



# National Case Study

**EGYPT**

**American University in Cairo**  
Cairo, Egypt



Researching  
Arab Mediterranean Youth:  
**Towards a New Social Contract**  
[www.sahwa.eu](http://www.sahwa.eu)



This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 613174

## General Data

Country	<b>Egypt</b>
Localizations (name)	<b>1</b>
Code of National Case	<b>NCS-EGYPT-4</b>
Keywords	<b>Employment, Education, Civic Engagement, Migration</b>

## Abstract

Short description about the main points. Summarize related with clusters

### 1. KNOWLEDGE

- University degree is needed to get a decent job
- What is taught at the university does not add much to the knowledge
- Illegal migration is popular in certain villages
- Migrants send money to their families back home

### 2. PRACTICES

- Wasta remains to be the mean to get into decent jobs whether public or private sectors
- Youth remain to be active in their communities in many ways
- Many are engaged politically through different parties and elections
- Many have lost interest in politics post Muslim Brotherhood era
- Campaigning and creating political awareness campaigns is more of a trend among youth in Egypt
- A lot are willing to migrate and leave the country

### 3. OPPORTUNITIES AND ASPIRATIONS

- New policies on university acceptance criteria are needed
- More inclusion of all stakeholders in the education process is needed
- The job market is rich with jobs to those that want to work
- Entrepreneurship is a dream to many, and a number of small businesses are started up by youth around Egypt
- Few do not see the point of migrating and believe that it is their responsibility to make Egypt a better place for living

### 4. REPRESENTATIONS

- A bachelor degree is more prestigious and more socially accepted
- Education is not a mean to social mobility anymore
- Public sector job remains to be a dream to many for stability reasons
- Youth are more aware and active politically in areas like Menoufia and Beni-Suef than in the larger cities such as Cairo and Alexandria
- Even though a public sector job would be chosen for stability and certainty reasons, these two conditions would be given up for the sake of migration.

## **Introduction**

This report presents and compiles all the ethnographic fieldwork data that the AUC Forum research team has conducted for the SAHWA project. The report aims at discussing previous qualitative data that has been collected during the focus groups, narrative interviews, life stories as well as focused ethnographies. The report will also showcase some of the results of the SAHWA youth survey conducted in Egypt. While we focus on our four main SAHWA themes: education, employment, civic engagement and migration, we take into consideration our SAHWA cross-cutting comparative clusters of knowledge, practices, opportunity and aspirations as well as representations.

### **Contextualizing local communities:**

#### **Imbaba, Cairo.**

Imbaba is a neighborhood in northern Giza, Egypt located west of the Nile and northwest of and near Gezira Island and downtown Cairo. Imbaba has a population of 1.1 million living on an area of 17,000 square km, contributing to 1.1 percent of Egypt's annual population rise (CAPMAS, 2008). Generally speaking Imbaba is a poor neighborhood, which is a maze of narrow alleyways many of which are not even paved, it is also known for being a home for many of migrants from Upper Egypt.

Imbaba is a relatively low class, lower middle class neighborhood, and so are all participants. They have graduated from public schools and universities. Each of the participants has a minimum of two other siblings with a maximum of five siblings.

All participants live with their parents at their houses, which is the norm among Egyptian and Arab culture in general, where children (even if not children anymore) stay at their parents' house until marriage. Most participants either have a part-time job that covers their pocket money, or are given pocket money from their parents.

#### **6<sup>th</sup> October City, Cairo.**

Being a relatively new settlement, 6<sup>th</sup> of October city is named after the Egyptian victory in the 1973 war, which took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October. The date marks the Egyptian Armed Forces day and is an official public holiday. It is worth noting that the city is significantly increasing in population due to the on-going expansion in the industrial and business sectors. There is great potential in this neighbourhood in terms of starting up a business. 6<sup>th</sup> October city is home to the popular smart village, which hosts a huge number of multi-national cooperation's where thousands of employees go there on a daily basis. It is worth noting that 6<sup>th</sup> of October city is different when it comes to socio-economic statuses of inhabitants. There are several gated communities in which large villas stand hosting the more fortunate members of society. Other areas are much more industrial and crowded hosting the less fortunate strata of the population. It is also worth noting that part of 6<sup>th</sup> October city carries the name of Sheikh Zayed (the late president of the United Arab Emirates). Sheikh Zayed was believed to be a huge contributor to the city through a financial grant in the middle of the 1990's.

### **Beba. Bani Suef.**

Beba is one of the small centers in Beni Suef governorate in Middle Egypt on the river Nile, it locates few meters away from Beni Suef (around 30 minutes by car), and is known for having a wide range of agricultural lands. Beba is an agricultural village, not urbanized at all, unlike Beni Suef the city that is a bit more urbanized.

Beni Suef is originally home for many of Upper Egypt's wealthiest communities. It is an important agricultural center, which populates over 200,000 citizen. Beni Suef has a large University, public one as well as the only private university in Upper Egypt named Al Nahda University.

The participants are all of middle class, none can be considered to belong to lower class citizens. All have been educated and some went to Cairo for education as well. Some of the participants are already married with kids and others are still students, however the majority are fresh graduates.

### **Alexandria.**

Alexandria is considered by Egyptians as the second significant governorate after the capital. Located on the Mediterranean in northern Egypt, Alexandria is known for its metropolitan nature.

Most participants were well educated, of which some received their education at well-off public schools that costa significant tuition fees *Tagribiya*. They all came from middle-class families and some from upper-middle class families. Most participants had their parents working either in the public sector or abroad in gulf countries.

### **Menoufia**

Menoufia is located in the Northern part of the country in Nile Delta, the governorates capital is Shibin El Koum where the NGO was located.

Most participants came from a middle-class family of which a significant number either had a parent living abroad or were working abroad themselves. None of the participating women were married, but two men were married or which one lived abroad in Saudi Arabia and the other was involved in political parties in Menoufia through local councils.

## **SAHWA Youth Survey**

The SAHWA Youth Survey in Egypt has been concluded with a sample size of 2004-recorded participants. The SAHWA Youth Survey has been conducted across Egypt, excluding only frontier governments (North Sinai, South Sinai, Red Sea, Marsa Matrouh, and the New Vally). Our SAHWA sample analyses youth between the age of 15-29 years of age. The data produced was weighted to produce a representative sample, allowing us to make conclusions applicable to the country as a whole.

## Education

### **Why get Educated?**

The participants agreed that the reason to why the certificate is important lies in the society's influence; either to get married or status in the society, they all believed that the educational process generally affected the way a person thinks.

“...No matter how devalued the education received is it still teaches, education overall is a strength to the idea that whenever a person learns something it would allow him to learn more and will add to him more if not now then later, but the problem is in the person wanting to learn...”

Completion of education is a social obligation. Even though many agreed and assured that education is not really a mean for social mobility anymore but they all when asked why the certificate is important then, they reasoned it “because of the society”.

“In order to have a status in the society, you need to have a certificate or a masters certificate or a diploma, only to have status in the society”.

In addition, another opinion viewed education as a mean of understanding and knowing; it is a process that without it one would not be able to deal with others and the world around us.

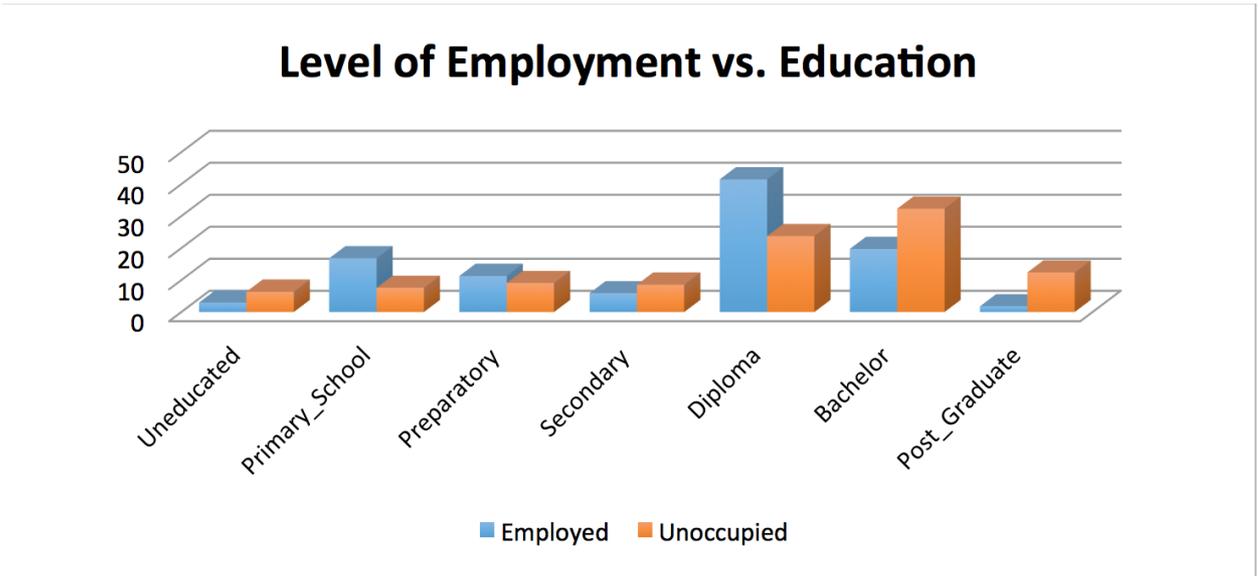
“We learn in order to able to live and deal and to understand everything around me, if you're uneducated you will not be able to understand anything. And to prove yourself and be able to do whatever you want and to know well and understand well even if you will be in this life alone you would still be able to do something and achieve”

In the same context, many agreed that although the quality of education is not the best in Egypt, it still remains to be important.

