



Youth and Democratic Change in Syria

Kesh Malek's Experience with the Youth



www.keshmalek.org



[kesh.malek.syria](https://www.facebook.com/kesh.malek.syria)



[keshmalek](https://twitter.com/keshmalek)



Contents

1	Kesh Malek
2	The objective of the report
4	Study case of youth’s situation in north-west of Syria Initial study
6	Youth Citizen Club The Establishment Capacity building Workshops Dialogue sessions for youths Advocacy campaigns and society participation
12	The initiative’s impact on the community
15	Lessons Learned and recommendations



Kesh Malek

As a youth workgroup at the same time as the beginning of the Syrian revolution in Aleppo Northern Syria “Kesh Malek” was formed. Its first activities were sharing and taking part in the peaceful movement, demonstrating and spreading demonstrators’ demands of “Freedom, Justice, and Dignity.” The group’s effort over that period was launching a variety of revolutionary and political awareness campaigns driven by the group’s long term vision to reach a better future for Syria. As “an Independent Democratic Pluralism state, respects human rights and devotes citizenship and justice values.”

After the liberation of the eastern part of Aleppo city, “Kesh Malek” concentrated its efforts to assist the educational sector and supported the necessary and vital facilities, as the government withdrawal created a gap in the educational sector. The NGOs stood up, and the members shouldered their responsibilities to run these facilities. In this regard, “Kesh Malek” constructed one of the leading and chief educational bodies in the liberated areas from the regime forces. “Mustafa Karaman School” was the name of the school “Kesh Malek” established. Mustafa is one of Kesh Malek’s co-founders. Mustafa died in due to a shelling against a peaceful protest in Bustan Al-Qasr in Aleppo.

Early 2014, “Kesh Malek” officially opened its Head Quarter in Gaziantep, south-west Turkey. “Kesh Malek” obtained a legal permit to operate in Turkey to work as a non-profit civil society organization. This step was a vital one towards both expanding the organization’s workability in the country and add up an institutional theme to its expanding projects.

“Kesh Malek” continued working towards delivering its vision of democratic Syria. A state where human rights are respected and justice, diversity, and tolerance’s values are the fundamental principles of the Syrian people and the state. “Kesh Malek” believes that revolution is the primary way for Syrians to topple the totalitarian injustice regime and eliminate it to achieve a democratic civil government.

The organization inspired its strategy based on its values and vision and focusing on the implementation of the following primary programs:



Gender equity
& women’s rights



Community cohesion
& social change




Human rights




Advocacy

“Kesh Malek” has

426 member staff



59%



41%

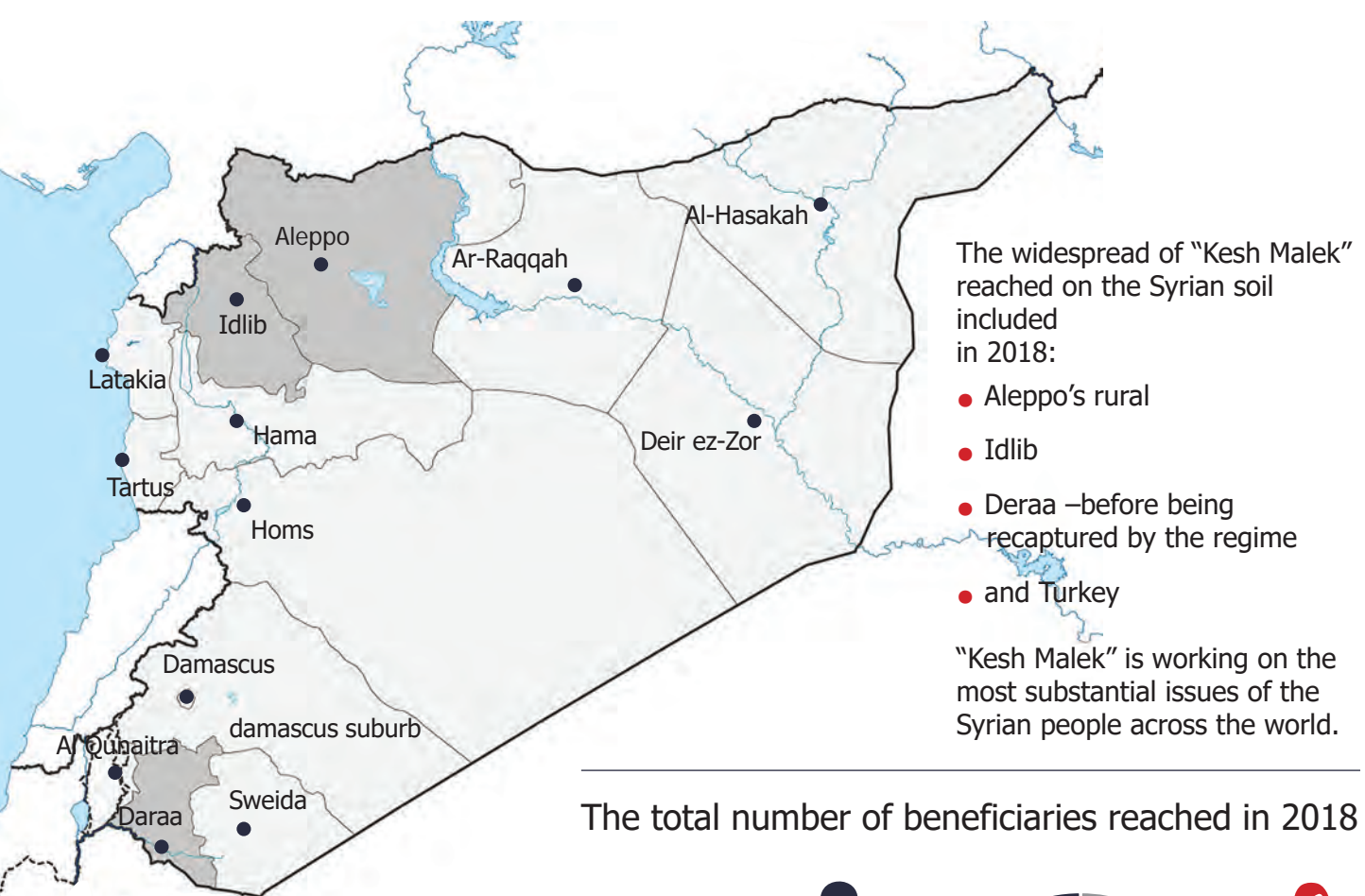
Including

82 volunteers

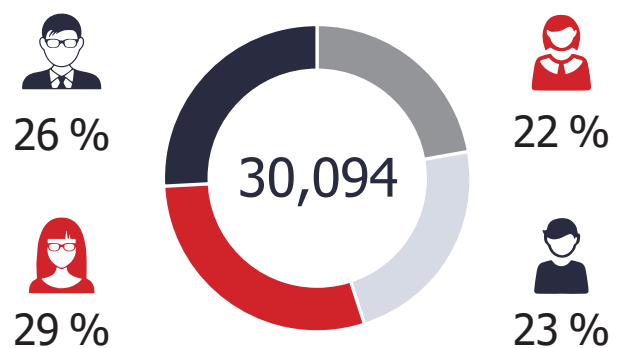
13 members within the executive board, based in Turkey

The organizational structure is divided into four sections supervised by the executive manager:

- Programs
- Operations (Human Resources, finance, and purchases)
- Media
- Monitoring, and evaluation.



The total number of beneficiaries reached in 2018



The objective of the report

This report endeavors to document Kesh Malek's experience with the Syrian youth throughout an initiative called «Youth citizens' club.» Besides highlighting the organization's participation in community leadership's capacity building, who will have a profound role to achieve the idealist future of Syria.

Context analysis and youths' role in social changing

Over the decades, Syria remained under totalitarian dictatorship rule of which marginalized Syrian participation and seeded sectarian, tribalism and ethnic division amongst the population. The regime systematically suppressed via its secret intelligence all kinds of civil movements that could have been a tool for Syrian to restore their rights. The regime also neglected the youths' contribution to society and became incapable of making a positive contribution. On top of that, there has not been any anticipation of Syrian, notably youth, within the local bodies. These bodies were under control of the regime's loyal members of the Albaath's party, which has always suffered from corruption. The regime used these organizations as a tool to grab his grip on society.





For instance, the Syrian regime forces children, in primary school to be members of Tala'a Al Ba'ath organization. Later in elementary school to Shabib'at Al-Thawra union. In which case, both organizations are branches from the motherhood Al Ba'ath Party (Hizb Al Ba'ath Al-Araby Al-Eshteraki).

Moreover, the regime has been striving to change of youths and children's ideology via attending regular meetings where they instill the Ba'ath ideas within the youths' brain. Those organizations were also establishing a firm groundwork of youths to carry on the same systematic ruling party agenda, as well as the totalitarian mentality with the lack of freedom as well. The Syrian people lost hope and dream of having a secular civil state. So their hopes of proper citizenship rights faded away by the dictatorship government ruling with fire and fear, especially after the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in 2011. The Syrian regime faced it with intense violence. It encountered civilians with numerous numbers of human and international human rights law violations. A significant number of reports indicated that the regime exposed the civilians to usages of different kind of indiscriminate unconventional weapons. Including explosive barrel bomb and internationally prohibited ammunitions including cluster, phosphoric, and chemical weapons.

The recent statistic of the death toll from 2011 to March 2019 reached 223.161. Amongst them, 28.486 children and 15.425 women. 92% of the total figure of victims were as a result of joint attacks by the Syrian-Russian coalition as per the report published by the Syrian Observer for Human Rights. These indiscriminate attacks resulted in displacing more than half of the Syrian population both internally and externally. The excessive usage of violence against the civilians had reflected new sophisticated problems within the society, whose majority were youth, and they were number one affected by these issues.

