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Sandra Ratcliff Daffron  
*Western Washington University*

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**The MENA Youth Bulge: Let's Help Them Save the World**

**By**

**Sandra Ratcliff Daffron, EdD**

**Professor Emeritus in Adult and Continuing Education**

**Woodring College of Education**

**Western Washington University**

**Bellingham, WA**

**Contact Information**

**[Sandra.Daffron@wwu.edu](mailto:Sandra.Daffron@wwu.edu)**

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**MENA youth bulge; fighting terrorism; Integrated plan for the MENA youth**

## **The MENA Youth Bulge: Let's Help Them Save the World**

### **ABSTRACT**

They are called the “Youth Bulge,” the millions of young adults under 24 years old that make up an average of 50% of the population of the 25 countries and territories of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). They live in massive poverty and inequality that Mandela calls “terrible scourges of our times.”<sup>1</sup> These MENA youth are literate, watch other youth of the world on their cell phones and want what other young people have, a job, a family of their own, a safe place to live and status. The chances of achieving the life they want seem hopeless in their countries with low GDP, lack of economic development, poor educational policies and overwhelming environmental problems. Many of the youth are refugees living in tents and temporary shelter waiting for war to end. Terrorists prey on these youth with promises to give them their dreams. It is just a matter of time before this “perfect storm” of angry unemployed youth, living in poverty, and facing environmental catastrophe collides with terrorism. Proposed is a model of an integrated plan assembled with the voices of the youth who “just want a chance!” The model has economic and educational development, with MENA youth taught knowledge, skills and abilities to correct the environmental problems and then puts them to work to rebuild their countries.

### **INTRODUCTION**

“Place the young at the head of the insurgent masses; you do not know what strength is latent in those young bands, what magic influence the voices of the young have on the crowd; you will find in them a host of apostles for the new religion. But youth lives on movement, grows great in enthusiasm and faith. Consecrate them with a lofty mission; inflame them with emulation and praise; spread through their ranks the word of fire, the word of inspiration; speak to them of country, of glory, of power, of great memories”.<sup>2</sup>

The events of the last several years bring these words about youth to center stage. With war, government upheavals, refugees, terrorism and huge humanitarian crises, the time is upon the world now to help these youth of the Middle East and North Africa, (the MENA region) find their mission and to inspire them with talk of a better future and ending the conflicts. The words of Mazzini might have been spoken at the start of the “Arab Spring” in Tahir Square, Cairo, Egypt in January 2011. The youth of the MENA region wanted it all in 2011– a job, a chance to get out of poverty, status, and to live in peace and prosperity. These young people of Egypt were smart, literate and educated, and they knew how to use technology to plan a revolution. Youth of other MENA countries quickly followed the example of Egypt, toppling regimes as quickly as they could form groups on Facebook, Twitter, or send messages on cell phones. The plan worked! Upheaval and revolution quickly spread across the MENA region. But it is now 2016 and the youth of the MENA region haven't gotten their jobs, nor have governments met their demands or invested in a growing economy. Many youth have given up hope for a new and better world; others have joined militia groups spreading terrorism quickly throughout the region resulting in conflicts and violence. What happened?

Warnings of the consequences of not tending to the “youth bulge” by Fuller in 2003 have now come to fruition.<sup>3</sup> In the Brookings Institution report, Fuller warned, if the US government left the issues of the youth bulge untended, the new generations of MENA youth would become hostile to the US and the result would be “greater levels of terrorism, violence, and underlying instability enduring over a period of generations.”<sup>4</sup> Fuller’s analysis shows the serious impact the MENA youth bulge would bring on economics, environmental, political and social infrastructures not only of the region, but on the rest of the world. The problem is much more than just living in poverty for these youth. Green of Oxfam International says, “It is a sense of powerlessness, frustration, exhaustion, and exclusion from decision-making, not to mention the relative lack of access to public services, the financial system, and just about any other source of official support.”<sup>5</sup>

The World Bank, in the “Voices of the Poor” interviewed 64,000 poor people around the world to understand their lives and one word emerged as the mark of poverty, it is ‘powerless.’<sup>6</sup> It is this powerlessness that leads to frustration, exhaustion, anger and eventually to actions against those who caused the poverty. The US is the prime target for the anger and Fuller speaks about policies over the last 200 years that bring about anger and rage in the Muslim world. He says, “Nor should the use of violence be surprising. When situations deteriorate, is it moderates, or radicals, who tend to respond first?”<sup>7</sup> Fuller suggests that rather than question what is wrong with the Muslim world or the religion of Islam, the West should acknowledge any role or policy impact that has caused the violent reaction and let it serve as a notice to examine the policies and if needed, make changes.

A worldwide catastrophe is near if not already started. Fuller reports, “When it comes to the Middle East, it is quite evident that terrorism, and especially suicide operations, are a phenomenon closely associated with youth. Youthful involvement in terrorism is simply the extreme end of the broader phenomenon of youthful attraction to radicalism. The source of radicalism often stems from a desire and impatience for justice, and the willingness to take action to try to achieve it.”<sup>8</sup>

The young terrorists no longer feel ‘powerless.’