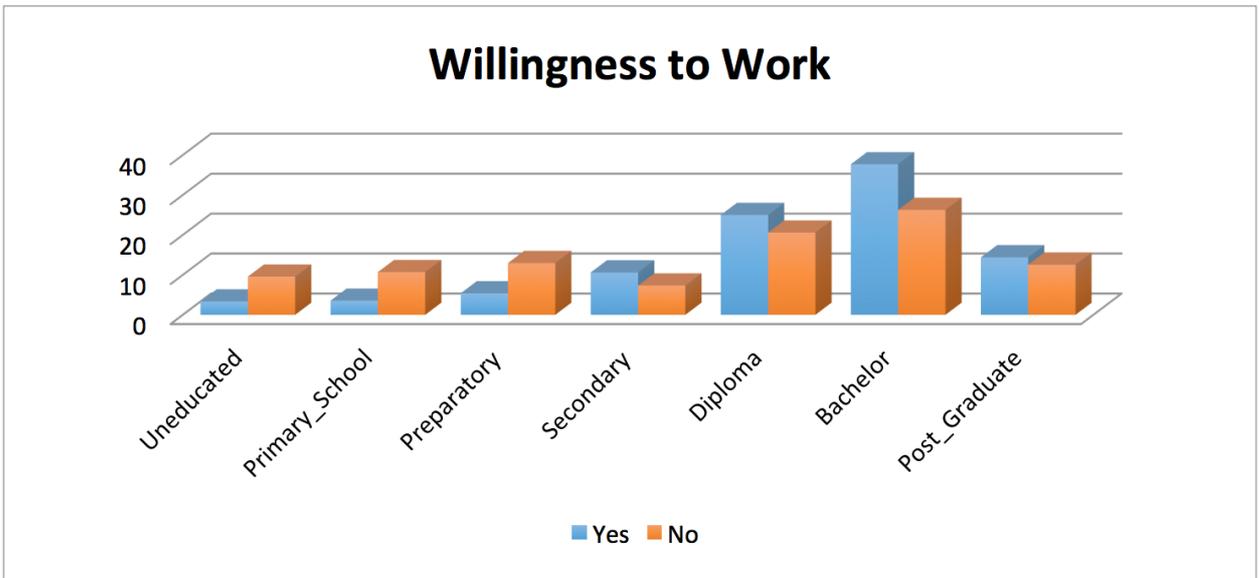
“We widen the scope of knowledgeable thinking like they say in order for me to be able to act wisely when put into a specific situation, as they say knowledge is light”

Moreover, others believed that education and receiving a higher education in general is a matter of society's norms more than a belief in the value and importance of education itself. Where one of the participants mentioned that she personally did not see that her education has helped her in her job but it did help her get the job. In other words, the idea of holding a bachelor's degree no matter what is it and what you studied in it and how you studied it is not a big deal and does not matter, what matters is the fact that you hold a bachelor's degree

Therefore, it can be concluded that the idea of getting educated for employment reasons is not true any more, and that was confirmed by the survey results as well as shown below:



In the above graph, we can see that the highest employment rate is for those holding only a diploma, which is a post-secondary school degree lower than a bachelor, while those with a bachelor degree and post-graduate degrees have the lowest employment rate. That is in comparison to bachelor holders having the highest rate of willingness to work as shown in the graph below:



**Education Stakeholders**

“ I cannot say the teacher only, or parents alone but I believe that the most important two are the state as a system and the family as an ideology.”

One of the participants was a teacher that criticized parents a lot, putting a lot of blame on the parents as they did not – in her opinion- perform their roles properly at home in preparing the children for the idea of schooling and education, they themselves lack understanding of the educational process’s importance within the society. In support to the importance of the parents as the stakeholder, others viewed their role in more positive view where they saw the parents are the ones that have the power to influence the children from the beginning which makes them the most powerful in the process as a result. Parents are also responsible, as they happen to be the

ones that raise the children and should be the ones that affect their behaviour, interests and so forth making them with an upper hand in to how the children receive the education.

“They all play a role in the educational process but not as keen as the father and mother that care about his daughter or son in raising him and educating him as if they do not follow up on his performance and grades, they would go to the teacher and say he is not doing well, if the child is not well performing then it is a problem from the father and mother.”

Moreover, others agreed that the most important stakeholder in the education process is the teacher:

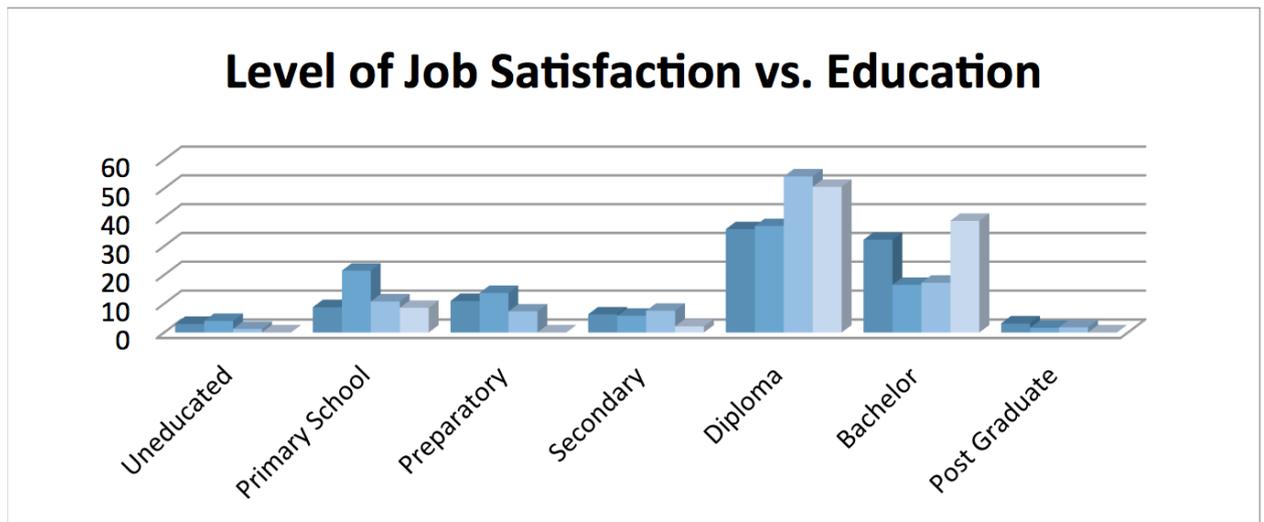
“To me, the most important thing in education is the government, it is the one responsible for syllabi setting and it sets the processes”.

In the same context and with the same point of view others saw the teacher even more important than the government itself:

“In my view, education is built on the teacher not the minister, not the associate minister and not the management because the teacher is the one that reaches out to the student to a certain place in education, and a lot of teachers do not perform this role. The teacher teaches and the other monitoring agencies such as the government if have done their job properly the education process would not be what we witness today because if we rank education in Egypt worldwide it would be in the last 10 as they say”

**Role of Education in the Job Market**

To start off, below is a graph that shows the level of satisfaction from the job in comparison to the level of education, which tells a lot about the relationship between education and the job market as has been supported by the interviews conducted.



Talking about the importance of the degree in the job market, almost all the participants agreed that the degree itself, without experience will take them nowhere.

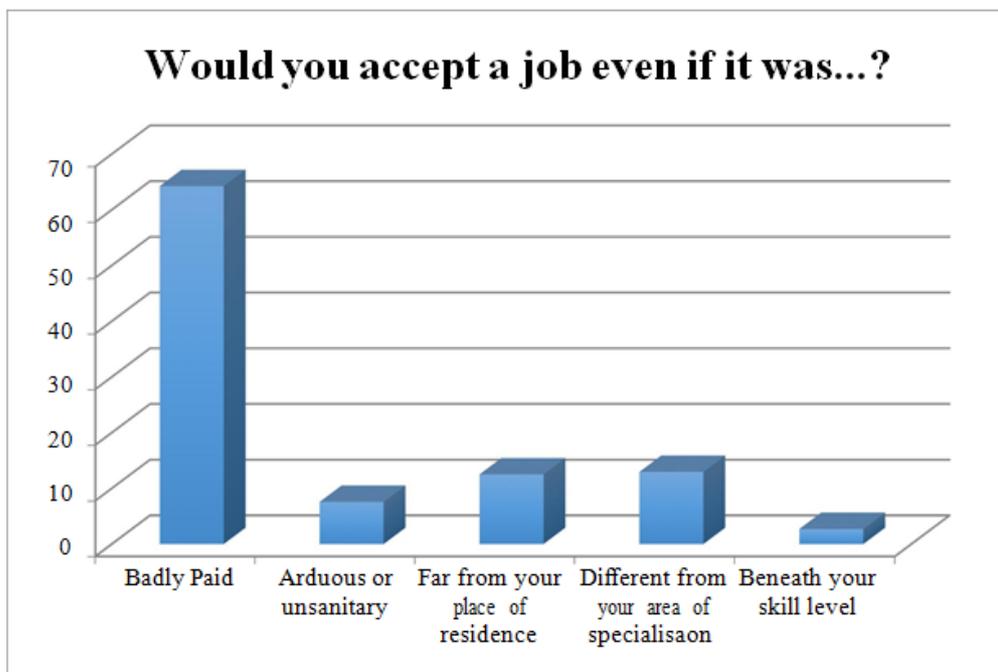
“We will finish and nobody will accredit this certificate and every workplace requires work experience and every time you will be asked if you have a previous experience, how would I will I get a job then?!”

