STATE OF YOUTH
IN THE OIC MEMBER STATES
2022

SESRIC

ICYF
ISLAMIC COOPERATION YOUTH FORUM
منتدى التعاون الإسلامي للشباب
FORUM DE LA JEUNESSE DE LA COOPÉRATION ISLAMIQUE

STATE OF YOUTH

IN THE OIC MEMBER STATES

2022

Kudüs Cad. No: 9, Diplomatik Site, 06450 Oran, Ankara –Türkiye

Telephone +90–312–468 6172

Internet www.sesric.org

E-mail pubs@sesric.org

ISBN: 978-625-7162-23-4

Cover design by Savaş Pehlivan, Publication Department, SESRIC.

For additional information, contact Research Department, SESRIC through research@sesric.org

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
COVID-19	Corona virus disease (SARS-CoV-2)
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
EIIP	Employment Intensive Investment Programme
ESALA	East and South Asia and Latin America
ICT	Information Communications Technology
ICYF	Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum
ICYSM	Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers
IIC	International Incubation Center
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information Technology
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
LFPR	Labour force participation rate
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NEET	Not in employment, education, or training
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NYVP	National Youth Volunteering Platform
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
PPP	Purchasing power parity
RM	Malaysian Ringgit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SESRIC	Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries

SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSDE	Safe Schooling through Distance Education
TİKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRIC	United Nations Regional Information Centre
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
USD	United States Dollar
WHO	World Health Organization

FOREWORD

Today, OIC Member States are home to 350.8 million youth (aged 15-24 years) accounting for 18.5% of their total population and 29% of the world's total youth population. This youth bulge represents a remarkable demographic potential for the OIC Member States, offering great opportunities as well as challenges for their socio-economic development and prosperity. In this context, the report on the *"State of Youth in the OIC Member States 2022"*, jointly prepared by the SESRIC and Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF), examines the state of youth in the OIC Member States with a view to identify key challenges faced by them, understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the development of youth, highlight best practices and formulate a set of policy recommendations to spearhead the post-pandemic recovery.

Over the years, OIC Member States have made considerable efforts to empower their youth and harness their potential through education, skill development, employment and social inclusion. However, despite noticeable progress, the OIC group continued to lag behind the global and other country groups averages in almost all aspects of youth welfare and development. In the education sector, for instance, the OIC youth literacy rate of 84.8% remained well below the world average of 91.3% in 2020 with relatively low investments in education infrastructure and personnel. This is also the case for OIC youth labour force participation rate of 37.4% compared to the world average of 40.1% and the resulting youth unemployment rate of 15.7% compared to the world average of 14.9% in 2022. The OIC group also underperformed when it comes to youth's access to mental healthcare and platforms for socio-political participation.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated the plight of youth in the OIC Member States and elsewhere by halting educational activities, limiting social contacts and stalling job prospects. For instance, OIC Member States, on average, suspended schools for a total of 27 weeks, much longer than the global average of 22 weeks, which affected more than 150 million young learners. In the same vein, lockdowns and restrictive measures have also led to a decline in the average youth labour force participation rate by 1.9 percentage points in 2020 as compared to 2019, thus, pushing the youth inactivity rate further up in several OIC Member States.

The relatively poor state of youth affairs in many OIC Member States emanates from a barrage of systemic, individual, and societal factors including limited availability of financial sources, inadequate inclusion of youth in decision-making and civic apparatus, lack of social protection coverage, and degradation of young people's opinions and experiences. In fact, despite some country-specific

differences, there are many commonalities among the OIC Member States in terms of problems faced by youth and the OIC Youth Strategy, which was adopted by the 4th Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers in 2018, charts out a framework of cooperation to address common issues and challenges that hinder youth's development and affect their quality of life across the Islamic world. In order to improve the situation, therefore, OIC Member States need to reassess and recalibrate their policies pertaining to youth's education, employment, healthcare, and social participation within the framework of the OIC Youth Strategy.

I firmly believe that the findings of this report will be instrumental in understanding the state of youth, highlighting the key challenges amid the pandemic, guiding cross-sectoral coordination to empower young people and enhancing intra-OIC cooperation that can ensure the full participation of youth in the sustainable development and post-pandemic recovery of the OIC Member States.

Nebil DABUR
Director General
SESRIC

FOREWORD

The world has endured transformations since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, with a direct impact on youth throughout the OIC region, which must now contend with challenges of youth unemployment, youth mental and physical wellbeing, education, and self-actualization. The report on the "*State of Youth in the OIC Member States 2022"*, jointly prepared by the SESRIC and ICYF, seeks to address and engage with these challenges by exploring possibilities for enhanced policy-making, capacity building, human and socio-economic development, and stakeholder participation.

The report highlights the role of youth as dynamic agents of socio-economic growth and development. It also emphasizes research and data as key components enabling an accurate, informed assessment of youth's condition in the OIC Member States inclusive of their hopes and aspirations. The report favours cogent analysis of successful best practices and experiences throughout the OIC Member States, with an emphasis on impact and practical feasibility.

In this regard, the ICYF has been instrumental in producing a thematic section in this report, titled 'COVID-19 Best Practices from the OIC Member States, which provides an in-depth overview of the youth best practices and policy success stories throughout the OIC Member States with reference to the unique challenges of connectivity and engagement posed by the global pandemic.

This edition of the report focuses on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth, as well as underlines the necessity of coherent, cohesive, and informed policy recommendations geared toward tackling complex youth-specific issues. Engaging with complexity through effective public policy is more necessary at a time when the region is in the grip of a global crisis and multiple conflicts while paving the way for joint multilateral action by OIC bodies and policies with a view toward stability, sustainability, and the potential to nurture and direct youth capital.

Accordingly, ICYF continues to prioritize strategic outcomes and policy coherence that can effectively mitigate complex and often intertwined challenges faced by youth across the OIC region and beyond. Primarily, this occurs through constructive reverse linkages and partnerships with the Member States, partners, and institutions. Nonetheless, as ICYF continues to strive towards holistic capacities that can stimulate and further facilitate the conjunction of OIC youth strategy priorities and of the SDGs. To that end, ICYF seeks to respond effectively to youth challenges, while tackling nuanced factors currently diverting the OIC region from realizing SDGs by means of developing far-reaching

platforms, networks, and knowledge bases with a direct impact on access to education, finance, and health amongst other infrastructure, while also supporting increased internet accessibility and entrepreneurship infrastructure.

The path forward, though significant, requires stakeholder backed investments in dynamic and sustainable solutions that can further enhance the constructive role of youth in development and decision-making, while providing sustainable opportunities, education, healthcare, support for mental health, and policy-driven empowerment for youth to reach their full potential.

Taha AYHAN
President
ICYF

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A research team at SESRIC led by Tazeen Qureshi and comprising Cem Tintin and Fahman Fathurrahman prepared this report. The research was conducted under the general supervision of Mazhar Hussain, Director of Research Department, and the directives of H.E. Nebil Dabur, Director General of SESRIC.

The contributions of individual authors were as follows: Tazeen Qureshi prepared Chapter 1, Introduction, and sections 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5 in Chapter 2 on the State of Youth in the OIC Member States. Cem Tintin prepared sections 3.1, in Chapter 3 on the COVID-19 Pandemic and Youth. Fahman Fathurrahman prepared section 2.2 in Chapter 2 and sub-section on Learning Deficit in Chapter 3 of the report. Chapter 4, Policy Recommendations, was prepared jointly by Tazeen Qureshi, Cem Tintin, and Fahman Fathurrahman. Tazeen Qureshi also helped with data visualisation and formatting of the report.

The SESRIC research team is grateful to the experts from the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) for facilitating the preparation of this report under the guidance of H.E. Taha Ayhan, President of the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF). The experts from ICYF made the following contributions to this report: Tugba Ceren Cerci, Director of International Projects Department, and Amel Ouchenane, Expert at Department of International Projects, provided comments on the outline of the report. Amel Ouchenane, with contributions from Jvaharat Dinavasova, Expert at the ICYF Young Business Hub Department, prepared section 3.2 in Chapter 3. Amel Ouchenane also contributed to Chapter 4 on Policy Recommendations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Out of the 1.2 billion young people in the world, some 29% are currently residents in the 57 OIC Member States. By 2050, the youth population in the OIC region is expected to make up a third of the world's total youth population. Even though the OIC Member States have made noteworthy progress in improving the state of their youth, many of them are not able to realize the full potential of their young population. In varying degrees, youth in the OIC Member States face a number of challenges ranging from economic inactivity and limited social participation to concerns over health and wellbeing and education and skills development. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has reversed decades of human development around the world, particularly amongst vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. The COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed the vulnerability and unpreparedness of crisis management systems in the OIC Member States. At the same time, there is an opportunity to learn from this public health crisis and to build back better.

Education and Skills Development

The OIC Member States have made great progress in the field of education and skill development. Yet, the youth literacy rate in the OIC Member States was some of the lowest in the world at 84.8% compared to the world average of 91.3% in 2020. Meanwhile, significant gender disparity exists in the OIC Member States in terms of access to education with a literacy rate of 87.8% amongst young men and boys and 81.6% amongst young women and girls. At the country level, youth literacy rates were over 90% in the majority of OIC Member States, with the exception being several Member States in Sub-Sahara Africa. The OIC Member States also had the lowest gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education (30.9%), the least number of teachers in tertiary schools (1.6%), and the lowest government expenditure per student in tertiary education (USD $3,068 PPP) in 2020. As a result, outbound student mobility in the OIC Member States has increased steadily since 2000.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a particularly severe impact on youth education and skill development. Schools throughout the world were progressively shut down as a precaution against the spread of the virus. These closures impacted over 1.6 billion students around the world, including more than 150 million young learners in the OIC Member States. Between February 2020 and December 2021, OIC Member States suspended schools for a total of 27 weeks, far longer than the global average of 22 weeks, increasing the risk of students dropping out or not returning to school, loss of learning, and probable loss of future earnings.

Restoring lost learning is critical to averting generational catastrophe. Monitoring students' missed learning opportunities is necessary to determine the extent of the damage caused by school closure. Additionally, schools must begin adjusting their curricula and establishing remedial programs. There is an opportunity to use lessons learned from the successes and failures of various methods during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to deploy more effective and equitable approaches to closing learning gaps for all students.

Employment and Entrepreneurship

The labour market conditions in many OIC Member States are not very promising for youth. The youth labour force participation rate in the OIC Member States (37.4%) is low when compared to the world (40.1%) in 2022. There is also a 20.7 percentage points difference between young women (26.8%) and young men's (47.5%) labour force participation rates. Due to a combination of reasons, youth unemployment rates in the OIC Member States are also at an all-time high (15.7%) as compared to the global average (14.9%) in 2022. Additionally, youth unemployment is particularly high amongst young women (around 2 percentage points more than young men). This in turn has led to an increase in youth inactivity rates around the world. In the OIC Member States, the youth inactivity rate in 2022 was recorded at 62.6%, which is 2.7 percentage points higher than the world. The youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) rate is also the highest in the OIC Member States at 27.7% as compared to 23.3% world average. Again, the youth NEET rate was significantly higher amongst young women in the OIC Member States (around 20.7 percentage points more than young men).

Even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the labour market outcomes for the youth in many OIC Member States were alarming as reflected by relatively high unemployment rates and limited participation rates in the labour force. The pandemic has just made the economic situation of OIC youth worse on several fronts such as by triggering the unemployment rate and deteriorating the labour market outlook for youth entrepreneurs. It is mainly because of the strict containment measures put in place and the slowdown in economic activities. Moreover, sentiments of youth entrepreneurs have been affected negatively that discouraged them to take any additional risks in presence of high uncertainties in markets. The increased prevalence of economic inactivity among youth was associated with an increase in the proportion of youth NEET in a number of OIC Member States during the pandemic. The disruptions in the education sector also limited the learning of new skills demanded by the labour market for millions of youth in the OIC Member States. In order to overcome challenges faced by the youth, many OIC Member States have taken bold policy measures. Yet, additional and more structured measures are essential to restore

the confidence of youth entrepreneurs and encourage the youth bulge to actively participate in labour force. Moreover, some incentives and quota schemes to stimulate youth employment could help many OIC Member States in the recovery from the pandemic.

Health and Well-being

In the domain of health, young people in the OIC Member States are more likely to die due to communicable diseases (217.4 thousand deaths), followed by injuries (209 thousand deaths) and non-communicable diseases (169.7 thousand deaths). This is especially concerning as a number of communicable diseases are either preventable or can be cured with timely interventions. Adolescent fertility, for instance, is concerning in OIC Member States (65.9 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19) as compared to the world (41.1 births) and at least 27 OIC Member States have a higher percentage of women married before the age of 18 as compared to the world average of 19.5%. Furthermore, young people's mental health is under grave threat from not just routine stressors but also unprecedented events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The crude youth suicide rate in the OIC Member States was 5.5 in 2019 which is lower than the world average (7.7). However, a majority of deaths caused by intentional injuries amongst youth were due to interpersonal violence (44.1 million deaths), followed by self-harm (29.3 million deaths) and collective violence (14.9 million deaths). At the same time, the availability of mental health staff and mental health facilities remained severely limited in many OIC Member States.

When it comes to the youth segment, the negative health outcomes of the pandemic are more concentrated in the category of mental health. In particular, the containment measures and disruptions in daily life have impacted the mental well-being of youth in the OIC Member States. For example, school closures and curfews fuelled higher levels of loneliness among youth. If not addressed properly, millions of youth could continue to suffer from anxiety and high stress caused during the pandemic in the OIC Member States. It is, therefore, need of the hour to take swift policy measures to improve the well-being of youth and respond to their emerging needs stemming from the pandemic. This requires improving health response capacities in the Member States and developing comprehensive mental services and care centres that are targeting youth populations.

Social Participation

Youth's social participation levels have been on a decline globally since 2010. According to the Youth Development Index 2020, global youth political and civic participation declined by 0.18%, volunteered time declined by 3.4%, and score for opinions voiced declined by around 3%. At the same time, recognition for community improvement amongst youth increased by more than 10%, signalling

an increasing interest in this area. Around the world, in 2020, youth's political and civic participation deteriorated in 102 countries and improved in 79 countries. Social participation amongst youth is the highest in several OIC Member States in Sub-Saharan Africa and lowest in several OIC Member States in the Middle East and North Africa. Yet, specific examples from the OIC Member States reiterate the benefits of youth's social participation for not only socio-economic development but also peacebuilding, accountability, and human development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to changes in traditional social relations and the social participation of youth in the OIC Member States and elsewhere. In particular, measures to contain the spread of the virus forced the youth to develop new skills in social relations such as by increasing their reliance on the internet and social media. Restrictions on travel and curfews halted social gatherings of youth including civil society events, meetings, and social awareness-raising events. Consequently, all these adverse effects have increased the risk of addiction to the internet, video games, and social media among the young during the pandemic. In this context, OIC Member States should take measures to encourage the social participation of youth such as through volunteerism activities. In this way, policymakers could channel the energy and dynamism of the youth for the betterment of their societies. Moreover, while developing effective policies for the youth, more attention should also be paid to some disadvantaged groups like young refugees and migrants in order to have more inclusive youth social policies.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The OIC Member States are home to 350.8 million youth between the ages of 15-24 which account for 18.5% of their total population. The youth population in the OIC Member States is dynamic, innovative, and perseverant, signalling optimism for their vast potential. However, without a proper support system in place, youth in the OIC Member States will neither reach their potential nor be able to contribute to the sustainable development of their societies. For the OIC Member States, critical factors such as educational attainment, employment opportunities, mental health services, and social participation can determine the viability of their youth population. This is why the OIC Member States, which are home to some 29% of the world's total youth population, need to assess their policies pertaining to young people's education, employment, health, and social participation.

More importantly, even though young people have not borne the physical burden of the COVID-19 pandemic as much as the elderly population, they have been severely affected by the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. With rising youth unemployment, worsening mental health, and limited opportunities to interact socially, the pandemic has brought a set of challenges to youth. Recovery from the pandemic requires that policy makers in the OIC Member States understand the severity of how the pandemic has affected young people and tailor remedial policies and programs targeted toward the short-term and long-term needs of youth.

Against this background, this report examines the state of youth in the OIC Member States with a view to identifying key challenges faced by them, understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the development of youth and drawing a set of policy recommendations surrounding the pandemic response and recovery. Apart from this introduction, Chapter 2 includes four sections in the following areas: education and skills development; employment

and entrepreneurship; health and well-being; and social participation. Chapter 3 of the report focuses on the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on youth and the best practices that OIC Member States have employed to support youth during the pandemic and include them in recovery efforts. Lastly, Chapter 4 of the Report provides a set of policy recommendations for the consideration of policy makers presented both at the national and intra-OIC cooperation levels.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF YOUTH IN OIC MEMBER STATES

This chapter analyses the state of youth development in the OIC Member States by using a holistic approach, which examines the literature and looks at the relevant statistical datasets. It is sub-divided into four sections in parallel with the priorities specified and addressed in the OIC Youth Strategy: Education and skills development, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, and social participation. It uses a combination of indices and indicators for a comparative assessment of the state of youth in the OIC Member States, non-OIC developing countries, developed countries, and the world. The rationale is to identify areas that require further attention from policy makers, to inform policy makers of the challenges faced by youth in the Member States, and to guide their efforts to develop new and effective policies to counter the identified challenges.

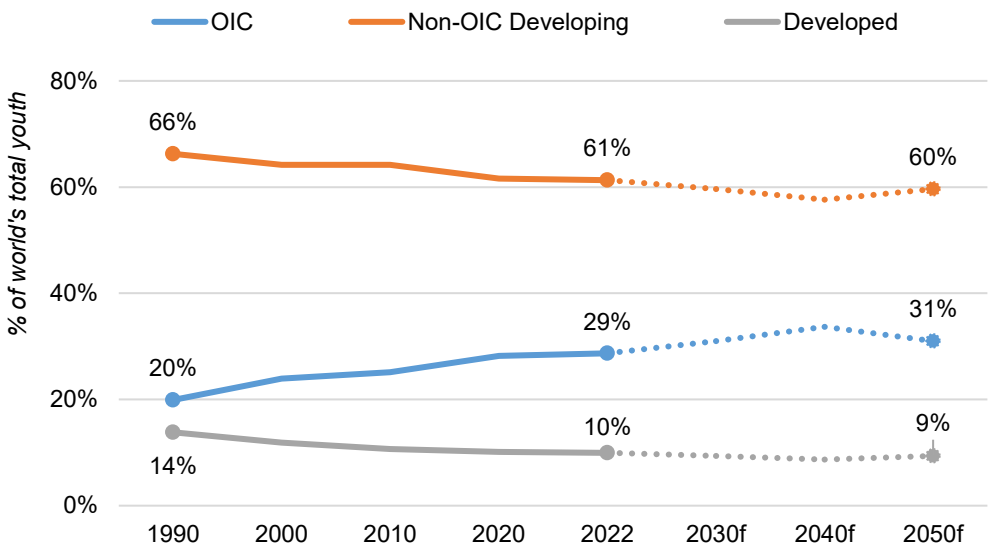
2.1. Demographic Profile of Youth

The youth population (15-24 years) around the world has increased by 21% between 1990 and 2022 from 1 billion to 1.2 billion. In the next three decades, forecasts predict that the global youth population will further increase to 1.3 billion. However, the youth population in developed countries has been declining steadily since 1990 and forecasts predict that it will continue to decline in the coming years (Figure 2.1). Developed countries were home to 14% (or 139.4 million) of the world's total youth in 1990 but in 2022, they hosted only 10% (or 121.8 million) of the world's total youth. By 2050, forecasts predict that the share of the world's total youth living in developed countries will further decline to 9% (or 114.4 million). Similarly, even though non-OIC developing countries are home to the largest share of young people, this share has declined by 5 percentage points from 1990 to 2022 (from 66% to 61% or 749.4 million). By 2050, forecasts

predict that the share of the world's total youth living in non-OIC developing countries will further decline to 60% (or 752.4 million).

In contrast, the trend in the OIC Member States is the opposite. In 1990, OIC Member States were home to 20% (or 200.8 million) of the world's total youth. In 2022, this share reached 29% (or 350.8 million) and forecasts predict that it will further rise to 31% (or 471.5 million) by 2050. Out of the 29% of the world's total youth currently residing in the OIC Member States, 179.5 million (or 51.1%) are male and 171.3 million (or 48.8%) are female.

