
    - Violence prevention and peace education programmes
    - Programmes for survivors of gender-based violence
    - Programmes for social reintegration of former child soldiers
- For severe psychological disorders, specialised services are needed – professional treatment for individuals or families.

Psychosocial support for youth

Psychosocial support interventions for youth are designed to improve their psychosocial well-being by (IFRC PS Centre, 2014: 37-38):

- enhancing trust and tolerance among youth
- helping to develop reconciliation to prevent new conflicts enabling youth to be active agents in rebuilding communities and in actualizing positive futures
- enhancing emotional well-being and coping mechanisms
- restoring the normal flow of youth development
- protecting youth and community members from the accumulation of distressing and harmful events
- providing youth with a safe place, where they can express themselves freely and lead a life free from violence, enabling them to develop and learn
- improving the support mechanisms linking young people and their peers
- enhancing social support mechanisms within communities and strengthening the social fabric.

Some of the factors considered crucial to the success of psychosocial programmes, particularly for young people, are as follows (INEE, 2016: 20-22):

- Contextualized responses – It is important not to lose sight of the fact that every situation is unique and has its own distinctive challenges and solutions. It is also vital to make sure that all activities provided are culturally appropriate.
- Children's/youth participation - It is extremely important to involve children/youth as much as possible in all aspects of these programmes. Young people know what their challenges are and often what the best solutions are. Involving them empowers them with an array of skills, such as problem-solving. It increases their self-confidence and improves their communication skills. Finally, it shows them that their opinions are listened to and respected, and that their importance to society is acknowledged and valued.
- Involvement of parents and caregivers - It is fundamental that parents and caregivers and other community members are as involved as possible in psychosocial activities. Their involvement provides young people with an external resource and increases the opportunity for adults to support one another.
- School-based approach - It is important to involve teachers in the programmes. School is a significant part of a young person's environment, but it also may be a site of violence. Combining a community-based approach with a school-based approach has great potential, as this enables more comprehensive coverage of young people's protective environment. It is essential to take a holistic approach to providing psychosocial support, and one that includes education.
- Ensure young people's safety and security – Examples of activities are: talk with girls and boys about where they feel safe so that activities can be organized in the right locations; create child-friendly spaces where children and youth can meet to play, relax, and begin structured activities; train all staff members in appropriate methods for working with children; train security personnel on the rights of children and civilians; establish a reporting mechanism that enables children and adults to feel secure when reporting threatening incidents.
- Ensure that programmes are designed to be inclusive - Girls and boys who do not normally participate in organized social activities are among the most vulnerable. They may include girls of all ages, youth (individuals between the ages of 15 and 24), children

who do not attend school, children without parental care, children with disabilities, and working children.

- Identify referral services – Some individuals may require mental health treatment. It is important to discuss referral mechanisms with medical and mental health-care workers prior to implementing a programme, and to train staff to identify the most serious cases and where to refer them.

Banati and Jones (2019) recommend that an action agenda for adolescents' mental health should include:

- Investment in a minimum package of interventions that includes: access to safe spaces; opportunities to interact with peers; life skills curricula focusing on interpersonal communication and emotional resilience; accessible reporting and referral pathways; and adequately resourced case worker support.
- Support for community-based models of prevention and response that focus on addressing underlying stigma associated with mental health.
- Strengthening the evidence base on the social determinants of mental health in young people to inform context-appropriate, actionable and scalable approaches.
- Changes in how we assess mental health interventions to better capture age- and gender-specific dimensions.

In the context of youth, key approaches to promote psychosocial well-being include through the education system and through sport and fitness, theatre and drama, music and art. Note that these are not discrete: sport and music, for example, can be offered through schools.

Psychosocial interventions in education settings

As noted above, school is a significant part of a young person's environment, and can play an important role in providing psychosocial support. Table 1 lists children's needs and possible psychosocial interventions in schools (learning spaces) that can help address those.

Table 1: Psychosocial interventions in learning spaces

Children's needs	Possible psychosocial interventions
A sense of belonging	Establish an educational structure where children feel included Promote the restoration of cultural, traditional practices of childcare, whenever possible
Relationship with peers	Provide a dependable, interactive routine through school or other organised education activity Offer group and team activities (i.e. sports, drama, etc.) that requires cooperation and dependence on one another
Personal attachments	Enlist teachers that can form appropriate caring relationships with children Provide opportunities for social integration and unity by teaching and showing respect for all cultural values, regardless of differing backgrounds
Intellectual stimulation	Enhance child development by providing a variety of educational experiences
Physical stimulation	Encourage recreational and creative activities, both traditional and new, through games, sport, music, dance, etc.
To feel valued	Create opportunities for expression through individual/group discussions, drawing, writing, drama, music, etc. which promote pride and self-confidence Recognize, encourage and praise children

