

# The Youth Forum for Youth Policies - Lebanon

## Strategic plan 2024 - 2028

September 2023



# FORWARD

The Youth Forum for Youth Policies developed its 5- year strategy (2024 – 2028) during 2023. The process constituted an opportunity to pause, assess the rapidly changing Lebanese context, discuss the growing challenges, reflect on achievements over the past years, and pinpoints priorities and dimensions that need to be incorporated into the Youth Forum work.

Facilitated by an external consultant, the strategy development process was participatory whereby brainstorming, validation, and endorsement meetings were attended by Member Organizations (MOs) in the Forum. Bearing in mind the diversity marking the Youth Forum membership, which pulls together youth NGOs and youth wings of political parties from various ideological, political, and thematic backgrounds, MOs valued the vitality of the process, for it shall guide them around agreed strategic objectives, which helps their actions make greater impact and influence positive change.

To ensure that the Strategic Objectives are achieved, the Youth Forum Secretariat will continuously monitor the progress of its work against the proposed results framework demonstrated in the strategy. This will help the Youth Forum ascertain that it is achieving its mission. Progress shall be reported in the annual report produced at the beginning of each year covering the activities of the year before. Annual monitoring will also feed into the planning of the following year. Moreover, towards the end of 2026, this strategy document will be revised in a mid- term review process. Targets for 2028 will be updated accordingly to guide the Youth Forum’s strategic direction.

Masar association, the Secretariat of the Youth Forum for Youth Policies, takes this opportunity to reiterate its determination to have a solid and visionary strategy that help reach a State where the rule of law guarantees for the Lebanese youth all their rights.

Masar association

The Secretariat of the Youth Forum for Youth Policies

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- FORWARD..... 2**
- ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS ..... 4**
- WHO WE ARE ..... 5**
  - Overview..... 5**
  - Vision .....5**
  - Mission.....5**
  - Core Values .....5**
- WHO WE WORK WITH ..... 6**
- WHERE DO WE WORK ..... 7**
  - Our Context..... 7**
- STRATEGIC ANALYSIS..... 8**
- STRATEGIC OUTCOMES..... 9**
  - Cross Cutting Issues ..... 10**
  - Key Working Approaches..... 11**
- STRATEGY MONITORING ..... 12**
- RESULTS FRAMEWORK ..... 14**

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>GoL</b>	Government of Lebanon
<b>MO</b>	Member Organization
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NYP</b>	National Youth Policy
<b>SO</b>	Strategic Outcome
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
<b>YF</b>	Youth Forum

# WHO WE ARE

## Overview

The Youth Forum (YF) is a non-government network of youth focused NGOs and youth wings in political parties that emerged in 2007 in parallel to the Decree No. 80/2007 issued by the Council of Ministers in Lebanon and that specified having a Youth Consultation over the Youth Policy. The Youth Forum's primary goal was the development of a national youth policy in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in a process that was supported by the United Nations Youth Task Force in Lebanon then. On the long term, the YF aims to advocate for a Governance Model in which it sits on the table with government officials to directly negotiate youth demands and priorities as a rights-holder and as described in the National Youth Policy.

The National Youth Policy (NYP) document included a list of 137 policy recommendations and was endorsed by the Lebanese Council of Ministers as presented by the Youth Forum in April 2012 and as a declaration of the State of its commitment to youth issues; it is a comprehensive document that comprises a vision of the steps the Government of Lebanon (GoL) intends to take with the aim to improve the living conditions of youth, including welfare and quality services, and the creation of an enabling environment to facilitate youth's entitled access to decision making positions in the public life.

In 2022, the Council of Ministers endorsed the National Youth Policy Action Plan that was developed based on the recommendations of the NYP and reflecting on some of the recent developments in the country such as the pandemic and the economic situation, among others.

## Vision

We envision a State where the rule of law guarantees for the Lebanese youth all their rights.

## Mission

The Youth Forum is a non-governmental network of youth NGOs and youth wings in political parties established in 2007. It aims to develop youth policy recommendations, submit them to decision makers, and advocate for their endorsement, implementation, and evaluation to the best interests of the Lebanese youth. It works towards the establishment of a Governance Model where youth priorities are constantly identified and proposed to the State to be acted upon.

## Core Values

The Youth Forum is guided by the values of diversity, transparency, participatory decision making, social justice and non-discrimination, and independence. As defined in Figure 1, these values shall be held by all member organizations (MOs) and shall be reflected in the work of the Youth Forum.

### **Diversity**

- We recognize and celebrate our differences as Member Organizations, embracing NGOs with different thematic areas and youth wings of political parties with different ideological backgrounds.