Figure 2.1: Share of Youth Population (15-24 years) (%), 1990-2050



Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on UN DESA's World Population Prospects 2019. 'f' denotes forecasted values.

An increasing share of the youth population in OIC members constitutes a window of opportunity. A higher youth population (also often referred to as a 'youth bulge') can mean lower dependencies on public goods and services and better social, economic, and demographic prospects in the future. However, the potential of a youth bulge is highly contingent upon young people having access to critical infrastructure and goods such as education, productive employment, healthcare, etc.

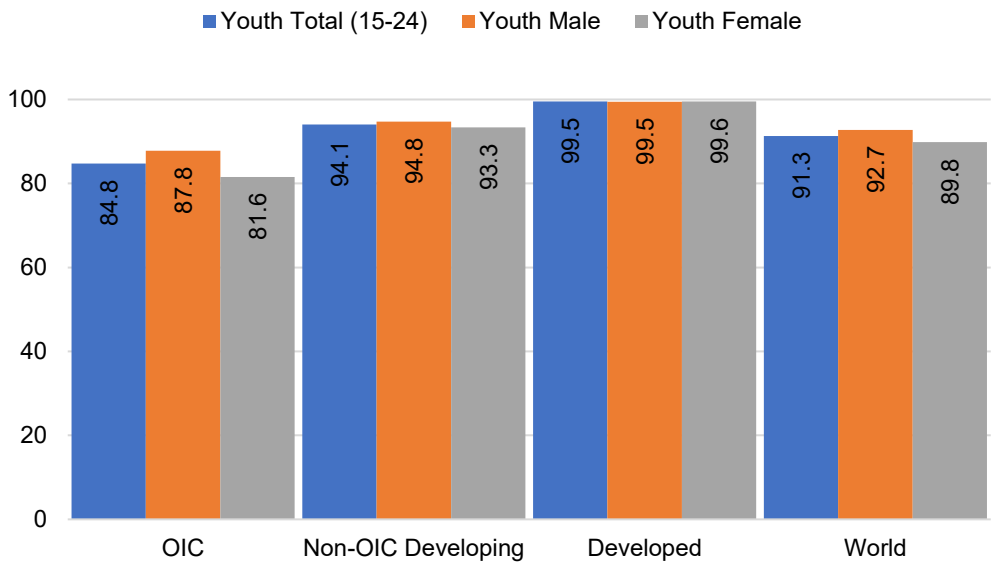
2.2. Education and Skills Development

Youth Literacy

According to recent data from the UNESCO UIS database, youth literacy rates in the OIC Member States, on average, are relatively better than adult literacy rates.

However, the average youth literacy rate in the OIC Member States remained lower than that of non-OIC developing countries, the global average, and developed countries (Figure 2.2). On average, 84.8% of youth in the OIC Member States are literate, which is lower than the global average (91.3%) and the average of non-OIC developing countries (94.1%). On the bright side, since the publication of our last report (SESRIC & ICYF, 2020), the youth literacy rate in the OIC group has increased by 2.5 percentage points. Additionally, the literacy gap between males (87.8%) and females (81.6%) has dropped to 6.2 percentage points, down from 6.8 in prior years.

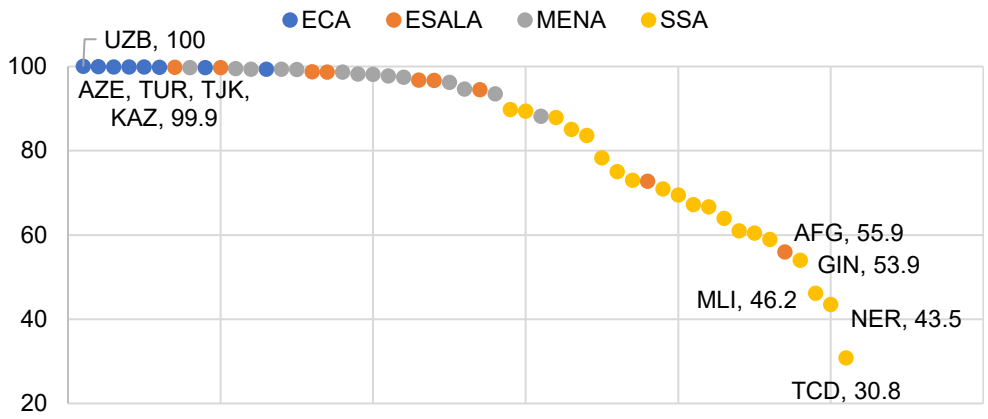
Figure 2.2: Youth Literacy Rates (%), 2020



Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on UNESCO's UIS Database. The weighted averages are calculated using latest data available between 2012 and 2020.

At the individual country level, youth literacy rates are above 90% in a majority of OIC Member States. Only 12 OIC Member States have youth literacy rates below 70%. There were 25 OIC Member States with youth literacy rates of at least 95%. Uzbekistan was the top-performing OIC country, with a youth literacy rate of 100%, followed by Azerbaijan, Türkiye, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan, all of which had a 99.9% of youth literacy rate (Figure 2.3). On contrary, Chad, with a rate of 30.8%, is the OIC country with the lowest rate of youth literacy. It is followed by Niger (43.5%), Mali (46.2%), Guinea (53.9%), and Afghanistan (55.9%).

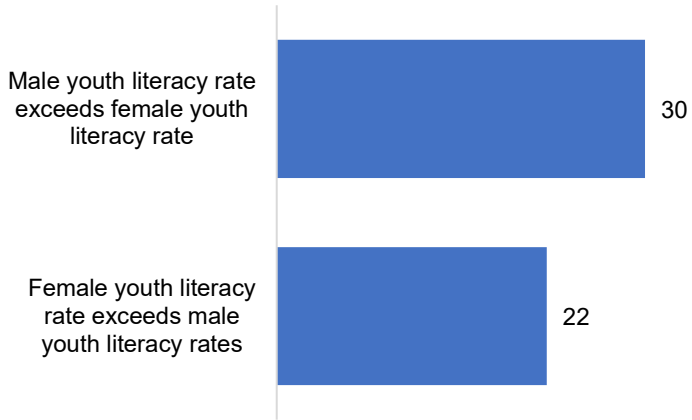
Figure 2.3: Youth Literacy Rates in OIC Member States (%), 2020



Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on UNESCO's UIS Database. Latest data available for each country between 2012 and 2020.

In the several OIC Member States, the disparity between young male and female literacy rates is persistent (Figure 2.4). There has been progress since the last report, with more countries closing the gender gap in youth literacy. According to the latest available, gender disparity is in favour of young females in 22 OIC Member States, with a zero or negative difference in literacy rates between male and female young populations. However, in 30 OIC Member States, this disparity is positive, meaning that the average literacy rate of young males exceeds the average literacy rate of young females. At the individual country level, the largest disparity is observed in Guinea, where the male youth literacy rate was recorded at 69.6% compared to the female youth literacy rate of 43.5% in 2020.

Figure 2.4: Number of OIC Member States with a Gender Gap in Literacy, 2020*



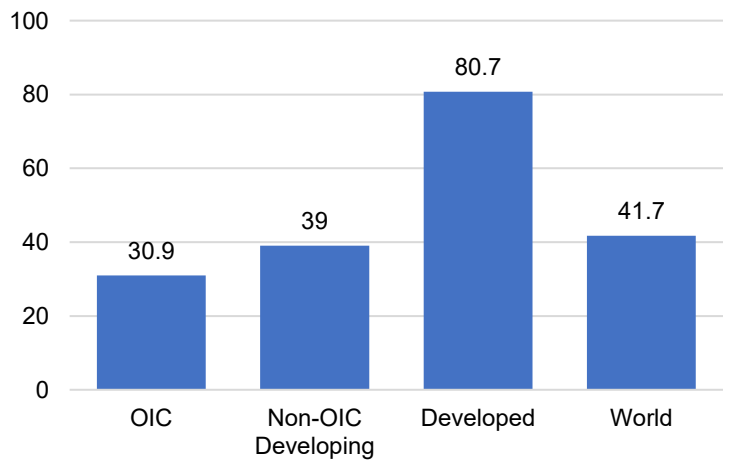
Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on UNESCO's UIS Database. Latest data available for each country between 2012 and 2020. OIC n = 52.

In education, gender inequality is manifested by a lack of access to the availability of gender-responsive educational infrastructure, materials, and training programmes. Gender-equitable education systems empower young people and foster the development of important life skills – such as self-management, communication, negotiation, and critical thinking – necessary for young people to succeed (UNICEF, n.d.). Studies also suggest that gender equality in education has positively related to environmental sustainability (Doğan & Kirikkaleli, 2021). Therefore, it is quite crucial for the OIC Member States to not only lower the number of illiterate youth; but also ensure equal access to education for all.

Participation in Education

Tertiary education enables students to acquire advanced information and skills directly following secondary school or later in life. Increased tertiary education enrolment results in a more trained and highly skilled workforce that actively contributes to a country's economic development and competitive advantage. Due to the voluntary nature of tertiary education, changes in tertiary school enrolment reflect changes in the perceived availability and value of tertiary education, as well as the number of the conventional tertiary-school-age population. The gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education is depicted in Figure 2.5, which represents the percentage of population-aged students enrolled in tertiary education. According to the most recent data available, the gross enrolment ratio for tertiary school students in the OIC Member States was 30.9%, which was lower than the global average (41.7%), the average of non-OIC developing countries (39.0%), and developed countries (80.7%).

Figure 2.5: Gross Enrolment Ratio for Tertiary Education, 2020



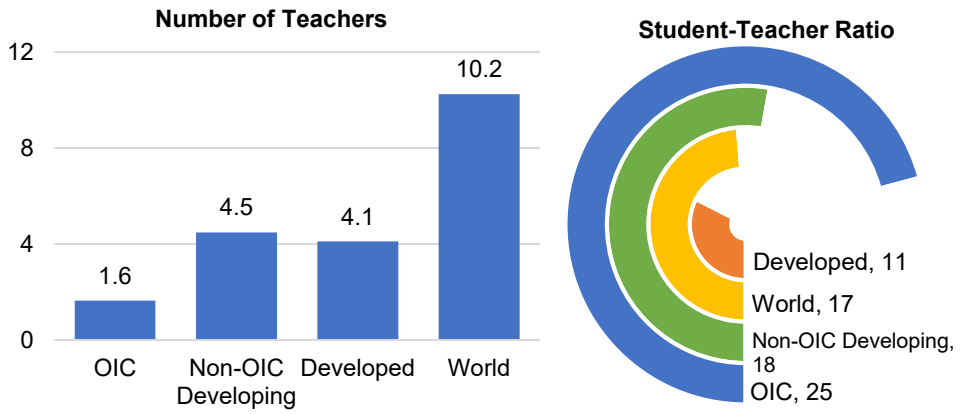
Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on UNESCO's UIS Database. The weighted averages are calculated using latest data available between 2012 and 2020.

Teachers in Tertiary Education

The number of teaching personnel employed in tertiary schools in the OIC Member States rose from 1.5 million in 2018 (SESRIC & ICYF, 2020) to 1.6 million in 2020 (Figure 2.6, left). Additionally, the proportion of OIC Member States' tertiary students in the worldwide tertiary school population has climbed from 14.9% in 2018 to 16.1% in 2020.

The student-teacher ratio measures the number of pupils enrolled in a school in comparison to the number of teachers employed at that institution. A high student-teacher ratio usually indicates that the school or school system is experiencing a set of challenges such as limited financial sources and governance. In 2020, there are 41.2 million students enrolled in tertiary education in 43 OIC Member States, while there are 49 million tertiary students enrolled in 38 developed countries. However, the student-teacher ratio at the tertiary level is the greatest in the OIC Member States, at a ratio of 25 (Figure 2.6, right). This ratio is much higher than in non-OIC developing nations (18) and in developed countries (11), suggesting a higher proportion of academicians and teachers at the tertiary level. The higher ratios in the OIC Member States indicate that the number of teachers entering the education sector is insufficient to keep up with the increasing number of students.

Figure 2.6: Number of Teaching Staff in Tertiary Education (left, millions) and Student-Teacher Ratios in Tertiary Schools (right), 2020



Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on UNESCO's UIS Database. The weighted averages are calculated using latest data available between 2012 and 2020. For figure on right: OIC n = 43, non-OIC developing n = 74, and developed n = 35.

In the many OIC Member States, the number of teachers in tertiary schools needs to be increased substantially in order to keep up with and compete with other countries' groupings. Turkmenistan (10), Azerbaijan (10), Tunisia (12), Brunei Darussalam (12), and Kyrgyzstan (12) had the lowest teacher-student ratios in

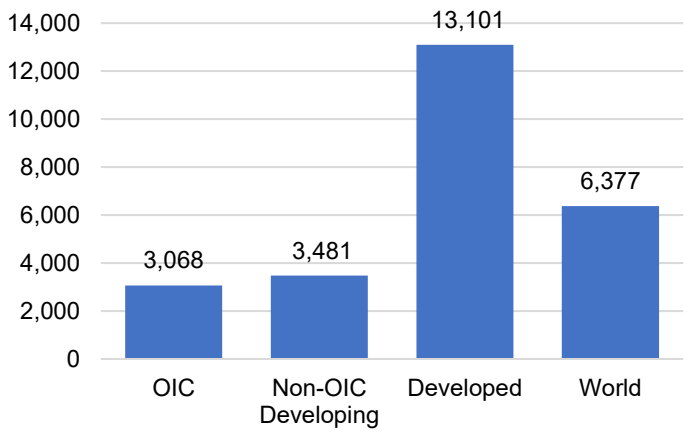
tertiary education. On the other hand, a teacher in Syria taught up to 58 tertiary level students, 55 in Mauritania, and 50 in Sudan. Such higher ratios reflect the existence of significant shortages of teachers at the higher level of study.

While the OIC Member States are making headway in reducing teacher-student ratios, collectively, there is still a need to establish policies that would help further reduce the student-teacher ratio. It is difficult or impossible for the youth to obtain a quality education and learning at any level if the teacher-student ratio continues to remain high.

Government Expenditure on Education

Educational resources are a critical component of education. Youth literacy, empowerment, and development are all heavily dependent on the quality of available educational resources. According to the latest data, government expenditures on tertiary level education per student show great discrepancies across countries and groups. In 2020, the average per student expenditure in the OIC Member States (US$3,068) is significantly less than the global average of PPP US$6,377 (Figure 2.7). The gap is even larger if compared with developed countries. On average, developed countries spend around PPP US$13,101; nearly four times higher than the OIC average. Lack of investment in tertiary education has a set of negative impacts on youth's development that could affect the stock of human capital and skilled labour force of these economies. In turn, this also has negative implications for economic growth and development.

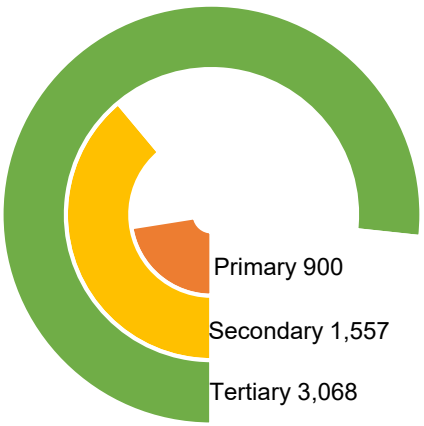
Figure 2.7: Government Expenditure per Student in Tertiary Education (PPP US$), 2020



Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on UNESCO's UIS Database. The weighted averages are calculated using latest data available between 2012 and 2020. For figure on right: OIC n = 37, non-OIC developing n = 68, and developed n = 37.

At the OIC level, the distribution of government expenditures on education by educational level varies. On average, OIC Member States spend more on tertiary education (PPP US$3,068) and less on primary education (PPP US$900) (Figure 2.8). At the individual country level, Brunei Darussalam spends the most on education per student at the tertiary level (PPP US$19,707), followed by Oman (PPP US$12,688), Bahrain (PPP US$11,035), Malaysia (PPP US$7,340), and Burkina Faso (PPP US$5,655). It is important to emphasize that disparity also exist among the sub-regions of the OIC Member States. For instance, the OIC Member States in Sub-Saharan Africa, on average, have lower rates of government education spending.

Figure 2.8: Distribution of Government Expenditure on Education per Student in OIC Member States (PPP US$), 2020



Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on UNESCO's UIS Database. Latest data available between 2012 and 2020.

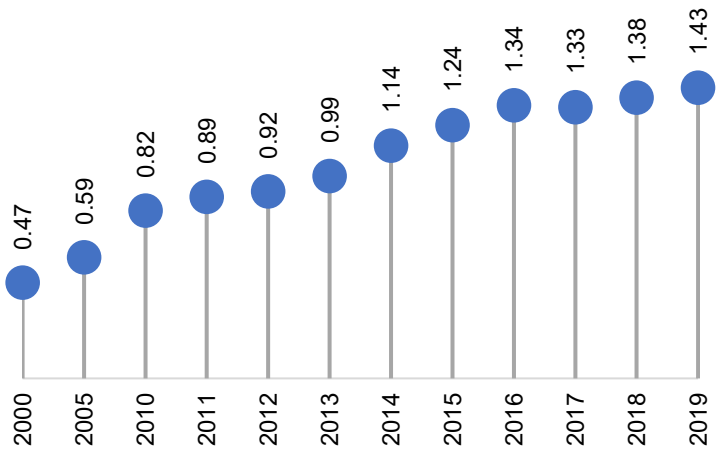
Youth Student Mobility

According to the UNESCO UIS database, almost 5.3 million students studied abroad in 2019. A significant increase from 3.4 million in 2010 and 4.3 million in 2015. The OIC Member States are gaining popularity as tertiary education destinations because of considerable expenditures and reforms in the education sector, which have resulted in a rise in educational quality and generated opportunities for both domestic and international students (SESRIC, 2019). However, a sizable proportion of youth living in the OIC Member States continues to study overseas. Students in the OIC Member States preferred to go overseas to countries with developed education sectors, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe.

As illustrated in Figure 2.9, the number of students from the OIC Member States studying abroad for tertiary education increased steadily between 2000 and 2019.

It reached a record high of 1.43 million students in 2019. The underlying factors fuelling the growth of outbound students in the OIC group include economic growth, high youth unemployment, and growing secondary school enrolments.

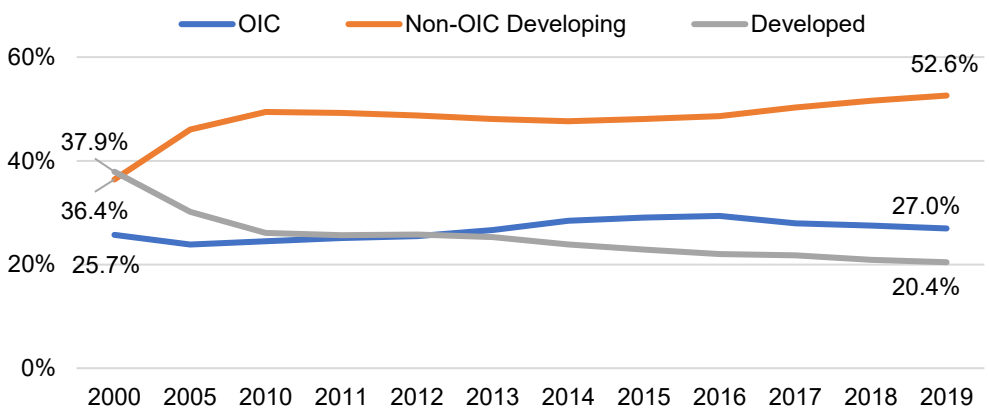
Figure 2.9: Outbound Students Mobility in OIC Member States (millions), 2000-2019



Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on UNESCO's UIS Database.

In 2000, OIC Member States accounted for 25.7% of all foreign outbound students, although this figure declined somewhat to 24.5% in 2010. Their shares have gradually increased since then, reaching 27.0% in 2019 (Figure 2.10). Non-OIC developing countries raised their share of the global foreign outbound students from 36.4% in 2000 to 52.6% in 2019. On the other hand, the share of developed countries decreased significantly during the same period, from 37.9% to 20.4%.