In this quote, the participant explains the struggle she faces every time she applies for a job opening, she is asked about her previous experience while she thinks there must be a first step where a workplace accepts her and gives her the opportunity to learn and gain experience. A 29 years old male gave another quote supporting the same argument:

“The certificate alone is not enough to get a job, to get one it is 10% on the certificate and then I need to take courses and other certificates in order to be able to work”

The university degree as unimportant at all in terms of the knowledge they receive as students, these were either graduates of business or of law. Many statements as “A Bachelor in Business is nothing”, “An unneeded certificate”...etc. were heard and repeated by a number of the participants and the rest mostly nodded in agreement.

## Employment

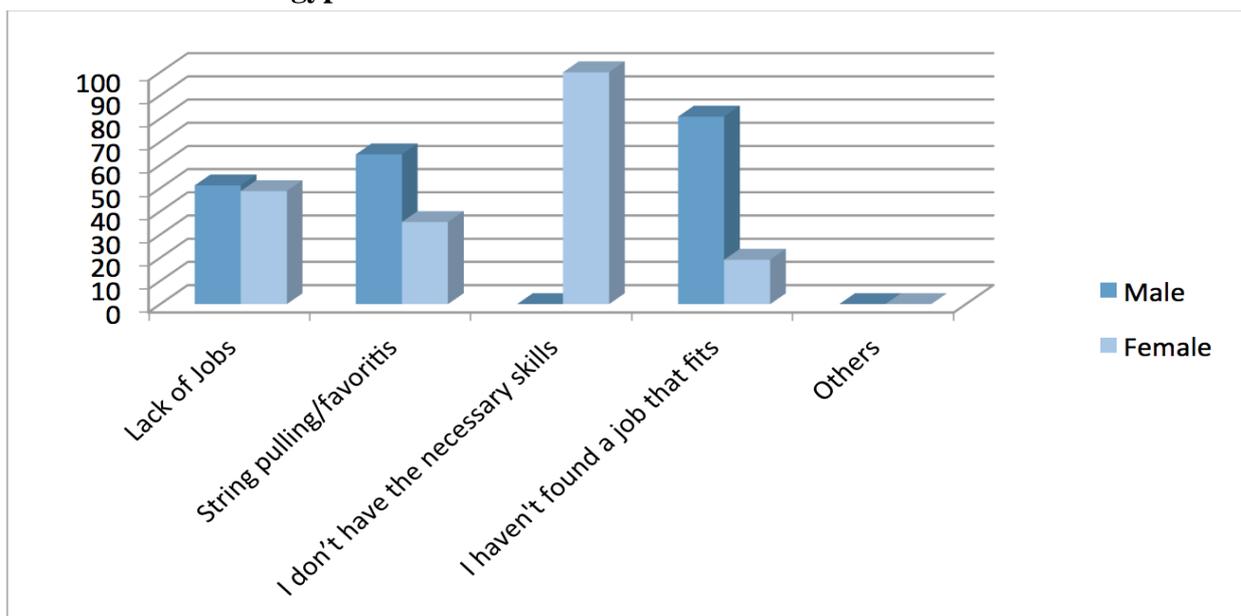


“To me there exists job opportunities in Egypt, but that can make a living to one person (not a family), to me as young man if I want to work there will be plenty of jobs to work in within Egypt but not related to my certificate”.

As can be viewed from the above graph, most young people would accept a job even if it was badly paid in comparison to the difference from the are of specialization. This has been highly reflected in the qualitative data as well. Mostly have agreed that the job does not reflect the education received. No one in Egypt work in their original certificate received. Results on Employment have proven that there exists a gap between the education offered and the job opportunities available in the country. Although, some believe that whoever wants to find a job would be able to do so with the right will, others believe that it is all a matter of qualifications where languages and computer skills can sometimes come before the degree awarded. In other

words, some agreed that their opportunities depended on how they act towards the job market. Many variables included what the one searching for a job had in mind; If searching only for jobs in fields of study, if waiting to get hired by the public sector, if insisting to working under some conditions, then not finding jobs at all, and so forth. But if the person happens to be flexible with the working hours, facilities and the nature of the work, then definitely would be able to find some sort of a payable job.

### The Job Market in Egypt



Some participants have mentioned that they are not optimistic about the job market, they think that it is blocked and that even if they were students of one of the top collages (in Egypt, engineering and Medicine schools are considered the best collages), they don't have many opportunities. However, in accordance to the quantitative data, when asked why they are unemployed the answer that was chosen the most by males was "I haven't found a job that fits", while by females it was mainly "I don't have the necessary skills". This has not been reflected on the qualitative data, specially when it comes to the difference in responses between females and males. Most of the sample interviewed had very well educated females that were more or less as keen as males to find a job, some were unable to do so due to other circumstances including family and spouse approval, but it wasn't the skill. However, it is also worth mentioning that most of those interviewed were active youth in their societies whom at least participated in NGO activities.

Another problem highlighted in both the quantitative and qualitative data is the problem of transition from school to work that was pointed out by many participants; where there are not enough training programs for undergraduates and graduates that provide them the necessary knowledge and skills for the job market. Whereas, when applying for new jobs, if their C.V. does not show that they attended some courses, that they received training and have a good command of the English language, then their application will not be considered. The college degree is no more sufficient to get a job. They think that the Government has to organize periodical training programs for young people in all specializations. Furthermore, a major opinion adopted was the fact that the education received does not prepare the students for the job market because of mainly two reasons: first, the students start studying without having a specific goal to why they

pursue their education.

“The problem is within us and not in the jobs that are available, any job announced needs specifications, the problem is that I go without any of that and imagining that my certificate will get me the job, no the specifications will be the things getting me the job, I need to excel these specifications/skills well and then start working, what happens is the opposite, I get the certificate and then start searching to decided what I want to do.”

In other words, the universities and colleges lack the practicality part, they do not give enough importance to trainings and learning practically how to do a job; preparing them to the job market post graduation.

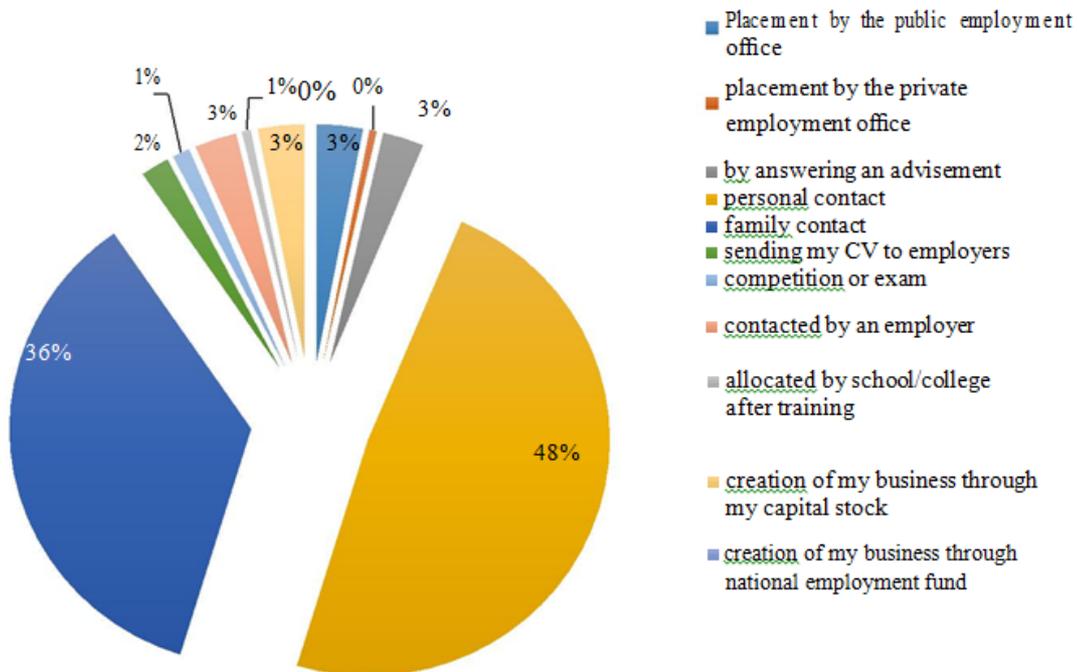
“ In the past, there used to a compulsory training that every student should at college.”

However, others agreed that there was availability of jobs for the educated related to their specialization but the problem lies in the lack of skills and trainings, since they do not get the practical part in their education in universities.

“Yes there are job opportunities with the university degree but the problem facing us is that we did not receive practical trainings in the college, we only studied from books and did not learn the practicality.”

