

Simulation Exercise for the Regional Launch Workshop of UNDP Youth Leadership Programme (YLP5)



Simulation Exercise Report

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Introduction

After the successful collaboration on organizing a simulation exercise on youth engagement in policy dialogue in December 2018, Crisis Simulation for Peace e.V. (CRISP) and Simulation Gaming Club Egypt (SimClubEG) had the pleasure to extend this cooperation and deliver a new simulation exercise on Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) in the regional launching workshop of the fifth year of the Youth Leadership Program (YLP5). The launching workshop invited young leaders, youth-serving organizations and policy makers from 12 countries in order to:

- i. Bring together selected youth-serving organizations to familiarize them with the vision, methodology, and the aims of YLP and the Joint Action for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls in the Arab States.
- ii. Discuss challenges preventing youth from engaging in politics, civic and policy dialogues.
- iii. Facilitate networking and knowledge exchange among participants to build their understanding of political, civic, and policy issues.
- iv. Exploring mechanism and tap into new financial technologies and mechanisms to access investment for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- v. Finalize National Action Plans (NAPs) with partner organizations to promote youth engagement.

The simulation exercise was organized on the 30th of March 2019, as part of the four-day launching workshop. The simulation methodology fits greatly with YLP5's theme, which emphasizes exploring new mechanisms to advance youth development solutions, experimenting these new solutions, and expanding YLP's knowledge base accordingly. Simulation gaming is an innovative methodology that enables learners to explore and experiment new solutions in a risk-free environment. Furthermore, the method promotes collaborative and multi-stakeholder approaches through building awareness and empathy among diverse participants. Therefore, this simulation game was designed to serve the following objectives:

- Increase the participants' understanding of the complexities of everyday policy making in a simulated situation to recognize system constraints, options, consequences and alternatives (contributing to YLP5's objectives (i) and (ii))
- Inspire participants to think about concrete regional advocacy/policy dialogue actions related to VAW (contributing to YLP5's objective (v))

This report will present the methodology followed to design, implement and evaluate the simulation exercise, as well as reflect on its effectiveness in terms of contributing to the workshop's objectives. Furthermore, the report will offer key lessons learned and recommendations captured during the implementation of the simulation exercise and from post-exercise casual conversations that involved forum's facilitators, organizers and participants.

Methodology followed

Considered as a "political laboratory," the simulation exercise was designed and facilitated to provide an opportunity for the participants to enhance an empathetic understanding of what it takes to engage in an effective policy dialogue around the topic of EVAW. The process followed three main phases: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. Below is a summary of the tasks that were carried out in these three phases:

First: preparation:

This phase aimed to design a new simulation game on EVAW that fits into the context of the YLP5 launching workshop and contributes to its objectives. Two skype meetings in addition to email exchanges were conducted with the teams of UNDP's YLP team and UN Women's Mosharaka program. As a result, the conceptual foundation was formulated and accordingly, subsequent detailed game materials were developed including the fictional scenario, exercise's rules and procedures, description of role profiles, the

agenda of the exercise and evaluation sessions plans. The below table presents the key milestones realized in the preparation of the simulation game:

Date	Description	Outputs
13 February 2019	1 st Skype preparation meeting	-team of YLP, Mosharaka, CRISP and SimClubEG were introduced -objectives and logistical information of YLP5 launching workshop explained - objectives of the simulation exercise brainstormed - findings of evaluation of previous simulation exercise shared for lessons learning
25 February 2019	First draft concept for simulation exercise shared with UNDP team	
28 February 2019	Second draft concept for the simulation exercise shared with UNDP team, based on feedback	
12 March 2019	2 nd Skype preparation meeting	-final agenda and measures to ensure the consistency of the simulation exercise with the overall workshop discussed (e.g. via introduction and evaluation sessions) -the “conflict” of the simulation game was fine tuned - the evaluation sessions of the simulation exercise were fine tuned to better serve the workshop’s objectives -strategy to ensure maximum participation for both participants who participated in previous simulation game and those who are new to the method was agreed upon (i.e. ensuring equal division of those who are experienced with the method in the parallel groups where the exercise will be implemented)
26 March, 2019	Finalization of the content of the simulation game, and submission to YLP team	

Second: Implementation:

Approximately 70 participants were divided into two groups of 35, and each group participated in an identical parallel simulation exercise. At the start of the exercise, the facilitators introduced the scenario and rules and procedures. More time was allocated to this introductory session as per the lessons learned from the previously implemented exercise. YLP’s Programme Manager, Ms. Kawtar Zerouali started the session with explanation of a contextual background for the simulation exercise to begin. Next, CRISP and SimClubEG facilitators started the session with a presentation with information about the simulation gaming methodology and orientated the participants about what to expect during the one-day simulation exercise. Next, the facilitators explained the scenario of the simulation exercise and informed the participants about the rules and procedures and reviewed the agenda of the day. Finally, the facilitators invited the audience to ask any questions related to the materials presented and ensured there is a minimum common understanding while assuring them that assistance will be provided by the facilitators throughout the different steps of the exercise. Next, the participants were divided into two groups using color-coded cards. Upon their arrival to the designated rooms, the participants checked-in their new roles and followed the multi-step process to realize an objective of the exercise which is about identification of priority policy issues related to EAW and agreement on key policy dialogue actions to address these policy issues. More details on the flow of the simulation exercise is delineated in the below table:

time	topic	Description
09.30-10.00	Introduction to the topic and the simulation game (SG)	Consultants gave a short introduction to the topic of the simulation exercise and linked it to the general framework of the YLP5's Regional Launching Workshop.
10.00-10.30	Allocation of roles and reading handouts	The simulation game materials were distributed to the participants including their role profiles. Afterwards, participants familiarized themselves with their roles and build individual strategies for the next simulated negotiations. In the end they checked into their new roles.
10.30-10.45	SG: Strategy Meetings	Here the actors met with others that have similar interests in order to build initial alliances and start building up supporting arguments. Participants also learned about existing actors who oppose their positions.
10.45-11.15	SG: Hearing session	In this plenary session, all actors presented their positions, their analysis of the issues and proposed policy solutions. This session was chaired by the fictional "National Council for Women." It was a good opportunity to continue the identification of partners and form alliances, in preparation for the following negotiation sessions
	SG: Negotiations (Committees)	The actors met in committees and discussed one of the pre-defined topics: 1) Domestic violence 2) Child and forced marriage 3) Women employment rights or 4) Honor crimes
11.15-12.00	SG: Negotiations (Committees)	Round-1: Each committee tried to agree on a <u>maximum of 2</u> priority policy dialogue opportunities regarding the issue being discussed. How to find an agreement (consensus, majority-vote, etc.) was up to the moderators of each committee. The facilitators handed in guiding facilitation questions and a template document to support the moderator to reach concrete outputs from each session.
12.00-13.00	Lunch Break	
13.00-14.00	SG: Negotiations (Committees)	Round-2: Each committee worked to develop a <u>minimum of 3</u> and a <u>maximum of 5</u> policy dialogue actions that aim to capitalize on the priority policy opportunities identified from round 1. Moderators of each committee were assisted with guiding facilitation questions and template document.
14.00-14.30	SG: News-Show	The press teams worked to cover as much of the course of the simulation game as possible. At the beginning of the exercise, the facilitators briefed them of their roles and provided them with cameras and PowerPoint Slides template that includes a video clip intro for a fictional news show. This news show included the result of all audio-visual materials created by the press team.
14.30-15.00	SG: Conference	The chairs of each committee led the conference. They presented the proceedings of the two-step negotiations at the four sub-committees, namely the priority policy dialogue opportunities, and the policy dialogue actions. The presentations were followed by questions and answers where the entire participants interacted with the results of the working groups.
15.00-15.15	SG: Check out	Participants crossed the line again and returned to the reality
15.15-16.00	Evaluation and reflection session	This session included a facilitated discussion on various aspects related to perception of YLP5 participants of the effects of the simulation exercise on their knowledge and attitudes, in relation to the workshop's objectives. The findings of this session are presented in the following section of the report.

Third: evaluation

As stated in Table 1, the evaluation session aimed to assess whether the participants benefitted from the simulation exercise in a way that contributes to the objectives of the launching workshop. The evaluation session capitalized on lessons learned from the previous simulation game. As a result, the activity of “stressometer” was eliminated this time, and more in-depth questions were emphasized, especially on participants’ feelings and inspired actions. The session was run as a facilitated discussion where all participants have a chance to share their reflections with the entire group. Moreover, the YLP team contributed to the facilitation of this session and steered the discussions towards deeper explorations and reflections.

Key findings of the evaluation

These findings were captured from the post-exercise evaluation session, casual observations of the discussion during the exercise, and casual conversations that took place after the simulation exercise:

- Learning by experience: most participants expressed that the simulation exercise is one of the activities they liked most in the launching workshop. This positive experience stemmed from the opportunities for risk-free experimentation as a group and also on the individual level. Moreover, participants felt a sense of achievement when they fulfilled the objectives of the simulation exercise.
- Self-discovery to replace prejudice with empathy: some participants stated that the simulation exercise helped them discover that they had prejudice towards government officials, and through the simulation game, they realized the significance of seeking to understand the personal background and the structural limitations of opposing actors. Therefore, an open-dialogue was perceived as an effective solution to ensure mutual understanding and identify a common ground for policy dialogue.