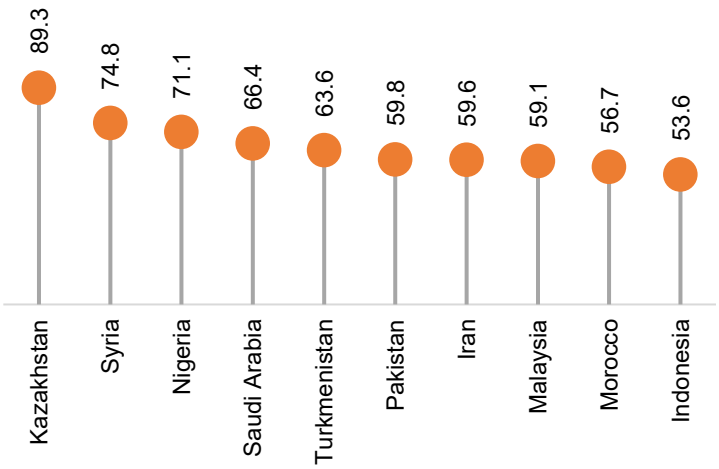
Figure 2.10: Share in Outbound Students Mobility, 2000-2019



Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on UNESCO's UIS Database.

Kazakhstan (89.3 thousand), Syria (74.8 thousand), Nigeria (71.1 thousand), Saudi Arabia (66.4 thousand), and Turkmenistan (63.6 thousand) were the OIC Member States that sent the most students overseas (Figure 2.11). These countries combined sent 26% of the students in the OIC group abroad. The largest increase in the number of outbound students in the OIC during 2010–2019 was observed in Syria, with an increase of almost 60 thousand, followed by Kazakhstan (50 thousand) and Turkmenistan (47 thousand).

Figure 2.11: OIC Member States with the Highest Outbound Students Mobility (thousands), 2019



Source: UNESCO's UIS Database.

Youth student mobility is closely related to youth migration. Both were related to people moving from one place to another. Even nowadays, the line between the two is becoming thinner as youth mobility tends to encourage migration. There are many reasons why people move, such as a lack of opportunities, inequality, or threats to their own well-being. All of these things can lead to a very strong desire for youth to move around and look for new or at least different ways of learning, training, and working (Cairns, 2021).

It is imperative to create a paradigm that simultaneously integrates mobility and migration. In this respect, the migration paradigm needs to be able to deal with new things like the growing number of students moving around, and the need many young people have to look for jobs in other countries. In many OIC Member States, the idea of youth mobility has been passed through generations due to the historical culture of migration. For example, in the OIC Member States in Central Asia, communities are characterised by a historical culture of migration to Russia and to European countries. Migration is now the norm, and people

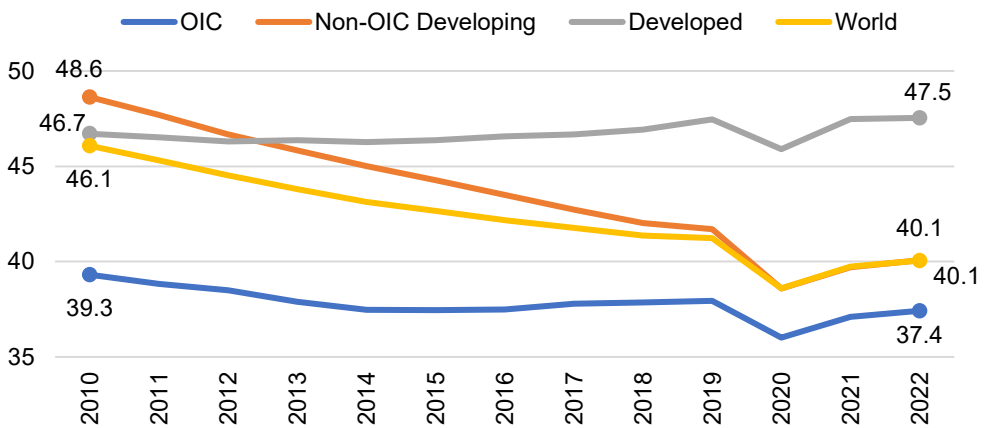
share their plans to move with each other and with each other through their circles (Zwick, 2021).

2.3. Employment and Entrepreneurship

Youth Labour Force Participation

Labour force participation is indicative of the level of integration of youth into labour market. Integrating youth into the labour market is essential to their ability to earn an income, live a fruitful life, and contribute to the socio-economic development of their communities. According to ILO estimates, the youth labour force participation rate (LFPR) has been variable throughout the past decade, with the rate corresponding heavily with economic downturns, recessions, and crises. For instance, the global youth LFPR was 41.2% in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic began and declined to 38.6% in 2020 (Figure 2.12). It has since recovered to some extent, reaching 39.7% in 2021 and 40.1% in 2022. Similarly, youth LFPR in the OIC group was measured at 37.9% in 2019, it declined to 36% in 2020. It started to recover in 2021 and increased to 37.1% before climbing up to 37.4% in 2022.

Figure 2.12: Youth Labour Force Participation Rates (%), 2010-2022



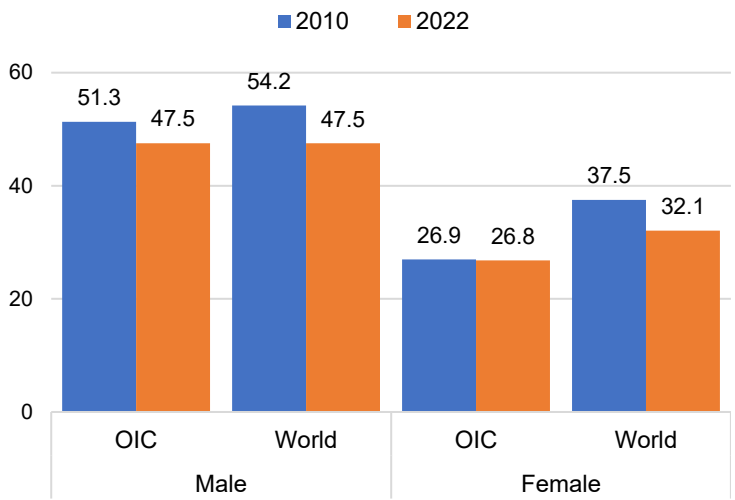
Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on ILOSTAT Modelled Estimates and UN DESA's World Population Prospects 2019.

In the past decade, youth LFPR in the OIC Member States, on average, has been consistently lower than that of developed countries and non-OIC developing countries. Participation rates of young men and women are affected by institutional factors such as norms and preferences (e.g. youth's mobility, value of female youth's work, discrimination based on age/experience); economic factors (e.g. comparison of the net earnings with benefits of unpaid work); and social and institutional factors (e.g. age, gender, employable skills) (SESRIC,

2020). Furthermore, when youth participate in the labour force, they may go into relatively less regulated sectors such as the agricultural or services sectors in some OIC Member States.

Girls and young women, between the ages of 15 and 24, have considerably lower labour force participation rates in the world when compared to LFPR of boys and young men in the same age group. In 2010, for example, male youth LFPR was 54.2% and female youth LFPR was 37.5% (Figure 2.13). Similarly, in 2022, female youth LFPR is 15.4 percentage points lower than male youth LFPR. This gender disparity is starker in the case of OIC Member States where female youth LFPR is 20.7 percentage points lower than male youth LFPR in the same year. One of the main factors discouraging women from participating in the labour force is the gender pay gap. There are several interrelated factors extending the gender pay gap such as part-time work, unpaid work, care responsibilities, occupational segregation, social norms, implicit biases, discrimination, and weak labour market institutions (SESRIC, 2020).

Figure 2.13: Youth Labour Force Participation Rates by Gender (%), 2010 vs. 2022



Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on ILOSTAT Modelled Estimates and UN DESA's World Population Prospects 2019.

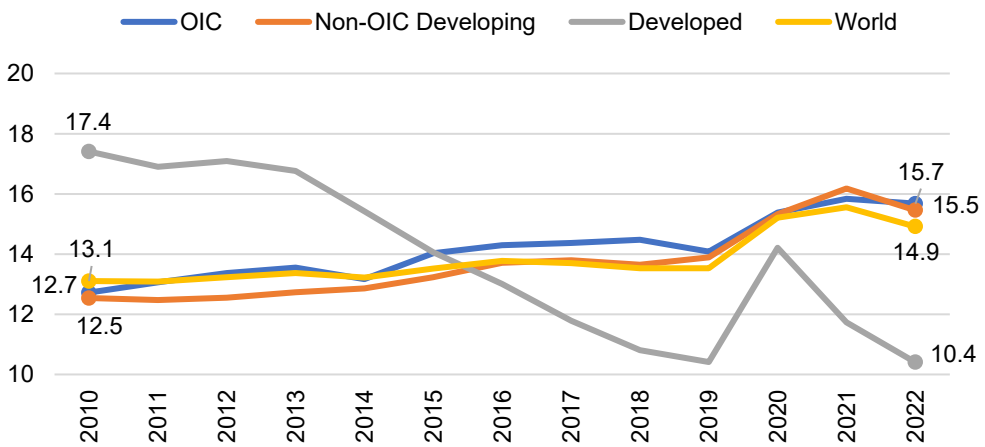
Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment can adversely affect the quality of life and developmental trajectory of a young individual. Youth unemployment is also a challenge to economic development because of its negative impact on the productivity of labour market and government expenditure on public services. Around the world, youth unemployment has increased from 13.1% in 2010 to 14.9% in 2022 (Figure 2.14).

Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the youth unemployment rate in the world was 13.5% and it was 14.1% in the OIC Member States in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in the youth unemployment rate around the world. In 2020, the youth unemployment rate reached 15.2% in the world and 15.4% in the OIC Member States. In two years since the pandemic began, youth unemployment rates have remained variable around the world. In 2021, for instance, the global youth unemployment rate was 15.6% and it reduced to 14.9% in 2022. In the OIC Member States, the youth unemployment rate rose in 2021 to reach 15.8% but has since decreased incrementally to 15.7% in 2022.

The youth unemployment rate in developed countries, similarly, was 10.4% pre-pandemic (in 2019), increased to 14.2% in 2021, and reduced significantly to 11.7% in 2021 and 10.4% in 2022. In non-OIC developing countries, the effects of the pandemic on youth unemployment have been felt more acutely. In 2019, the youth unemployment rate in non-OIC developing countries was 13.9%. In 2020 and 2021, the average youth unemployment rate in non-OIC developing countries was notably high at 15.3% and 16.2%, respectively. However, in 2022, the youth unemployment rate in non-OIC developing countries is 15.5%, lower than that of OIC Member States.

Figure 2.14: Youth Unemployment Rates (%), 2010-2022



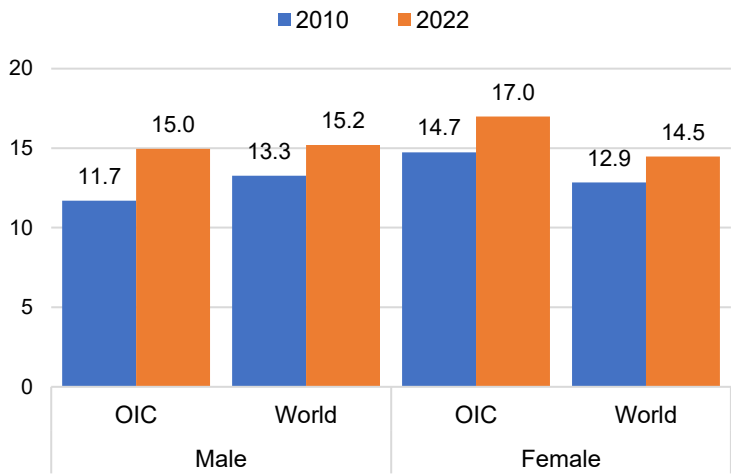
Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on ILOSTAT Modelled Estimates.

Several factors can explain the high unemployment rates seen among youth in the OIC Member States (SESRIC, 2020). First, youth are more vulnerable than adults in unfavourable economic times. Second, they may have a harder time finding employment due to the lack of labour market information and job search experience. Finally, the high share of informal economy in some of the OIC Member States tends to reduce job opportunities available for youth in the formal economy. Other factors may be related to bias against youth, sociocultural

norms, lack of the first experience and mismatched skills in the labour market amongst others.

Furthermore, gender disaggregated data for youth unemployment show that the female youth unemployment rate the in OIC Member States, on average, has increased by 2.3 percentage points from 2010 to 2022, whereas the male youth unemployment rates have gone up by 3.3 percentage points in the same period (Figure 2.15). Globally, male youth unemployment rates have also increased from 13.3% in 2010 to 15.2% in 2022 and female unemployment rates have increased from 12.9% in 2010 to 14.5% in 2022. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, female youth unemployment rates were generally higher around the world and in the OIC Member States. However, the pandemic has led to an increase in the youth unemployment rates of both genders.

Figure 2.15: Youth Unemployment Rates by Gender (%), 2010 vs. 2022

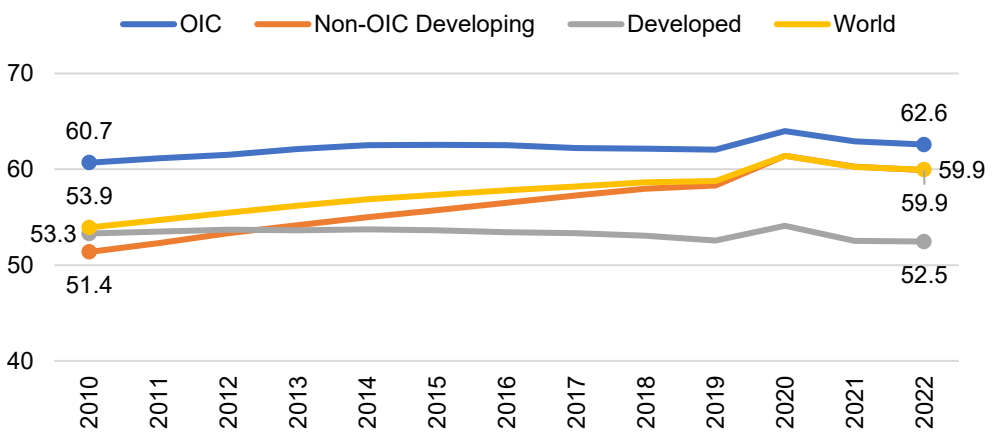


Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on ILOSTAT Modelled Estimates.

Economic Inactivity amongst Youth

The youth inactivity rate is an indication of the proportion of young individuals that are not active in the labour market (either working or looking for work). The youth inactivity rate has been on the rise around the world since 2010. In 2010, the global youth inactivity rate was 53.9% which reached 59.9% in 2022 (Figure 2.16). In the OIC Member States, the pre-pandemic youth inactivity rate was 62.1% (in 2019), which rose to 64% during the pandemic in 2020 and again reduced to 62.9% in 2021 and 62.6% in 2022. Similarly, in non-OIC developing countries, the youth inactivity rate in 2019 was 58.3%, which rose to 61.4% in 2020 and reduced to 60.3% in 2021 and 59.9% in 2022. In developed countries, the youth inactivity rate before the pandemic was 52.5%, which increased to 54.1% and has since reduced to 52.5% in 2021 and 2022 as well.

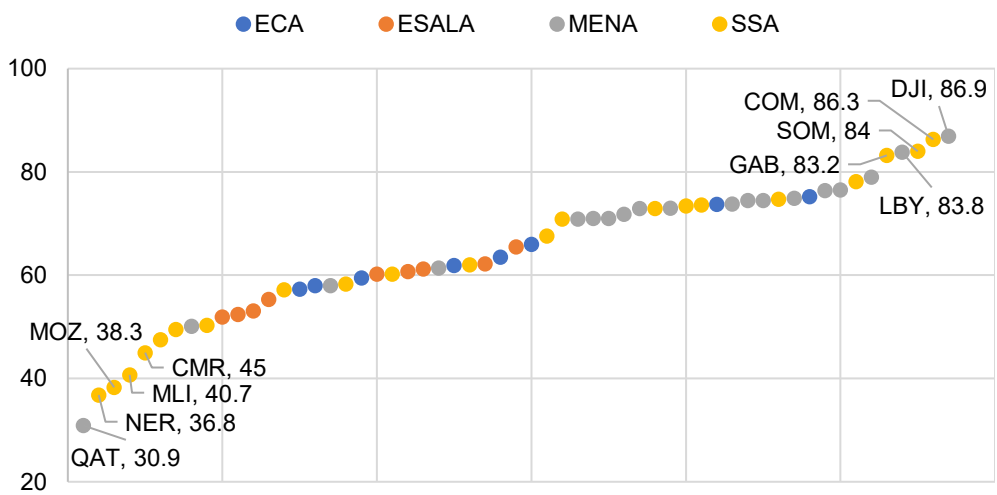
Figure 2.16: Youth Inactivity Rate (%), 2010-2022



Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on ILOSTAT Modelled Estimates.

At the individual OIC country level, youth inactivity rates were the lowest in Qatar (30.9%), Niger (36.8%), Mozambique (38.3%), Mali (40.7%), and Cameroon (45%) (Figure 2.17). On the other side of the spectrum, the highest share of inactive youth was in Djibouti (86.9%), Comoros (86.3%), Somalia (84%), Libya (83.8%), and Gabon (83.2%). High youth inactivity rates are clearly a cause for concern for countries that impedes their course of development. In this respect, OIC Member States, collectively, need to develop policies to address youth inactivity be it due to longer enrolment in education, cultural norms, or youth's unwillingness to participate in the labour market.

Figure 2.17: Youth Inactivity Rate in OIC Member States (%), 2022



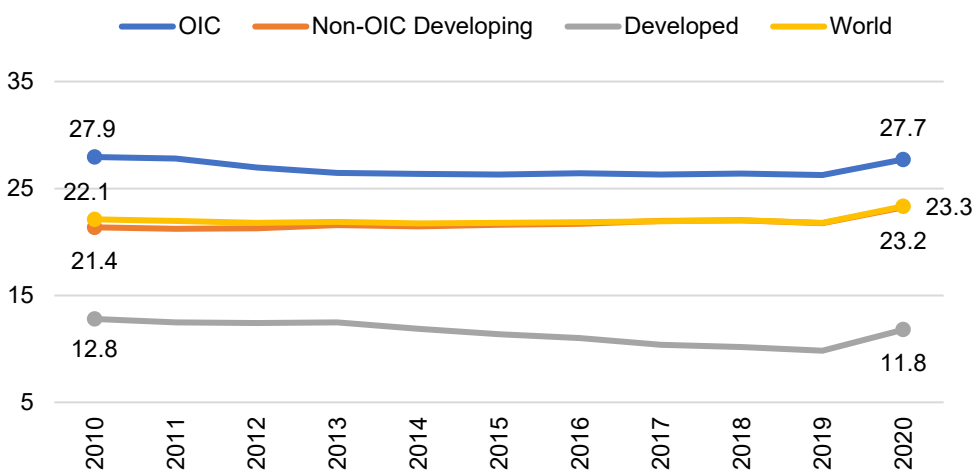
Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on ILOSTAT Modelled Estimates.

Youth Not in Employment, Education, or Training

As mentioned briefly in the preceding sections, young people may not participate in the labour market or be economically active because of their engagement in education or vocational training for longer periods. Generally, youth tends to dedicate a longer period towards education and upskilling when overall employment prospects deteriorate. However, one group of young people that are of special concern are youth that is neither in employment nor in education and training. Youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) are uniquely disadvantaged because they are unable to access employment, education, as well as training.

Over the past decade, youth NEET rates followed a stable pattern until the COVID-19 pandemic, following which youth NEET rates have increased globally. Between 2010 and 2019, youth NEET rates had decreased by 1.7 percentage points in the OIC Member States, 3 percentage points in developed countries, and 0.3 percentage points globally (Figure 2.18). In contrast, youth NEET rates increased by 0.4 percentage points in non-OIC developing countries from 2010 to 2019. However, from 2019 to 2020, youth NEET rates increased by 1.5 percentage points globally, 1.4 percentage points in the OIC Member States, 1.5 percentage points in non-OIC developing countries, and 2 percentage points in developed countries.

