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First Social Innovation Camp for Arab Youth 13 – 15 June 2015 Final Report



Executive Summary:

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) organized the First Social Innovation Camp for Arab Youth, which brought together young men and women from 19 Arab countries, to coherently discuss key development challenges facing the region. After challenges were stated, innovative solutions were brainstormed and developed for further implementation. Social innovation methodologies, namely design thinking, were used during the camp in order to engage creative ideas and solutions that could be applied to challenges. The key thematic areas which were discussed included: education, employment and entrepreneurship; health; conflict and peace building; religion and identity; young women leadership and participation in public space; and civic engagement.

A public call for applications was launched which gained the attraction of over 6000 youth and 4637 filled in applications, out of which, 65 young men and women were selected. In light of the themes and challenges identified, participants were divided into themes, with members placed together based on a mix of nationalities; gender balance; age; and backgrounds. Under each theme, innovative solutions were created, stemming from shared ownership, shared narratives, and a shared vision of team members.

Under the theme of education, the main issues identified were related to the curriculum and the traditional learning/teaching methods, therefore solutions were created, such as the development and use of an “Innovation tent” to reach children deprived of formal education in remote areas, in addition to an online education platform that supplements school teaching. Under the theme of health, issues such as the inaccessibility to quality health services and infrastructure, led to the solution of a wide awareness campaign on priority health issues to target rural areas, including a mobile application that connects to local hospitals in case of emergencies. Under the theme of employment, identified challenges included bridging the gap between youth skills and present market needs, and the building of a nourishing environment for entrepreneurs. In turn, teams created the idea of an online platform that connects employment seekers to prospective employers through the form of video CVs. In order to promote entrepreneurship in the Arab world, one team articulated the idea of a digital game promoting entrepreneurship skills.

Teams aiming to promote and spread civic engagement among local communities formulated the use of a mobile application connecting the youth to volunteer opportunities, as well as a Caravan that spreads awareness of culture and values of volunteering around villages that do not have access to such information. Issues pertaining to the engagement of youth in conflict and peace building were addressed through the idea of an online news channel that engages youth as citizen journalists. Lastly, solutions for the lack of encouragement of young women leadership and participation, included a social media campaign that counters sectarianism through the use of reverse psychology, an online platform that inspires girls and young women to engage in public

space, and a campaign displaying female historical figures to break stereotypes of the role of women in society.

Overall, the regional camp provided youth participants with the opportunity to engage in the development of the future of their countries. Breaking stereotypes, spreading awareness, creating an entrepreneurial spirit, and helping out the community; are all movements that the youth long to participate in, but lack the necessary tools to do so. Instilling a sense of strength and ownership, and creating an atmosphere of flexible mindsets are a few of the main factors leading to the succession of the camp. The camp provided participants with the motivation and exposure to start making a difference. Therefore, in order to further encourage the incubation of the ideas developed, UNDP is determined to follow up

Introduction:

“The First Social Innovation Camp for Arab Youth” was held between the 13th and 15th of June 2015 in Amman, Jordan, which brought together 65 young women and men, between the ages of 19 – 35, from 19 Arab countries, to examine key development challenges facing the region and collaboratively suggest innovative solutions to address them. This was done to set the stage for Arab youth’s long term and continued involvement in the development dialogue with UNDP.

Youth make up the majority of the population in the Arab Region, therefore it is important that UNDP supports plans, policies and programmes that create a sense of agency among them, while empowering, and giving them the autonomy to set, and realize, their own future. This is the role of UNDP, which is, to encourage youth civic engagement and participation. The social innovation camp is a successful example of how changing mindsets, in addition to empowering and engaging youth through the use of non-traditional approaches can contribute to a future of positive social change.



This report is to detail how the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) used social innovation methodologies to engage youth from Arab countries in thinking creatively about development challenges across the region, as well as including them in the thought and design process of possible solutions. Recognizing that development organizations need to tap into the

creativity of youth for inspiration and innovative ideas, UNDP provided a platform for young men and women to become “designers”, and provide them with the opportunity to voice their aspirations and hopes for the future.

