



*United Nations Alliance Of Civilizations
Fellowship Programme 2016*

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*Final Reports of the 2016 MENA Cohort
“Education as a Tool
for the Prevention of Radicalization and Xenophobia”*

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MENA Cohort

Final Report:

Demystify Global Citizenship Education:

A Tool in Combating Xenophobia and Radicalization in the Middle East

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Introduction

The Middle East has a long history of political, religious and social instabilities, regardless of variations concerning GDP and national income levels. Political reform attempts and initiatives were leveraged using extensive oil-based fortunes or loans, yet rarely reach out to local citizens or long-term sustainable economic growth. One of the major challenges in the face of reaching out to long-term sustainably in the Middle East are xenophobia and radical thought, which could be manifested in extremist religious movements and intolerance to diversity. Solutions to create a social framework to support economic growth and national reform movements may include policy making, government democratization, accountability and corruption combat. While policy and government support are effective tools needed to reinforce national development, yet grassroots initiatives, including the implementation of global education, can be leveraged to achieve the desired social change and prevent xenophobia and radicalization.

In this report, the status of global citizenship education is examined as a tool to prevent xenophobia and radicalization in four Middle Eastern countries, which are Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon and Algeria, while also proposing a grassroots action plan inspired by the visits conducted by the MENA fellows in 2016.

Defining Global Citizenship Education

Global Citizenship Education can be used as a grassroots tool to prevent xenophobia and radicalization. Global citizenship is defined as “a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity. It emphasizes political, economic, social and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness between the local, the national and the global” (UNESCO, 2015). The three core conceptual dimensions of Global Citizenship Education are multilateral and include cognitive development focusing on the acquired knowledge and utilizing critical thinking skills for a deeper understanding on different global, regional, national and local issues. The second domain is socio-emotional where students show respect and shared values for diverse populations. The third domain is behavioral development which focuses on exhibiting effective and responsible acts on all levels to achieve global peace and sustainability. (UNESCO, 2015).

It is important to note that Global Citizenship Education employs different concepts and methodologies for other relevant fields including human rights education, peace education and education for sustainable development. It can be used for different age groups in different formal and informal education settings, and with a wide range of tools and approaches for participation and to achieve the desired learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2015).

Radicalization and xenophobia are complex global issues that cannot be understood in isolation without understanding the wider socio-economic, psychological and institutional framework. Nevertheless, Global Citizenship Education can be implemented as an educational tool to prevent radical thought and support national reform initiatives. According to UNESCO, it can help learners develop critical thinking skills to question extremist beliefs and claims and also to develop required resilience to resist extremism and engage positively in their societies without violence. (UNESCO, 2016).

The Current Status of Global Citizenship Education in the Middle East

Progressive national development in the Middle East is tied up to understanding the wider context in which they exist for each country. Due to variations regarding the economic, social, political and religious status in the Middle East, the following section in the report will showcase the following points for Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon :

- National demographics
- Social, economic and political status
- Global Citizenship Education status

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is home for more than thirty-one million citizens and residents, including eleven million expatriates coming from different nationalities and origins. The nationalities dominating the minority groups residing in Saudi Arabia according to a study conducted in 2013 come from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Philippines, Yemen, Indonesia, and Sudan. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated to be \$ 646.002 billion in 2015 (World Bank, 2016).

The structure of schools in Saudi Arabia does not fully support intercultural exchange as certain types of schools are dominated by Saudis while others are mainly for students of expatriates. The Saudi public schools are mostly for Saudi students; recently students of other nationalities were allowed to attend public schools yet they remain the least preferred option due to quality concerns. It is speculated that public schools will undergo higher levels of scrutiny and demands for reform by the Saudi public as more students will move from private to public schools. The expected increased enrollment rate is due to annual income reductions for most Saudi households in 2016.

Private schools can be considered as the most preferred option as they allow for more flexibility and usually offer more intensive English language classes and extracurricular activities. Currently private schools in Saudi Arabia are under pressure to offer accredited international courses with parents demanding more quality assurance measures. The majority of private schools use either the American curriculum (Common Core standards) or the British Curriculum (Cambridge International Examinations). The private sector, international or regular, is open for all students residing in Saudi Arabia regardless of their nationalities. The last type of schools are embassy-based international schools which are created to provide quality education in respect to the local cultures of the nationalities they serve. Saudi nationals are required to get an official approval form by the Ministry of Education in order to get their children enrolled. Embassy-based international schools do not implement the Saudi curriculum and offer few Arabic and Islamic Studies classes.

Some of the issues facing education in Saudi Arabia is the low quality of teacher training programs, the centralized education system that allows for a limited list of approved educational resources, the low level of Arabic mastery in international school graduates, and the limited cultural integration opportunities

According to the Saudi vision for 2030, the national vision aims for the country to become “the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, the investment powerhouse, and the hub connecting three continents” (vision2030, 2016). With a national focus to diversify income and develop the social landscape of

Saudi Arabia, **investing in global citizenship is vital to set the required social infrastructure for successful international partnerships.**

Foreign Student Voice in Saudi Arabia

As part of the UNAOC fellowship program in 2016, fellows visited the Peace and Human Rights Education program teachers and students in Teachers College, Columbia University. This interview was conducted with one of the students from India who lived in Saudi Arabia and currently a student in Teachers College.

"I moved to KSA (Riyadh) in November 2007 due to my dad's job. I am studying at Teachers College Columbia University but my family and I are still living in Riyadh so that's where I go back.

*My knowledge and exposure about Saudi Arabia and its society comes from hearing experiences of students in school (Saudi and non-Saudi). I went to the American School in Riyadh and it was interesting to hear people's stories. However, **the school did not offer many opportunities to expand my knowledge about the country. It was only until I went to Qatar to do my undergrad at Georgetown University that I had classes focused on Saudi Arabia.** This is when I got really interested and started doing my own research on the country.*

I know that a lot of schools are segregated based on gender/language/nationality etc. and that I think is the root cause of the problem. When schools segregate people, they create a scenario where 'us' and the 'other' becomes the norm. These children thus never truly see or interact with people from a different gender, color or race than them and that leads to problems in the future. These kids grow up to be adults who rely on stereotypes to make judgement calls about people and that's not okay for the harmony of the country and the lessons these adults pass on their kids. We need children to be in the same classrooms, especially in the primary and secondary levels, so that their peers are humanized and education is more inclusive to all".

Algeria

Algeria is made up of 48 provinces and more than 1,500 communes, with a 2016 population estimated at 40.4 million (ONS 2016), and an area of 2,381,741 km², making it the largest country in Africa and the Arab world with an outstanding diversity. Interestingly, 99% of Algerians are Arab-Berber. While it is common that the vast majority of Algerians are Berber in origin rather than Arab, Berbers represent only 15% of the total population (CIA 2016). The Berbers are also generally Sunni-Muslims but prefer to be identified with their Berber cultural heritage. At a closer look, however, the Berbers have long demanded autonomy, but the Algerian government has always denied the legitimacy of their demand, offering to make Tamazight an official language and sponsor teaching it at schools in sixteen provinces as a tool to absorb social anger.

The linguistic landscape of Algeria is multilingual, echoing the different conquering groups that settled in North Africa. In addition to the Berbers, the original settlers of the region, Algeria attracted the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Vandals, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Spaniards, the Turks, and the French. Unsurprisingly, therefore, there are four spoken languages in today's Algeria: literary Arabic, Algerian Arabic, Tamazight and French. Literary Arabic is widely taught at academic institutions, used in administrations and media. It is also the official language of Algeria since 1962. Undoubtedly, Algerian Arabic is the main language of Algeria. The latter is practiced by 70-80% of the population as their mother tongue. Tamazight on the other hand, is orally spoken by 20 - 30% of the Population (Chemami, 2011). Interestingly, under the Tamazight's umbrella, many dialects stem out, including Kabyle Berber, Shawiya Berber, Mzab Berber, Touggourt' Shelha, Tuareg Berber.

In spite of the fact that Algeria is a heterogeneous community, the Algerian authorities imposed a unified educational model with a deliberate refusal of reality. This model can be best illustrated in the

post-colonial era's 'Arabization policy' which was an endeavor to create a national identity, but unfortunately, this policy is often described as "a total failure" or as a disastrous policy that delivered a generation of illiterate bilinguals mastering neither Arabic nor French.

