

ENHANCING YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY IN THE MENA REGION THROUGH SIMULATION GAMES



Today, youth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region face uncertainty and precarity in many aspects. Central to most concerns is the economic situation which is illustrated by very high unemployment rates, and poor chances for youth to find a decent job or to start and grow a business. Women have even lesser opportunities, which is slowing down their emancipatory development. The region had the highest youth unemployment rate in the world in 2019, according to data published by the World Bank. The situation is even worse for young women with an unemployment rate of about 40 per cent.

Even though there are substantial differences in political, social, and economic conditions across MENA countries, youth unemployment is a challenge across the region. However, there are similarities regarding the main causes for unemployment. Due to weak educational systems, youth is not adequately prepared for the job market. Secondly, there's a lack of labor market information systems and career planning resources for job seekers. A mismatch between the expectations of educated job seekers and the wages and prestige of available jobs worsens the situation even further.

Having worked in the MENA region since 2012, we propose to employ interactive learning methods to equip youth with needed soft skills and to **empower them in becoming entrepreneurs or finding a job**. Here we rely on the method of simulation gaming. In the following you find an overview of our suggestions on how to use the method in order to make youth find a way out of unemployment. Feel free to contact us, so we can adjust our ideas and adapt to your particular circumstances and needs.

THE SIMULATION GAME METHOD

Simulation games are an interactive way to model reality and thus provide an ideal space to learn. The method offers opportunities to experiment and thus provides the space for developing a self-organized and practice-oriented learning culture. At the very center of the simulation games there's a complex problem then participants step into the roles of stakeholders, in order to find solutions. The course of the simulation games is not predefined, however it is shaped by the players' actions, which constantly create new situations that require the assessment of the players.

Simulation games create a safe space that encourages participants to experiment and to try out themselves. This way, knowledge can be applied and tested in a realistic setting and soft skills can be trained in a playful way.

WHY SIMULATION GAMES?

Today's modern jobs require skills that are not necessarily taught in school, college or university. Mostly because educational systems are outdated and not preparing their students/graduates adequately for the job market. Especially soft skills are not explicitly addressed even though team-working, communication and conflict management skills are crucial in almost every workplace.

Our simulation games stimulate participants to work together to create shared strategies and to jointly implement them. This way they can test and train their soft skills in an experienced-based and more sustainable way. Further, despite many youth having innovative ideas and some can even imagine themselves as entrepreneurs, there are



only few start-ups that actually become sustainable and have the potential to grow. Our simulation games are designed in a way, so participants can practice how to do an in-depth risk assessment, or, a multi-stakeholder analysis. Simulation games are very suitable to address even educationally deprived target groups as they are easy to get into because of their accessible design.

GENERAL LEARNING GOALS

- Our simulation games sharpen young job-seekers' profiles, by creatively exploring their interests and potentials which helps them scout for more fitting opportunities.
- Participants receive a profound chance to test and improve their soft skills, such as time and conflict management, teamwork, etc.,
- All our simulation games include the cross-cutting learning goal of understanding the structural factors of female unemployment and giving space to the participants to overcome existing hurdles.
- We further design simulation games that are focusing on the policy level: Participants are guided to

formulate and voice their needs regarding employment to actual decision makers.

- Within the simulation games participants can learn how to establish their own start-up, including risk- and sustainability assessments and eventually create their own jobs and even jobs for others.

OFFERINGS

We at CRISP welcome challenges, therefore, we are open to adapt our modules to your local needs. Here are some basic modules that could be included in your already ongoing efforts to overcome unemployment:

- **Custom-made Simulation Games:** According to your target group and to your preset learning goals we develop a perfectly matching simulation game. Our portfolio already includes dozens simulation games on a multitude of topics, which we are happy to adapt and implement for different target groups and event formats.
- **Training-of-Trainers:** If you want to learn how to develop simulation games yourself, then join one of our ToTs and you will learn how to apply the method for your particular target groups with your own learning goals.

TARGET GROUPS AND FORMATS

- Highly skilled graduates that look for a job as employee
- Lower skilled youth looking for vocational training and other jobs
- Young people that are interested in becoming entrepreneurs
- Girls and Women - We place high importance in targeting the labor needs of girls and women in MENA Job markets as they often face even larger challenges.
- Employers and business owners that want to learn how to find more fitting employees
- Policy-makers, in order to better understand the needs of youth regarding employability and to develop adequate, new and innovative policies.

