

Ahmed Younis

Youth Arab's Immigration, Employment and the Future of the Region

As the Arab world undergoes significant and sweeping change, the voice of young people from each country is a critical component of any cogent analysis on what the future holds. The Silatech Index^{*}, created by the Gallup Organization, is a bi-annual poll of 15-29 year olds in the 22 MENA countries about life, employment and the future. The Index is the first ever poll of young people on a regular basis in all MENA countries and is used by opinion shapers and decision makers to catalyze the job creating potential of the region to meet the challenge of employing millions.

One of the challenges of Intergenerational Dialogue is listening. The Silatech Index affords all segments of society globally the opportunity to listen to the voices of youth in their pursuit of building a society that is keen on integrating the skills and talents of all segments. The following is a portion Silatech Index Analysis from the newest version of the study (April 2011) that highlights the Progress made for young people on the metrics we follow.

It is with great pride and respect that I offer this element of analysis to the larger group for assessment and study.

^{*}For a full copy of the Silatech Index, please visit Silatech.com or the Qatar HQ of the Silatech Organization.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (SILATECH INDEX ANALYSIS)

This fourth installment of The Silatech Indexes: Voices of Young Arabs charts Arab League members' progress from 2009 to 2010 towards creating a better climate for job creation and entrepreneurship. The findings, based on surveys conducted twice each year with more than 16,000 country nationals aged 15 to 29, reveal strengths and challenges across the region and within countries. Although the data were collected before periods of civil unrest in late 2010 and early 2011 across several countries, the recommendations in this report are perhaps now even more important for those seeking to implement meaningful initiatives to foster job creation and entrepreneurship.

Silatech Index Rankings

The Silatech Indexes are based on three fundamental pillars: Mindset, Access, and Policy. The mindset Index measures young people's views of the job climate, obstacles to employment, and their societies' investment in young citizens. The access Index gauges young people's attitudes about their countries' current economic and business environment. The Policy Index measures young people's views on market competitiveness and their perceptions of how well societies are maximizing human capital.

Many countries saw changes in their index scores from 2009 to 2010. Some, such as Bahrain, gained ground on the access Index but lost ground on the policy Index. Other, such as Sudan, fell behind on the Access and policy indexes. A few, however, showed positive momentum in all three dimensions. These differences underscore why policymakers need to closely examine strengths and challenges at the regional, national, and local levels.

HIGH-INCOME COUNTRIES								
MINDSET	2009	2010	ACCESS	2009	2010	POLICY	2009	2010
Qatar	83+	82+	Qatar	62+	71+ ♣	United Arab Emirates	82	84
United Arab Emirates	81	79	Kuwait	51	63 ♣	Kuwait	69	74 ♣
Bahrain	78	78	Saudi Arabia	51	60 ♣	Qatar	75+	71+
Kuwait	73	77 ♣	Bahrain	50	58 ♣	Bahrain	66	61 ▼
Saudi Arabia	74	71	United Arab Emirates	58	58	Saudi Arabia	71	-

MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES								
MINDSET	2009	2010	ACCESS	2009	2010	POLICY	2009	2010
Algeria	61	70 ♣	Tunisia	49	45 ▼	Tunisia	78	-
Tunisia	74	70 ▼	Algeria	37	44 ♣	Jordan	66	63
Jordan	68	66 ▼	Morocco	40	39	Morocco	65	57 ▼
Syria	68	66 ▼	Syria	38	34 ▼	Algeria	44	52 ♣
Lebanon	61	60	Jordan	40	33 ▼	Syria	62	51 ▼
Morocco	69	60 ▼	Lebanon	24	24	Libya	-	50
Egypt	60	56 ▼	Egypt	26	23 ▼	Lebanon	37	37
Libya	-	55	Iraq	27	23 ▼	Iraq	38	29 ▼
Iraq	51	43 ▼	Libya	-	22	Egypt	55	-

LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES								
MINDSET	2009	2010	ACCESS	2009	2010	POLICY	2009	2010
Somaliland Region	65	72 ♣	Somaliland Region	43	50 ♣	Djibouti	60	69+ ♣
Djibouti	73	70+	Djibouti	52	48+ ▼	Somaliland Region	65	69 ♣
Sudan	66	64	Mauritania	28	36 ♣	Mauritania	51	62 ♣
Mauritania	57	63 ♣	Sudan	41	36 ▼	Comoros	50	53 ♣
Yemen	53	55	Palestinian Territories	27	29	Sudan	67	52 ▼
Comoros	51	54 ♣	Comoros	19	27 ♣	Yemen	50	48
Palestinian Territories	48	49	Yemen	26	23	Palestinian Territories	45	45

- ♣ ♣ Indicates a statistically significant difference from 2009
 + Based on one wave of data collection
 - No index score could be calculated because of the unavailability of survey items.

