

Green economy and environmental education essential priorities for WANA region

By: Yemen Times Staff

The most common concerns for many countries in the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) region are related to resources and the environment. Whether it is oil, water, energy, human resources or climate change most of the countries suffer from mismanagement or the lack of such resources or even both.

This is why a regional forum was created last year to gather professional individuals who want to make a difference in their countries through research and collaboration.

Chairman of the forum HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal emphasized that there is a need to mobilize people towards the priorities of 'greening' the West Asia and North Africa region in the context of a holistic focus on building regional supra-national concepts within which joint projects can develop.

In his keynote speech at the consultation on "Greening WANA" earlier this month, HRH said that a comprehensive approach in presenting development projects must take into account the cultural aspects of the needs of people, stressing that if the central planning era has ended, this does not mean that the era of priorities has also ended.

The consultation's aim is to "green" the region by educating for water security and sustainable development and leapfrogging to the third,

post-carbon, industrial revolution. Environmental education, establishing a modern green industrial base and green regional infrastructure were among the priority issues selected by participants at the First Annual WANA Forum, which was held last April in Amman.

Members of the WANA Forum held



Prince El Hassan: there is a need to mobilize people towards the priorities of greening WANA.

their third consultation between 8 and 10 Nov., 2009 in Amman on "Greening WANA". This theme is a merger between two of the three groups created in April last year under the leadership of HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal chairman of the forum.

Last year more than 100 individuals from the WANA region and supporters from other countries around the world participated in the launching forum of this initiative that aims to facilitate dialogue amongst people of the region from all sections of society,

in order to develop practical solutions to address the most pressing social, economic and environmental needs of West Asia - North Africa as a whole.

At the time, three groups were created, social, economic and environment.

In October and November this year, three consultations were conducted on the social cohesion, WANA-Led reconstruction and recovery, and greening WANA.

The economic theme was integrated into the reconstruction and recovery

and the greening WANA themes, because the participants realized that economy should be dealt with through other fields.

In the consultation Prince El Hassan stressed the need for people to have the opportunity to give their best and develop their talents. He expressed hope in developing an active program, within the region, to make the law work for everyone, including the silenced majority.

Prince El Hassan said that the region needs an initiative for "Green Jobs", in order to develop a joint work program in which global commons meets regional commons, through governments, businesses and civil society, as well as addressing issues of poverty, migration, conflicts and climate change within a supra-national framework that takes into account the harmony between economy, society, culture and the environment.

HRH also said that it is time to organize the Arab house so that Arabs can have an intellectual and ethical starting point to participate in developing a human future. HRH pointed out the need to develop a road map that is sensitive to the social challenge of the Arab identity so that Arabs can actively participate in building a productive industrial base.

Prince El Hassan called for promoting awareness and moving towards the development of a consultation mode rather than a negotiating mode with regard to common issues in WANA.

HRH said that the region needs a genuine development policy which comes from within and which is based

on social realities and social solidarity. HRH stressed the need for increasing awareness among the various actors of the need to focus on core issues away from stereotypes and labels.

HH Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Ali Al Nuaimi, CEO of the UAE Al Ihsan Charity Centre, spoke of the environmental challenges and roadmap facing the WANA region as well as other regions around the world, including population size and climate change. However, he remarked that the real challenge is to break down these challenges into basics and to look at the environment from the inside.

He encouraged participants to follow the principles of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) that apply to nature, such as tawhid (unity), khalifa (stewardship) and amana (trust).

Sheikh Abdul Aziz highlighted the

three E's: Economy, Environment and Education and stated that these are all interconnected, especially for WANA. "An environment without ethics does not work; it will be unsustainable. We need a global environment ethics network", he stated.

The event gathered experts, entrepreneurs, academics and dignitaries from WANA countries, including Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Yemen and the UAE, as well as partners from Japan.

The consultation aims to "green" the region by educating for water security and sustainable development and leapfrogging to the third, post-carbon, industrial revolution.

Read about WANA Road Map on page 5.

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The Huthis: Iran-affiliated or just propaganda?

By: Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed

Following the G8 Summit, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh met with the US President. During this meeting, President

Saleh was briefed on information gathered by the CIA, specifically with regards to what is termed the Youthful Believers movement [Shabab al-Moumineen] which is led by Hussein Badreddin al-Huthi. Al-Huthi is said to have incited the Yemeni population

against US forces with claims that the US is preparing to invade Yemen. The [CIA] report also discussed the Huthi leader's ties with Iran, saying that these go back a long time, and that al-Huthi spend three years in Iran. This has resulted in the group appearing to follow Iranian doctrine, and this can further be seen in the group's political literature, as well as through its military activities on the ground.

The above news sounds as if it only occurred recently, but the majority of the above paragraph comes from a media report published in July 2004. Is it reasonable that five years later, we are still unable to understand the Huthis, and their identity continues to be a mysterious puzzle?

All of the information that we have about the Huthis is contradictory; there are stories that they are an Iranian-affiliated movement that was let loose [by Iran] against Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Another story claims that the Huthis have no connection whatsoever to Iran, that they are nothing more than a local nationalist movement that is at odds with the Yemeni regime,

and that it is the Yemeni regime that is promoting the story of Huthi ties with Iran in order to obtain international support, particularly from the US and Saudi Arabia. They are in need of this support to crush the rebel movement, because the Yemeni regime has failed to defeat the Huthis following five years of incessant fighting.

What the media report revealed [with regards to Huthi ties to Iran] may be untrue, however the date of this report indicates that the Huthis were a problem even before the conflict in Sa'dah, this conflict was later transferred across the border into Saudi Arabia where it has now become an international news story.

Are the Huthis allied or affiliated to Iran in the same way as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Muqtada al-Sadr or are they truly nothing more than a rebel movement, like the rebel movements in western and southern Sudan?

Is labeling the Huthis as Iranian allies nothing more than part of a propaganda war?

On one hand, the official Yemeni argument seems weak. When a Ye-

meni official was told that the Americans are not certain that the Huthi insurgents are genuinely affiliated to Iran, he answered by saying that the evidence of this is that the Huthis have publicly declared their hostility to the US and chant the slogans "Death to America" and "Death to Israel". However anybody who lives in our Arab world must be aware that these are populist slogans that are chanted by a broad cross-section of society, and even occasionally in countries that are allied to the US, therefore this does not represent evidence against the Huthi insurgents or anybody else. Nevertheless Iran's fingerprints can be seen in the Huthi religious doctrine and political ideology, as well as in the Huthi movement's activities. This does not prove that they are affiliated to Iran, but it does cast doubts over the movement's political position.

In my opinion, even if the Huthis have no links to Iran and the Yemeni government is deliberately "distorting" their reputation, taking up arms for political expression is completely unacceptable, and will only serve to

sow discord in Yemen. Despite the many political and administrative weaknesses in Yemen, the country enjoys a reasonable freedom of expression, objection, and protest, not to mention electoral freedoms as well. The Huthis were capable of besieging their opponents in the Yemeni regime without shedding all of this innocent blood.

The fact of the matter is that we have no idea what [Yemeni] President Saleh will do once he tightens his grip on power. He needs a national project far more than he needs political speeches. He needs to win the support of his political opponents who did not take up arms against him far more than he needs to win the military battle with the Huthis. Those Yemenis are far more worthy of his attention, and if he continues to lose their support he will never be able to win the conflict with the Huthis.

Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed is the general manager of Al-Arabiya television. Mr. Al Rashed is also the former editor-in-chief of Asharq Al-Awsat



Sa'ada Thoughts is a series of reflections on life and people in Sa'ada from an independent perspective, written by a nurse from the Philippines who had been working in Sa'ada for two years. He could be reached at levy9ph2000@yahoo.com.

Leaving Sa'ada

The day before I thought I will leave Sa'ada, my friends and I gathered under a tall pine tree where we laid our picnic mat, unrolled our blankets and set our midnight snacks to anticipate my departure at 6 to 7 am the next day. We were told it is dangerous to stay in the compound grounds because many employees saw stray bullets hitting the grounds or walls. We are all lucky because we have yet to have a casualty from this maddening war in Sa'ada. It hit pipelines, trees and walls but it never injured a soul. More people from our home country are praying for our safety. It seems to ward off bad luck and incidents from happening. I guess we all have the Indiana Jones mania in the company; not just our driver who I described to have survived a lot of threats while he was on his way to Sana'a and vice-versa.

My friends and I decided to have our shirts or pants written a message before I leave. I had my duty pants ready and a marker to start our session. We weren't emotional because we all planned to meet in Philippines after all of this. I know we are going to meet in the future. We all went in at 3 am and I slept for two hours. I slept at my friend's room because I was afraid I won't wake up even if I scheduled my mobile phone for 2 alarms. I woke up at 5 am and took a bath. I had my bags ready outside and I stayed in the hallway to keep myself warm. I like winter in Yemen. Although the cold bites and gets through your multilayered clothing, it feels nice compared to the humidity in Philippines. I knew I wasn't in the list but the personnel department informed me to be ready. At 7 am the company van came to load our baggage and we also started to find a comfortable seat for a rocky trip ahead of us. We were about to leave the hospital when our driver received a call from the personnel. They told me I was not supposed to travel with them because they did not include my name on the list. I said it was OK. I felt good to stay because I forgot to pack some important things. I unloaded my box and trolley and proceeded to the cafeteria to eat breakfast.

My friends were shocked when they saw me opening the door towards the poolside. I told them I would be back and I was in 15 minutes. We were all laughing about my fate. When I went back to my room to check on my things; I discovered I left my money below my pillows. I had to keep it to myself or else I will be the laughing stock. I also felt bad because I accidentally changed the combination of my trolley. I was really sleepy but I desperately sought my friend's help. The trolley's lock had only 3 combinations and the last number we might think of to open it was 999. I promised my friends I would pay for lunch if they were able to open it. Four of us formed two pairs, the other sits down to change the combination and the other presses the buttons to release the lock. We started from 000, when we finally came to XXX we jumped and drop to our knees to laugh. I felt relieved. I was never this anxious about things except this experience. I don't want to bring lots of luggages because I accidentally locked my trolley which weighs one third of its capacity. Inside my bag, I left documents which I am supposed to send to Sana'a when I arrive in the city. Destroying my trolley was our last resort but it would make me very guilty.

I slept for 2 hours then a loud bang from my door woke me up. The personnel department was looking for me. They thought I joined the group who left for the mountains to ride the helicopter for Sana'a. I was inside my room. I was paged twice but I never heard of it because I was busy sleeping. I spent the rest of the afternoon with my Yemeni friends. We took pictures of the hospital and the compound. I retreated in my room to make copies for them. At last at 11:30 pm, my friends and I met again. We placed our mat inside the hallway of a building to keep away from stray bullets, took our sodas out and crossed our legs or folded it to prepare for the "real" farewell conversation between friends. We were there until 3 in the morning and we all had 2 to 3 hours of sleep because I will definitely leave; I was on the list and there was no stopping. My leaving did not trigger emotional outbursts because they knew the kind of life I was prepared to take. I was prepared for separation. I was prepared for months to a year without work.

Just before going out of the compound, I took a deep breath. I could hear cannons firing and gun shots. I still want to live. Our driver took us to the market so the other passengers could buy stuff and take them to Sana'a. I waited impatiently; I felt I would miss Sa'ada.

By: Michel Rocard

By awarding its Peace Prize for 2009 to Barack Obama, the Nobel Committee took a big risk. Even if Obama is obviously something of a pacifist, the president of the United States leads the world's most powerful military, one that is still waging war in Afghanistan and Iraq. So, on its face, the choice does not appear to be an obvious one.

Some observers around the world criticized the Nobel Committee for rewarding only lofty rhetoric by anointing Obama as this year's peace laureate. I believe that this criticism is perverse and inappropriate – and thus dangerous. For it consists in condemning hope as nothing more than ephemeral words.

Yet, in politics, words can be actions. Obama's speech in Cairo earlier this year contributed, at the very least, to a change in the climate of the relationship between the Muslim world and America. The words that Obama has said to Iran may not yet have borne fruit, but talks with Iran have resumed and the International Atomic Energy Agency will send inspectors to the nuclear plants near Qom that had been secret until last month.

It is also thanks to words – two statements followed by a conversation – exchanged between

Obama and Russian President Dmitri Medvedev that a joint program for bilateral nuclear disarmament was initiated. The outcome of this effort is to be submitted to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in the spring of 2010.

Almost everyone knows that the dangers of nuclear proliferation can be reduced, and eventually resolved, only through concerted action by the international community.

No country can manage the process on its own. So the step taken by Presidents Obama and Medvedev is essential, and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, seeking big cuts in Britain's nuclear arsenal, has publicly endorsed it.

Despite its silence, there are hints that China views this process with approval. And, of course, the French must reveal their stance on nuclear disarmament. For, in this crucial case,

actions need to follow words.

But if the diplomatic future of nuclear disarmament looks promising, such is not the case with the other issues. For example, the dialogue with Iran, and with Muslims in general, remains dependent on resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict, the persistence of which pollutes dialogue and prevents progress.

Both protagonists in that conflict remain starkly divided. In both Israel and Palestine, political leadership is very weak.

The fact that in Israel a parliamentary majority still permits the expansion of settlements – the construction of 200 new housing units was recently authorized, despite a warning from Obama – means that those who would undermine peace remain in action.

In continuing to expand settlements, Israel leaves gradually less and less room for the creation of a viable Palestinian state, which requires a contiguous and unified territory.

There is something criminal in the determination of some Israeli forces to destroy this opportunity, and something tragic in the helplessness of the rest of Israeli society to prevent it.

Elie Barnavi, former Israel ambassador in France, has just published a prominent book entitled Today or Perhaps Never (Aujourd'hui ou peut-être jamais), and sub-titled The Case for an American Peace in the Middle East (Pour une paix américaine au Proche Orient).

His study highlights the overall decline of the situation and the increasing difficulty of reaching a peace settlement. He clings to the hope evoked by Obama, and to the fact that, unlike his two predecessors, Obama did not wait until the last year of his term of office to address the problem.

At the moment, the problem is even more serious, since the suspension of settlement expansion, which is key to any peace talks, is not supported in Israel.

As a result, we are in a difficult

period, because realizing the hopes expressed by Obama will require increased American pressure on Israel, a stance that is unpopular at home. But if nothing happens, we will inevitably face another failure.