The Algerian structure of the school system is based on a compulsory basic education, secondary studies, and a higher education phase. Basic education refers to the nine years of primary and middle school years which the ministry of national education is in charge of. At the end of basic education, pupils take the BEM exam, which grants them access to secondary studies. After three years, pupils take their Baccalaureate exam, and students who pass go to higher education. In both phases, Students are assessed and promoted to successive grades based on coursework; an average of 50 percent or more is required for progression (10 out of 20.)

Higher education in Algeria is offered at many universities, university centers, national schools and institutes. Universities and university centers are administered by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, while higher schools and institutes generally fall under the portfolio of the ministry to which its specialization is most closely related. Private educational institutions are not widely spread, either because they are neither welcomed nor recognized by the authorities, or simply because they are not affordable to most Algerians (in the case of embassy-based schools).

The Algerian framework of university degrees is based on the LMD system (License, Master, and Doctorate) which is similar in structure to the reforms being undertaken in Europe through the Bologna process. Although the LMD system aims at making the Algerian universities more compatible with those around the world, there is actually a real need for a serious higher education. In fact, this reform has to bridge the gap between theory and practice, the industrial sectors and academic research, higher education institutions and local labor markets, and more importantly, the voice of higher education has to find ways toward the decision making. Hence, the reform should develop the student's innovative and critical thinking skills, including innovation in their academic field. (Benouar 2012)

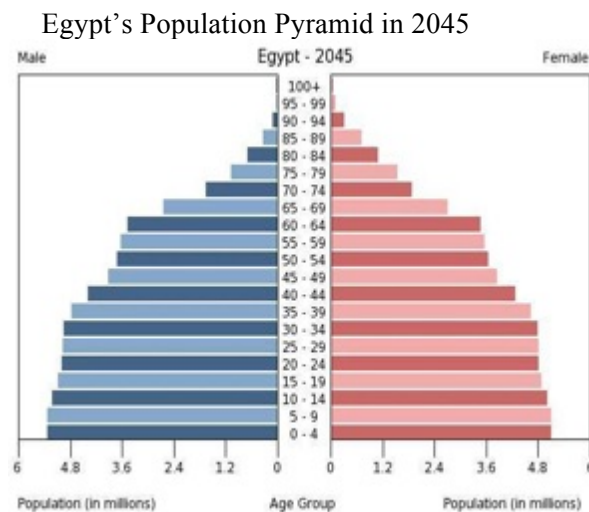
The Impact of the UNAOC Fellowship:

Approaching EUNA Fellows, grassroots organizations, and policy makers in the US, Germany, France, and Spain is a unique experience that will seep into the Algerian model at different levels. Although Algeria is an ambiguous country where a strong military in a power struggle with its civilian counterparts over the control of the leverages of power (Mortimer, 2006), the Civil society's voice is loud as well. Thus, Chances are that the latter can dialogue with the authorities pleading for more openness toward western examples and partnerships. With such an accomplishment, Algerians would become global citizens with a broader vision.

Egypt

Egypt is one of the oldest states in the world, given its central location connecting Asia and Africa; Egypt rose as a unified kingdom around 3200 B.C. In addition to its

geographical position, Egypt is the most populous Arab Country and the third in Africa. 95% of the country is deserted, while only 5% is inhabited by more than 94.6 million (CAPMAS: 2016 Projection). 62% of Egyptians are below the age of 29 as reported in 2012 (United Nations Population Fund, 2012). Moreover, the average age of total Egyptian population is 25.1 years (CIA, 2016). Reported total fertility rate was 2.79 between 2010- 2015 in comparison to 5.2 during the period of 1980- 1985. Population growth rate was decreasing during 1980-1985 at 2.28 %, it decreased to be 1.56% during the 1990s, and rose slightly to be 1.68% during 2005-2010, however it expected to decline and reach 0.69% in 2045-2050 (UNPD, 2012). Egypt's rapid population growth that nearly doubled between 1994 and 2014 increases the sense of limited resources, employment, housing, sanitation, education, and health care.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The Egyptian community is widely homogenous, where 99.6% are citizens, and only 0.4% are expats or from other nationalities according to the 2006 census. Arabic is the official language of the country as per the 2014 constitution; however, English and French are widely understood by the educated. 90% of Egyptians are mostly Sunni-Muslims, and 10% are Christians from different sects including (Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, Maronite, Orthodox, and Anglican) as per CIA 2012 estimates. In February 2016, the government of Egypt issued its first mid-term Sustainable Development Strategy: Vision 2030 echoing the 5-year plans during the 1960s. This strategy utilizes quantitate deliverables that should be in display by 2030. For instance, the government aims to position Egypt among the top 60 countries as per the global innovation index. As for education, it is planned that only 7% of Egyptians will be illiterate in contrast to the current 34% figure.

The UNAOC 2016 Fellowship was eye-opening, in regard to various EUNA experiences of development and inclusion. Egypt could benefit from different examples, while at the same time developing its own case-sensitive path. Egypt has historically been a melting pot for Mediterranean and Levant cultures. Those earlier nationals came and settled on the banks of the Nile contributing to the development of their local communities. Intercultural dialogue is much needed in these days of cyber connectivity that leveraged deep intercultural understating among peoples of the universe. Moreover, what Egypt needs specifically is professional skills and the know-how that is usually present in the northern hemisphere of our ostensible small world. With such perspective, the most populous Arab state can reach its deliverables by 2030 and lead-by-

Lebanon

Although the existence of Lebanon as a political entity in its current borders dates back only to the year 1920, as a result of a decree of the French protectorate authority, it is characterized by a unique and complex education system, deeply rooted in the traditions of its historical core, “Mount-Lebanon”, an autonomous area within the Ottoman empire. Religious diversity, political freedom and a strong sense of private and citizen initiative are the main strength of this system, while its main challenges are political instability, lack of economic resources and internal as well as external conflict.

With 10542 km², a little more than 5000000 citizens (no official data is available, as for political reasons, no census has been conducted since the 1940s), and more than 452,669 registered Palestinian refugees (UNRWA, 2016), as well as 1017433 Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2016), Lebanon has more than 2847 schools, divided upon 4 sectors: public (44.1%), semi-private (12.9%), private (40.6%) and UNRWA (2.4%). In addition to the Lebanese public university, there are more than 40 private universities, as well as 123 public and 247 private vocational training institutions (CERD, 2014-2015).

To understand such diversity, one must go back as far as the 15th century, when the “Capitulations” of the Ottoman Empire granted European states certain privileges, including the protection of religious minorities and the creation of private institutions, mainly schools. As one of the main places of refuge for the minorities of the Empire, “Mount-Lebanon” benefited from these measures, and from the competition between foreign powers which they generated, and which is reflected in the multilingualism that characterizes Lebanese schools. Also, after the foundation of the Maronite college in Rome, in 1584, graduates of this college founded several education institutions, in addition to primary schools in small villages, which lead to the eradication of illiteracy very early on within the historical borders of Lebanon. The creation of the public school system, however, came in very late, initiated by the Ottoman Empire and later developed in the 60s and 70s as a result of the wave following the student revolts in France. It is this public education sector that has been the main victim of political turmoil since the civil war between 1975 and 1990, while the private sector resorted largely to accreditation from foreign institutions, thus managing to maintain high quality standards.

It is to compensate the inequalities and inconsistencies inherent to this system that the Taif agreement in 1989 demanded a vast educational reform, aiming to increase National cohesion through common culture and values. As an immediate result to this agreement, a new framework for education was published in 1995, followed by new curricula in 1997 and new textbooks in 1999-2000, all of which emphasize an equilibrium between national identity and cohesion, as well as multilingualism and

multiculturalism. However, although these reforms were the result of consensus between all 18 recognized religious communities in the country, their implementation has faced numerous challenges, both because of the lack of authority of the state on private institutions, and the lack of financial means in public institutions.

Examples of the shortcomings of the new curricula include the failure to reach consensus on a History book, almost 20 years after the reform, as well as the failure to implement common religious education, which has been suggested as an alternative to the current chaos leading to radicalization. Examples of success, however, include the Civic Education curriculum and school books, which are mandatory in both private and public institutions, and cater for legal and political literacy, and in the last few years, mandatory “community service” for all students prior to graduation.