SUBJECT AREAS

In the following section we introduce examples on how to support employability in the MENA region. The design and implementation of our activities will be based on a thorough analysis of the specific local contexts as well as the needs and the potentials of the chosen target group. The topics of the activities that we are striving to implement can be as various as are the needs related to employability. All our formats have the goal of improving cross-sector cooperation, especially between actors from the government, economy and civil society spheres.

EXAMPLE1: SOFT SKILLS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

CHALLENGES: Young graduates as well as lower skilled youth in search of vocational jobs frequently lack soft skills that could improve their chances of finding work. There is no doubt about the importance of soft skills in all work spheres and the high extent to which any business can benefit from well equipped employees. CRISP has extensive experience with activities aiming at soft skills development in various areas, using the method of simulation games.

TARGET GROUP: High and Low skilled job seekers, Women, young entrepreneurs.

LEARNING GOALS: The overall goal is to increase job relevant soft skills among young people. The simulation game has an actors' centered approach, puts the participants in realistic situations and thus provides the space to train the following soft skills:

- **Teamwork:** Within the simulation game, teams with short, mid and long term goals are formed. Participants can reflect and improve their abilities to work in a team, lead others and follow instructions.
- **Conflict-Management:** Very often, there is a lack in dealing with conflicts or respectively managing those in a work environment. Participants learn about general techniques of conflict management and apply those during the simulation game. Moreover, they combine them with their personal strategies. In the end, they feel much more ready to handle conflicts.
- **Communication skills:** Participants have to build and present their arguments within the simulation game and try to convince others. Reflecting on these processes helps them to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. This helps them to learn about their own levels of conscientiousness, agreeableness, patience, optimism, extraversion and stress tolerance.
- **Criticism:** Express and receive criticism is a capacity much needed in a healthy working environment. Participants will learn through new techniques how to express and how to accept criticism more professionally.
- **Initiative:** Dynamic working environments require the workers/employees to identify needs and shortcomings. If they have a proactive approach to problem solving, this can be very beneficial for any company or firm.

- **Creativity:** Setting free the creative potential of workers and employees is another goal of any modern business. The experiences from the simulation game in this regard are helpful to become encouraged in following your own ideas and in increasing the personal self-esteem of the participants.
- **Empathy:** Participants step into roles of others. Due to this change of perspective, the simulation game pushes participants to reflect on their own behavior and values and thus increases their capacities to empathize with others.



RESULTS: During the evaluation phase the participants reflect on their own behavior during the simulation game and are introduced to a wide set of techniques in order to improve respective soft skills. Alternatively, the participants can be introduced to the techniques and skills beforehand and then try to apply them during the simulation game. One way or the other, the knowledge about their areas of strength as well as soft skill proficiency will have significantly increased. Participants' willingness to actually work on their own skills will also be boosted as they will have recognized the significance of the latter. Moreover, participants will have a better understanding of what employers look for in their employees. Eventually, participants have a higher chance of scoring well on pre-employment personality tests such as the Caliper Profile, Predictive Index Behavioral Assessment (PI), Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), DISC Assessment Test and the Occupational Personality Questionnaire. Even if employers do not employ such tests, they will at least subconsciously select for the tested abilities. This will give participants of the simulation games higher chances of being employed.

EXAMPLE2: COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES

CHALLENGES: In order to be prepared for the multiple challenges participants of the MENA employment sector can be confronted with, it is of highest importance to be able to join forces and to make the most of the limited resources available. Unfortunately, a collaborative approach is not available everywhere and even less in hierarchical and patriarchal systems like those common in some MENA countries. What is needed is a key moment that opens the eyes and minds of the participants to be more open for cultural and social change when it comes to leadership.



TARGET GROUP: High and Low skilled job seekers, Women, young entrepreneurs, employers & business owners.

LEARNING GOALS: Participants will understand the power of collaboration. Due to the experiences made in the simulation game, they will clearly understand the added value of collaborative approaches in improving the overall impact/outcome. Accordingly, the participants will become introduced to different leadership models, focusing on the concept of collective leadership.