What are Social Innovation Camps?

The aim of a social innovation camp is to further empower youth to become agents of social change by including them in the development process of the region. Social innovation camps provide a collaborative space for co-design and direct civic engagement within targeted communities. A social innovation camp is a non-traditional approach to development, where unique tools, such as design thinking, are used to guide participants through a creative process towards solution building. The camps provide a participatory platform and positive environment for engaging young men and women, to collectively analyze the various development challenges, utilize new tools, build their networks, and innovate collaboratively. Furthermore, the camps serve as a tool for empowering youth as they gain a sense of ownership and begin to take charge of their futures through the ability to independently solve their own problems. Through this citizen-centric approach, youth from the Arab world were given a space to have their voices heard, to think about what the ideal future holds, and to discuss the outcomes that could be achieved through regional co-creation.

Selection Criteria:

Youth from all Arab countries served by UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States were targeted. Four participants per country were selected, with the exception of two selected from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and six selected from Egypt.

In order to ensure a diverse group of youth the following criteria were taken into consideration:

- Age (19-35), Sex, and Nationality
- Educational background (different areas of study)
- Professional background (different professions)
- Socio-economic background (different socio-economic standings)
- Background in civic participation
- Expectations for the innovation camp
- Reasons for wanting to participate in the innovation camp
- Future vision and aspirations for the region
- Creativity in providing an innovative solution for their selected priority
- Equal representation of both men and women

Selection Process:

- Two months prior to the event, an application form was created via Google forms and a public call for applications was launched regionally via a [Facebook event](#).
- The link was shared on other social media platforms such as Twitter, and through the networks of UNDP RBAS country offices and partners.
- The event reached a total of 6420 expressions of interest on Facebook and 4637 completed applications.
- UNDP Egypt took responsibility for long-listing candidates for RBAS Country Offices, and subsequently, the Country Offices shortlisted participants and conducted interviews with them. Based on the interview results, the final participants were chosen.

Thematic areas:

During the innovation camp, parallel workshops were organized on seven youth engagement thematic areas, relevant to the context of the region and the Arab Human Development Report (AHDR).

The 6th edition of the AHDR is expected to launch in September 2015. The report covers a broad spectrum of development issues related to youth in the region. This is the first AHDR to be launched since the Arab Spring, where youth played a central role in becoming leaders and taking command of the future they yearned for. The challenges considered in the camp coincided with those identified and discussed in the upcoming Arab Human Development Report 2015 on Youth. The seven development challenges discussed in the report include: education; health; employment and entrepreneurship; religion and identity; civic engagement; conflict and peace building; and young women's leadership and participation in the public space.

However, instead of conventionally defining the themes that participants were to find solutions to, UNDP decided to use the application process as a benchmark. By utilizing this approach, UNDP was able to see if the AHDR thematic areas were in congruence to the youth's preferences.

Applicants were asked to prioritize the following themes from 1-10 in their application:

1. Civic Engagement
2. Religion and Identity
3. Entrepreneurship and Employment
4. Women Leadership and Participation in Public Space

5. Conflict and Peace-building
6. Education
7. Health
8. Environment and Climate Change
9. Sports, Arts and Culture
10. Open Thematic Area (to be decided by youth via application)

After thorough analysis of 4637 applications, the following were determined as the seven priority thematic areas in order of preference (lowest – highest average):

1. Education (3.247)
2. Employment and Entrepreneurship (3.592)
3. Health (4.050)
4. Civic Engagement (4.369)
5. Religion and Identity (4.940)
6. Young Women Leadership and Participation in Public Space (5.808)
7. Conflict and Peace Building (6.276)

Indeed, the results revealed that the issues that deemed most important and dire to youth in the Arab world were relevant to the AHDR topics.

