

Building approaches for engaging youth in humanitarian action



MYCHA

MENA Youth Capacity Building in Humanitarian Action

Since 2005, Reach Out to Asia (ROTA) has strived to empower, engage, and support young people across various contexts to realize their full potential and contribute to the development of their communities. Sharing the view that youth must be recognized as critical actors during humanitarian crises, in 2017, ROTA along with partners from the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action launched the **MENA Youth Capacity Building in Humanitarian Action (MYCHA) Initiative**. Its goal is to catalyze local youth-led humanitarian action and generate evidence on appropriate methodologies for helping them gain the necessary capabilities to act effectively. Through this initiative, ROTA seeks to develop processes of capacity building which inspire and motivate youth to not only act, but also to recognize their potential as effective agents of positive change.

MYCHA is part of a global movement to promote the participation and leadership of young people in national, local and international humanitarian processes. The initiative contributes directly to Key Action 3 of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, which in turn contributes to Transformation 3F of the Agenda for Humanity.

At the core of MYCHA is a series of three regional trainings to be held annually in Doha. The first such training was hosted in November 2017 by ROTA/EAA, along with partners UNHCR, OCHA, Qatar Red Crescent (QRC), and United Muslim Relief (UMR). Once participants complete a MYCHA training, they receive six months of ongoing support and mentorship by local NGOs in their home countries to help them deliver youth-led humanitarian actions which they plan themselves. Beyond annual regional trainings, field work, and follow-up, youth also engage in key activities throughout the year; further strengthening their practical skills through a rolling capacity building approach.

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Doha Youth Declaration on Reshaping the Humanitarian Agenda



Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action



Agenda for Humanity

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01 Background

Stakeholders across all sectors have answered the UN Secretary General's call for a renewed commitment to humanity and are reforming how the international community addresses humanitarian need and suffering. This new **Agenda for Humanity** was established through a three-year consultative process which culminated in Istanbul at the first World Humanitarian Summit (WHS). Since young people are a key demographic affected by crises, stakeholders recognized that youth must be significant and respected contributors within the reform process. A global youth consultation was organized in Doha in the lead-up to the WHS (UNMGCY and ROTA, 2015) and a special session was convened during the Summit to ensure that their input and voice would help shape the Agenda first hand (UNFPA, 2016). The **Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action**, an outcome of this process, has emerged as one of the key initiatives under Core Responsibility 3 of the Agenda for Humanity.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY 3 - STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION F

Empower and promote the participation and leadership of young people in national, local and international humanitarian and development programmes and processes, specifically in conflict prevention and resolution, in the response to crises and in the recovery of communities.



This process and the resultant Compact have galvanized unprecedented momentum around the inclusion of youth in humanitarian efforts. More than 50 partners have so far joined the Compact, under which members pledge to align operations with the principles outlined within; take steps to support young people in humanitarian action; engage locally with young people where they have a presence; and report annually on their ongoing efforts.

As a dedicated stakeholder, committed to this youth-centered agenda, ROTA worked throughout the three-year WHS process to ensure youth were meaningfully represented. In Istanbul, ROTA announced the commitment to launch a regional capacity building platform to reach youth who are interested or already engaged in humanitarian action and increase their capacities, knowledge and participation. Mr. Essa Al-Mannai, ROTA's Executive Director stated:

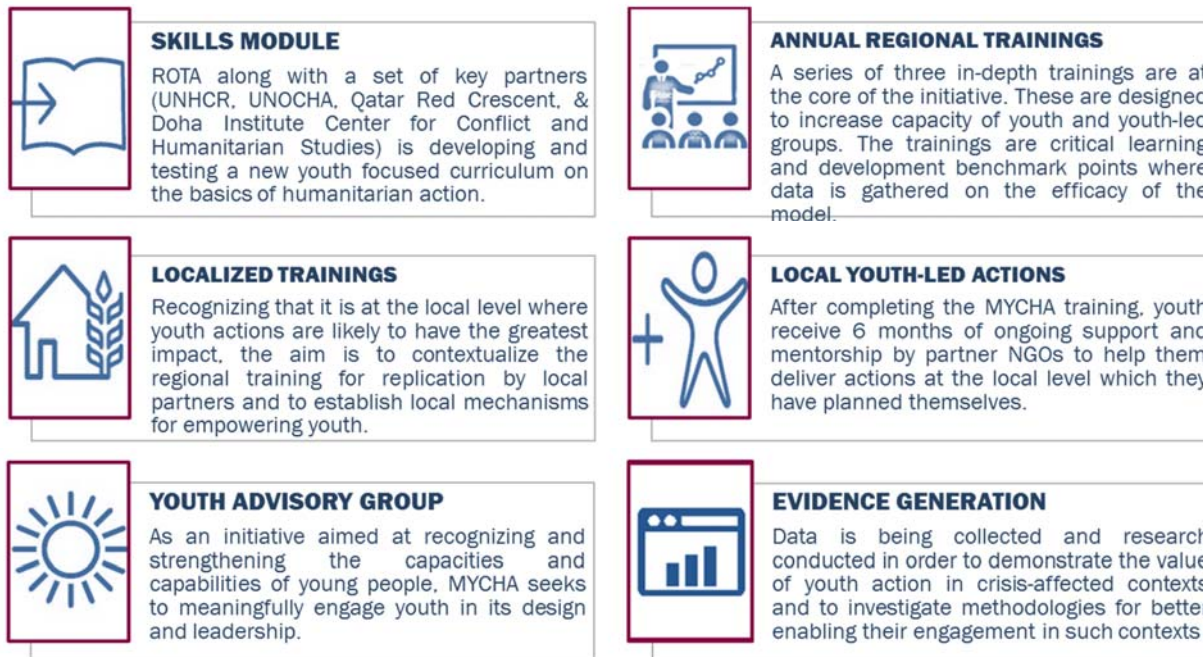
"We are developing this platform at the regional level and it is our hope that it will be replicated by other interested entities across the globe. ROTA sees this capacity building platform as a tangible mechanism for equipping youth with the necessary skills and tools to facilitate their meaningful engagement and participation."