RESULTS: The work and leadership culture inside the human resource system starts to change. Due to the simulation game, many will experience the advantages of a collaborative approach to common challenges. During the evaluation phase the participants undergo an in-depth analysis of different leadership styles and furthermore different ways of how to start and maintain dialogue between different institutions/organizations and levels of authority.

EXAMPLE3: ECONOMICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

CHALLENGES: Amongst women, the percentage of unemployment in the MENA region is particularly high. Over the past years, MENA countries have achieved tremendous progress in terms of gender equality in education. The gender gap is closing in education and health, but not in the economy. This is referred to as the MENA paradox. The job market is different in every country in the MENA region. Therefore, for the purposes of this draft, we are focusing only on the collective challenges that are prevalent in most of the countries.

We are very much willing to adjust our outline to the needs of each local community. As a matter of fact, there is already a high 'out of school' rate amongst children going to secondary schools in the entire region: 12% of boys and 18% of girls. This leads to a lack of employment opportunities, and an entrenchment of social inequalities. Thus, it is very relevant to offer opportunities to people with lower education levels.

TARGET GROUP: Job seeking women in the MENA region

LEARNING GOALS: Participants will have better awareness of their right to be part of the labor force. The participants will then get an understanding of developing entrepreneurship capabilities. Accordingly, the participants will learn an entrepreneurial based approach to better enhance their opportunities for business creation.



RESULTS: After taking part in the simulation game and exploring the opportunities that are provided by the job market or not, the participants will ultimately have a better understanding of skills needed to ensure smooth entry in the job market. The participants will further increase their understanding of their rights as women, for example regarding to equal pay, maternity leave and anti-discrimination.

EXAMPLE 4: ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING

CHALLENGES: The largest reason for business discontinuance in the MENA region as a whole is the lack of profitability of entrepreneurs. This is to a large part caused by structural hurdles such as the overall economic situation, but also due to administrative barriers. These issues discourage young people from founding businesses or growing their small enterprises.

How to do your own business and how to set it up? The high bureaucratic hurdles are often a barrier to founding businesses. While a simulation game can not directly change this structural factor, would-be entrepreneurs can be capacitated to keep up with the paperwork through intrinsic motivation, planning skills and knowledge. Moreover, lessons learned are often not accessible and would-be entrepreneurs do not know where to start finding resources and training.



TARGET GROUP: High skilled youth that want to start a business; Young graduates from universities or vocational education institutions; Young people without any higher education diploma/with low level of education who seek to start their own business; People with traditionally less opportunities such as refugees, people with disabilities, school students who might want to start an own business when they leave school; economic and other political stakeholders who have an influence on local job markets.

LEARNING GOALS:

- Learn the classical steps that lead to the creation of an enterprise, from market research, ideation, pitch training, legal hurdles, project incubation to financing your project and communicating about it (PR).
- Developing a solid business plan is challenging. The simulation game introduces the participants to the different elements required in every business plan and gives practical insights on how to create in-

depth risk-assessments, sustainability plans, organizational-strategic development plans and more.

- Learning tools on how to carry out market-analysis, in order to prevent young entrepreneurs from entering an already saturated job market.



- Developing individual strategic plans on becoming an entrepreneur, in order to make each single participant aware of the upcoming steps before entering markets. The idea is to make young people aware of these opportunities very early and to properly plan and prepare their market entry.
- Make economic and political stakeholders understand the bureaucratic barriers that may hinder the creation of new enterprises and work on how to retrieve/ease some of these barriers.
- Further we aim at building the capacities of the target groups to increase the profitability of their business through increased entrepreneurial spirit, innovative approaches to market and customer analysis, branding and collaboration as well as accessing online markets.
- Participants get sensitized on the question of corporate social responsibility, i.e. their own responsibility towards their environment and the society as a whole as young entrepreneurs.

RESULTS: Participants have a better knowledge of how to create, maintain and grow their enterprise, step by step. They are aware of their possibilities/opportunities and potential hurdles as well as ways of circumventing them in the creation of their enterprise, be it local retail, or ambitious online business. Moreover, they are able to network more efficiently. Through the course, they can expand their network (composed of the other participants in the workshop/sim game as well as the stakeholders participating in these projects).