## Human Resources Management

### How did you get your current job?



One of the major problems highlighted in relation to employment is the problem of the ‘*Wasta*’ system that means people get hired because they have connections that help them apply and give them priority even if they don’t have the necessary skills and knowledge for the job. The influence and importance of ‘*wasta*’, can also be reflected in the quantitative data as shown in the chart above. 48% of the participants have mentioned that they got their jobs through personal

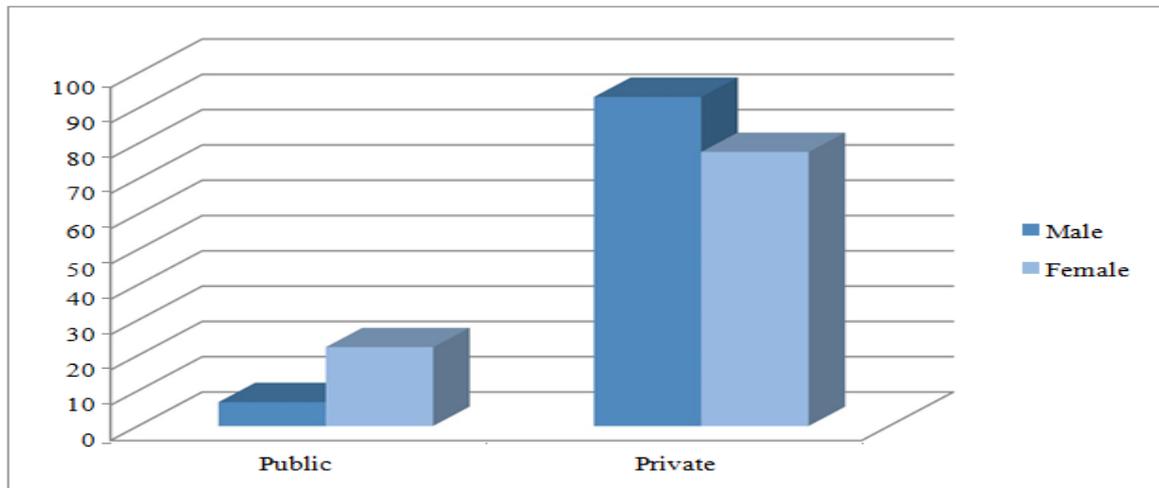
contact in comparison to 36% through family contact, where both are considered ‘wasta’ in this case.

Moreover, talking about the management of the human resources in different jobs and its relation to satisfaction the following were the results, and of course results differed between males and females.

This was not reflected in all qualitative data, but in some of the interviews relation can be built. For instance, one girl among the participants talked about the gender bias and that girls are less privileged than boys when it comes to job opportunities and work conditions. It’s easier for a young boy to find a job.



**Public vs. Private Sector Jobs**



When asked whether a public sector job is a dream job for them or not anymore, opinions were very different in the qualitative data, in a way reflecting the data collected in the quantitative study, and maybe not completely agreeing in another perspective. Some participants explained that the salary and the experience they will gain are more important to them than the working conditions and stability, therefore, they do not mind working in the private sector even if their working conditions are not optimal.

Other participants showed great interest in working in the public sector due to its stability and the

privileges it gives such as the medical insurance, the social insurance and other privileges. One participant said, “If I was offered a public sector position with a low salary, I wouldn’t say no”. Also, participants explained that the interest in the public sector jobs increases with their responsibilities. In other words, participants agreed that what gives the public sector advantage over the private sector are the benefits given as well as the stability gained for public sector employees.

“The public sector job gives benefits more than the private sector, if something wrong happens no one will tell me leave and I’ll get someone else.”

The above can be summarized into mainly three points: First, the public sector job is a dream job to many as it simply means stability.

“Stability, if I work in the private sector I work hard but there are cut offs, however in the public sector I get health insurance, end of month I know how much I will receive...”

Second, for some, it is better to have a private sector job as you actually gain working experience and learn new skills.

“I refuse to just go to complete a number of staff, to go sign and leave and have a salary end of month not feeling any added value, it’s not about the financials but the private sector gives you experience and gives you responsibility and commitment and that’s why it is successful because if you are not committed and not working you will not be promoted.”

Third, in some cases, it is better to do both, working in a public sector job in the morning for stability while having another part-time job at night in order to have better income.

“Even if its money is less (public sector job) we work, we wish to work in a public sector job and work in the private sector after it, we can work 16 hours a day not a problem or 20 hours a day not a problem but we’d be sure of how much we have incoming”.

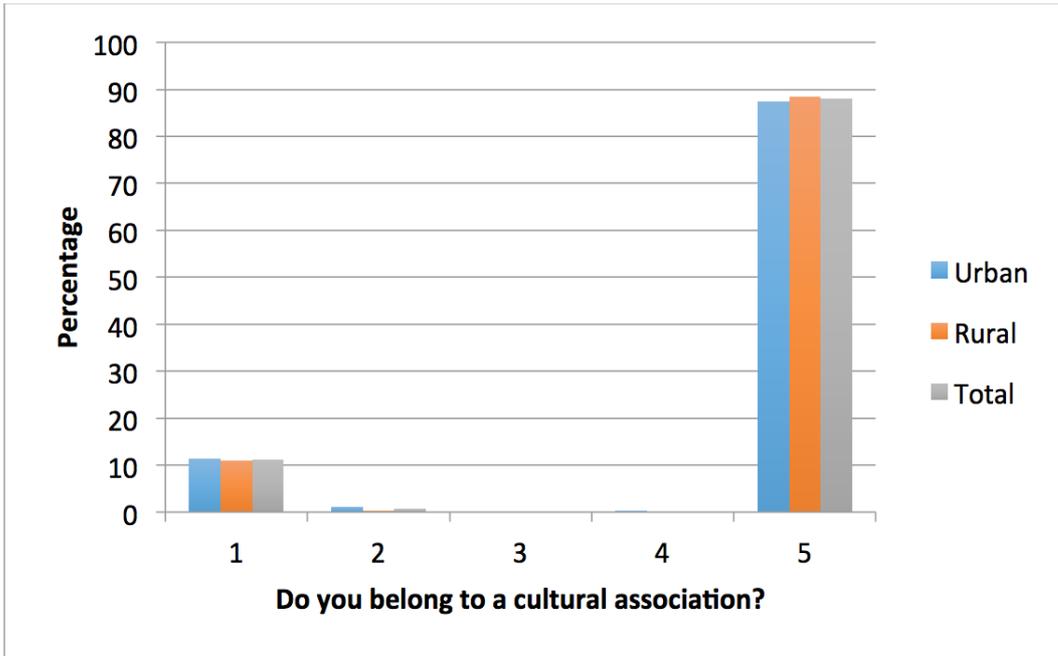
## **Civic Engagement**

Civic engagement and participation in society is a crucial part of Egyptians daily life that is interesting to study, and will yield interesting outcomes. Through the different ethnographic interviews that have been conducted, civic engagement mostly involves the interaction between the citizen and his society usually involving some voluntary participation as a contribution to improve the life of other fellow community members. Civic engagement in Egypt usually materializes in the form of NGOs that aim at developing certain human characteristics.

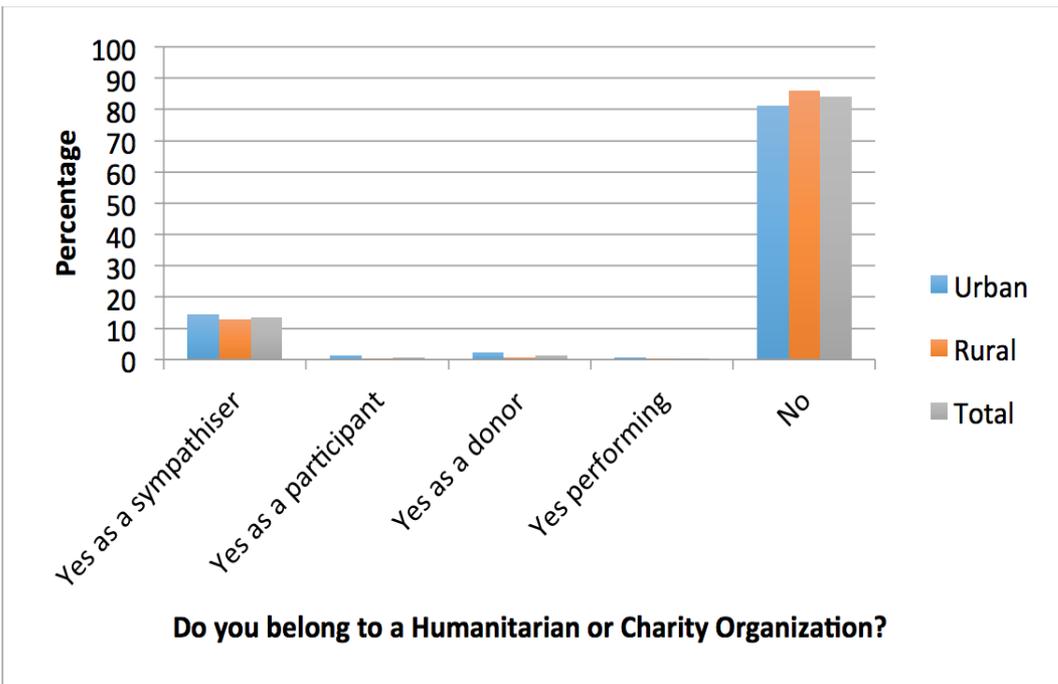
What is interesting to note is the fact that despite having a number of NGOs in existence before the Arab Spring, the 2011 uprisings were not organized in any way. In other words, the uprisings were not led by a certain faction or mobilized for through certain means, but rather it was collective action and a sense of public will.

