

# Key Challenges of Youth in OIC Countries



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ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION  
STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING  
CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES



OIC Outlook Series

# Key Challenges of Youth in OIC Countries

May 2015



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## Foreword

Young population is one of the most important strengths of the OIC member countries and according to the current population projections it will remain a major strength over the coming decades. It is projected that one third of them will be leaving in OIC countries in 2050 compared to one fourth of the total world young population currently leaving in OIC countries. While this offers a great opportunity for OIC countries, governments also have to face critical challenges in utilizing this great potential. Providing quality education and training, generating adequate number of jobs and easing transition from education to labour market, creating equal opportunities in skill formation and job market for both male and female, promoting intergenerational social mobility for better standards of living, ensuring active participation of youth in the society, and reducing addictions of young people to harmful substances and behaviours are some of the issues that need to be taken into consideration to effectively utilize this crucial potential in OIC countries.

The current state of affairs in the majority of OIC countries, however, reveals that a significant part of young population remains inactive and those who actively seeks a job in the market face serious challenges. This requires greater focus on young people through promoting their participation into labour market, providing required skills and facilitating the creation of suitable jobs. The quality of education also remains a critical concern in many OIC countries. In this area, there is a need again to develop and implement effective programmes and policies to utilize this potential and to attain higher productivity and better competitiveness levels, attendance as well as quality of education at all levels.

On the other hand, youth in many OIC countries are experiencing tremendous levels of stress due to limited opportunities for social mobility and due to restrictions on fully participating in social, cultural, economic and political life. This state of affairs leads in many cases to social turmoil and political unrest. In order to tackle such problems, there is a role for all stakeholders. Governments should ensure equal access to opportunities, civil society organizations should support disadvantaged people to succeed, education institutions should consider the diverse background of students in their efforts to get good quality education and labour market players should be flexible in giving a second chance to those who fail to adapt to working environment.

As SESRIC, we are taking some important initiatives to improve the socio-economic conditions of youth. Skill Development for Youth Employment (SDYE) programme of SESRIC in particular and OIC-VET programme in a general aim at improving employability of youth and their attachment to labour market and socio-economic development process. However, there are still lots to be done. Through strong partnership and collaboration among relevant organizations and bodies, I am confident that we can overcome the challenges faced by youth and achieve their active and productive involvement in their societies. In this context, I believe this report will help us to better understand some of the critical challenges faced by youth in OIC countries and devise and implement effective policies and programmes to address these challenges.

Amb. Musa Kulaklikaya

Director General

## Executive Summary

Young population is one of the most important strengths of the OIC countries. According to the current population projections, youth population will remain a major strength for OIC countries over the coming decades. However, there are critical issues to be addressed in order to effectively utilize this strength. In this context, this report investigates the challenges facing youth in OIC member countries under four categories: education, employment, social mobility and inclusion, and mental health. It reviews the current state of education and unemployment in OIC countries, highlights some major issues related to social mobility, social inclusion and mental health of youth, and provides some relevant policy recommendations. Overall, there are some serious concerns on the quality and relevance of higher education in OIC countries in terms of preparing the young people to labour market. It is evident that it becomes more difficult to find jobs for the young people that match their qualifications and skills. It is also observed that there is not enough progress in social mobility and participation of youth in society.

The report has four main sections, excluding introductory and concluding sections. First section briefly reviews some of the major educational outcomes in OIC countries. Literacy rates, participation to tertiary schools and international student mobility are the main indicators reviewed in this section. Average youth literacy rates in OIC countries are still lower than those of non-OIC developing countries and the world. On average, 82% of youth are literate, which is below the world average (88.6%) and average of non-OIC developing countries (90.9%). Moreover, the section highlights the educational system responsiveness to the changing needs of youth, economies, societies and labour market.

Unemployment remains one of the most challenging issues across the globe. The labour market conditions for youth in OIC countries are not exceptionally promising. OIC countries are largely characterised by low participation to labour force and high unemployment rates. In this context, this section highlights some important indicators of labour market for young population with a view to identifying the main challenges and obstacles in OIC countries. The current state of affairs in the majority of OIC countries reveals that a significant part of young population remains inactive and those who actively seeks a job in the market face serious challenges. Youth labour force participation in OIC countries decreased from 45.9% in 2000 to 44.4% in 2012, while youth unemployment in OIC countries remained constantly above 15%.

Third section addresses some of the social problems of youth. Socially speaking, OIC countries are dynamic and rapidly changing with a large population of youth who are in many of these countries experiencing tremendous levels of stress due to limited opportunities for social mobility and due to restrictions on fully participating in social, cultural, economic and political life. This state of affairs leads in many cases to social turmoil and political unrest. This section highlights some social issues related to youth in OIC countries. It starts with social mobility and moves on to social inclusion and youth dependences on tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and technology before concluding with the issue of youth migration.

Fourth section deals with mental health issues. Youth are at greater risk of a range of mental-health conditions as they transition from childhood to adulthood and these mental health conditions

negatively impact youths' development, quality of life and ability to fully participate in their communities. This is why it is paramount that decision makers in OIC countries develop policies, legislations, and plans to improve the state of mental health, allocate resources to establish mental health facilities and build the capacity of mental health human resources, and provide mental health services for youth who are in need. This section presents the current state of mental health policies, facilities, human resources and services in OIC countries and discusses the factor affecting mental health of youth in OIC countries.

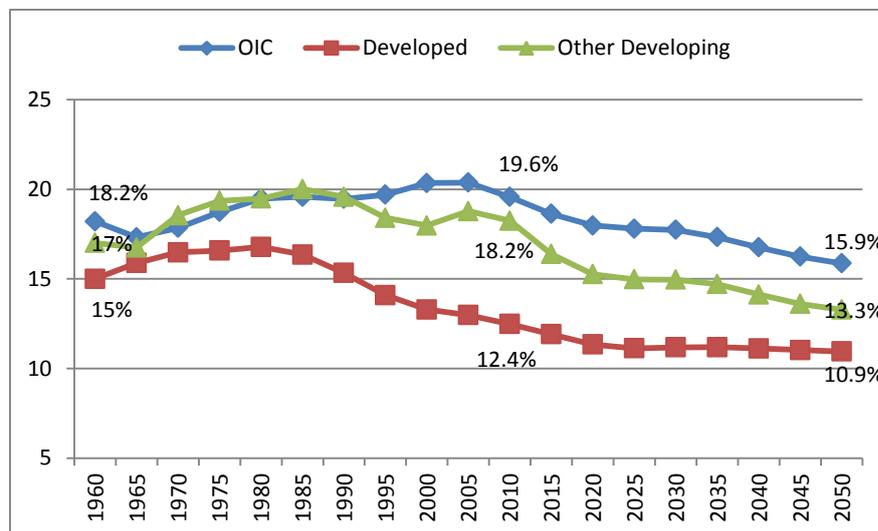
Based on the analyses in these four sections, final section of the report provides some relevant policy recommendations. Overall, it seems that much more efforts are needed to be undertaken by national governments and other stakeholders to effectively address major challenges of youth and youth-related issues in OIC member countries. Among others, new and effective strategies should be devised to improve the learning outcomes in addition to improving participation to education. Moreover, greater emphasis should be given to young people through promoting their participation into labour market, providing required skills and facilitating the creation of suitable jobs.

## 1 Youth as a Strength and Challenge

Standards of living have been improving at a faster pace, albeit at varying levels, all around the world. The last decades of the human history especially witnessed rapid advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs) with particular repercussions on the needs and demands of youth. Constantly evolving lifestyles created major shifts in expectations towards better standards of living among youth in developing countries, including OIC members, to reach the levels attained and enjoyed by their peers in more developed parts of the world. Governments and authorities that ignore the needs and demands of youth or cannot guarantee similar opportunities for better life encountered significant challenges posed by their young population.

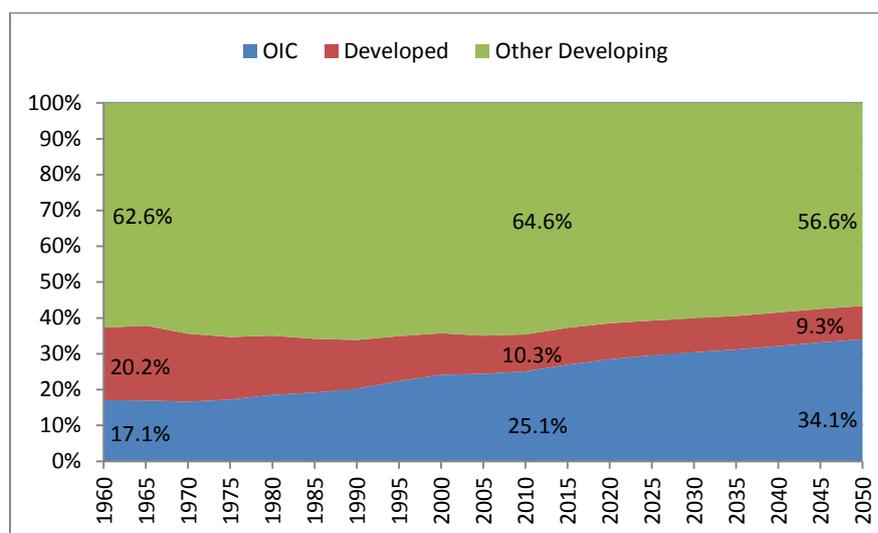
Indisputably, young population is one of the most important strengths of the OIC member countries. At a time when aging population turns to an increasingly major concern in developed countries, OIC countries can create enormous dynamism in their development efforts and catching up process by effectively utilizing this potential. The relative significance of young population in OIC countries compared to other country groups can be depicted by referring to the current and projected population dynamics. Since 1990, youth in OIC countries constitutes higher shares of population compared to other country groups (Figure 1). As of 2010, young population in OIC countries accounted for 19.6% of the entire OIC population, while this ratio was 18.2% in other developing countries and 12.4% in developed countries. According to latest projections, share of young population will constantly fall all around the world, but OIC countries will remain to have the largest share of young population. In 2050, 15.9% of the population in OIC countries are projected to be 15-24 years old.

**Figure 1:** Share of young population in total



Source: ILO, Key Indicators of Labour Market (KILM), 8th Edition.

While the shares of young population are expected to fall all around the world, the share of OIC countries in total young population in the world will steadily increase. Over the last five decades, this share increased from 17.1% to 25.1% and is expected to reach 34.1% as of 2050, indicating that while one out of six young people were living in current OIC member countries in 1960, it is expected that two out of six will be living in OIC countries in 2050 (Figure 2). This means that OIC countries will have stronger position in terms of its younger population.

**Figure 2: Share of groups in total youth population**


Source: ILO, Key Indicators of Labour Market (KILM), 8th Edition.

Critical challenges, however, remain. Providing quality education and training, generating adequate number of jobs to ease transition from education to labour market, creating equal opportunities in skill formation and job market for both male and female, promoting intergenerational social mobility for better standards of living, ensuring active participation of youth in the society, reducing addictions of young people to harmful substances and behaviours, and strengthening mental health of young people are some of the issues that need to be taken into consideration to effectively utilize

#### BOX 1: Challenges of Youth from OIC Perspective

First Islamic Conference of Youth Ministers, held in Jeddah during 1-2 May 2007, identifies the following challenges faced by the youth in the OIC countries:

- A. **In the Social field:** Shrinkage in the family role, the disconnection of some Muslim youth from the Islamic values, the spread of the evils of violence, extremism, drug-addiction, along with the rise in the rate of unemployment and the spread of serious diseases among youth.
- B. **In the Cultural field:** a deficit in religious education, lack of awareness-raising, cultural and psychological alienation among the youth, along with a shortage in trainings for those active in the field of youth and the aggravated crisis in terms of a mature dialogue between religious institutions and youth, all of these have led to conversions to other faiths or disregard for Islamic values.
- C. **In the political and economic fields:** The lack of youth participation in decision-making and in politics has resulted in the absence of youth in the evolvement of economic and poverty alleviation policies. The gap between the social strata grew wider economically and socially with a rising cost of living, declining wages, and disproportions between the outputs of education and the needs of the labour market along with an insufficiency in program funding.
- D. **In the Area of Education:** There is a general weakness in terms of the quality of youth and general education programs and a failure to keep abreast with modern technologies on the part of the centers of learning.
- E. **In the field of environment:** The youth's disconnection from activities in environmental programs and failure to tap on environmental resources as investment and job-opportunities for youth, along with a disinterest in the youth's environmental awareness.

this crucial potential in OIC countries.

This outlook report focuses on the challenges of youth under four categories. These are education, employment, social mobility and inclusion, and mental health. In this context, this report reviews the current state of education and unemployment in OIC countries, highlights some major issues related to social mobility, social inclusion, and mental health, and provides some relevant policy recommendations. In general, there are some serious concerns on the quality and relevance of higher education in OIC countries in terms of preparing the young people to labour market. It is evident that it becomes more difficult to find jobs for young people that match their skills and education. It is also observed that there is not enough progress in social mobility and participation of youth.

The rest of the report is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the trends in youth education in OIC countries. Section 3 provides an analysis on the current situation of youth unemployment and participation to labour force and highlights some prospective issues and major challenges to be addressed. Section 4 provides more qualitative discussion on social mobility in OIC countries together with discussions on participation, addictions and migration of youth. Section 5 draw the current state of mental health policies, facilities, human resources and services in OIC countries and discusses the factors affecting mental health of youth.

