

شباب الشرق الأوسط

Middle East Youth Initiative

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MEYI Beginnings

- The Middle East Youth Initiative began in 2006 as the first main project of The Wolfensohn Center for Development at the Brookings Institution.
- The Wolfensohn Center adopts rigorous research to address development challenges and bring about action in a sustainable way.
- MEYI is a joint partnership of the Wolfensohn Center and the Dubai School of Government.

Overview of Presentation

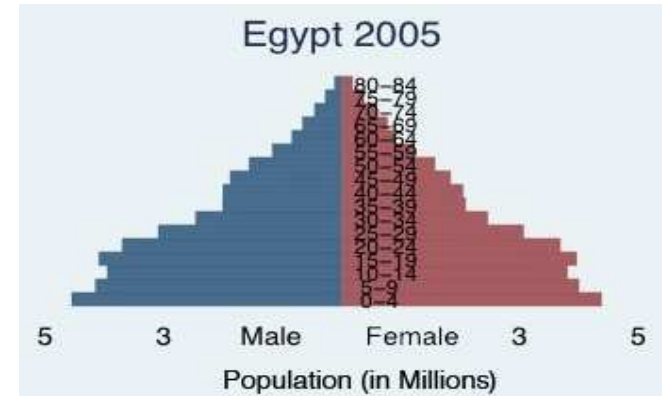
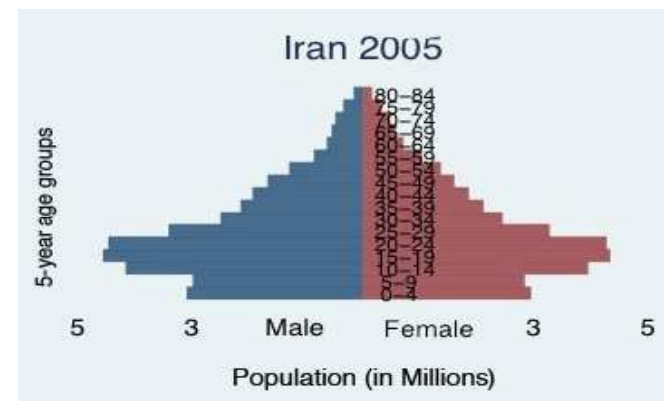
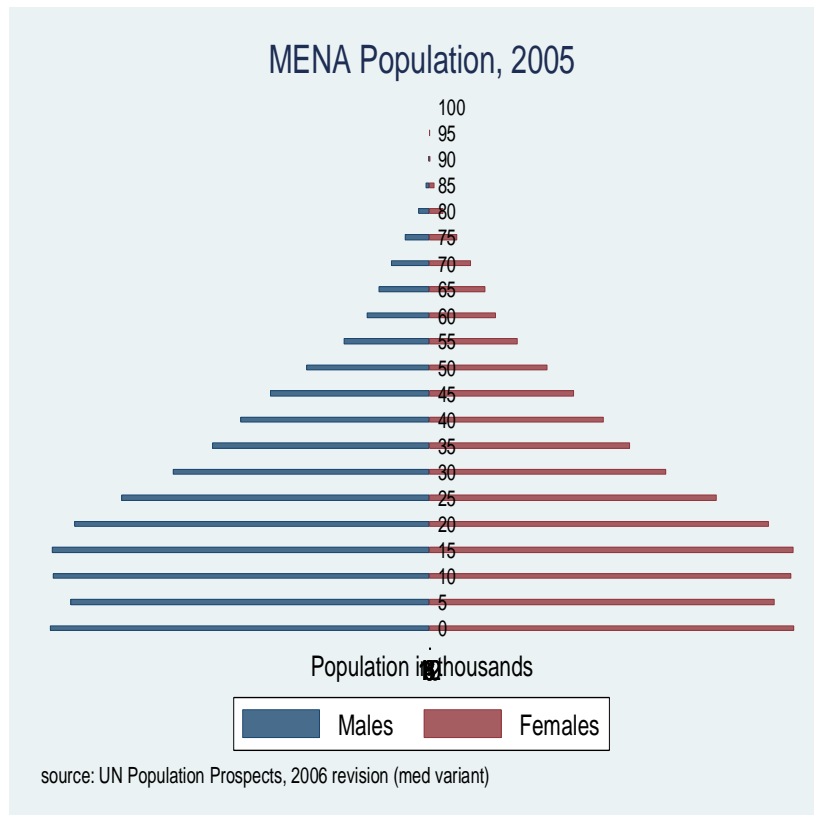
- Introduction and Approach
- Background on the status of youth in the Middle East
 - Snapshot of Youth Challenges
 - Education and Employment
 - Marriage, Family Formation and Housing
 - Introducing “Waithood”
- MEYI’s approach to youth development policy
 - Institutions and Incentives
 - Examples of effective and ineffective policy
- Moving forward with a policy and research agenda