Source: INEE (2016: 26)

Sport and physical activities

Psychosocial sport and physical activity programmes offer many benefits (IFRC PS Centre, 2014; Sportanddev.org[4]):

- They can provide a safe structure and friendly environment for people to begin to share their emotions through verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Activities allow youth to have positive experiences with peers.
- The interactions that occur naturally through sports activities can contribute toward repairing and re-building trust among people in the community.
- Interventions may also promote hope at an individual and at a collective level by offering activities that renew motivation for learning and future planning.

[4] https://www.sportanddev.org/en/learn-more/disaster-response/sport-psychosocial-intervention-0

Sport and physical activities can assist youth to address many social and psychological challenges simultaneously in gentle and non-intrusive ways.

Psychosocial sport activities do not have a primary focus on competition but rather an emphasis on creating a cooperative and supportive environment in which community members can interact and communicate with each other.

There is no direct evidence supporting one activity over another (IFRC PS Centre, 2014). Sport and physical activities should be defined and implemented in the broadest possible way, including fitness, traditional and international games, martial arts, gymnastics, dancing, etc. However, activities need to be adapted to the local context: preferences for certain sports or games can differ between male and female participants for reasons relating to culture and religion. The type of activities offered should enable everyone to participate regardless of abilities, talent, age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, etc. All activities that come from within the community itself – traditional or modern – are particularly well-suited to meeting psychosocial aims.

Psychosocial support for youth in Jordan

While psychosocial support programmes in Jordan were not the direct focus of this review, it identified a number of recommendations specifically for Jordan. These are given below.

Mercy Corps has implemented the Advancing Adolescents programme in Jordan (as part of a regional initiative) to enhance young people's emotional development and mental health (Mercy Corps, 2016: 3). It uses a framework called Profound Stress and Attunement (PSA) to provide a holistic platform for young people to develop empathy and resilience in response to their needs, and supports measurable psychosocial improvement. A study by Yale University of its impact found that young people who expressed high levels of insecurity, measured in terms of worries and fears about oneself, one's family and one's future, showed an increased sense of security 11 months after attending a psychosocial programme, when compared to a control group (Mercy Corps, 2017). The impact evaluation of the programme in Jordan made the following recommendations (Mercy Corps, 2016: 7-8):

1. Prioritize and increase funding for programming that addresses psychosocial and mental health needs of adolescents in complex emergencies — these interventions are and should be considered lifesaving in nature.
2. Cultivate support and buy-in from local institutions and key stakeholders on approaches that facilitate meaningful engagement of young people in their communities. These should build young people's sense of voice and belonging, and reduce their isolation and other grievances that have been linked to risk of engagement in violent acts, including violent extremism.
3. Tailor adolescent programming to meet the needs of boys and girls and increase commitments and resources required to ensure hard-to-reach boys and girls have equal access to programs and services.
4. Improve accountability of investments and coordination of initiatives to promote youth development in complex crises by tracking funding by sex, age and sector as part of joint appeals in complex emergency settings to establish a baseline and track changes in financial support for adolescent and sectoral programming over the life of the response.

The International Medical Corps (IMC) carried out a study on the utilization of mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS) among Syrian refugees and the Jordanian host population. The study made the following recommendations (relevant for both refugee and host communities) (IMC, 2020: 3-4):

1. Expand and implement additional outreach activities to provide psychosocial support and mental health services;
2. Train community and social workers adequately and structurally, and expand their roles to provide different services; such as, providing vital education on available healthcare options, in order to increase public awareness on the availability of mental health services and institutions, and providing culturally appropriate health education on topics related to mental health and psychosocial needs;
3. Minimize stigma associated with MHPSS by incorporating mental health services into broad-based community settings, such as schools, primary prevention or services at primary health care level;
4. Implement school-based interventions, integrate psychosocial support activities into the education sector, and build the capacity of teachers and school counsellors to provide psychosocial support to schoolchildren;
5. At schools and among youth institutions more specifically, promote activities that promote social cohesion and social support such as increasing opportunities for extra-curricular activities, which helps to occupy young people in healthy activities, developing critical thinking skills and fostering a positive whole school ethos, and providing equal access to educational opportunities for students from all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds;
6. Increase the number, and, build the capacity of non-specialized health workers to be able to deliver low-intensity psychological intervention for mild to moderate mental disorders; and increase the capacity-building opportunity of evidence-based scalable psychological intervention.

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