## FRAMEWORK FOR DISCUSSION

The MENA region has one of the highest proportions of youth to older populations in the world, with 14 of 25 MENA countries and territories having more than 50% of their populations under 24 (see Chart 1).<sup>9</sup> The region has 6% of the world's population.<sup>10</sup> They have 4.3% of the world's GDP.<sup>11</sup> The region has approximately 60% of the world's oil supply.<sup>12</sup> In spite of the large profits from oil exports in the past, the 21 Arab countries, Afghanistan, Iran, and 2 territories of the region have some of the highest rates of unemployment and poverty in the world. Only 5 of the 25 MENA countries have an unemployment rate below 11%, which leads to only 6 countries where people live above the poverty line. The GDP Real Growth Rate shows 10 of the 25 countries with a very small or no real economic growth. While the good news is these young people are literate with 19 of 25 countries reporting a literacy rate of 80% or higher. Even with this good news, reports from Abou-Chacra, World Bank, and UNESCO, find the educational policies in the 25 countries are dated and inadequate, leaving the youth able to read and write but unable to compete in a global job market.<sup>13</sup><sup>14</sup><sup>15</sup> A review of the environmental issues for each of these countries shows all but 2 of the 25 countries have serious water shortages. There is soil erosion and waste run off

contamination in all but 1 country. There is a shortage of adequate housing in all but 6 countries, and unreliable electricity and waste disposal in all but 8 countries. (see Chart 1). Global warming has brought severe drought, severe winter and summer storms and prompted millions of refugees working in agriculture to seek jobs in Europe. To put each of the facts listed here in a perspective, a comparison can be made with 3 countries, Israel, Turkey and the US who have positive GDP, smaller percentages of youth, and environmental problems less daunting (see Chart 1).<sup>16</sup> Put these MENA statistics together and the future for the youth of the MENA region is bleak.

### Demographics of the MENA Region - The Youth Bulge

The rapidly growing youth population of the MENA region, with a rapidly declining death rate, has led the MENA population to be projected to be more than 700 million by 2050.<sup>17</sup> The demographic trend is easily calculated for the next 20 years and while the birthrate of the MENA region continues to grow, other first world countries have birthrates that are slowing and aging. The MENA region, with the youth bulge, requires a growing economy to support the youth with jobs and training. Without economic development, this youth bulge depends on the first world countries for financial support. The youth of the MENA countries want to be independent. *The Cairo Review* in 2011, interviewed the demonstrators of the Egyptian Arab Spring and the youth wanted a stable government that would provide economic development. But the obstacles of political instability, extensive government graft, entitlements of the ruling parties, and lack of economic investment by outside corporations in their country, has left the youth without a clear sense of hope or expectations for change and improvement.<sup>18</sup>

High unemployment rate and general poverty are affecting the social development of both young women and men. Girls traditionally married by their early 20s and started families or lived at home until they married. Young men traditionally worked until they had sufficient funds to approach a family and ask to marry their daughter. These traditions, still in place, have left young women living at home well into their 30s. Both the young women and men in the MENA are frustrated to see their hopes for marriage and children disappearing. ISIS and other militant groups are aware of these issues and offer marriage, a job, a place to live and status if the young people join them.<sup>19</sup>

## **CHART ONE**

1. % Population under 24 years (added figures for under 14 and 15-24 together)
2. % GDP Real Growth Rate
3. % Unemployment rate
4. % Population below poverty line
5. Prevailing environmental problems: (A)Water Pollution, (B)Soil Erosion and Contamination  
(C) Shortage of Housing (D)Energy (unreliable electricity and waste disposal)
6. Literacy rate

<b>Country</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Afghanistan	63%	1.5%	35%	36%	ABCD	38%
Algeria	45%	3.7%	11%	23%	ABCD	80%
Bahrain	35%	3.2%	4.1%	N/A	ABCD	95%
Djibouti	54%	6.5%	60%	23%	ABCD	N/A
Egypt	48%	4.2%	12.8%	25%	ABCD	74%
Gaza	63%	-15.2%	43.9%	30%	ABCD	97%
Iran	41%	0%	10.5%	19%	ABCD	87%
Iraq	59%	2.4%	16%	25%	ABCD	80%
Jordan	55%	2.5%	13%	14%	AB	95%
Kuwait	41%	0.9%	3%	N/A	B	96%
Lebanon	42%	1%	N/A	29%	ABCD	94%
Libya	44%	-6.4%	30%	33%	BC	91%
Mauritania	59%	1.9%	31%	40%	ABCD	52%
Morocco	43%	4.5%	9.7%	15%	ABCD	69%
Oman	50%	4.1%	15%	N/A	B	91%
Pakistan	54%	4.2%	6.5%	22%	ABCD	60%
Qatar	25%	3.3%	0.4%	N/A	A	97%
Saudi Arabia	46%	3.4%	11%	N/A	B	95%
Somalia	62%	2.6%	N/A	N/A	ABCD	N/A
Sudan	61%	3.5%	13.6%	47%	ABCD	76%
Syria	52%	-9.9%	57.7%	83%	ABCD	86%
Tunisia	39%	0.8%	15.4%	16%	ABD	82%
United Arab Emirates	34%	3.9%	2.4%	20%	A	94%
West Bank	55%	5.3%	18%	18%	AB	97%
Yemen	62%	-2.8%	27%	54%	ABCD	70%