**The Sahwa Youth Survey also yields interesting data about practices among youth in our sample.**

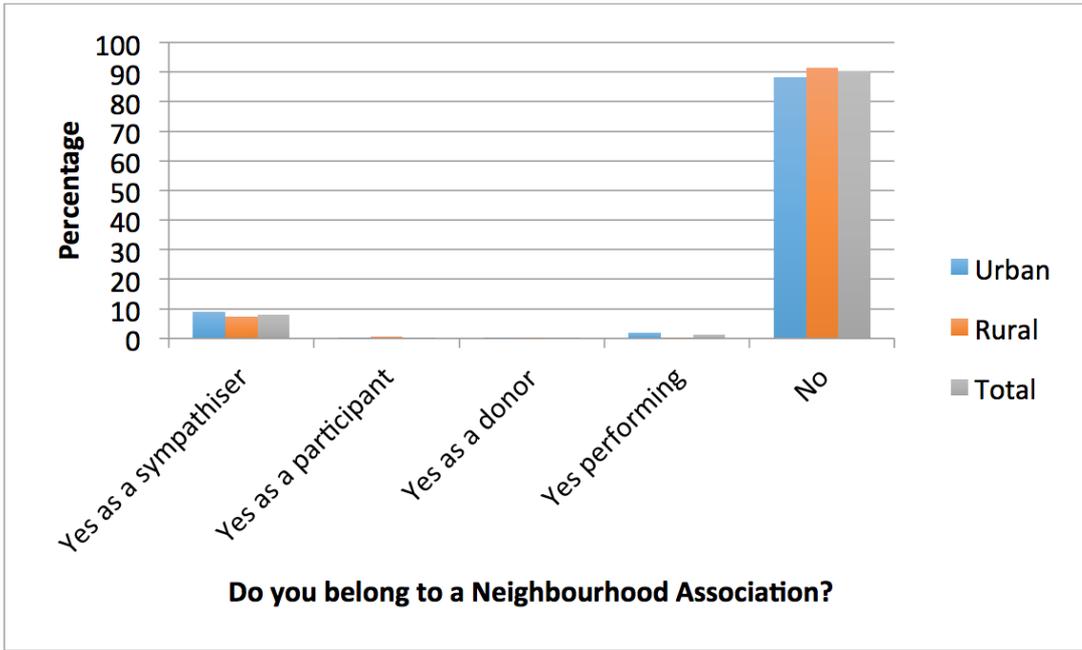
### Cultural Association



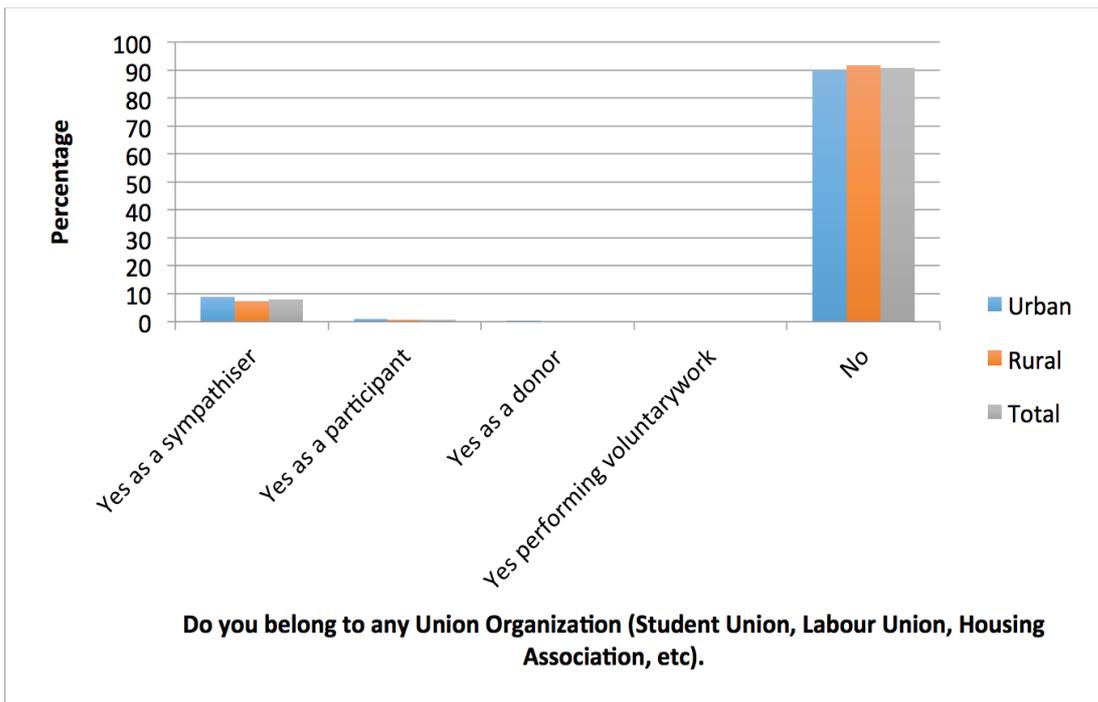
### Humanitarian or Charity Organization



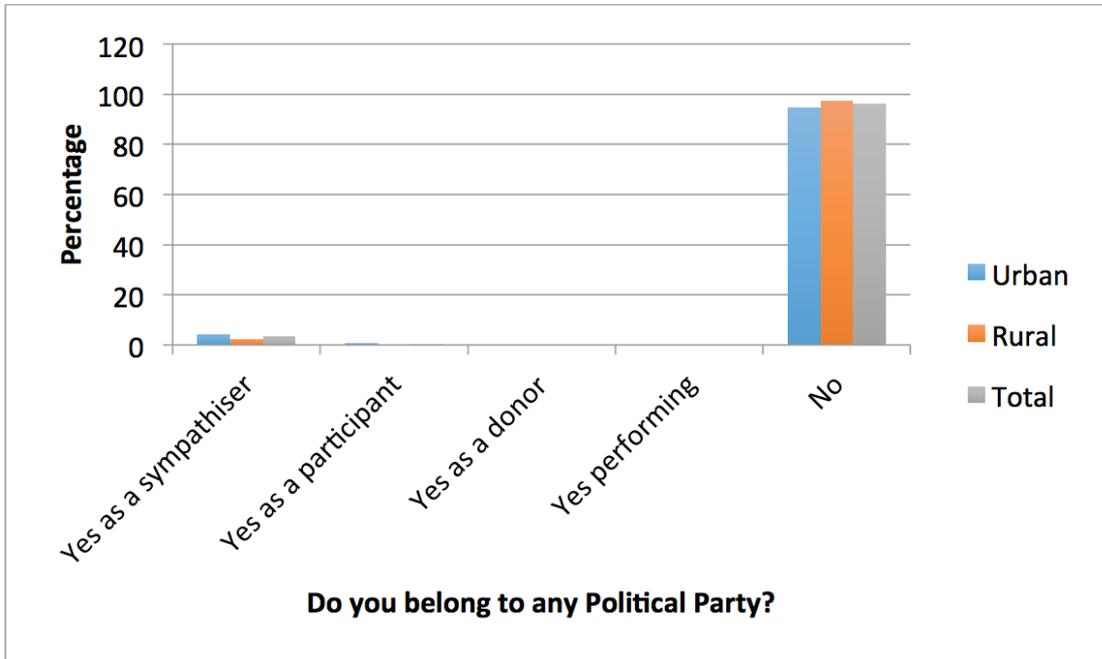
**Neighborhood Associations:**



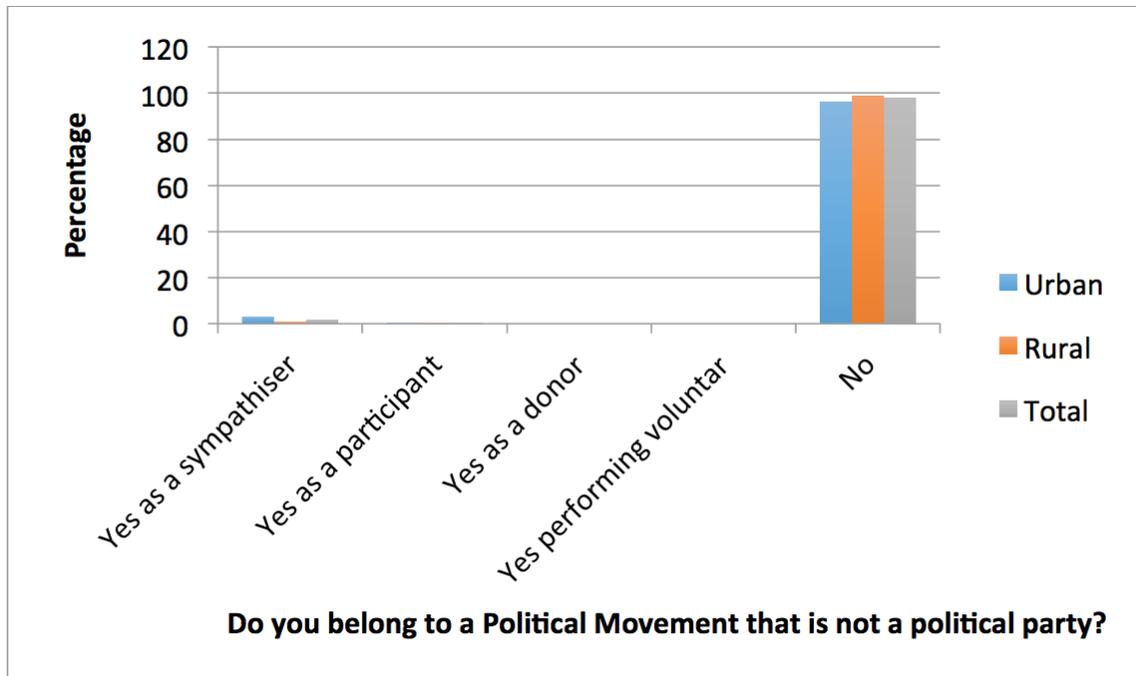
**Union organizations (Students' Union, labour union, housing association, etc)**