## **2 Youth Participation in Education**

Education is one of the most important investments a country can make in its people and its future. It is the core of human capital formation and central to development of a society. It is widely accepted that investment in education and quality research at various national institutions are vital in achieving higher economic growth and reducing poverty and inequality. Quality education generates benefits to the society that go beyond the gains secured by the individuals involved. There is overwhelming evidence that education improves personal health, encourages stronger national identity and promotes peace and stability. The development literature has also drawn attention to the role of education in reducing inequalities that exist in many countries, particularly in developing societies with lower levels of income. The high correlation between the level of education and income or wealth is considered from the equity perspective as a justification for public intervention when the conventional market mechanisms do not function efficiently to ensure equality.

Evidence shows that learning levels rather than years spent in school are what drive social and economic returns on investment in education, including employability, productivity and growth (Brookings Institution, 2011). However, in many parts of the world, including OIC countries, children leave school without acquiring the basic knowledge and skills they need to lead productive, healthy lives and to attain sustainable livelihoods. Poor quality education is jeopardizing the future of millions of children and youth across the OIC region.

Against this background, this section briefly reviews some of the major educational outcomes in OIC countries. Literacy rates, participation to tertiary schools and international student mobility are the main indicators reviewed in this section. It highlights the educational system responsiveness to the changing needs of youth, economies, societies and labour market.

## 2.1 Youth Education Trends in OIC Countries

Human capital is one of the main determinants of long-term growth. Skilled and well-educated workforce facilitates the absorption of foreign knowledge and technology from other countries through various channels. Investment in human capital accumulation or education has the potential to increase the capacity to obtain and utilize the knowledge developed elsewhere. Since the majority of the OIC member countries need such capacities to promote development, the issue of human capital development remains critical in widening the potentials to achieve long-term sustainable growth.

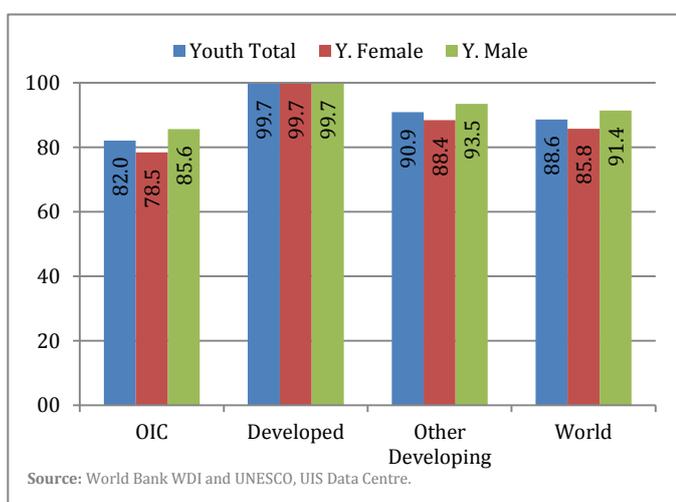
Despite being an important strength of the OIC countries, young population faces considerable challenges in the social and economic life in a significant number of member countries. Inadequate level of education and lack of required skills make it especially difficult for youth in finding jobs in the labour market. In addition to its impact on economic development and productive capacity, long-term unemployment among the young people may trigger some major social problems within the affected communities.

### Youth Literacy Rate

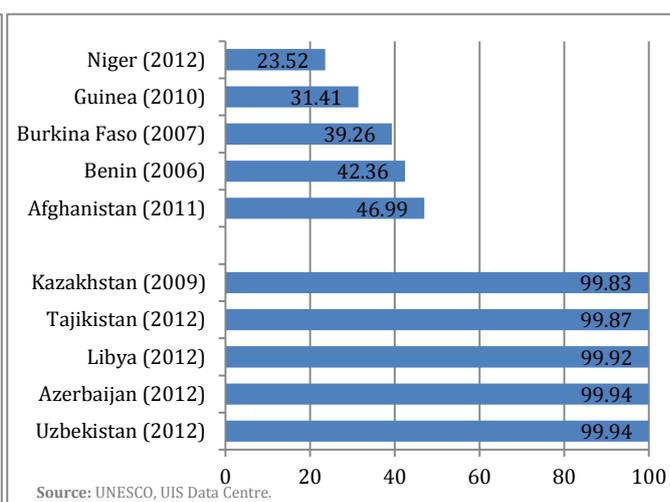
According to the latest available data, literacy rates among youth are comparably better than adult literacy rates in OIC countries. However, average youth literacy rates in OIC countries are still lower than those of non-OIC developing countries and the world (Figure 3). On average, 82% of youth are literate, which is below the world average (88.6%) and average of non-OIC developing countries (90.9%). In many countries, however, illiterate women far outnumber their male counterparts. On average, the gap between young male (85.6%) and female literacy rates (78.5%) in OIC countries is 7.1%, which is higher than the gap in non-OIC developing countries (5.1%) and the world average (5.6%). Gender inequity in education is characterized by, among others, lack of access to and availability of gender sensitive educational infrastructure, materials and training programmes, as well as a high dropout rate amongst secondary school aged girls.

The distribution of OIC countries with respect to literacy rates is more favourable for youth as compared to that of adult population. In majority of the member countries (28 out of 55 OIC countries

**Figure 3: Youth Literacy Rates in Comparison\***



**Figure 4: Lowest and Highest Performing OIC Countries in Youth Literacy Rates**



for which data are available), youth literacy rates are above 90% and 24 countries achieved youth literacy rates of 97% or above. On the other hand, eight member countries have youth literacy rates that are lower than 50%. Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, with youth literacy rate of 99.94%, are the best performing OIC member countries (Figure 4), followed by Libya (99.92%), Tajikistan (99.87%) and Kazakhstan (99.83%). Niger, with a rate of 23.5%, is the country with lowest youth literacy within the OIC community, followed by Guinea (31.4%), Burkina Faso (39.3%), Benin (42.4%) and Afghanistan (47%).

### Higher Education Participation (Tertiary GER)

Figure 5 shows the total numbers of enrolled students in tertiary schools. The total number of tertiary school students in the OIC countries increased more than two-fold from 14.7 million to 33.0 million between 2000 and 2013, based on the most recent data available in each year. As more tertiary school graduates means more qualified, highly skilled workforce, this is a particularly promising development for the OIC community. When compared with non-OIC developing countries and world as a whole, it is observed that the share of OIC member countries in total world tertiary school students has been on the rise.

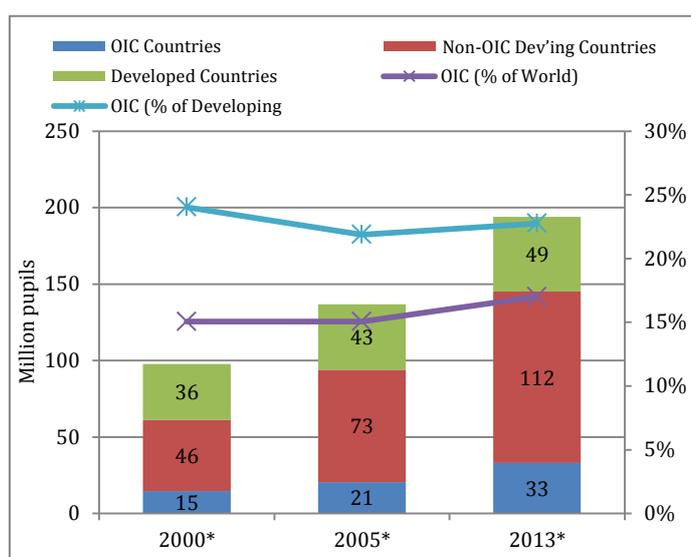
The tertiary school students in the member countries represented 17% of those in the world in 2013, vis-à-vis 15.1% in 2000. A cursory look at the evolvement of their shares in total developing country tertiary students, on the other hand, offers rather a mixed picture. As of 2013, OIC countries accounted for 22.8% (down from 24% in 2000) of total developing country tertiary students.

In terms of tertiary school gross enrolment rates (GER), OIC countries, with an average enrolment rate of 22.6% as of 2013, lagged behind non-OIC developing countries (24.9%) and far behind the developed countries (78%) (Figure 6a). In the same year, the world average GER was 29.4%. According to the most recently available data as of 2013, OIC member countries, namely, Turkey, Albania, Jordan and Kyrgyzstan all recorded GERs above 40.0% (Figure 6b). Yet, in some member countries, namely, Niger, Sierra Leone, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, Afghanistan, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mozambique and Djibouti, the tertiary school GERs are even lower than 5%.

### International Student Mobility

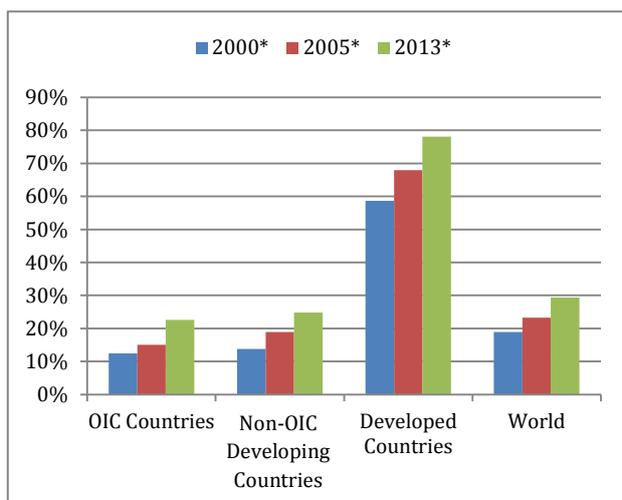
The number of students pursuing studies abroad continues to surge not only because of rising demand for quality education but also due to increasing competition among higher education institutions around the world for the best and brightest minds. International recognition of qualifications and the availability of scholarships, reflecting the demand from both sides, are mainly the leading motivation for increasing mobility. In 2012, more than 4 million students worldwide went abroad to study, up from 2 million in 2000 (UNESCO UIS).

Figure 5: Total Enrolment in Tertiary Schools



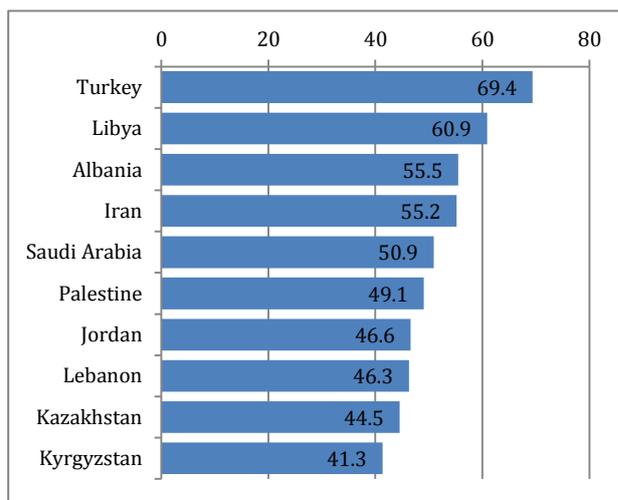
Source: SESRIC; UNESCO; World Bank WDI and World Bank Education Statistics. \* Or latest year

**Figure 6a:** Tertiary School Gross Enrolment Rates



Source: SESRIC; UNESCO; World Bank WDI and World Bank Education Statistics.  
\* Or latest year

**Figure 6b:** Highest Performing OIC Countries in terms of Tertiary School Gross Enrolment Rate (% , 2013\*)

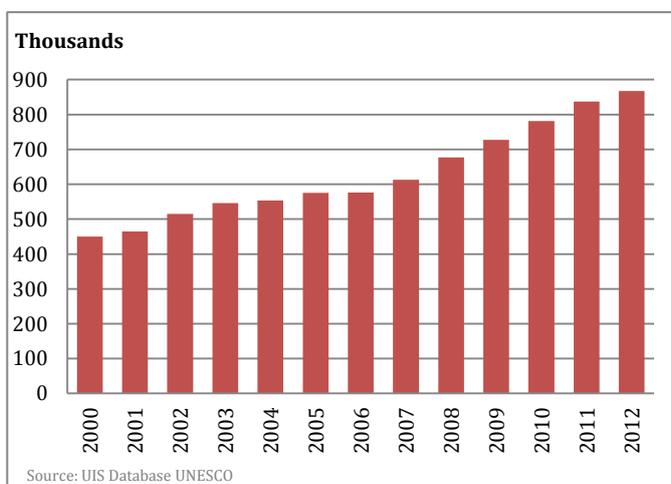


Source: SESRIC; UNESCO; World Bank WDI and World Bank Education Statistics.  
\* Or latest year

Outbound mobility rate is the share of students studying outside to total number of enrolments in the country. As depicted in Figure 7, the number of the students going abroad from OIC countries for tertiary education continuously increased over the period 2000-2012. During this period, the number of students studying abroad almost doubled and reached over 820,000 in 2012. The main reasons for this substantial increase are, among others, the growing number of youth and higher economic growth in the member countries that created opportunities for students to pursue their education at international education institutions.

Despite the considerable increase in the total number of students studying outside their countries, the share of OIC countries in total outbound student mobility did not increase during the same period. In 2000, OIC countries accounted for 25.2% of all international outbound students, which decreased to 24.7% in 2012.

**Figure 7:** Outbound Students Mobility in OIC, Total



Source: UIS Database UNESCO

## 2.2 Educational System Responsiveness to the Changing Needs

Notwithstanding the educational achievements made by the OIC countries over the last decades, 18% of young people in OIC countries are still illiterate, lacking basic numerical and reading skills, and accordingly having reduced likelihood to successfully attach to full and decent jobs. With many young working poor lacking even primary-level education, persistently high levels of youth unemployment and underemployment rates are likely to threaten social inclusion, cohesion and stability. Young people who drop out of school early are vulnerable to unemployment, poverty and involvement in hazardous behaviours.