## **COMPARISONS**

<b>Israel</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>98%</b>
Turkey	41%	3.8%	10.4%	17%	AB	95%
US	32%	2.4%	5.2%	15%	AA	80%

**Source: CIA (2015) *The world fact book*. Washington, D.C: US Government.**

The large number of MENA children drive up their country's costs for food, water, housing, and education. They will leave a large footprint on the environment. The MENA countries need to adjust their economic development, their investment in all social and educational institutions to accommodate the bulge.<sup>20</sup> A positive society demands young people who are in good health, educated in basic information, have training in skills that lead to jobs that contribute to society and are ready to support and build their countries into the future. There is no other course of action for each of the MENA countries. The MENA governments, no matter if they are new governments or older established ones, need to develop means to attract economic development. With the investment comes the need for skilled workers and updated educational policies. The demographic makeup of the youth also shows almost equal numbers of women, women who also demand education and training and also want the same jobs as the men. This issue of equal opportunities for women in the workforce will come slowly as MENA governments adjust their attitudes on the role of women in the workforce.

### Economic Development in the MENA Region

The ruling parties in the MENA region seemed to have been taken by surprise by the power of the youth during the first Arab Spring revolt. Warnings had appeared in Fuller's and Rivlin's work and through other signs that the youth were not content and would demand jobs and a way to get out of poverty.<sup>21</sup><sup>22</sup> The economic overview for the region has been grim since the turn of the century with the World Development Indicators showing a growing labor force with a declining GDP.<sup>23</sup>

Even though regime change happened in Egypt in 2011, in June 2016, the Muslim Brotherhood government leaders were sentenced to death, and Egypt's newest government continues to muddle through with the same old policies that fail to foster economic development and employment for its youth. When Arab Spring uprisings led to overthrow of longtime despots and filled the ruling parties with newer "despots," the Arab world failed its people and led to an opportunity for Islamic militant parties to gain power. It was easy for the Islamic militant parties to illustrate the failures of secular governments to seize economic opportunities and development and instead keep the money for those in power. The experimental democracy in Algeria, the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS), or Islamic Salvation Front, a model of democracy, failed when citizens voted to choose their own representatives, leaders who didn't embrace democracy. Those in the MENA region concluded if that democratic experiment failed then surely other efforts at democracy will fail.<sup>24</sup> As a result, nothing has changed with regard to economic development. The 2004 Arab Human Development Report noted, "The modern Arab state, in the political sense, runs close to this astronomical model, whereby the executive apparatus resembles a "black hole" which converts its surrounding social environment into a setting in which nothing moves and from which nothing escapes."<sup>25</sup> Rivlin concludes, that "political factors are central." The political factors are so central that nothing will change without the consent of the leadership and most leaders of the MENA region do not want to give up their political power, even if the majority of citizens are living in poverty.

But the overthrow of longtime leaders in Egypt and Libya have forced the Arab leaders in other MENA countries to pay attention to what some leaders are doing to keep the youth from demonstrating and overthrowing their government. Two examples of this effort are Saudi Arabia

and Jordan. Their kings have started initiating economic development projects that includes training selected young people and putting them to work.<sup>26</sup> But even this small change in economic policy has required giving up some amount of control. With every aspect of the Arab economy being closely monitored by its citizens and competing political groups or tribes, other Arab leaders haven't followed this lead. Estes explained why the MENA leaders are so slow to modernize and invest in economic development. The Index of Social Progress (ISP) measures trends and 45 social indicators such as demographics, economic development, the status of women, health, education, and even welfare efforts. The ISP also measures leadership to improve society. In 2000, Tunisia had high scores for the rights of women and investment in the economy.<sup>27</sup> Others, such as Yemen, Sudan, Iraq and Oman, had low ISP scores and overall the MENA countries scored lower than the rest of the world.<sup>28</sup>

### Educational Policy in the MENA Region

The current MENA educational policies are outdated and are inadequate to handle all of the needs for effectively educating and preparing the young adults for the global workplace. An examination of the CIA World Fact Book shows high rates of literacy.<sup>29</sup> The MENA children learn to read and write and calculate. If war breaks out, and children cannot attend school, parents teach the children. Even families that have a small income often sacrifice other necessities so their children can attend private schools and go to college. While children live in poverty in 19 of the MENA countries and territories, they are still taught to read and write and taught by using the Koran. In a study of Saudi Arabian education policy, Rugh found, "Islam is not only integral to Saudi education but also serves as the very essence of its curriculum. Islam is central to the curriculum of Muslim countries."<sup>30</sup> The MENA countries often lack facilities and good methodologies to teach skills needed to be competitive in the global society, especially science and technology. Abou-Chacra found in a review of higher education that most MENA countries lack coordinated and accepted curriculum. Schools are overcrowded and have inadequate facilities and resources.<sup>31</sup> Daffron and Davis confirm this with a report of universities in the West Bank and Gaza without libraries, laboratories, basic textbooks, water, or adequate sanitary conditions.<sup>32</sup>

In 1998, Mehrotra, then the Economic Advisor for UNICEF, studied 10 developing countries (determined by UNICEF) that have all become middle-income countries today. There were common elements of educational policies that have been in place in these 10 high achiever countries in terms of educational status. The countries had five criteria for measuring educational outcomes:

- 1) primary school enrollment
- 2) primary school completion rate
- 3) transition to secondary schooling
- 4) adult literacy rate
- 5) gender equity