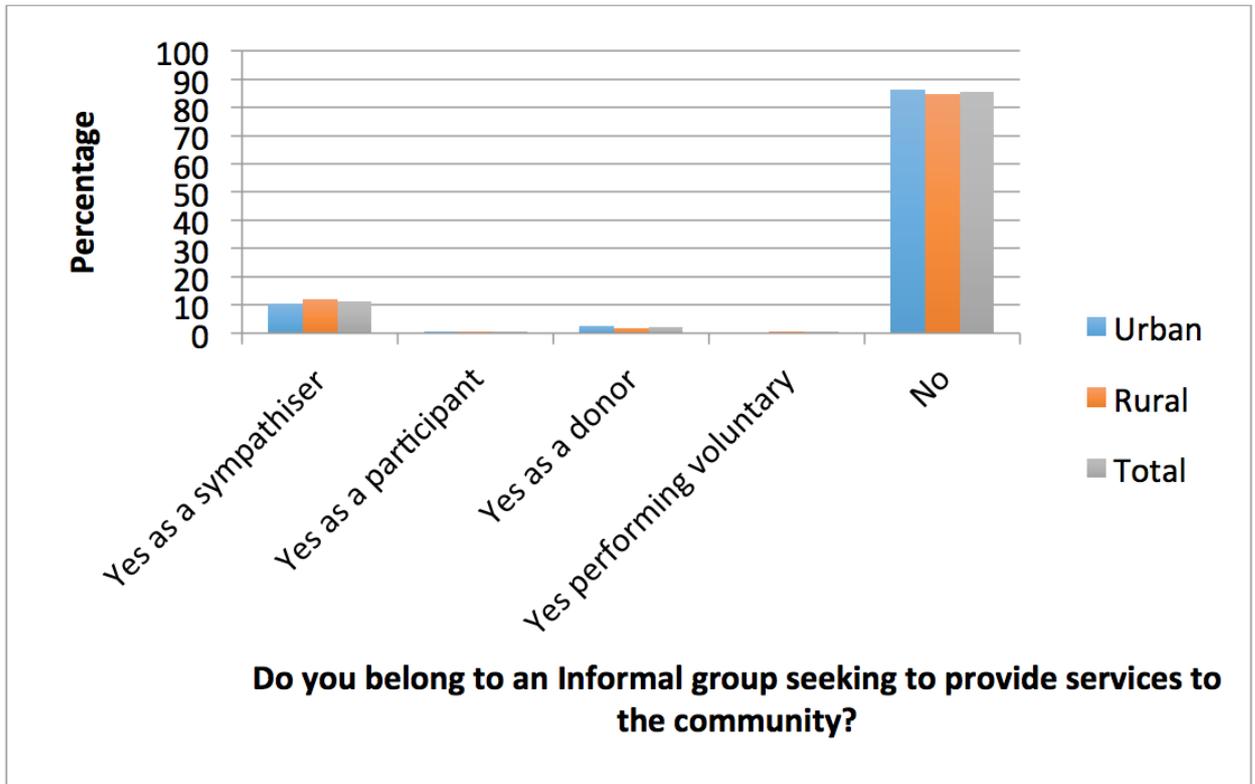
**Political Parties:**



**Political Movement that is not a political party:**



**Informal group seeking to provide services to the community (neighbourhood, residents, etc.)**



The data above showcases youth practices and participation in a number of different civic activities. The above data shows right away that civic participation levels are very low across all activities researched. In fact, participation in civic activities across the sample in any given activity has not exceeded 5%. Most responses (average 90%) have explicitly recorded “no” as an answer to participation and others recording as sympathiser to a certain activity. The data has been analysed to show an urban – rural divide that does not record significant differences.

It is worthy to note that our qualitative data suggests otherwise. Our sample for the qualitative data was based on those who participated in some type of civic activity through NGOs or some version of voluntary work. One explanation to the extreme skewedness of the data above can be attributed to the current political socialization and social pressure that one is exposed to. One can say that people actually fear to announce that they are affiliated to a certain political or social group. This suggestion can be seen if we refer to the graphs displaying “union organization (students’ union, labour union, housing association, etc.)”, “political party”, and “political movement that is not a political party”. These categories in the question of civic participation recorded 0% in response to questions of participation and donor activities. We can infer then that everyone was keen not to announce that they had any type of political affiliation or participation in any type unionization. This can be backed up by people’s responses when asked about participation in: political meetings or activities, making donations to parties or associations, collecting signatures or signing a petition, participating in attending demonstrations, join a strike, use forms of violent action for social or political ends, as well as political participation via the internet with responses recording an average of 97% of a “no” response.

While our qualitative data (discussed below) might display a biased sample of those who are active and participate civically, they also shed the light on a certain strata of youth that are existent in the Egyptian society and devote themselves to participate in civic activities.

NGOs in Egypt are popular among those in their university degree or fresh graduates who seek to add to their society as well as gain working experience. Ahmed Amr is an Egyptian in his late twenties, living in the town of Abu Kerkas in the governorate of Menya. Ahmed is an interesting case to study because he has a BA degree in community service. Ahmed narrates a story of which the popular “Businessmen Association” was known for its loan giving services to those who intended to open up a small business.

“My friend went to seek a loan for a start-up he had planned, he applied and the people there had taken all the necessary documentation to process the loan until he received the loan, they do not have any political intentions what so ever”. Ahmed Amr

Ahmed has also been part of the Human Rights Association and Freedom’s Centre. During his work at the centre, Ahmed conducted frequent visits to local jails and used to report any human rights violations. These jail visits were done under the umbrella of the National Centre for Human rights. Ahmed also reports that the association “was concerned with providing gas to meet the local towns demands. Through the association we were able to also provide cars that provided the gas containers needed for cooking and heating”.

If we look at the neighbouring town of Malawi, we can find different active NGOs such as “Resala”, which is well know among most Egyptians. In a narrative with a female Egyptian in her early 20’s, Mona describes how she has actively participated in ““Resala”” organization during his years in college. Mona describes how dedicated she was and had allocated a weekly time slot to which she devoted completely to the NGO.

“I used to work in “Resala”, and I used to help a group of bling people. I dedicated myself once a week to sit down and read them a book, while they sat down and thought it through. When I worked there, “Resala” used to collect old or used clothes then they would wash them and prepare them for distribution among the most needy”. Mona Mansour

“Resala” as a NGO also has a number of different activities that Mona highlighted. “Resala” is active in distributing clothes, books, financial aid to those who are getting married. Mona sheds light on other NGOs such as “Masr el-Kheer” who concentrate more on preparing and packaging necessary food items to deliver to families on a monthly basis. These food packages can usually sustain families for 15 to 30 days, and are usually directed towards those who live on pensions. “Masr el-Kheer” also helps those in debt and unable to pay back loans.

Mona also narrates how the Businessmen association was active in Menya. She notes that indeed it used to help people financially in providing electronic appliances for discounted prices and over long-term instalments. That said, Mona was also quick to explain that it was politically motivated, because of its immediate shutdown during the events of 2011, as well as the cutting off of employees wages to compensate for people not paying their instalments. Mona also narrates that protesters targeted the Businessmen Association headquarters as a sign of discontent.

Shifting to the more urban city of 6<sup>th</sup> of October, our life story was an interesting case of discussion. Mohamed is an Egyptian man in his early twenties. Interestingly, he has lived in the city of 6<sup>th</sup> October, and is more exposed to an urban life. Mohamed has completed a BA degree in business administration and also has a number of work experiences. It is worthy to note that Mohamed was very cautious in speaking about NGOs in an attempt to avoid the question. For Mohamed, NGOs in his area focused more on personal development, working on improving skills and qualifications.

Mohamed has contributed to several NGOs such as “Masr el-Kheer” and “Resala” and more significantly in his case, the “Fard” institution.

