3. Conclusion: Most Prevalent Challenges and Constraints

➤ The **conservative prevailing political culture** of society, and **authorities' lack of awareness** about nature and role of civil society are region-wide challenges to civic engagement and participation in governance.

➤ **Poverty** and **unemployment** are widespread and rapidly increasing across the region. Therefore, **youth economic empowerment** is key to promote youth civic engagement in the MENA.

➤ Economic hardship, insecurity, divisions, and the pandemic have dramatically **decreased mobility**, which curtails the level of youth **exposure to diversity,** and the opportunities to **meet and discuss** with peers.

➤ **Media** are increasingly polarized, unreliable, and fueling conflict.

➤ CS in most countries is **atomized** and therefore weak: little dialogue and cooperation among CSOs, and disconnect between "elite" CSOs and small, grassroots CSOs.

➤ **State-society relations are weak** across the MENA. Youth civic engagement does not find room for individual expression and participation in governance, which fuel tension and violent protest. Greater civic engagement can reduce violent confrontation between citizens and authorities, and of conflict among communities.

3. Conclusion: Youth Training and Policy preferences

➢ Most requested trainings across the MENA appear to be:

  o **Risk assessment** and management;

  o **Conflict analysis** and management;

  o **Civic education, democracy**, and **civil society**;

  o **Public policy** and how to influence it;

  o **Digital security** and the **use of media** for public communication and advocacy.

➢ The policy issues that respondents considered **most important** were:

  1. Education;

  2. Unemployment and economic development;

  3. Healthcare;

  4. Democracy, freedom and human rights;

➢ The policy issues that respondents considered **less important** were:

  o Migration;

  o Art/culture/heritage;

  o Scientific Research.

3. Conclusion: Needs and Recommendations

➢ **Online events** and **mobile programs** are crucial to reach youth in rural areas and small towns, which are isolated by **costs of transportation, restrictions to mobility** and **social conservatism**.

➢ **People with disabilities** (PWD) are largely neglected in the MENA. CSOs should include PWDs in all their trainings, rather than organize trainings dedicated to PWDs. Establishing mandatory quotas for PWDs can force CSOs to make trainings accessible to them.

➢ Youth need access to **independent media** and a higher **media literacy** to combat fake news and hate speech.

➢ **Secondary schools** and **universities** can play a very important role to bridge the gap between communities and foster civic consciousness and engagement.

➢ There is a need for **dialogue and cooperation** among local CSOs, more **outreach** to small and local CSOs in the peripheries, the creation and support for **national and regional thematic networks** and **unions of CSOs.**

➢ In dangerous and conflict-affected countries, youth need **safe spaces** to meet and discuss freely. **Dialogue** fosters **trust** that enables **cooperation**, which is needed to address more complex and controversial issues.