There are many reasons why young people are dropping out of school, which includes, among others, income poverty, gender, disability, conflicts and wars. Perceived low market returns to education also discourage people with lower education in their decision to continue their education. While it turns to a real challenge to prevent these young people from dropping out of school, alternative learning opportunities to consolidate their basic skills and competencies should also be developed to support youth in their efforts to find a job or engage in other productive work.

In improving the responsiveness of educational system to the changing needs of youth, economies and labour market, enhancing the quality of education and training plays a critical role. Even though access to education improves all around the world, there are serious concerns on the quality side of provisions. Poor quality education particularly affects disadvantaged segments of societies by minimally impacting on their lives and insignificantly contributing to their social participation as well as labour market outcomes, which further exacerbates the observed inequalities, poverty and marginalization. Therefore, further efforts are needed to ensure that education at all levels is respondent to the needs of young people to foster their participation in social and economic life.

On the other hand, in cases where education and training systems do not furnish young people with the basic skills needed to escape poverty and unemployment, non-formal education programmes could be a remedy, even when they continue to receive formal education. Provided often through youth and community based organizations, such programmes can fill the gap by providing learning and skills development opportunities, especially for disadvantaged and marginalized groups. By complementing the formal education, such facilities can improve opportunities for youth to meet the challenging demands of work and life.

Technical and vocational training programmes are also critical in equipping young people with the skills required for decent employment. Otherwise, it will be difficult for young people to find a job, to keep the job or to be promoted in the job. Such programmes will improve problem solving capabilities and adaptability to changing environments as well as their awareness on new technologies and entrepreneurial activities. By supporting life-long learning, such programmes will enhance the employability of young people by enabling them to seize immediate employment opportunities and to adjust new career opportunities.

### **3 Youth Employment: Trends & Challenges**

Unemployment remains one of the most challenging issues across the globe. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Global Employment Trends 2014 report, almost 202 million people were unemployed in 2013 around the world, an increase of almost 5 million compared with the year before, with almost 37% of which being aged between 15 and 24. This reflects the fact that employment is not expanding sufficiently fast to keep up with the growing labour force. Whereas, 23 million people estimated to have dropped out of the labour market due to discouragement and rising long-term unemployment.

The labour market conditions for youth in OIC countries are not exceptionally promising. OIC countries are largely characterised by low participation to labour force and high unemployment rates.

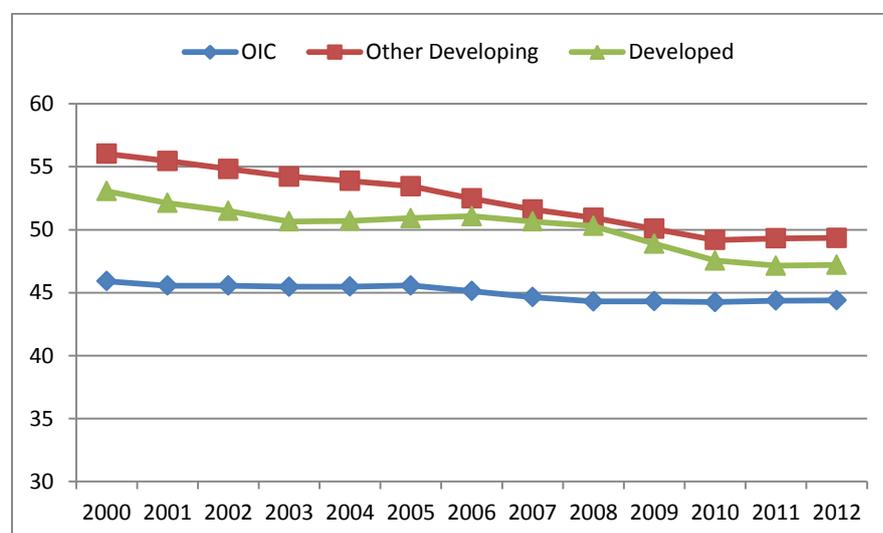
In this context, this section highlights some important indicators of labour market for young population with a view to identifying the main challenges and obstacles in OIC countries.

### 3.1 Youth in the Labour Market and Key Trends

Although unemployment rate is accepted as one of the leading macroeconomic variables critical for the state of an economy, it may not accurately reflect the health of labour market as the definition ignores people who are not actively seeking a job. Therefore, it might be ideal to start with labour force participation rate of youth, which measures the proportion of people aged 15-24 that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or actively searching for a job. It provides an indication of the relative size of the supply of labour available to engage in the production of goods and services.

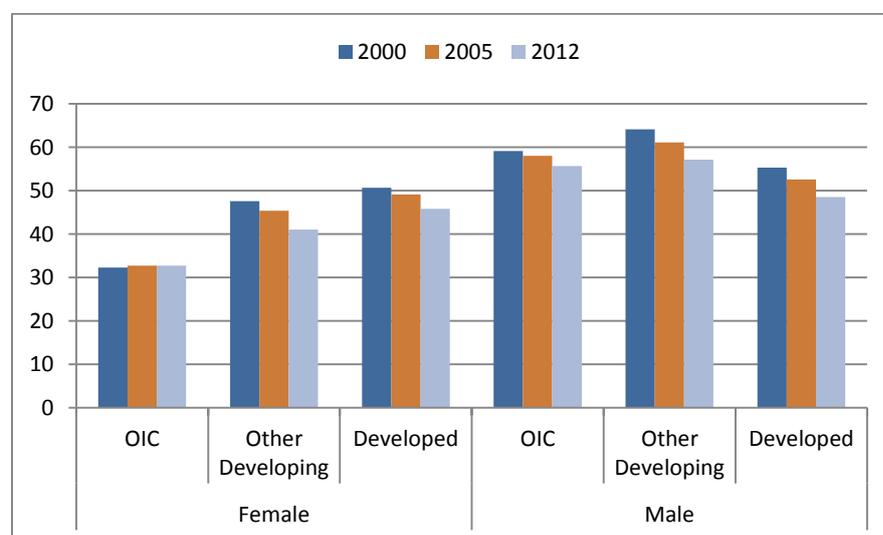
As depicted in Figure 8, a declining trend is observed in the youth labour force participation in all country groups, as more young people, frustrated with their employment prospects, continue to drop out of the labour market. Youth labour force participation in OIC countries decreased from 45.9% in 2000 to 44.4% in 2012, but it decreased even more significantly in other comparison groups, from 53.1% to 47.2% in developed countries and from 56% to 49.4% in other developing countries. The world average has accordingly declined to 48.5% in 2012 compared to its level of 52.9% in 2000. This trend can partly be explained by rising participation of young people to education and vocational training programmes, longer stay in school and tough labour market policies avoiding the work of teenagers.

**Figure 8:** Youth labour force participation (2000-2012)



Source: ILO, Key Indicators of Labour Market (KILM), 8th Edition.

Albeit slow, only increase in youth labour force participation was observed in young female population in OIC countries, which increased from 32.3% to 32.7% (Figure 9). However, despite falling trend in other country groups, youth female participation in OIC countries continues to remain significantly below the averages of other country groups. Male participation, on the other hand, showed a declining trend in all country groups during the period under consideration. It decreased from 59.1% to 55.7% in OIC countries, from 64.1% to 57.1% in other developing countries and from 55.3% to 48.5% in developed countries. Accordingly the male participation in the labour force in the world decreased from 60.9% in 2000 to 56.1% in 2012.

**Figure 9: Youth labour force participation (by Gender)**

Source: ILO, Key Indicators of Labour Market (KILM), 8th Edition.

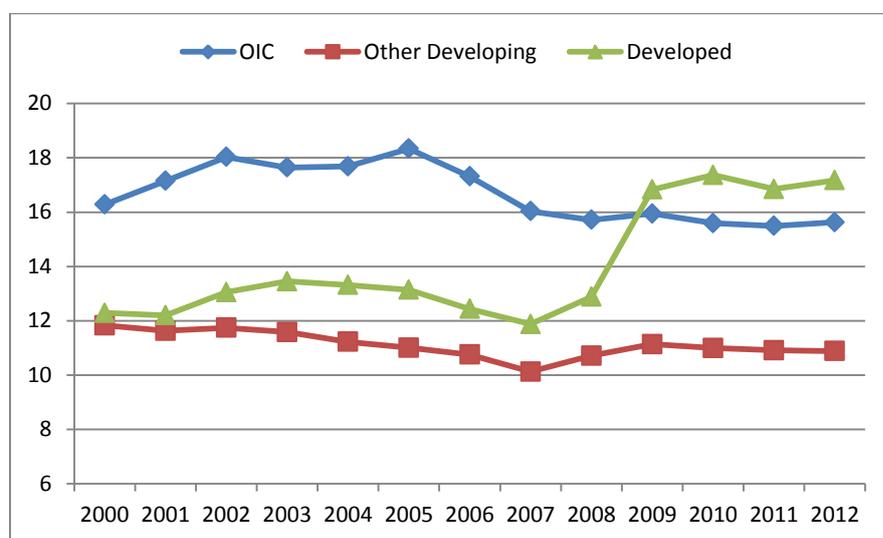
While economic conditions play a major role in large discrepancies observed in OIC countries in participation rates of young men and women, institutional factors such as values, norms and culture are also among critical determinants of gender gap, making it difficult to separate out the effects of different factors on female participation. In such settings, governments and civil society organizations need to promote female participation to labour force and employment through various programmes and activities such as creating educational as well as working conditions that address the challenges stemming from some concerns based on local values.

### Youth Unemployment Rates

According to the latest estimates of ILO, some 74.5 million young people were unemployed in 2013 in the world, with global youth unemployment rate reaching 13.1%, but reaching even higher in the Middle East (27.2%) and North Africa (29.4%) regions. The analysis on youth labour force participation shows that a larger proportion of youth remains inactive in OIC countries compared to other country groups. Despite low participation to labour force, it is important to note that youth in OIC countries suffer from lack of decent job opportunities.

Figure 10 shows that youth unemployment in OIC countries remained constantly above 16% and also well above the averages of other developing and developed countries until the global financial crisis in 2008, but then it fell below 16%. With the crisis, the problem of youth unemployment in developed countries became even more serious compared to that in OIC countries. As of 2012, youth unemployment in OIC countries estimated at 15.6%, in developed countries at 17.2% and in other developing countries at 10.9%.

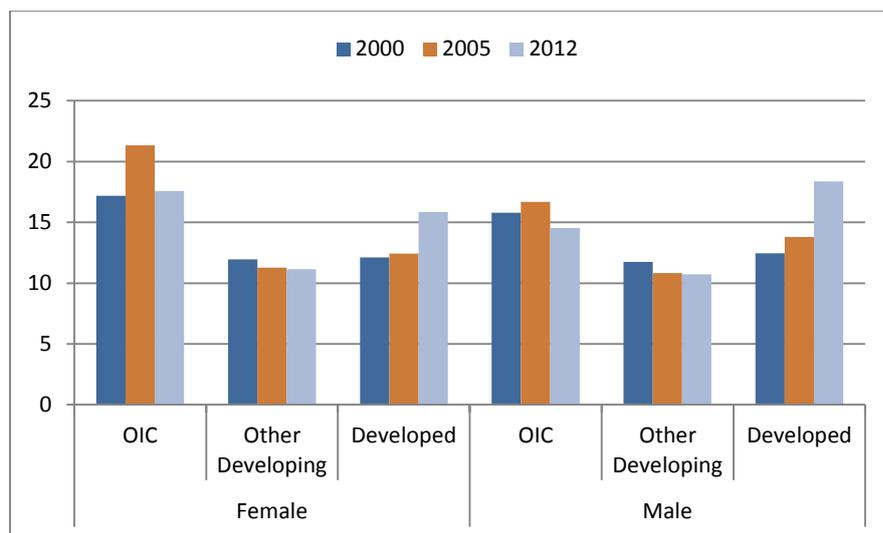
**Figure 10: Youth Unemployment Rates (2000-2012)**



Source: ILO, Key Indicators of Labour Market (KILM), 8th Edition.

Despite some improvement since 2005, female unemployment among young people is highest in OIC countries. It fell to 17.6% in 2012 from its level of 21.3% in 2005 (Figure 11). While female unemployment among youth has been decreasing in other developing countries during the period under consideration, it followed an upward trend in developed countries. As of 2012, it was estimated at 11.1% in other developing countries and 15.8% in developed countries. With respect to male unemployment among youth, it decreased to 14.5% in OIC countries and 10.7% in other developing countries, but increased to 18.4% in developed countries as of 2012.

