

## Youth Paper

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### **National strategies on youth:**

National Development Strategy (NDS) and International Compact with Iraq (ICI) aimed to overcome the complicated and multiple challenges and problems facing Iraq in general. For instance, NDS (2007-2010) aims to develop a fruitful policy for the Iraqi society all over Iraq. Such policy is based upon problem solving, identifying interests, and drawing up work tracks in order to improve the current situation of Iraqi people.

As for ICI, which was launched by Government of Iraq (GoI) with support of the United Nations, it aims to establish a partnership with the international community; realize a national vision in order to reinforce peace and continue economic, social, and political development process during the next five years. Therefore, ICI contributes to making a qualitative stride in the Iraqi economy and integrating it into the world economy. In addition, the returns of ICI will be significant and have positive impact on future of Iraq and its economic, social, and political development, as ICI will lead to:

- 1- Accelerate reconstruction process and develop infrastructure, especially in basic sectors
- 2- Provide opportunities to revive and rebuild the private sector which is the key for economic growth
- 3- Open the way for foreign investment which can play a crucial role in achieving economic growth and technological advancement
- 4- Realize stability in Iraq, which will contribute to regional stability in the future
- 5- Provide the overall framework of Iraqi economy and integrate it into world economy
- 6- Achieve NDS objectives.

Based upon principles of NDS (2007-2010) and ICI, we believe that the next five-year plan should take into account the two initiatives to use them in creating positive changes for Iraqi youth, keep them in touch with development, and prepare them to contribute to building a free and civilized society.

In terms of the national strategy on youth, it is based upon a set of general principles through which it aims to make positive changes among Iraqi youth in order to reinforce and consolidate their set of values which control their behavior, encourage them to get rid of the negative effects of the past, and enable them to contribute effectively to building a free and civilized society under the state of law and institutions on the basis of freedom and dignity of Iraqi people.

The national strategy on youth in Iraq is based on six basic principles that will be reinforced through a set of objectives and plans. These principles are:

1. Education: The strategy focuses on the educational care for the youth and emphasizes on sound raising (family, school, university, and society).

2. Development: National strategy on youth emphasizes on incorporating youth issues in comprehensive development objectives, as it focuses on providing equal opportunities for male and female youth in order to develop their capacity and solve their problems.
3. Human: This strategy works on enhancing youth dignity in searching for a decent life, peace, security, and safety. It will also seek to provide a better living conditions appropriate for physical, mental, spiritual, morale, and social growth; and eliminate gender discrimination on the basis of language, ethnicity, religion, and sect.
4. Mobilization: The national strategy on youth focuses on linking the youth to the national issues, enabling them to play an effective role in natural and non-natural disasters, helping them organize themselves in entities allowing them to express themselves and participate in the decision-making process regarding to their issues.
5. Demographic: The national strategy on youth aims to meet the needs of Iraqi youth based upon their demographic diversity (e.g. urban, rural, etc.)
6. Change: This strategy aims to create a change in youth attitudes and behavior, enabling them to contribute to developing themselves and society.

#### Objectives:

1. Mobilize government efforts dedicated to the youth in one scientifically developed track in order to achieve its objectives efficiently and effectively
2. Realize optimal balance between state and youth needs
3. Increase efficiency of programs directed to the youth through an integrated system.

#### Dimension One: Characteristics of youth

The United Nations defines Youth category as the age group between 15 – 24 years old. However the practical definition of youth varies according to different countries and affected by cultural, organizational and political factors. In the industrial countries the minimum age of youth goes with the age of finishing the compulsory educational stage. However, the maximum age varies a lot. For example, in Britain they mean by the ‘Youth Vocational Policies’ those policies directed to the age category between 16 – 18 years old. On the other hand, Youth Vocational Policies in Italy targets those who are between 14 – 29 years old in the north of Italy and 14 – 32 years old in the south (this difference in policies between the north and the south is resulted from the tendency to make the vocational policies more applicable in the relatively poor south parts of the country. Iraq adopts the United Nations definition in categorizing the youth.