Pre Camp Preparation:

In preparation for the camp, UNDP engaged with the selected participants on three different levels:

1. A pre camp meet-up was organized at the Country Offices

- Country Offices invited their selected participants to a meet-up, with the intention of creating a social atmosphere before the launch of the camp.
- Participants were also introduced to the design thinking process by completing a quick exercise known as the wallet design challenge.



- Participants chose 3 – 5 thematic areas to discuss in-depth and to identify specific issues relevant to their country's context. The purpose of this exercise was for UNDP to collect all identified issues relevant to each country, find the common issues, and based on the commonalities, formulate specific design challenges/questions participants were to find solutions to (**see below**).
2. Participants were asked to submit motivations for their preferred challenges
- Some problems within the thematic areas were more urgent in certain countries than in others, and, within this context, participants felt more strongly towards some issues than others. Therefore, each participant submitted a short motivation letter on his or her top two design challenges they wished to build solutions for during the camp. The purpose of this activity was to formulate the teams based on the participants' interests.
3. Facebook Group
- A [Facebook Group](#) was set-up in order to virtually break the ice between all attendees and maintain thorough communication through the posting of quick updates.

Social Media Campaign:

Prior to and throughout the camp, a social media campaign was launched to keep in contact with the youth, survey their opinions about issues, and widely spread the word about the initiative.

Each social media wizard was assigned to a group, where their role was to promote the event and highlight the important aspects of the discussions on social media, particularly to wide audiences through twitter.

- Hashtags: #inno4ahdr and #ابتكر معنا
- A **communications guidance note** was sent to all Country Offices
- The Arabic hashtag achieved trending status on the first day in the Egyptian Twitter sphere.
- Achievements: an average reach (total number of estimated unique Twitter users) of over **1.5 million** with an average exposure of over **7.0 million** (total number of times tweets about the hashtag was delivered to Twitter streams, i.e. the number of overall potential **impressions**) on each of the 3 days of the event.

Design Challenges:

As participants are given ownership of the entire design process, it was important for them to **determine the specific challenges** they would like to address within each theme. It was essential for UNDP to **understand the main issues** the participants were facing on a daily basis. The issues identified per thematic area were then refined to create **design challenges**.

A well-defined design challenge sets the stage for a focused and successful design project. A design challenge includes several components, including:

1. **Opportunities:** What problems and issues in your community can potentially be solved through a design challenge?
2. **Needs and Aspirations:** Are there any compelling human needs or aspirations that can be addressed in the challenge?
3. **Empathy:** Can the participants working on the design challenge share personal stories and relate to the problem? Can empathy be created in order to understand the problems in depth?
4. **Interest:** How can you motivate the participants to work collaboratively on the challenge?

Based on the common issues identified in each country, these were the final design challenges, and the teams were split accordingly:

1. Education

- Team 1: How can we make the current learning curriculum and teaching methodology more engaging, compelling and relevant for students?
- Team 2: How can youth play an effective role in ensuring that good quality education is accessible to all those living in remote areas across the Arab region?

2. Health

- Team 3: How can we enhance the access and quality of preventative and curative health services in local Arab communities? How can we improve the infrastructure and service efficiency in hospitals and monitor their performance?

3. Employment & Entrepreneurship

- Team 4: How can we build a nourishing environment for entrepreneurs, where they can easily access practical, financial and creative support?

- Team 5: How can we bridge the gap between youth skills and present market needs across the Arab region and how can established private sector entities and entrepreneurs play a role in increasing opportunities for market engagement for youth in the region?

4. Conflict and Peace Building

- Team 6: How can we enhance youth engagement in conflict management and peace building in local Arab communities, and expand their engagement on a wider level?

5. Religion and Identity

- Team 7: How can we celebrate the diversity in our communities and spread the values of coexistence and acceptance?

