

**Urban Children and Youth in the MENA Region: Addressing Priorities
in Education
Dubai, May 16 - 18, 2005**

Dubai Declaration on Urban Children and Youth

May 18, 2005

Under the patronage of his Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai, Minister of Finance and Industry, United Arab Emirates, Chairman of Dubai Municipality, the ‘Urban Children and Youth in the MENA Region: Addressing Priorities in Education’ conference was convened in Dubai, , between May 16—18, 2005. It was jointly organized by Dubai Municipality, the Arab Urban Development Institute, and the World Bank, in collaboration with the MedChild Institute, UNFPA, and the Child Protection Initiative (CPI).

The conference objectives were to highlight the issues facing children and youth in urban areas in the MENA region and to raise awareness of the role of municipalities in addressing these issues.

The conference was attended by over 400 participants including ministers of education, mayors and other local authority leaders, World Bank officials, representatives of regional and international organizations (UNICEF, UNFPA, League of Arab States, AGFUND) and other agencies and individuals concerned with children and youth issues in the region and around the world, as well as children and youth representatives.

Building on the preceding Amman 2002 and Genoa 2004 conference declarations, and recognizing that children and youth represent more than half of the MENA population, the conference participants stress the importance of inclusive education and reaffirm their commitment to improve the well-being and quality of life for **all** children and youth, regardless of their age, gender, religion, ethnicity, disability, or social background.

The conference participants consider young people as an asset and commit to empower all children and youth by facilitating their participation in decision making at all levels of governance. The participants urge municipalities to implement their mandate to address children and youth

issues, to seek further delegation of authority, and to improve collaboration with central governments.

To achieve these goals, the conference participants made the following recommendations:

1. Enhance the quality of education through,
 - a. Providing inclusive education for all children and youth.
 - b. Enhancing the role of local authorities in promoting and implementing multi-sectoral early childhood development approaches in collaboration with national authorities.
 - c. Enhancing and confirming the role of the family in raising and educating their children through adhering to high values of religion and morals to safeguard them from the hazards of extremisms and delinquencies.
 - d. Making education more relevant to the needs of the labor market in an interconnected world. Enhancing the collaboration between local authorities and the private sector to ensure smooth transition from school to work, including mentoring, career counseling, internships, etc.
 - e. Enhancing the role of local authorities in providing informal education and lifelong learning. Encourage preventative policies to combat child labor and strengthen remedial education for out-of-school and unemployed youth.
 - f. Integrating schools in their communities and improving school safety, accessibility, design and physical environments.
 - g. Building quality environments (with safe, clean and appealing designs) that are accessible and connected with the surrounding communities, that promote age-appropriate uses and activities, and that offer meeting and learning opportunities to children and youth.
 - h. Involving and supporting families in effective education
 - i. Reducing violence against and among children and youth in and outside of schools through awareness-building and interventions in families, communities and schools.
 - j. Promoting collaboration among local and central authorities to maximize the use of innovative learning approaches and tools, such as accessible technology.
 - k. Introducing and improving a network of libraries, science museums, youth clubs, etc.

2. Empower children and youth through,
 - a. Providing the enabling environment to allow children and youth participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of interventions that affect their lives.
 - b. Networking and coordination among schools and local authorities to improve the skills and capabilities of youth.
 - c. Strengthening partnerships with international, regional, and national authorities, local organizations, the private sector, and NGOs.
3. Adopt an evidenced-based policy approach that builds on proper disaggregated data analysis, improved targeting, piloting, monitoring and evaluation and international best practices. A common form of child welfare measures should be agreed upon and implemented on a pilot basis in selected cities in the region.
4. The conference participants call upon the League of Arab States to establish a regional fund, to which each state will contribute proportionately to its national income, to support the achievement of universal education in Arab states (i.e. the Education for All strategy).

The participants recognize the tragic circumstances of children and youth in Palestine and Iraq and affirm the need to protect them and to address their special needs.

This declaration will be monitored closely by the organizers of this conference with coordination provided by the Child Protection Initiative. An annual report will be prepared and disseminated and a follow-up conference will be organized no later than December 2006 in collaboration with youth and other relevant development partners and municipal authorities.

The conference participants request the conference president, Mr. Qassim Sultan Al-Banna, to convey their appreciation and thanks to His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, His Highness Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, United Arab Emirates Vice-president and Prime-minister, and to His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai, Minister of Finance and Industry, United Arab Emirates, Chairman of Dubai Municipality.