**Figure 11: Youth Unemployment Rates by Gender**

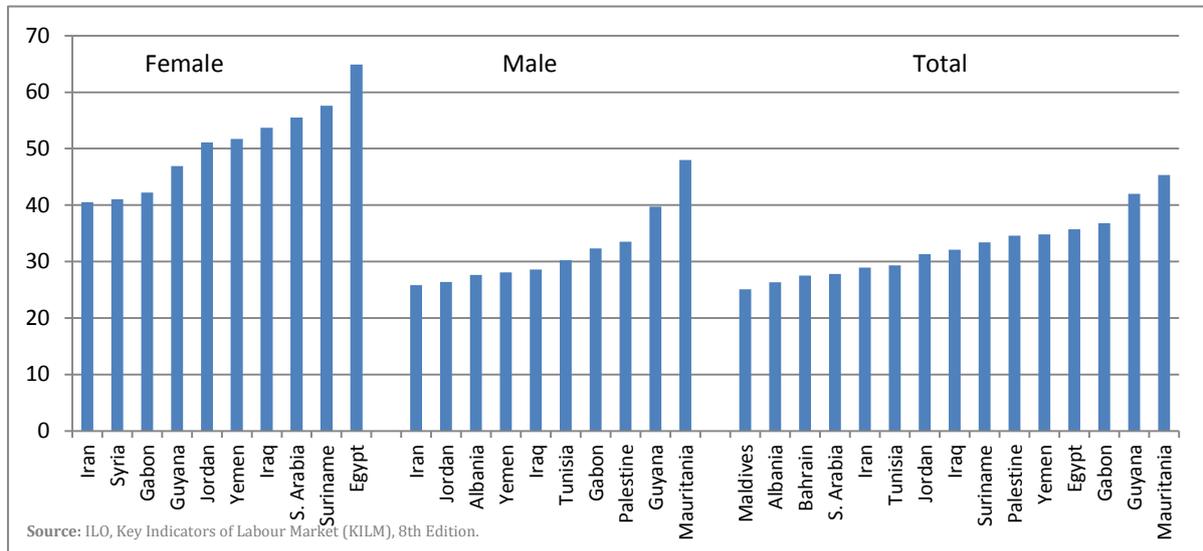


Source: ILO, Key Indicators of Labour Market (KILM), 8th Edition.

There are wide discrepancies in youth unemployment rates across OIC countries. Qatar (1.7%) and Benin (1.8%) are the countries with lowest unemployment rates in 2012, which are also among top three countries in the world. In contrast, the highest youth unemployment rate was estimated in Mauritania with 45.3%, followed by Guyana (42%), Gabon (36.8%), Egypt (35.7%) and Yemen (34.8%). In 24 OIC countries, youth unemployment rate was above 20% and in 33 countries above the world

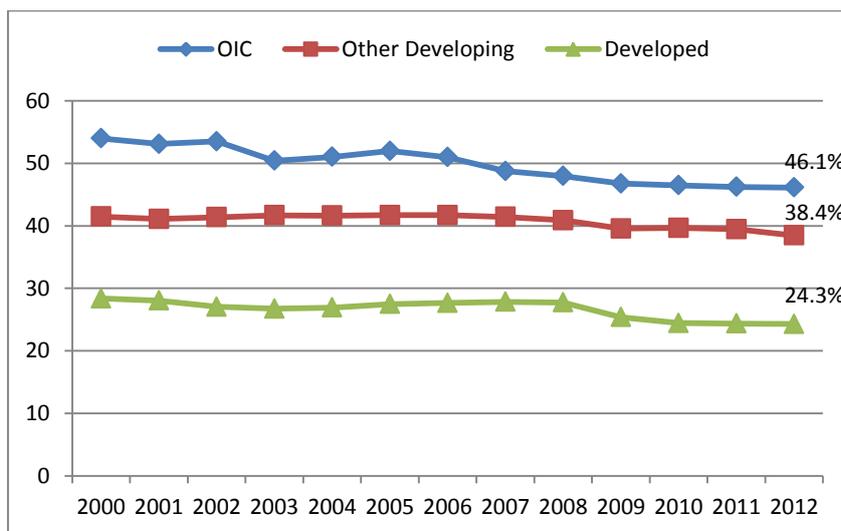
average of 12.9% in 2012. However, female youth unemployment rates reach up to 65% in Egypt and in 17 OIC countries this rate is above 30%, making it a more serious concern in some countries (Figure 12).

**Figure 12:** Countries with Highest Rates of Youth Unemployment



In order to show the relative significance of youth unemployment, their share in total unemployment is depicted in Figure 13. Until 2006, unemployed youth were accounting for more than half of all unemployed people in OIC countries. This share has been decreasing since then and fell to 46.1% in 2012 from its level of 54% in 2000. However, it can still be regarded as a significantly high ratio compared to the levels of 38.4% in other developing countries and 24.3% in developed countries. If almost half of all unemployed are aged between 15 and 24, this should be a major concern for OIC countries.

**Figure 13:** Share of youth unemployed in total unemployed (%)



The critical question is why youth unemployment rates are significantly higher than adult unemployment rates. There are many likely explanations. Firstly, youth are more vulnerable than adults in difficult economic times. Assuming that employers seek employees with past working

experience, the youth who is entering the labour force for the first time will be at a disadvantage and have a harder time in finding employment. Secondly, young people often lack both labour market information and job search experience. Adults, on the other hand, might have the possibility of finding future work through references from previous employers or colleagues and are more likely to know the “right” people. Another possibility is that youth might wait longer to find work that suits their requirements (ILO, 2006).

### 3.2 Transitioning Youth into the Labour Market

Young people typically display lower labour market attachment (including lower job search) and higher unemployment rates. This is largely due to their ongoing engagement in full time education or due to their desire to find a decent job, but also their frequent move from one job to another as part of their investment in human capital. While the possibility of relying on parental support provide them a room to manage the transition less painful, their dissatisfaction with lower wages associated with lower experiences and their stronger preferences for leisure reduce their readiness for quick transition to labour market.

Apart from these frictional reasons, overall macroeconomic circumstances affect the state of youth in the labour market. At the time of economic recession, available job opportunities will diminish and young people will be particularly affected from this situation. They are generally more vulnerable to economic recession due to their lower level of skills and experience as well as lower labour market attachment, but also due to employment protection legislation that does not sufficiently protect the rights of newly hired young people. When their employment prospects deteriorate, young people will tend to respond by further reducing their attachment to labour market and increasing their stay in education. It may also be possible to observe that some frustrated young people involve in hazardous behaviours, including crime and substance abuse.

Whatever the reasons might be, a considerable part of young people, particularly in developing countries, may never complete the transition until their adulthood. The large shares of ‘youth in transition’ will become ‘adult in transition’ and yet another generation of productive potential will remain underutilized. There are also serious gaps in participation rates and transition outcomes between young women and men. In most countries, young women remain much more likely to be neither economically active nor in school, as most young women face a lengthy job search before finally settling into an unsatisfactory job with comparatively lower wages.

In order to improve the transition outcomes, governments should devise effective strategies and policies. As training appears to be positively linked to earnings of young workers, they might focus on establishing incentives for enterprises to provide training for employees, targeting especially those who would not normally receive it. Improving the quality of labour market institutions will facilitate youth’s transition to more satisfactory and secure jobs. These can be public employment services or facilities and programmes within the education system, such as career planning and placements centres at the secondary or tertiary education level. These institutions can also collect and disseminate timely and relevant labour market information in order to ease the policymaking process and transition from school to work. However, it should be noted that the potential for improving employment prospects for young people hinges on the ability of the country to boost the economic growth with active participation of private sector in order to create jobs for people at every level of skills and experience.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the youth unemployment. National circumstances determine policy responses and strategic actions. In general, promotion of youth employment should be considered under a more comprehensive and integrated framework that promotes economic development and employment growth. An overly simplified approach that ignores different individual characteristics, including age, gender, level of education and socio-economic background, will fail to address specific labour market challenges faced by many young people. A good basic education, vocational training or higher education together with initial work experience is critical for successful entry into labour market. An effective strategy to facilitate the transition to work and improve decent work prospects to youth should involve targeted active labour market measures including giving incentives to enterprises to employ young people, promoting youth entrepreneurship and facilitating access to finance.

### **3.3 Key Issues in Reducing Youth Unemployment and Promoting Quality Jobs**

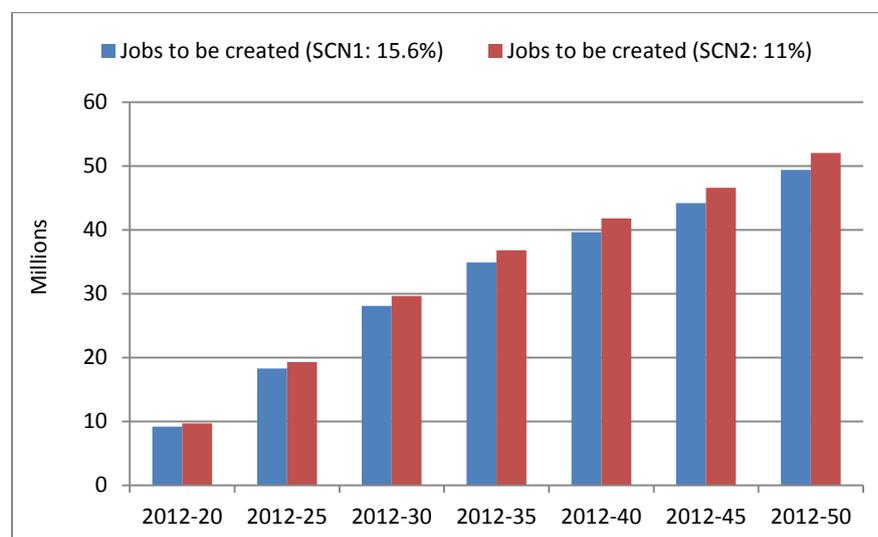
All in all, it is clear that youth unemployment is one of the major economic and social problems that many OIC countries are still facing and requiring urgent attention. Current and prospective challenges of youth unemployment in OIC countries require comprehensive action by involvement of all key stakeholders, including governments, private sector, education institutions and civil society organizations. The causes of unemployment vary across countries depending on the prevailing socio-economic and political conditions of each country, but most critical are insufficient job creation and skill mismatch. The available jobs do not increase proportionately with the increase in population and participation into labour force. The challenge facing many unemployed workers is the lack of skills for the jobs that are likely to be created as the economy grows. The mismatch between the supply of skills and competencies by the labour force and demand by employers causes structural unemployment.

It will be illuminating to see the number of jobs to be created for the youth in order to better grasp the challenge of job creation for young population. Considering the latest population projections, the number of jobs needs to be created for the increasing youth population is estimated under two scenarios. In the baseline scenario, the number of jobs to be created is estimated while keeping the current level of youth unemployment constant (15.6%). In the second scenario, the number of jobs to be created is estimated assuming that OIC countries would reduce the youth unemployment rates to the levels observed in non-OIC developing countries (11%). In both scenarios, labour force participation rate is kept at its current level of 44% constant. The results are shown in Figure 14. From 2012 until 2020, OIC countries need to create an additional 9.2 million jobs for youth and an additional 9 million jobs for every 5 year until 2035. OIC countries need to create almost 40 million jobs until 2040 just to keep the current level of unemployment rate constant.

Given 21.5 million unemployed and 175 million inactive youth population as of 2013, OIC countries will likely experience major challenges in creating additional 9 million jobs for every five years. Developing countries typically experience structural transformation, which requires constant adaptation of skills to the needs of labour market. Higher levels of education do not necessarily improve job prospects and labour market outcomes. More educated youth may not possess the right skills to qualify for the existing and potential job openings, creating further challenges for education and vocational training systems. In order to tackle such challenges, proper labour market information

is required to avoid skill mismatch in the labour market and for effective educational and training systems.

**Figure 14:** Number of job needed to be created



Higher expectations of youth, lack of work experience, low valuation of skills by employers, and inadequate training are also among the major challenges facing millions of unemployed young educated people in finding suitable jobs.

Macroeconomic and developmental policies should pay attention to the problems of youth for better employment generation. Start-up businesses and risk-taking behaviours of young graduates can be supported by governments. Active labour market policies are another important dimension of reducing youth unemployment. While better functioning public employment services and wage and training subsidies can motivate employers to hire young people, vocational training programmes, apprenticeship programmes, entrepreneurship training programmes and some other training programmes can help offset the mismatch of qualifications and skills requirements. Partnerships among governments, business organizations and educational institutions can be instrumental in determining the most appropriate action to be taken at national and local levels for the promotion of decent work for young people. Finally, labour market information and analysis systems can be developed to monitor labour markets and design and implement effective policies.

#### 4 Social Mobility & Inclusion of Youth

Socially speaking, OIC countries are dynamic and rapidly changing with a large population of youth who are in many of these countries experiencing tremendous levels of stress due to limited opportunities for social mobility and due to restrictions on fully participating in social, cultural, economic and political life. This state of affairs leads in many cases to social turmoil and political unrest. This section highlights some social issues related to youth in OIC countries. It starts with social mobility and moves on to social inclusion and youth dependences on tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and technology before concluding with the issue of youth migration.

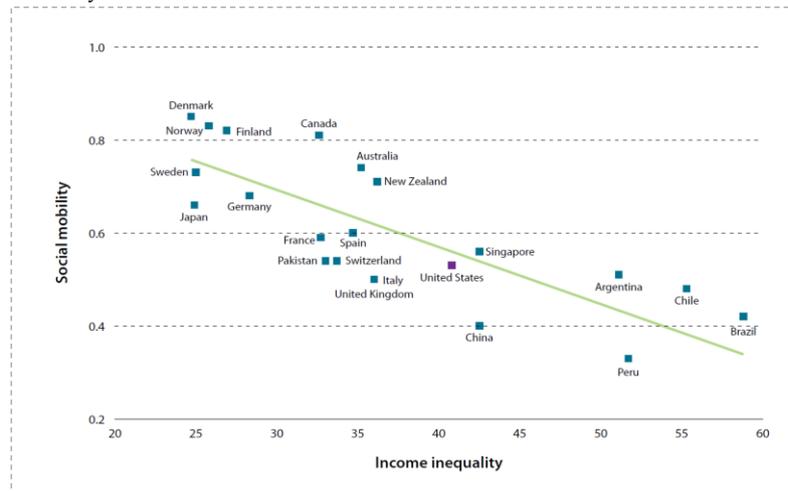
### 4.1 Social Mobility of Youth

Social mobility is the movement of people between social strata in a society. Social mobility can be evaluated using the indicators of education, occupational, wage and family income mobility, but these are based on highly specific datasets, which are not available for OIC countries. Social mobility is correlated with inequality. Countries suffering from higher income inequality tend to have lower social mobility as Figure 15 reveals. OECD (2011) states that rising income inequality “can stifle upward social mobility, making it harder for talented and hard-working people to get the rewards they deserve”.