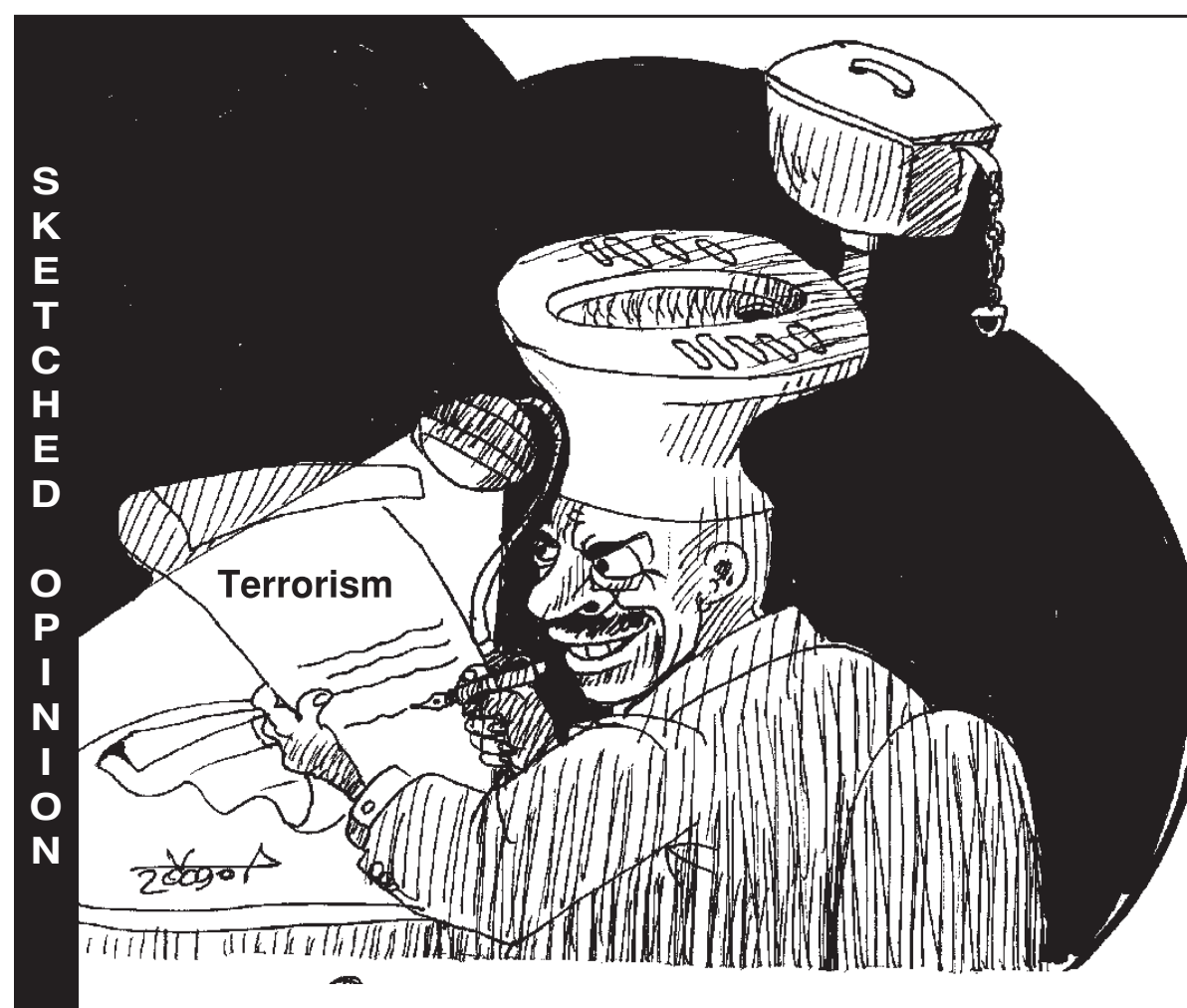
Following that reasoning, Obama's Nobel Peace Prize came too early, because nothing has, in fact, happened yet. On the other hand, this award strengthens the visibility, authority, and international legitimacy of the American initiative. All is not yet said and done, and success remains possible.

The Nobel Committee has taken a large risk by not rewarding an acknowledged contribution. But that risk may have been worth it, because peace, being hard to achieve, must be nurtured with hope.

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Stamps publicize heritage

By: Ismeel Al-Ghabri

The hundreds of stamps issued by the General Post and Postal Savings in Yemen have helped preserve Yemeni popular culture. These stamps reflect Yemen's diversity, historical, humanitarian, and cultural heritage.

"The Authority worked through 144 versions of the postal stamps to document the important historical events in Yemen as well as to contribute to tourism promotion by showing Yemen's history and natural beauty" said Faiz Saif Abdah, Deputy Director General of the General Post and Postal Savings.

Versions of stamps have contributed to publicize Yemeni folk heritage, highlight Yemen's attitudes in supporting Arab and Islamic world issues, as well as introducing international celebrations and events.

"Stamps are the symbol and ambassador of each country, especially those which have deep-rooted historical civilization like Yemen. Each stamp has its specific character and meaning that expresses the culture, science, currency, and notable features of each country," He noted.

Saif Abdah draws attention to the fact that the first postage stamp printed locally in Yemen was issued in 1926. In 1930 the first stamp was issued with international standards

and printed in Germany. In 1937 a stamp was issued with the name of the city of Aden in English during the British occupation. In addition to a number of other versions, the most important is the stamp of the Federation of South Arabia in 1963. After the revolution in the north Yemen in September 1962, the first stamp was issued in March 1963 in Sana'a, and the first stamp was issued after independence from the British occupation in Aden in May 1968.

With regards to the most important issues that stamps portrayed, the stamps cover everything from civil to archaeological heritage, and serve to highlight tourism attractions in Yemen. Images of castles and forts, living evidence of the ancient traditions and civilizations of Yemen are published on postage stamps and advertise the beauty of Yemen's history around the world. There are also pictures of historic mosques in Yemen, including al-Qanad historical mosque in the area of Taiz, as well as Al Amiriah Mosque and School, an important archaeological and historical fixture in Yemen.

Among the cultural topics that stamps have portrayed include handicrafts, customs and traditions, and popular fashion for men and women in various provinces of the Republic. In addition, the Yemeni natural environment is often well represented, with pictures of birds, plants, flowers, spiders and insects.

Stamps that introduce symbols of literature, poetry and thought serve to export these intellectual traditions to the world. The most important developmental, cultural and political achievements are com-

memorated on Yemeni stamps as well. For example, there is a commemorative stamp issued to honor people, associations, organizations or events, and such stamps are the most desired kind in the amateur market, according to Saif Abdah.

Many countries also choose to put pictures of great leaders on their stamps, as a means of educating the young about those who founded the nation.

Regarding the stages of selection of stamps, Mr Saif Abdah said, "Proposals for postage stamps are received from individuals, local or international organizations, or from the relevant departments of the Post Authority. Designs are selected by specialists through a public competition. A committee headed by Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Director General of Post and administrative leaders make the decisions of what goes on the stamps, and are aided by experts in collecting stamps. The chosen pieces are then sent to a specialized printing presses, and usually those used for printing international currency.

Stamps have documented sequential stages of development and improvement in Yemen throughout the years. There has been tremendous advances in terms of graphics, pictures, and printing in recent years, and this has served to enhance the quality of Yemeni stamps. For example, a recent stamp showing the Yemeni Onyx has gained international awards.