Another issue faced by the Lebanese Education system since the beginning of the 20th century is the integration of several waves of migrants, the last of which are the Syrian refugees. The usual response has been to create new structures (private religious schools for Armenians, then UNRWA schools for Palestinian refugees...), the current policy of the MEHE in response to the Syrian crisis is to centralize efforts and channel them through public institutions, though not immersing them fully in “normal” classes.

Political Education as a tool of prevention: lessons learned from Germany

As part of the UNAOC 2016 fellowship program, the fellows visited two German non-governmental organizations who focus on political education within schools: “School without racism – School with courage” and “Dialog with schools”. Both visits emphasized the role of political education as a tool to prevent not only radicalization, but violence and discrimination in general.

In the aftermath of World War II, Germany experienced educational reforms similar in their aims to the ones experienced in Lebanon after the 1975-1990 civil war. The discussion with the German Organizations was an occasion to learn some of the best practices in implementing education policy measures and making change sustainable and deeply rooted within society, through the publication of excellent teaching material, teacher training and collaboration between schools, public institutions, NGOs and other citizen initiatives.

The Plan to move forward

The plan to move forward in utilizing global citizenship education through grassroots initiatives is inspired by a network of organizations visited by the MENA fellows in the UNAOC 2016 cohort. The following six programs are classified according to the medium used and targeted audience. The selected organizations are based in the United States, Germany, France and the United Nations. Governmental endorsements should be needed to implement some of these programs in the MENA region, yet some models can be virtually implemented with some country-specific adaptations as required.

A brief description of each program/organization below will be followed with an attempt to understand implementation in the MENA region in terms of feasibility and potential challenges.

Inter-cultural and exchange programs

The **Connect Program at Soliya** is a virtual cross-cultural exchange program that has been implemented in twenty-seven countries across the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, Europe and North America since 2003. Facilitators are trained to develop the skills required to run two-hour sessions once every eight weeks. The program aims to establish a deeper understanding of others around the world and develop skills such as critical thinking, cross-cultural communication and media literacy skills (Soliya, 2016).

Some of the discussions raised by the MENA fellows indicated the need to hold inter-cultural as well as intra-cultural conversations. Initiatives such as the Connect Program can be used to overcome challenges in conflict areas and reach deeper levels of understanding concerning religious and ethnic minorities in the MENA region. The school structure in some MENA countries may not allow for students of different socio-economic status to co-exist within school walls, creating more opportunities for misunderstanding and potential for future conflicts. Virtual dialogue that is monitored by trained facilitators may help reduce the intra-cultural gap that currently exists in some contexts in the MENA region.

Implementation of virtual exchange programs can threaten centralized education systems, as dialogues are spontaneous and the curriculum outcomes are not scripted. These programs can clearly oppose national agendas to promote the supremacy of certain ethnic and/or religious groups and therefore disapprove credited participation for students enrolled in public schools.

In reflection to another visit conducted in Germany, **Dialogue with Schools** offers another model to promote intracultural dialogue for students within schools. The organization was established in 2013 in response to the immigration wave in Germany. It aims to offer democratic education for immigration societies and decrease social and ethnic segregation of schools. A study presented at the organization indicated that 3rd generation immigrants still don't feel integrated in the German community. This program trains mentors to offer citizenship and civic education classes in schools using a specific model that focuses on building a relationship with the students, identifying topics to be studied with them and delivering projects after conducting an in-depth study on the selected topics.

Immigrant integration is yet another issue facing some MENA countries. As mentioned in the student voice story above, non-Saudi students rarely feel integrated due to the scarce opportunities for intercultural dialogue in Saudi schools.

Cultural exchange programs can take many forms and utilize different platforms. The MENA cohort were introduced to the **Peace Corps** program where American citizens get to travel to contribute to certain destinations and work on identified projects based on local needs. Although this program is at the grassroots level, yet this level of exchange requires clear endorsements by the governments of the MENA region.

One of the highlights of the fellowship program was the knowledge and exposure acquired learning from other fellows in the MENA region. It was evident that members were hungry to learn more about other MENA traditions and cultures and also explore social and economic challenges at the home countries of MENA fellows. A model that's inspired by Peace Corps would be beneficial for the MENA youth to practice global citizenship, yet, as mentioned above, high level endorsements are needed and government agreements should take place.

The need for the MENA youth to identify and explore local issues within the MENA region can also be worked on through more simple less-expensive models similar to **Café Babel**. Café Babel is a pan-European news and features platform where youth from different European countries contribute to present their local issues and concerns. Many issues face youth in the MENA region including the implications of the presidential elections in Lebanon, the consequences of the Saudi-Yemeni conflict on both sides, the challenges youth in Jordan and Egypt face to access quality education and earn a living. Such issues need to be brought up to the surface and shared with young people to reduce misunderstandings and wrong assumptions.

Arts and creativity

Preventing xenophobia and radicalization thought education can be explored through arts and creative expressions of student thoughts. **Arts and Resistance through Education (ARTE)** in Brooklyn is “an organization that uses art, design and technology to empower young people to develop creative solutions and bring awareness to local and global human rights challenges, fostering leadership opportunities to train and organize other young people in their own communities” (ARTE, 2016).

Art can be utilized as a tool to provoke feelings and thoughts on global issues related to human rights. Students can learn about gender equality, oppression, social reform movements and other related issues in different parts of the world to explore and compare perspectives. Art can be used as part of the school curriculum or as an extracurricular activity to initiate dialogue related to issues in the MENA region and the world. Using art to promote global citizenship for students in the MENA region can be viewed as a leeway for informal constructive dialogue in centralized education systems where formal subjects are dictated and student knowledge is scripted and tested. Although art appreciation is growing more relevant to youth in the MENA region, yet using it constructively in MENA countries to serve creativity that should lead to provoking thoughts in education remains either totally unexplored territory, or difficult to implement due to financial and demographic challenges as well as lack of teacher training .

Conclusion

With the rise of the Arab spring and multiple national reform movements in the past few years in the MENA region, setting the right social infrastructure is now more vital for driving sustainable economic growth. Education is a powerful tool to overcome challenges that usually stand in the face of safety, sustainability and economic growth which are concerns facing many countries in the MENA region. The plan to move forward to lead social change through global citizenship education still needs awareness at the grassroots level. Resources need to be made available in Arabic and legitimacy still needs to be acquired through accreditation by ministry officials in local MENA schools. One of the

points that was repeatedly raised up by the MENA cohort is the need to focus on intra-cultural dialogue before attempting to approach the international community. More initiatives need to discuss and explore the religious, linguistic, ethnic, social and economic differences that usually lead to misunderstanding or xenophobia and radicalization in extreme cases.

The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations clearly require openness to global issues and understanding of the entailed actions for successful collaboration. The oil-based economies in the MENA region are facing challenging times and should actively invest in expanding the capabilities of their future employees and leaders.

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Racism and Xenophobia in Media: Migrants & Refugees as a Case Study

A special report on the UNAOC fellowship

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Introduction:

Media as a mass communication method can both have a negative role or a positive role based on how it is used, as in itself it is a neutral tool, and that's how it should be; unbiased and impartial. However, that is not the case in our current world, especially with the emergence of social media and the way it reaches people all over the world through a simple platform as a cellphone, contrary to traditional media. Adding the fact that social media users could be simultaneously consumers and producers of media contents that could be potentially harmful, especially when we realize that most social media activists don't have a proper training on professional media production and journalism principles and ethics.

Media, both traditional and social media (online media), is a powerful tool for education of the population worldwide, a short video clip on any given topic can be more informative than a class on the same subject, and in that sense, journalists and media producers are educators, but in a more open environment where usually the messages are being sent in one direction, without feedback and questioning and discussion, and the receivers are prone to accept those messages relying on the integrity and professionalism of the senders. While in our current world, majority of media have lost its integrity and influenced by businesses, politics, and religions, and is heavily controlled by other agendas and biases, especially in an environment where independent media is losing the battle to the major corporations, and that assumption is true for both traditional media such as T.V, radio, newspaper...etc. and for online media such as Facebook and YouTube but to a lesser degree when it comes to the latter.