### **Transparency**

- We hold ourselves accountable to our stakeholders and pledge to make information readily available to people who are interested to know more about the YF and its activities/ interventions.

### **Participatory Decision Making**

- We believe in the importance of active engagement, involvement, and contribution of all member organizations in the process of making decisions that affect the youth, adopting a consensus approach rather than voting to ensure unanimity.

### **Social Justice and Non-Discrimination**

- We advocate for fairness, equality, and respect for Lebanese youth.

### **Independence**

- We value self-reliance, autonomy, and personal responsibility away from political considerations. We encourage member organizations to take ownership of their actions and decisions, and to be self-sufficient to the extent possible.

*Figure 1: Core Values upheld by the Youth Forum*

## **WHO WE WORK WITH**

Being a national body, the work of the Youth Forum reaches out to and interacts with tens of stakeholders as presented in Figure 2. We believe that these stakeholders influence our work, and we plan to have an influence over them to realize the NYP.



Figure 2: Key Stakeholders

## WHERE DO WE WORK

### Our Context

The situation of youth in Lebanon concerning policy and participation in decision-making presents both challenges and opportunities. Lebanon's political system is organized around sectarian divisions, resulting in political polarization and hindering the collective representation of young people in decision-making processes. The way Lebanese youth are perceived and addressed in policies lacks a comprehensive and integrated understanding of their intricate and diverse lives. So far, public policies in Lebanon have not adequately involved youth in decisions

related to issues affecting their lives. Furthermore, youth are not considered a priority group by the political class who is called to engage them in reform actions to be set in the future. The ongoing economic and political crisis in Lebanon, which started in 2019, has exacerbated the situation. Hyperinflation, high unemployment rates, and a collapsing currency have disproportionately impacted the youth, resulting in the deterioration in the quality of education and the fear of an ill-prepared “lost generation” faced by limited job opportunities, increased hopelessness, immigration, brain drain, and reduced access to essential services. Rising unemployment and poverty levels have left many young people with a precarious mental health, and vulnerable to substance abuse as a self-destructive means of coping with the harsh realities. As a result, youth are lacking the capabilities, resources, and support needed to compete in this increasingly challenging world.

Given these challenges, there is a pressing need for a unified strategy that brings together youth wings of political parties and youth-focused NGOs to partner with the Government and play an active role in prioritizing and elevating youth concerns in Lebanon's political and developmental agendas. By doing so, the youth can have a more prominent role in shaping the present and the future of the country and actively participating in decision-making processes. The groundwork has been laid through the NYP and the NYP Action Plan. Thus, acknowledging that policy making processes have been interrupted over the past decade due to political instability, deadlocks, and the spread of a pandemic, the time has come for the YF to set a strategy. This strategy will guide the work of the YF over the coming five years, ensuring that policy making becomes evidence based in matters that concern the youth and calling for the NYP to be part of an overall public policy.

## STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

The Youth Forum has engaged in an active reflection on its own Strengths and Weaknesses as well as the potential Opportunities and Threats it may face in a SWOT analysis exercise. This analysis presents the basis on which this strategy is planned over the coming five years.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An endorsed National Youth Policy in a bottom-up approach with a varied basket of recommendations that address all sectors.</li> <li>The existence of an internal democratic structure.</li> <li>Diversity of member organizations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of registration for the YF.</li> <li>Slow internal decision-making process.</li> <li>Weak visibility and media presence.</li> <li>Limited budget.</li> <li>Absence of a workplan.</li> <li>Some uncommitted member organizations.</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active engagement of Member Organizations in Advocacy Action for the Youth Policy.</li> <li>• Expertise and experience in advocating the Youth Policy.</li> <li>• Commitment of member organizations.</li> <li>• Active youth participation as decision makers inside the YF.</li> <li>• Access to duty bearers and decision makers.</li> <li>• Presence of updated bylaws.</li> </ul>	
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Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive parliamentary blocs and ministries.</li> <li>• National Youth Policy Action Plan endorsed in 2022.</li> <li>• Access to the Lebanese youth abroad.</li> <li>• Promotion of the Youth Forum Visibility in media and social media.</li> <li>• Increased youth interest to participate in the public sphere.</li> <li>• Building a governance model over youth rights.</li> <li>• Interested donors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of societal understanding of the Youth Policy.</li> <li>• Lack of sufficient data and statistics on Lebanese youth.</li> <li>• Youth are not a top priority on the Government agenda.</li> <li>• Socio-political, economic, and security instability.</li> <li>• Political vacuum.</li> <li>• Irregularity in operating public institutions.</li> <li>• Youth immigration and despair.</li> <li>• Lack of sustainable funding.</li> </ul>

## STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

In our strategy 2024-2028, and based on our analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, we plan to pursue three strategic outcomes (SO) as follows:

- Strategic Outcome 1: An empowered YF capable of taking the lead in becoming a true partner to duty bearers to oversee the process of the NYP implementation and evaluation, while playing an active role in it.
- Strategic Outcome 2: A YF actively engaged in advocacy actions to implement and constantly evaluate progress towards realizing the NYP recommendations.
- Strategic Outcome 3: A significant increase in media coverage and portrayal of youth right-based issues is achieved.