“The institution has been very busy over the past two years and is especially concerned with the migrants coming from Syria”, he said. In the place where I reside, 6<sup>th</sup> of October city, is a common place to find Syrian migrants, The organization was concerned with their status and most of the work revolved around them. Research was conducted on them producing statistics which we could report to other international organizations such as the United Nations or the Humanitarian Relief Foundation and ask for grants to help those suffering the humanitarian crisis in an attempt to relief need”. Mohamed Mansour

## **Migration**

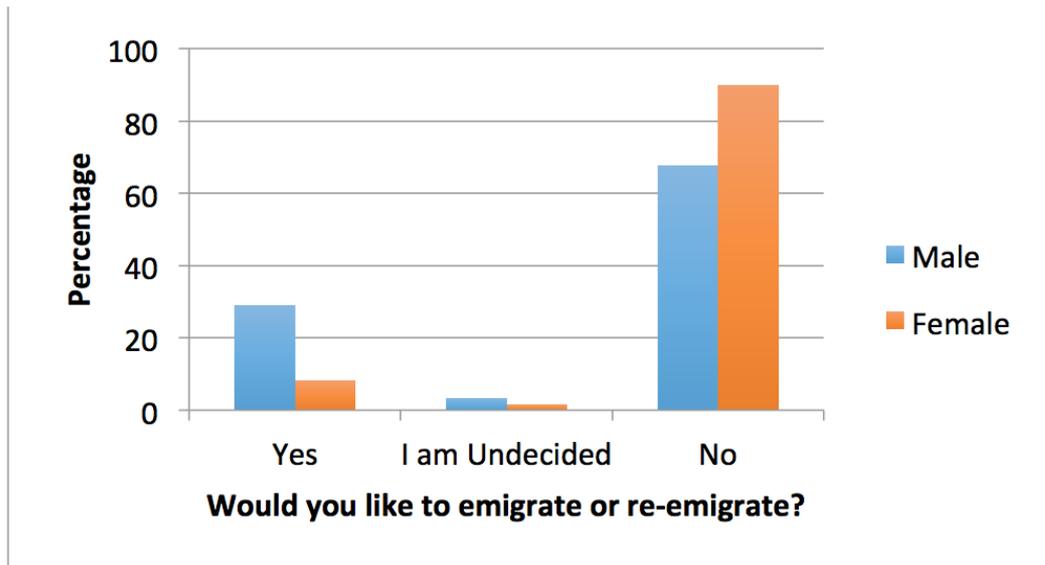
Migration has always been commonplace in Egypt, especially with the advent of oil in the Gulf countries. The Gulf has been a popular destination to many Egyptian youth who seek better employment opportunities. The Gulf has continued to be a major recipient of expatriate labour attracting different professions especially medical doctors, construction engineers and teachers. It is common to find people who usually stayed there between 5 to 10 years in an attempt to make a decent amount of money, and return to live in Egypt, and probably marry after they are financially capable. Others migrate to the Gulf to fund their children’s education or provide for elder members of the family. In all of the cases discussed above, migration is temporary and revolves around financial issues.

Mona explicitly said “My dream was to actually migrate for a short period of time to make a decent amount of money and then return,” Mona would not migrate for any other reason.

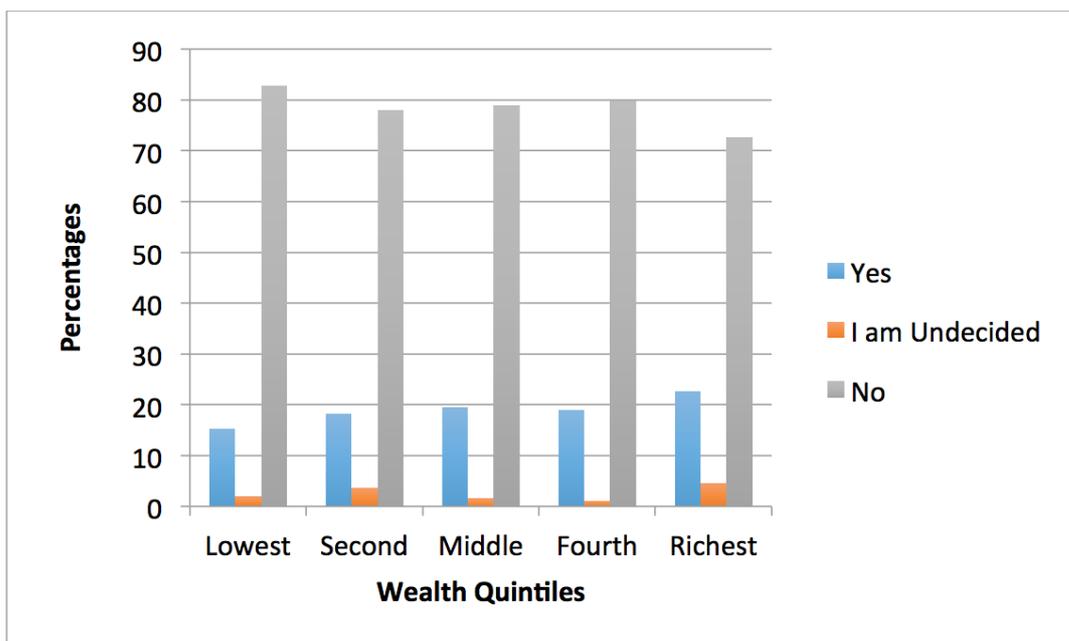
Preliminary analysis of the SAHWA youth survey suggests that not many people have actually emigrated. More importantly and indicative to our analysis is the intentions that people have and their decision if they were given the choice or capabilities.

The below graph shows a gender perspective in relation to peoples will to migrate or re-emigrate. Approaching this question from a gender, education, and wealth perspective is most applicable, and is worthy of analysis. Though the percentage of people below who reply by “no” is much higher, people who would like to emigrate are significant standing at about 20%.

It is clear that gender is a factor when considering migration. Men are more likely to migrate probably for the urge to find a well paid job to be able to live a decent life, and probably return for marriage. Such data also conforms with Middle Eastern traditions where the man is seen as the “breadwinner” and is supposed to sustain the family.

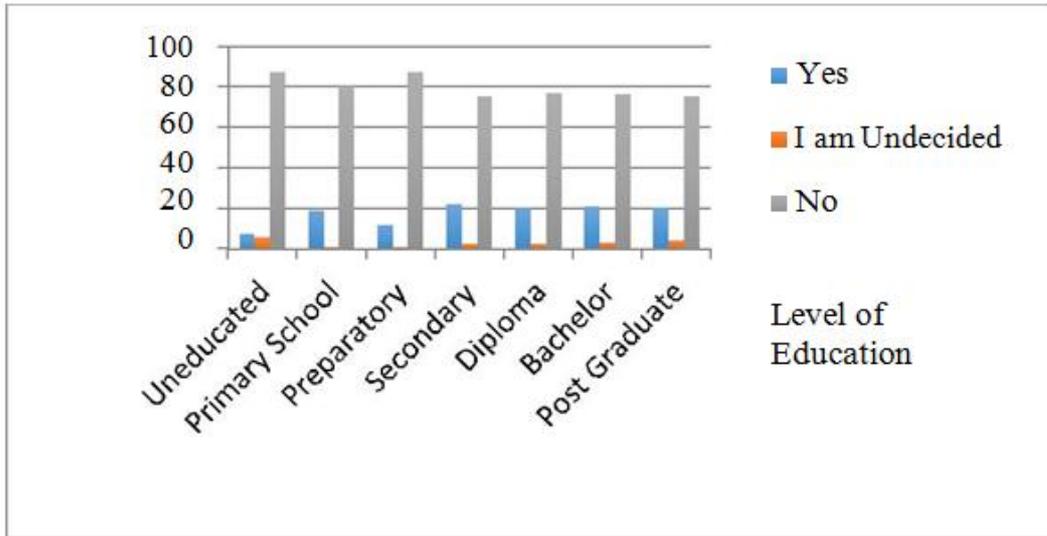


When we analyse the same question with reference to “wealth quintiles”, there is another interesting point the data raises. While it would be rational to assume that those who have a lower income are more likely to search for a job abroad and emigrate, the data suggests otherwise. One suggested explanation would imply that people who are more financially fortunate might feel the urge to emigrate due to security reasons.



Looking at the question from the “level of education” perspective, the data seems to have a general trend in the sense that people who have an education in general would like to emigrate.

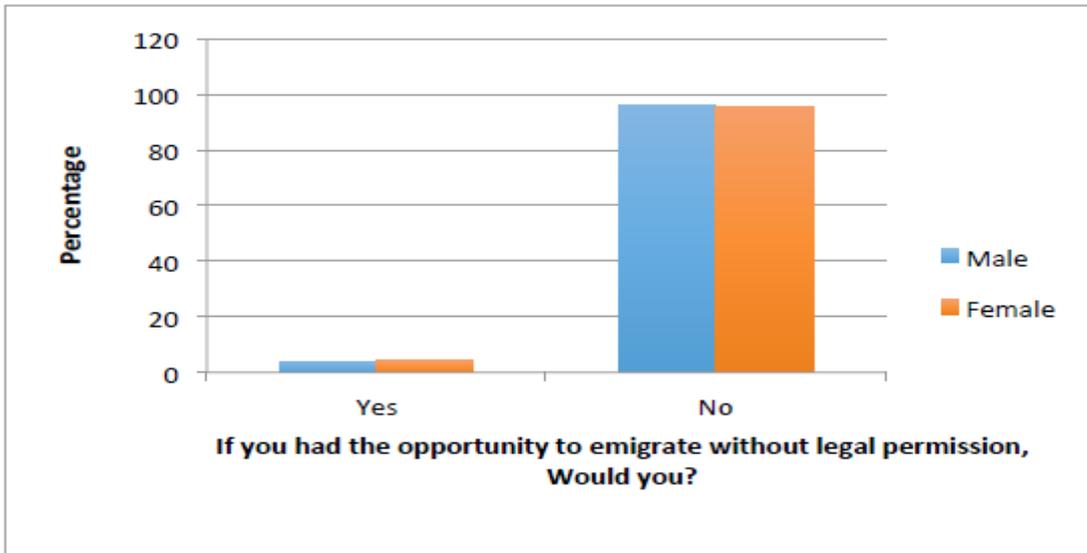
More specifically the numbers are constant with those who have a secondary education or higher. People with secondary education or a diploma might suffer from what the ethnographies described as lack of opportunity and a closed job market. One explanation to those who have a bachelor or post-graduate degree might be overqualified, and therefore refusing to accept a job that they see as lower. Therefore people might seek emigration for a job that meets their qualifications and financial expectations to evade being “over-qualified”.