Figure 2.18: Youth NEET Rates (%), 2010-2020

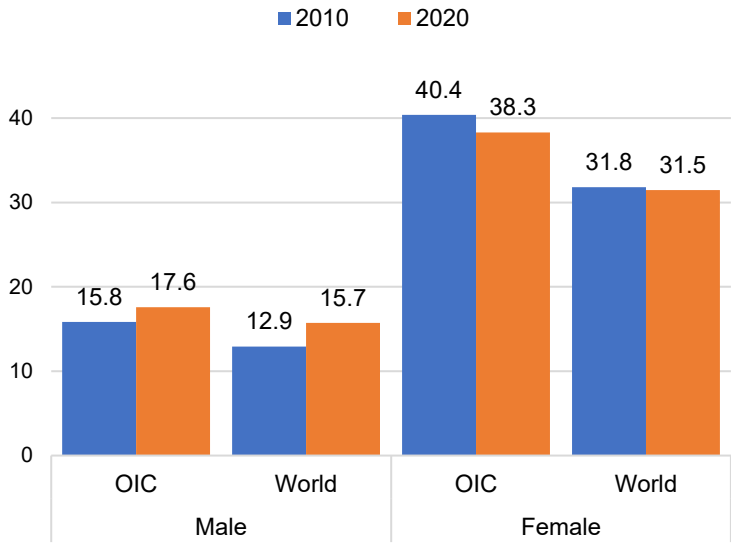


Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on ILOSTAT Modelled Estimates and UN DESA's World Population Prospects 2019.

Gender disaggregated data from 2010 vs. data from 2020 show that youth NEET rates have been consistently lower for boys and young men as compared to girls and young women. In 2010, for instance, the global gender gap between female

and male youth NEET rates was 18.9% and this gap declined slightly to 15.8% in 2020 (Figure 2.19). Similarly, the difference between female and male youth NEET rates in the OIC Member States was 24.6% in 2010 and 20.7% in 2020.

Figure 2.19: Youth NEET Rates by Gender (%), 2010 vs. 2020



Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on ILOSTAT Modelled Estimates and UN DESA's World Population Prospects 2019.

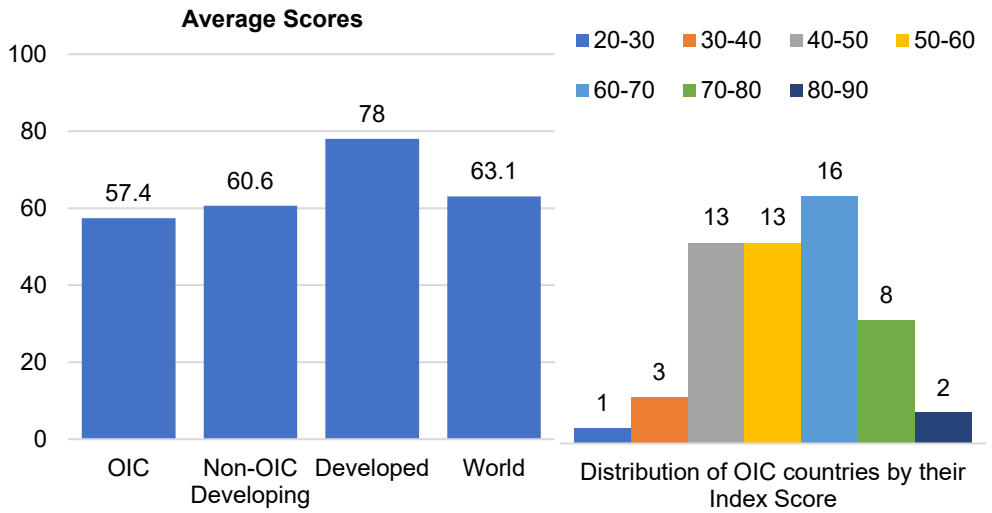
Youth Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial activities can become a source of income for young people who have limited job opportunities in the formal sector, while also maximizing their socio-economic potential and skills. However, young entrepreneurs in the OIC Member States face a list of challenges. Youth often has lower access to capital and business network, limited access to infrastructure, and limited knowledge of regulations pertaining to entrepreneurship. In developing countries, the ease of doing business can promote young people's entrepreneurial intent and activity. However, according to the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, regulations directly affecting businesses in ten areas (from trade to electricity) were the weakest in the OIC Member States, where the average ease of doing business score was 57.4 in 2019. As compared to the OIC Member States, the average ease of doing business score was comparatively higher in non-OIC developing countries (60.6) and considerably higher in developed countries (78) (Figure 2.20, left).

At the same time, the ease of doing business score was above 50 in 80% of the 56 OIC Member States reported in this index, with United Arab Emirates (80.8) and Malaysia (81.5) having the highest scores in the OIC region (Figure 2.20,

right). Only 17 of the 56 OIC Member States had scores lower than 50. Policy makers in Somalia (20), Yemen (31.8), Libya (32.7), and Chad (36.9) – who received the lowest index scores in the OIC region – need to ensure that regulations pertaining to starting or doing business are eased to open up new venues for youth and support the efforts of young entrepreneurs.

Figure 2.20: Ease of Doing Business Index Scores (left) and Distribution of OIC Member States by their Ease of Doing Business Index Score (right), 2019



Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on World Bank's World Development Indicators. Scores range from 0-100, where zero indicates lowest performance and 100 indicates highest performance.

2.4. Health and Well-Being

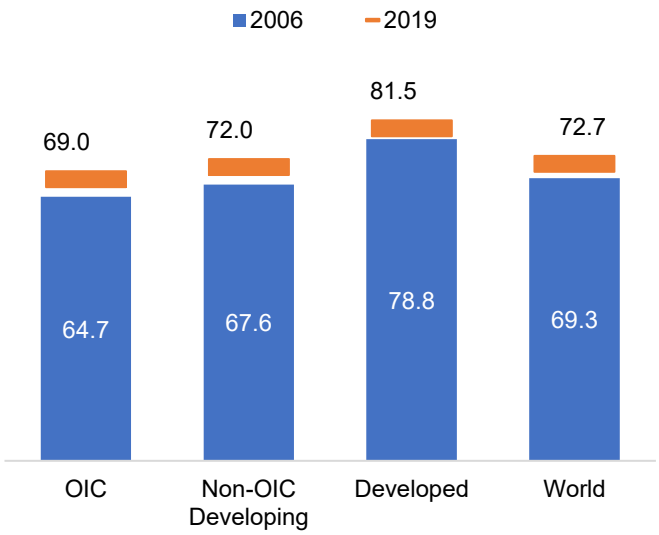
Life Expectancy and Causes of Mortality

Life expectancy at birth is indicative of the overall status of health of people in a country and, to some extent, the quality of healthcare services available to them. Life expectancy is commonly affected by factors such as poverty, malnourishment, conflicts, limited access to water, sanitation and hygiene services, and lack of critical healthcare services such as immunization coverage. For youth, factors affecting life expectancy can determine their ability to live fulfilling and successful lives, have prosperous careers and have families.

Fortunately, life expectancy at birth has increased across the world between 2006 and 2019 (Figure 2.21). Globally, the life expectancy at birth was 69.3 years in 2006. In 2019, this expectancy was 72.7 years. Similarly, in OIC Member States life expectancy at birth increased by 4.3 years, in non-OIC developing countries it increased by 4.4 years, and in developed countries, it increased by 2.7 years

between 2006 and 2019. However, OIC Member States, on average, continued to have the lowest life expectancy at birth in the world in 2019.

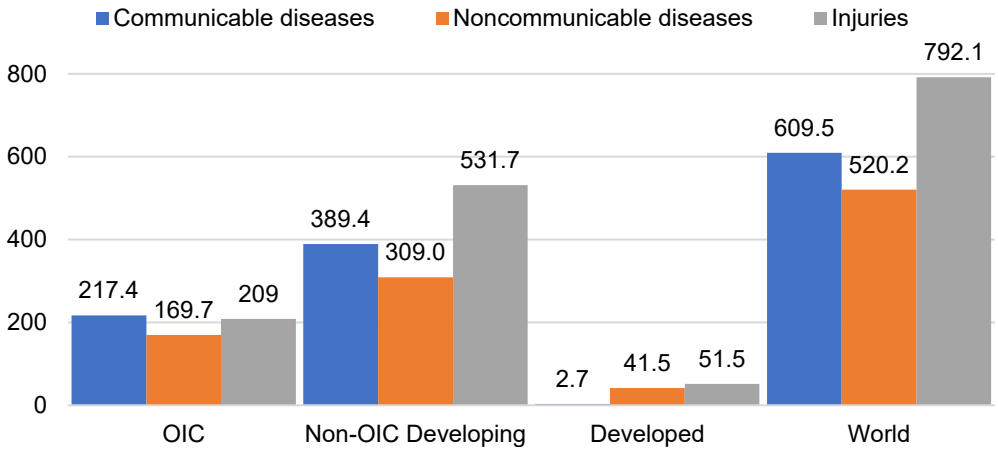
Figure 2.21: Life Expectancy at Birth (years), 2006 vs. 2019



Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on World Bank's World Development Indicators.

An analysis of major causes of death amongst youth can partially explain why life expectancy at birth is relatively lower in the OIC Member States. As shown in Figure 2.22, the major cause of death amongst youth (ages 15-29) was injuries in 2020. Approximately 792.1 thousand young people died globally due to injuries in 2020 (Figure 2.22). This was followed by 609.5 thousand young people who died of communicable diseases (including maternal, perinatal, and nutritional conditions) and 520.2 thousand young people who died of non-communicable diseases. Injuries were also the leading cause of mortality amongst young people in non-OIC developing countries and developed countries. In deviation from global trends, the major cause of mortality amongst young people in the OIC Member States was communicable diseases (217.4 thousand), followed by injuries (209 thousand), and non-communicable diseases (169.7 thousand) (Figure 2.22). This is particularly concerning because a number of communicable, maternal, perinatal, and nutritional diseases/conditions are preventable and can be mitigated with timely interventions such as early detection and proper curative care (including treatment, immunization, inoculation, etc.).

Figure 2.22: Major Causes of Death amongst Population Aged 15-29 (thousands), 2020



Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on World Health Organization's Mortality Database.

Mental Health and Services

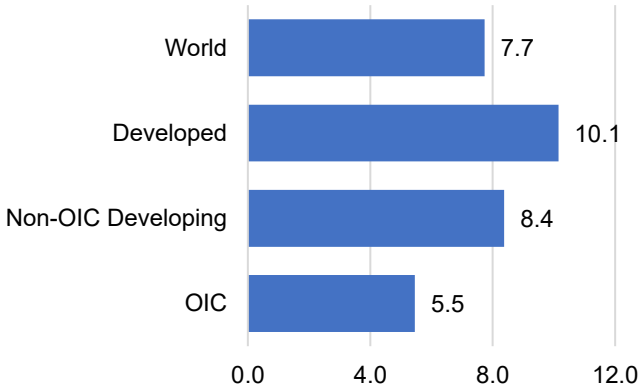
Youth's mental health can have a decisive impact on their developmental outcomes, the quality of their lives, and even their socio-economic integration in society (UN, 2014). Mental health conditions can impact a young person's self-confidence, self-esteem, ability to form healthy relationships, social involvement, and also their economic potential. In 2019, UNICEF estimated that approximately 86.2 million youth (ages 15-19) experience a mental disorders, including anxiety and depressive disorders, conduct disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, idiopathic developmental intellectual disability, and other disorders. Yet, the national level data on young people's mental health, mental health facilities for youth, and mental health policies and programs are severely lacking in the OIC Member States. It is very difficult to determine the adequacy of mental health services and the overall state of youth's mental health in the OIC Member States due to this limitation.

Nevertheless, mental disorders are closely linked to suicide for which there is data available. About 90% of people who commit suicide have experienced at least one mental disorder (Bilsen, 2018). In addition, according to the WHO, suicidal behaviour is often triggered by factors such as conflict, disaster, violence, abuse, or a loss of sense of belonging. Suicide rates are also higher amongst vulnerable youth such as migrants, refugees, and minorities.

According to the WHO data from 2019, the youth crude suicide rate in the world was 7.7 in 2019, meaning that 7.7 people per 100,000 young people have died by suicide. Youth crude suicide rate in 2019 was the highest in developed countries (10.1), followed by non-OIC developing countries (8.4) and OIC

Member States (5.5) (Figure 2.23). It is difficult to determine whether a lower rate was due to the presence of mental health support and facilities or lack of data on the subject.

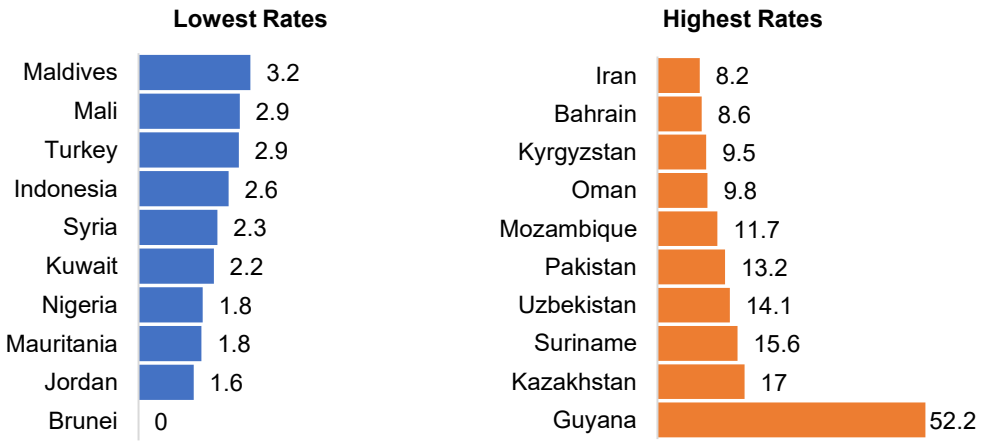
Figure 2.23: Youth Crude Suicide Rates, 2019



Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on World Health Organization's Global Health Observatory.

At the individual country level, more than 10 young people (per 100,000 youth) died because of suicide in Guyana, Kazakhstan, Suriname, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and Mozambique in 2019 (Figure 2.24, right). On the other hand, youth crude suicide rates were the lowest in Brunei Darussalam, Jordan, Mauritania, and Nigeria (Figure 2.24, left). With adequate mental health policies and programs, awareness, and support services, youth suicides can be reduced in many OIC Member States.

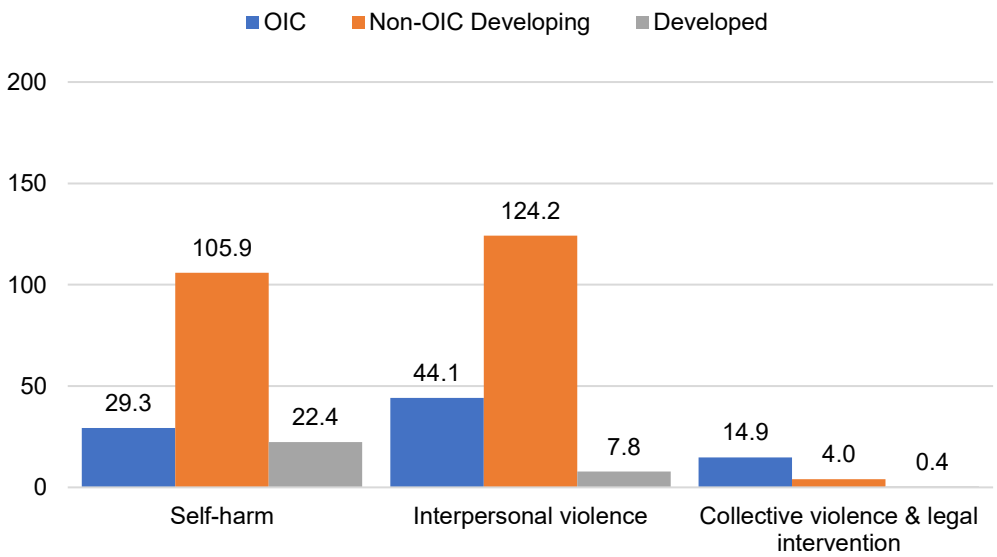
Figure 2.24: OIC Member States with the Highest and Lowest Youth Crude Suicide Rates, 2019



Source: World Health Organization's Global Health Observatory.

Similar to suicides, mental disorders can also manifest in the form of intentional injuries including self-harm, interpersonal violence, and collective violence. According to WHO, in 2020, globally 353.2 million youth (aged 15-29 years) died due to intentional injuries out of which 157.7 million died due to self-harm, 176.2 million deaths were caused by interpersonal violence, and 19.3 million deaths were caused by collective violence and legal intervention. In the OIC Member States, the leading cause of mortality was interpersonal violence (44.1 million deaths), followed by self-harm (29.3 million deaths) and collective violence (14.9 million deaths) (Figure 2.25).

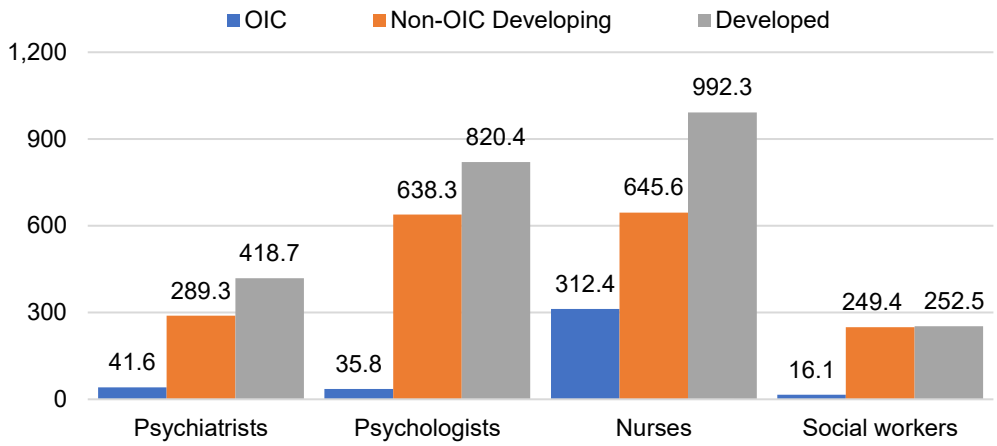
Figure 2.25: Distribution of Deaths due to Intentional Injuries amongst Population Aged 15-29 (millions of deaths), 2020



Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on World Health Organization's Mortality Database.

However, regardless of the high youth crude suicide rates and deaths caused by intentional injuries, data pertaining to mental health sector staff from 2017 reveal that OIC Member States are lagging behind non-OIC developing countries and developed countries when it comes to the availability of psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, and social workers employed in the mental health sector (Figure 2.26). A comparison between OIC and non-OIC developing countries shows that, per 100,000 people, OIC Member States had 247.7 lesser psychiatrists, 602.8 lesser psychologists, 333.2 lesser nurses, and 233.3 lesser social workers employed in the mental health sector. The disparity was even starker when compared to developed countries.

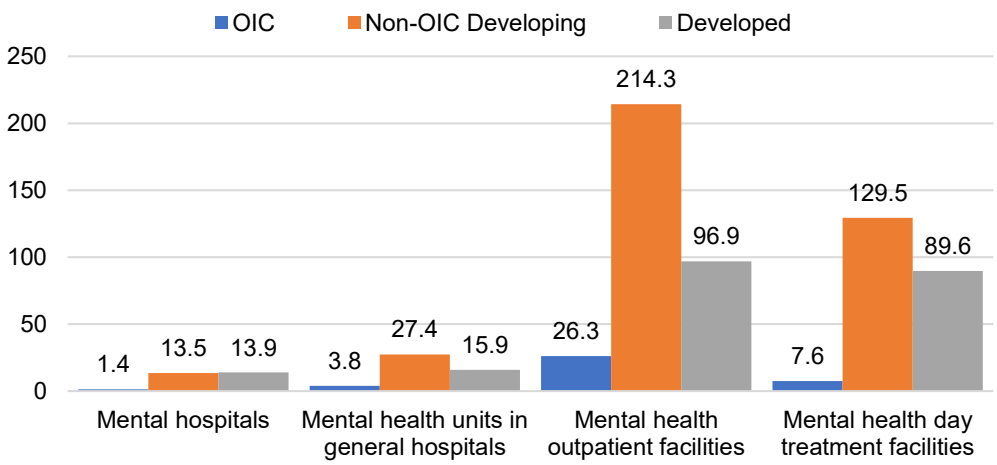
Figure 2.26: Mental Health Sector Staff (per 100,000 people), 2017



Source: SESRIC staff's calculations based on World Health Organization's Global Health Observatory. Data is from the latest year available between 2013 and 2017.

Similar to the inadequacies of mental health sector staff, OIC Member States also had alarmingly few mental health facilities per 100,000 people in 2017. On average, OIC Member States had 12.1 fewer mental hospitals, 23.6 fewer mental health units in general hospitals, 188 fewer mental health outpatient facilities, and 121.9 fewer mental health day-treatment facilities per 100,000 people as compared to non-OIC developing countries (Figure 2.27).