There are common elements of social, economic, political, legal, and educational policy in the 10 countries of high achievement. They are:

- 1) basic social services are state supported



- 2) the state invests in basic education and attaining a high mean number of years of education
- 3) health services are utilized bringing life expectancy rates up and infant mortality rates down
- 4) a better basic nutrition ensured for the population
- 5) the role of women is elevated with freedom to work outside the home to earn a decent income, to receive education and to own property.<sup>33</sup>

Even if the MENA countries could become middle-income countries, Abed and Davoodi examined the state of educational administration in the MENA countries and found it not unusual to have as many as three state educational administrative offices for one country, and without coordinated efforts to work with local administration.<sup>34</sup> This lack of coordination puts educational decisions upon local administrators, many of whom are political appointments. Teachers often do not need to meet any standard of teaching nor is there a check of classroom curriculum. Teachers are frequently trained in other countries and use teaching methodologies they learned out of country.<sup>35</sup>

Sultana reports on the Girl's Education Initiative in Egypt, launched in Cairo in 2009 as a project funded by UNICEF, the Ministry of Education of Egypt, and investment by other international organizations. The barriers presented in the project were the barriers common to many MENA countries and stand in the way of the country reaching high achiever status, the same criteria for status as explained by Mehrotra. The barriers were:

- 1) poverty – widespread that kept girls from being able to go to school;
- 2) lack of employment of women once they did complete schooling ;
- 3) decreasing national wealth;
- 4) culturally sanctioned gender roles of girls and women such as gender inequality, break down of social norms, domestic violence and carrying the burden of the family;
- 5) entrenched cultural traditions of young girls being married off by age 12 due to poverty;
- 6) schools that are not girl-friendly and taught by men for boys, without books for girls and other resources as simple as lack of bathrooms; also boys and men bullying and hurting girls; and
- 7) lack of representation of women in social, political and economic affairs.<sup>36</sup>

Not mentioned in this research is the very tough issue of a humanitarian crisis due to war and conflict that sets up refugee situations and interrupts education. Most of the refugees are coming from the MENA countries.

### Environmental Issues

A close examination of the Chart 1 shows all 25 of the MENA countries lack adequate water for its citizens. A comment often heard in the MENA region is that the next war will be about lack of adequate water. The severe droughts in the North African countries along with tribal violence has brought on huge numbers of refugees fleeing to Europe and to some Middle Eastern countries. The global warming has brought warmer water to those groups located by the sea and along with contamination from refining oil, has depleted the supply of fish. Without a source for food and jobs, MENA populations have had to flee their homes in record numbers to become the largest refugee population ever recorded by the UN.<sup>37</sup> The refugees are fleeing through the MENA region

to European countries to seek food, water, safe homes and jobs. Lack of adequate water and pollution of soil has pushed those in the MENA region who were farmers or shepherds to the urban areas to look for work. Only 6 of the 25 countries, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Syria, and Tunisia, along with Israel and Turkey, have at least 12% arable land. Those in the other MENA countries have to import their food, adding to the stress of extreme poverty.

When the MENA governments are weak or corrupt, their governments do not designate funds to supply adequate housing. Wars and occupation have left the territories like Gaza and countries like Iraq and Syria with rubble where homes used to be, with no electricity or adequate water supply or adequate waste management. Disease often breaks out and adds to the already serious humanitarian crisis. Refugees and victims of war are desperate for fresh water, food and adequate housing. They want to protect their children and turn to those who can help them, often the militant groups who frequently provide many of the necessities in exchange for loyalty to their cause. Isolated, hungry, scared and disenfranchised children are perfect candidates for terrorist groups. Children are kidnapped and sold into slavery, with the recent kidnappings of 200 girls in a private school in Nigeria as a sad example. Widows and orphans are taken care of by Hamas in Gaza– to show their humanitarian side but also to illustrate that they are there providing help when other organizations do not, and to build loyalty among the citizens. These political and social problems can all be linked to environmental problems and lack of resources.

What can be done? Daffron and Riedel, in 2007, brought the issues together to form a positive scenario for the future and said, “Demographic figures today provide a picture of a MENA region that has about half of the population under 30, with trends showing this very large population continuing to grow, and at a significant pace. If major improvements are made today in the educational systems of the MENA countries and the youth and adults receive knowledge and skills to prepare them for work in a global economy, along with improvements made in the social, political, environmental and economic settings, then . . . society ills begin to be solved and families live in comfort and prosperity. The world is benefiting from the discoveries and contributions of the Arab world and the MENA region.”<sup>38</sup>