Those who collect stamps can help to improve their knowledge about science and cultural history in an interesting way. Stamps are a means



to help identify the most remarkable national and international events, as well as the most important scientific, intellectual and literary projects.

Stamps are considered to be the ambassadors for their country, roaming the world to give a true shining

picture of the most significant historical events, people and achievements that the country witnesses. Stamps play a unique role in the media in the service of their country. Moreover, stamps take part in developing the art of painting, calligraphy, and design.



Too many kids out of school in Hodeidah Governorate - report



Children in Hodeidah searching for work in farms to support their families

HODEIDAH, Nov. 23 - (IRIN) - Nearly half of children in rural areas of the western Yemeni governorate of Hodeidah, have no access to basic education, according to a new report by the Seyaj Organization for Childhood Protection (SOCP) and the Yemen News Agency.

A survey was conducted on a random sample of 3,249 boys and girls from 1,542 families in the districts of Liyah, Zahrah and Beit al-Faqih, said Fahd al-Sabri, lead author of the report.

The survey results, announced on 18 November, indicate that 45 percent of boys and 52 percent of girls in the 6-15 age group have no access to basic education - for several reasons, including vulnerability of their families, lack of schools and teachers, or schools being far away from their homes, al-Sabri told IRIN.

In two villages (each having an average of 110 children), the enrol-

ment rate was zero, he said, adding: "96 percent of mothers and 65 percent of fathers in surveyed families [there] cannot read and write."

According to the government's Central Statistical Organization, 1.5 million of Hodeida's 2.4 million people live in rural areas.

There is no doubt that school enrolment rates for some governorates, including Hodeida, remain a huge concern for Yemen, Naseem Ur-Rehman, a spokesman for the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Yemen, told IRIN.

Enrolment rates for primary, secondary and tertiary schools in Yemen, where nearly 42 percent of its 22 million population lives below the poverty line, is 55.2 percent, according to the UN Development Fund (UNDP).

Poverty

Rampant poverty is forcing thousands

of rural families to send their children to the city to beg or work in the streets, cleaning cars or toiling in restaurants or 'qat' (mildly narcotic leaf frequently chewed by Yemenis) markets at the expense of their education, according to Talal al-Dubai, supervisor of a Hodeida orphanage.

"In 2008, we gathered up to 240 street children, rehabilitated them and sent them back to their families," al-Dubai told IRIN. "We enrolled 180 of them (under age 10) in schools, gave them bags, uniforms, and reached agreements with school administrations to exempt them from tuition fees, while those aged 10-17 had access to vocational training in order to help them support their vulnerable families."

The report recommended that children from vulnerable families be exempted from tuition fees and given transport and grants to boost enrolment in schools.

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Roadmap for consultations and commissioned research

"The West Asia - North Africa (WANA) Forum was initiated in response to the fact that nature abhors a vacuum. In our region, this vacuum represents the gradual loss of the noble art of conversation and the increased marginalisation of human beings who are the most important asset to stability and the most dangerous contributors to instability and violence."

BACKGROUND
The First Annual WANA Forum in April 2009 gathered 70 eminent individuals from WANA, and partners from outside the region, to identify regional challenges as well as discuss and evaluate feasible approaches for tackling these concerns and advancing regional cooperation. Although promoting cooperation in a region that has experienced so much conflict may be a daunting task, there are many issues that cannot be effectively addressed by one nation alone.

The WANA Forum is a long-term initiative that brings together decision-makers, civil society organisations, religious leaders, researchers, business owners, media representatives and other relevant regional stakeholders. It employs a participatory methodology in the work of the annual Forum and interim consultations, and seeks to engage the public in the process.

Stakeholders are encouraged to bridge geographical and ideological boundaries to build on each other's work, adopt and contribute to the development of international standards and encourage synergies instead of duplicate efforts. In every step, the emphasis is always on what value-added does this work bring and how does it differ from what has already been attempted in WANA.

Three phases over a five year time period have been identified: to prioritise key issues and initiatives, develop concrete policy proposals and advocate these policy proposals to decision-makers for implementation.

The facilitator and guardian of the process is His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal, with the generous support of The Nippon Foundation. Working groups, consisting of Forum Members and other key actors, advance the ideas that come out of the annual forums with the support of a Secretariat based in Amman.

While participants at the First Annual WANA Forum were tasked with addressing priorities in social, economic and environmental break-out groups, they did not lose sight of how these spheres interact. Two overarching themes were:

1. Cross-cultural exchange in WANA to learn more about each other, break down stereotypes and share knowledge of best practices.

2. "Greening WANA" - seeing the "green lining" in the global economic crisis by making "green" thinking a lucrative part of the recovery strategy.

Five main crosscutting initiatives emerged, not as objectives in themselves but as means to an end, which is to address shared human concerns in the region:

- 1.Reconstruction and Recovery
- 2.Social Cohesion
- 3.Environmental Education for Sustainable Development
- 4.Modern Green Industrial Base
- 5.Green Regional Infrastructure

THE INITIATIVES

1. RECONSTRUCTION AND RECOVERY

Individuals from across the region highlighted the importance of governments, institutions and civil society actors taking collective responsibility for the fate of people living in conflict areas, and of the need for a new WANA-led approach. After all, the region faces many areas of conflict that set some countries lagging behind others in social and economic development and contributes to the destabilisation of the region as a whole.

Reconstruction is the process of rebuilding a society, a polity and an economy in a manner which reduces

the likelihood of reversion to conflict and promotes equitable development. It includes infrastructure rehabilitation, service provision and social development, governance and state building, rule of law, security sector reform and development, private-sector development as well as psycho-social recovery. The process of rebuilding a society involves social, economic and environmental dimensions and should be regarded as a way of preventing future conflicts.

The most active sites for post-conflict reconstruction are Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen and Sudan, all in the WANA region and yet, the region has ceded much control of the process to outside institutions. These interventions fail to reflect local cultures and priorities, which have thus derailed reconstruction efforts, resulting in cycles of continuous conflict and instability in the region.

In cooperation with the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit (PRDU) at the University of York, the WANA Forum seeks to commission research to review the effectiveness of post-conflict reconstruction efforts and identify good practices and to explore the possibility of creating a "Centre of Excellence" in WANA to build human capacity through education, training and research. The three main components include:

- Current Deficits in Reconstruction: Addressing current deficits in internationally led, Western-oriented reconstruction efforts within the WANA region and identifying what is distinct about WANA-led reconstruction and where it deviates from existing models applied in places such as Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan.

- Contemporary WANA-Led Reconstruction & Gulf States Donorship: Examining recent instances of WANA-led reconstruction with a particular emphasis on the role of Gulf State actors from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, with a focus on what they do, where, why and to what effect.

- Towards WANA-Led Reconstruction: Strengthening and expanding current WANA-led efforts in war-torn countries based on the understanding of recovery capacity and ways of enhancing it.

2. SOCIAL COHESION

The WANA Forum aims to highlight the contribution social policy can make to economic development, considering it as both an investment and as a way to ensure human security and the Legal Empowerment of the Poor.

Relations between and within communities suffer when people lack work and food security and endure debt, ill-health, poor skills and bad living conditions. These basic necessities of life are the foundations of a strong social fabric and important indicators of social progress. Another tenet of cohesion is social order, safety and freedom from fear.