Figure 2.27: Mental Health Facilities (per 100,000 people), 2017



Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on World Health Organization's Global Health Observatory. Data for mental hospitals, mental health units in general hospitals, and mental health outpatient facilities is from the latest year available between 2013 and 2017 and data for mental health day treatment facilities is from the latest year available between 2015 and 2017.

Substance Abuse and Addictions

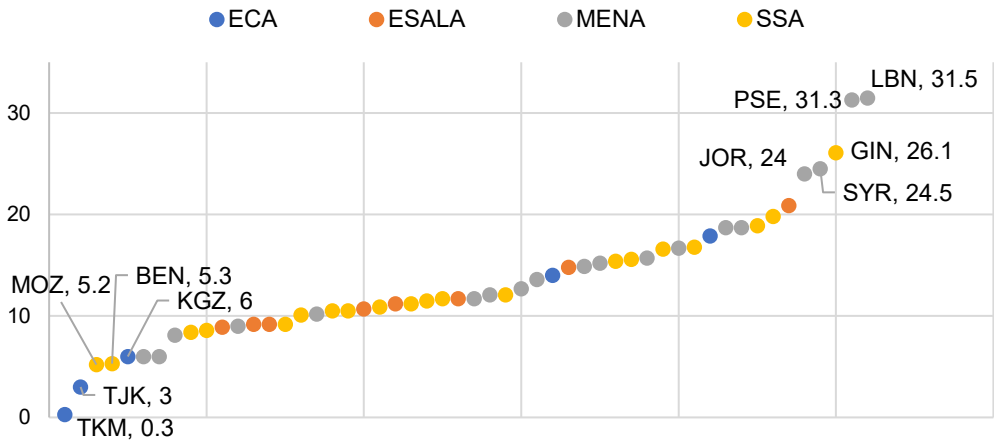
Amongst the youth, substance abuse and addictions are often triggered by mental and physical stressors, poverty, social isolation, exclusion and marginalization, inter-familial conflict, parental neglect or abuse, and lack of social support. Adolescent and young members of a family are more vulnerable to substance abuse because of their impressionability and exposure to aggravators. For example, negative peer influence, poor awareness of the long-term consequences of addictions, and lack of parental involvement can often force young people to resort to substance abuse. In a majority of cases, dependencies and addictions increase youth's likelihood of unemployment, criminal propensity, physical ailments, dysfunctional social relationships, suicidal tendencies, mental illness, and lower life expectancy.

There are three common types of dependencies and addictions that are currently prevalent amongst youth around the world: alcohol consumption, drug and tobacco use, and – more recently – internet addiction. Globally, alcohol consumption results in 3 million fatalities annually. While there is little to no data on youth's alcohol consumption in the OIC Member States, it is assumed that alcohol consumption amongst youth is low in the OIC Member States as compared to other country groups because consumption of alcohol is considered to be a deviation from the teachings of Islam. The consumption of alcohol is also usually associated with a strongly negative social stigma in many OIC Member States (SESRIC, 2020a).

When it comes to drug use and dependencies, younger members of a family are more likely to consume drugs as compared to older members. A number of studies identify early (12-14 years old) to late (15-17 years old) adolescence as a risk period for the initiation of drug use. It is often more prevalent among young people aged 18–25 years (UN, 2018). Similar to alcohol consumption, the use of illicit drugs is frowned upon in Islam. In the absence of adequate data on the subject, it is assumed that young people in the OIC Member States consume drugs less frequently as compared to other country groups due to religious restrictions combined with social stigma associated with the use of drugs.

When it comes to the current use of tobacco products, data from 2020 show that the prevalence of tobacco products is not homogenous amongst OIC Member States (Figure 2.28) with a relatively higher use observed in Lebanon (31.5%), Palestine (31.3%), Guinea (26.1%), Syria (24.5%), and Jordan (24%) and a relatively lower use observed in Turkmenistan (0.3%), Tajikistan (3%), Mozambique (5.2%), Benin (5.3%), and Kyrgyzstan (6%).

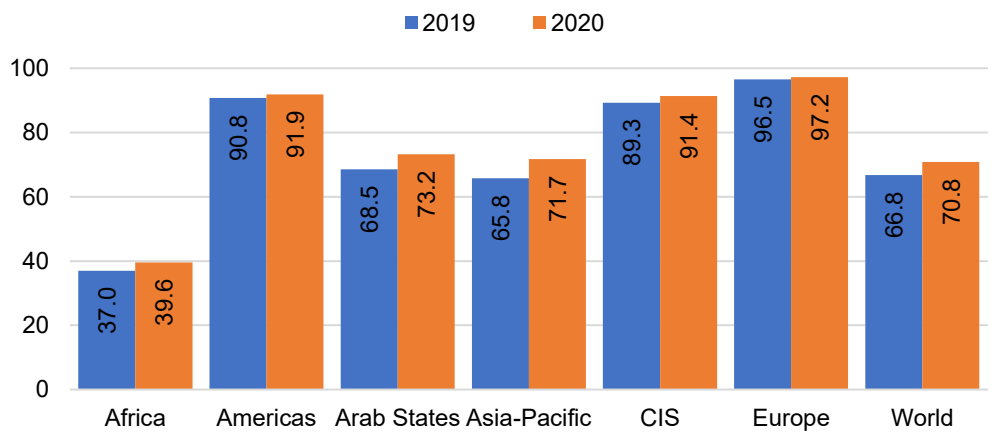
Figure 2.28: Prevalence of Current Tobacco use among Adolescents (ages 13-17) (%), 2020



Source: World Health Organization's Global Health Observatory.

In recent years, technology or internet addiction amongst youth has emerged as a significant health-related challenge in many countries around the world. Between 2019 and 2020 alone, the percentage of youth using the internet increased by 4 percentage points around the world. Regionally, the percentage of youth using the internet increased by 5.9 percentage points in Asia-Pacific countries, 4.7 percentage points in the Arab States, 2.6 percentage points in Africa, 2.1 percentage points in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), 1.1 percentage points in the Americas, and 0.7 percentage points in Europe (Figure 2.29).

Figure 2.29: Percentage of Youth using the Internet (%), 2019 vs. 2020



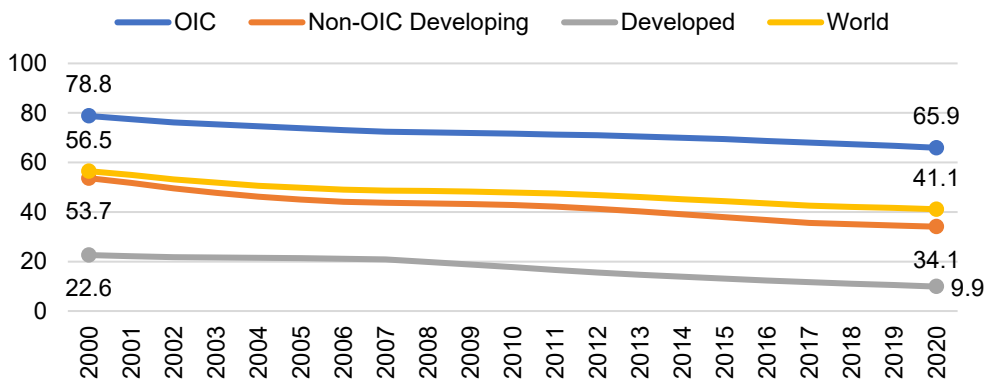
Source: ITU World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database.

While it is true that newer technology can improve people's opportunities for learning, networking, communicating, recreation, and upskilling, it may also lead to a habitual compulsion to engage in the use of technology as a form of escapism (Young & de Abreu, 2010). Internet addiction amongst youth can also cause a breakdown of communication between them and their parents and transform traditional morals and values due to exposure to other (often conflicting) cultures (SESRIC, 2017). Excessive use of technology tools (such as the internet, mobile phones, etc.) can resemble behaviours associated with alcohol and drug dependency (Byun et al., 2008).

Reproductive Health

When it comes to the reproductive health of young women, adolescent fertility is a particular concern. Adolescent pregnancies can be highly detrimental to young women's health, their propensity for education, their employment prospects, and more. When adolescent girls get pregnant, they are likely to drop out of school and discontinue work. Adolescent fertility can also result in health complications for the mother and the child such as low birth weight, lower life expectancy, and even maternal mortality.

Figure 2.30: Adolescent Fertility Rates (births per 1,000 girls ages 15-19), 2000-2020



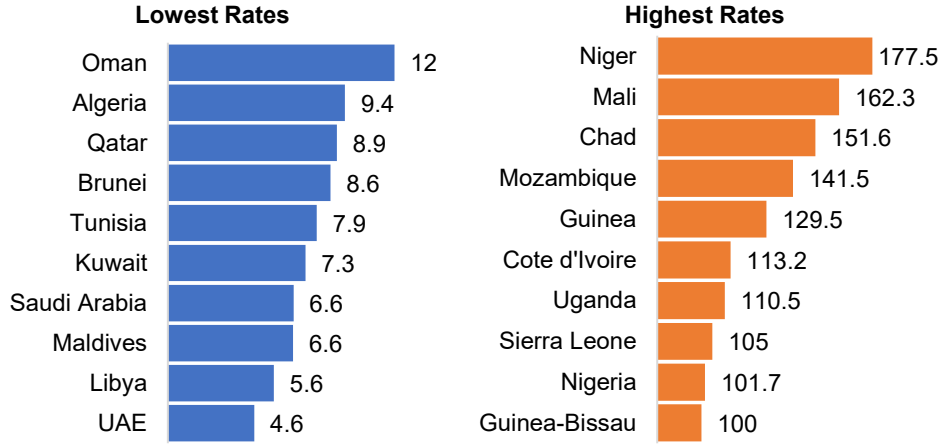
Source: SESRIC staff's calculation based on data from the World Bank.

According to the latest available data, adolescent fertility has been on a decline around the world since 2000 (Figure 2.30). As compared to 56.5 births per 1,000 girls (ages 15-19), global adolescent fertility rates have dropped to 41.1 births per 1,000 girls. Adolescent fertility rates have also declined by 12.7 births per 1,000 girls in developed countries, 19.6 births per 1,000 girls in non-OIC developing countries, and 12.9 births per 1,000 girls in the OIC Member States. Yet, adolescent fertility rates in the OIC Member States were the highest in the world in 2020 at 65.9 births per 1,000 girls. In many developing countries, early

marriages and adolescent fertility are prevalent due to harsh socio-economic conditions or cultural practices.

At the individual country level, the OIC Member States in Sub-Saharan Africa had some of the highest adolescent fertility rates in 2020. These countries include Niger (177.5 births per 1,000 girls), Mali (162.3 births), Chad (151.6 births), Mozambique (141.5 births), Guinea (129.5 births), Cote d'Ivoire (113.2 births), Uganda (110.5 births), Sierra Leone (105 births), Nigeria (101.7 births), and Guinea-Bissau (100 births) (Figure 2.31, right). The lowest adolescent fertility rates in 2020 were observed in the OIC Member States in the Middle East and North Africa, with the lowest rates in United Arab Emirates (4.6 births per 1,000 girls), Libya (5.6 births), Maldives (6.6 births), Saudi Arabia (6.6 births), Kuwait (7.3 births), Tunisia (7.9 births), Brunei Darussalam (8.6 births), Qatar (8.9 births), Algeria (9.4 births), and Oman (12 births) (Figure 2.31, left).

Figure 2.31: OIC Member States with the Highest and Lowest Adolescent Fertility Rates (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19), 2020

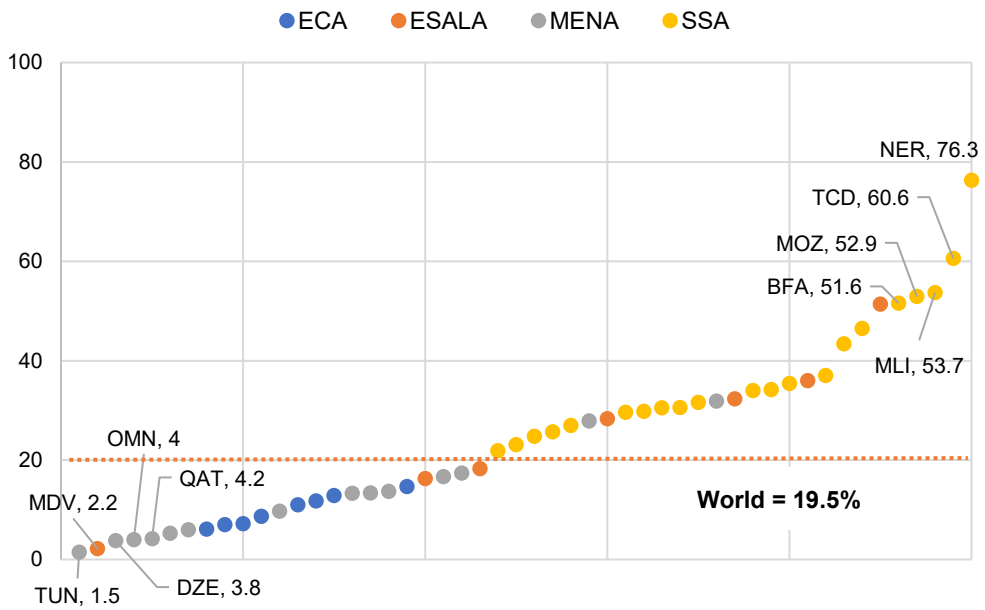


Source: World Bank.

Adolescent fertility is linked with early marriage or child marriage, i.e., formal marriage before the age of 18. More often than not, child marriage is a result of socio-economic factors such as poverty, beliefs surrounding family honour, dowry-related practices, lack of girls' education and employment opportunities, social obligation, and more. In 2021, the UNICEF dataset shows that 19.5% of women (ages 20-24) around the world were married before the age of 18. In the OIC Member States, the percentage of women married before the age of 18 was noticeably higher in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the highest percentage observed in Niger (76.3%), Chad (60.6%), Mali (53.7%), Mozambique (52.9%), and Burkina Faso (51.6%) (Figure 2.32). At the other end of the spectrum, countries in the Middle East and North Africa region had some of the lowest percentages of

women married before the age of 18, with the lowest instances observed in Tunisia (1.5%), Maldives (2.2%), Algeria (3.8%), Oman (4%), and Qatar (4.2%).

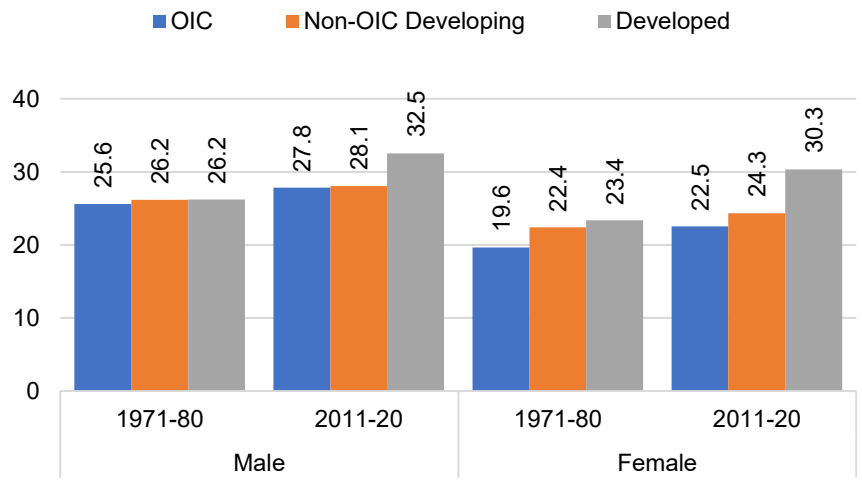
Figure 2.32: Percentage of Women (ages 20-24) in OIC Member States who were Married before the age of 18, 2021



Source: UNICEF Global Databases. Data is from the latest year available between 2015 and 2021.

Nevertheless, the age at first marriage for both men and women has been on the rise globally. From 1971-80, there has been an increase of 6.31 years in men's age at first marriage and an increase of 6.99 years in women's age at first marriage in developed countries (Figure 2.33). Similarly, in the OIC Member States, men's age at first marriage has increased by 2.21 years and women's by 2.88 years. The increase has been the smallest in non-OIC developing countries (1.92 years for men and 1.95 years for women). At present, the highest age at first marriage for both, men and women, has been observed in developed countries, followed by non-OIC developing countries and the OIC Member States. Young women and girls choosing to marry at a later age tend to have lower fertility rates, exhibit an increased preference for obtaining higher education and pursuing employment, and demonstrate changes in demographic and cultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices.

Figure 2.33: Age at First Marriage (number of years), 1971-80 vs. 2011-20



Source: SESRIC Staff calculations based on World Bank's Gender Statistics Database. Note: Data is from latest year available between 1971-1980 and 2011-2020.

2.5. Social Participation

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed by 196 countries, stipulates that "young people have the right to have their voices hears and taken into account in decisions that affect their lives" (Article 12, Generation Unlimited, 2020). The capacity for social work, activism, and volunteerism that young people have is vital for the equitable and sustainable growth of societies. Yet, around the world, young people experience a barrage of challenges that results in unequal opportunities and limitations on civic and political participation. Young people, in many developing countries, are significantly disadvantaged; their voices are not heard and their involvement and influence over decision-making are marginal (Generation Unlimited, 2020).

Evidence suggests that when young people are socially active, their critical thinking, communication, and negotiation skills are improved and they are able to form healthier relationships (Martin et al., 2015). Youth's involvement in decision-making yields policies that are more suited to their needs (Tatum, 2012). When socially active, the young population has the ability to strengthen civil society, increased accountability in the public sector, improve public service delivery mechanisms, and strengthen social cohesion (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). All of these factors equip youth with the tools needed to combat social conflict, inequity, injustice, abuse, and discrimination (Generation Unlimited, 2020).

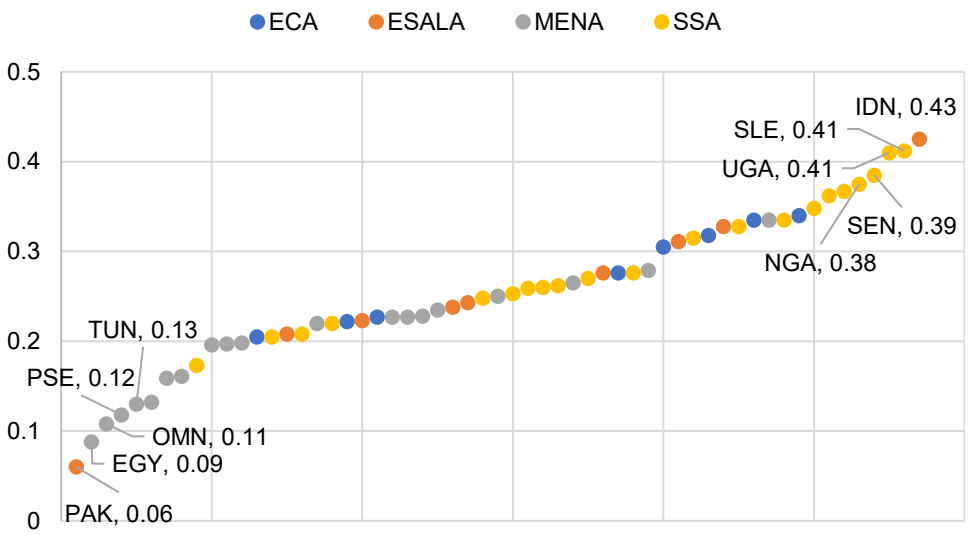
However, even with these commendable benefits, youth's social, civic, and political participation is very much influenced by traditional societal structures and

hierarchies. In some member countries, there is a general lack of acknowledgment of youth's potential to become policy makers and systemic discrimination against youth's involvement in politics. It is often based on negative perceptions about youth, where adults do not take youth seriously, do not trust them, and discourage them from voicing their opinions. There is also a lack of adequate government support for safe social participation venues and platforms and inter-agency coordination on social participation opportunities for youth. Lastly, poverty and unemployment are leading reasons inhibiting youth's social participation. For youth, poverty and unemployment lead to lower levels of motivation, lack of time, and inability to physically participate in activities. It also triggers higher migration flows and brain drain (urban-rural, national, and international), which affects youth's ability and intent to participate socially.