This report is a reflection on the role of media in shaping public opinion and policies in general with a special focus towards Migrants and Refugees in the North American and European countries, based on the outcomes of the series of meetings and discussions conducted during 2016 UNAOC fellowship, and based on our experiences in the field of education and media and their role in decreasing hate speech, and our work especially with migrants and refugees & IDPs, and how we envision the way forward towards creating unbiased and racism free media both in North America and Europe, and in our countries in the same time.

Objectives:

This report has three main objectives:

- Shedding light on the key issues within the main western media institutions and organizations working through media, both in term of explaining the status quo and in term of the actors and initiatives working to change that status, which is misrepresenting refugees and migrants and generally people from different religions and cultures, supported by the right wing political movements.
- Preparing a set of recommendations for what could be done to address these issues, both on the UN level and on countries level, where governments and civil society actors could have a say in working towards containing the widespread problem and working with the grass root organization s/activists to address the causes of hate speech and xenophobia and utilize media as a tool to change the narrative, also to work with media to prevent VE.
- Identifying the current key actors who are working on the issue in hand that were met during the fellowship, and the possible actors in the future that could be engaged in working towards decreasing xenophobia, racism, and hate speech in media.

Although this report is not a project proposal, but it will aim to formulate the recommendations in a manner that could be transferred into policies or projects in the future, mainly through recognizing the

role of media as an alternative education channel visa vis the traditional educational methods.

Context Analysis & Problem Statement:

This report will try to address two main questions in order to shed light on what is the current stance of media when it comes to Xenophobia and Racism, and what are the problems existing:

- What is the role of media as a mass education tool?
- How possible it is for media to have a positive role in decreasing hate speech & racism especially towards refugees and migrants?

Biases and false messages have existed in modern media platforms since the beginning, including different forms of racism, such as those based on color and ethnicity or those based on sexual orientation or gender identity, along with the different forms of xenophobia, yet these biases have become the dominant norm in the recent years, Islamophobia, triggered by the various terrorist attacks that were used as excuses to invade countries in the Islamic world such as Afghanistan and Iraq, and the influx of refugees from these countries to the western world. And the most recent influx of Syrian refugees due to a 5 years' civil war and the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq declaring an Islamic Caliphate.

Nowadays, most of the medias in the west, especially US, Europe, Australia, and to a certain degree Canada, are encouraging fear and rejection in the minds and actions of their audiences, let alone the increasing level of hate speech online and the use of online media by the radical groups to recruit young people. The continuous rise of extremist right wing in EU and north America is not a phenomenon that should be only considered unfortunate, but it should be analyzed and its causes should be studied in order to prevent the humanity from going into another world war that would be more devastating than the first two!

Not only the media is a major contributor to fear and xenophobia towards refugees and Muslims in the west, and thus creating a racist and sometimes deadly terrorist front, but it has a major role in radicalizing the youth, whether a young boy or girl that don't know much about the cultures outside Europe or North America, but also can radicalize moderate Muslims, whether towards Non - Muslims, or between different sects of Muslims themselves, such as what is going on in Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. Media is playing this role through dehumanizing the other, and associating the other with all the images and cogitations that bring out fear and hatred in the individuals, especially in an advanced world of technology where you can reach everyone through an online post, and in an era where collective conscious of the population is at its weakest, and labeling people has become the rhetoric of populist leaders, something that would sizably increase after the win of Donald J. Trump as the president of U.S, which will open the door to hate crimes to spree under his blessing.

Media and Refugees & Migrants:

Media in general and western media particularly were not welcoming towards refugees and migrants especially in the last two years, more particularly towards Syrian refugees heading towards EU countries and North America. Media outlets are polarized due to three major facts:

- The first one political and reflects the current mindset of politicians and rulers who want to accommodate the concerns and feelings of their constituencies who have little or no knowledge of Muslims and Islam and thus linking them to terrorism despite the fact that most of the current refugees are running away from terrorist groups, and instead of making efforts to raise the awareness of the public and introduce them to what a moderate Muslim is and thus reducing the tension, most of the mainstream media is feeding that fear and investing in it.

- The second reason why mainstream media is polarized towards refugees and most of the major outlets are reinforcing stereotypes about refugees and migrants is that these outlets are owned by mega corporations vis-a-vis the independent and objective media, which is usually small and less mainstream compared to the incorporated media. This lack of balance in power creates imbalance in messaging and outreach scope as well, and that is why a lot of liberal and independent are relying heavily on social media to make up for that imbalance.
- The third main reason behind why migrants and refugees are not represented in media properly, whether in western media or in the medias of MENA region (considering most of the refugees and migrants are from that region) is the homogeneity of the media professionals itself, as for example media in the west is dominated by white Christian males, while the media in MENA is dominated by the Muslim males of each country. Thus, it is hard for the narrative to change when the storytellers are thinking the same or like-minded and the other side of the story is not represented or not heard.

Key Actors & Stakeholders:

The main actors in the field of decreasing racism, xenophobia through media either directly or indirectly (which includes online media) that we met throughout the fellowship are:

- UNAOC:

Media being one of the UNAOC's portfolios in creating intercultural dialogue is a great thematic entry towards making media a focus point globally through linking different media actors worldwide and through urging both governments and INGOs to pay a bigger attention to media as a double-edged sword. We found the work of UNAOC in fighting radicalization through social media particularly interesting and beneficial for our regional projects and partnerships, including Plural+ which could be duplicated in our countries.

- DW Arabic:

This was one of the meetings we were highly looking forward to, although the meeting itself didn't rise up to the expectations due to having to meet them with the presence of another group of visitors, but the work DW does in raising awareness of both German public on middle east, and vis-a-vis the middle east populations in Germany and Europe in general is a great example of Media should and could be a bridge for connecting different cultures rather than dividing mankind based on color, religion, geography...etc. as some of western media does. Their academy in providing technical training, especially in disadvantaged communities, is important for creating a balance between incorporated media and small local medias.

- Ali Aslan, Journalist:

Meeting with Ali Aslan was the highlight of the meetings during the fellowship, not only because he is former fellow that could be reached for consultancy by us when we work on projects related to media, but particularly because of what he does and his position in it, as he is a German from migrant background, and an active voice against xenophobia and racism in Germany. He brings a unique vision into the problem as an insider, and during the meeting he provided a lot of vital analysis on what are the root causes of the widespread hate speech in western media, and the most interesting analysis to us was when discussed the lack of diversity in media actors and journalists in western media, and how might media be xenophobic without even realizing it, and how to address that problem.

- Café Babel:

Café Babel is a unique experience, as it uses social media and the online platform to combine journalism and activism. Although it is a pure European initiative, but it could be also an opportunity for us from MENA to work with journalists to create an initiative that bring citizen journalism and youth activism together to fight radicalism, especially where in our region access to traditional media for youth is very limited if not null, and thus, this could be a way to engage youth in politics and public life and gather them around bigger causes to overcome ethnic, religious, and sectarian differences, and that way preventing them from joining radical movements as a way of expressing their frustrations of the failed democracies in MENA after the Arab Spring.

- TFI Foundation:

TFI foundation is an interesting breakthrough in providing opportunities for young professionals who are underprivileged because their socio-economic conditions or because of their ethnical backgrounds, as media and journalism in Europe being an elite profession, it makes it very hard for disadvantaged youth to find their way into it, and that is a major cause for why media in Europe (and North America as well) is usually a one narrative platform, and this lack of diversity is a cause for the xenophobia existing in media nowadays.

We found it very inspiring but also very beneficial for our work in creating an inclusive work environment, whether that inclusivity is through providing equal opportunities for women and LGBTQ community, or for people from ethnic and religious minorities, because if media meant to be the voice of the people, it has to be a mirror of what the community is compromised from.

- Bondy Blog:

Yet another great example and actor in citizen journalism, a success story that we should be looking up to in our countries and try to benefit from their experience in engaging youth in journalism and activism, especially youth from minorities, who feel more ignored than youth in general, and thus leaving a space for extremism to thrive, both in western communities and in our communities as well. This initiative and Café Babel are two great practical examples on how citizen journalism could be a way of working to create an inclusive society for all through engaging youth and giving them a podium where they can express their concerns and hopes and ideas.