Multiple factors created youths' statues of uncertainty, misery, and frustration about their future, such as the constant feeling of the inability to solve these problems. This atmosphere affected their daily lives massively, besides the absence of a sufficient dynamic way to support the youth. They also lack official bodies and corporations to satisfy their needs, and a continuous sense of instability made their situation getting worse. Neglecting this part of the community and distance them from being engaged and decision-makers in the public affairs, contributed to fatigue youth and disabled them from being robust in their local communities. Also, the impact of weapons widespread and economic deficit stood as profound factors behind prevalent of dangerous phenomenal among youth, adolescents such as extremism and enforced-recruitment by extremist groups. These problems equally struck the female youth, however, significantly as they had to bear the extra burden as a result of these problems, such as being neglected and deprived of participating in social affairs and events of decision-making operation. As a result of the social and intellectual habits and principles became more radical with women, increasing the level of risks upon them, their future, and liberty in general. Also, creating additional problems such as early marriage, learning deprivation, violence, and so on.

Study case of youth's situation in north-west of Syria

In collaboration with Development Transformation cooperation, Shaml Coalition, in which "Kesh Malek" is part of, formulate scanning study aimed to understand and evaluate youths' conditions in the targeted main regions and sub-regions (northern west Syria), in order to comprehend and address their problems adequately and design individual scheme based on their accurate needs. Based on this study's outcome, a new agenda was improved to form *youth clubs*. Also, establish a new methodology and dynamic activities to run these clubs. In a way that fulfills the insufficiencies and set prioritizes by themselves.

Initial study

Data collection and reports preparation



Alongside our partners at Shaml Coalition's program, "Kesh Malek" designed and filled in 1328 questionnaires to determine the most critical obstacles and barriers as well as solutions from youths' outlook. In addition to carrying out 35 interviews with prominent local members of the community in four main regions within Idlib province (Idlib city- Areha-Harem- Marat Al Noman) and two sub-regions in Aleppo province (Albab -Samaan Mountain). Based on a particular matrix. The collected data was analyzed, which aims to identify exclusively, the fundamental root causes behind youths' problems, instead of installing short term solutions in the mentioned areas that will not meet the needed goals. We conducted specified conversational sessions with a youth member of the targeted communities and came up with 14 certified feedback list. Finally, we implemented a methodological analysis by using the primary reasons and youths' recommendations about the best-suggested solutions to come up with the essential activities aimed to meet and evolve youths' current abilities. Additionally, this study is considered as a reference to get back to determine the following programs to enhance youngsters' capacity in north-west Syria.

Questionnaires



The quantitative surveys enclosed 12 questions attached to a collection of information. This approach was designed to promote better contextual comprehension of youths affairs, especially after seven years of the armed conflict. Apprehending the core factors and the complaints that are connected with, considered a profound matter to develop and understand the exact reasons systematically. The genuine direct reasons will enable people to continue and will likely boost youth to support positive participation in their society. At the same time, avoid misunderstanding or neglect of the youth's needs, which usually happens in conflict zones. Shaml coalition designed a series of additional questions pursuit to obtain a better understanding of their experience.

Interviewing reference characters



Our team conducted face-to-face interviews in the targeted areas and collected data via of distinctive quantity of popular surveying questions. These interviews introduced local contextual on variable community factors, which contributed and helped to understand and direct the root-causes and analysis of the motivations.

A list of qualitative questions was developed to target a particular part of the community such as local councils, teachers, university students, civil society employers, and staff, collecting eventually 12 qualitative interviews.

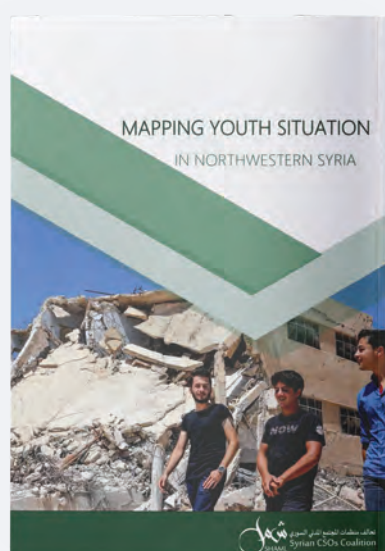
Focused group discussions



Shaml coalition administered a total of three dialogue groups, one in each sub-region. Each one lasted approximately one and a half hours, allowing enough time for productive contribution and participation in the shared discussion for all individuals. The dialogue age-target was between the youth of between 25-30 years old of both genders.