## Cross Cutting Issues

This policy is guided by three cross-cutting issues: gender equity, rights, and inclusion of people with disability.

Addressing gender as a cross-cutting issue is essential for promoting inclusivity, equality, and social justice among young people of both genders to meet their specific needs effectively. Recognizing and incorporating a gender perspective into the Youth Forum Strategy ensures that priorities identified are sensitive to the diverse needs and experiences of young people of both genders and helps in dismantling gender stereotypes and norms, ensuring equal access to opportunities, and empowering young people of both genders to participate fully in society. This includes addressing gender-based discrimination and violence, promoting gender-responsive education, and challenging harmful social norms.

Rights, just like gender, are another crucial cross-cutting issue that should be incorporated into the various interventions of the Youth Forum Strategy. In this context, "rights" refer to human rights, which are inherent to all individuals. A human rights-based approach rooted in citizenship practices ensures that the rights of young people are protected, promoted, and fulfilled, guiding all interventions and initiatives within this strategy.

Noting that youth come from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities, inclusion is a fundamental cross-cutting issue. By including people with disabilities in youth activities, real-world diversity is reflected, helping create a more inclusive society. This also ensures that all young people, regardless of their abilities, have equal opportunities to participate in youth programs and initiatives, upholding the principles of equality and social justice.

## Key Working Approaches

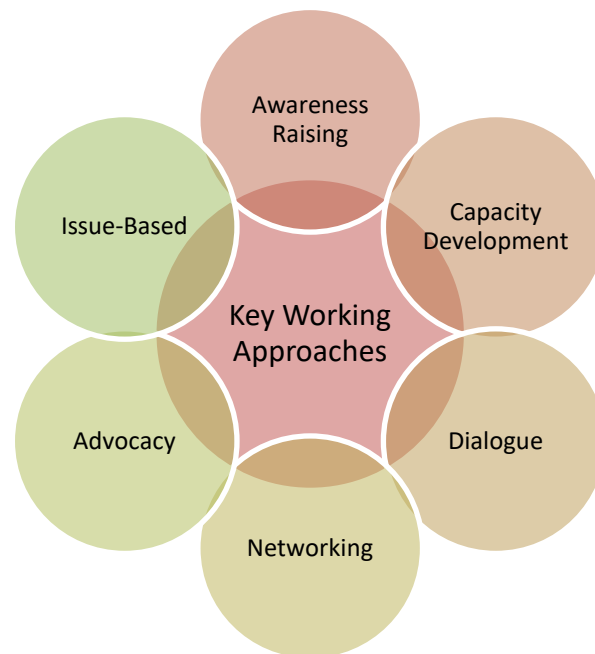


Figure 3: Key Working Approaches

- **Awareness raising.** Awareness raising is a vital working approach that seeks to inform, educate, and mobilize young people and the broader community about important issues that affect youth in Lebanon. Through targeted campaigns, workshops, social media, and community engagement, awareness raising will be adopted by the YF to shed light on challenges faced by young people, stimulating public discourse and creating a sense of urgency for action. Furthermore, awareness raising encourages young people across Lebanon to become active agents of change who can contribute to the realization of the NYP.
- **Capacity development.** Capacity development is a crucial working approach that focuses on empowering young people with the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to actively participate in society and drive positive change towards the realization of the NYP recommendations. By investing in capacity development, the YF strategy aims to enhance young people's capabilities in various areas through targeted training programs, workshops, and access to information. By nurturing the potential of young people, the YF strategy not only enhances their personal development but also fosters a pool of skilled and engaged youth leaders who can actively shape the present and the future and address the pressing issues facing their generation.
- **Dialogue.** Dialogue fosters open and constructive communication among young people, policymakers, duty bearers, and other stakeholders in Lebanon. Emphasizing dialogue creates a participatory and inclusive environment where young people's voices are heard, valued, and taken into account in policy development and decision-making processes. By

engaging in meaningful dialogues, young people can express their perspectives, needs, and aspirations, leading to more informed and targeted interventions within the strategy. Moreover, dialogue helps build mutual understanding and trust, enabling the youth to collaborate effectively and co-create solutions hand in hand with the Government to complex challenges they face.