Social cohesion should be understood beyond a safety net that protects and assists society's most vulnerable, and rather, as an integral part of socio-economic development that empowers everyone. It is about promoting a social cohesion mechanism in day-to-day life while also being reactive and strong enough to limit the damage of exposure to potential risks, whether it is the global financial crisis, conflict or natural disasters.

A regional Social Charter would further the aims of advancing social development by promoting the concept of citizenship, stimulating a process of dialogue with civil society and encouraging governments and non-state actors to demonstrate their commitment to the interests and welfare of their citizens.

The creation of a regional cohesion fund is an important step toward establishing a more productive and forward-thinking mechanism for investing funds that benefit the entire region and not only in times of conflict. Existing funds that are currently used on an ad hoc basis could be reallocated for new purposes with an understanding of public policy that promotes social peace and justice.

The aim of the WANA Forum's

Social Cohesion Study is to initiate a multi-year collaborative effort that galvanises people in the region to think about social cohesion. The research project focuses on six stages:

1. Contextualising by combining global insights of current social development literature with regional cultural, political and structural realities and practices and assessing carrying and recovery capacity.

2. Compiling a WANA region social development index using advanced econometric techniques to identify and cluster those countries which are better/worse off in terms of social cohesion.

3. Exploring case studies in Turkey, Lebanon and Oman on innovative mechanisms for delivering social cohesion (both formal and informal).

4. Investigating various ways to promote cooperation at the regional level drawing on practices in the context of WANA, reflecting cooperation between NGOs, states and networks of extended families across borders.

5. Evaluating international social cohesion experiences proposed by the institutions of global governance and international think tanks, with the aim of identifying good international practices which may be useful to the WANA region.

6. Formulating policy recommendations which are technically and politically feasible and fiscally sound.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The WANA region, as the rest of the world, faces environmental problems of critical importance to its development, such as water scarcity and the impact of climate change on natural resources. Increased worldwide awareness about the environment over the past few decades has been accompanied by a parallel recognition of the need for environmental education, which is an essential component of the larger framework of education that seeks to foster good citizenship.

Environmental Education (EE) is a process in which individuals gain awareness of their environment and acquire and exchange knowledge, values, skills, experiences and the determination which enables them to act individually and collectively to solve environmental problems.

Yet Environmental Education for Sustainable Development (EESD) is a concept that goes far beyond environmental education. It is the educational process of achieving human development (economic growth, social development and environmental protection), which includes education for poverty alleviation, human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity, international understanding and peace.

Hima - the Arabic word referring to conservation - is originally an Islamic concept, which lends support to the utilisation of culturally appropriate frameworks for helping people understand why sustainable development, in the long run, offers the best hope for meeting the needs of future generations.

In spite of achievements in environmental education in WANA, impediments remain: the absence of a systematic approach to environmental education, lack of sufficient and sustained economic support, existence of contradictions and gaps in the usage of concepts and methods, insufficient teaching capacity, scarcity in the production and distribution of teaching materials, and lack of evaluation mechanisms and continuity in programmes.

The WANA Forum seeks to facilitate the establishment of the following:

- 1.Mapping regional initiatives and networking with relevant stakeholders.
- 2.Conducting an environmental awareness study to assess the level of environmental awareness.
- 3.Establishing and consolidating mechanisms for fostering integration and increased communication among government, private sector and civil society actors.
- 4.Investigating environmental teaching methodologies and devising training programmes for educators and others.
- 5.Developing common teaching materials and teaching methodologies appropriate for utilisation at different

levels in WANA countries.

- 6.Consolidating public policies on environmental education within the framework of sustainable development and establishing a "Guidelines for Excellence" for environmental education.

7. Promoting the development of financing the implementation of a WANA Agreement on Environmental Education.

4. MODERN GREEN INDUSTRIAL BASE

One structural feature that impedes social and economic progress in WANA is rentierism and the "Dutch Disease". Oil revenues and foreign aid have been the main engines of economic growth since the end of the Second World War. The absence of a modern industrial base and the prevalence of rentierism have contributed to the widening of income gaps within countries and among them. It has also led to policies aimed at gaining short-term access to revenues and benefits, as opposed to policies that are in the long-term public interest.

Investment in real-estate and stock exchange bubbles do not generate enough job opportunities. Therefore, rather than increasing charity and further rentierism, efforts should be made to promote the development of a modern industrial base. The private sector could play a key role in this effort.

WANA missed the first industrial revolution based on coal and the steam engine, and then the second industrial revolution based on oil and the internal combustion engine. The silver lining of the absence of a modern industrial base is that in the current global economic crisis, WANA has no ailing industries to bail out. It can pave its own path independent of the 'late industrialisers' with the opportunity to leapfrog into the third post-carbon industrial revolution. The adoption of solar energy technologies, such as the Desertec initiative, is an example of where countries do not repeat the mistakes of highly industrialised countries.

Setting up an electric car industry without having to protect any oil based automotive industry is a case in point. Greenfield industrial development (setting up industrial complexes from scratch) also produces environment friendly output and provides "green" jobs, in the sense of employment in post carbon sectors. Thus, green vehicle production would not only help create an industrial base that currently does not exist in WANA, it would increase specialised knowledge, promote technological advancement that would make WANA a potential leader in the world, increase employment opportunities and decrease the carbon footprint of the region.

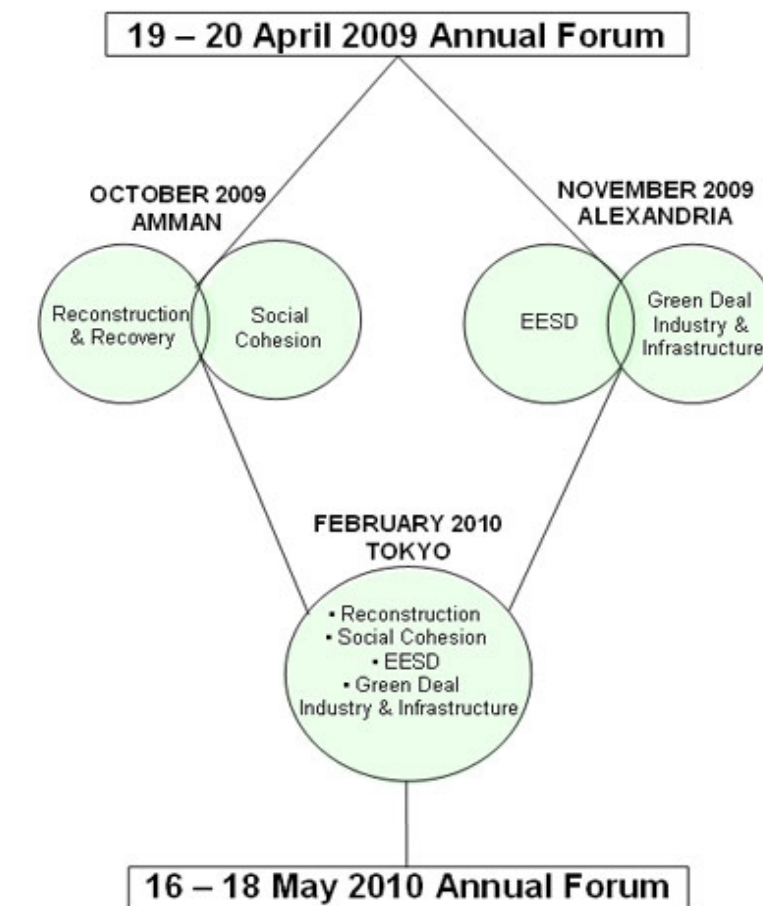
The WANA Forum seeks to develop a strategy for initiating electric vehicle production and will commission a study to investigate the level of industrial capacity, availability of skilled labour, niches in the market/demand for the product and possible incentives for partners and investors in the region.