Location		Quantitative Surveys	KIIs
Idlib	Ariha	158	6
	Dana	120	5
	Marat A'noman	146	6
	Maarat Misrin	156	6
Aleppo	Abzimo	119	4
	Ourem Alkobra	118	4
	Kafr naha	102	4
	Al Bab	280	N/A
	Atareb	128	N/A

Location		Population	% of youth in the studied area	Sample size in the targeted community
Idlib	Ariha	75000	13.78	147
	Dana	50000	9.18	98
	Marat A'noman	90000	16.53	176
	Maarat Misrin	80000	14.69	156
Aleppo	Abzimo	21000	3.85	42
	Ourem Alkobra	23250	4.27	45
	Kafr naha	30000	5.51	59
	Al Bab	110000	20.21	215
	Atareb	65000	11.94	127



The study outcomes varied in terms of recommendations and outputs. Reiterating youths' perspective in terms of political and social and services affairs. Which they are -as well as their communities- are living in.

The full published [report by *Shaml Coalition*](#).

The majority of the recommendations from interviewees, when we asked them about the essential needed means, they ought to utilize to recover and improve their future! The answer was to amplify their role in decision-making placements within the communities.

It has also stressed on the necessity of supporting youth's initiatives and dedicate the needed resources to rebuild their capacity. Besides constructing safe-zones to think and brainstorm sustainable solutions for their puzzles. Also, they focused on the importance of prioritizing economic and high education support.



Youth Citizen Club

The Establishment

Aiming to amplify youths' voices and build up young community leaderships. "Kesh Malek" began in the mid-2018 forming youth groups in its centers inside Syria in northern and west Aleppo province. Named *Youth Citizens' Club or YCC*, to make these assembling as a hook to reach social change which is Kesh Malek's ultimate aim, through regrouping enthusiastic youth of both genders to participate and change their communities. After supporting them with the needed expertise and skills and pave their way towards making this change come true. The initiative will ensure these groups reach out and meet up with decision-makers and all stakeholders within the society, throughout a series of meetings that will be conducted in the organization's center. Endeavoring to resolve and gain more representation and support their struggle towards restoring their rights, and transform their attitude to be a positive members in their societies, instead of from relying utterly on others and balme external parties or the community itself of their miserable situation and not fulfilling their needs when they are able to be a champion and stand up for themselves.

YCC was announced in May 2018 when registration for candidates opened for who was willing to join the club. Later a total of 60 members, divided in half for each gender, from different villages, as per the following: Ourem Alkobra, Abzemo, Kafar-Naha.

Later on, additional members from Mare'a city joined the club, after a series of interviews resulted in selecting the most passionate candidates who demonstrated a genuine desire for sociable activities and held a moderate ideology away from extremism or violence to be the nucleus and founding members of YCC.

Finally, meetings were held between the members to discuss the founding principles of the club and brainstorm suggestions to attract more youths and new members to join the initiative.

Capacity building

The capacity building program helps youths to provide primary knowledge and skills to help them anticipate actively in their society. It also attributes to highlight their fundamental role in social change as active citizens who are capable of conflicts solving progress and advocacy to the predicaments that confront the community.

Community mobilization and encountering extremism ideology:



The training attributed to skills provision to the youth civil society leaders who are mobilizing and involving all stockholders of the society, including ordinary citizens, government authorities and private sector representatives who are engaged in cooperative efforts to solve the local common problems and enhance living conditions for the people as tackling the intense extremism ideology. The training provided practical skills as well such as presentations and public speaking skills, analyzing stakeholders and conflict analyzing, building team's operation facilitate, cooperative projects planning and gender considerations in governing and development.

Advocacy and social participation



The training helped to provide the necessitated knowledge and practical skills of political advocacy, such as organizing clear and compelling call to actions, advocacy operation and methodology, primary steps in advocacy campaigns, identity determination, primary stakeholders involvement, coalitions forming, communication/negotiation, public awareness, media utilization (including social media), the best global practice and advice to manage and achieve successful advocacy campaign.

This training has also provided the youths with practical skills in facilitating governing progress which are being conducted by official stakeholders and teaches them how to construct and facilitate cooperative governing bodies' work which contains a variety of local stakeholders who are working collectively to evolve governing advancement and society living condition.



Gender concept and its application throughout advocacy campaigns

The training's purpose was to provide informative knowledge for youth about gender-concept based on the international definition and the differences between gender and sex. Additionally, the training included step by step guide in applying gender notion throughout advocacy campaign stages, starting from planning to the real application.



Disputes solving

The training provided the trainees with the required abilities and skills to resolve the conflicts they face daily in their communities whether on a personal scale (family) or a larger scale (society) in general and studying the utilized means to analysis conflicts and search for its root causes.



Peacebuilding strategies

The training helped youths to comprehend the implemented skills in the peacebuilding process, starting from negotiation and mediation to increase their capacity to be productive citizens who can engage in the community peacebuilding process actively.



Dialog facilitation skills

The required skills were provided for youngsters to administrate dialogue sessions and discussions, which is a substantial talent in peacebuilding progress.