Our Approach

- Framework:
 - Youth through the Lens of Inclusion
 - Integrated approach that looks at Education, Employment, Marriage, Housing
- Focus on mid-educated youth. Why?
 - 55% of Iranian youth have a high school or university education and 70% of new entrants to the labor force in Egypt have a secondary education or higher
- Robust macro-economic environment is necessary but not sufficient to solve youth exclusion. Institutions and incentives matter.
- Impetus for Institutional Reform
- Demographic Gift

The Youth Bulge – A Demographic Gift

The Youth Bulge – A Demographic Gift



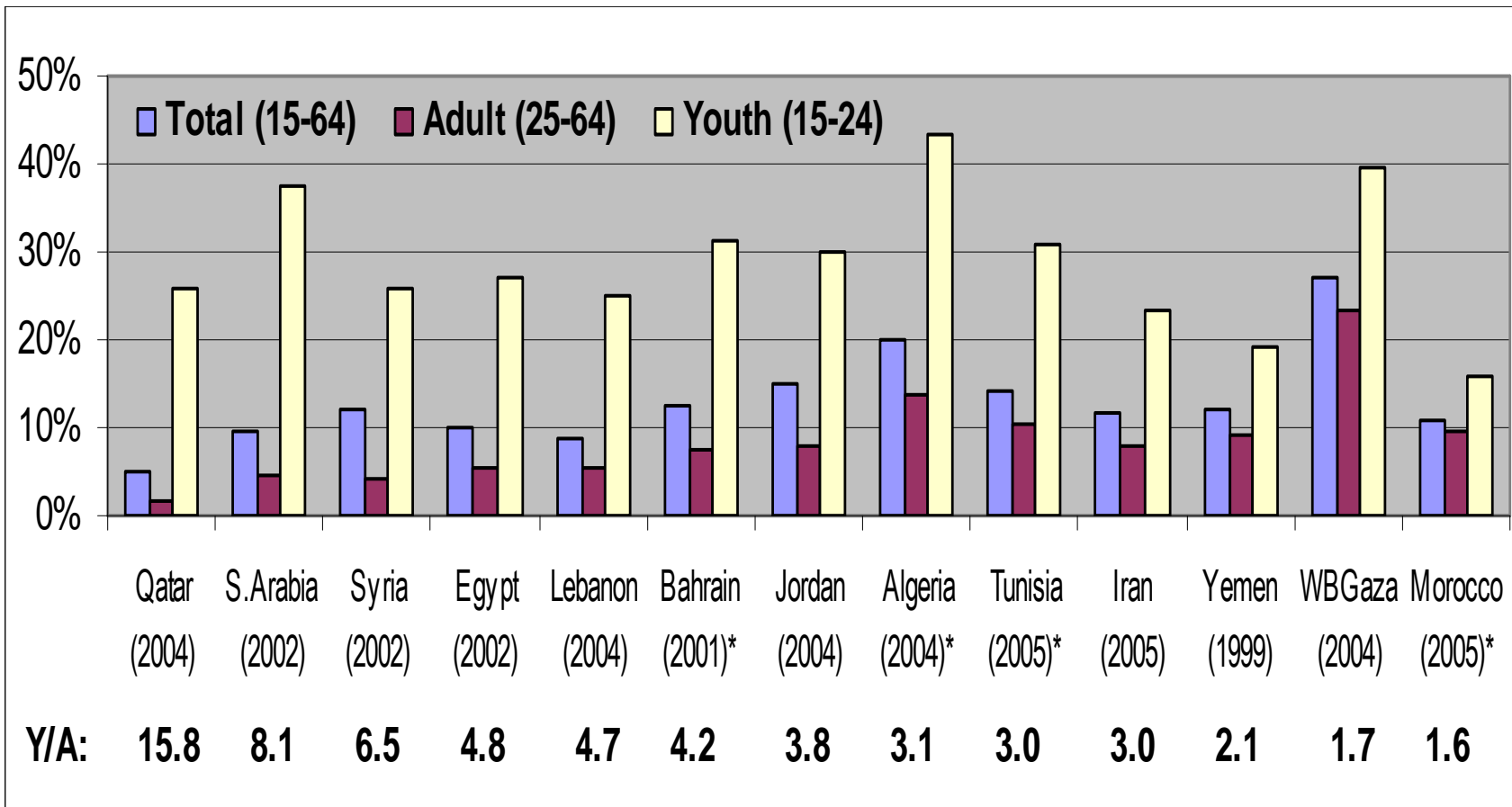
The Status of Youth in the Middle East: Education