## INTRODUCTION TO THE MODEL

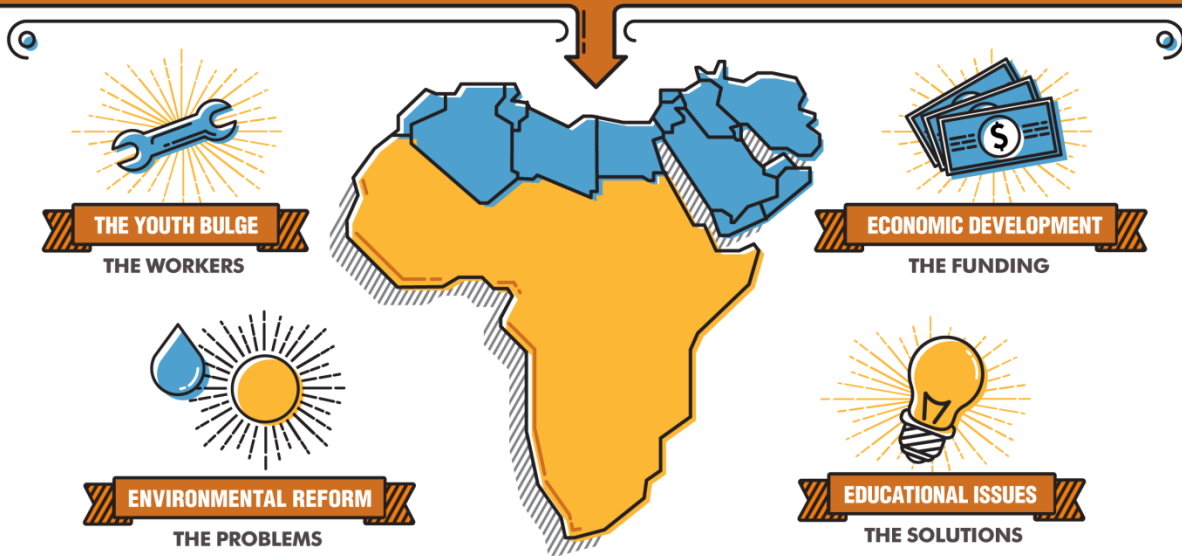
I, Sandra Daffron, lived and worked in the MENA region, in West Bank and Gaza for two years, 2000-2001. As Senior Advisor for Legal Education for a US funded project, I assisted law professors at four universities, Al Quds, An Najah, Bir Zeit and Al Azhar, with their teaching and research. I had the opportunity to discuss social, political and personal issues with the thousands of students in the four universities. Even during the second Intifada, the students’ hopes and dreams were not unlike those of my own children and thousands of other children I knew and had taught in the US and other countries. I would hear the words, “I just want a chance” in the steaming halls of Al Azhar in Gaza. The potential lawyers in An Najah in Nablus wanted to be corporate lawyers. The professors and parents used every resource to try to make the dreams of the 12,000 students come true. It is this desire and hope for MENA youth to have a job, a family, a home to live in and status in the world that has inspired the creation of the model illustrated here.

The issues of this study are challenging one on one. Those who study Middle Eastern policy conclude there is no easy fix or solution to solve even one issue or problem. But when issues and

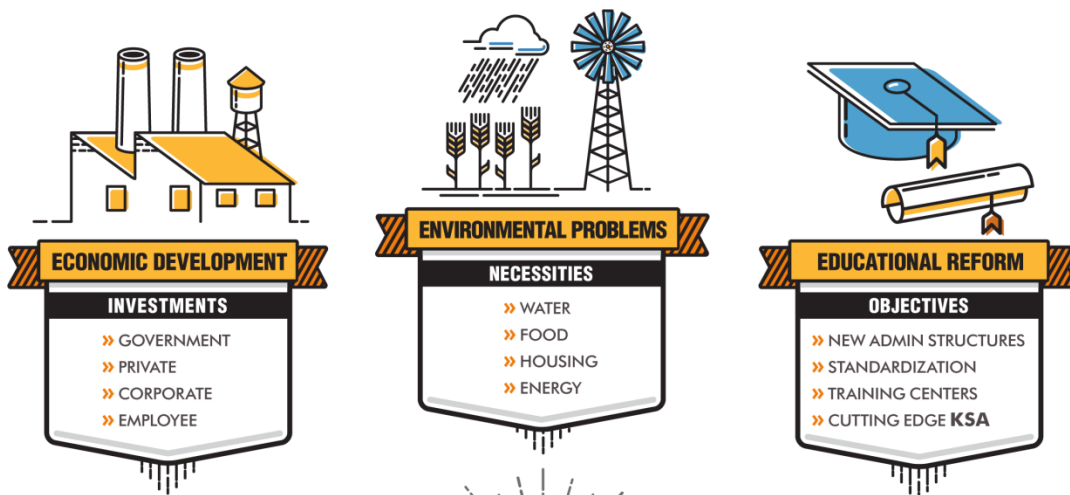
problems occur at the same time, they create a tough, if not catastrophic, situation. Fuller in 2003 reminds us that the challenges are complex and have been building for several generations without any socio-economic progress.<sup>39</sup>

The Arab Spring demonstrations by the very youth making up the youth bulge, gives hope that changes can be made, even if they haven't yet occurred. As unfortunate as the problems of the MENA region are now, it is not too late to address them. The terrorist attacks in 2015 and 2016 are another indicator of a potential complete worldwide catastrophe. However, again it is not too late! Much can be done to address this potential disaster, but the youth of the MENA region are the key component. A model for an integrated plan for economic, environmental and educational development with the MENA youth receiving Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA) can solve the problems.

# An Integrated Plan for Economic, Environmental, and Educational Development for the MENA Region



**ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** HOW CAN REFORMED GOVERNMENTS IN THE MENA REGION INVEST IN THE YOUTH TO SOLVE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS THROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?