6. Young Women Leadership and Participation In Pubic Space

- Team 8: How can we promote female role models as a means of encouraging women to participate in public space and assume leadership roles?
- Team 9: How can we promote women's active citizenship across the Arab region and enhance conditions that enable them to assume leadership positions in their societies?

7. Civic Engagement

- Team 10: How can we promote civic engagement and volunteerism amongst youth in their local communities?
- Team 11: How can we incentivize the civic engagement of Arab youth in the development of their local communities and what roles can governments and civil society play in maximizing opportunities for civic engagement for Arab youth?

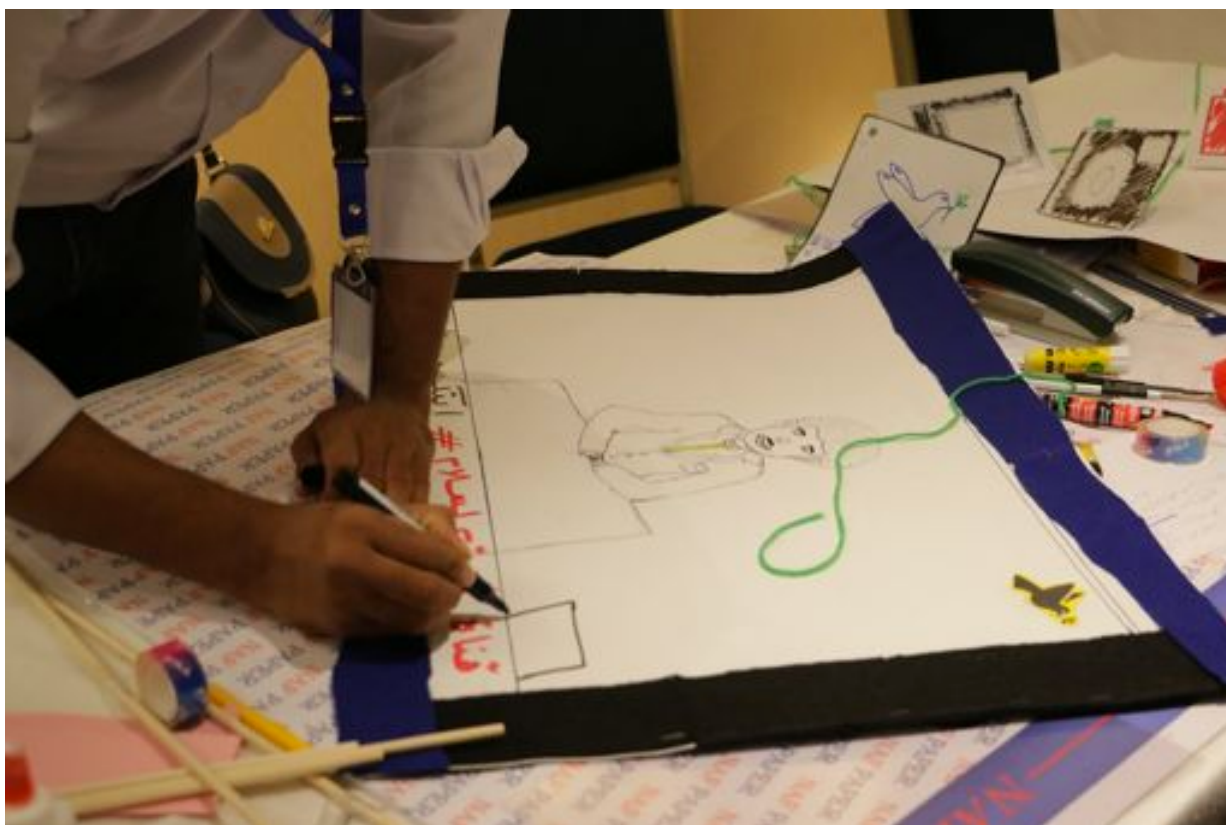
Working Groups:

Each participant submitted a motivation letter for his or her top two priority design challenges prior to the camp. Based on their preferences, 11 teams were put together keeping in mind a mix of nationalities, gender balance, age and backgrounds (to the extent possible).