- **Networking.** Networking facilitates the establishment of meaningful connections and collaborations among all stakeholders mapped under Figure 2. Most importantly, it brings about concerted efforts into the implementation of NYP recommendations. Through networking, the YF can share knowledge, expertise, and resources with stakeholders to create a comprehensive and holistic approach towards ensuring youth rights. Moreover, by fostering networking, the YF Strategy can tap into a wide range of perspectives, best practices, and innovative ideas, ensuring the strategy remains relevant and adaptive to the ever-changing needs and aspirations of young people. Last but not least, networking opens doors to new opportunities, partnerships, and funding sources, enhancing the strategy's implementation and amplifying its impact.
- **Advocacy.** Through advocacy efforts, the YF can raise awareness about key issues affecting young people, influencing decision makers and duty bearers to find the will to realize the NYP and allocate resources towards the realization of its recommendations. By integrating advocacy as a working approach, the YF through this Strategy can achieve greater inclusivity, responsiveness, and sustainability, ultimately leading to positive and transformative outcomes for the well-being and advancement of young people in Lebanon.
- **Issue based.** In pursuing this strategy, the YF will adopt the issue-based approach, taking one topic at a time and focusing in-depth on it to be implemented before moving on to another topic. Topics will be identified by priority and achievability as determined in unanimity by MOs.

## STRATEGY MONITORING

Monitoring this strategy is essential to ensure its effectiveness, track its progress, and make necessary timely adjustments to achieve the desired SOs. The monitoring process shall involve systematic data collection, analysis, and evaluation of the strategy's implementation and impact. To this end, the Results Framework presented on page 12 offers Milestones and Targets that serve as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) identified during the strategy's development to measure progress towards the planned SOs. By effectively monitoring the YF strategy, the Youth Forum can make evidence-based adjustments, allocate resources efficiently, and ensure that the strategy remains responsive to the evolving needs of young people in Lebanon. This shall be done through (a) ongoing monitoring, (b) reflection meetings held every six months to check progress

and update the SWOT analysis to make sure the Strategic Outcomes (SOs) are still valid, and (d) a mid-term comprehensive strategy review.

## RESULTS FRAMEWORK

**Strategic Outcome 1:** An empowered YF capable of taking the lead in becoming a true partner to duty bearers to oversee the process of the NYP implementation and evaluation, while playing an active role in it.

Outcome Indicators	Milestone 2026	Target 2028	Assumptions
Member Organizations provided with practical knowledge, skills, and tools that they can use to oversee the process of the NYP implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MOs trained through 4 workshops annually to use the newly acquired knowledge, skills, and tools to approach duty bearers and actively support the implementation of the NYP recommendations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MOs trained through 4 workshops annually to use the newly acquired knowledge, skills, and tools to approach duty bearers and actively support the implementation of the NYP recommendations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Funding is secured.</li> <li>▪ Trained MOs remain committed to advocate for the NYP implementation.</li> </ul>

**Strategic Outcome 2:** A YF actively engaged in advocacy actions to implement and constantly evaluate progress towards realizing the NYP recommendations.

Outcome Indicators	Milestone 2026	Target 2028	Assumptions
Targeted advocacy actions implemented on the NYP recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One advocacy topic selected by the YF annually.</li> <li>▪ Ten meetings held with duty bearers to advocate each selected topic annually</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One advocacy topic selected by the YF annually.</li> <li>▪ Ten meetings held with duty bearers to advocate each selected topic annually.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Funding is secured.</li> <li>▪ A functional State is in place.</li> <li>▪ MOs remain committed to advocate for the NYP implementation.</li> </ul>
Evidence generated on advocacy topics related to the NYP recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 policy paper/ brief issued per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 policy paper/ brief issued per year</li> </ul>	

<b>Strategic Outcome 3:</b> A significant increase in media coverage and portrayal of youth right-based issues is achieved.			
<b>Outcome Indicators</b>	<b>Milestone 2026</b>	<b>Target 2028</b>	<b>Assumptions</b>
Youth right based issues addressed in the media as an issue of priority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One digital media campaign implemented annually over one topic of focus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One digital media campaign implemented annually over one topic of focus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding is secured.</li> <li>MOs remain committed to advocate for the NYP.</li> <li>Media platforms remain readily accessible to portray youth messages.</li> </ul>