Looking deeply into the youth position you will conclude that it is tied to many structural and generational discrepancies full with threatens to youth in the present and the future which in turn affects negatively the future of development.

The new economical and social changes as well as the changes in means of communication with other cultures led to opportunities to realize its maturity ambitions and expectations earlier than expected. At the same time, many of the basic needs are not fulfilled for many others mainly those unemployed like the difficulty of getting married and having a family, the decreasing opportunities of contributing to development and building up a discourse with the older generations. For this reason, it is not strange as experiments and reality has proven that the youth will suffer from isolation and self seclusion and being attracted to extremity and violence to prove himself. So, it is vital to maintain the future development by having youth as one of the goals of the strategic social policies.

### First: Percentage of coverage of youth category and qualitative and environmental distribution of this category

Special data show that the percentage of the youth of the whole population reached to 20.8 per cent in the year 1997 and decreased to 20.1 per cent in the year 2004. It continued in decreasing down to 20.05 per cent in the year 2007\*. This decrease in youth category refers to the decrease in fertility rate and the increase in death rate as a result of the terrorism acts that target this category of people and the security situation that Iraq passes through. The male youth percentage to the whole male population is about 15.9 per cent in the year 1997. It had risen up to 21 per cent in the year 2000. Then it went down in the year 2004 to reach 20.4 per cent and about 20.3 per cent in the year 2007. Comparing the male's percentage to the female's, we find that the later reached to 19.9 per cent in the year 2007 with a gap of 0.4 per cent. The decrease in the male youth percentage refers to the human losses caused by the previous wars, kidnapping, assassination and explosions in the terrible security situation that Iraq passes through.

The percentage of the youths who live in the urban areas out of the whole population of the urban areas forms about 19.9 per cent which is less than the ones who live in the rural areas that forms about 20.3 per cent out of the population of the rural areas in the year 2007. This decrease is caused by the terrible security conditions as well as the expulsion that the citizens are exposed to in the different cities and governorates.

### Second: Youth growth trends

The results of the general population statistics of the year 1997 point that the youth population reached to 4577 thousand people and raised to 5953 thousand people by the year 2007 with a raise of 30.1 per cent. The annual rate of the youth population growth in the country during the period 1997 – 2007 reaches to about 2.9 per cent. This rate is considered a high one as a result of the increasing population growth in Iraq due to the encouragement of marriage in Iraq. Moreover, there is an increasing interest in social services provided to the citizens

like free educational and health services that contributed to increasing this rate. But, by comparing this rate to youth growing rate during the period 1987 – 1997 we find that the later has reached to 3.7 per cent . Consequently, we notice that the growth rate for the period 1997-2007 had decreased. For the economical reasons that Iraq had passed through which affected the demographic distribution as the fertility rates had decreased while the death rate had increased among the various ages. The terrible security conditions after the crisis of 2003 contributed to that as well.

\*Source – Youth unemployment and challenges – Department of Employment and Training – International Labour Office, Geneva.

\* Statistical Collection for the year 2007 published by the Central Department of Statistics and Information Technology.

### Third: Youth and education

Iraq is considered as one of the countries that has the best educated people in the whole region. The results of educational reform in the 70s and 80s of the last century appear clearly in the high rate of the educated people among the adults of the whole population. But this educational system was a victim of the last two decades that witness lots of wars and conflicts and hard economical conditions. The available data published by the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT) points out that rate of literate people who are between 15 – 24 years old reached to %78.6 in the year 1990, and decreased to %71 in 2004 according to the results of the “Living Conditions Survey”. It is lower than the percentage of literate people all over Iraq according to the statistics of the year 1997 as it reached to 72.1 per cent, but at the same time it is less than the percentage of educating the 25 – 35 years old category. However, during 2007 the rate raised up to 83.9 per cent according to IHSES done by COSIT. On the other hand, the educational rates of women didn't improve as the percentage of the literate females compared to males for the same age category reached to 75.6 per cent and raised up to 91.4 per cent in 2007. The gap reduction in education among the two genders in the present time is due to the falling level of literate men not because of the increasing level among women. Moreover, the illiterate women level rose up among women in some governorates.