One facilitator and one social media wizard were allocated to each team. The role of the facilitator was to guide his/her respective group through the design thinking process. Whereas, the social media wizard's role was to document important highlights from the discussion and promote the camp activities on social media platforms, namely twitter.

Methodology:

Design thinking is a creative and unique approach to problem solving that allows the designer to immerse him/herself in the problem he or she is trying to solve. By using creative tools, he/she can build relevant solutions.



Therefore, Design Thinking was at the center of the methodology for the innovation camp. Participants were guided through a creative process and a set of techniques that has been used effectively to generate “out of the box” ideas for social challenges.

The methodology was very narrative based and focused on achieving three main principles: shared ownership, shared narrative and a shared vision.

Each tool served its own purpose and by the end of the three days each team had developed an initial idea for a solution based on the different perspectives shared by each team member and the insights gained through each activity.

The camp was held in **Arabic**. The activities were as follows:

Day 1: Saturday 13th June 2015

The first day was mainly focused on identifying and defining the problem in depth.

1. Introduction

The day kicked off with an introduction, where UNDP introduced the goals of the camp for the next couple of days, which were: engaging and empowering youth, understanding their priorities in relation to development challenges, encouraging creative co-creation and collaboration, providing a space for the creation of solutions, and finally giving participants ownership of the design process. Afterwards, participants re-capped on the five stages of the design thinking process, and lastly we discussed the proceedings that will occur after the workshop. In order to create positive competition, we announced that a judge's panel would choose the best three solutions to present their ideas at the AHDR launch. Finally, UNDP committed to following up with the teams post-camp by providing guidance and technical support as needed.

2. Icebreaker (Charades)

As an icebreaker, attendees paired up and had to share three interesting attributes about themselves through silently using hand gestures; while leaving their partner to guess those attributes. A couple of pairs were chosen to present each other.

3. Group Formation, Check-in, Team Name

Following the icebreaker, the participants split into teams and began the first team building activity called "Check-in". Each team member shared with his or her group their greatest skill or talent. Through this activity, the teams were able to identify and appreciate the different talents within their group, which could later be tapped into over the next couple of days. Finally, each team chose a name that would represent their group. These were the first steps towards team bonding and shared ownership.

4. Value Ladder

Sharing values is a very important step in the design process of any solution. The teams were made up of people with very diverse perspectives and experiences who were going to work together towards a shared goal; therefore, common values were essential in regards to reaching their creative aim. Shared values is also a necessary step in setting a strong foundation for team

dynamics. Once each team agreed on the underlying values of their project, it was possible for them to move forward collaboratively. Hence, the teams negotiated and agreed on five shared



values for their group. Some examples they came up with included: transparency, trust, justice, equality, innovation, acceptance, and sustainability. Each team then presented the five values to each other.

5. Appreciative Inquiry **Empathy**

This activity defined the first stages of the design thinking process, which is gaining empathy. Before delving into the problem from a negative angle, we first decided to create a positive mind set for the solution building. Each individual, within his/her team, shared their best experience or best example of an already existing solution to the problem they are trying to solve. Each team chose one example, and presented to the others. This exercise allowed the participants to look at the problem from a positive angle and to gain a sense of hope and optimism. Participants pinpointed the factors that allowed these experiences and examples to work so as to use them for inspiration in the brainstorming stages.

6. Individual Stories **Empathy**

Adding to the narrative-based approach, we decided to use individual stories as the second empathy tool. Although the individuals in the same team may suffer from the same thematic challenge in their country, there is no doubt that their personal experiences may differ based on the context. In order to create harmony between the team members in the sense of identifying and working on one common challenge, a personal storytelling session was held.