## **Model Overview -An Integrated Plan for Economic, Environmental and Educational Development for the MENA Region**

The model is an integrated plan bringing together the youth as trained and capable workers with funding for economic development to solve the environmental problems using reformed and modern educational policies. It will take a government reformed and supportive enough to allow the strength of civil society, supported by local and international donors, to invest in solving serious environment and economic problems. Not all MENA governments may want to make this commitment. However, the model shows the plan for training institutes that are set up with MENA youth as students; they will learn to use new technological tools to address the environmental problems of their region and will: create clean water and air, set up and operate facilities to grow food, to clean the seas, to replenish forests, to build housing and to create new policy and legal structures for freedom and future economic development.

The components of the integrated model are:

### **Component 1 - The Youth Bulge – The Workers**

The MENA Region supplies its youth who have completed secondary or tertiary school, to enter into the 1-2 year training programs to become the technicians and workers solving the environmental problems.

### **Component 2 - Economic Development – The Funding**

Each of the 25 MENA countries will have the opportunity to fund the training for their youth as they go through training and to work with those who want to invest in their country. The investments in each country are made to solve environmental problems and to bring in new business or industry.

### **Component 3 - Environmental Reform– The Problems –**

These are the problems that can be solved with a highly trained and specialized workforce. The youth workers are trained to improve the serious environmental problems of the region, such as lack of water, barren land, shortage of food and housing and shortage of energy and elimination of waste.

### **Component 4 - Educational Issues – The Solutions**

MENA countries develop strong central educational policies for administration and management. Schools teach basic education and incorporate critical thinking skills and problem solving. Elementary schools and secondary schools incorporate sustainable education into their curriculum. Educational standards used by worldwide organizations are determined for each MENA country with revised curricula emphasizing science and technology that are integrated in all the schools. Technical training programs are incorporated in countries with technical schools. For those countries without these schools, a 2-year associate degree and certificate programs are developed and technical schools are created. The technical schools set up raining centers in each country for MENA youth being trained to solve the environmental problems.

## **The Essential Question - How can reformed governments in the MENA region invest in the youth to solve environmental problems through economic development?**

MENA governments recognize the urgency to invest in economic reform to educate the youth to solve the environmental problems in their country. The word “reform” can refer to changing an emphasis of the government, perhaps giving more funding to education. It is entirely possible to have a government that has not gone through a reform or has been overthrown; ex., Saudi Arabia and Jordan. These two countries have seen the wisdom of providing funding for training their youth to improve their countries. The emphasis that high achieving countries set worldwide is that they set up new educational policy to be a driving force in economic development. This emphasis is made clear to all MENA governments; educational policies will need to change to make this integrated plan work. The efforts are made from the top down with the government directing the necessary reforms within the country and making a commitment with public funds for education. The governments seek experts and experienced workers to establish the environmental training centers in their country.

**The Integrated Plan for Economic, Environmental and Educational Development for the MENA Region Model** - To begin, a government will make a commitment to the Integrated Plan and set up an advisory group representing each of the components. Estes has found factors that can make positive social changes in the MENA region. He suggests making political and economic ties to other countries outside the region. He encourages finding ways to solve environmental problems by working with other successful programs to get a start.<sup>40</sup> These kinds of partnerships are encouraged and can lead to stronger and more successful projects. Ideally, this is happening as the MENA governments are supporting their economic development and solving the environmental problems through educational reform and training.

### **Economic Development**

The leaders of the Arab League, Iran, and Afghanistan move toward economic development in the region and actively encourage investment from outside sources and investing a small but significant percentage of their GNP for education and training. Each country works within this model to provide youth as a trained workforce for the new business and industry and the work to correct the environmental problems. As a result the GDP for each country grows and unemployment drops and poverty rates fall. The commitment to educational reform, with direction from UNESCO, can be the factor that interests outside investors in making a commitment for economic development in the region. While this model uses environmental problems as the focus of the work, a strong rule of law has to be in place to handle legal issues that always arise when economic development begins and to reassure outside investors that a rule of law will protect their interests and to be a hedge against fraud and corruption.

Since **The Integrated Plan** requires financial backing, the government can find investors to match the government investment. Investors can be private, corporate, in or out of the country and even those employees of the training institutions, once they are established. The intent of **The Integrated Plan** is to grow a country by using the youth to solve environmental problems. This lofty goal will attract many investors outside the MENA governments. Each of the environmental

problems has organizations and researchers and trainers and corporations who will be interested in helping to rid the MENA countries of the particular environmental problem. There may be so many investors ready to help with **The Integrated Plan** that each MENA country may want to establish their criteria for economic investment. Each MENA government will project the cost of setting up the training centers and determine what the cost will be for 5 years of operation. Specific budget items such as food and lodging for the trainees are built into the budget and government subsidies for employing the trained workers will be included in a 5-year budget. Each MENA government will calculate how many youth are to be trained and how many environmental problems will be worked on and solved over a 5-year period.

### **Environmental Problems**

The leaders of the MENA region collaborate with environmental experts, those with experience in sustainable education and those with scientific innovation to find solutions to the environmental problems and then to teach the solutions to the region's youth in training centers and 2-year colleges. The youth are taught the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA) they need by those willing to invest in the economic development of the region. Businesses and industry are built to the specifications of the collaboration and the youth work between the educational institutions and the workplace.

