World Bank Report: Young People in Tunisia Still Frustrated by Social and Economic Obstacles

A multi-dimensional policy is needed to address the many facets of exclusion and to promote greater youth participation

TUNIS, October 2, 2014—Three years after the revolution, young people in Tunisia have a limited presence in politics, continue to face high levels of unemployment and are not systematically consulted on key issues that directly affect them. A new report from the World Bank and the Center for Mediterranean Integration maps out the sources of this ongoing disenfranchisement and offers suggestions on the holistic approach needed to overcome them.

"Youth inclusion is a central theme of the development agenda," said Simon Gray, World Bank County Director for the Maghreb. "Since the Arab Spring, youth have been shaping social and economic policies and challenging social norms and values. This report provides us with sound analytics to engage on how best to support young women and men in achieving their full potential; be that in the job market, or in political and economic life. We hope that those concerned will use the report as a way to map the way forward."

The report shows that while active citizenship and civil participation among young Tunisians is critical to sustaining the country’s positive socio-economic momentum and achieving political stability, very few engage in any form of political participation, except mobilizing for demonstrations. In fact, youth activism is done in an ad-hoc manner with social media as the mobilizing tool, outside the formally established civil and political institutions.

The report also provides an analysis of the aspirations and needs of young Tunisians by taking into account both noneconomic and economic measures of exclusion that were at the root of the revolution. Beyond unemployment, the report also reveals a high level of discouragement among young people. The total numbers of young people between the ages of 15 and 29 that are "Not in Education, Employment or Training" is estimated at 33 percent --one of the highest rates in the region. The sources for this discouragement ranges from prevailing labor market conditions and poor quality education to regional disparities and gender bias, to name a few.
“The revolution provided young Tunisians with a glimpse of possibilities,” said Gloria La Cava, World Bank Senior Social Scientist and lead author of the report. “The task of building a new future not only remains to be achieved but it cannot be done by the youth alone. Greater efforts are needed to bring together all relevant stakeholders. These include public and private education providers, civil society, public sector policy makers and administrators, private employers, the emerging NGO sector concerned with youth employment issues, local governments and above all, Tunisia’s young people.”

With a new constitution that recognizes “the youth as a driving force in the building of the nation,” there is hope for a better future for young Tunisians. The framework proposed in the report addresses how economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions need to be tackled simultaneously to develop solutions. These are expected to help young Tunisians believe in their future again by enjoying the benefits of a quality education, finding meaningful work or starting a business, having their voices heard, and actively participating in civil society and politics at local, regional, and national levels.

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