02 Development of the model

MYCHA has six interrelated components. Each is designed to increase capacity among youth from crisis-affected contexts and to provide platforms for them to demonstrate their ability to contribute in positive ways. The development, refinement, and delivery of youth focused training content forms the core of the model. Components of the emergent model will be synthesized into open source tools and resources which are replicable and adaptable by other agencies to meet their needs for engaging youth at the local level.

Developing a humanitarian skills module for training youth

The primary resource developed under MYCHA is a youth-focused training module. An extensive desk review of training material for stakeholders who are new to the humanitarian field revealed that while general content exists, little has been developed specifically with youth in mind. The uniqueness of MYCHA is that the training module is based on established humanitarian principles yet is customized to address the realities youth may face as key actors. The module was compiled through a participatory approach whereby each facet has been contributed by partners working in the humanitarian field based on their respective areas of expertise. The module covers foundational concepts and also provides practical guidance for application.



Regional trainings as a learning and networking platform

Regional level trainings convened annually during the three year formative phase of the initiative are designed to provide an initial platform for testing the applicability and efficacy of the training module as well as facilitating networking and knowledge sharing among youth and youth-led groups. As with the development of the training module, the regional MYCHA trainings are delivered through a participatory partnership approach by leading humanitarian aid agencies such as UNHCR, OCHA, and QRC. Each core session is designed and facilitated by experts based on their organization's mandate in the humanitarian landscape.

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03 The forward vision

To achieve MYCHA's underlying vision, the initiative is being developed in three phases: formation, testing, and replication. During the development and delivery of the training module, the content is continuously being assessed and refined. Tools and processes are also being developed for replicating trainings at national and local levels. A youth advisory group has been established as a mechanism for young people to have voice and provide direct input during all three phases.

Localization and replication

Local youth-led action is at the heart of the MYCHA initiative. The methods and approaches being developed can be applied in a wide range of contexts. By being an adaptable and flexible model, MYCHA is designed to be replicated in accordance with local needs, priorities and levels of existing youth engagement. In order to learn from application across various contexts, partners who use the module in their trainings are also documenting modifications and adaptations made to the core learning content; sharing any newly developed/revised content; and capturing and share lessons learned.

Evidence and knowledge sharing

Through reflective practice and documentation, the initiative also contributes to knowledge building. Knowledge and evidence is being generated on the nature of actions youth are already taking in crisis-affected contexts and the types of skills required for them to be even more engaged. These findings may inform future decisions related to replication of MYCHA and similar initiatives and inform ways in which organizations can best empower youth to take on more prominent roles.

Dissemination of open source tools and resources

All resources and tools developed under the initiative will be made available through an online repository for use by stakeholders with similar youth engagement aims. Through this open source sharing, ROTA hopes that new content will continue to be added, thereby expanding and enriching the module and tools.

References

UNMGY and ROTA. (2015, September). *Doha Youth Declaration on Reshaping the Humanitarian Agenda*. Retrieved from <https://www.reachouttoasia.org/sites/default/files/Doha-Youth-Declaration-on-Reshaping-the-Humanitarian-Agenda.pdf>

UNFPA. (2016). *Special Session Prospectus: Transforming Humanitarian Action with and for Young People*. Retrieved from http://whsturkey.org/Contents/Upload/SS10%20Youth_qea4a3xk.iae.pdf