The results of IHSES IN 2007 show that about 27.7 per cent of the youth attend school (%18.3 in the rural areas and 31.4 per cent in the urban areas). However, the percentages of those who don't attend school become 72.3 per cent (81.7 per cent in the rural areas and 68.6 per cent in the urban areas). Add to this that those who attend school were from the richest one-fifth whose percentage reaches to 40.9 per cent, however, the percentage of those who attend school of the poorest one-fifth become to be 15.1 per cent. On the other hand, the percentage of those who don't attend school of the poorest one-fifth become to be 84.9 per cent. Meanwhile, the lower percentage of school leavers become from the

richest one-fifth which reaches to 59.1 per cent. Surely the low income of families pushes these families to leave school and move to labour market to earn living.

#### Fourth: Refined economic activity rate of youth by environment, sex, and governorate

The results of the population statistics for the year 1997 points out that the refined economic activity rate of youth at the age of 15-24 years old percentage reached to 11.9 per cent for both sexes (22.7 per cent for males and about 1.5 per cent for females). However, according to the environment, the rate becomes 10.5 per cent for the urban areas and for 15.2 per cent in the rural areas.

Comparing these rates with the rates of the surveys of employment and unemployment for the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 we find that the refined economic activity rate of youth has raised up to 43.7 per cent, 42.4 per cent, and 42.1 per cent for both sexes in the year 2004. The males rate in this respect forms 56.7 per cent however the female's rate doesn't exceed 11.1 per cent. But on the level of environment the rate reached to %28.8 in the urban areas compared to %45.9 in the rural areas in the year 2004. We notice that the refined economic activity rate of youth among males in 2005 reached to 63.5 per cent and 17.8 per cent among females. However, on the environment level the rate reaches to %35.1 in the urban areas compared to 55.8 per cent in the rural areas. In the year 2006, we notice that there is a slight improvement in the refined economic activity rate of youth by sex as it reached to 64.3 per cent among males and 18.5 per cent among females, however, on the level on environment, the refined economical activity index has maintained its rate in the urban areas and has decreased slightly in the rural areas to reach 54.9 per cent.

As a result, we notice that the rural areas are characterized by high rate in the economical activity among youth compared to the urban areas. As well, these rates get high among females in the rural areas compared to urban areas. In general, the economical activity rate for youth in Iraq is high when compared to some advanced countries that there rates reach to 50 per cent.

The increasing economical activity phenomenon is looked at with satisfaction in general and among females in particular as it is an evidence for a positive developmental change in labour values and at the same time an evidence for more libration and contribution for women in the economical and social development process. Add to this that the increasing level of education in general has led to more embark upon work mainly among females. In the rural areas, this high rate is interpreted that women contributes in the agricultural works more than any other works.

## Dimension Two: Active workforce of youth in Iraqi economy:

Economical growth opens the gate wide for human development and it gives people more freedom of choice and making this a reality requires giving more work opportunities and to achieve the freedom of choice there should be fair opportunities for men and women, urban and rural areas as well as for the ethnic groups and the majority of the population. Job opportunities are characterized by four main dimensions: economical dimension, social dimension, cultural dimension and political dimension. These four dimensions are closely relative to each other which gives bigger opportunities for some categories of the society which helps in turn in increasing the development of some categories. Providing jobs is considered the main bond of the economical growth which means earning living not just a paid job.