As shown in Figure 16, OIC countries, as a group, suffer from a serious inequality problem with people being denied access to equal opportunities. The Figure shows that OIC countries fair worse than all other country groups when it comes to equal opportunity. OIC countries score a mediocre 4.3 on the equal opportunity scale (ten being the highest score possible) whereas other developing countries score 5.2, developed countries score 8.4, and the world average is 5.0. Without tackling the inequality problem in OIC countries, it will be very difficult to increase social mobility. However, OIC countries should be careful that policy measures taken to reduce inequality and increase social mobility do not have a negative impact on efficiency and long-term growth.

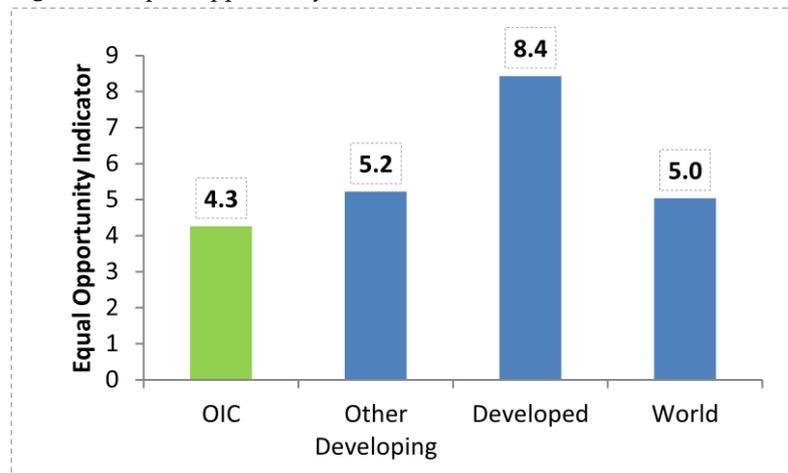
What should be done to improve social mobility in OIC countries? Major factors that determine individual success include inheritable abilities as well as environmental characteristics. Factors such as social norms and work ethics are not directly related to policy issues, but factors affecting human capital formation through various public support programmes in education are highly critical from

**Figure 15:** The Relationship between Income Inequality and Social Mobility



Source: Greenstone et al. (2013).

**Figure 16:** Equal Opportunity



Source: SESRIC Staff Calculation based on BTI Transformation Index 2014. Data available for a total of 128 countries of which 47 are OIC member states

the policy perspective (OECD, 2011). Given the direct linkages between human capital development and labour productivity growth, providing equal opportunities for educational achievement is an important element in promoting social mobility in OIC countries.

Empirical studies of mobility suggest that the transmission of economic status across generations is higher in developing countries than in developed countries (e.g., Solon, 2002). This indicates that social mobility in a country will increase with economic development and improvement of the educational system. Evidence from the Middle East, however, suggests that this may not always be the case. Binzel (2011) documents the profound changes in intergenerational educational and economic mobility in Egypt by providing quantitative, microeconomic evidence for a decline in social mobility among the well-educated youth in Egypt.

A plausible explanation for increased educational attainment but lower social mobility across the Middle East would be the improper functioning of the labour market. Labour markets in the Middle East are characterized by dominant public sector and highly regulated private sector that limit the ability of the labour market to accommodate new talents and to utilize their skills (Binzel, 2011). When increased educational achievement does not translate to corresponding economic outcomes, new generation will be bound by an environment determined by the parental background. It should not be a surprise for youth to show their dissatisfaction in one way or another when well-educated youth do not experience a considerable change in their social status despite their huge investment in education.

In order to improve equality and social mobility, actions should be taken not only during transition from school to work, but efforts should be initiated right in the early years of an individual life and followed up throughout his/her life, as recently developed by the UK Government. Literature suggests that children from poorer settings who have shown early signs of high ability tend to fall back relative to more advantaged children who have not performed so well (Feinstein, 2003). Poorer children generally have lower birth weight, poorer health and behavioural conditions, as well as lower personal, social and emotional development. Therefore, early intervention is crucial in ensuring equal opportunities for fulfilling people's true potentials.

During the school years, children develop the skills, qualifications and aspirations that are crucial in determining their future life paths. There are large gaps to emerge and widen in educational attainment and achievements of children from diverse background during this period. During transition to work, many young people are failing to achieve their potential, with some falling out of education, employment and training altogether. Young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) can experience long-term negative effects in their social status. In the labour market, people tend to progress to better jobs with better earnings as they become more experienced. However, some young adults, particularly the lower skilled, have little chance to progress and are given few second chances to succeed through learning new skills. Particularly women and youth with inferior skills face particular challenge in finding a job or getting competitive salaries over their working life (UK Government, 2011).

In this perspective, in order to improve social mobility in OIC countries, a comprehensive approach should be developed that encompasses the critical stages of individual development from early childhood care to schooling and from higher education to transition to work and progress in the labour market. This requires attention and action from all relevant stakeholders. OIC Governments

should ensure equal access to opportunities, civil society organizations should support disadvantaged people to succeed, education institutions should consider the diverse background of students in their efforts to get good quality education and labour market players should be flexible in giving a second chance to those who fail to adapt to working environment.

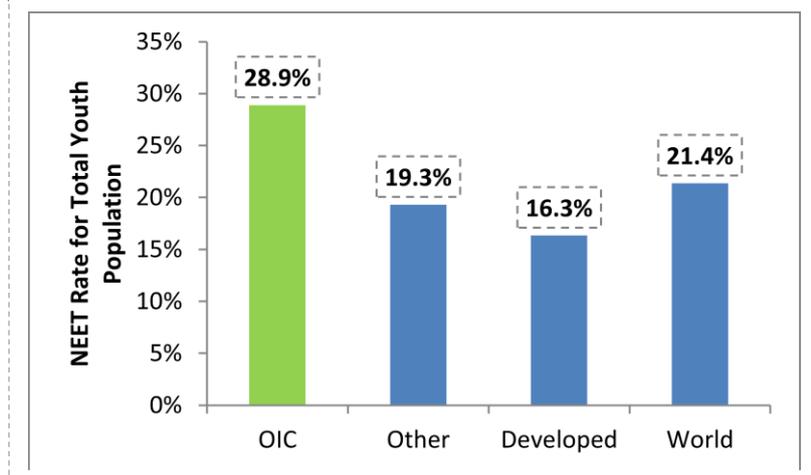
#### 4.2 Inclusion of Youth in Society

Social inclusion is a process in which individuals or entire communities gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and political life of their societies. While most of the literature focuses on the economic dimension of youth inclusion, we strongly believe that this single dimensional focus is not valid for OIC countries and instead we will consider social inclusion of youth through both the economic and political dimensions.

From the economic dimension, the best protective measure against youth exclusion is to maximize youth participation in education and in the labour force and to maximize the opportunity for youth in fulfilling their aspirations for buying a home and establishing a family. However, a growing percentage of youth in OIC

countries are not able to fulfil those aspirations. The reason for this lays in the fact that 28.9% of youth in OIC countries are excluded from education, employment and training as shown in Figure 17. The NEET rate (Youth who are not in education, employment and training) for OIC countries is higher than that observed in other developing countries (19.3%), developed countries (16.3%) and the world (21.4%).

**Figure 17:** Youth who are not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)



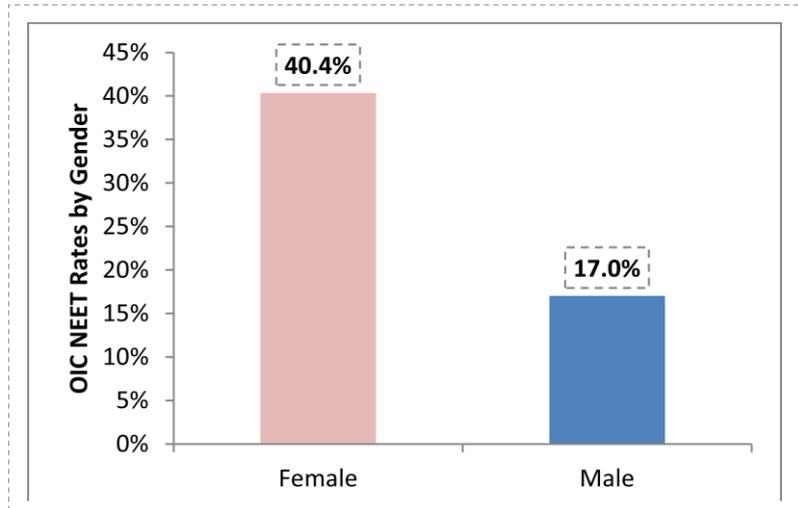
Source: SESRIC Staff Calculation based on World Bank using the most recent data up to year 2012. Data available for a total of 45 countries of which 8 are OIC member states (Benin, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Mali, Togo, Turkey, and Yemen)

Youth, however, is not a homogeneous group. Within youth ranks there are groups that are highly vulnerable and subject to social exclusion such as women. As Figure 18 reveals the NEET rate for young women in OIC countries (40.4%) is more than double that for young men (17%).

Another youth group that is vulnerable and subject to exclusion is youth living in rural areas. The percentage of OIC population living in rural areas is 45.9 (SESRIC staff calculations for year 2013 based on World Bank) and youth in rural area experience higher levels of poverty, and lesser access to: technology and telecommunication infrastructure, education opportunities, and the labour market.

Overall, as shown in Figure 19, political participation in OIC member countries is still weak. As a group, they recorded a low score of 4.7 in terms of political participation index (highest possible score is 10) while other developing countries score 6.3, developed countries 8.7, and the world average is 5.9. The same fact can also be seen when assessing political and social integration. OIC countries score a low 4.3 on the political and social integration index, whereas, other developing countries score 5.4, developed countries score 7.9 and the world average is 5.2 (Figure 20).

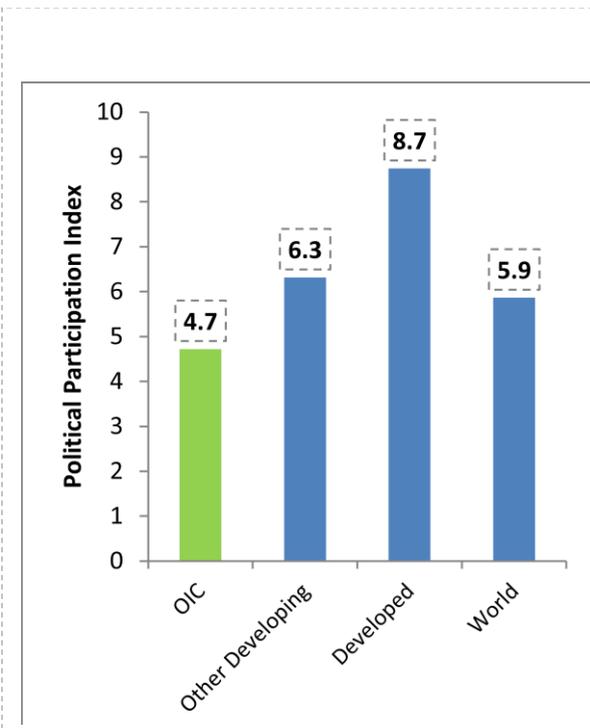
**Figure 18: OIC Youth NEET by Gender**



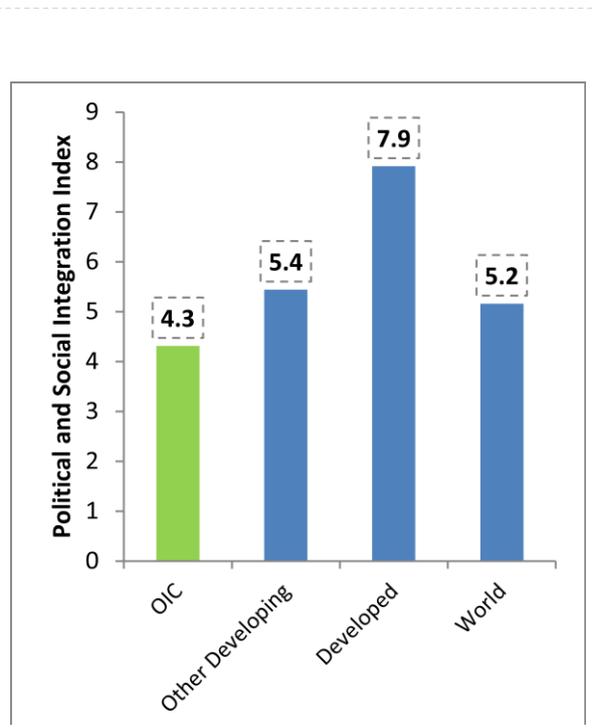
Source: SESRIC Staff Calculation based on World Bank using the most recent data up to year 2012. Data available for a total of 45 countries of which 8 are OIC member states (Benin, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Mali, Togo, Turkey, and Yemen)

The economic and political dimensions of youth inclusion in society are highly inter-linked. Governments are, therefore, advised to recognize the importance of adopting a multi-dimensional approach to addressing the issue of youth inclusion in society. On the economic front: OIC countries need to improve youth access to employment, education and training. In particular; youth without university degrees and who are not in education, employment, or training must be given access to

**Figure 19: Political Participation**



**Figure 20: Political & Social Integration**



Source: SESRIC Staff Calculation based on BTI Transformation Index 2014. Data available for a total of 128 countries of which 47 are OIC

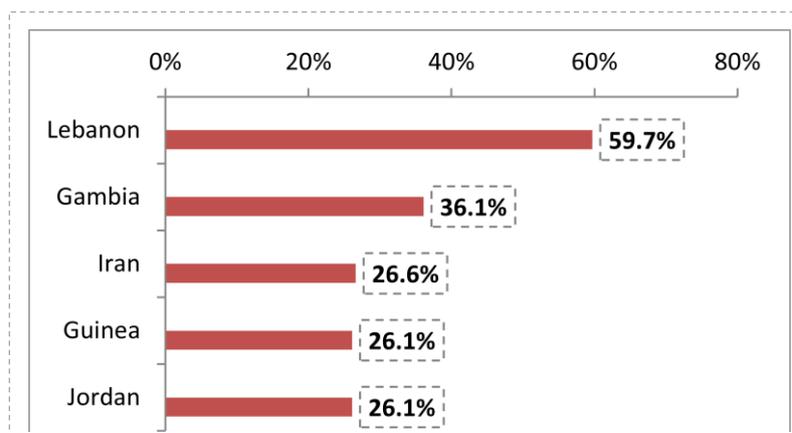
programs tailored to their needs and to the needs of the labour market. On the political front: new policies and initiatives should be taken and geared towards enabling greater youth participation in political and socio-economic decisions with a view to rebuilding trust between youth and the public institutions. Furthermore, the challenge of youth inclusion in society should not be left to the government alone. The government, private sector, NGOs and youth themselves should work as partners when it comes to issues related to youth inclusion in society.

