

The Arab youth Raise their Voices and Shape their Vision for the Future of Education



"I seek to find alternative platforms to raise my voice and the voice of my colleagues". Reem Hamdan, Consultation Committee Member

"Since I've joined the university, I've sought to be a voice representing the issues of my community and my fellow students, as I have been involved in implementing initiatives at the university and in my community, which reinforced my desire to improve the reality of youth participation, but I faced the first real challenge in my life during my experience when I was trying to join the Bar Association, with no clear standards for the training process for lawyers, including the criteria of the training provider." Reem Hamdan, member of the Youth Consultation Committee.

This is how Reem summarized her motivation to join in the project "Engaging youth in Education for Social Transformation" as member of the Youth Temporary Consultation Committee. This committee was created in order to plan the project from a youth perspective to ensure an enhanced culture of youth involvement in the structure of Arab Campaign for Education for All-ACEA and educational coalitions. In addition, the role of the Committee is to anticipate the future of youth role within ACEA and its partners in

influencing educational policies; to propose national and regional policies and strategies to ensure youth involvement in the educational movement; and to develop the theory of change of the project strategically to ensure the sustainability of youth engagement. Reem joined the project along with 9 other youth from Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon who aspire to improve opportunities for youth in their countries from the perspective of lifelong learning.

Reem, through her experiences as an activist in the university and in the community, realized that youth participation faces societal and structural challenges that make youth rights vulnerable to violation without any way to protect these rights. Reem confirms that students' challenges do not end with the end of university studies, but rather that the real challenges begin directly after university life. Reem describes these challenges through her personal experience, she clarifies "The availability of a site or office to receive the trainee lawyer is sufficient to obtain a certificate without guarantees of the quality or conditions of this training. The Bar Association does not set standards for the hours or the quality of the training, so the trainee lawyer becomes forced to work long hours without pay in order to be able to obtain a certificate that will be his/her key to join the Bar Association. Unfortunately, the Association did not play its minimum role in defining these standards, and the Association Council don't make any serious efforts to follow up on this issue. On the other hand, I believe that the voice of the trainee lawyer will not be heard, and in the case, we demand a decent professional educational environment, disciplinary action will be taken against us."

Because of these circumstances, Reem felt that her voice would not be heard, because the Association, which is supposed to protect her rights, has become an institution that does not perform its role, and does not allow

its members to express their demands. Therefore, her participation in this project constituted an opportunity for her and youth peers to create alternative spaces for youth to express their opinions, spaces that they create from their own perspective because the available structures in their current form do not meet the slightest aspirations of youth.

In this context Reem details "I seek to find alternative platforms to raise my voice and the voice of my colleagues who may suffer to obtain appropriate training that enables them to obtain decent work because education does not end with the end of university life. Decent education is a lifelong human need, but we need platforms through which we can express our demands in order to be able to shape our vision for our communities."

Reem's story reflects the story of the majority of youth in the Arab world who can't find free space to express their actual demands. ACEA team understands the context in which youth abilities are underestimated. This is accompanied by a lack of clear governmental policy & regulatory frameworks concerned with increasing youth engagement and influence in public education policies. Therefore, the youth expressed their need for a platform of their own, not only as participants, but also as a leader for the action.

The youth (Committee members) decided to make changes on plan of the project. Although the goal of the project is to integrate youth into the structures and frameworks of ACEA and educational coalitions, in addition to involving them in the educational movement to advocate for education priorities. However, the youth have another vision. Despite their full willingness to work jointly with all stakeholders on education, whether with ACEA or educational coalitions, they also seek to form their own movement that is characterized by its youthful spirit and puts youth issues on the priorities of decision-makers' agendas. This required a prompt response by ACEA, which was reflected by working to push the youth to hold youth-led webinars on issues identified by the youth. Therefore, they have the leading role in this framework. Although this required redoubling the efforts of the youth and the project team, it was worth it, because the demand to integrate them turned them into numbers, but they actually want to be influential.



The Youth Member of the Youth Temporary Consultation Committee

The Youth Committee held two webinars, the 1st one was conducted on October 18, on "Youth Declaration on Transforming Education"- Critical review of the " Youth Declaration on Transforming Education " from the perspective of Arab youth, under the slogan of (Arab Youth's Vision to Contribute to Achieving SDG4). More than 50 participants from the region and the globe joined the webinar, which created a strong launch of the committee's work and showed youth efforts.

<https://www.facebook.com/100064654333148/videos/485176320205144>

The other webinar was conducted on Nov 15, on " Education and environmental citizenship, the role of youth in addressing climate change. More than 70 participants from the region joined the webinar that was held in conjunction with COP 27 summit Sharm El-Sheikh and aimed at raising youth awareness of the importance of taking action to confront the impact of climate change on development sectors.

<https://www.facebook.com/100064654333148/videos/649958453278253>

In addition, Reem and other member of the committee participated in the GCE Youth and Students Action Month. The 1st activity was conducted on Oct 25: Under the Theme: Youth and Students #ClaimingOurEducationAgenda. Majd Hithnawi talked about Media campaigns for women in the vocational and technical education sector in Palestine. The 2nd activity was conducted on Oct 27: Enough Solidarity, Time For Action! #OurEducationOurFuture. Reem talked about Youth efforts to compensate for the learning loss for student in in Talbiya camp for Palestinian refugees in Jordan. This participation is expected to help them to build a global citizenship, which will contribute to creating a generation who are aware of their local context and able to lead their communities to catch up with the global developments. Thus, the institutionalization of youth movement will be created on strong base to advocate for a just issue.

ACEA sensed the urgent need for the Arab youth to have their own spaces and platforms to express their issues, and took it upon itself to support youth to respond to this need