5. GREEN REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Participants at the First Annual WANA Forum supported the concept of establishing a Community of Water and Energy for the Human Environment. After all, the historic European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), a six-nation international organisation serving to unify Western Europe during the Cold War, created the foundation for the modern-day European Union.

Cross-border infrastructure development (water, energy, transportation and communications systems) is crucial for enhanced regional cooperation and economic integration. WANA countries must share the responsibility to protect and sustainably manage the global commons for the benefit of future generations thereby creating a regional commons that enhances the region's carrying capacity. An important area of cooperation for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is binding its countries closer through efficient infrastructural linkages in transportation, telecommunications and energy.

Empirical evidence indicates that infrastructure spending has a positive and statistically significant effect



on long-run economic development, stimulating employment growth and improving quality of life. A United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) study on infrastructure in developing Asian countries has shown that road transport and electricity, in particular, play a key role in poverty reduction.

Infrastructure also improves socio-economic and environmental conditions by providing basic needs and utilities such as roads, water, sanitation, environment-friendly power and telephone lines. It can reduce poverty by facilitating access to basic services and increasing economic opportunities and income generating capacity. Finally, regional infrastructure development facilitates the movement of goods and services and supports trade and investment expansion, financial market development and labour mobility.

The WANA Forum seeks to explore the development of a regional infrastructure in the areas of water, energy, transportation and communications. Forum Members have addressed the prospect of transportation as an important field to examine comprehensively, including the development of highway systems, removing barriers between countries and the possibility of constructing a high-speed train.

THE CROSSCUTTING DIMENSION

A common thread that connects all these initiatives is the need to learn more about each other in the region and to share knowledge of best practices. One of the concerns that emerged at the First Annual WANA Forum was that there is little cross-cultural understanding within WANA itself, and that the culture of tolerance within and among states would be needed to address the deep rifts that exist. Establishing regional student and internship exchange programmes will be one important aspect that all these initiatives will incorporate as well as utilising the media as an effective tool for bridging gaps.

Green innovation is another overarching theme that runs throughout these initiatives. Currently, conflict-prone areas are used as toxic dumping grounds for hazardous waste and exploited by international companies and entities concerned only with profiteering. Furthermore, environmental factors are increasingly the cause of conflicts around the world. Climate change with its associated failure of rains and expansion of deserts is at the heart of the conflict in Darfur, with clashes over scarce resources, including water and land. According to Achim Steiner, the executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme, "Sudan's tragedy is not just the tragedy of one country in Africa it is a window to a wider world, underlining how issues such as uncontrolled depletion of natural resources like soils and forests, allied to impacts like climate change, can destabilise communities, even en-

tire nations."

Energy is another factor that is all too often neglected in current reconstruction and recovery efforts. According to The Reconstruction of Gaza 2009 PRDU report "The conflict in Gaza resulted in the loss of energy to nearly two-thirds of Gaza's population, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. The unpredictable and dramatically fluctuating cost of fuel likewise makes Gaza energy insecure even during times of relative calm. The region would be far more secure if energy sources were diversified and decentralised. Solar, wind and tidal energy are all viable, to varying degrees, and should be pursued."

To be successful in the long-term, any effort toward reconstruction must be based on 'green' recovery and address the social and economic concerns of ordinary people. The negative effects of conflict could present an opportunity to reconstruct communities based on good governance, green infrastructure development and socially cohesive policies.

An integral part of greening the economy involves the concept of green infrastructure as an approach to long-term planning for sustainable development. Investment in mass-transit is one example of an area ripe with development opportunities that provide green jobs, fuel productivity and based on environmentally sound practices. Green infrastructure development could also be integrated into reconstruction and recovery efforts to revive post-conflict communities.

Environmental Education for Sustainable Development (EESD) may present one of the best opportunities for regional cooperation as a "soft-policy field", says Professor Volker Perthes, director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

Environmental education, at its core, involves the social and economic spheres and thus has a practical impact on people's everyday lives. Part of meeting the goals of environmental education for sustainable development has to entail linking lessons to practical life and teaching about the key social, political, ecological and economic factors that influence decision making on local, national and global issues. EESD reform also has the potential to offer new thinking about education as a whole. According to Dr. Maya Yaha, Regional Advisor on Social Policies at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), "The region suffers from obsolete teaching methods, lack of teaching and administrative skills in schools, poor involvement of parents, lack of extracurricular activities and curricula that does not encourage critical thinking, group work and leadership development."

Therefore, if environmental education is evaluated on the basis of the value-added it brings to students and to society as a whole, than the implications of a proposal for reform is sure to be multifaceted and far-reaching.

Jasmine – final part

By: Marwa Abubaker Al-Maisari
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One evening when the men were heading for the mosque to pray Isha and Traweeh, Abdullah and his sons were already inside but Samer was left behind. As he was about to enter inside a hand from behind of him was placed on his shoulder prevented him from proceeding forward. Samer turned to see who it was. A tall, white man was standing right in front of him.

The man was a foreigner Samer could tell from his white skin, dark blond hair and eyes that were blue as a sea. The man was wearing a long white dress the same that Samer had on, he had a light smile in his face, and finally spoke, "Alsalam Olaakoom brother can I lead me to a Sheik or Imam in this town?" Samer nodded to the man and asked him to wait there and that he will be right out. He went in to tell his uncle everything, minutes after Abdullah and Samer walked to the man. "How can I help you son?" Abdullah's voice was deep but soft. "Sir, I want to profess Islam." The man's voice was clear and it had a tone of determination that made Abdullah and Samer stand there with no movement.

A moment of silence took place, Abdullah had had a lot of visitors that he didn't know who they were, and they would come and ask about a lot of different things, but that was the most surprising thing he had seen. He finally cleared his throat and told the man exactly what to do. He prayed Isha and Traweeh with them. Abdullah told the boys to go home and he stayed with the man at the mosque, he talked to him about Islam and all the things that he should be aware of as a Muslim. In fact, Abdullah was surprised that he had known quiet a lot for a new Muslim. The man explained that he appreciated all the things Islam teaches a human and admitted that it is

the best thing that had ever happen to him. Abdullah insisted that the man comes the next day for eftar and the man accepted. When Abdullah got home, the women had already known about the foreigner. For everyone in the family it had been just another event that happened, but for Jasmine she had a strange sensation deep inside, she couldn't really declare what it was though.

The women had prepared a feast for the man invited each one of them made a dish.

The table was full of all kind of different dishes all looking delicious. The door bell rang; Samer opened the door for their guest. The men greeted him and welcomed him inside. The family had been divided, men were on one side of the house and the women were in the other side. Laughter and noise was coming from the men side of the house. It seemed that they really have enjoyed the gathering.