This data supports what Mohamed had narrated before about migration and the likelihood of him or other people around him to do it. Mohamed explains that “Youth have the perception that they will not find work after college and that is why they basically accept any job offer to save some money abroad and send it back home to his parents and family to invest in their education and life, while maintaining a relatively decent life for himself”. Mohamed Mansour

When we asked Mohamed if illegal migration was an option, he replies by saying “for someone like me, it does not pay off to take the risk of illegal migration. For many others however, it is worth the risk. People are living in a country that basically does not offer any jobs at all, so people decide to take the risk, they have reached at a point where they have nothing to lose anymore, so they might as well take the risk and have the chance to live a proper life elsewhere”. Mohamed Mansour

Results from the SAHWA youth survey show that fewer than 5% of the people would actually emigrate using illegal means if they had the change. While the analysis below gives an idea of the sample distribution in response to the question of illegal migration, the data might not be very much representative of Mohamed’s explanation. It is rational to assume that people would not admit to doing something illegal when asked in the context of a survey, even if they would attempt it in real life. As such, the percentage of people who would probably migrate illegally is probably higher than the data suggests.



While migration is a dream that many aspire too, Mohamed seemed convinced that for his specific case this was not an option, but he does understand why many have this thinking. We asked him if he hypothetically had to migrate, where would he go and why. His response was that he would travel to Arab countries (mainly Gulf countries) because they are well off. Mohamed has a perception that working in the Gulf countries will allow anyone to gain experience and decent money from which he can open a private business. While he says that the experience in Arab countries will be relatively less rewarding if one is to migrate to Europe, were experience is unparalleled. Mohamed notes however that it is very difficult to compete in the European markets due to it being well structured and deals with specific customers. In Arab countries however, we do have huge conglomerates, but we can still enter the market and compete on a smaller scale. When we asked Mohamed to name a specific country he would head to if he had to migrate, and his immediate reply was

“The United Arab Emirates because they are well paid there, so one can actually save a decent sum of money and open up a private business, and there is opportunity there. Though these Arab states are fairly young and new, it is actually an advantage because there is potential to introduce several new ideas and implement it, such as the case in The UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia”

## References

### (Conducting the research and setting the framework)

Abdelhay, Ahmed Tohami, Studies on Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: Egypt, EuroMed, Regional Capacity Building and Support Unit

Abdel Mowla, Somaya, Trends and Determinants of Job Search Intensity of Unemployed Females: Empirical Evidence from Egypt, Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences Vol. 2, No. 3, September 2011

Abdel Mowla, Somaya, Women's Job Search Behavior in the Egyptian Labor Market, Population Council 2011

A generation on the move: Insights into the conditions, aspirations and activism of Arab youth, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy & International Affairs, American University of Beirut, 2011

Amorim, Anita, ILO promotes South-South cooperation on youth employment in the Arab region, ILO Press release 14 February, 2014

Annotated Bibliography Series Youth Development and Engagement, USAID Middle East, March 2012

Assad, Ragui & Barsoum, Ghada, Youth Exclusion in Egypt: In Search of "Second Chances", Middle East Youth Initiative Working paper, Dubai School of Government, September 2007

British Council & the American university in Cairo, THE REVOLUTIONARY PROMISE: YOUTH PERCEPTIONS IN EGYPT, LIBYA AND TUNISIA, British Council & the American university in Cairo, 2013

Cochran, Charles & Elaise Mahone: Public Policy: Perspectives and Choices, Boulder, Col.: Li. Rienner, 2005 (3rd edition)

Council of Europe, The European Commission and the Council of Europe sign a new youth partnership for the period 2014-16, Youth partnership Press release, 7 April 2014

Dhillon, Navtej and Yousef, Tarik, Inclusion: meeting the 100million youth, The Wolfensohn Center for Development at Brookings & the Dubai School of Government

Dhillon, Navtej et al., Missed by the Boom, Hurt by the Bust : Making Markets Work for Young People in the Middle East, The Dubai School of Government & The Wolfensohn Center for Development at Brookings

Diego F. Angel-Urdinola and Amina Semlali, Labor Markets and School-to-Work Transition in Egypt: Diagnostics, Constraints, and Policy Framework, Munich Personal RePEc Archive, World Bank, August 2010

Diversity in Equality: Women in Egypt at work – ,noitacudE lanoitacoV , لمأفرظنل معلا , Training and Employment Programme Mubarak-Kohl-Initiative (MKI-vetEP), Programme Management Unit - (PMU), Cairo, January 2010

El Gaafarawi, Ibtissam, “Enhancing Productive Capacity of the Poor in the COMCEC Member Countries through Improving the Human Capital”, National Centre for Social and Criminological Research & Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs, Working Group, Ankara, June, 2013

El-Taraboulsi, Sherine, Youth Activism and Public Space in Egypt, Innovations in Civic Participation & Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement, American University in Cairo, 2011

Ghoneim, Wael: Revolution 2.0, London: harper Collins, 2012

Goodin, Robert: The Oxford Handbook of Political Science. Oxford and New-York: Oxford U.P. 2011

Hafez, Hend & Ghaly, Ayman, The Arab Spring migration in Egypt: one year on: Imapcts, perceptions and attitudes, European University Institute 2012

Haider, Huma, Helpdesk Research Report: Youth (un)employment in MENA-Egypt, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 2011

Handoussa, Heba, Egypt Human Development Report 2010, United Nations Development Programme, and the Institute of National Planning, Egypt, 2010

Ibrahim, Barbara and Hunt, Leah – Hendrix, Voices on Arab Philanthropy and Civic Engagement: YOUTH, SERVICE AND PATHWAYS TO DEMOCRACY IN EGYPT, John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement, The American University in Cairo, June 2011

Ibrahim, Barbara, Youth, Service and Political Mobilization in Egypt: An Arab Families Working Group Policy Brief, The John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy. The American University in Cairo, June 2011.

ILO, Decent jobs for Egypt’s young people - tackling the challenge of young people in agriculture, ILO Project document, ILO Cairo

John, Peter: Analysing Public Policy. London and New York: Routledge 2012 (second edition)

Kandil, Amani, Civic Service in the Arab Region, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, SAGE, 2004

Khamis, Sahar & Katherine Vaughan : ‘‘Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: How Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted The balance’’, Arab Media & Society. <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/index.php?article=769>, 02/01/2014, 10:13 PM

Korany, Bahgat & Rabab El-Mahdi (eds.) : Arab Spring in Egypt. New York and Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012 & 2013

Korany, Bahgat: ‘‘Microcosm of Revolution: The Sociology of Tahrir’’ in Mehran Karmava (eds.): The Ruling Bargain in the Middle East. New York and Oxford: A. Hust and Oxford University Press, 2014

Mahgoub, Nahla & Morsi, Reham, Youth Perspectives on Citizenship and Civic Engagement in Egypt, AUC Conference Paper

Martin, Ivan & Bardak, Ummuhan, Union For The Meditteranean Regional Employability Review: The Challenge of Youth Employment in the meditteranean, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2012

Osman, tarek ‘‘Young Egyptians: Their Society and Future’’. Social research 79/2 (summer 2012): 299-322

Rani, Uma and Torres, Raymond, The global crisis: Causes, responses and challenges, Geneva, International Labour Organization 2011

Relton, Melanie, Graduate Employability in the MENA region, British Council

Roberto Pitea & Riham Hussain, After January 25: Survey of Youth Migration Intentions, International Organization for Migration, Cairo, May 2011

Silatech, Underemployment in the MENA Region: Young people in MENA are in need of good jobs, Silatech, December 2013

Sika, Nadine, Youth Political Engagement in Egypt: From Abstention to Uprising, British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 29 August 2012

Smith, Kevin & Christopher larimer, The Public Policy Theory Primer, Boulder, Col.: Westview 2013 ( 2nd edition)

Sugita, Seiko et al., Arab Youth : Civic Engagement & Economic Participation, UNESCO Regional Bureau – Beirut, 2010

Staeheli, Lynn and Nagel, Caroline R, Whose awakening is it? Youth and the geopolitics of civic engagement in the ‘Arab Awakening’, European Urban and Regional Studies, 2013

Van Eekelen, Willem, Loretta de Luca, Nagwa Ismail, InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability, Youth employment in Egypt, International labor Office, Geneva

World Economic Forum, Addressing the 100 Million Youth Challenge Perspectives on Youth Employment in the Arab World in 2012, Regional Agenda, 2012

World Bank : Reforms in Labor Markets and Social Protection are Key to Job Creation in the Arab World, World Bank Press Release 26 february, 2014

World Economic Forum, Addressing the 100 Million Youth Challenge Perspectives on Youth Employment in the Arab World in 2012, World Economic Forum, Switzerland, 2012

Young People in Arab Countries: Promoting Opportunities and Participation, Background Paper to the Marseille Conference, April 2010



Researching  
Arab Mediterranean Youth:  
**Towards a New Social Contract**  
[www.sahwa.eu](http://www.sahwa.eu)



This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 613174.

The SAHWA Project ("Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract") is a FP-7 interdisciplinary cooperative research project led by the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and funded by the European Commission. It brings together fifteen partners from Europe and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries to research youth prospects and perspectives in a context of multiple social, economic and political transitions in five Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon). The project expands over 2014-2016 and has a total budget of €3.1 million. The thematic axes around which the project will revolve are education, employment and social inclusion, political mobilisation and participation, culture and values, international migration and mobility, gender, comparative experiences in other transition contexts and public policies and international cooperation.