In fact, according to the Youth Development Index 2020, the political and civic participation of youth is the only domain that experienced deterioration in the past decade. Between 2010 and 2018, global youth political and civic participation declined by 0.18%, volunteered time declined by 3.4%, and score for opinions voiced declined by around 3%. At the same time, recognition for community improvement amongst youth increased by more than 10%, signalling an increasing interest in this area. Around the world, youth's political and civic participation deteriorated in 102 countries and improved in 79 countries. Regionally, an increase in youth's political and civic participation, between 2010 and 2018, was the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa at 4.9%, followed by Asia-Pacific at 1.8%, and Europe at 0.2%. However, the decline in participation was the highest in North America (17.1%), Russia and Eurasia (12.2%), South Asia (6.6%), Middle East and North Africa (4%), South America (2.8%), and Central America and Caribbean (0.7%).

At the individual country level, Indonesia (0.43) had the highest youth political and civic participation score, as part of the Youth Development Index, in 2020 (Figure 2.34). Also, the OIC Member States in Sub-Saharan Africa, generally, had higher scores for youth's political and civic participation under the Youth Development Index, with the highest scores observed in Sierra Leone (0.41), Uganda (0.41), Senegal (0.39), and Nigeria (0.38). The lowest scores were observed in some OIC Member States in the MENA.

Figure 2.34: Youth Development Index Scores for Political and Civic Participation in OIC Member States, 2020



Source: Commonwealth Youth Development Index Report 2020. Higher values indicate better performance.

Yet, specific examples from the OIC Member States reiterate the benefits of youth's social participation for not only socio-economic development but also peacebuilding, accountability, and human development. In Sierra Leone, for instance, there are multiple examples of how youth-led initiatives have nurtured peace and reformation. For example, the "Youth in Action for Peace" club, established by a young reformed gang member, promotes peace between street gangs in the Freetown area by organizing community activities such as football matches, social events, and non-violence campaigns in schools (UNOY Peacebuilders, 2018). The "Movement of Concerned Kono Youths" (MOCKY) is another example of how youth's social participation is helping consolidate peace by mediating disputes (UNOY Peacebuilders, 2018). Similarly, the "Youth for Sustainable Development" (YOSUPA) is a local youth-led NGO that promotes peace as part of its agenda for furthering sustainable development in Sierra Leone (UNOY Peacebuilders, 2018).

In Libya, 'H2O', a youth-led organisation established in 2011, is a bridge between policy makers and youth. The organisation gathers opinions, suggestions, and recommendations from youth to present them to relevant authorities and civil society institutions. The organisation designs civic engagement and public education campaigns to improve youth's social and civic participation. In doing so, the organisation puts young people in a position where there can monitor and advise government policies and programs, influencing policy makers and

government institutions to be more accountable, transparent, inclusive, and efficient (H2O, n.d.).

In Afghanistan, youth's social participation has also paved the way for their economic empowerment. In its first year of establishment, one youth organisation provided training to 200 young individuals on computer skills, graphic design, English language, and other school subjects (UNOY Peacebuilders, 2018). The same organisation also helps provide home-based employment opportunities to women in carpet weaving, pickle making, and cooking (UNOY Peacebuilders, 2018).

CHAPTER THREE

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND YOUTH

Youth in the OIC Member States are not immune to the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like in several other countries around the world, young people in the OIC Member States have been experiencing the adverse and disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on their lives. This chapter presents a discussion on these impacts focusing on four main areas: education and skills development; employment and entrepreneurship; health and wellbeing; and social participation. The chapter also presents a set of selected success stories and best practices from the OIC Member States regarding their policy responses and measures to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on the youth.

3.1. Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Youth

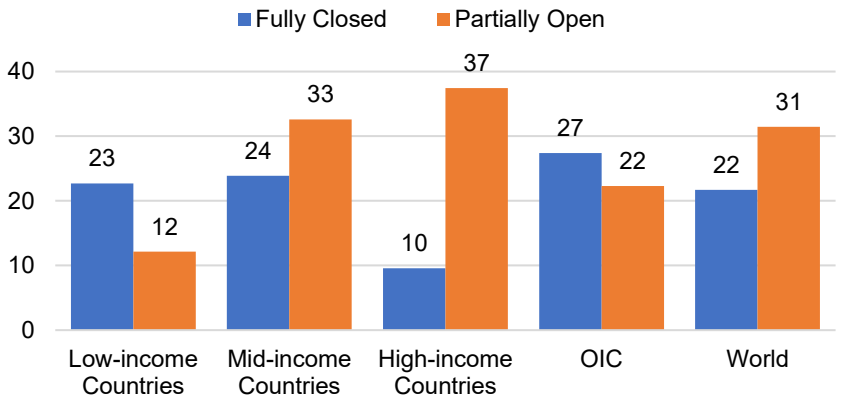
Learning Deficit

As the Coronavirus started spreading fast, among other containment measures, governments around the world enacted school closures. In 2021, around 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries were impacted by these closures (UNESCO, 2021). The education sector in the OIC Member States has been particularly impacted by the pandemic, with 432.6 million students, including more than 150 million youth, being forced out of school—with the biggest concentration of out-of-school learners in East and South Asian Member States (SESRIC, 2022).

Figure 3.1 depicts the length of pandemic-related school closures in the OIC and around the world. The number of school closures weeks reflects the number of weeks students did not get classroom instruction in person. Between February 2020 and December 2021, OIC Member States closed schools for 27 weeks longer than the global average of 22 weeks. However, schools were partially open

for an average of 22 weeks, lesser than the global average of 31 weeks. The period of OIC school closures is also longer than that of low-income countries (23 weeks), middle-income countries (24 weeks), and high-income countries (10 weeks). In terms of partial school openings, OIC Member States took longer time than low-income countries (12 weeks) but less time than middle-income countries (33 weeks) and high-income countries (37 weeks).

Figure 3.1: Duration of School Closures around the World (number of weeks) between February 2020 and December 2021



Source: UNESCO Global Monitoring of School Closures caused by COVID-19. Note: Estimates are weighted by number of students from pre-primary to upper secondary schools in each country.

While school closures were temporary, they have a long-lasting impact on the level of human development in society, particularly in those with a high proportion of children and youth – as the OIC has. According to the UN (2020), school closures caused by COVID-19 are likely to result in a "generational catastrophe" due to lost schooling, lost learning, and lost earnings of students.

For starters, prolonged school closures may result in an increase in the number of youth who drop out or do not return to school because of the disruption to their education. The risk of interruptions in schooling is particularly high for those who are most sensitive and whose fundamental core learning was weak to begin with. Young people from disadvantaged socio-economic families, members of minority groups, and young female learners are more likely to be adversely affected (UNESCO, 2020).

The shutdown of schools has resulted in billions of youth being unable to attend school, which has a negative impact on their learning. Azevedo et al. (2021) estimated that global levels of education and learning will decline, resulting in a loss of between 0.3 and 1.1 years of schooling (quality-adjusted). This corresponds to a decline in the effective years of average basic schooling in the

OIC Member States from 6.4 to between 5.3 and 6.1 years. If pandemic-related loss of learning goes unaddressed, annual future earnings of youth could be reduced by an order of $366 – $1,776. This roughly equates to $10 trillion (2017 PPP) in lifespan earnings or approximately 16% of the investments governments have made in basic education (Azevedo et al., 2021).

On top of all of these issues, there is strong evidence that COVID-19-related education disruptions will disproportionately affect low-income developing countries and vulnerable populations. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2021), learning losses will be particularly severe for youth from lower-income households and rural areas without access to digital infrastructure. Learning losses associated with forced school closures range between 20% and 25% of the school year in developed countries and 40% to 50% in developing countries, depending on socio-economic quintile and parental education (IMF, 2021). These estimates anticipate that some students will participate in remote education, which will offset some of the educational losses, while those who do not will experience greater losses.

Unemployment

The OIC Member States are home to around 29% of the world's total youth, which is projected to reach 31% by 2050. Even though the OIC Member States have made noteworthy progress in improving the economic well-being of their youth in recent years, many OIC Member States were not conducive to enabling the full potential of their youth population even before the pandemic. Challenges prevalent in the OIC Member States, ranging from economic inactivity to limited access to finance, not only reduce the economic contribution of youth and young entrepreneurs but also increase their vulnerabilities, especially in times of crises like the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, limited personal savings and inadequate public social assistance schemes may keep many young entrepreneurs from investing in themselves or their businesses.

The outbreak of the pandemic has made the economic situation of youth worse in many OIC Member States on several fronts including, but not limited to, an increase in unemployment levels and a worsening of markets for young entrepreneurs (Barford et al., 2021; ILO, 2020). On one hand, as discussed in the previous section, the pandemic hindered youth's access to educational institutions and their ability to invest in their future. On the other hand, the overall labour market outcomes for youth also became gloomier as economic growth stalled and supply chains were disrupted (SESRIC, 2022). Additionally, youth working in the formal and informal sectors suffered from employers reducing their number of workers and working hours.

In fact, there is some evidence that the pandemic has affected vulnerable groups including youth to a higher extent (SESRIC, 2020b). In particular, the youth bulge

in the developing world including several OIC Member States has faced a number of critical challenges in the area of employment, apprenticeship, and entrepreneurship resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and measures taken to contain the pandemic such as curfews and social restrictions (ILO, 2021).

In particular, for developing countries and many OIC Member States, the outcomes of restrictions imposed during the pandemic have exacerbated challenges faced by young people due to inadequacy of IT infrastructure, limited accessibility of IT equipment and broadband internet connection, and lack of skills/experience in using digital tools. According to an ILO (2021) survey conducted amongst Indonesian youth, the pandemic has caused 56% of the respondents to delay their studies. More strikingly, 75% of respondents admitted that they learned less through digital sources adopted during the pandemic. This delay in studies and limited learning opportunities has affected the job prospects of young people and has discouraged many young people from improving their skills and pursuing entrepreneurial endeavours.

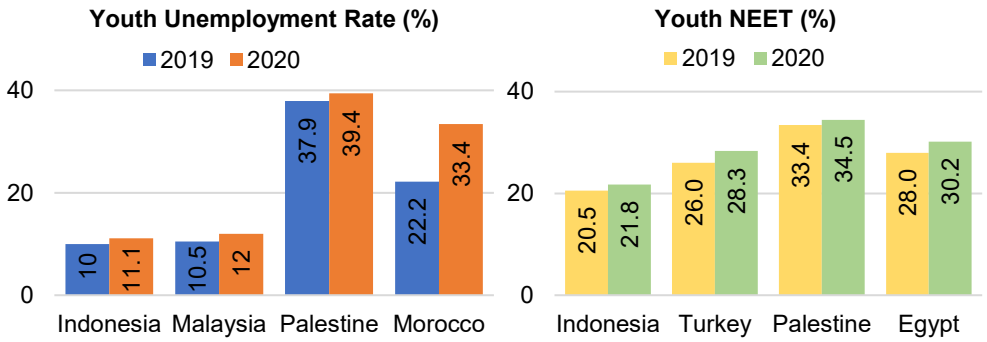
Several OIC Member States experienced an increase in youth unemployment rates during 2020 as compared to 2019 (the pre-pandemic period). For instance, the youth unemployment rate rose by 11 percentage points, reaching just above 33% in Morocco during the pandemic (Figure 3.2, left). At the same time, the overall unemployment rate in Morocco only increased by 4 percentage points in the same year (Morocco Employment Lab, 2020). A number of OIC Member States like Indonesia, Palestine, and Malaysia also reported an increase in youth unemployment rates in 2020 (Figure 3.2, left).

As compared to overall unemployment rates, a disproportionate increase in youth unemployment rates can be partly explained by the fact that young people have fewer years of work experience. When firms decide on layoffs, they are more likely to retain employees with more work experience and those that the firm has invested in training rather than fresh graduates. In other words, for many employers, youth and personnel with limited experience constitute a group that can be fired relatively easily in case of a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This results in an increased rate of unemployment amongst youth and an increase in young people's job insecurity. In addition, young people are also more likely to work in vulnerable or unprotected sectors such as the informal sector, services sector, and agriculture, where job insecurity is relatively higher (Morocco Employment Lab, 2020; ILO, 2020).

A simultaneous disruption in young people's educational and employment prospects has also led to a rise in youth NEET rates during the pandemic (ILO, 2021b). In 2019, before the pandemic began, youth NEET rates were 21.8% around the world. In 2020, global youth NEET rates were at 23.3%. Similar evidence from four OIC Member States (Indonesia, Türkiye, Palestine, and

Egypt) also reflected a rise in the proportion of youth NEET during the pandemic. For instance, it rose from 26% in 2019 to 28.3% in 2020 in Türkiye and from 28% in 2019 to 30.2% in 2020 in Egypt (Figure 3.2, right). At the same time, the daily routines of young people not in employment, education, and training also changed during the pandemic, with reports of youth sleeping for longer hours, doing more household chores, watching TV longer, and spending more time online (ILO, 2021b).

Figure 3.2: Youth Unemployment Rate (left) and Proportion of Youth Not in Education, Employment of Training (right) (%), 2019 vs. 2020



Source: ILOSTAT, based on available data reported nationally.

On one hand, the limited availability and scope of social assistance such as unemployment benefits in many OIC Member States have worsened the economic situation of youth. Given the widespread restrictions related to the pandemic and economic slowdown, many OIC Member States have forced financial institutions to review their priorities for funding. This has negatively affected the access to finance for young entrepreneurs (SESRIC, 2022).

On the other hand, OIC Member States have extended various support schemes to young people during the pandemic to increase their employment and retain them in the workforce. For instance, in Malaysia, the Government announced financial incentives for employers to hire and train 300,000 unemployed people. This included 600 Malaysian ringgit (RM) per month for apprenticeships for school leavers and graduates for up to six months (ADB, 2020). Similar initiatives, discussed in the succeeding section, were also implemented in the other OIC Member States to support youth throughout the pandemic.

Anxiety and Stress

Mental and physical health are two important determinants of the well-being of a person. The COVID-19 pandemic has a relatively limited impact on young people's physical health as compared to adults given their age (SESRIC, 2020). Mortality and serious health conditions caused by COVID-19 are more concentrated in population with chronic diseases and those above 60 years old

(i.e. elderly). Yet, the consequences of the pandemic on youth's mental health and well-being are overwhelming due to its effects on the social and educational life of youth and fears fuelled by the pandemic. In many cases, the negative impacts of the pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing are difficult to detect and treat. Mental health problems of youth are likely to persist for a longer time and their treatment often requires long-term continuous support from family members, friends, and social groups.

Several studies revealed that young people's mental health has worsened significantly since the outbreak of the pandemic both in developing and developed countries. In most countries, mental health issues in this age group have doubled or more (OECD, 2021). Young people were 30% to 80% more likely to report symptoms of depression or anxiety when compared to adults in a study covering Belgium, France, and the United States in March 2021 (OECD, 2021). Belgian public health institute, Sciensano, found young people aged 18-24 and students were by far the most affected by anxiety and depression during the crisis (UNRIC, 2021).

The pandemic has affected the mental well-being of young people through a number of channels. First, pandemic related closures and curfews have led to higher levels of loneliness; mental health support for young people has been heavily disrupted such as in schools, universities, and workplaces. Second, closures of educational institutions have contributed to the weakening of dependable routines, including daily routine and social interactions that help maintain good mental health. Third, the COVID-19 pandemic has hampered the career prospects of young people resulting in an elevated level of stress and a higher risk of experiencing mental health issues. Lastly, the pandemic has had effects on the social environment of young people (e.g. financial and emotional health of family members, friends, neighbours etc.), which is associated with high-stress levels.

An online survey conducted by UNFPA (2020) amongst Indonesia's Youth Advisory Panel revealed that 90% of young people in Indonesia feel anxious during the COVID-19 pandemic, with social distancing measures forcing schools and workplaces to close. The survey highlighted a number of reasons for this anxiety ranging from a lack of improvement in the situation (70%) and inability to socialize (58.7%) to financial issues (40%) and feeling unsafe in their environment (38%). Factors that increase suicide risks such as chronic mental health conditions, social isolation, and financial difficulties have also been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. For example, a study in Japan found that the suicide rate among under 20-year-olds increased from July to October 2020 (OECD, 2021).

Social Exclusion and Loneliness

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to changes in social relations and the social participation of youth. The impacts of COVID-19 on young people's social participation are important to study in order to inform pandemic response and recovery policies and programs.

In many societies including the OIC Member States, restrictions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have limited the social participation of youth in their communities. These restrictions include measures to prevent social contact and interactions to contain the spread of the virus by closing schools, shops, restaurants, and cafes, banning public events, and imposing working from home policies (SESRIC, 2022). Initial studies find that social distancing has also had a subsequent impact on travel, out-of-home activities, changes in public transportation patterns, and social isolation (Des Vos, 2020). In particular, youth have been affected by school closures that limit their physical engagement with friends and the most important social environment for them. Restrictions on travel and curfews halted social gatherings of young people including civil society events, meetings, and social awareness-raising events. Even religious gatherings, as part of social gatherings, in many OIC Member States were not held in a traditional format during the peak months of the pandemic (SESRIC, 2020).

When young people are provided the opportunity to participate in decision-making or civic engagement, they also are given the chance to acquire or strengthen skills and improve their sense of self (UNICEF, 2022). In particular, in times of crisis the voices of youth matter a lot as their concerns and expectations may differ from other segments of the society. However, when surveyed in 2021, a majority of OECD-based youth organisations felt that their government had not incorporated the views of young people when taking emergency measures and decisions to mitigate the pandemic (OECD, 2022).

Although the inclusion of voices of youth is important, policymakers took important decisions promptly without carefully assessing the impacts of such decisions on the social participation of young people and the overall well-being of the youth population. The reason was obvious that the pandemic is a health-related emergency crisis. However, in two years since the start of the pandemic, emerging evidence suggests that containment measures have had a more negative impact on the social participation of youth than initially thought (ADB, 2020; SESRIC, 2022).

Young people learn skills, gain experiences and exposure, and form social relationships by participating in social activities whether it is in the form of civil society engagements or volunteerism. Such engagements also boost youth's sense of value, their sense of belonging, and their sense of contribution to their

communities. Limitations of such social activities and disruptions in social and physical events have not only increased the level of stress among youth but also fuelled their uncertainties and feelings of undervaluation. Such negative feelings are likely to have long-term impacts on the self-development of youth, with a potential to deteriorate their overall wellbeing throughout their lifespan (OECD, 2021).

Evidence from past public health emergencies has shown that children and youth are at heightened risk of exploitation, violence, and abuse when schools are closed, social services are interrupted, and movement is restricted (UN, 2020). As the pandemic has led to an increase in time spent at home and limited social interaction, young people have become more vulnerable. In particular, young women and girls are faced with an increased risk of violence, abuse, and early marriage (SESRIC, 2020).

When young individuals are cut off from their routine social networks in school, playing with their friends, and protection services, they naturally resort to using digital technology as a path to the outside world. This increases the risk of addiction to the internet, video games, and social media among youth during the pandemic. Such addictions are difficult to cope with and can affect the productivity and health of youth negatively. Moreover, their transition to routine social life and in the post-pandemic era can also become more difficult as coping with addictions requires specific interventions and medical treatments.

The availability of digital technology and platforms has reduced the burden of the pandemic to some extent. It is because, through such technologies and platforms, young people are able to connect with their social networks. Yet, young people in a number of OIC Member States do not have access to such facilities due to a lack of IT equipment and broadband internet connection (SESRIC, 2020). Even in developed countries, inequalities among youth exist in access to such technologies and the digital skills required to use such technologies are limited (UK Youth, 2021). For these young people, the negative impacts of the pandemic have become more significant, especially from the perspective of social participation (UNFPA, 2020).

The negative impacts of the pandemic related to social participation is more prevalent among some segments of youth like migrant/refugee youth populations, youth with disabilities, and displaced youth (UN, 2020). Youth belonging to disadvantaged groups has experienced more challenges due to their legal status, difficulties in access to information, and more. In many developing countries, the pandemic has made their lives more difficult in the absence of adequate social services available.

Civil society organizations, which are a major source of youth social engagement, have also been impacted by the pandemic. Given the enormous demand for civil

society services from all segments of society, social services for the youth population have been hit due to budget constraints, staffing issues, and pandemic-related restrictions on their activities. For example, a survey conducted with youth organisations in the United Kingdom (UK) reveals that most respondents (88%) indicated they are likely or very likely to reduce service provision to young people due to challenges faced since the outbreak of the pandemic. Around one-third of the respondents (31%) said that staff redundancies were likely, while 17% said permanent closure was likely (UK Youth, 2021).