Each MENA country determines what environmental problems need to be solved and begins with one of the problems. Technicians are hired to develop solutions to solve the problems and to develop curriculum to teach the youth the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) to do the work needed to correct the environmental problem. The assessment is used to develop the classes and then certified teachers and classes are established. With environmental problems affecting virtually every country in the world, solutions should be available from other countries. In a cooperative mode, the MENA countries could partner with another country and exchange researchers, teachers and students to the benefit of both countries. The oil, natural gas, ore and precious metals – the resources of this region, are in demand by other countries. Since demand for exports may change, the youth of the MENA countries will be challenged to find solutions and to develop long range plans for the future. Centers for training can be spread across the region to produce a stable of experts in particular environmental problems. These experts are supported with research funds to grow the expertise of that country, eventually leading to exporting the expertise or actual environmental products made, to other countries around the globe. This potential is supported by sustainable education classes in all schools who will continue this important work in the future. The MENA region can become the much admired group of countries to address world-wide environmental problems!

Arable land in the region is limited. Many countries have already developed varieties of plants to grow in green houses, in water and even in air. MENA youth are taught to specialize in these research projects and to develop their own hybrids for their own country. Large green houses can be built. Or as with some countries with droughts, they can retrofit train boxcars to grow plants for food. Researchers in agriculture can teach classes on sheep and goat production to double the herd, to find places to graze herds when land can be irrigated/or not. Adequate housing for families and businesses need to be built on land with varying challenges, such as, covered with rocks or on other land with shifting sand. Challenges can be land that is already crowded with other inadequate housing and contaminated soil. Researchers in affordable housing teach the students how to make

housing out of shipping containers, out of stronger fabric for the Bedouin tents. Again, research and ideas from around the world are shared through the training programs.

Land, water and air are polluted from soil erosion and human wastes, pesticides, fertilizer and run off from oil refineries. Each country could set up their own technical program to address ridding their country of these contaminants. A better plan could be to have the MENA region leaders work together to solve similar environmental problems and set up training centers for the youth to be trained as environmental specialists. An example would be, Pakistan establishes a training center to grow food, food that requires less water. Students from Iran, Egypt and the Sudan are sent to Pakistan to study and to take their knowledge back home to recreate centers there for growing food. Turkey sets up a training center for producing electricity from windmills and students from the refugee camps in Turkey (Syrian youth), along with students from Djibouti, Egypt and Gaza are sent to learn the skills to take back to their home country. Water purification is very expensive and is set up in countries throughout the world. Because the water supply is so severe in each of the 25 MENA countries, researchers, scientists, engineers and others who are creating desalination plants or using methods to clean water in other parts of the world, gather in the MENA to teach the processes.

### **Educational Reform**

The leadership of the Arab League, Iran, and Afghanistan nations, like most countries, take a long time to make changes in their educational policies. Studies of the MENA region's educational systems show most are outdated and in need of serious reform. A series of meetings with UNESCO and the leaders of the Arab League, Iran, and Afghanistan, with an eye to using education and training to solve the environmental problems, can help the region's leaders plan the work necessary to prepare its adults for employment to meet the demands of a global society and at the same time begin to reform the policies.

Educational reform starts at the top levels of government and includes all levels of education. The governments need one central administrative body controlling education and limiting the political controls. The administrative bodies can gain valuable insights from administrative practices and policies used in other countries. The Arab states, Iran, and Afghanistan would be prudent to consider modeling the very best practices from the educational systems producing young adults who have skills that are marketable in today's global economy.

Once administrative bodies are set and policies and practices are determined for the Arab states, Iran, and Afghanistan, then significant funds should be funneled into the educational institutions to provide attractive salaries to teachers and trainers. All teachers and trainers for **The Integrated Plan** are trained in best teaching practices for adult learning and participate in exchange programs. Even though teachers and trainers are educated in other countries, a common methodology of teaching, with the use of critical thinking and problem solving techniques, would bring continuity to all teachers in K-12 and in higher education. This unified approach, using principles of adult education, will aid the students as they compete in a global market for jobs.

The Arab states, Iran, and Afghanistan review their curricula to incorporate and emphasize science and technological skills. Sustainable education is taught throughout all schools. Children are encouraged to prepare for fields using science and technology as economic development moves



ahead in the region. Investors will expect a skilled workforce to work in the service area. Those workers who want to remain in agriculture and industry will need science and technological skills. Adults in the region could take advantage of this vocational education that incorporates the most recent research and findings in their area. Equipment such as computers and scientific instruments should follow. New institutions for vocational education are changed to accommodate these fields of environmental studies. In countries without vocational education technical schools are created and accommodate the increase in scientific and technological training.

Students and teachers have access to the Internet for purposes of communication and research. The faculty of the institutions continue their education and training for purposes of research. Educational research in the region is encouraged as soon as possible to find solutions and ideas for the educational reforms. Educators in the region will already have agendas to be developed, but need support and encouragement.