The available statistics from the International Labour Organization point out that the people at the age 15-24 years are about a billion around the world, which form 18 per cent of the world population. 85 per cent of them live in the developing countries, 21 per cent of the Middle East and North Africa population is formed by the youth at the age 15-24 years old. The unemployed youth form 47 per cent of the whole unemployed people around the world, meanwhile youth unemployment in the Arab region is about 25.6 per cent.

Iraq does not have any effective and specific employment policy to encounter the pressure and instability in the job market and in turn to encounter the high growth rates of the Iraqi workforce that are resulted from the absence of the clear policies that regulate population, in addition to the big workforce in the public sector that is considered as a disguised unemployment. The main goal for any effective employment policy is coping with the unemployed people and finding opportunities to employ the new comers to the job market. So, the old styles to create job opportunities in Iraq will not survive any more as a result of many objective factors. It is not acceptable anymore that the public sector remain as the main creator of job opportunities or the only way for employment. The complete employment policy makes the public sector suffer from the inflated numbers of employers that reach to 50 – 60% of the whole workforce as the previous ruling system had applied a policy of employment that eliminate the private sector despite of its role in employing big numbers of workers. Moreover, the social and political pressures of the transitional era enforced the public sector employment policy for the workforce in the governmental institutions which, in turn, allows adopting unwise employment policies in the short term that would have negative effects that will be reflected on the economical performance and growth on both long and short terms.

Of the objectives of economical development plans, during the previous decades, achieving the full employment for all of the potential workforce and the economical active individuals by providing new job opportunities, eliminating unemployment and elevating the individuals' ability level to reach to the job

market. It comes in the Iraqi constitution that “Work is a right for every citizen and a duty he must do. The government should provide it for all citizens.” Plans aimed at increasing women and youth participation in the workforce in addition to improving the abilities of the workforce, improving its productivity, providing healthy and organizational work conditions and working on finding and developing training and rehabilitating institutions.

- Source – More and Better Jobs for Women (work guide) – International Labour Office, Geneva.
- Appropriate Job for Woman – Gender Equality Department, International Labour Organization.

Iraq is privileged with several developmental characteristics qualify him to be as one of the accelerating countries in development and advancement. In addition to its richness of the natural sources and apparent potential powers, Iraq is privileged with human resources that are well known of their abilities to gain the knowledge and skills that qualify them to cope up with the new technological development despite the limited technology access during the past decades as a result of the isolation the country affected by. Add to this, Iraq has specialized scientific and administrative abilities that can be benefitted from in the future development parade.

Despite the privileges the Iraqi economy and human resources have, and as a result of adopting old fashioned economical policies, the complete isolation from the world, refusing the modern ideas of development during the past decades and getting into provincial wars and conflicts, the country economical resources were consumed, the rate of unemployment gets very high, the economical activity seized up, the infra structure damaged and the level of basic services went down. These situations worsen after the last war and the destruction that follows and the lack of security.

The National Development Strategy focused on the reality that the Iraqi economy was not managed in a right way during the past four decades and so there is a need for alternative strategy instead of the old ones that had made economical confusion under central planning system that led to shed the country fortune and resources and restrained economy. Of these effects we have:

- High unemployment rates
- Wide poverty gap
- Educational and health levels seize up after being described to be the best in the region.
- High inflation rates and the low buying ability.
- Old infrastructures that don't satisfy the citizens' needs.
- Effective investment and economical growth rates seize up.
- The state dependence on one source of financing which is oil.
- The absence of the private sector from the economical activity of the country.

Creating new job opportunities is considered as one of the challenges the national economy faces as the ultimate goal of economy growth is not just having an added value but also enabling people of broadening their choices for better life which depends on the economical environment and its changes, the present and expected technological level in the development projects, the level of workforce improvement and availability of job opportunities to be used ideally according to the place of living (urban or rural areas) or on the level of governorates to achieve the needs of the present and future generations.