3.2. Best Practices from OIC Member States

E-learning and Distance Education

Education and skills development is one of the core sectors affected by the pandemic. Governments and educational institutions were prompted to explore alternative policies and new learning patterns, including virtual educational platforms and using technology to train teachers remotely. This section highlights best practices/success stories from the OIC Member States on COVID-19 policies and programs specifically targeted toward youth.

In **Türkiye**, the government, in collaboration with the World Bank, announced Safe Schooling through Distance Education (SSDE Project) during the COVID-19 pandemic and for a resilient recovery. With a budget of 160 million dollars, the project aims to promote the capacity of the education system and enhance online learning. Through the SSDE project, Türkiye is working to strengthen an innovative and resilient education ecosystem, which aims to reduce the risks associated with new crises, especially future public health crises (World Bank, 2020). Similarly, in **Pakistan**, the government, in partnership with the World Bank, announced the program 'Actions to Strengthen Performance for Inclusive and Responsive Education Program' that aims to enhance the targeting of COVID-19 education response, improve learning opportunities for school children and at-risk students, and strengthen federal-provincial coordination, and education management (World Bank, 2022).

In **Saudi Arabia**, coordinated efforts have been taken by government institutions to adapt to the pandemic and ensure the continuity of education for all educational levels, from primary schools to universities. The Ministry of Education established the General Administration of E-Learning and Distance Education and the "Madrasati initiative" for distance learning to accommodate six million students and about 500,000 teachers. In its report, the Planning and Development Agency of the Ministry of Education evaluated the effectiveness of the distance education system. The report presented several policy proposals including, but not limited to, benefiting from and promoting post-pandemic e-learning, which would provide

alternative solutions to organizational and educational problems, accelerate the transformation of e-learning, push the community to engage more in the use of modern technologies, and strengthen coordination with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology to enhance the quality of the Internet. The report also stresses on the importance of reviewing characteristics needed for good digital education (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

In a similar vein, relevant Ministries in **Jordan**, **Egypt**, and **Morocco** emphasized the crisis recovery process in the education sector. Ministries of Education in these countries have developed online learning platforms in cooperation with telecom companies to promote digital education. For instance, Jordan's education portal Darsak was developed by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, and a private enterprise (namely Mawdoo3). Morocco's Ministry of Education provided free access to all online learning platforms. Egypt, within the framework of cooperation, has allowed students of neighbouring countries to benefit from lessons through the Egyptian Knowledge Bank, an online government library providing resources for teachers, researchers, and students (OECD, 2020).

The Ministry of Education of **Senegal**, in partnership with UNESCO, Microsoft, and Huawei, organized a Training of Trainers program under the name of "Master Trainers" to raise the efficiency of the educational staff. Through this program, 200 teachers were trained and certified. Furthermore, the Ministry established an online learning system to support 1.5 million students (UNESCO, 2020). In **Malaysia**, the Ministry of Education, in partnership with UNICEF, launched the Komuniti Guru Digital Learning or Teacher Digital Learning Community, the national platform that provided learning material for three million students. Moreover, the platform helped to equip teachers with the required knowledge and competencies to prepare distance education content effectively. Approximately 2,400 teachers from over 1,600 schools joined the online teacher training (UNICEF, 2020).

The Ministry of National Education in **Uzbekistan** also created e-training manuals and video blogs for teachers while also improving e-learning and assessment tools for students and their parents. Notably, the Ministry established a call centre and a "Telegram bot" to answer questions about e-learning (Barford, Coutts, & Sahai, 2021). Similarly, the National Bureau for Distance Education and Training of the Ministry of Education of **Algeria** set up an online learning platform to facilitate the learning process for all educational levels. This initiative has also strengthened the Ministry's partnerships with UNHCR, WHO, and UNICEF and initiated projects with a special focus on youth education (OECD, 2020).

Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionately detrimental impact on youth's employment, entrepreneurship, and future economic prospects in developing countries. However, there are examples from several OIC Member States that shed light on how policy makers have successfully supported young individuals economically during the pandemic through prescriptive policies and programs.

In **Jordan**, for example, the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, in partnership with the Digital Opportunity Trust of Jordan and UNICEF, launched the B.O.T (Bridge. Outsource. Transform) platform. The platform aims to facilitate the access of the vulnerable youth to small employment opportunities and to assist them in finding digital micro-employment jobs. After launching the platform, UNICEF conducted an analysis of labour market needs and accessibility of the platform. The analysis estimated that "more than 3,000 young men and women (70% of them are female) have been trained in nine governorates, 560 trainees found job opportunities, while others were provided with remote work opportunities, giving them a resource income of more than 9000 Jordanian dinars. Youth between 18 and 25 benefited from B.O.T platform" (UNICEF, 2022).

In addition to B.O.T platform, the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship has also implemented the Jordan Youth, Technology, and Jobs Project. The aim of the project is to develop digitally enabled income opportunities and increase digitized government services in Jordan. The Ministry of Labour announced a plan to reinstate a one-year military service for young men aged 25-29, with the aim of controlling youth unemployment during the pandemic (Barford, Coutts, & Sahai, 2021).

In **Iraq**, ILO in partnership with UNICEF initiated the Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP), which supports young engineers in promoting green works in Iraq. EIIP links infrastructure development with employment creation, poverty reduction, and local economic and social development for young men and women. It uses local labour and resources to create much-needed employment and income and strengthen the capacity of local institutions. This initiative also aims to develop the social inclusion of young people (UNICEF, 2021).

Similarly, the Presidency of the Republic of **Türkiye** Investment Office, IT Valley of Türkiye, and the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) jointly established the International Incubation Center (IIC) with the aim to produce quality and competitive entrepreneurs by using innovative global trends to adapt them to the digital age. The Center focuses on building the capacity of young entrepreneurs, and investors in company establishment, product development, marketing,

project, and patent consultancy, and mentoring access to funds, it is serving as a hub for young entrepreneurs in the OIC region (International Incubation Center, 2022). The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) also established an agricultural and aquacultural production facility in Torodi, Niger, aiming to provide employment opportunities to 200 youth and help them participate in economic production activities of Niger (African Farming and Food Processing, 2021).

With a budget of 180 million USD, **Tunisia** launched the PARISE project to finance the Support Programme for the COVID-19 Response through Social Inclusion and Employment. The project aims at mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis through job protection and the social inclusion of vulnerable groups including youth in the short term and boost economic recovery in the medium term (African Development Bank, 2020). In **Malaysia**, the government established a fund of 2 billion RM (US$487 million) to reskill and upskill 200,000 unemployed young workers to increase their employment prospects. The fund also provided financial support to employers to train 300,000 unemployed young people and recruit them. As part of the fund disbursements, individuals who have dropped out of school and those who have graduated receive 146 US$ per month for apprenticeships for up to six months (Barford, Coutts, & Sahai, 2021).

Similarly, the Government of **Indonesia** initiated a “Pre-employment Card Programme” aimed at upskilling two million young workers. The plan provides the costs of accommodation and transport during training through a lump sum payment of 500,000 IDR (US$34) per trainee. These plans are suited to specific challenges faced by young people, including honing skills and covering basic costs (Barford, Coutts, & Sahai, 2021).

‘My project is my Future’, an initiative of the Ministry of Employment, Youth, and Sports in **Mauritania** helps aspiring young entrepreneurs and leaders with achievable projects. It aims to empower youth, sustain projects, create job opportunities, and finance 500 projects across the country in a transparent manner (Ministry of Employment, Youth and Sports, n.d.). Furthermore, the Mauritanian Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training launched the “Mihnati initiative”, an active consultative framework for youth facilitating coordination between employers, vocational training facilities, and the private sector. The initiative aims to harmonize training with labour market needs and facilitate the access of young people to the labour market during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Ministry of Employment, Youth and Sports, n.d.).

E-health and Psychosocial Support

Several OIC Member States have implemented a number of measures to mitigate the negative health outcomes of the pandemic for youth between 2020 and 2021.

The government of **Morocco**, for instance, adopted a national health strategy for school and university students, through which it provided necessary health care for youth utilizing cross-sectoral partnership agreements and cooperation between the ministries of youth, education, the interior, social affairs, and Wakif. This partnership aimed to raise the number of jobs in the health sector and prioritize youth in health sector employment, create university health centres, and expand the map of health spaces for young people. Furthermore, the government adopted entertainment and educational programs to mitigate the effects of quarantine and protect youth mental health. During the pandemic, the Mohammed V University, in cooperation with UNICEF, launched a project to provide remote psychological support to children in protection centres via WhatsApp (Office of the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco, 2020).

Similarly, the government of **Azerbaijan** provided online psychological assistance to many segments of the society including youth, women, children, and the elderly. The launch of "Online Psychological Assistance" benefitted approximately 2,300 people during the pandemic (OHCHR, n.d.). In **Qatar**, the Mental Health Service Unit in Hamad Medical Corporation launched a set of new services through a unified helpline 16000 to provide psychological support services during the pandemic (Al Arab Qatari, 2020). Furthermore, within the framework of World Mental Health Day, the Qatari Ministry of Health, in cooperation with a number of institutions, launched a new campaign entitled "Are you okay?" to raise awareness about mental health. The initiative primarily encourages people to speak about their mental health, considering that this is the first step to enhancing awareness on how to deal with anxiety and tension, as well as interact with others and make good decisions. The campaign included the youth. Around 20 institutions in Qatar joined the campaign, more than 35,000 calls were received, and medical advice was provided to callers (Murad, 2021).

In a similar vein, the National Program for Happiness and Wellbeing in **United Arab Emirates** launched a psychological support line as part of the national campaign "The Emirates Volunteers", an initiative of the Supreme National Committee to organize volunteering during crises. The project aims to provide psychological support to individuals affected, directly or indirectly, by the pandemic, assuring complete safety and confidentiality. The project targets youth as well (Emirates Foundation, n.d.). Additionally, the Federal Youth Foundation of UAE launched the "Youth Practices to Promote Mental Health" initiative under the slogan "Action for Mental Health: Let's invest in it". This initiative was informed by a survey conducted amongst 7,000 youth in 21 Arab countries by the Arab Youth Center and Federal Youth Foundation. Respondents of this survey said that "being able to obtain mental health services at reasonable prices" was their third top priority and "mental health awareness campaigns" was an important priority as well (Al Bayan, 2020).

In the context of protecting the health of young people during and after the pandemic, the UNICEF and Al tibbi platform in **Jordan** collaborated to provide health services to 3,000 young people. The partnership aims to ensure the well-being of youth, ameliorate access to quality health care services, and prevent diseases. It was announced that young people benefited from this partnership without any cost and students enrolled in UNICEF's "Our Hope" Youth Economic Participation Program and Syrian refugee volunteers benefited from the initiative (UNICEF, 2020).

Community Development and Volunteering

In order to recover from the pandemic and mitigate its adverse impacts on youth's social participation, several OIC Member States involved the youth in developing relevant policies and programmes. Some notable examples of youth-centric programmes for social participation in the OIC Member States include **Egypt**'s "Youth Parliaments" program under the slogan "Our Rule" in partnership with UNICEF and with support from the Arab Council for Childhood and Development. This program aims to train youth in planning and implementing community initiatives. Within the scope of that program, trainers support young people through periodic meetings in youth centres to discuss challenges that they face in implementing initiatives while tracking and monitoring their developments (Younis, 2021).

In **Algeria**, the Ministry of Interior announced the provision of unprecedented facilities for young people to establish associations and NGOs, through a simple administrative file submitted to an office in the provinces to which the Association belongs. In this context, the Ministry of Interior revealed the establishment of about 4,000 local associations (Zammamouche, 2020). Furthermore, the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Algeria announced the establishment of the Supreme Council. This advisory body of the Presidency provides opinions, recommendations, and suggestions on issues related to the needs of young people in the economic and social fields and it contributes to the promotion of national values, civic sense, and social solidarity, as well as participating in the design, follow-up, and evaluation of the National Youth Plan. The creation of the council is aimed at empowering youth in the decision-making process (Supreme Youth Council, 2021).

In **Türkiye**, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in partnership with the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) and Turkish Red Crescent, organized the "Young Volunteers Camp" program for 12 days to equip young people with practical knowledge and guidance to help and support communities during the pandemic. Around 120 volunteers, students, and professionals between the ages of 18-30 years from OIC Member States participated in the program (ICYF, 2021). Similarly, the Ministry of Youth and Sports of **Iraq**, the Ministry of Culture and

Youth in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and UNICEF, in collaboration with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program, jointly launched the National Youth Volunteering Platform (NYVP). NYVP is an innovative tool that allows young people between 15 and 24 years old in Iraq to be involved in volunteer activities and to help their communities. The platform is the first structured volunteering program in Iraq. It offers young people a chance to register, search, and apply for volunteer activities. Young volunteers can also benefit from capacity-building training conducted by relevant UN agencies (UNICEF, 2021).

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this report highlight that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a number of negative impacts on the socio-economic wellbeing of the youth living in the OIC Member States. The report also underlines that various OIC Member States have exerted a wide range of policy efforts to address these negative impacts on the youth during the pandemic. The efforts made by the OIC Member States also aim to ensure that the youth are not excluded in recovery and resilience efforts with a view to facilitating the transition to the post-pandemic era. Against this background, the following chapter puts forth a list of policy recommendations to guide policy makers in the OIC Member States in formulating policies and programs that are considerate of, and conducive to, the wellbeing of youth during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In keeping with the structure of this report, the policy recommendations are divided into four areas: education and skills development, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, and social participation.

4.1. Education and Skills Development

Ensure safe and healthy school openings. The pandemic is far from over, and its future is still unclear. However, schools must remain open fully to avert a generational catastrophe caused by prolonged school closures. The key to reopening is the ability to assure a safe return to physical premises while maintaining physical distance and executing public health precautions, such as the use of masks and frequent handwashing. Countries may consider developing a hygiene & safety protocol for opening schools and enhancing school readiness to avoid further COVID-19 outbreaks.

Address learning losses and prevent dropouts, especially for the vulnerable. Prolonged school closures in the OIC Member States have increased the likelihood of youth dropping out of school and the loss of learning. It is, therefore, necessary to provide timely attention and assistance. Vulnerable groups bear a disproportionate share of the burden, and they must be given special treatment. To avoid future damage to human capital development, ongoing and diverse initiatives to encourage re-enrolment must be implemented. Young learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, will require specialized support to adjust and make up for missed learning. Many students may require remedial instruction to re-establish their academic standing.

Ensure sustaining education finance and investment. During times of crisis, countries frequently redirect budgetary resources to prioritized sectors. It is vital for the OIC Member States to continue investing in and financially supporting education sectors throughout and after the pandemic. Failure to do so may compromise the quality of educational resources available in the Member States, which will have negative long-term consequences for their overall growth. In the medium run, investments in education and ICT must be prioritized. The pandemic has highlighted the digital divide in the OIC Member States, with students in countries lacking ICT infrastructure suffering a greater loss of learning. Investing in and integrating ICT into the education sector will bolster the resilience of the educational system.

Foster the quality and accessibility of e-learning for youth. Concerns have been expressed regarding the long-term viability of conventional schooling systems throughout the world following the outbreak of COVID-19. While the majority of OIC Member States have managed to provide education through distance learning, this is only a temporary fix. While reshaping the current educational model, OIC Member States must place an emphasis on developing innovative learning methods, which include revising traditional curricula, anticipating learners' needs in line with the country's human capital needs, integrating ICT into education, and cultivating a culture of "learning" outside of traditional learning spaces.

4.2. Employment and Entrepreneurship

Strengthen employment services for young people. The availability of employment services is vital to cope with the immediate impacts of the pandemic and build resilience for future shocks. Due to the pandemic and containment measures, millions of young people could not find an apprenticeship or part-time job opportunities. Full-time job opportunities also eroded due to ongoing uncertainties and lay-offs stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic in many OIC Member States. Considering financial and non-financial incentives for youth

employment, quota schemes and tax breaks could help to increase youth employment in the OIC Member States.

Promote youth entrepreneurship and employment. Despite the impact of the pandemic on youth employment, it has opened up newer avenues of entrepreneurship and shed light on new opportunities for income generation for youth. Technology has helped motivate young people to launch online businesses and participate in e-commerce. To further encourage entrepreneurial efforts of youth, OIC Member States are recommended to increase capacity building programs on entrepreneurship, help youth to understand the nature of the new market and rapidly changing ecosystem, learn to deal with challenges associated with entrepreneurship, assist youth to explore opportunities in a post-pandemic world, allocate a quota for youth employment, establish local agencies that promote youth self-employment, suggest legislation that supports youth entrepreneurship, and alleviate bureaucratic barriers that young entrepreneurs and investors are facing.

Improve social protection systems and safety nets targeted toward youth. Social protection systems have become more critical than ever under the pandemic conditions as many young people have had to rely on support from the government. Yet, in many OIC Member States, financial constraints have led to the exclusion of vulnerable populations (including youth) from social protection programmes and safety nets. In this regard, the OIC Member States in cooperation with regional and international organisations are recommended to develop specific social safety net programmes targeting youth employment, education, healthcare, and youth entrepreneurship.

Address widespread negative impacts on the employment of youth and support youth entrepreneurs. Policymakers in OIC Member States should prepare detailed short-term action plans as well as long-term vision documents to address increased youth unemployment and inactivity rates. In this way, they should not only focus on short-term immediate negative impacts on the labour market outcomes but also come up with concrete plans on how to increase the participation of youth in economic activities, benefit from their transformative economic potential for recovery, and make them agents of change for sustainable development.

Conduct comprehensive research to design, implement, and monitor youth employment and entrepreneurship as part of pandemic recovery programs. The OIC Member States are recommended to undertake comprehensive national diagnostic studies to evaluate the short, medium, and long-run economic impacts of the pandemic on the youth segment with a particular focus on the labour market outcomes. In particular, for strengthening the resilience of OIC Member States to future shocks to youth employment, it is essential to invest in youth skills

development including technical and soft skills such as organizing capacity-building programmes in cooperation with civil society organizations and increasing the number of elective courses in the school curriculum. It is also critical to develop a national crisis-management strategy that includes possible policy interventions of public institutions on various segments of the population including youth in times of shock.

4.3. Health and Well-Being

Increase awareness about young people's mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns have led to an increase in the scope and severity of mental health challenges and implications that are unique to young people. The psychological impacts of the pandemic will also likely have long-term implications for youth health outcomes. Therefore, policymakers in the OIC Member States are recommended to adopt a holistic policy approach that takes into account the psychological and mental health of youth, considers youth mental health as a major part of the overall health care plan, designs more inclusive mental health programs that include parents, teachers, and experts, increase awareness campaigns on the protection and development of youth mental health, establish mental health centers in schools and universities for serving young people and identifying their psychological problems.

Build resilience to future health emergencies. In countries where public health response to the pandemic is relatively lax or weak, there has been an erosion of trust amongst youth (Aksoy et al., 2022). Therefore, countries around the world including OIC Member States need to think of ways to be better prepared for the next infectious disease outbreak, which is inevitable (Patel & Sridhar, 2021). In this respect, OIC Member States need to upgrade the response capability of their public health systems in order to build up resilience to future shocks and address the needs of youth and vulnerable groups in such challenging times.

Invest in health infrastructure targeted toward youth. Improving health response capacities requires the development of comprehensive healthcare and mental health services and care centres for the youth population. The use of social media channels and the internet is critical to reaching more young people, especially those living in rural areas with limited access to service providers. It is also essential for policymakers to include parents, teachers and community leaders to be part of the design and delivery of such services and programmes targeting the youth. In particular, religious and community leaders in the OIC Member States could deliver social programs and sermons to deliver teachings of Islam that could help many young people to mitigate their high-stress levels and become more resilient. In addition, specifically targeted programs could be considered for orphans and young who lost their family members during the pandemic. In order to design and implement effective policies to improve the health and wellbeing of

the young amid the pandemic, policymakers in the OIC Member States should prepare a health response strategy with short, medium, and long-term performance indicators by considering the nature of the pandemic.