After the Traweeh the men were home but the guest wasn't with them. Samer climbed up the stairs to Jasmine. He knocked and let himself in, Jasmine was reading the Holy Quran. He closed the door behind him and made sure it was lock. Jasmine looked at him; her glance was filled with discomfort. "I am really sorry to disturb you but I have a very important thing to tell you and you would defiantly want to listen." Samer's voice was quite almost like he was whispering.

He sat himself on the edge of the bed; he made sure that there was space between them. Jasmine straightened herself and looked interested and waited for the thing that Samer was about to tell her. "Do you know who is in our house today?" Jasmine shocks her head almost not caring. "Daniel Bengemin, who is now Mustafa" Jasmine was frozen; she didn't even blink for a whole minute. She continued gazing at Samer. "Da... Daniel." She whispered.

With no extra word Samer left the

room. He didn't know why he told her but he thought that she deserved to know. He had seen Jasmine suffer through all these years, so he wanted to cheer her up; he wanted to be the one who gave her the only thing that she lived for, her love for (Mustafa)Daniel. The next day Samer had asked Mustafa to join him at the industry, he was planning to do the same thing he did for Jasmine. "Do you know what my full name is?" without giving him a chance to reply back Samer continued, "My name is Samer Al-Mayasi." Mustafa's face expressions were filled with bewilderment. "It sounds familiar doesn't it? In case you are wondering, Jasmine Al-Mayasi is my cousin." He continued to clarify to him how her life has been a mess since she left the U.S and that she hadn't forgotten him through all these years.

Samer had arranged a meeting with his uncle Abdullah and Mustafa. He had no doubt that his uncle would welcome Mustafa in to the family with no further questioning. Mustafa took the approval of both Abdullah and Samer. But Abdullah told Mustafa that the real decision was Jasmine's. Later that night Jasmine was in her room getting ready to meet Mustafa for the first time in twelve years.

The last time she saw him was in the prom night. Samer came into the room. "You look glorious, Jas. He sure is a lucky man." He meant every word he said. "Thank you Samer. If it wasn't for you, I would have never seen day light again. You have been a big help ever since my parents died and you were there when I needed you." Jasmine knew that "Thank- you" was certainly not enough for what Samer had done for her. She climbed down the stairs next to Samer her fingertips were frozen. She was so nervous but ecstatic.

Mustafa was in the living room she could see his golden, shine hair. "Here is your bride Mustafa." Samer announced stepping aside from Jasmine. They gazed

at each other for a long time, they didn't even try to say a word leaving their eyes do all the talking. The family left the two couples alone and left the room. "I can't believe I am here, for twelve years I have searched for you thinking I lost you forever. And here I am today in your house! Jasmine, ever since you gave me the Holy Quran I did a lot of search on Islam and loved it.

I have become vice president in the agency because you encouraged me and gave me a strong motive to succeed in life. I owe all my triumph to you. I want to spend the rest of my life with you; I want to grow old with you. I want you to be the mother of my children."

Mustafa broke the silence and with no further talk, he knelt down on one knee, took Jasmine's had in his own and said, "Would you Jasmine Al-Mayasi be my wife, to have and to hold from this day on, in sickness and in-" Jasmine stopped him from continuing. "You can get up and put your hand in my uncle's hand and read Al-Fatah. That's the way we do it in my part of the world." Jasmine grinned happily like she had never done in years.

The wedding preparations took place right after Eid. The house was filled with ecstasy. Jasmine and Mustafa had decided to go back to the States were Jasmine would open her own gallery of all the paintings she had of Yemen and she even bought a couple more antiques that she thought it would add an extra touch for the place. Mustafa will settle there too and he has was just a step closer of reaching to be the manager of the agency.

Two weeks after the wedding took place, the newly weds were packing up. Samer had the two tickets ready for them. His love for Jasmine never faded but he couldn't deny that her happiness was the most vital thing. The family said their good-byes to the happy couple with having them promising to come back and visit.

Destiny or punishment? Part 1

By: Salwa Yehia Aleryani
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Whether you open your eyes in life and realize that you belong to the lucky people in earth or to the unlucky people on earth is a matter of luck and destiny. The baby who finds himself the child of a rich family is a lucky person. Definitely this is not a reward for him for something good he has done because he has just arrived to life's harbor and hasn't done anything at all. It is just his destiny. The baby who finds himself the child of a poor family is certainly an unlucky person.

Eventually, this is not a punishment for anything bad or evil he has done because he is too young to do anything at all. It is just his portion of luck and his destiny. Who chooses "who" goes "where"? Who decides who will be lucky and who won't? I guess people like myself, who believe in Allah the creator of all creatures and earth, believe that it is God who chooses fates. Yet, it is also true that people struggle and strive to change and improve their reality and many of them succeed. Many of them don't. Also it is God who allows this one to succeed and makes that one fail. It is true too that a fact being so, makes the other fact an obvious result. For example: bad nutrition is a result of poverty and bad nutrition leads to poor health. So, a person can reach many goals but certainly not all he wants!

All these thoughts were passing through my mind when I was on my way to the rehabilitation house for prostitutes. I was going to make interviews with a few girls from there to write about their experience and sufferance. I was a little nervous. These are young girls that I will meet. How much have they seen in their lives? How bitter was it? What are their worries? I remembered the bouquet of nieces and female cousins that I have in my society and I thought about their worries. Those girls I remembered were happy with superficial concerns. Their disturbances in life were issues such as: "My best friend in school misunderstood me.", "That boy is harassing me and must be stopped.", "The pants I bought were too tight, I need a bigger size.", "I need a list of things, when will I go shopping?", "I have a pimple under my eyebrow, I hate it.", "I have gained 3 kilos and I need to go on diet."

These were a bunch of worries that these teen-agers panic and maximize for no other reason except being well provided with all essential needs such as food, clothing, shelter and acceptable education. (As I find no "good" education in our country what so ever.) No other reason other than being pampered. I was

feeling more and more nervous as I was coming closer to the house. The idea of interviewing teen-agers who were rejected by their families due to their practicing prostitution in an Islamic society like ours and in a country like Yemen was a challenge. I felt that I will interview children who are unfortunately adults in the same time!

I arrived at the rehabilitation house. My heart was beating. I entered and saw the guards on both sides sitting and standing. They were there to protect the girls from any possible, expected attack from their families to take revenge and kill them for making such a disastrous scandal in their family's history. The principal, if I may call her so, stood up and welcomed me with a strong hand shake. She ordered a woman to serve me juice. Then she automatically started telling me about the various activities which take place in this house and how many handcrafts the girls learn.

She told me about the qualified teachers who teach here and some of them were European volunteers. She showed me albums of different occasions they celebrated. She told me that the girls were the ones who did the decoration and cooked the cookies, cakes and sang, clapped and danced. She showed me an album of photos of a wedding of one of the girls here. She told me that one day a delegation, from the Unicef, visited the house and an Algerian photographer came with them. He took pictures and quickly fell in love with one of the girls. He then proposed to marry her. She agreed and after the marriage ceremony he took her back to his country. The principal told me that the bride's dress was designed, sewed by her house mates. The food served in the wedding party was made by them too.

