



In collaboration with



**YOUTH IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA:
EXPANDING ECONOMIC PROSPECTS IN URBAN AREAS**
Highlighting Global Lessons, Creating Local Solutions
4- 6 December, 2006, Hilton Hotel, Rabat, Morocco

The Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI); Rabat Municipality, the National School for Architecture, Morocco; & the World Bank in collaboration with MedChild Institute and Child Protection Initiative are jointly organizing this international conference. This international conference will be the fourth in a series of conferences co-organized by AUDI and the World Bank, with various regional and international partners, to address children and youth issues in urban areas of the MENA region.

The present conference, therefore, builds on the momentum generated in the MENA region by the three previous conferences, and is intended to deepen and broaden the achievements that resulted from them. By focusing on youth, it is intended that this Conference will highlight the seminal issues, priorities and potentials of this key population group, and will help further enlist and strengthen local governments as partners in addressing these issues.

Regional context:

The MENA region has also witnessed a fast expansion in educational attainment, and in the recent past a reduction in gender disparity in educational attainment. However, education and skills training has generally lacked quality and relevance and has remained mismatched with the needs of the economy and society. These conditions have hampered accessibility of youth, in several MENA countries, to employment opportunities. The Conference will highlight the complex multi-sectoral issues that interface the themes of youth, education and skills, and employment in the region.

Tackling issues related to youth is not simply the responsibility of national governments. The brunt of the fallout of unemployed and frustrated youth is felt by local governments. Mayors and municipal authorities in the region have already shown interest in addressing children and youth issues and many have initiated programs in their cities. Furthermore, as the trend towards decentralization accelerates in the region, more services will be handed over to local governments and municipalities. Indeed, international experiences have shown that when resources are available close to the source of a problem, sustainable solutions are easier to achieve. This Conference, therefore, will also focus on how mayors and municipal authorities, in collaboration with national governments and civil society can effectively address key youth issues in their cities and towns. This is particularly relevant in a region that is expected to be 70% urban by 2020.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the Conference are to (i) highlight the magnitude and complexities of the issues facing youth (12-24 years) in the MENA region related to enhancing their economic prospects; (ii) assess the needs and priorities of youth in urban areas and the characteristics of urban

environments suitable for them, and the roles of urban authorities in tackling youth issues and (iii) identify and discuss international experiences and effective policy and program options that MENA municipal authorities and national governments could consider in addressing youth issues. The Conference will also provide a forum for networking and highlighting activities and accomplishments of key stakeholders and partners dealing with youth issues from within and outside the MENA region.

Conference Themes:

- **Current Status of youth in the MENA region;** health, educational and socio-economic status; demographic profile and effects of youth bulge, cultural and behavioral issues affecting successful economic participation.
- **Geographic youth transitions:** international and intra migrations of youth (including rural-urban migration).
- **Youth in Urban Settings:** urban needs of young people and the roles of municipal authorities in satisfying them, integration of youth in urban areas, youth-friendly urban environments: characteristics and planning guidelines, participation of youth in urban planning, development, governance and collective action, dimensions of young people in new urbanisms, impacts of urban problems on youth.
- **Transition from school to work:** transition through formal education, attachment to the labor force, vocational training for youth, skills training and development, urban dimensions of transition.
- **Youth employment:** youth as a productive labor force and driver of future growth, active labor market initiatives for youth, re-training and skill development opportunities.
- **At-risk youth:** addressing social and other disadvantages including those specific to urban youth, fostering citizenship and community participation.
- **Operationalizing youth policies and programs:** Highlights of progress achieved in addressing children and youth issues in the MENA region and internationally, including the Child Protection Initiative, MedChild and other partner initiatives, programs and funding mechanisms, with emphasis on the roles of municipal authorities and national governments in tackling youth issues.

Three key types of papers and presentations will be featured in the themes outlined above: (i) academic papers – analytical pieces on specific topics adhering to high standards (could be included in the Conference Proceedings); (ii) policy/ program presentations – presentations on effects of specific policy and program interventions; and (iii) poster presentations – presentations of specific projects of NGOs, etc. Preference will be given to MENA focused papers and presentations, or papers from other regions that are relevant to MENA.

Languages:

English, Arabic and French. Simultaneous translation will be provided.

Conference Audience and Participants:

The primary audience for the Conference will be mayors and/ or their staff from large and secondary cities in the MENA region, national government officials and policy makers; and individuals from selected NGOs, international and regional organizations, universities and research centers, and private sector groups. The Conference will include a balanced number of presentations by scholars and practitioners (including mayors from outside the region). Youth representatives will also participate in the Conference sessions.

Registration:

Participants are kindly requested to complete the attached Registration Form and send it to the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) together with the appropriate registration fees as follows:

- 1125 Saudi Riyals for employees of municipalities that are members of the Arab Towns Organization
- 1500 Saudi Riyals for all other participants.

Invited speakers are exempted from the registration fees.

The registration fees cover the conference proceedings, attendance of all sessions, receptions and tours.

Accommodation:

Some hotels will provide special rates for the conference, Participants are kindly requested to contact the following hotels directly to arrange for accommodation:

HILTON HOTEL (5* LUXE)

Address : Souissi B.P. 450-Rabat-Maroc
Tel : (212) 03.7.67.56.56
Fax : (212) 03.7.67.14.92
Web site : <http://www.hilton.com>
E-mail : rabathilton@mtds.com

GOLDEN TULIP FARAH HOTEL (5*)

Address : 26, Place Sidi Makhoulf Rabat - Maroc
Tel : (212) 03.7.23.74.00
Fax : (212) 03.7.72.21.55
E-mail : reserve-farahrabat@menara.ma

CHELLAH HELNAN HOTEL (4*)

Address : 2, Rue d'Ifni Rabat - Maroc
Tel : (212) 03.7.66.83.00
Fax : (212) 03.7.70.63.54