WHO WE ARE

CRISP is an independent, non-profit, organization, based in Berlin, Germany. Created in 2007, our organization specializes in developing projects, facilitating trainings and conducting consultancies mainly in the fields of conflict transformation, civic education and citizen’s participation. Through our work we aim to promote critical thinking and a transnational democratic culture, in which different groups can engage in constructive dialogues, in order to transform their conflicts and/or the environment they live in.

More specifically, CRISP is specialized in developing and implementing innovative learning tools, particularly simulation games. Our commitment to our method exhibits our conviction of the value of experienced based learning-tools in various contexts. Apart from our traditional areas of intervention, the fields in which CRISP puts its pedagogical approach into practice are manifold and adaptable to the specific needs of our clients.

Our activities are designed and conducted in cooperation with experts and professionals from our target domains of intervention, thus enabling us to offer high quality pedagogical contents in many more areas such as vocational training, urban development or the fight against corruption. Our regional focus areas include the MENA region as well as Eastern Europe and former Soviet-Countries, Sub-Sahara-Africa, the European Union and Germany.

REFERENCES



Egypt, 2019 – 2020

Y-LEAD – Creating Civic Spaces for Active Citizenship (Dorna الأن رودو)

The Y-Lead project promotes inclusive participation in 23 governorates, with a strong focus on women, to become active citizens and take leading roles in the public sphere in general. In particular, the project emphasizes their role in the upcoming Local Council Elections. Beneficiary youth will become empowered to effectively drive positive social change within their constituencies and create networks of change-makers.



Jordan, 2020 – 2021

“MASARNA” – Our Pathway: Fostering Jordan Youth Vision Towards Effective Civic Engagement & Self-Reliance

The Y-Lead project promotes inclusive participation in 23 governorates, with a strong focus on women, to become active citizens and take leading roles in the public sphere in general. In particular, the project emphasizes their role in the upcoming Local Council Elections. Beneficiary youth will become empowered to effectively drive positive social change within their constituencies and create networks of change-makers.



Algeria, 2020

CCP SYNERGY

The project consists of implementing a training of trainer workshop to enable participants to use a tool-kit of non-formal education methods, including simulation games to further enhance the contribution of the local trainers to positive change.



Jordan, 2019

JORDAN YOUTH VISION 2030

Together with several hundreds of youth from different governorates, we have developed a common and shared vision for the country. This vision is supposed to serve as a point of reference for key actors from different sectors, in order to join forces and to collectively work on social change.



Egypt, 2012 – 2018

SIMULATING EGYPTIAN TRANSITION (SET)

Sustainable change has to come from within society itself. Therefore, we have empowered and supported young social activists in Egypt for several years in analyzing and identifying needs of local communities and furthermore to design and implement efficient local initiatives that have brought positive change to the communities.



Morocco, 2016

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SIMULATION GAME “EL KOUDIA”

Throughout the project, we sensitized the participants, from the ministry of interior, governmental agencies and civil society about the needs and perspectives of different interest groups concerning the integration of migrants. Through a series of workshops, we developed ideas for concrete multi-stakeholder cooperation on social and economic integration as well as on institutional and legal levels.



Morocco, 2016

INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY OF LOCAL POLITICIANS THROUGH SIMULATION GAMES

The question of how to hold politicians accountable is crucial when it comes to establishing a democratic culture. In order to create innovative approaches on how to hold local politicians more accountable we have developed a simulation game “Jbeil El-Shams” together with 14 local trainers. The simulation game has been conducted in 7 regions in Morocco and action plans how to increase accountability have been developed accordingly.



Tunisia + Lebanon, 2018 – 2019

UNDP YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

We developed and facilitated a simulation game for approximately 120 youth representatives and policy makers from all over the MENA-Region. The participants had to design a National Youth Policy (NYP) in four areas: Economic + Political Participation, Education and Social Cohesion. They also had to include approaches how to improve gender equality in the region.



Tunisia 2018

MENA INTEGRITY IN TUNISIA 2018

We’ve developed and implemented a simulation game called Bribania (in Arabic: Fasadistan), in cooperation with Transparency International (TI). The participants were able to design, experiment and test innovative strategies on how to fight corruption. Furthermore, they became sensitized in identifying difficulties and risks during the implementation of anti-corruption-actions.