All the guests were them only!! The bride's makeup and hair style was done by the fingers of her loving friends. They all helped her and expressed their care despite their envy. I then remembered that outside this house the bride's gown was about 2000\$ and the food served to the guests costs 1500\$ and the makeup and hair style costs about 400 \$. I sighed. I then congratulated the principal as the person in charge for all those beautiful achievements. I was starting to run out of patience. I wanted to meet one of the girls now but the principal was so proud of her house and wanted to advertise more. She told me that this house also includes very gifted poets and talented painters. She brought some drawings to show me. One of the drawings attracted me. I took it and put it on my lap to examine it. The principal noticed my interest so she said, "This is Nayda's imagination about the outside world." It was a drawing of a windy day. The trees were swaying to the left and so was the grass and flowers.

Time management

By: Hajer Ali
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People complain about accumulating works and reduce achievement level that hinders reaching the target goals. Time administration strategy is considered one of the important skills for successful person. In order to know these strategies, you have to believe that no time to do all things so you must determine your priorities and exert all efforts to achieve them. Putting goal for all tasks will stimulate you to complete the tasks without boredom.

You can determine your priorities and administrate your time by three phases.

Planning

First, randomly write list of all tasks, then Order them according to "priority level" as the following,

An important and an urgency task

An important but no urgency task.

An urgency but no important task

No urgency, no important task

Second, determine the tasks must be achieved by you, tasks that can put in charge of others and delete no important and no urgency tasks.

Third, determine the actually time to achieve tasks and put additional time for any unexpected circumstances.

In this phase, learn to put a soft plan and scale achievement level. If you have a big task, divide it into minor tasks. Don't enter to the second tasks unless you

finish the first. Try to know your highest energy time to achieve the difficult tasks. Eventually, in the end of day, take 15 minutes to prepare tomorrow's tasks.

Order and arrangement ;

Order you office, put out mess and clutter paper, put in front of you all materials that you will need them in your work in order to work without break or dispersal.

Don't enter more than one tasks at the same time.

Start

Put tomorrow's agenda, start with the most difficult tasks then the little and the little until to finish all tasks.

Learn to go to your work early, that give you chance to deal with others, and you will find time for rest that helps you to

recommence mental activities. Start your day or your task positively. Our pains and complains come from outstanding and postpone tasks but achieving task make you satisfied and happy.

Effective steps: learn to ignore any awkward tasks that no give you good rustles in your work, cancel an unnecessary meeting.

Recourse technology to perform your tasks, example, sending message to person by fax or mail better than meeting with him. Stand up when you reply phone that make you hire up finishing speech

Dedicating a day for performing the similar tasks

Live your life correctly without frustration or worries by administrating your time and your life.

English education

By: Mamdoh Fadhle Zable
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There is a weakness of English among our students. I'd like in this words to make glance about the main reasons, which lid to this weak of English among our students Firstly, there are many teachers is not enough qualification to teach English. the cause back to that they are graduated 1970 like in our school or less more that. That's means they have

Secondary school certificate. In addition many of them Don't receive any courses or even training .therefore their teaching methods are old and tradition . so they become unable to use modern Aids lik computers, wall sheet, Data shop and tapes. They depend only on book, black board and chalk. Although all these equipments are available in our schools now

Secondly: the curriculum itself is

not design and prepared enough like American teacher said to .that the curriculum is suitable for teaching the monkeys . she also said if you say every the monkey.

Do you like apple?

-Do you like dates? it will say . this is not true, make the students think .ask him why you like Apple . what is the colure of apple an so on. In other words we are teaching. language that's mean four skills should .be integrated in one lesson Do serve them separated.

These two reasons in addition to the absence of specialize institute tions on suitable environment which enable the student to practicing the language in also the families stoped to play their role by take care their sors and following the learning process during visiting the school and ask teacher absents sans at the end I hope that every body fer form his duty so that graduating a generation armed by knowledge and science especially English which conceder the first language in the world

Teaching aids

By: Ahmed Mohamed Omar Aflah
yahya_mohammad_6@yahoo.com

You always need me.
You can touch me . See me and hear me.
I am beside you , I am not far of you , I am near you.
Do you love me? I love you why don't you try me
Why don't you catch me ,
Why don't you think about me

I am not expensive, I am your relative.
Take me, I am here, I am there , you can find me every where.
I make your work interesting, I am very cheap
Why don't you touch in keep I love you in deep
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For whom you love show me
Let us be friends you and me

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Universal Children's Day

By Resolution 836 (IX) in December 1954, the UN General Assembly recommended that all countries institute a Universal Children's Day, to be observed as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children all over the world, and to promote the protection, welfare and education of children.

The UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child on Nov. 20, 1959 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Nov. 20, 1989.

The 1990 World Summit for Children in Copenhagen, Denmark, set standards aimed at boosting children's health and education. In May 2002, the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children adopted an outcome document, "A World Fit for Children," which focused on four key priorities: promoting healthy lives, providing education, protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS.

However, about 9.7 million children died in 2006 before their fifth birthday, mostly from treatable diseases such as malaria and pneumonia. More than half of the deaths were caused by malnutrition, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

About 42.5 million children do not have access to clean water, and 1.5 million children under five die each year due to the lack of clean water and basic hygiene facilities. About 2.5 million under 15 have been infected with HIV/AIDS.

The "Progress for Children: A Report Card on Child Protection" report, released by UNICEF, estimated that some 218 million children between five and 17 are working outside and 126 million are working in poor conditions.

More than 300,000 children around the world are forced to fight in wars, 2 million children are believed to be exploited through prostitution and pornography, 1.2 million are trafficked every year, and 40 million below the age of 15 suffer from abuse and neglect, the report says.

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Interview: Helping children is "the only thing to do" for future

By: Xinhua writer Bai Jie

Hollywood actress and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Lucy Liu on Thursday called on the international community to take action to protect children from threats, saying it is "the only thing to do" for the future.

At the occasion to mark the Universal Children's Day and the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child that both fall on Nov. 20, Liu said at UNICEF headquarters in New York that children should have the same basic rights as adults, like the rights to survive, to develop, to be protected from harm, and to be treated equally.

Calling the anniversary an "urgent reminder to place children at the heart of human development," Liu said she hoped that the whole society could take steps to strengthen protections against every threat to children.

"It's not merely the right thing to do," she said. "It's the only thing to do if our future on this planet as a human family is to hold any promise at all."

To mark the event, UNICEF has released a special edition of its flagship publication "The State of the World's Children," outlining progress made on



children's rights over the past two decades.

Liu, born in New York and named UNICEF goodwill ambassador in 2005, told Xinhua that instead of being invited by UNICEF as a goodwill ambassador, it was herself who "actually called them up."

"I pushed my way into their family because I love the way they work -- on the global level, reaching out to children," she said.

In the past four years, Liu has been dedicated to the work of helping children and traveled a lot on behalf of UNICEF.

"I have been to different countries, from Africa to Russia to Peru ... all of these different areas have something in common which is children in need," Liu said.

"But the most impactful was my trip to D.R. Congo, one of the most war-torn areas in the world," she said, adding that it was such a pity that they were not permitted access to children in the country due to security reasons.

"No ability to bring things to those children right away really breaks my heart," she said.

Liu also said she could always find time to do things for children despite her busy schedule. "You just make the time, you find the time," she said.

Whenever she travels, she will work with UNICEF to plan a visit to local children.

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