Often the feedback of these workshops is manifested through social activities aiming to raise awareness about different hazards of specific fundamental problems and launch advocacy campaigns dedicated to shed the lights on social cases such as early marriage, children recruitment, Human Rights, Freedom of thoughts and speech

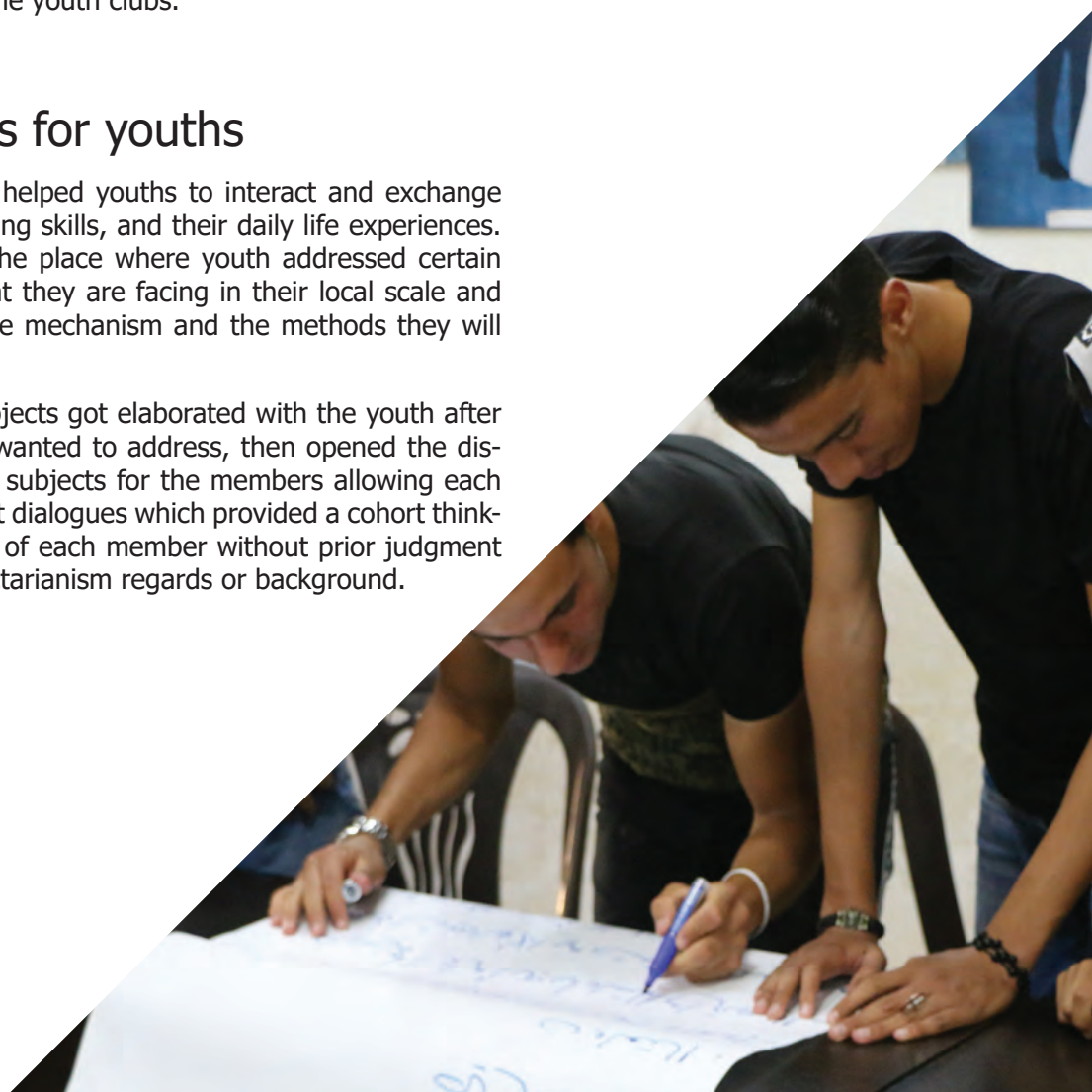
Workshops

The workshops aim to highlight some of the issues which are facing the communities out of the Syrian regime control, where the club's members assemble with the facilitators and supervisors of the youth clubs aiming to identify a numbers of obstacles and analysis its root causes and then brainstorm suitable valid solutions including operating strategies and structure the right activities. Often the feedback of these workshops is manifested through social activities aiming to raise awareness about different hazards of specific fundamental problems and launch advocacy campaigns dedicated to shed the lights on social cases such as early marriage, children recruitment, Human Rights, Freedom of thoughts and speech besides other advocacy campaigns, which have been set up by the youth clubs.

Dialogue sessions for youths

The dialogue sessions have helped youths to interact and exchange expertise, knowledge, adapting skills, and their daily life experiences. These dialogues represent the place where youth addressed certain coherence related issues that they are facing in their local scale and national scale, identifying the mechanism and the methods they will use to sort it out.

Afterwards, the dialogue subjects got elaborated with the youth after defining the problems they wanted to address, then opened the discussion about each of these subjects for the members allowing each one to take part in these joint dialogues which provided a cohort thinking and embracing thoughts of each member without prior judgment about religious, ethnic or sectarianism regards or background.