The team members paired up, interviewed each other to discuss their personal experiences, and shared them with the rest of the group. Later on, a discussion was facilitated on the commonalities in experiences and a list was compiled on all the major challenges identified. That way, it was easier for the team to agree on and choose a common and specific challenge to solve, within the larger overarching theme.

7. Persona *Define*

At this stage, it was time for the teams to begin clearly defining the problem. For a team to make solid design decisions for their societal intervention, it is important that they have a clear picture of the user they are designing for. Based on the narratives from the previous exercise, each team chose their target user (a fictional character). They created a drawing and described their user in various details including: name, age, sex, marital status, residence, cultural background, education, profession, interests and hobbies, motivations, goals, needs, skills, weakness, behavior, media usage (mobile, computer, TV, music).



8. Present scenario *Define*

The purpose of this activity was to build a shared narrative, mapping the current “problem” situation that the target user is facing. Based on the challenges previously identified, it was time for the teams to come up with an integrated narrative, representing a day in the life of the fictional character. This activity would make it easier to pinpoint key entry points for solving the specific challenges. Each team built the present scenario by using a practical and visual tool called the storytelling icons. Once a societal issue is explained using the icons, it gives you overview of the scope of the challenge, the parties involved and the different effects it has on the community. It enables the team to consciously decide on what parts of the problem they want to focus on. The teams then presented their narratives to each other.

Day 2: Sunday 14th June 2015

The second day was mainly focused on identifying opportunities and solution building.

9. Future scenario *Ideate*

On the previous day, specific challenges were identified, selected, and integrated to fit the contexts of the different nationalities working together. Now, it was time to focus on the hopeful future. In this exercise, participants were asked to build a shared narrative of their persona's ideal future scenario by using the icons. They had to think about how their persona's future improves, the best situation their persona could be in, and how they got there. This was the initial ideation phase where the teams thought of abstract solutions.



10. Storyboarding *Ideate*

By drawing storyboards, the teams were able to move away from abstract concepts towards concrete societal interventions. The storyboard helped them think about their persona moves from the current situation to the ideal situation. In the first square of the storyboard, teams drew the present scenario and in the final square they drew the ideal scenario. Then, they had to fill in



the steps between. The teams had to take into consideration how the persona gets introduced to their solution, their first experience, the effects of the solution, and how the solution eventually reaches more people and grows.

The teams pitched their ideas and then evaluated and gave each other feedback. This was considered the *testing* phase.

11. Prototyping

Prototyping is one of the most important stages of the design thinking process because it allows the participants to think in 3D. Low-cost materials were provided such as cardboards, clay, lego and straws (just to name a few) and each team was requested to build a model of their solution. This was a very practical and creative activity, which allowed them to see their solution from a different angle. Therefore, through the prototyping process, the teams were able to refine and change aspects of their solution.

Day 3: Monday 13th June 2015


On the final day, teams were requested to finalize and present their solutions.

12. Final Presentations

The teams were given 15 minutes each to present their solutions in front of a judge's panel. The three selected teams would be given the opportunity to attend the AHDR launch to present their solutions to high-level officials and policy makers. In addition, the presentations were live streamed so as to reach a wider audience.

The **three selected solutions** were Keyboardy (my keyboard), Sawtoha (her voice), and Mowatenoon (Citizens).

Brief Summary of Solutions

- Ta3alam Wantaleq (*Learn and take off*):** The development and use of an “Innovation tent” to reach children deprived of formal education in remote areas, with resources and activities that use non-formal innovative and creative tools to promote literacy and an interest in education. The tent will be used as part of a caravan operated by young volunteers;
 
