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Empower the Arab youth, expect a brighter future



At the Women Deliver conference 2013, I was given the chance to moderate a session on the Middle East and North Africa region. What came into focus for the most part were Islamic fundamentalists and their effect on women's rights.

However, after talking to elderly women, working on advancing women's rights for years and youth attempting to make a difference, something stuck.

If you empower the youth and give them a voice, they will be the ones to help fight for the rights of women and the change in their societies.

The 'leaders of now'

Speaking in one of the panels, Nadine Mouawad, a young activist at Nasawiya Feminist Collective, said regimes in the Middle East "are so corrupt" and would have to fall in order for women to rise collectively.

"The systems in place will not allow us to rise as a class. We can only rise as a class if there is no such thing as 'women breaking into the system'. There are entire systems that need to fall, regimes that need to fall so that women, as a class and as gendered bodies, can find their way into the system."

If we work to empower our youth and make sure they are educated and strong, the wrongs we see in our communities and mindsets can effectively be eradicated.

The youth in the Arab world are the driving force behind the revolutions, the ones taking stances on their regimes and human rights through social media like Facebook and Twitter.

The Women Deliver conference 2013 in Kuala Lumpur was invigorating and could be seen to inspire many in continuing their fight for women empowerment and health. But, what inspired me was the under

Even Mandy Moore the singer and actress was at the conference, I attended a closed-door youth meeting where she gave a speech telling those in the room “You have ignited something in me. You are an unstoppable force for good.”

This was highlighted by Barbara Bush and Chelsea Clinton who are both youths taking a stand on the global stage for human rights and the rights of women. Bush told the same youth conference that they were not “leaders of the future. You are the leaders now.”

_____ Sophie Ghaziri is a Shift Editor at Al Arabiya English. She has previously worked as a producer, presenter and a writer at the BBC, Al Jazeera and she was Head of English at Future News in Lebanon for 2 years. She can be followed on Twitter on: @sophieghaziri