- Casa Arabe:

Although Casa Arabe is not a media institution as such, but their work in introducing the Arabic and Islamic culture to Spain is important, especially through cultural events, where they create a space for intercultural/interfaith dialogue, and that creates a better understanding more than any written material can provide. Such intercultural encounters are important for decreasing xenophobia in general, but if these institutions work closely with media and include them as an actor and not just as a medium or channel, then the effort would have an even bigger outcome, because journalists and media reach a wider audience and thus their messages would be more effective in shaping public opinion.

- Governments:

Here we mean not only the government agencies we met, but also the governments in EU in general, as they can play a key role in decreasing Xenophobia, Racism, Radicalization and others forms of antisocial phenomena as governments in the current world we live in can no longer afford to play the role of bystander and let the civil society to be the only actor in bridging the gap between the different components of the society, because creating a harmonized society that it accepting towards each other is a major component in “keeping order” as one of the roles of the modern governments.

Lessons Learnt:

Throughout the meetings and dialogues took place during the fellowship with the relevant institutions, whether education institutions, media institutions, or government offices, a lot of issues were put under the light circle and many realizations were made, chief of them were:

- Media has a critical role in providing information to the public, and that role could be used properly in feeding the right information to both the decision makers and the general people as well, but it also could be misused through reinforcing stereotypes depicting negative images, especially about migrants and refugees, and thus inducing racism and islamophobia.
- There is a deep misunderstanding towards MENA region countries when it comes to religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity, mostly from the point of view of the western media, but also from the point of view of the politicians as well. That been said, we realized that
- The level of lack of knowledge about the cultures and the religions in the MENA region is shocking, taking in consideration that in the age of technology and mass online communication, flow of information should be both ways, and learning should be both ways, yet little interest there is in learning about the region and their inhabitants.
- This could be out of political reasons as some political parties/figures and governments want their population to have only one narrative and thus their participation in decision-making would be directed towards certain agendas. Also this problem could be induced by lack of interest in learning about different communities and cultures and taking what the media provides for granted.
- Media in EU and North America is not diverse, both in term of covering issues of interests and importance globally, and in term of not having a diverse staff, as it's usually dominated by white Christian males, and this is creating a one - sided narrative because of lack of representation from the other groups, whether they are from a different ethnicity, religion, color, gender...etc. This lack of diversity itself is a form of prejudice on its own, but it leads to a bigger problem, which is stereotyping and reinforcing the negative images being spread by most media especially about Muslims and refugees and migrants. At the same time, it will lead to more marginalization of people from different backgrounds and this could be one of the reasons behind radicalization of youth whom were born and raised in western countries.
- There are some efforts and initiatives to counter those native images on mainstream media and online media, and that is through highlighting the role of media as shared platform for bringing the different views and opinions and try to show the reality and deliver correct information to the audience, and through developing new and innovative tools bridge the gap between the different cultures, and through showing the human side in each story and focusing on what the human being share instead of what is different, and encouraging on celebrating the differences at the same time.

The Way Forward:

Ø Media, as one of the key drivers behind Xenophobia, Racism, and Radicalization, has to be recognized globally as a powerful educational platform, and thus it has to be addressed on the highest level internationally in order to urge the governments to have better responses and strategies to neutralize radical media, or at least support the unbiased media in order to keep the balance and create a counter force. And by highest international level, we mean within UN system itself, it should be highlighted as a tool to fight racism, xenophobia, and radicalization, because as we mentioned, media is a double-edged sword that could be utilized either ways.

Ø Governments are required to provide more access to youth from disadvantaged communities to media and journalism, and for this to be achieved, grass root organizations should be included and supported. One of the main practical and logistically feasible action plans is through supporting citizen

journalism through social media. The same could be said for countering VE through media, as those who are prone to be radicalized are usually not following traditional media, but usually are active on social media, and thus could be reached easily that way.

Ø Training youth on basics of journalism and online journalism is cost effective initiative as it could be as simple as linking experts from the western world with active youth from MENA region online, and this won't only lead to educating youth in MENA, but also to raising the awareness and understanding of journalists and activists from N.A and EU through creating a direct dialogue between people who don't have the chance to be exposed otherwise.

Ø The initiatives that could be taken towards decreasing xenophobia, racism, and hate speech in general requires a lot of resources, both in term of human capital and in term of financial resources, these resources sometimes are harder to find in some countries compared to others, and the way to overcome this hurdle is to create networks of exchange and collaborations between the initiatives in different regions so that they learn from each other's success and mistakes and conduct joint programs instead of starting from zero or duplicating efforts.

Ø Also such collaboration is much needed on a governmental level in a way that the donors invest more in these projects on a regional scope, and draw the international attention to the problem, as currently the attention is focused on the humanitarian crisis, while there should be an equal attention to what creates most of those humanitarian crises, especially from a point of view of protection of displaced people as a major mandate of UN.

Ø Awareness projects must be conducted in order to decrease the hate speech, and these sessions should be designed for journalists and media professionals, as most of the times they are not aware of the level of sensitivity of how they describe events and formulate news. While these sessions might not be useful for those who have an interest in spreading xenophobia and racism through media, but if the level of hate speech is decreased in the majority of the media outlets, the effect of the right wing media could be contained and decreased as well, and a hate speech free media initiative could have a ripple effect on the others, the same way businesses chose to have their products be environmentally friendly for the sake of their profitability, media as well could be put under such pressure, after all, most media outlets are corporations and a form of business that needs the audience and advertisers to sustain. Furthermore, to the point above, journalists and media professionals need to be more exposed to the cultures and religions of the countries they cover. While there are cultural exchanges for many lines of professions between western world and MENA and east in general, media is not at a particular focus point yet, because it's considered a very technical profession and thus the know - how is seen more important than the content itself, in addition the business side of the profession made is less appealing for journalists to be considered beneficiaries from international exchange programs.

Ø We believe that journalism to perform its role as a civil society actor and a watchdog it needs to be diverse and culturally rich, after all, it is an education platform, and it cannot educate the western world about the rest, MENA in our case, unless itself it well educated and informed about the countries it covers, therefore, we deem crucial that intercultural dialogues, exchanges, encounters...etc. need to be designed specifically for journalists and media professionals from both sides, for example two media outlets exchanging a journalists to as a temporary job placement, similar to the programs designed for students where they spend a semester abroad for instance.

Ø Encouraging and supporting more diversity in western media in term of providing access to media

professionals from different religions and ethnic backgrounds, is a key factor in changing the narrative in media and providing a balanced view on the events, and creating a media that speaks to everyone, and hence the community as whole will be included and feel ownership as an equal citizen instead of excluding a section of the community based on their differences, which might lead to violence and extremism.

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Fellowship Program

Program report: The role of storytelling as an educational tool in intercultural dialogue.

MENA Fellows: Hoda Touny and Samar Samir Mezghanni

EUNA Mentor: Fatoumata Kebe

A. Introduction:

“Vivir Para Contarla”¹

Storytelling is one of the oldest forms of oral communication. Historically it played a major role in transferring knowledge, culture, customs and traditions. The role of storytelling in preserving the human experience have expanding when communities and groups started to adapt it further as a tool of bringing people together, bridging cultures, expressing emotions, exchanging ideas and addressing personal or social issues. In its simplest and most complicated forms, storytelling is a tool shared by all humans, and the human experience continues and develops because of the transmissions that storytelling allows. Human beings, throughout history, across the globe, and in all cultures, have been storytellers. And our ability to tell stories is an aptitude that unites us all.

Why Storytelling?

Being part of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Fellowship program, we had the opportunity to explore how several individuals and communities use various forms of art to tell their stories. We heard their stories and told them ours. Most importantly, we had the chance to hear from people at different ends of a given story, protagonists who play different roles in their shared life story. Some of those we met write policies, others are affected by them; some of them develop programs, and others are targeted by them. We exchanged stories with people who are subject to injustice and those who sustain the fibers of the unjust system.

¹ Title of Gabriel Garica Marquez’s autobiography, translated as “Living to Tell the Tale”, 2002.

The stories that offered complex realities, sometimes in a simple way, and those that exposed us to various narratives ranging between the two ends of the spectrum shaped our reflection and stimulated us to further explore the role of storytelling as an educational tool in intercultural dialogue.