- Keyboardy (*My keyboard*):** An online educational platform that supplements school teaching. It allows students to connect to and collaborate with their teachers after school, and includes additional educational resources to support their studying. The platform also allows students to voice their opinions in the materials that they are taught, connect to other students and provides interactive and engaging methods of teaching, such as games;
- Nabd (*Heartbeat*):** A wide awareness campaign on priority health issues, such as diabetes, targeting rural areas and including a mobile application that quickly connects urgent cases to local hospitals. The health awareness campaign will use plastic bags used for packing in supermarkets and pharmacies as well as telephone charge cards as the main vehicle for its messages;
- Tawasol (*Connection*):** An online platform that connects employment seekers among the youth to prospective employers/companies, based on their skills. The platform allows youth to post their CVs in the form of three-minute video snippets rather than the traditional CV paper format;



- **Noor (Light):** A digital game that promotes entrepreneurship skills amongst youth. It is made up of a simulation that teaches the player how to turn an idea into an actual business. At the end of the game the player's business plan is evaluated and the higher the votes the higher the opportunities for real investments. Additionally, animations on entrepreneurship will be created to specifically target children.
- **Sharek For Change (Contribute for change):** A mobile application that connects youth interested in volunteering to NGOs, government and private sector, pinpointing volunteer opportunities and civic activities of interest that they can get engaged with;
- **Mota7edoon (United):** A "Volunteering" Caravan that aims to spread awareness on the culture and values of volunteering around villages. The project will target youth by promoting volunteering opportunities, in addition to targeting parents by displaying success stories and role model volunteers;
- **Taree2 El Salam (Road to peace):** An initiative and online news channel built around a mobile application that provides youth with balanced, unbiased coverage of events in conflict countries. The "app" engages youth as citizen journalists and trains them on responsible online reporting to counter ill-informed, sectarian, inflammatory, and sometimes hateful discourse that pervades the internet;
- **Mowatenoon (Citizens):** A social media campaign that counters sectarianism through the use of reverse psychology. The campaign "I am sectarian ... yet a citizen," attempts to reconcile identity association with specific, ethnic or religious groups –at times in intolerant manners— and responsible citizenship that respects diversity and promotes co-existence;



- **Sawtoha (Her voice):** An online platform that inspires girls and young women to engage in public space and aspire for excellence, by displaying struggle and achievement stories of successful Arab women, including a mentorship component; The platform also includes a toolkit for youth on "how to be a role model".
- **All For She:** An NGO for women empowerment that aims to break stereotypes about the role of women in society. This will be done through a social media campaign highlighting female historical figures and engaging men and boys in the conversation. In addition, the project will launch youth activities (similar to Model United Nations) in universities to change mindsets and break gender roles stereotypes.



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Way Foreword:

Undoubtedly, the solutions are only as developed as a 3-days camp allows. The solutions will all need further development and detailing, but have managed to achieve the seeds of promising great ideas, especially if well incubated. Therefore, UNDP has committed to following up with the teams by providing guidance for the next couple of months to help the teams consolidate their ideas. Online biweekly meetings will be conducted virtually and physical meetings will be organized through local UNDP country offices.

The three teams that will exemplify the most progress will be invited to the AHDR 2015 launch to present their solutions to policy makers and high-level government officials. Moreover, after the ideas are consolidated, UNDP will provide technical support in addition to opportunities for networking to help the advanced teams to implement their ideas. After speaking to the teams post-camp, already some of them (namely My Keyboard, Her Voice and Contribute for Change) have begun doing research, developed a plan for implementation for the next couple of months, reached out to different stakeholders in their communities and are developing their prototypes.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the regional innovation camp has proven to be a valuable experience and a successful example of a non-traditional approach towards engaging youth in thinking about development challenges and possible solutions across the region through the use of a design process. More importantly, the camp was an excellent gateway to promoting civic engagement among youth, instilling a sense of strength and ownership among them, and changing mindsets through teachings of “out of the box” thinking. The youth involved felt empowered by the experience as appreciation was conveyed around having been provided a platform for co-creation and collaboration. Furthermore, the youth expressed a need for expanding such opportunities for meaningful youth engagement.

UNDP is keen on maintaining the youth momentum created through the camp and to continue to sustain stronger youth engagement.





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