There is a vital need for policies and programs for the job market in Iraq related to its core needs and other economical and social policies to enforce the productive workforce, maintain its basic rights, and protect it. However, this requires setting effective policies and developing, analyzing and observing them.

### Youth workers by sex and environment

The results of the general population statistics for the year 1997 point out that percentage of youth contribution in the workforce has reached 27.7 per cent. This is resulted by the limited job opportunities available at that time. The low rates of the economical activity led to the low rate of young female workers as it reached to 19 per cent. In addition, data point out that the percentage of the young workers in the rural areas is higher than that of the urban areas as it reached to 33.1 per cent, meanwhile the percentage of the young workers in the urban areas reaches up to 25.2 per cent.

The available data of the year 2004 point out a slight increase in the youth contribution percentage in the workforce than that of the 1997 as it reached to 27.9 per cent which in turn led to an increase in the young female workers to reach %32.4 while males percentage reached to 27.9 per cent. However, in the years 2005, 2006 the available data point to a decrease in the youth contribution percentage in the workforce as it reached to 28.2 per cent in 2005 and get low to 24.7 per cent in 2006. More over the data show an increase in the young female workers as it reached to 33.6 per cent in the year 2005 and 26.3 per cent in the year 2006. However the male's percentage was 26.4 per cent, 24.2 per cent. As a result we notice that the youth contribution rate in the workforce is almost stable over the past years.

What is notable that the rate of young female contribution in the workforce in the rural areas is higher than that of the urban areas (21.5 per cent for males in the rural areas and 32.8 per cent for females in the year 2005). Although the concept of working woman is so conservative in these areas, this phenomenon can be interpreted through two factors; the first is the low income in rural areas as it may force them to work as a kind of cooperation within the family to make

the ends meet. The other factor is it may be easier for women to do many of the agricultural production works which is accepted socially.

Males and females mostly get into the workforce at the age of 20, however, females leave the job market at earlier age than that of the males. Moreover, education helps to more contribution in the workforce and its effect appears more on women.

- **Youth workers by educational background and specialization**

The educational background for young workers in general is characterized of being low as the available data about the relative distribution for the numbers of the young workers according to the educational status in the year 2003 show that the majority of the workers are illiterate or those who hardly read and write or elementary school leavers. They form two thirds of the workers and they are unable to improve their knowledge, use computer skills or even go into self learning to raise their productivity as their percentage reached to 33.2 per cent, 30.3 per cent, 25.6 per cent for the educational stages mentioned above. As it is noticed the educational levels have maintained its percentage through the years 2004, 2005, 2006 by reducing the percentage of the illiterates and those hardly read and write and increasing the percentage of the elementary school certificate holders. This percentage is reflected among the males and females as it reached to 24.5 per cent, 37.1 per cent, 38.5 per cent for males and 42.5 per cent, 23 per cent, 25.8 per cent for females. These percentages continued in increasing through the years 2004, 2005, 2006 for the mentioned levels. Meanwhile, there is a worrying decrease in the category of workers who hold other types of certificates as the percentage of the university degree holders is still low for both males and females. Despite all of the paid efforts to eliminate illiteracy, it is still high among the youth workers and it continues increasing relatively. Illiteracy is a dangerous problem not only on the level of the workforce represented in the low productivity, but also on the social advancement and improvement as well as making use of all the scientific and technological achievements all over the world that is characterized by rapid changing. The illiterate lives outside the age he is in as he is less effective for his society.

However, concerning the qualitative distribution for the youth by field of study, the results of the employment and unemployment survey for the year 2003 show their concentration in the fields of engineering and Arts with a percentage of 23.6 per cent and 23.6 per cent in the year 2003 and 32.6 per cent, 31.3 per cent in the year 2005 followed by pure science with a percentage of %26.9 in the year 2003. This percentage is reflected among males and females as data show an increase in the percentage of males who work in the field of engineering up to 33.8 per cent, 51.3 per cent and 43.7 per cent in the mentioned years. However, the female workers concentrate in the arts field as they become 46.4 per cent, 49 per cent and 49 per cent then followed by pure science.