B. The Art of Storytelling for Change

Throughout the meetings and visits we conducted over these two weeks, we were astonished by how storytelling can take numerous shapes and forms. We engaged with artists who use forms of art and tailor the content and form of their message to the needs of their communities. For example “Art and Resistance Through Education” uses graffiti and street art to engage community members, deliver Human Rights messages and educate children, whereas Plural+ uses movies as a platform to communicate ideas and express feelings. Another encounter allowed us to get to know Peace Corps and the way they use printed materials to bring stories from distant parts of the world to classrooms in the USA², whereas a meeting with Black Lives Matter and Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity members explored the use of videos to bring individual stories to everybody’s life.

The diversification in these forms reinforces the story’s accessibility and facilitates its reach to the hearts and minds of the audience. Stories connect with people on organic and emotional levels. When told creatively, stories allow for the diversity of interpretations and the potential of negotiation. The more artistic storytelling could be, the more space is created for interpretations, which facilitates dialogue and conversations between different perspectives.

Throughout the meetings we had it became clear that in all the different ways it is practiced, storytelling is a powerful tool for change: It can expose issues, educate communities and mobilize people. As discussed with activists in the Black Life Matters movement, numbers and statistics that showcase injustice are not sufficient. Sometimes it takes one story to motivate people for action and change.

² <https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/resources/ivan-fool/>

C. Reflecting Reality: Integrity and Complexity

While forms and purposes of storytelling may differ, the discussions we had in the fellowship allowed us to identify two factors that condition the effectiveness of storytelling: integrity and complexity.

Integrity in storytelling refers to presenting the stories of people truthfully, ethically, and sincerely without following personal benefit or hijacking its ownership. A clear example of this was presented by the Peace Corps' "Let Girls Learn" Project: individual stories about girls' struggle to receive education in different parts of the world were presented³. The stories were written by the girls themselves, characterizing the narrative by its credibility and authenticity.

The idea of ownership in storytelling remains a controversial issue, especially when other parties, less affected by it, take part in delivering it. In one of the Plural+ films we watched, an African American man addressed the struggles of African American women in the USA. This is a double edged situation. In one hand, it gives the audience a different perspective of the story and endorses a unique point of view. On the other hand, it could jeopardize the depth of the story as other actors simplify it. This leads us to the second essential element in storytelling: complexity. By complexity we refer to a coherent, deep and holistic understanding of any given issue with all its multiple layers. Such understanding can only be attained by fully engaging with the actors in the story, which requires empathy.

Complexity also entails refraining from all cliché and mainstream ideas in an attempt to provide a fresh and creative perspective. Such mainstream ideas that simplify reality were clearly expressed by George Lewis, a photographer we met at City University of New York. The "art" work he presented followed orientalist stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims instead of challenging them. Some of the photos he proudly showed fetishized and portrayed veiled women and their supposed "struggle for liberation". It lacked critical thinking and genuine experience inside the communities it claimed to represent. In contrast, the speaker at Peace Corps managed to transfer not only an engaging story of her two years' experience in Morocco, but also an entertaining one. By being sincere and deep, storytellers honor the stories they choose to tell. As such, stories can become

³ <https://www.peacecorps.gov/stories/>

the first step towards a bigger goal: they open the door for further conversation, negotiation and reconciliation.

D. Storytelling and Personal Growth

The benefit of storytelling is not limited to its communication role. New forms of storytelling give people space to learn technical and interpersonal skills that allow them to grow as humans from a very young age. In competitions like Plural +, participants as young as 12 years old can participate in telling stories through movies. This gives a window to young generations to be exposed to what happens in the world and to critically analyze it in an artistic way. During the Plural+ event, the Master of Ceremony shared an interesting revelation: When we are young we are fearless and hopeful. Storytelling among youth capitalizes on this absence of fear and optimism to address any issues in powerful and influential ways. In addition, most of these art forms require team work, interactions with communities and negotiations with official bodies. This process enhances interpersonal and soft skills, such as communication skills, team work and conflict resolution. Most importantly, in cases of painful experiences, expressing one's story in a creative and artistic way could be a survival technique to surpass the pain. The ability to open up, reflect and raise above personal and communal pain to address larger human issues is in itself transcending individual experiences to allow for a the continuity and progress of the human experience.

Intercultural Dialogue

Overview

This world became very small because of the technology. Now, everyone can know a lot about countries, people, cultural and attitudes through reading, movies or properly internet. But is this enough? To be in the spot, you should be in the centre of the action and to have some concrete things.

Meeting people and have intercultural dialogue (ID) is the best way to have more understanding about others and to avoid misconception. Dialogue within and among civilizations is the critical challenge of the 21st century. Without authentic exchange our deepening interdependencies may lead to greater conflict instead of cooperation. Also, Fruitful cultural dialogue depends on being able to draw people past all conceivable limits to embrace what unites them. Because ultimately a successful dialogue should enable us to understand others.

Many people don't know what intercultural dialogue does mean. Many definitions are raised and discussed, thus the definition that we believed it gives a full image of the meaning of the ID is "Intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups and organisations with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes".⁴

For this reason, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) has established the UNAOC fellowship to give young people from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and European Union and North America (EUNA) a unique chance to meet together, discover and explore the cultures and attitudes of each other.

This year, the fellowship focused of theme of Education as a tool to prevent xenophobia and radicalization and gave us the chance to visit and meet people from four countries (United States, Germany, France and Spain). The fellowship has given us a good impression about other people and cultural. We believe that when young people from different knowledge and cultural backgrounds know and work together and understand each other, we may begin to have a more peaceful and tolerant

society. In this report, we discuss the role of ID in four approaches: education, cultural, media and religion.

The Role of Intercultural Dialogue

Everybody's duty is to make bridges between one cultures and another. Knowing about other cultures gives the person a better chance to strengthen the ties between countries through exchanging ideas and attitudes. This is the best way to provide a mutual understanding between different citizens and help to make the world better place for living by erasing any kind of misunderstanding between cultures.

The idea of intercultural dialogue looks like and crystal clear, however, the question arises of urgency about the reasons why formatted dialogue to settle disputes. So it's nearly inevitable of intercultural dialogue because we believe that the cultural approach and dialogue will be the new solution for conflicts.

During our fellowship, we learnt that the change of perspective has a positive impact on people's personal and professional development. Also, intercultural dialogue among civilizations is a great buzzword. Cultural, religious and other sensitive issues can't be discusses easily. It's people who have to get together, on an equal footing – and that's exactly what the UNAOC Fellowship Programme makes possible. No TV report and no book can substitute what becomes possible when people actually meet and listen to each other.

When we visited different countries in the EUNA region, we gained a clear and realistic view of other countries. It's something different about what media saying. We learnt about the cultural and religious diversity of countries participating in the programme, which helped us to counter widely-held stereotypes and prejudices and promotes mutual respect.

Intercultural Dialogue is a long-term means to carry intercultural dialogue into all layers of civil society, indeed.

The Role of Education in intercultural dialogue

Education is a key approach to understand others in a proper way. Education is a vast topic, not only in content, but also in time. Knowledge is not only directed to the labour market, lifelong learning includes the development of social and intercultural competences such as personal development, active

citizenship, social inclusion. Intercultural education should not be made an option in our curriculum. The intercultural dialogue in education should be a priority in national education policies.

During our fellowship, we visited many different educational institutes and organizations and we would like to focus on two of them.

- **The Institute of International Education (IIE), New York, US**

The Institute of International Education (IIE) is one of the largest and most experienced international education and training organizations. The IIE is committed to delivering program excellence to a diverse range of participants, sponsors, and donors.

One of most interesting thing about the IIE is the international education services that they are provided. The exchange educational programmes are one of the best tools to experience a new culture. The chance of meeting new people is priceless and defiantly will let you know how to think out of the box. Another thing is learning a language and making new friends from around the world and even getting a second family.

- **Meeting with School without Racism, Berlin, Germany**

Education is a great tool to prevent xenophobia and radicalization. During our meeting with Schools without Racism, we learnt that curriculums are not everything at schools. Education is not only a book and a pen but It's the students themselves who decide which activities to pursue at their respective schools.

At School without Racism, we got to know that the students have the chance to distinguish between people based on attributes, organize them into a hierarchy and use this to justify discrimination. Ideologies promoting inequality also assume that divergent elements are not equally valuable. The basic formula is as follows: x is more valuable than y. That means that x has a legitimate reason to fight against y and deprive y of rights.