- Few regions invest more in the education of their young people than the Middle East and get less.
- Educational enrollments are high and access to education has expanded rapidly during the past few decades.
- However countries still lag behind in educational quality (TIMSS Results).
- “Skill mismatch” explanation for the high rates of unemployment of educated youth.

The Status of Youth in the Middle East: Employment

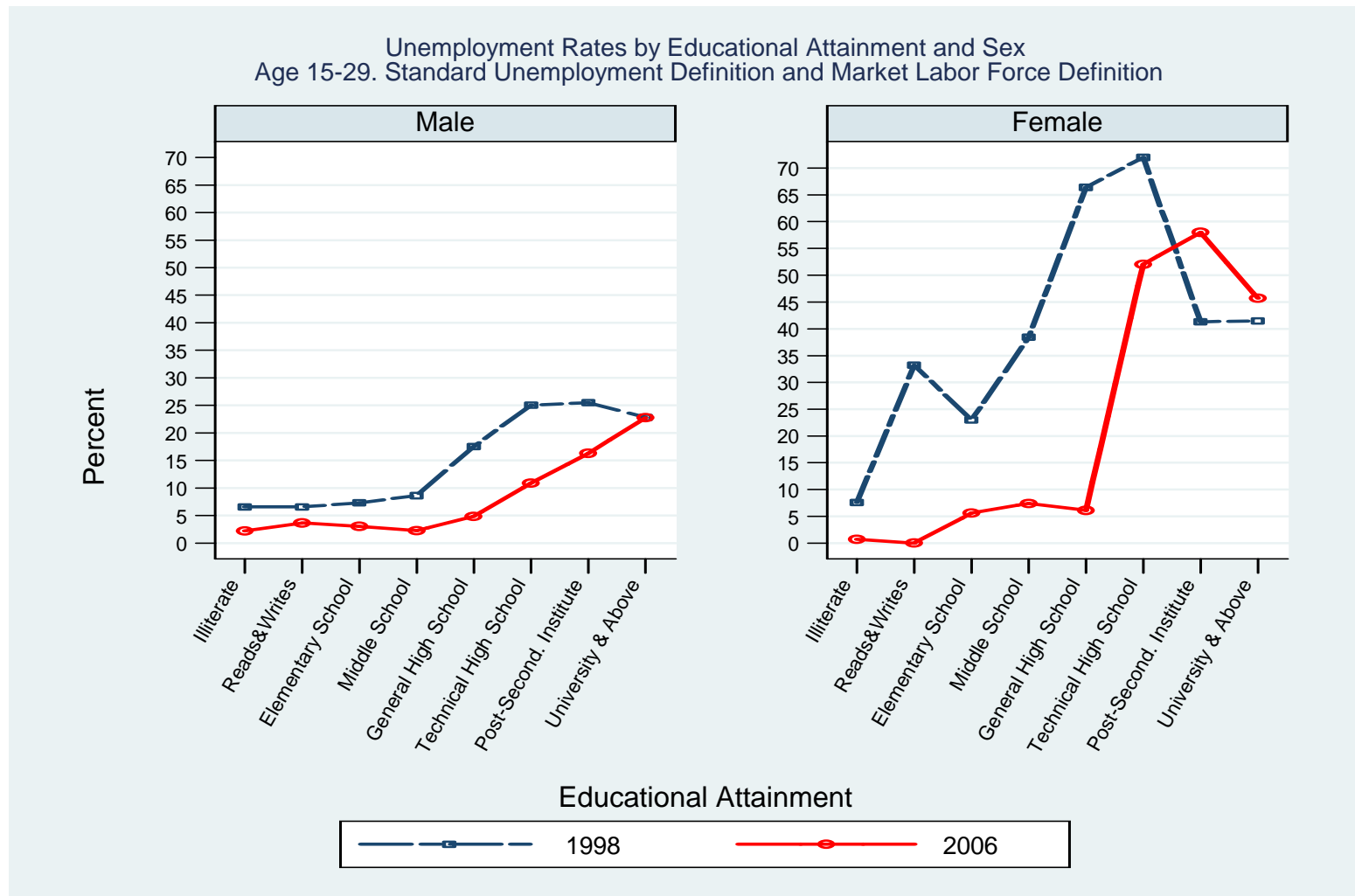
High unemployment rates among youth

Youth /Adult Unemployment Rates and Ratios in Middle Eastern Countries



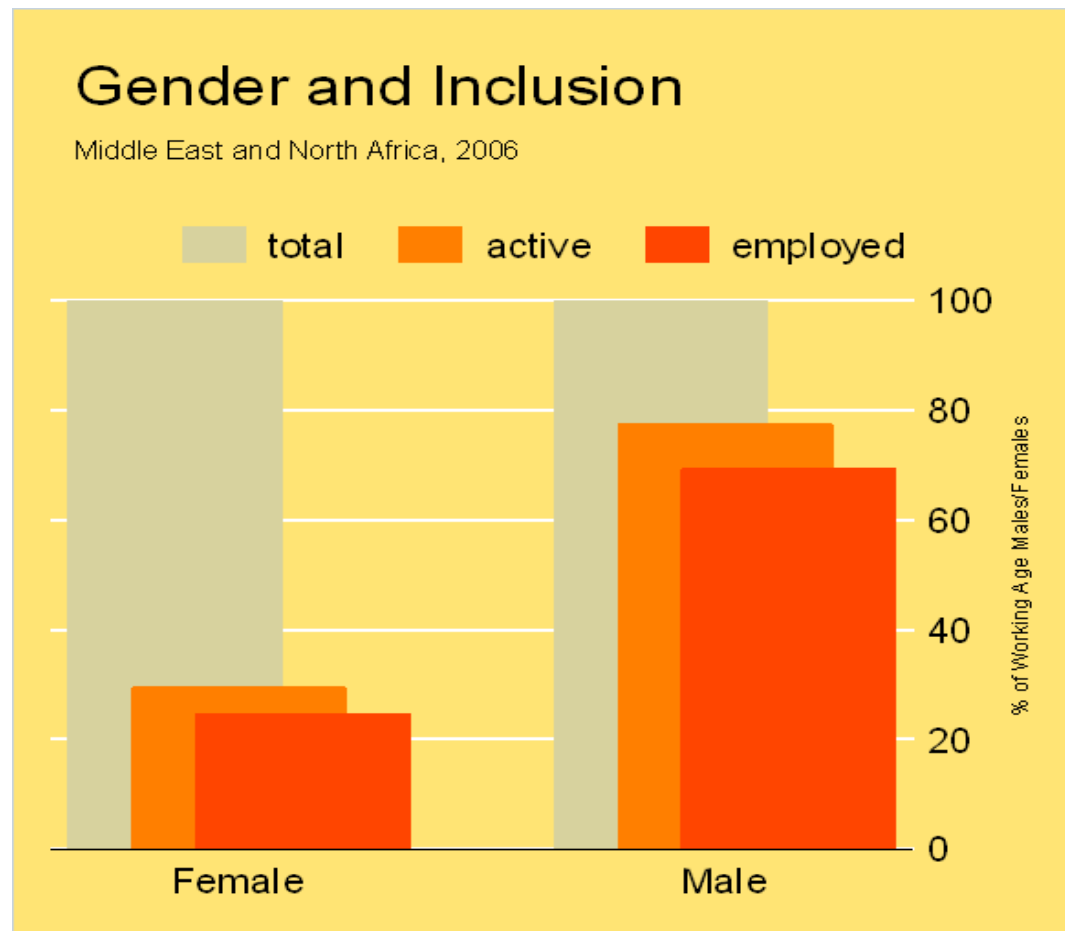
The Status of Youth in the Middle East: Employment