- **Youth workers by economic activity**

Agriculture, industry and constructions, trading and services, and administration are considered as the main employment activities. General population statistics data for the year 1997 show that 45.9 per cent of the youth workforce work in the fields of education and health, 23.1 per cent in agriculture, 20.1 in trade and services and about 9.6 per cent in the field of industry and construction which are all considered as important activities of employment.

By comparing the above mentioned data to the results of the survey of living conditions in Iraq in 2004, it is noticed that the highest percentage of youth workforce work in the fields of trade and services and they form about 30 per cent of the whole working youth and 27 per cent in agriculture, 25 per cent in industry and construction fields. However, administration got the lowest percentage although it was higher than any other fields in the year 1997 as it reached to 18 per cent.

Agriculture and construction are considered as crucial sectors in employing youth as these activities specify the choice between work and education as the individuals who don't want to continue their education move to work in the activities that don't need high skills. The importance of these activities increases for those economically active women since high percentage of them work in agriculture. The employment and unemployment survey for the year 2006 show that the percentage of the youth workers in agriculture field had achieved the highest percentage when being compared to the other activities as it was 33.3 per cent.

### **Dimension Three: Characteristics of youth unemployment in Iraq and related challenges**

- **Youth unemployment in Iraq**

The results of the employment and unemployment survey for the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 show that the rate of unemployment among the youth at the age from (15 – 24) reached to 45.6 per cent, 43.8 per cent, 29.6 per cent and 30.3 per cent of the whole workforce, meanwhile the rate becomes 50.5 per cent of the whole unemployed people in the year 2006. Unemployed women formed 62.5 per cent of the whole unemployed youth in the year 2006. This percentage is higher than that of her contribution in the workforce which reached to 18.6 per cent which is nearly three times the percentage of the males. This means that the unemployment concentrated in the youth category below the age of 25 and mainly in the young females as it reached to 32.5 per cent in the year 2006 as a result of two main reasons which are the females contribution in the workforce is concentrated in the age period (15 – 19) and (20 – 24) compared to females contribution at other age periods, in addition to the limited job opportunities in the public sector which is considered the perfect opportunity for woman work and the institutions preference to males work over females work.

The high rates of unemployment is not because of the high rates in the population growth as much as it is because of the development of the economical development and because of the recess phenomenon that overwhelming economy over the past few years. So, treating the problem of unemployment spurs from improving the productivity basis and increasing the rate of the economical growth and finding job opportunities for the youth or rehabilitating them according to the new circumstances and the available job opportunities.

The unemployment phenomenon in Iraq is considered as one of the heavy remnants left behind over the past decades that the society suffer from and led to dangerous depressions and declines all over the various levels because of wars. It was natural that these events leave destructive effects mainly on the Iraqi economy as it has achieved the lowest growth rates all over world. Individual's income had lowered to unprecedented levels.

- **Unemployed youth by educational background**

Observing the relative distribution for unemployed youth by educational status, it is noticed that the unemployment in general is decreasing as well as the educational level gets higher, as the illiterate and those hardly read or write or elementary school leavers in the year 2003 reached to 81.3 per cent of the whole unemployed people. The secondary school certificate holders (preparatory + intermediate) at the same year reached to %81.3 of the whole unemployed people. However, the unemployed diploma, bachelor or post graduate certificate holders reached to 7.4 per cent. The limited job opportunities for the university graduates get back to the weak educational curriculum and its weak relationship to the needs of the job market. The existence of big numbers of unemployed educated people is a result for disability of the productive sectors to create job opportunities as required.