### 4.3 Youth Dependencies on Tobacco, Alcohol, Drugs, and Technology

#### Tobacco

Among youth, the short-term health consequences of smoking include respiratory and non-respiratory effects, addiction to nicotine, and the associated risk of other drug use. Long-term health consequences of youth smoking are reinforced by the fact that most young people who smoke regularly continue to smoke throughout adulthood (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1994). Rate of tobacco products use among OIC youth is 14.7%, which is slightly higher than the world average 14.3% (SESRIC staff calculations for year 2010 based on WHO statistics). The epidemic of using tobacco products among youth is not homogenous throughout OIC countries with certain countries registering alarming rates as depicted in Figure 21. Over the years, OIC member countries strived hard and took various legislative and administrative initiatives to implement the measures prescribed by the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO-FCTC). As of September 2013, 53 OIC member countries are signatories of the WHO-FCTC. 35 out of 41 member countries with data have comprehensive legislation to control tobacco use and 47 out of 56 members with data have a national tobacco control agency (SESRIC, 2013a).

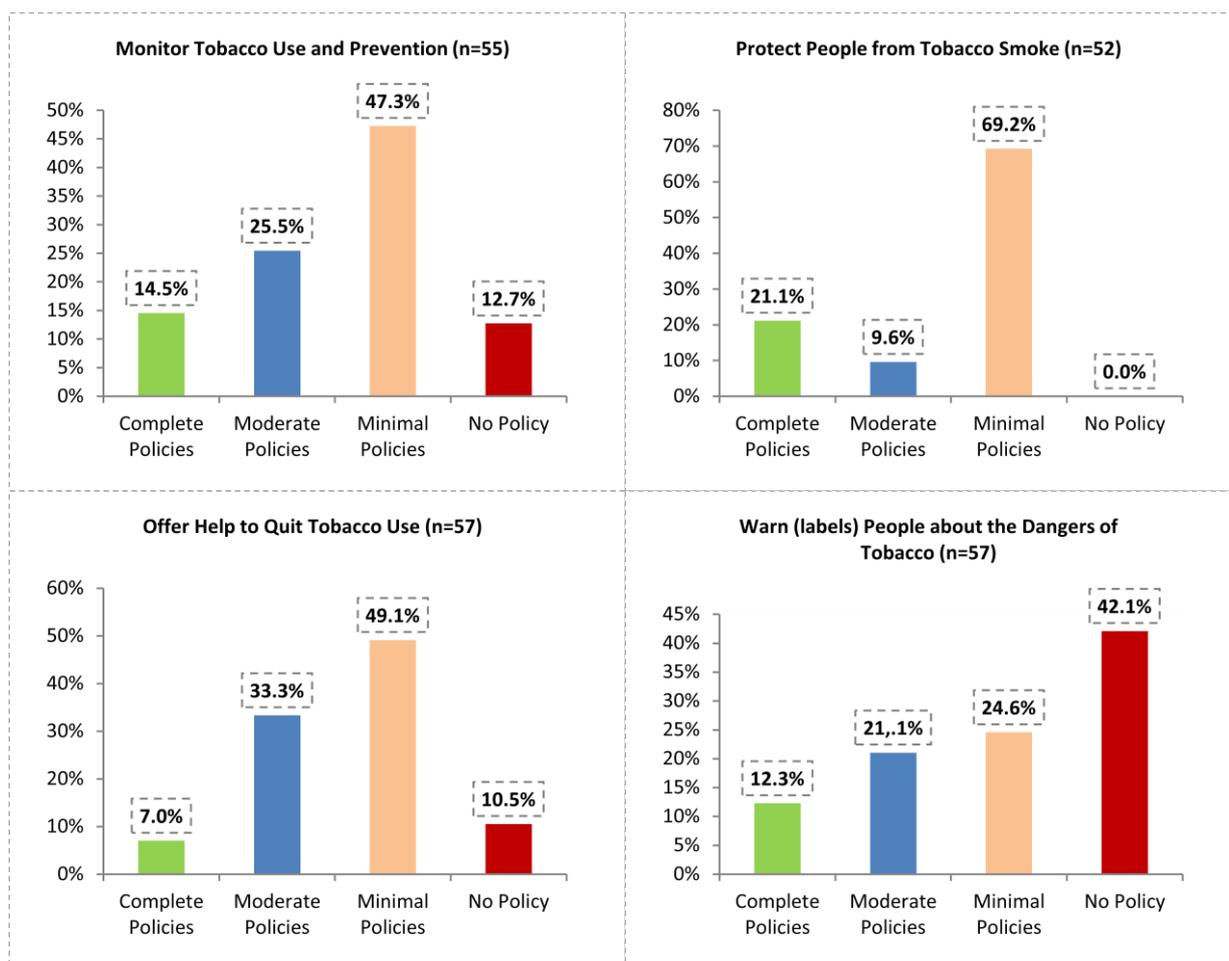
Figure 21: Top 5 OIC Countries in Youth Using Tobacco Products, 2010



Source: SESRIC Staff Calculation based on WHO

In spite of the above, OIC countries still have a long way to go in combating the use of tobacco products by the general population as a whole and by youth in particular as evidenced in the state of “MPOWER” measures<sup>1</sup> implementation in OIC countries. Figure 22 reveals that only 14.5% of OIC countries have complete policies for the monitor of tobacco use and prevention. Only 21.1% of OIC countries have complete policies for protecting people from tobacco smoke. A mere 7.0% of OIC countries have complete policies for the offer of help to quit tobacco use and only 12.3% of OIC countries have complete policies for warning people about the dangers of tobacco.

<sup>1</sup> MPOWER is a policy package introduced by the World Health Organization (WHO) to assist in the country-level implementation of effective interventions to reduce the demand for tobacco.

**Figure 22:** State of MPOWER Measures Implementation in OIC Countries

Source: WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, 2013

## Alcohol

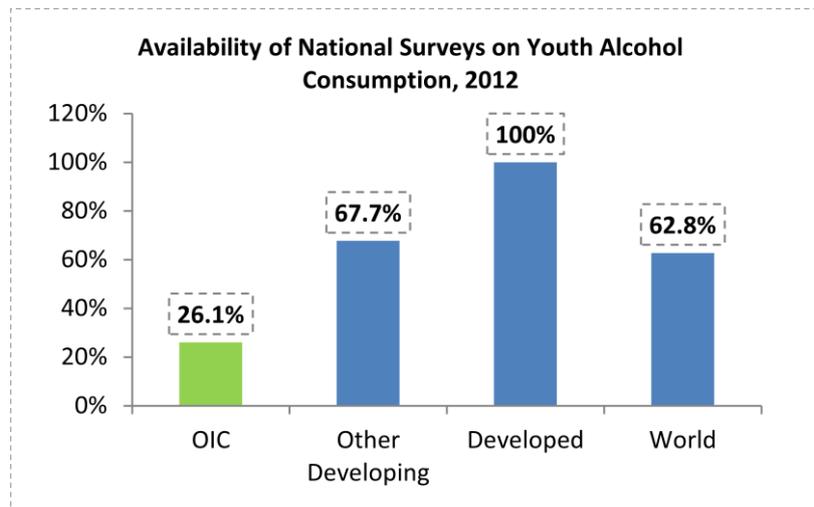
There is a very limited data on alcohol consumption among youth in OIC countries where only 26.1% of OIC countries having national surveys on youth alcohol consumption compared to 67.7% in other developing countries, and 100% in advanced countries (see Figure 23). However, we can assume that the rate of alcohol consumption among youth in OIC countries is low compared with other country groups. The reason behind our assumption is the fact that in Islamic countries the consumption of alcohol is considered a deviation from the teachings of the holy Quran and Islam and that the consumption of alcohol is associated with a strongly negative social stigma. Our assumption is backed by the findings of the World Health Organization that states “consumption is highest in countries in Eastern Europe where total adult per capita consumption ranges from 15 to 21 litres per year, and is lowest in Northern Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, South Central Asia, South- East Asia and the Indonesian islands where the majority of the population abstains (WHO, 2010).”

## Drugs

For the above mentioned religious and social reasons the use of illicit drugs among youth in OIC countries is limited when compared with other country groups as illustrated in Figure 24. In spite of this, OIC countries must keep a watchful eye on the consumption of alcohol and use of drugs among youth. Most OIC countries are dynamic and rapidly changing with a large population of youth who

are experiencing tremendous levels of stress. This could potentially lead to an increase of alcohol consumption and drug use among youth. Our concern is not misplaced and the tramadol story in Egypt and Gaza (Fawzui, 2011) and the Bonzai story in Turkey justify our concerns. For this reason OIC countries are recommended to take measures to reduce demand for drugs, reduce supply, counter money-laundering and promote collaboration between public institutions, NGO, and society in the fight against drugs.

**Figure 23: National Surveys on Youth Alcohol Consumption, 2012**



Source: SESRIC Staff Calculation based on WHO. Data available for a total of 172 countries of which 46 are OIC member states

### Technology

While new technology tools (i.e. internet, smart phones, tablets) offer youth opportunities for learning, communicating, entertainment and skill growth; they also may lead to technology addiction which is the habitual compulsion to engage in using technology instead of addressing life's problems (Young & de Abreu, 2010). Some researchers have associated the excessive use of these new technology tools with addiction since many of the behaviours resemble the behaviour associated with drug and alcohol use (Byun et al., 2008.)

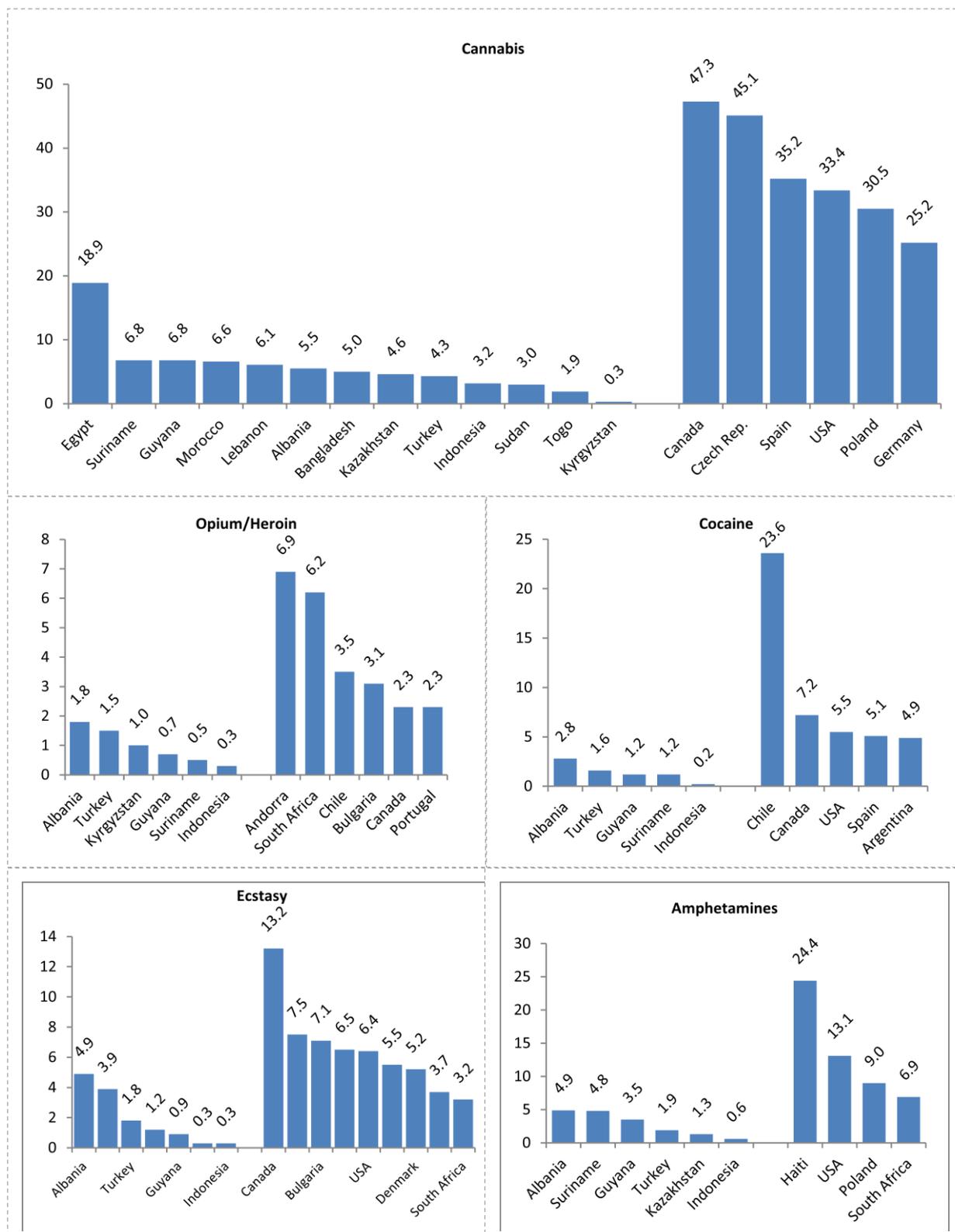
In OIC countries few studies exist regarding youth addiction on technology but these few studies shed some light on the issue. One study found UAE youth spending 9.9 hours on average a day with media – more time than they sleep. The same study found that UAE youth spending as much time on the internet as they do in the combined activities of reading magazines, newspapers and books (Walters et al., 2005). Another study found that 40% of UAE youth are addicted to their usage of technology and spend almost 10 hours a day on social and other media (Hashem & Smith, 2010.)