“the simulation taught us that we [the youth] are the solution, and we should not depend on the government to solve problems while we sit and watch”
-YLP participant
- The urgency to express youth voices to policy makers: several participants expressed that they learned that voicing out their demands and concerns to the government is very important and that youth should work to remove psychological barriers that may prevent them from doing so. The participants came to this realization when they influenced the results of the simulation game, and therefore, they felt more confident to transfer this practice to the reality in a small- or large-scale policy contexts.
- Exploration of gender and culture: at the beginning of the exercise, an interesting observation is how several male participants had difficulty to accept simulating fictional female roles, and the reverse was not the case. This invites us to learn more about how participants define the social roles and social status of women. Nonetheless, at the end of the exercise, some participants shared that it was their first time to experience how it is like to be a woman and learned more about cultural and legislative barriers to accessing women’s rights.
- Practiced skills and competencies: similar to YLP4’s simulation exercise, participants appreciated learning about the significance of and practicing particular skills for effective policy engagement. These skills and competencies are:
 - Networking and alliance-building: in several instances, the participants expressed that they learned how to approach stakeholders and build alliances with them based on no comprehensive mutual understanding, but rather small agreements.
 - Communication skills: participants agreed that when they listened actively to the stakeholders, including those with opposing views, they learned more about the background and the rationale behind stakeholders’ views. This process of effective

communication assisted the participants to develop stronger negotiation ground and communicate their views more convincingly.

- Facilitation skills: similar to the previous simulation exercise, the participants appreciated the experience to facilitate result-oriented discussions. It taught them how to work under pressure while ensuring high level of participation from different views and reach consensus to the best possible extent.
- YLP5 team building: several participants expressed that the simulation exercise offered them an opportunity to exchange views and personal stories and know more about the other participants from the YLP5 cohort as well as the YLP mentors from previous years. The exercise allowed them to discover the commonalities rather than differences and be more ready for future collaboration.
- The role media and alternative media: participants learned that the integrity of media is of paramount importance in policy advocacy.
- Possible impact on the YLP5 National Action Plans (NAPs): participants shared their initial views on how they can integrate what they have learned from the simulation exercise into their NAPs. Below is a summary:
 - The method of simulation gaming is very engaging, universal and ideal for sensitive issues, and it can be integrated into the local capacity building training and awareness activities
 - Ensure that NAPs target marginalized and vulnerable groups such as children and persons with disabilities
 - NAPs should focus on empowerment of women, youth and children
- Participants feedback on the design, content, logistical aspects of the simulation exercise:
 - The fictional nature of exercise was perceived positively because it assisted the participants to forgo the limitations of reality to a maximum extent
 - Almost 50% of the participants preferred the exercise materials to be in Arabic language
 - Participants suggested to increase the strongly conservative roles such as the “Priest,” because it increased the group learning about dialogue and negotiation
 - The scenario of the exercise and other supporting documents contain well-crafted information that encouraged the participants to delve into the fictional country and enjoy the quality experience

Lessons learned and recommendations

The simulation exercise was a successful component of the YLP5 launching workshop. It helped introducing the issue of VAW in a non-formal way and made a case for addressing it in the YLP NAPs. Indeed, there are potential for incorporating the method of simulation in future YLP activities, and below are lessons learned from Beirut’s exercise:

- The collaborative development of the simulation exercise involving its developers, UNDP, and UN Women teams was an asset to the success of the simulation exercise, because it ensured the relevancy and sensitivity of the exercise to the backgrounds and expectations of YLP participants
- The method of simulation gaming has potential to serve the national activities of YLP. A design of a simulation game addressing a topic such as social entrepreneurship for SDGs and promoting design thinking, followed by a Training of Facilitators (ToF) could be an added value to the YLP national teams.

Annex I: proceedings of simulation game on EVAW (these recommendations were presented during the last stage of the simulation exercise, before participants returned to reality)

Committee 1: domestic violence:

- Form a multi-stakeholder committee involving youth, parliamentarians, government representatives to:
 - Discuss and propose legislative amendments needed
 - Monitor state's progress on EVAW in terms of law implementation
 - Work with the media to ensure women's positive image among stakeholders
 - Advocate for revision of school curricula to convey positive messages related to EVAWG
- Support the establishment of local safe spaces for women to report cases of domestic violence, and receive psychosocial support

Committee 2: child and forced marriage:

- Conduct evidence-based studies on the problem to support policy advocacy
- Advocate for free access to education for children, to encourage more parents to let their female children to school, rather than seeking their marriage
- Raise awareness of the communities of the dangers of child and forced marriage
- Strengthen the punishments for all parties that facilitate child and forced marriage
- Form a committee involving civil society organizations, government and religious institutions to address the issue

Committee 3: women's employment rights:

- Increase job creation programs and partner with civil society organizations in these programs
- Raise women's awareness about their labor rights
- Establish monitoring mechanisms and strengthen the enforcement of labor laws, and propose law amendments as needed
- Involve private sector in policy dialogue and incorporate their views and needs
- Support women's entrepreneurship, and women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises

Committee 4: honor crimes:

- Conduct evidence-based studies on the problem to support policy advocacy
- Amend penal code to clearly include honor crimes
- Raise awareness of all groups of society to combat honor crimes, ensure awareness raising is taking place in schools