Despite the relative decrease among the unemployed educated people, it is painful for them mainly those individuals who spent long years studying to get a suitable job opportunity. Moreover, the educated people unemployment is considered a big loss for their families and the society because of the high expenses paid for their education. As it is well known, the educated people unemployment is shedding the available productive powers and losing one of the most important production elements which is the high quality work. In addition, the high rate of unemployment among educated people may contribute to social, economical, and political instability as well as it would be a direct reason for immigrating which in turn deprives the country from their contribution in building and improving it.

- **Female unemployment**

There is no systemic way for the relationship between the rates of the males' and females' unemployment; Females suffer from the unemployment rates more than males though they vary from one country to another. The available data from the International Labour Office that the rates of the females unemployment is higher than the males unemployment in many European countries (Finland,

France, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain) which means that the females position is very dangerous in many countries. Reviewing the development over time we find this systematic procedure continued as it is or slightly increased over time mainly in the southern European countries.

As for Iraq, the ratio of youth female unemployment to youth male unemployment reached in 2006 1.1. The rate of female unemployment holding B.A., diploma, and secondary certificate was 33.8 per cent, 23.9 per cent, and 16 per cent, respectively. This is attributed to the fact that institutions prefer to employ male workers rather than female workers. In addition, men are still considered the main bread feeder and more capable to work than women.

Moreover, female unemployment is increasing in urban areas compared with rural areas (54.5 per cent and around 9 per cent, respectively) in 2004. Similarly, the female unemployment in rural areas reached 3.48 per cent and 10.5 per cent in 2005 and 2006, respectively, compared with 48.04 per cent and 71 per cent in 2005 and 2006, respectively. This reasons behind this are the high competition between female and male workers in urban and outskirts areas, the increasing number of educated female, and the equal job opportunities between men and women in the public sector.

Accordingly, once there is a decline in economic growth, demand on female workforce declines, as the traditional rules indicate that men has the priority to be the household head. This lead to increase unemployment rate of female workforce. Sources say that women are the first to lose jobs in deflation times and the first to get job opportunities in economic booming times. It is worth mentioning that females usually has better educational achievements than males. However, traditions believe that the best place for women is their home, and the man should go to work. Allowing women to fulfill their potentials within a supportive family is necessary to realize human development process.

#### **Dimension Four: Youth culture:**

##### **First: Youth culture and recreation**

A qualitative survey conducted in 2004 on youth KAP from youth perspective in Iraq by COIST in cooperation with UNICEF, which covered youth cultural and recreational aspects of the youth. The findings showed that 5.6 per cent of the youth considered the radio as the main media source of culture, 4.3 per cent considered press at the top, while 88.3 per cent considered TV at the top. 42 per cent of the youth thought that media programs satisfy their needs, and 40.4 per cent prefer reading. In this respect, books come first as a source of reading, followed by magazines and newspaper. Religious topics came first in terms of interest. As for satellite channels, 23.7 per cent thought they have a bad impact, while 37.5 per cent thought they have a good impact. 8.8 per cent go to youth centers, and 47.7 per cent thought that these centers are good places to practice

sports activities. In such centers, 37.3 per cent of the youth practice sports activities, followed by artistic activities (i.e. 10.7 per cent). Football is the main sport practiced in these centers (i.e. 87.3 per cent). The percentage of the youth who do not go to youth centers is 45.8 mainly because there are no centers in their neighborhood, while 34.5 thought that the reason is the discouraging traditions and customs. The survey findings also showed that watching TV is the main hobby of the youth (i.e. 64.2 per cent), followed by sports (35.7 per cent), reading, and drawing.

IHSES conducted by COSIT in 2007 showed that 79.5 per cent of the youth do not read newspapers. This is a serious indication on poor cultural levels. In addition, 75.5 per cent of the youth do not practice sports activities, and 90.5 per cent do not practice artistic activities. Such situation should be addressed to find appropriate solutions.