Advocacy campaigns and society participation

Youth club members meet twice a month to discuss and respond to particular social matters and go through the problems that the most vulnerable neglected part of the community remain suffering from such as adolescent, women, and special-needs. This discussion strives to come up with ideas and subjects to design advocacy awareness campaigns targeting society and stakeholders. Then we worked on developing the youths capacity in these skills, throughout a series of training about the subjects mentioned above. Afterward, an internal dialogue was arranged between them about the problems related to these issues, to convey the knowledge and establish a common understanding about the principle cases that they are willing to work out and tackle. These sessions have helped them to genuinely comprehend the problems their society is suffering from and address the priorities of each one separately.

Hence, youths have concentrated on several subjects during their discussion sessions in the centers. At the strain statues, the local communities are undergoing due to the massive waves of displaced of civilians to new areas; this raised several problems. Uniquely the different habits and traditions between the IDP and the residents hosting the IDP. Unraveling new challenges and creating conflict from both sides against each other. That is to say that from the hosting villagers, the heat was as a result of indifference between the original inhabitant and the IDPs, and from the migrant side because they found themselves in a new awkward environment relatively, in comparison to their hometown and the commitment they felt to blend in the current community and get used to the new life.

Also, youths had discussed women's participation in civil society. As for the past decades women have been neglected and isolated from the civil working prospect and prevented her from taking the lead and be in decision-making superior positions in the regime era when women representation was exclusive for a number of figures, which were being replaced subsequently to give a fake impression that women have an actual representation in the state facilities.

This policy towards women continued after the beginning of the revolution and women's isolation carried on from taking part in the civil workforce, apart from few exceptional situations which proved themselves in the community as a role model.

Youths have organized advocacy campaigns pushing the community to improve their efforts to allow women to participate in the civic life via working to develop women's abilities in both administrative and personal levels and provide her with community leadership skills.



This discussion strives to come up with ideas and subjects to design advocacy awareness campaigns targeting society and stakeholders.





Furthermore, youths have converged throughout their campaigns about the importance of woman's participation in the civil sector and the potential positive impact that will be associated with her involvement in both family and community levels.

Special needs circumstances took great attention from youths efforts and campaigns as their problems have become severe since the beginning of the Syrian Revolution. Due to the regime bombardment against the areas that were out of his control, the figures of special needs in Syria reached 1.5 Million people based on the statics provided via The International Health Organization in 2018.

The majority of them are currently suffering from a lack of proper work opportunities and an inability to adapt to their new condition, which created further physiological trauma among the majority of them. Hence, youths have been effortlessly working to raise the community's awareness about the significance of embracing and merging them and create work opportunities that fit their conditions, stressing that being wounded is nothing but a motivation for creativity and accomplishment.

Human rights and freedom of thinking and speech have taken a considerable portion of the youth's attention during their discussion session. After generations of oppression and tyranny by the Syrian regime who arrested and suppressed possessors of free words and thoughts, making *words and ideas* a basis for getting people to disappear and justification in some occasions for a severe sentence such as the capital punishment sometimes and disappearance in others. Additionally, the increasing estimates of fatalities among journalists in the past three years before the Syria revolution and the deliberate targeting by the Syrian regime as well as arresting most of the novel writers who praised and promoted the civil movement since its bringing in 2011. This policy made *free word* dooms to inevitable hell. Throughout the revolution period, as a result of the dictatorship and totalitarian rule, some of the remaining of this extreme ideology was adopted by radical factions in the none-regime control areas. Therefore, high numbers of journalists and activists have been chased and killed by Hay' at Tahrir Sham (HTS) and the Islamic State (ISIS) as well as other extremist groups across Syria. All of these reasons boosted youth club members to team up and highlight the value and weight of freedom of speech and thinking and its significant enrichment to social changing holding a vital task to transfer from dictatorship oppressive state to a civil democratic state that respects its citizens' rights. Equally, youth clubs have also discussed girls education deprivation due to old tradition and habits of the local communities.

The advocacy campaigns

Public discussion sessions



Twelve public discussion sessions were held in the four centers, with Local Council members, Free Police, and local organizations. The sessions were aiming to highlight the reviewed problems (by youths' previous meetings) and team up with decision-makers to acknowledge the required solving mechanism to minimize the severity of these problems.



Field visits

On the one hand, field visits were carried out to schools and public facilities to meet up with families and workers in those facilities. On the other hand, awareness sessions were organized with students at the schools to raise their comprehension about the subjects of the club's advocacy campaigns. Twenty-eight visits were conducted to a civil facility such as school, medical points, civil defense centers, and the local council, on the other hand.



Houses visits and raise families' awareness

Houses visits and raise families' awareness about the subjects of youth club's awareness campaigns to make sure a full outreach is met to all residents within the targeted zone.



Distribute informative and statistical brochures

Distribute informative and statistical brochures about youth club's awareness campaigns to urge the mainstream residents about the risks of early marriages, depriving girls of education, and children's rights.