A school without racism is only a small seed in this complicated world but we hope to move forward from a school without racism to a world without racism.

The Role of media in Intercultural Dialogue

In our world media plays a marvellous role in changing, creating, increasing and developing the strength communication and understanding between cultures and civilizations; the world community has to know that media is the power and the tool to reach human by many ways such as TV, Internet, radio , social media and so on .

The parallel roles of intercultural dialogue and media lead to promote tolerance and mutual understanding among the civilizations by respecting the cultural and religious diversity. Hence, we should use media as a significant tool to promote intercultural dialogue by supporting all kinds of media programs.

In our fellowship we have visited different media organizations, virtual exchange media program and met journalists. In this regard, one of the best program to cite is:

- **Soliya Connect Program**

Soliya is a massive great program which connects more than 100 different NGOs and educational institutions and has more than 1300 participants, students and young professionals empowered in each year including 28 countries. In each semester, across North America, Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia, and every week over the course of a semester, students engage on-line in face-to-face small group dialogues and collaborate with peers across the globe, under the guidance of Soliya-trained and professional facilitators.

In a safe eight environment sessions, the program gives an excellent opportunity for participants and students to express their opinion and have dialogue to talk about global issues, peace, human rights, politics, economic and refugee crises that help the students understand the world with all its various different languages, cultures, traditions and ways of thinking.

This is a magnificent example for world community to use media as a magic wand in spreading and promoting intercultural dialogue among civilizations.

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- Soliya Connect program: www.soliya.net

In today's world, many of the quarrels, conflicts, and clashes that occur between people who come from different religious and cultural backgrounds are caused by misconceptions that they form and hold of each other's religion due to stereotypes that are perpetuated around them. Let us take ISIS as an example. When this terrorist group first came into existence, many of those who do not know Islam well or do not have Muslim friends thought that the vicious terrorist acts performed and practiced by its members represent Islam and its values. For anyone who is familiar with Islam, such an allegation cannot be accepted because it is a religion of peace and tolerance that calls for mutual respect. Yet for someone who does not have sufficient knowledge of Islam and its values, stereotypes and allegations perpetuated by mass media might be all that he/she needs, since there is no other source, resulting in the propagation of hate speech against Muslims. It is because of these misconceptions and these stereotypes that we are now, more than ever, in need of projects, programs, initiatives and campaigns that promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue

During the fellowship program, we had an opportunity to visit and get to know many projects and programs which are working on culture and religion diversity. An example would be:

- **House of one** “House of one” is distinctive project which will implement in Berlin. The idea of this project is to link three religions; Jewish, Christianity, Islam.

Jews, Christians, and Muslims are planning to build a house of worship here – one that brings a synagogue, a church, and a mosque together under one roof. The three separate sections will be linked by a communal room in the center of the building. This will serve as a meeting place, where worshippers and members of the public can come together and learn more about the religions and each other.

This project is one of the best examples to illustrate our role as nations in spreading peace and mutual understanding. It is hoped that more projects of this kind be established throughout the world.

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- House of one: www.house-of-one.org/en
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During the fellowship program, we had a golden opportunity to visit many places that we did not know of before. This enabled us to know about many international organizations, projects, programs and events that are concerned with promoting tolerance, cultural, religious diversity and anti-racism. The UNAOC Fellowship gave us a real experience to understand people and cultural better and to build bridges and narrow gaps. We've learned a lot about differences and similarities, about stereotypes and prejudices and about the variety of cultural backgrounds, values and religions

Combating racism and xenophobia against sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco

By

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Introduction

This is to report on racism and xenophobia against irregular Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco. By doing so, the report will allow us to identify how and where to wipe out and change attitudes and practices of some Moroccans against this social category. Indeed, racism and xenophobia are dangerous because they fuel hatred which is so deeply connected to violence, and other oppressions such as exploitation, marginalization. With this report, I don't aim or claim radical or rapid change of the status quo; my objective is to induce Moroccan people to reconsider the way of looking at these migrants and move towards more tolerance and acceptance of this social group in the spectrum of the Moroccan community. In this report, my claim is that there is nothing better than education to fight and combat racism and xenophobia. In other words, educating the next generations remains – in my opinion - as the most if not the only effective way to reduce the number of racists and xenophobists not only in Morocco but all over the world.

To this effect, the report starts with a discussion of the two phenomena and how they overlap. The second part describes the scope of racism and xenophobia in Morocco. Indeed, the aim of this section is to identify the origins as well as the different facets of this hostility towards irregular Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco. The third part reiterates in details the objectives of the report and how education is seen as the most effective way to fight and reduce these hostile feelings. Based on the conviction that education must be a shared task, the report ends with a list of recommendations that are categorized based on the roles of different stakeholders. The aim is to identify the specificity of each intervention.

I.Framework

Racism and xenophobia are two worldwide spread phenomena. They exist in every corner of the world. While the first refers to any discrimination based on physical characteristic differences, such as skin color, hair type, facial features, among other features, the second refers to the idea that the other is foreign to or originates from outside the community or nation. Indeed, despite the apparent differences between the two phenomena, they greatly connect and overlap in many waysⁱ. Indeed, the fact that the difference and distinction between the local community and 'the other' is based on physical characteristics, it is difficult to differentiate between the two phenomena. Added to this, xenophobia happens against people of different physical features namely when they move to areas -usually new countries- where they are taken as others, foreigners or outsiders. Racism and xenophobia intensify mainly when influxes of these migrants or displaced people increase in a certain country leading thus to a reduction in the host country's services of social welfare, health care and educationⁱⁱ.

Indeed, the issues of racism and xenophobia are nowadays on the lips of all stakeholders including governments, civil society actors and international institutions. This is traced mainly to the growing numbers of migrants and displaced people all around the world and the fact that the right to be protected from any form of discrimination is a fundamental right of individuals in all human right declarations and conventions.

II. Problem statement

Since early 2000s, increasing numbers of sub-Saharan migrants have taken the perilous journey across the Sahara to get into Morocco. Once on Moroccan soil, they find themselves with limited opportunities to obtain gainful employment and without social support other than the scarce resources offered by civil society groups and international organizations. Indeed, both the irregular legal status of and blackness of these migrants make them vulnerable and more open to racism which has its roots in Moroccan memory. To put it more clearly, the expressions *abd* or *soudani* (Sudanese) evoke the long period of trans-Saharan slave trade that structured relations between the Arab-Berber and the 'Negro-African' world for more than a millennium. The slave trade, as an essential vector, has structured the Moroccan imagination when it comes to representations of black Africans.ⁱⁱⁱ

Actually, the evidence of racism and xenophobia against sub-Saharan migrants are always present and take different shapes and forms. The first one is the common use of the terms *3azzi* and *3azziya* for African immigrants and darker-skinned Moroccans who are male and female, respectively^{iv}. The terms have a derogatory meaning; they are used to signify blackness and inferiority. Media is not exempted in this regard. Indeed, racist discourse against sub-Saharan migrants has characterized Moroccan media and society in many instances. For example, A Moroccan weekly magazine called *Maroc Hebdo* published on Friday 2nd, 2012 an article titled "The Black Peril" as a description of dark-skinned sub-Saharan Africans who immigrate either legally or illegally to Morocco^v. The magazine went even further by describing these migrants as being a danger to Morocco's safety. They were seen as a source of trafficking, prostitution and dangerous diseases such as HIV. This has led to mass mobilization among the migrant community and Moroccan civil society. Likewise, in July 2013, the magazine *France 24* covered a story about Casablanca landlords who systematically refused to rent to Africans. A sign reading "*Il est strictement interdit de louer les appartement aux Africains*" or, "It is strictly forbidden to rent apartments to Africans," was hung in the lobbies of several buildings in a Casablanca neighborhood in both French and Arabic.^{vi} Such examples illustrate the continuing xenophobia against black African migrants in Morocco. As a result, social interactions among these migrants and Moroccans remain always limited.