The challenge posed by these new technology tools for OIC countries lays in ensuring that youth are using these new technology tools responsibly and productively. This requires educational leaders and parents to consider the potential use and potential abuse of these new technology tools and provide a well-defined structure for the adoption of technology by OIC youth that will result in healthy technology related habits.

## 4.4 Youth Migration

To the best of our knowledge, there are no studies that document youth migration in OIC countries. Though the literature on youth migration in general is scarce, the UN World Youth Report (2013) states that “*Young migrants constitute a relatively large proportion of the overall migrant population.*” Accordingly, total migration statistics can be used as an approximation for youth migration statistics.

**Figure 24: Drugs Use among Youth (% who ever used, 2011 or latest data)**



SESRIC (2013b) estimates the number of OIC international emigrants to reach 60 million in 2015. This is a significant number and can be explained by the “Push – Pull – Facilitation” model proposed by SESRIC (2014a). Push factors are factors driving people out of their country of origin, pull factors are

factors attracting people to the country of destination, and facilitation factors are factor facilitating the immigration process from the country of origin to the country of destination. One of the major push factors is the lack of inclusion of OIC youth in society (see Section 4.2). Other push factors include: low wages, unemployment and underemployment, poor working conditions, political instability (such as civil wars in Syria, Iraq, South & West Sudan, Afghanistan, etc.), poor governance, lack of freedom, discrimination in appointments, corruption, and poverty. Pull factors include: higher income, better working conditions, better employment prospects, higher living standards, freedom, and political stability. Facilitation factors include: globalization which has increased people mobility across country boundaries, internationalizations of professions and professional markets which has also led to an increase in the level of people mobility as documented in the works of Carr et al. (2005), and advances in the information and communication technology. Advances in the information and communication technology (ICT) affects youth more than the general population due to the higher adoption of ICT by youth (see anecdotal evidence provided in Section 4.3.4). ICT provides easy access to information about employment opportunities abroad and easy access to cheap communications (i.e. Skype, WhatsApp, Viber, etc.). Also social networks (such as Facebook) in particular are playing an important role in shaping the migration process of youth by facilitating their immigration to locations where members of their network reside.

The effects of migration are complex, difficult to quantify, and are a subject to controversy. Numerous articles claim that immigration has positive effects on sending countries (see Commander et al. 2004, Docquier & Rapoport 2012, and Gibson & McKenzie 2011). These articles build their claims on the premises that immigration is accompanied by remittances to the sending country that serves as a boost to the economy, increased trade as a result of diaspora activities, expertise and know how brought by returning emigrants, and a positive effect on human capital accumulation due to people striving to achieve high educational levels and professionalism with the hope of emigrating. The above literature about the benefits of immigration for sending countries can be best described as being theoretical, based on static partial equilibrium analysis or anecdotal evidence (see SESRIC 2014a for a detailed discussion on this issue).

Youth who are left behind by migrating parents are highly affected by immigration. The majority of OIC countries have traditional and conservative values where the family is considered the corner stone of society. The role of guiding youth is performed by families and the absence of one of the parents has serious consequences on the social, psychological and emotional development of youth and on their transition to adulthood. Furthermore, youth left behind their migrating parents have to assume responsibilities previously assumed by their parents. This is especially true for the elder sons and daughters and these added responsibilities have the potential to affect the academic performance of youth and in extreme cases lead to their exit from schooling.

Addressing the effects of migration on youth requires OIC countries to consider the push and pull factors described earlier in this section. Of course migration is a fact of life throughout human history and will continue. Thus for youth who have already migrated or will migrate, OIC countries need to create modalities through which emigrants can be involved in their country's development while they are abroad. In this regard three mechanism stand out: First, OIC countries need to establish diaspora networks with the objective of securing effective communications and exchange of ideas between emigrants and their peers back home, this in turn, will ensure that emigrants contribute to the

economic and social development of their home countries. Second, OIC countries need to encourage the transfer of knowledge and expertise possessed by emigrants. Third, OIC countries need to develop trade association with participation from emigrants and their counterparts in the home country. The objective of these trade associations is to maximize the benefits of having a well-connected diaspora on trade and business opportunities for the home country. As for the youth that have been left behind by migrating parents, OIC countries need to identify these youth as “*at risk and vulnerable group*” and develop programs targeting them at both the school level and community level with the objective of providing them guidance and ensuring their academic success.

## 5 Youth & Mental Health

Youth are at greater risk of a range of mental-health conditions as they transition from childhood to adulthood (Kessler et al, 2005) and these mental health conditions negatively impact youths’ development, quality of life and ability to fully participate in their communities (Fisher and de Mello, 2011). This is why it is paramount that decision makers in OIC countries develop policies, legislations, and plans to improve the state of mental health, allocate resources to establish mental health facilities and build the capacity of mental health human resources, and provide mental health services for youth who are in need. The following subsections present the current state of mental health policies, facilities, human resources and services in OIC countries and discuss the factor affecting mental health of youth in OIC countries.

### 5.1 State of Mental Health Policies, Facilities, Human Resources and Services

#### Mental Health Policies, Legislations, and Plans

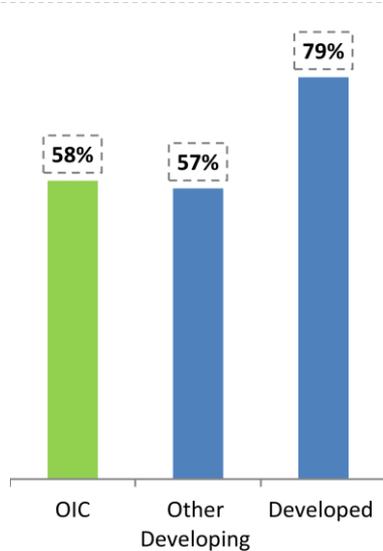
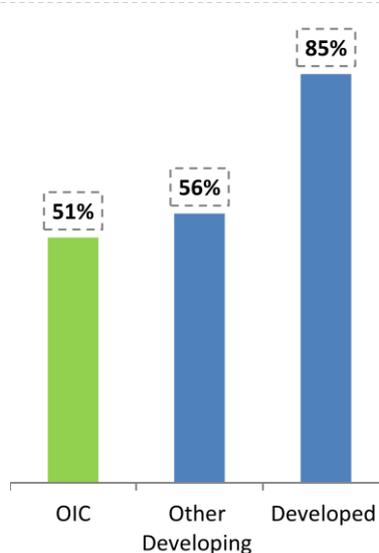
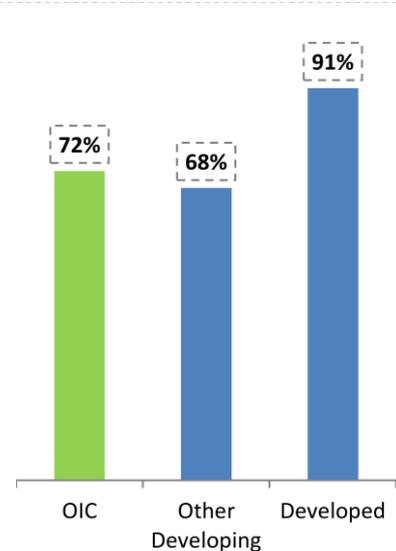
In 58% of OIC countries a mental health policy exists. This percentage is comparable to other developing countries (57%) but it falls far short from developed countries where 79% of countries have a mental health policy (see Figure 25.). Similarly, mental health legislation is available in 51% of OIC countries compared to 56% in other developing countries and 85% in developed countries (see Figure 26). In terms of the availability of a mental health plan, 72% of OIC countries have a mental health plan compared to 68% of other developing countries and 91% of developed countries (see Figure 27). These figures show that OIC countries have a large room to improve the state of mental health. In this regard the OIC can play an important advocacy role in ensuring that OIC member countries that still do not have a mental health policy or legislation or plan do develop one.

#### 5.1.2 Mental Health Facilities

Figure 28 shows the availability of mental health outpatient facilities, mental health day treatment facilities, community residential facilities and mental hospitals in OIC member countries in a comparison manner with other country groups. It is obvious from Figure 28 that there is a significant lack of mental health facilities in OIC countries where they are not only lagging behind the developed countries in this important area, but also seriously still lagging behind other developing countries.

#### 5.1.3 Mental Health Human Resources

The number of psychiatrists, nurses, social workers and psychologists working in the mental health sector is shown in Figure 29. With the exception of social workers, the number of mental health

**Figure 25:** Availability of Mental Health Policy**Figure 26:** Availability of Mental Health Legislation**Figure 27:** Availability of Mental Health Plan

Source: WHO, 2011. Data available for a total of 179 countries of which 53 are OIC member states

professional staff in OIC countries is significantly lower than that available in developed countries and seriously less than that of other developing countries.

#### 5.1.4 Mental Health Services

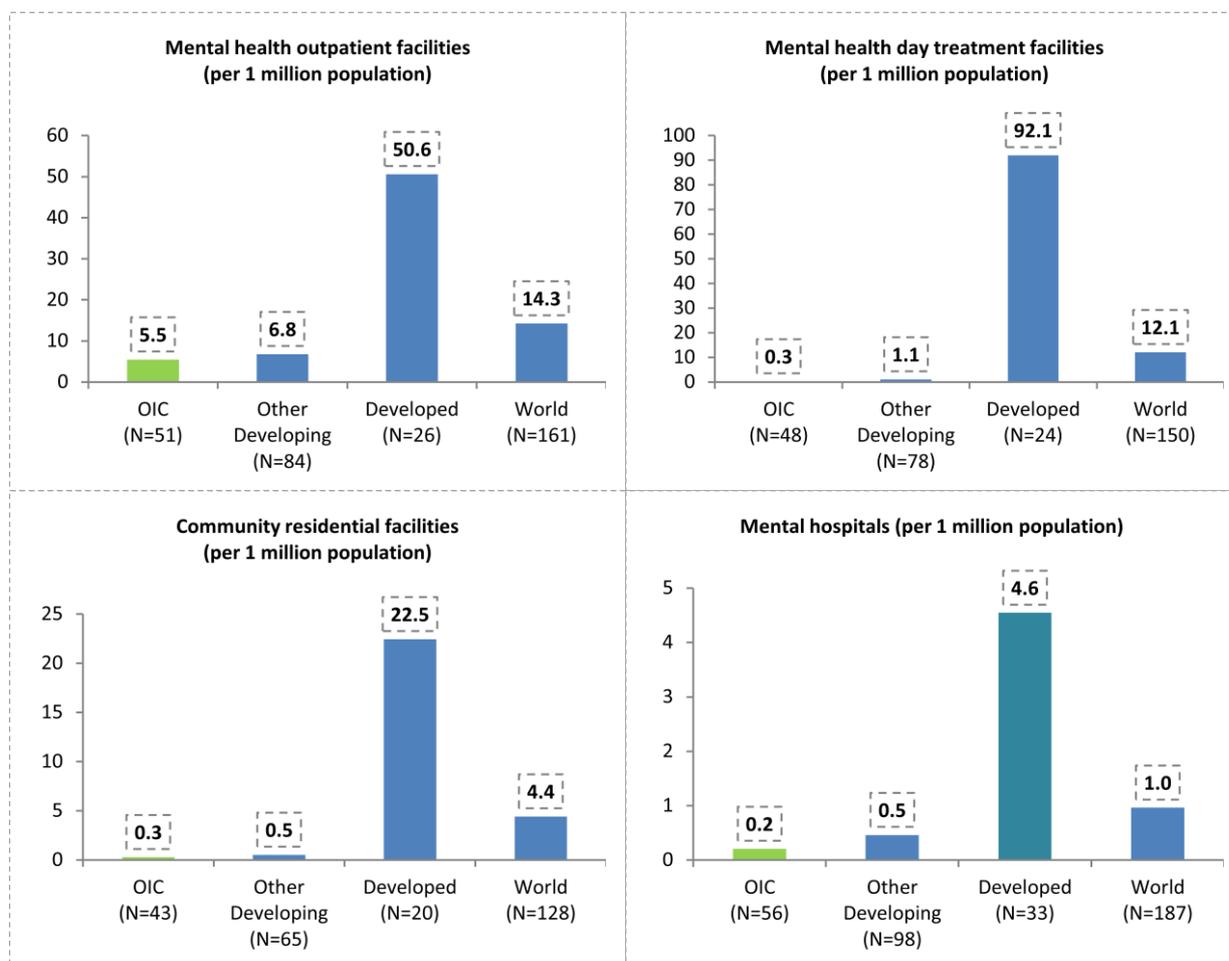
The extent of mental health services for victims of violence in OIC member countries can be described as “large scale” in only 38% of OIC countries while in 44% of OIC countries the extent of mental health services for victims of violence is limited and 18% of OIC countries offer no services at all. These percentages compares poorly with both developed and other developing countries as Figure (16) reveals.