Organizing peaceful stands

Organizing peaceful stands to demand the elimination of weapons widespread. Also, discussion meetings were held with families and prominent members of the community in Ourem village to come up with solutions to this peril phenomenon in the residential districts.

Those campaigns have received significant backing from the civilians and the local civil facilities because it was the first initiative of its kinds in the region to concentrate on youths' role in the society and amplify their potentials and make them capable of taking part in social change and decrease the community's intensity problems.





The initiative created a space for youth to express their opinions and take part in severe affairs in relation to their hometown.

The initiative's impact on the community

On the one hand, the fundamental idea of the initiative has always been to build up youths' expertise and raise their representation and awareness about and in their community's issues. On the other hand, taking part alongside the society with solutions finding process.

YCC members have focused on meetings and discussion coordination with different segments of the community to unite the efforts and work in groups to find solutions concerning the emerging dilemmas that are facing society. These meetings endeavored to push forward all society members to work together to reach a proper mechanism helping to accelerate the healing process of the community. As a result of youth clubs, the members work efficiency they gained enormous trust and a good reputation in their local societies as it is an individual initiative in these areas to cover these subjects tackling social problems and organizing advocacy campaigns raising public awareness.

The initiative's impacts manifested in different aspects. Starting with youth club members themselves whose awareness became more significant about their communities' essence problems and demanding to find solutions.

According to Fatima, one of the youth club members in Abzemo who dreamt of being a lawyer in the past to defend oppressed rights she cited that:



After the revolution and due to the attacks against the non-regime control areas all paths to the university were shutdown. Hence, I volunteered at one of the schools teaching children, so they do not get deprived of their right to learn which I underwent" She continue, "After I spotted the announcement of the youth club in my town (Abzemo) I registered at once to be a member in the club because it happened to be the only way I could be a member of a platform that works to amplify our voice as youths and operate to enable and develop our abilities".

Fatima deems her mission in this club is to represent and raise women and girls voice of my village and work to raise their awareness about the risks from lack of education and early marriage, which have been their mission in the first campaign covering and highlighting the risks of early marriages and its negative influence on the community, yet she indicates that the outcome of our work from the community was quite significant.

The campaign's positive effect has also been praised by the Free Police Chief of Ourem Alkobra who addressed the importance of the early marriages hazardous campaign noting that:



Many of youths who were a victim of the early marriage became robbers or joined fighting groups because they could not stand to be a breadwinner," He added, "This resulted in a surge of crimes figures in the village such as robbery and theft with violence cases using weapons. Therefore, the importance of this campaign on society in two aspects; First, to raise awareness, and the second phase is that youths are the ones in charge of this campaign, which is the same level as the age of the targeted groups. In other words, youths are dealing with their peers and are increasing their comprehension about the risks they are exposed to."



The club contributed to seed responsibility's soul within the young generation in the social workspace and efficiently constructed high self-esteem inside them and amplified their positive power and helped equally to change the youth stereotype.

On the other hand, Mahmoud Al-Ibrahim, Ourem Alkobra village former local council-manager cited that the most critical challenges facing youths in none-regime controlled zones are –education problem - and that the distinguished articulating by youths' campaign on girls' education was a significant step onward in the club's efforts, Mr. Mahmoud also attributed the society's ignorance to the broad spectrum of society remain convinced by the fact that girls' education is not necessary; this, however, has contributed to more significant quandaries such as early marriages and children labor. Moreover, M. Al-Ibrahim said:



The notable change on youths in terms of their awareness of their community's problems is exciting because the fact that they are discussing these sensitive topics including its impact on the community reflects a high level of intellectual awareness."

Hussien Kharoufeh one of the coaches who worked and trained the youth groups in several training sessions said:



I have tried to share my knowledge and experience in this field with youths via several presentations, and pieces of training about community participation, campaigning and advocacy and communication skills. As we know, he added, young people are more likely to tolerate and embrace evolving and the most flexible to collaborate to change-making if they were given the opportunity. However, they are still suffering from isolation in the political and social scales," He added, "The opportunities they have to actively take part in the community and express their opinions are limited. The conflicts and political instability for the past eight years of the beginning of the Syrian revolution have resulted an increase of their weakness and made them more vulnerable and more likely to be exposed to exploitation and persecution by the community,"



Here comes the importance of youth clubs believing in their potentials and emphasizing that when they have the tools they need, they will be able to eradicate inequality and discrimination chains that they have been suffering from for an extended period,"



We have been working to enhance and elaborate youth's abilities, striving in the long run to foster both their representation and role in the community based on proper building capacity operational methodology developing their collaboration in their communities. Also, generating opportunities to take advantage of these talents through social activities and advocacy campaigns."

Abdulaziz Hamdo, resident from Kafar-Naha village illustrated the initiative's impact creating a space for youth to express their opinions and take part in severe affairs in relation to their hometown:



The local council in Kafar Naha usually takes into consideration representing the families in the village only, neglecting youths' role in the council especially females. Hence, the club became a platform where youth come together with local council representatives and decision-makers in the city council and education manager as well as talking through a variety of obstacles correlated to the public affairs and youth's matters in particular."