- Unemployment in Egypt is primarily a problem of educated youth.



The Status of Youth in the Middle East: Employment

- Young women across the region are the most disadvantaged in their quest for jobs, penalized for both their age and gender.



The Status of Youth in the Middle East: Employment

- **Average duration of unemployment** for youth with university or vocational education is relatively high.
 - In Morocco, the average waiting period after graduating and finding a job is three years; nearly three years in Iran and two and half years in Egypt.
- **Preference for Public Sector Work –**
 - In Syria, 80 percent of unemployed youth in a survey said they would continue to seek jobs in the public sector, and 60 percent of them asserted they were looking for public sector jobs *exclusively*.
- **Job Quality and Decent Work** - Even when employed most young people are ending up in the informal sector

The Status of Youth in the Middle East: Marriage, Family Formation & Housing

- A major rite of passage to adulthood in the region.
- Today, in the Middle East, nearly 50 percent of men between the ages of 25 and 29 years are unmarried.
- Marriage market linked to education and employment market.
- High costs of marriage.
- As more couples desire independent housing after marriage, the cost of housing is another factor that contributes to the delay in family formation.
- In the Middle East the cost of a house is 8 times the average annual income since there few instruments to leverage future earnings.

The Status of Youth in the Middle East: “Waithood” ...

- The bewildering time that a large proportion of Middle Eastern youth spend in transition from youth to adulthood, is more than just waiting.
- Youth transitions to adulthood in the Middle East are increasingly protracted and fraught with uncertainty. We call this phenomenon “waithood.”
- Gallup Poll Data – high levels of boredom, worry, and anger among youth. But also very high levels of optimism.

MEYI's Policy Approach - Institutions and Incentives

- Micro approach which looks at institutional setting that shape youth behavior in key markets: education, employment, social insurance, marriage, housing, and credit
- Institutions & Incentives matter
 - Economic Institutions
 - Social Institutions
- Example – Skills mismatch
- Example - Volunteerism

Youth Policy in the Middle East – What doesn't work...

- **Quick fix solutions that address the symptoms rather than the underlying causes
underlying causes can further distort
incentives**

Youth Policy in the Middle East – What works

Recommendations for Reform

- **Education** - Revise university admissions policies
- **Employment** – Reform public sector employment policies
- **Marriage and Family Formation** - Reforming rental laws or mortgage laws to make affordable housing more accessible for young people

Moving Forward - Research Agenda

- More policy research and analysis
- Invest in developing and replicating effective programs
- Regional cooperation – a regional platform to facilitate knowledge exchange

Thank You!

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