## 5.2 Mental Health of Youth

As the previous section demonstrates; the weak state of mental health policies, facilities, human resources and services in OIC countries leaves youth with little chance at rehabilitation and social integration. This in turn leads to behavioural risks such as substance use, hazardous behaviour and violence (Patel et al., 2007). The result is that a high percentage of youth with mental health problems end up breaking the law and finding themselves in prison. As a matter of fact the vast majority of young offenders suffer from some mental health condition (Glaser et al., 2001.)

Due to cultural reasons many youth in OIC countries tend to express their mental problems not as a psychological issue but in terms of physical symptoms. Their objective is to avoid stigma associated with mental illness. Youth are more impacted by stigma and the feeling of embarrassment hence preventing them from seeking help which in turn leads to significant barriers to mental health service delivery for youth. The issue of stigma is made worse by the lack of adequate mental health services in OIC countries. In such a setting, a vicious cycle is formed; stigma creates barriers to mental health

**Figure 28: Mental Health Facilities**

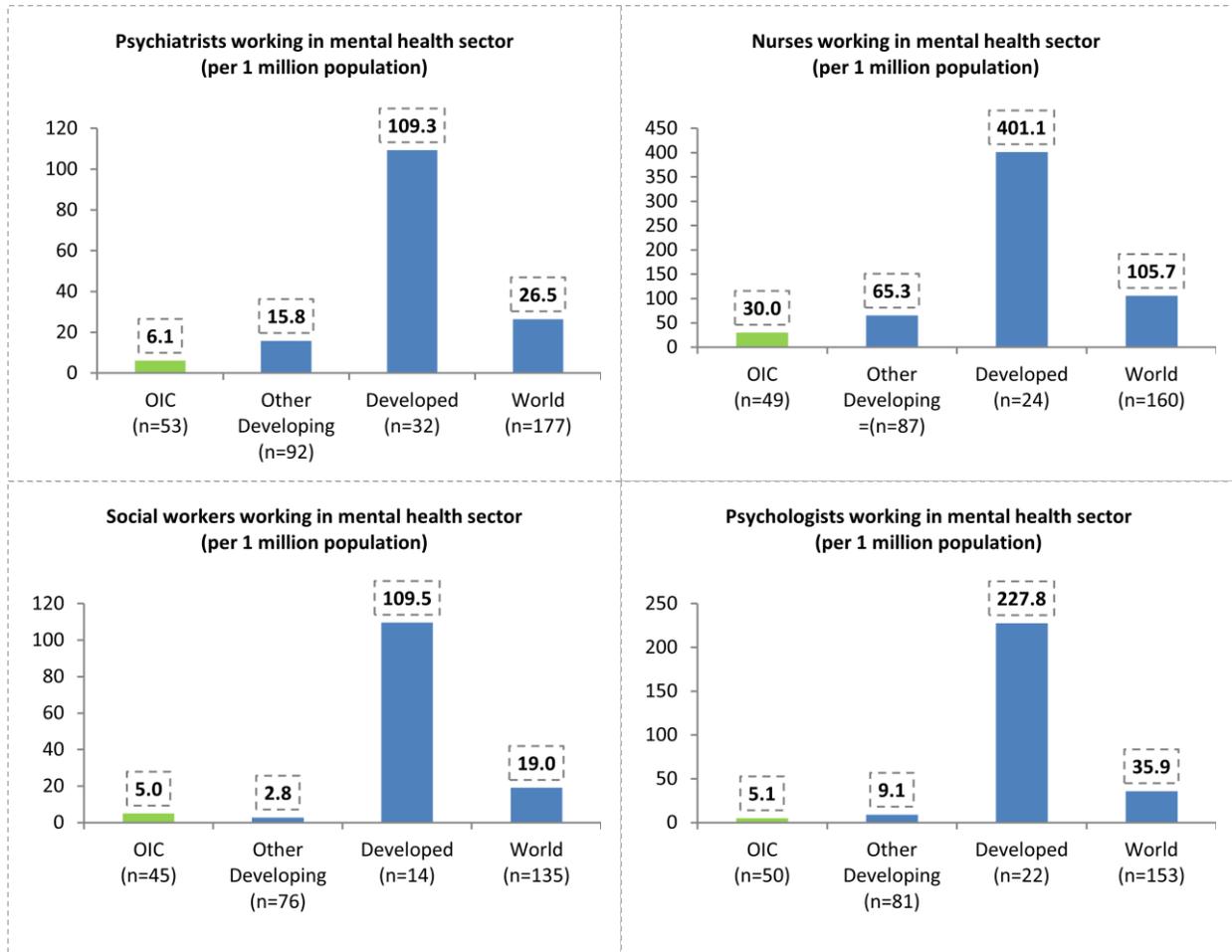


Source: SESRIC Staff Calculations based on WHO, 2011.

service delivery for youth while the lack of adequate mental health services for youth amplifies the problem of stigma.

Another factor, which is negatively affecting mental health of youth in OIC countries, is war and conflict. According to the Human Security Report Project (HSRP), during the period 1946-2005, 53 OIC member countries have spent a total of 621 years in conflicts, or 11.7 years per country. Almost 3 million people have died in OIC countries during these conflicts, or more than 4,600 per conflict. This average is almost the same for 107 non-OIC countries with 11 years of conflict (SESRIC, 2014b) Exposure to war and conflict remains one of the greatest risk factors for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other mental-health conditions among adolescents (Attanayake et al. 2009; Barenbaum et al., 2004). The incidence of PTSD among children and adolescents affected by conflict (including refugees and displaced people) has ranged from 25 per cent to 75 per cent across studies (Dyregrov and Yule, 2006.) Furthermore; in conflict settings, children and adolescents often have disproportionately higher rates of morbidity and mortality compared with adults (Attanayake et al., 2009; Bellamy, 2005).

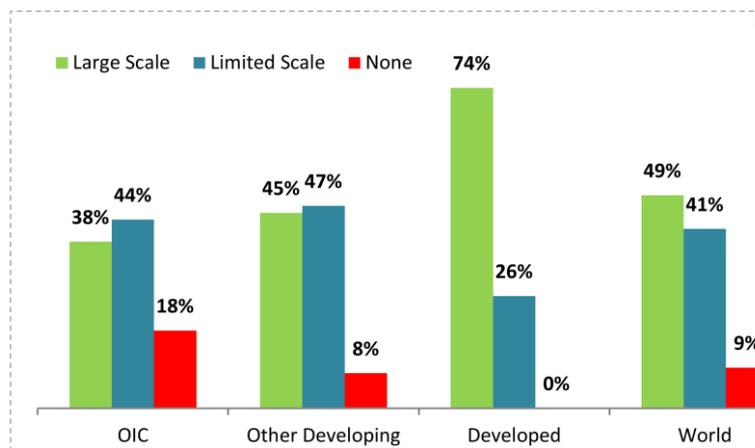
**Figure 29: Mental Health Human Resources**



Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on WHO, 2011.

On the positive side, OIC countries benefit from an important factor which is Islam. The majority of people in OIC countries consider their selves religious; a fact highlighted by the 2010 Gallup poll results, in which about 90 percent of the adults residing in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member countries consider religion an important part of their daily lives (Crabtree, 2010). Islam positively affects the behaviour and attitudes of youth and protects them from self-infected harm. Religion and spirituality have been identified as cogent sources of developmental

**Figure 30: Extent of mental health services for victims of violence**



Source: SESRIC Staff Calculation based on WHO, 2011. Data available for a total of 128 countries of which 39 are OIC member states

influence (Benson et al., 2003; Kerestes & Youniss, 2002). Also, several studies provide evidence that religion acts as a buffer against risky behaviour and a support for positive attitudes and actions among youth (Donahue & Benson 1995).

Targeted policies, legislations and plans for reaching youth are needed to address the mental health of youth in OIC countries. Adequate resources should be effectively allocated to improve mental health facilities, human capacity, and mental health services.

## 6 Final Remarks and Policy Recommendations

According to the current population projections, youth population will remain a major strength for OIC countries over the coming decades. However, there are critical issues to be addressed in order to effectively utilize this strength. Improving the quality of education, labour force participation of youth and young adult and reducing youth unemployment were among the major discussion points of this report. The current state of affairs in the majority of OIC countries reveals the fact that a significant part of young population remains inactive and those who actively seeks a job in the market face serious challenges. Therefore, greater emphasis should be given to young people through promoting their participation into labour market, providing required skills and facilitating the creation of suitable jobs.

The quality of education also remains a critical concern in many OIC countries. For effective human capital development that can lead to higher productivity and better competitiveness levels, attendance as well as quality of education at all levels (pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary) and all types (vocational, formal, and evening) should be supported through effective programmes and policies. Low literacy rates and low levels of scientific outcomes reflect the dimensions of learning crisis in OIC countries. New and effective strategies should be devised to improve the learning outcomes in addition to improving participation to education. Educational resources and teaching conditions should also be upgraded to translate the higher participation to better learning outcomes.

Only those who succeed in their education and labour market can experience an upward mobility in their social status. Evidence suggests that education itself does not necessarily lead to social mobility. In addition to good quality education, people should be able to access professional jobs with competitive wages irrespective of their parental background and nobody should be prevented from fulfilling their potential by the circumstances of their birth. With collective efforts of governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and education institutions, barriers to social mobility can be lifted for more prosperous societies.

Overall, it seems that much more efforts are still needed to be undertaken by national governments and other stakeholders to effectively address major challenges of youth and youth-related issues in OIC member countries. In this context and in the light of the discussion in this report, the following key recommendations can be made:

- Devise and implement strategies and policies with a view to reduce the mismatch between the supply of skills and competencies by the labour force and demand by employers through developing curricula that fits the expectation of labour market and

supported by adequate vocational, apprenticeship and entrepreneurship training programmes.

- Enhance and well utilize the competencies of well-educated young graduates through, inter alia, encouraging and supporting the role of the private sector in creating jobs that matches the competencies of young graduates according to the national and international standards.
- Develop strong and well-coordinated partnerships among governments, business organizations, educational institutions and other organizations in determining the most appropriate action to be taken at national and local levels for the promotion of decent work for young people.
- Encourage and support start-up businesses and risk-taking behaviours of young graduates and improve the quality of public employment services for effective intervention and intermediation.
- Develop, labour market information and analysis systems to monitor labour markets and design and implement effective policies, such as the implementation of wage and training subsidies to motivate employers to hire young people.
- Improve the structural conditions for social mobility across generations by: ensuring equal access to opportunities for all, supporting disadvantaged people to succeed, considering the diverse background of students in their efforts to get good quality education and being flexible in giving a second chance to those who fail to adapt to working environment.
- Adapt a multidimensional approach for increasing youth inclusion in society. On the economic front: improve youth access to employment, education and training. In particular; youth without university degrees and who are not in education, employment, or training must be given access to programs tailored to their needs and to the needs of the labour market. On the political front: introduce new policies and initiatives geared towards enabling greater youth participation in political and socio-economic decisions and rebuild trust between youth and public institutions.
- Fully implement the MPOWER measures to combat the use of tobacco products by the general population as a whole and by youth in particular
- Take the necessary actions to reduce supply and demand for drugs and promote collaboration between public institutions, NGO, and society in the fight against drugs.
- Develop a well-defined structure for the adoption of technology by youth that will result in healthy technology related habits.
- Identify youth that have been left behind by migrating parents as “at risk and vulnerable group” and develop programs targeting them at both the school level and community level with the objective of providing them guidance and ensuring their academic success.

- Develop targeted policies, legislations and plans for reaching youth who are suffering from mental illness and allocate resources to improve mental health facilities, human capacity, and mental health services.

All these issues require strong commitment and collaboration on the part member countries and OIC General Secretariat. As the OIC's executive organ in charge of implementing the resolutions issued from the ministerial and summit conferences, the OIC General Secretariat has carried out several activities including holding and participating in a wide range of gatherings, ministerial conferences and meetings of experts specializing in the area of youth and youth events in more than one Member State. In this respect, the General Secretariat has set up a section within the General Department of Cultural, Social and family affairs, entrusted with the issues of youth, from all facets: cultural, social, political, economic, and so on.

With a view to cater for youth issues in the OIC Member States and in order to accord the youth community special interest for their capacity building, two Islamic conferences of youth and sports were held, the first in Jeddah (KSA) on 1-2 May 2007 and the second, also in Jeddah, on 17-18 March 2014. The third session of the Conference is decided to take place in Turkey in 2016 and the meeting is expected to adapt the OIC strategy for youth capacity building 2016-2025. With the strategy document, it is expected that more concrete actions will be taken during the coming period to deal with the problems of youth in OIC countries.

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