

The Arab NGO Network for Development organized a youth forum on development issues within the framework of the “Safir” project, from March 12 to 14 in Beirut, Lebanon; it brought together more than fifty young women and men, that had taken part in a training on advocacy and sustainable development goals involving with about 300 young men and women in eight Arab countries.

The Forum succeeded in creating a space for dialogue between the youth participating in the “Safir” project, civil society organizations and development actors, after completing training activities and framing development priorities for youth in the Arab region and preparing them to participate in the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development.

Throughout the three days of the Forum, young men and women succeeded in identifying development challenges facing their countries and the Arab region, which allowed them to frame priorities at the regional level and to submit recommendations that enhance the participation of youth in the development process. Below are some of the most important recommendations:

- Establish youth advisory councils that ensure their participation in decision-making at the local and national levels, guarantee expanded terms of reference and competencies, and create a monitoring and accountability mechanism. This allows cooperation between youth and other groups of decision-makers such as the government, civil society and the private sector, and promotes the involvement of youth in formulating national strategic plans to convey and translate youth priorities and acknowledge them as actors in public policies and not as a simple tool.
- Ensure fair and equal participation of all youth groups at the national level by adopting a human rights’ approach (inclusion policies, geographic considerations, gender, etc..).
- Support micro youth projects and not neglect them, and support equitable and fair decision-making processes to obtain funding for youth projects without bureaucratic procedures.
- Allocate an independent ministry for youth.
- Amend laws for youth representation in councils and legislative positions, such as reduce the age for candidacy, and promote administrative decentralization.
- Build partnerships with civil society institutions and organizations concerned with development issues and promote the involvement of youth in the structures of civil society institutions.
- Create media platforms and youth forums in the Arab region through which young people express their opinions and participate in the decision-making process.
- Promote the social responsibility of the private sector to develop and the support the process of integrating young people into local communities.
- Support and train Arab youth, building their capacities, and educating them about citizenship and about their rights and duties in laws, specifically in the political field.
- Consider the cultural dimension in the process of integrating young people into local communities.
- Promote good governance, as it includes all sectors and fields, and apply mechanisms for accessing information, enabling young people to accurately address urgent issues.
- Provide a comprehensive and equal Development social protection system for all, which would encourage young people to engage more in public life.