Regional Progress Report

At the regional level, many countries' 2010 scores demonstrated noticeable progress from 2009, while others dropped below previous performance scores on one or more of the three Silatech Indexes.

Increase in Access to mobile Technology

Young Arabs gained more access to information technology and communication. Eighty-seven percent of young Arabs say they have access to cellular phone, compared with 79% in 2009. Internet access at home and in the community improved slightly as well. Greater cellular phone and Internet penetration could open doors to job opportunities for young Arabs. Leaders should encourage innovations that capitalize on the growing connectivity, such as social enterprises that are already using SMS messages to connect young job seekers with employers.

Local Outlook Improving

Young people's views of their communities-as places to live and the local economic situations-show signs of positive momentum. Young Arabs are more likely to say their communities are becoming better places to live and their local economy is improving. At the same time, young people grew more negative about national economic conditions. Policy makers should focus on policy interventions at the local level where they can tap into growing optimism.

Rising Concern About Affordable Housing

Young people's satisfaction with the availability of affordable housing in their communities declined sharply. Slightly less than one-third of young Arabs are satisfied, down from early half in 2009. Because rising housing costs are barrier to young people's transition into adulthood, policy makers need to make the affordable housing crisis a top priority.

Progress Report by Income group

High-income countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

More Believe Their Leaders Harness Young People's Talents

More Young people in high income countries say leaders maximize on their potential. The percentage of Young Arabs in high-income countries who say their leaders do this surged to 86% in 2010 from 67% in 2009. This likely reflects a combination of economic growth and investments in education and healthcare. These young people are also increasingly satisfied with their countries' efforts to increase the number of quality jobs.

Less Friendly Climate for Entrepreneurs

Young people in high-income countries are now less likely to see their communities as providing a hospitable environment for entrepreneurs. Further, they are less likely to believe entrepreneurs can trust the government to allow their businesses to make a lot of money. Policy makers must create an environment that helps these young people perceive the business climate differently if they want to convert economic growth on the national level into new businesses and jobs.

Middle-Income Countries: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia

Young People Are More Connected

Young people in middle-income countries are more likely now than in 2009 to have cellular phones and community Internet access. Eighty-seven percent of young Arabs say they have access to cellular phone, compared with 79% in 2009. Sixty-nine percent have Internet access in their communities now, compared with 63% in 2009. The progress in middle-income countries largely mirrors the region as a whole, because these countries make up the bulk of the population surveyed.

Less Willing To Do Home-Based Work

Young people in middle-income countries are less willing to do home-based work if they faced unemployment for at least six months. Slightly less than half (48%) say they would be willing to do this, down from 58% in 2009. This decrease may hinder small enterprise creation and weaken prospects for economic entrepreneurship. This is the only area in which middle-income countries' setbacks did not largely mirror the region as a whole.

Low-Income Countries: Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Palestinian Territories, Somaliland region, Sudan, Yemen

Improving Confidence in the Judiciary

Young people in low-income countries place considerably more faith in the rule of law now than in 2009. Their confidence in their judicial system and courts increased to 50% in 2010, up from 31% in 2009. This significant step forward may prompt these young people to feel more confident that they can trust their assets and property will be safe, which can often be a sizeable barrier to starting business. They are also more likely to say they know someone they trust enough to go into business with, which may also increase the chances they will follow through on their entrepreneurial aspirations.

Greater Obstacles to Business Creation

Young people in low-income countries are increasingly less likely to say their government makes paperwork easy enough for entrepreneurs and to believe their business will be allowed to make a lot of money. While these young people's growing confidence in the judicial system and

in the supply of potential business partners are perceived strengths, policy makers need to address all aspects of entrepreneurship for people to feel the risks of business ventures are worth it.

The Research

The findings in this report are based on surveys conducted twice a year in 2009 and 2010 in 20 countries in the league of Arab States and the Somaliland region of Somalia. Index scores and all other data are yearly averages, unless otherwise noted.

To compare Silatech Index scores as well as other data across countries, Gallup grouped countries into categories according to International Monetary Fund's (IMF) 2010 estimates of GDP per capita (in U.S dollars). Countries fall into one of three income categories: high income (GDP per capita of at least \$23,000), middle income (GDP per capita ranges from \$2,600 to less than \$23,000), and low income (GDP per capita of less than \$2,600).