Educate youth about prevalent health risks, healthy lifestyle, and active living. During the pandemic, the well-being of the youth population (especially those with conditions such as obesity) was affected to a higher extent. To this end, developing and implementing strategies to fight against health risks that affect the well-being of youth would help increase the resilience of youth living in the OIC Member States. This could also facilitate developing and delivering policy responses against future shocks by reducing the pressure on public and social services. It is also of importance for policymakers that youth populations should be educated about health risks and healthy lifestyles in order to nurture their decision-making skills. This requires the development of a new approach to designing school curriculum. In this regard, school curriculums could be reviewed with support from health professionals to not only include education on healthy habits but also include information on ways and means of improving resilience and coping with traumatic situations.

4.4. Social Participation

Enhance youth social participation and provide equal opportunities. The pandemic has demonstrated the value of youth's social participation. There is a growing recognition that young volunteers, youth organizations, and activists play a crucial role during crises, given their flexibility, adaptability, and creativity. Enhancing youth's social participation builds more inclusive and resilient societies that can withstand crises. Therefore, policy makers in the OIC Member States are recommended to enhance civic and citizenship education of youth and institutionalize their social participation, ensure the accessibility of youth with disabilities to social work, improve the quality of youth participation training programs, develop inclusive policies which bring together youth organizations and governmental institutions, guarantee the youth participation and representation, derive the Islamic values that cherish solidarity, cooperation, and fraternization among the youth.

Foster awareness about the 'new normal' in social participation. The pandemic has accelerated the pace of social transformation around the globe. In the post-pandemic period, it seems that 'hybrid social events/gatherings/activities' will be one of the pillars of the new normal. In this regard, OIC Member States should invest more in hybrid and alternative channels and equip youth service providers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with the necessary knowledge and skills. Such efforts could help the OIC Member States in increasing the social participation of youth and extend services to disadvantaged young individuals like those living in remote areas and migrant youth.

Promote cross-sectoral initiatives between governments, civil society, and private sector organizations. COVID-19 lockdowns and curfews have shown that NGOs and volunteers play a critical role in reaching out to young people living in slums or rural areas. In addition, such organisations could play an instrumental role to transmit the voices of the youth to decision-makers. They also help to convey the expectations or concerns of youth to policymakers. The pandemic is a critical time for the youth sector and NGOs face a number of financial challenges due to the increased financial stress. Therefore, governments in the OIC Member States are recommended to work out modalities to collaborate with NGOs, increase the contribution of active youth NGOs in policy response programmes, and consider supporting them fiscally (with contributions from the private sector) to increase the effectiveness of youth-centric policies.

Utilize newer channels of information to improve youth's social participation. As young people's expectations and concerns differ from other demographic groups, policy measures on the social participation of youth should also be customized for this segment. For instance, TV campaigns and offline materials have a limited impact on youth whereas social media and social media influencers are more effective in reaching out to youth, helping them manage anxiety and stress, informing them of services, and restoring their self-confidence. Such channels could be effectively used to increase youth's level of social participation and involvement in decision-making processes. Such channels can also help engage youth in volunteerism and enable them to help others. Robust volunteering programmes for youth not only increase youth resilience and their civic involvement but also contribute to strengthening community resilience (OECD, 2020). It is therefore important for policymakers in the OIC Member States to consider extending support measures for volunteering programmes and encourage the participation of youth in such programmes.

Bridge the 'digital divide' and ensure youth's access to the internet and digital technologies. The pandemic has led to an increased reliance on the internet and digital technologies in almost every sector ranging from education to social participation. It has also brought to the fore discussions on a number of topics including, but not limited to, youth's connectivity, digital equity, digital inclusion, internet addiction, etc. The lack of access to the internet and digital technology is becoming a critical challenge that deprives young people of opportunities like online job opportunities, online education, and online entrepreneurship. Therefore, prioritizing the bridging of the digital divide and ensuring that youth has access to the internet can reduce inequalities and social exclusion of disadvantaged youth. In this regard, OIC Member States are recommended to evaluate and improve youth's access to the internet by taking into account factors such as quality of internet, digital infrastructure, knowledge about services, accessibility of technologies, and use of technologies.

Promote intra-OIC cooperation and coordination to address a range of youth-specific socio-economic challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has given way to a host of unique socio-economic challenges including, but not limited to, the high burden on health systems, school closures and loss of education, decline in economic growth, vaccine accessibility, etc. There is a pressing need to overcome complex socio-economic challenges effectively and collectively. Therefore, the OIC needs to develop an integrated and systematic policy response to tackle the effects of COVID-19 on youth; this response should ideally be in line with the OIC Youth Strategy. Enhancing cross-sectoral partnerships amongst OIC Member States and OIC institutions will help in formulating a comprehensive vision of how to address the consequences of the pandemic constructively. Furthermore, it will promote capacity building and exchange of knowledge, experiences, expertise, and resources amongst national institutions such as youth ministries, regional organizations, experts and practitioners, OIC institutions, and other relevant stakeholders.

ANNEXES

Annex I: Country Classifications

OIC Member States (57):

Afghanistan (AFG)	Gabon (GAB)	Maldives (MDV)	Sudan (SDN)
Albania (ALB)	Gambia (GMB)	Mali (MLI)	Suriname (SUR)
Algeria (DZE)	Guinea (GIN)	Mauritania (MRT)	Syria* (SYR)
Azerbaijan (AZE)	Guinea-Bissau (GNB)	Morocco (MAR)	Tajikistan (TJK)
Bahrain (BHR)	Guyana (GUY)	Mozambique (MOZ)	Togo (TGO)
Bangladesh (BGD)	Indonesia (IDN)	Niger (NER)	Tunisia (TUN)
Benin (BEN)	Iran (IRN)	Nigeria (NGA)	Turkey (TUR)
Brunei Darussalam (BRN)	Iraq (IRQ)	Oman (OMN)	Turkmenistan (TKM)
Burkina Faso (BFA)	Jordan (JOR)	Pakistan (PAK)	Uganda (UGA)
Cameroon (CMR)	Kazakhstan (KAZ)	Palestine (PSE)	United Arab Emirates (UAE)
Chad (TCD)	Kuwait (KWT)	Qatar (QAT)	Uzbekistan (UZB)
Comoros (COM)	Kyrgyzstan (KGZ)	Saudi Arabia (SAU)	Yemen (YEM)
Cote d'Ivoire (CIV)	Lebanon (LBN)	Senegal (SEN)	
Djibouti (DJI)	Libya (LBY)	Sierra Leone (SLE)	
Egypt (EGY)	Malaysia (MYS)	Somalia (SOM)	

Non-OIC Developing Countries (98):

Angola	Dominica	Madagascar	São Tomé and Príncipe
Antigua and Barbuda	Dominican Republic	Malawi	Serbia
Argentina	Ecuador	Marshall Islands	Seychelles
Armenia	El Salvador	Mauritius	Solomon Islands
The Bahamas	Equatorial Guinea	Mexico	South Africa
Barbados	Eritrea	Micronesia	South Sudan
Belarus	Ethiopia	Moldova	Sri Lanka
Belize	Fiji	Mongolia	St. Kitts and Nevis
Bhutan	Georgia	Montenegro	St. Lucia
Bolivia	Ghana	Myanmar	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Grenada	Namibia	Swaziland
Botswana	Guatemala	Nauru	Tanzania

Brazil	Haiti	Nepal	Thailand
Bulgaria	Honduras	Nicaragua	Timor-Leste
Burundi	Hungary	Palau	Tonga
Cabo Verde	India	Papua New Guinea	Trinidad and Tobago
Cambodia	Jamaica	Paraguay	Tuvalu
Central African Republic	Kenya	Peru	Ukraine
Chile	Kiribati	Philippines	Uruguay
China	Kosovo	Poland	Vanuatu
Colombia	Lao P.D.R.	Romania	Venezuela
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Lesotho	Russia	Vietnam
Republic of Congo	Liberia	Rwanda	Zambia
Costa Rica	North Macedonia	Samoa	Zimbabwe
Croatia	Panama		

Developed Countries (39):**

Australia	Germany	Lithuania	Singapore
Austria	Greece	Luxembourg	Slovak Republic
Belgium	Hong Kong	Macao SAR	Slovenia
Canada	Iceland	Malta	Spain
Cyprus	Ireland	Netherlands	Sweden
Czech Republic	Israel	New Zealand	Switzerland
Denmark	Italy	Norway	Taiwan
Estonia	Japan	Portugal	United Kingdom
Finland	Korea, Rep.	Puerto Rico	United States
France	Latvia	San Marino	

** Based on the list of advanced countries classified by the IMF.

Annex II: Geographical Classification of OIC Member States

Sub-Saharan Africa (21): OIC-SSA

Benin	Gambia	Nigeria
Burkina Faso	Guinea	Senegal
Cameroon	Guinea-Bissau	Sierra Leone
Chad	Mali	Somalia
Comoros	Mauritania	Sudan
Côte d'Ivoire	Mozambique	Togo
Gabon	Niger	Uganda

Middle East and North Africa (19): OIC-MENA

Algeria	Kuwait	Saudi Arabia
Bahrain	Lebanon	Syria*
Djibouti	Libya	Tunisia
Egypt	Morocco	United Arab Emirates
Iraq	Oman	Yemen
Iran	Palestine	
Jordan	Qatar	

*Syria is currently suspended from its OIC membership.

East and South Asia and Latin America (9): OIC-ESALA

Afghanistan	Guyana	Maldives
Bangladesh	Indonesia	Pakistan
Brunei Darussalam	Malaysia	Suriname

Europe and Central Asia (8): OIC-ECA

Albania	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmenistan
Azerbaijan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Kazakhstan	Turkey	

REFERENCES

H2O. (n.d.). About us. Retrieved from https://www.linkedin.com/company/h2o-organization/?original_referer=

UNOY Peacebuilders. (2018). Beyond dividing lines: The reality of youth-led peacebuilding in Afghanistan, Colombia, Libya, and Sierra Leone. The Hague.

Martin, S., et al. (2015). *An examination of children and young people's views on the impact of their participation in decision-making*. Ireland: Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Tatum, J. (2012). We need their help: Encouraging and discouraging adolescent civic engagement through photovoice. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*, 2247-2254.

Hickey, S. & Mohan, G. (Eds.) (2004). *Participation: From tyranny to transformation*. London: Zed Books.

ADB. (2020). How to Avoid Creating a "Lockdown Generation", Retrieved from: https://blogs.adb.org/blog/how-to-avoid-creating-lockdown-generation

African Development Bank. (2020, May). Support programme for COVID-19 response through social inclusion and employment. Retrieved from ADB

African Farming and Food Processing. (2021, November 23). TIKA sets up agricultural and aqua cultural production facility in Niger. Retrieved from https://www.africanfarming.net/livestock/aquaculture/t-ka-sets-up-agricultural-and-aquacultural-production-facility-in-niger

Aksoy, C., Eichengreen, B. & Saka, O. (2022). COVID-19 and trust among the young, F&D Magazine (June 2022). IMF.

Al Arab Qatari. (2020, May 11). HMC Mental Health launches new services on its helpline. Retrieved online.

Al Bayan. (2020, October 11). The Federal Youth Foundation launches the "Youth Practices to Promote Mental Health" initiative. Retrieved from https://www.albayan.ae/across-the-uae/news-and-reports/2020-10-11-1.3983128

Azevedo, J. P., Hasan, A., Goldemberg, D., Geven, K., & Iqbal, S. A. (2021). Simulating the Potential Impacts of COVID-19 School Closures on Schooling and Learning Outcomes: A Set of Global Estimates. *The World Bank Research Observer, 36*(1), 1–40. https://doi.org/10.1093/WBRO/LKAB003

Barford, A. Coutts A., & Sahai, G. (2021). Youth Employment in Times of COVID. Geneva: ILO. Retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_823751.pdf

Cairns, D. (2021). Mobility Becoming Migration: Understanding Youth Spatiality in the Twenty-First Century. In David Cairns (Ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Youth Mobility and Educational Migration*. Palgrave McMillan.

De Vos, J. (2020). The Effect of COVID-19 and Subsequent Social Distancing on Travel Behavior. Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Volume 5 (2021).

Doğan, N., & Kirikkaleli, D. (2021). Does gender equality in education matter for environmental sustainability in sub-Saharan Africa? *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 28(29), 39853–39865. https://doi.org/10.1007/S11356-021-13452-1

Emirates Foundation. (n.d.) Psychological support line – 800HOPE. Retrieved from https://www.emiratesfoundation.ae/ef/ar/hope/

Generation Unlimited. (2020). Young people's participation and civic engagement. Retrieved from https://www.generationunlimited.org/media/3021/file/Action%20Guide%205:%20Young%20people%E2%80%99s%20participation%20and%20civic%20engagement.pdf

Human Rights Watch. (2020). *Impact of Covid-19 on Children's Education in Africa Submission to The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 35th Ordinary Session*. September, 1–9.

ICYF. (2021). Annual report 2021. Retrieved from https://express.adobe.com/page/nBrPk0i1ugUa6/

ILO. (2020). Youth & COVID-19: Impacts on Jobs, Education, Rights and Mental Well-being. Retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_753026.pdf

ILO. (2021). Youth and COVID-19: Access to Decent Jobs Amid the Pandemic.

ILO. (2021a).How Indonesian Youth Respond to COVID-19 Pandemic. Retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/jakarta/info/publi

c/fs/WCMS_772479/lang--en/index.htm

ILO. (2021b), Youth and COVID-19: Access to Decent Jobs amid the Pandemic.

IMF. (2021). Fiscal Monitor, April 2021. https://doi.org/10.5089/9781513510590.089

International Incubation Center. (2022). About Us. Retrieved from https://iincubation.com/about-us/

Ministry of Education. (n.d.). Education and Corona. Retrieved from https://moe.gov.sa/ar/LifeEvents/Pages/default.aspx

Ministry of Employment, Youth and Sports. (n.d.). My Future Project. Retrieved from MEFP

Ministry of Employment, Youth and Sports. (n.d.). My Job (Mihnati). Retrieved from https://mefp.mr/ar/15503-2/#

Murad, I. (2021, November 10). Are you okay? A Qatari campaign aimed at raising awareness of mental health. Retrieved from Al Jazeera.

OECD. (2020). Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for All Generations?, OECD Public Governance Reviews. Paris.

OECD. (2020, November 6). COVID-19 crisis response in MENA countries. Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-crisis-response-in-mena-countries-4b366396/

OECD. (2021). Supporting Young People's Mental Health Through the COVID-19 Crisis. Paris.

OECD. (2022). Delivering for Youth: How Governments can Put Young People at the Centre of the Recovery. Paris.

Office of the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco. (2020). Prime Minister: The government has paid special attention to young people, whether during or after the Corona pandemic. Press Release.

OHCHR. (n.d.). COVID-19 response measures in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Retrieved from https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Events/GoodPracticesCoronavirus/azerbaijan-submission-covid19.pdf

Patel, J. & Sridhar, D. (2021). Toward Better Pandemic Preparedness, F&D Magazine (December 2021). IMF.

Qatar Foundation. (2020, December). Your Professional Guide (Issue 11). Retrieved from https://qcdc.org.qa/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/01/CG11_AR_WEB-1.pdf

SESRIC, & ICYF. (2020). *State of Youth in the OIC Member States 2020: Enhancing Economic Participation of Youth*. Ankara: SESRIC.

SESRIC. (2019). *Education and Scientific Development in OIC Member States.* Ankara: SESRIC.

SESRIC. (2020). Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic in OIC Member Countries: Prospects and Challenges. Ankara. Retrieved from: https://sesricdiag.blob.core.windows.net/sesric-site-blob/files/article/724.pdf

SESRIC. (2020a). State of Youth in OIC Member States 2020, Ankara.

SESRIC. (2020b). Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic in OIC Member Countries: Prospects and Challenges. Ankara. Retrieved from: https://sesricdiag.blob.core.windows.net/sesric-site-blob/files/article/724.pdf

SESRIC. (2022). *Socio-Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic in OIC Countries: Pathways for Sustainable and Resilient Recovery*. https://www.sesric.org/publications-detail.php?id=545

SESRIC. (2022). Socio-Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic in OIC Countries: Pathways for Sustainable and Resilient Recovery. Ankara. Retrieved from: https://www.sesric.org/publications-detail.php?id=545

Supreme Youth Council. (2021, November). Establishment of the Supreme Council for Youth. Retrieved from https://mjs.gov.dz/index.php/ar/actualites-ar/jeunesse-ar/2021-11-09-13-20-37/5723-2021-11-09-13-26-27

UK Youth. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on young people & the youth sector. Retrieved from: https://www.ukyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/UK-Youth-Covid-19-Impact-Report-.pdf

UN. (2020). Classroom crisis: Avert a 'generational catastrophe', urges UN chief. https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/10/1075982

UN. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on children. Policy Brief. Retrieved from: https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/160420_Covid_Children_Policy_Brief.pdf

UNESCO. (2020). UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response: How many students are at risk of not returning to school? July 24. http://www.unesco.org/open-access/terms-use-ccbysa-en

UNESCO. (2020, April 29). 1.3 billion learners are still affected by school or university closures, as educational institutions start reopening around the world, says UNESCO. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/news/13-billion-learners-are-still-affected-school-university-closures-educational-institutions

UNESCO. (2020, September 23). UNESCO reviews education sector

responses to the COVID-19 crisis before the United Nations General Assembly. Retrieved from https://ar.unesco.org/news/lywnskw-tstrd-stjbt-qt-ltlym-lzm-kwfyd-19-mm-ljmy-lm-llmm-lmthd

UNESCO. (2021). One year into COVID-19 education disruption: Where do we stand? https://en.unesco.org/news/one-year-covid-19-education-disruption-where-do-we-stand

UNFPA. (2020). Prioritizing Youth Needs in National COVID-19 Response. Retrieved from: https://indonesia.unfpa.org/en/news/prioritizing-youth-needs-national-covid-19-response

UNFPA. (2020). Prioritizing Youth Needs in National COVID-19 Response, Retrieved from: https://indonesia.unfpa.org/en/news/prioritizing-youth-needs-national-covid-19-response

UNICEF. (2020, July 27). UNICEF and Altibbi partner to provide health services for youth in Jordan. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/jordan/press-releases/unicef-and-altibbi-partner-provide-health-services-youth-jordan

UNICEF. (2020, July 8). UNICEF education COVID-19 case study: Malaysia – Empowering teachers to deliver blended learning after school reopening. Retrieved from UNICEF

UNICEF. (2021, December 8). Iraq's first National Youth Volunteering Platform is launched. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/iraq/press-releases/iraqs-first-national-youth-volunteering-platform-launched

UNICEF. (2021, November 25). Youth Engagement: EIIP and Green Works, ILO and UNICEF joint initiative supports young engineers to play a key role in promoting Green Works in Iraq. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/iraq/press-releases/youth-engagement-eiip-and-green-works-ilo-and-unicef-joint-initiative-supports-young

UNICEF. (2021, October 5). UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth launch joint pilot project to empower adolescents and youths. Retrieved from UNICEF

UNICEF. (2022). Snapshot on Protection. Retrieved from: https://data.unicef.org/adp/snapshots/participation

UNICEF. (2022, March 23). UNICEF launches Jordan's first impact sourcing platform. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/jordan/press-releases/unicef-launches-jordans-first-impact-sourcing-platform

UNICEF. (n.d.). Girls' education. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education

UNRIC. (2021). COVID-19 impact on young people's mental health in spotlight. Retrieved from: https://unric.org/en/covid-19-impact-on-young-peoples-mental-health-in-spotlight/

World Bank. (2020, June 25). Responding to COVID-19 and Looking Beyond: Turkey invests in safer schooling and distance education with the World Bank support. Retrieved from WB

World Bank. (2022, March 22). Actions to strengthen performance for inclusive and responsive education program. Retrieved from https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P173399

Younis, D. (2021, December 9). Youth parliament in Asyut. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/egypt/stories/youth-parliament-asyut

Zammamouche, F. (2020, November 21). Algerian initiatives…Society supports efforts to combat Corona. Retrieved from Alarabi

Zwick, H. S. (2021). Intra-regional Academic Mobility in Central Asia: The OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. In D. Cairns (Ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Youth Mobility and Educational Migration*. Palgrave McMillan.

STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES (SESRIC)
Kudüs Cad. No:9 Diplomatik Site 06450 ORAN-Ankara, Turkey
Tel: (90-312) 468 61 72-76 Fax: (90-312) 468 57 26
Email: oicankara@sesric.org Web: www.sesric.org