Al Hamdo also stressed that youths initiative has explicitly demonstrated to everyone the importance of youth's representation and role laying out and discuss public affairs and lookup for solutions.

Reem Khalifa, Assistance manager of Ourem Alkobra School, explained:

“ Youth citizen club has a significant role breaking the typical stereotype of women and young girls which indicates that they should stay at home, get married and not continue their education. She cited that “Female form equal numbers of their male counterparts in the clubs structure and they have proved their ability to participate in dialogue sessions whether in local councils which are dominated by men, as well as sharing alongside men in awareness campaigns operation approaching organizations and peoples across the whole society.”

Ahmad, a resident of Ourem Alkobra, said that the club contributed to seed responsibilities’ soul within the young generation in the social workspace and efficiently constructed high self-esteem inside them and amplified their positive power and helped equally to change the youth stereotype.

Ismael Mohammad, who works with one of the civil society organizations in Ourem Alkobra, sees the YCC initiative a positive step onward to achieve healthy active citizens capable of boosting up the recovery process and developing their communities.

Nawras Abdullah, advocate activist from Abzemo village said:

“ My relation with the YCC comes from my interest and believe of youths’ role in the community, and their ground application of early marriages advocacy campaigns in Abzemo village in western Aleppo countryside, the importance of this initiative stands essentially due to its efforts highlighting youth work’s value. As they have always been suffering from isolation and neglection by several community segments that have been pushing young people away from contributing to the public affairs or the Syrian community problems.” He added “As a result, this project became very successful because of its high expectations upon the importance of youth and their role and ability at the same time”

Nawras also believes that the initiative originated a significant influence on youths themselves because they possessed massive merit from discussion sessions and training that the initiative had sponsored them with. Also, the society itself earned a positive consequence as its awareness has risen notably in terms of early marriage problem, human rights, women participation in civic life, and other indispensable unique efforts by the club.

“ The YCC initiative a positive step onward to achieve healthy active citizens capable of boosting up the recovery process and developing their communities.



Lessons Learned and recommendations

Youths could form a magnificent workforce if their abilities were adjusted and guided to a productive direction and empowering them to reach a democratic pluralism civic state in Syria. However, the constant violence and regime tactics of siege and targeting residential areas have been used by the government against the Syrian population living out of regime control, consequently pushed civilians' lives into miserable humanitarian status.

In a similar context, youths are deemed the most neglected and vulnerable segment of the nation, since they demanded political change in 2011. Moreover, it made them separated from the reality of their local communities and feeling disappointment about their future. Furthermore, it had also increased their isolation and pushed them away from sharing decision-making roles with adults depriving them of enhancing their living conditions.

Consequently, instead of having them as productive factors in the social recovery or positive social change, they got exposed to harmful self-defence mechanisms adopting radical ideologies and getting involved with destructive behaviour.

Despite the establishment of many local governing bodies, which have been working to develop its workability to embrace youth. The constant violence cycle condition has spared no time for Syrians to elaborate their craft.

The difficulties facing youths in Syria nowadays are no different from other conflicts zones. Youngsters have rare options to participate in governing bodies process or get involved with formal and none-formal leadership roles which require a tolerant and liberal environment. They need samples and practical tools for productive participation in social affairs, education and capacity development, which inevitably attract enthusiastic and devoted individuals to social activities to stay.

We think that amplifying young groups' voice and supporting their inventive involvement in social affairs, will enable them to work for robust living conditions via constructive channels, without undermining their representation in decision-making positions.

Recommendations



The conducted efforts towards youths' initiatives ought to cover all community spectrums not only working with youths because this will help to merge them within the community and decrease their isolation.



Supporting youths' initiatives locally focusing on groups rather than individuals to ensure that knowledge is conveying between their peers gaining a collective perspective rather than a single one. Similarly, youths assembling help during displacement crises as their influence will last wherever they go.



Avoid working with youths in beforehand set up cliché regardless of the organization's awareness of the mainstream or working domain. Instead, stimulating youths and involve them with analyzing the situation, addressing the priorities and proposing social initiatives. Besides, supporting them to draw a practical road map for their activities based on their understanding to make sure that the constructed ideas originated and fitted by youths themselves.



Taking into account gender courtesies in the club's formation. whether in members numbers, training, designing activities and advocacy campaigns to guarantee full gender equality, which will ease many activities progress flexibility and will make the knowledge approach easily accessible to females' rivals.



Surge the numbers of joint activities with the organizations and operating local governing bodies. Open more spaces for youths to share personal perspective and take part in discussion and debates with decision-makers which will result in amplifying their voice.



www.keshmalek.org



[kesh.malek.syria](https://www.facebook.com/kesh.malek.syria)



[keshmalek](https://twitter.com/keshmalek)