Now, after Morocco officially acknowledged the growth of sub-Saharan migrants in the country by adopting law n°02-03 in November 2003 'on the entry and stay of foreigners' and announcing a migration policy to regularize the status of up to 40,000 irregular immigrants in November 2013^{vii}, the main concern now is how the Moroccan government along with all stakeholders should use education as a tool to eradicate or at least lower racism and xenophobia against these sub-Saharan migrants.

III.Objectives

The objective of this report is twofold. The first is to report on the existing hostility of Moroccans against sub-Saharan migrants and how it is manifested. The second is discussing venues of eradicating or at least reducing this hostility. The focus is mainly on education as both a short and long term tool to reconcile Moroccans with their values of hospitality and tolerance.

IV.Key points

As already discussed, despite the fact that racism and xenophobia vary in scale from one place or country to another, the two issues are increasingly at the heart of political and social debates all over the world. This is because the right to be protected from any type of discrimination is a fundamental right of all human beings regardless of their religious, gender or racial identity. Also, as a precondition to effectively combat racism and xenophobia is to recognize their existence. In other words, shedding light officially on these hostilities help in paving the ground for more tolerance, acceptance and reduction of hatred towards the other.

On the other hand, I believe that all this requires and necessitates a form of education that goes beyond teaching a curriculum; a teaching-learning process that moves into experiential learning, engaging with others, working with groups, and individuals; a process that aims to develop understanding and judgement, and enable action. Indeed, the aim of report is to suggest recommendations that will facilitate and help Moroccan people learn about the benefits of diversity and act by changing the way of treating sub-Saharan immigrants. The focus here is on learning respect because when we respect somebody we value her/him enough to make her/him our focus and to try to see her/him for what she/he is, rather than what we might want her/him to be^{viii}.

V.Recommendations

Based on the input of the discussions raised with both state and non-state actors during my participation in the MENA fellowship program with UNAOC in USA, Germany, France and Spain from October 23 to November 9, 2016, and my exposure to a range of experiences in combating racism and xenophobia, I think that the process of education, as an effective solution, is not and should not be a school task per se but must be a shared task among all stakeholders starting from the family and finishing with government. The aim is to ease the process, broaden the scope of success and reach most if not all social categories of the society. In this regard, the following recommendations could help to mitigate and lower the hostilities in focus. They are categorized based on the areas and nature of interference.

a- At the level of school

The ministry of education along with Moroccan civil society actors working with migrants should focus more on educators than education itself as the first need to have enough cultural differences awareness to help their pupils learn how to accept the 'other' and to construct interventions that don't reinforce stereotypes. They should also make sure that the new textbooks provide a variety of materials, activities and texts with a range of world cultures and allow teachers to discuss them with children so that children would be able to tolerate and accept the 'other'. Last but not least, the ministry of education along with Moroccan civil society actors should provide special trainings to teachers,

educators and caregivers of how to take care of their language to ensure that they don't reinforce boundaries between us and the 'other'.

b- At the family and society levels

Civil society organizations and actors should collaborate with parents and families and involve them in regular campaigns, activities and meetings to sensitize them and make them understand that accepting these migrants is neither dangerous nor harmful to their own community and its traditions. Rather, they should embrace it just as a bold struggle for personal and societal transformation. Mass Media, in its turn, should also play role in educating the public in general and families in particular of the role of richness and diversity of any community. In other words, Moroccan people should be taught that they shouldn't be afraid or feel threatened by irregular sub-Saharan migrants and should change the way they interact with them their daily lives. They should also be aware that their negative attitudes towards the 'other' alienate them from embracing their values of tolerance, hospitality and respect.

c- At the state/ judicial level

Last but not least, Moroccan government should ensure better legal protections for migrants - access to a lawyer and legal aid are crucial to ensuring that their human rights are respected irrespective of their "legal status." This will help sub-Saharan migrants alleviate feelings of racism and hostility towards them. It should also provide practical solutions to facilitate the integration of these migrants in the Moroccan society after legalizing their residency status.

Endnotes

ⁱ. NGO Working Group on Migration and Xenophobia for the World Conference (in International Migration, Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia, 2001. A publication jointly produced by ILO, IOM, OHCHR, in consultation with UNHCR. Cited in UNESCO *Learning to live together*: “Xenophobia” <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/xenophobia/>

ⁱⁱ. Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ. Ali, Bensaad. *Le Maghreb à l'épreuve des migrations subsahariennes. Immigration surémigration*, (Paris: Editions Karthala, 2009), 30.

^{iv}. Yachoulti, Mohammed and Jacobs, Anna. (2016). “Migration Reform in Morocco: Political and social realities behind the 2013 law”. a forthcoming publication

^v Ibid

^{vi}. “Casablanca Landlords Try to Ban Renting to Africans”, *The Observer*. July 19, 2013, Available at <http://observers.france24.com/content/20130719-landlords-casablanca-ban-renting-africans>. (Accessed)

^{vii} Indeed, the 02-03 law, which was adopted in November 2003, was the first legal framework that attempted to regulate migration in Morocco. The purpose of the law was to manage migration at the borders by controlling entry and exit migrants. In the event of the border authorities refusing entry, the law enables applicants to contact the person who had invited them, to notify him/her by any means, notify their country's consulate or notify a lawyer of their choice. In case of the inability to fulfil any of this, the potential migrants can be jailed or fined if he/she attempts to enter the country in an illegal way. (MELLIANI, Mohammed and El CHIGUEUR, Mohammed May, 2009). The law also strengthened legal penalties against people who facilitate or organize irregular entry into or exit from the country. These penalties range from six months to three years imprisonment and heavy fines that go between 50 000 to 500 000 MAD . It also penalized irregular immigrants or emigrants, should they be foreign or national citizens. To tighten control over borders, the law doubled the number of permanent border guards from 4000 to 8000 and created the Direction of Migrants and Borders Surveillance (DMBS). On the other hand, to keep with international human rights conventions, the law protects some foreign nationals from deportation, namely pregnant women and minors (Article 26 of the law). In 2013, the government announced a new and comprehensive migration policy, the first of its kind in the Arab world. The new policy is based mainly on regularizing the residency status of irregular migrants living in Moroccan territory. The policy was an official change from the harsh legal and social attitude towards irregular migrants in Morocco; it marked a radical shift towards the issue of migration in general.

^{viii}. Mark K Smith 2015 “What is education? A definition and discussion” Retrieved on November 21st, 2016 from <http://infed.org/mobi/what-is-education-a-definition-and-discussion/>.

“A significant experience”

Intisar Al Adhe

Education is perhaps the most important tool for human development and for the prevention of radicalization and xenophobia. It is the means by which successive generations develop the values, knowledge and skills for their safety and for future social and cultural development. There are many lessons I have learnt from my significant experience with UNACO the cultural exchange program.

Firstly, in US I found some organizations work to build friendly, peaceful relations, and professional exchanges and use tools to understand the cultures of other countries and work to prevent, mitigate, and resolve violent conflict. I learnt more about UNAOC and PLURAL+ that encourages young people to explore migration, diversity and social inclusion. Also, they use art, design, and technology to empower young people to develop creative solutions and bring awareness to local and global human rights challenges, fostering leadership opportunities to train and organize other young people in their own communities.

Secondly, through my traveling to Europe, the meetings were significant. I learnt how schools are an excellent place to foster mutual trust, break down stereotypes, explain the value of diversity and broaden understanding of universal human rights. Education equips children with the necessary skills to effectively participate in political, social and economic life. The role of education is often stereotyped as ‘peace education’, perceived to involve working with children and youth on peace education programmes for personal development.

In Yemen, Education systems face exceptional challenges during times of violent conflict education may be perceived politically as a powerful tool for ideological development. This can take many forms, ranging from the use of education in the development of liberal ideas, to nation building and, in extreme cases, political indoctrination. Secondly, education may be perceived as an instrument for providing the knowledge and skills necessary for economic development and societal mobility. However, this may or may not include equity concerns, thus further excluding certain groups from economic and social benefits that education can provide.

Finally, education is a means by which social and cultural values are transmitted from generation to generation and, depending on the values concerned, these may convey negative stereotypes or encourage attitudes that explicitly or implicitly condone violence or generate conflict. So my planning is focusing on education and students to disseminate the peace. I am planning to connect many organizations I have been visited, like Soliya Program flagship virtual exchange initiative, TFI, and Berghof Foundation. And I will apply some ideas on my organization in Yemen.