The educational systems of the MENA countries begin to follow the advice of the World Bank for developing countries. They will produce workers who “will need to be able to engage in lifelong education, learn new things quickly, perform more non-routine tasks and more complex problem solving, take more decisions, understand more about what they are working on.”<sup>41</sup>

The students leaving secondary and post-secondary education, both men and women, are taught skills that make them competitive in a global society and taught sustainable education practices. They are educated under a state coordinated curriculum and will have similar ideals and ways of working. This effort to train and educate the students to be able to work together is crucial to the success of **The Integrated Plan**. Teachers in the technical schools receive regular continuing education programs and collaborate to follow these goals and objectives set forth by the state. The MENA governments make education a priority and provide adequate funding for the schools, by improving the classrooms, building new schools and campuses and encouraging and supporting research. Research in the fields of science and technology is supported to solve the environmental problems of each country.

Training institutions for **The Integrated Plan** are set up as 1-2 year technical colleges with associates degrees or certificates issued. Specialists from around the world are the teachers and trainers for each specialty with very specific skills taught to solve the environmental problems present in each of the MENA countries. Each level of the training and administration are taught to the youth with adult education philosophy and techniques so they will be able to make the training centers self-sustaining and self-run in the future. Specialists train selected students to be their successors. The size and scope of training for the workers is determined and limited by country to country preference of the 25 countries. Training can be set up in empty warehouses, empty government buildings and the laboratories for training can come from donations from each country and from other countries. Children and teachers from the refugee camps are included. Accomplishments are celebrated and widely recognized as the first steps to ensure a successful future for the youth.

By using this plan, the MENA region has citizens who are trained to be critical thinkers and to reason and solve problems by working with each other. They seek out training and education beyond their basic literacy skills. Teachers and students actively participate in world-wide

exchanges. The graduates of the region's schools take jobs and set up opportunities for employment for other youth within their own countries. Foreign investments match those of the MENA governments and the economy in the MENA region thrives. The trainees require less supervision, assume more responsibility, “and . . . have better reading, quantitative, reasoning, and expository skills. Again, education will be center stage.”<sup>42</sup>

## **Implications for the Future - Peace, Freedom and Prosperity**

**The Integrated Plan** begins to solve MENA societies' ills enabling families to live in peace, freedom, comfort and prosperity and the youth of the MENA region begin to have 'their chance.' The world benefits from the discoveries, innovations, and contributions of the youth of the Arab world and the MENA region. Noam Chomsky, in his 2016 book, *Who Rules the World*, says there is no simple and definite answer to the question, 'Who Rules the World?' However, Chomsky says the US remains the leader of discussions on setting global discourse, to establish what actions are taken against terrorists, to monitoring the international economic organizations, and encouraging studies and meetings about human rights and justice. Even if the power of the US is diminishing, the world issues of economic development, environmental issues, educational standards and policy and political and social interventions about the youth bulge of the MENA region weighs heavily on its shoulders.<sup>43</sup> By using **The Integrated Plan** proposed here, the threat of terrorism diminishes, and ISIS, currently the most dangerous threat to the MENA youth, is stopped. Nance, in his new study of ISIS, echoes many of the points made by Fuller in 2003.<sup>44</sup> Nance warns, as the leader of the world, the US has to act now before it is too late with all the power that America has to restore security, power and most importantly, build up the economies of the countries controlled by ISIS. This is done with six “Ds” of Detect, Deny, Degrade, Disrupt, Defeat, Deceive and Discredit our enemy.” While the US is using its power to crush ISIS, the US “must reengage the Middle East with the power of good ideas and values “and indeed help the youth of the MENA region to have good homes, families, jobs, status and hope for the future. When that is done, then in the future, the MENA Youth Bulge will save the whole world.

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<sup>1</sup> From a speech by Nelson Mandela, London, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> From a speech of Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini, quoted in Herbert Moller, “Youth as a Force in the Modern World.” *Comparative studies in society and history*. 10:(3).

<sup>3</sup> Fuller, Graham E. 2003. *The Youth Factor: The New Demographics of the Middle East and the Implications for U.S. Policy*. The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at The Brookings Institute.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,pp.vii.

<sup>5</sup> Green, Duncan. 2008. *From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States Can Change the World*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxfam International.

<sup>6</sup> World Bank. 2000. *Voices of the Poor*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

<sup>7</sup> Fuller, Graham E. 2010. *A World Without Islam*. New York: Little Brown, pp.268.

<sup>8</sup> Fuller, 2003, pp.19.

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- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, pp. 8-9.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp. 3.
- <sup>21</sup> Fuller, 2003, op.cit., pp.27.
- <sup>22</sup> Rivlin, Paul. 2009. Arab Economies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Cambridge: Cambridge U Press.
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- <sup>24</sup> Rivlin, op.cit., pp.14.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp.15.
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- <sup>27</sup> Estes, Richard J. 2000. "Social Development Trends in the Middle East, 1970-1997: The Search for Modernity." *Social Indicators Research*, 50(1), pp. 51-61.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 54.
- <sup>29</sup> CIA, op.cit., pp.selected MENA countries.
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- <sup>31</sup> Abou-Chacra, op. cit., pp.131.
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<sup>37</sup> Edwards, Adrian. 2016. “Global Forced Displacement Hits Record High,” *UNHCR – The UN Refugee Agency*, June 20, 2016.

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<sup>39</sup> Fuller, 2003, op.cit., pp. vi.

<sup>40</sup> Estes, op.cit., pp. 58-59.

<sup>41</sup> World Bank, op. cit., pp. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Chomsky, Noam.2016. *Who Rules the World?* New York: Metropolitan Books.

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