### **Second: Youth intellectual development**

The youth are facing a set of systematic and violent beliefs which try to influence their thinking. Therefore, the youth should be prepared to face such beliefs with culture and scientific advancement. Caring for the youth requires covering all aspects related to youth situation, trends, behavior, and problems, so that the society can make use of youth potentials and protect them from deviant trends. This can be done through intellectual development which pays attention to human mind development, liberalizing it from any thing hindering its development, and emphasizing the importance of knowledge.

### **Third: Youth health development**

The youth are the main element of human development. Therefore, the state should care for them physically and psychologically by providing them with free of charge health services and improving their nutrition. In addition, the state should pay attention to their physical fitness and sports aspects to enhance the potentials of each age stage. The youth should also be educated against bad health habits such as smoking, drug use, liquor, malnutrition, over nutrition, etc. Such education should take place at school and religious places.

The data of IHSES in 2007 showed that 75.5 per cent of the youth do not practice sports, while 11.8 per cent practice sports sometimes. The survey also showed that only 0.9 per cent of the youth practice sports activities in around 10 hours or more weekly. This can be attributed to the fact that most youth centers are more than 1 kilometer away from neighborhoods.

### **Forth: Youth social activities**

Promoting individual motifs, social behavioral patterns, and forms of social organization help employ development efforts to the best interest of the society. In addition, this help solve youth problems, and provides a special care to

disabled youth in order to integrate them into the society. IHSES data showed that 34.3 per cent of the youth do not practice social activities, 34.1 per cent only practice them sometimes, and 2.2 per cent practice them 10 hours or more weekly.

#### **Second: Youth technical culture (use of computer and internet):**

Spreading technical culture (use of computer and internet) is very important nowadays. IHSES in 2007 showed that such culture is emerging with variant percentages. Internet was used by only 65.1 per cent of male youth and 6.8 per cent of female youth. 26.5 per cent of the youth used internet for electronic mail, 33.9 per cent of researching, while 48.4 per cent for recreational purposes.

#### **Dimension Five: Challenges facing youth in Iraq**

Youth issues represent a concern for politicians and economists alike as ignoring them lead to spread of crime and adverse social implications with interact with the external terrorism. This will create unproductive environment for development and reconstruction. In addition, lack of job opportunities will increase brain drain and waste human resources.

#### **The main challenges facing youth in Iraq are:**

- 1- Lack of harmony between supply, represented by colleges and universities, and demand for workforce represented by the public and private sector. In case higher education focus and quality are not dramatically improved towards market-oriented programs, current imbalance between university graduates and labor market needs will worsen, resulting in more resources waste and unemployment.
- 2- Lack of appropriate employment policies that create new job opportunities, and limited role given to the private sector which was one of the basic factors in economic development process in western countries.
- 3- Dominance of the public sector over economic activities during the last 4 decades, confining the private sector in small enterprises that absorb small numbers of workforce.
- 4- Trade openness led to closure of many local enterprises and industries due to competition of imported goods.
- 5- Lack of investment that creates new job opportunities for the emerging workforce, and the large numbers of graduates annually without providing them with job opportunities.
- 6- Iraqi economy is oil-based, as the oil sector has the biggest share in GDP, yet it employs only 2 per cent of the workforce.
- 7- Political and economic depression among the youth, although the current political conditions promotes more freedom, participation, and transparency. However, the youth feel helpless to participate and express their views. For instance, the youth have no voice in the

educational curricula, university admission criteria, etc. This makes the youth feel frustrated as parliaments in other countries allocate certain days for the youth to listen to their views. In addition, youth shows on non-Iraqi satellite channels enable the youth to speak freely in youth related issues.

- 8- Fear of the future amid the unstable political and economic situations in Iraq, along with increasing cost of living and unemployment. This puts the youth under an immense pressure, leading them to extreme trends and depression.

Improvements in political and economic situations will improve labor market indicators. However, this should take place in the context of well-established national strategy which takes into account unemployment and job opportunity generation, as this is one of the main approaches to combat poverty, increase economic growth, and improve living conditions of the Iraqi citizens.