

## **Final report on employability through voluntary social and civic engagement and vocational training through grassroots sports**

*“The real and practical experience of the OFFS and Caravans is incomparable to the experience and knowledge we gain from our academic studies. Without the experience gained through voluntary work, we, as unemployed university graduates, wouldn’t have anything today. This is how we get our motivation, gain practical and organizational skills, and noticed by future employers.”* - Wa’ad, NGO-worker in Rbid, Jordan.

The present report examines how voluntary social and civic engagement has a positive societal impact as well as function as an asset on the individual’s CV, and sparks social entrepreneurship through the uncovering of local issues and needs. Furthermore, the report will dive into how voluntary youth leaders and coaches combat economic stagnation and job-recession through community-engagement and innovative solutions to unemployment, thus increasing employability.

The evidence is based on quantitative and qualitative data about our voluntary youth leaders and coaches’ employment situation, gathered by Cross Cultures implementing partners in Jordan and Tunisia. The quantitative data were collected from mid-March to 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2021, before, during and after the volunteer’s participation in Cross Cultures youth leadership education, to uncover to what extent and how the Cross Cultures programme may have impacted their job situation. The survey includes all volunteer leaders and coaches who have participated in the Cross Cultures DAPP programme in Jordan and Tunisia in the period 2017-2020 (Tunisia N=249, Jordan N=241).

The aforementioned survey has been the foundation for 18 interviews conducted via ZOOM with local CCPA youth coaches and leaders in Tunisia and Jordan from 28<sup>th</sup> of June to 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, comprising representatives of local communities in both rural and capitol areas of both countries. The interviewed sources were selected based on their expertise, merit and experience relevant to the mission. The interviews were conducted in either French or English with a facilitating Arabic translator, according to the convenience of the interlocutors.

Against this background, Cross Cultures wish to learn more about what the local youth finds to be successful solutions towards employability. Furthermore, what could be done differently, let alone better? Thus, we establish the following argument: *Voluntary social and civic engagement is an asset on the community organizer’s CV, helping to promote and increase local employability, political awareness and gender equality.*

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## Quantitative findings

The data collected show that 65% (N=319) of the total number of unemployed voluntary youth coaches have been employed, and 71% (N=227) of our youth leaders say the programme has been the direct cause of their employment.

In Tunisia 2017, starting the programme, just 41 of the attendees, out of 249, were employed (16%). Today 169 (68%) are employed. 71% of these state that the skills and networks acquired through the participation in the Cross Cultures activities have helped them achieve their current employment. Thus, 145 out of 249 have achieved employment in the grassroots sport sector or as animators and programme voluntaries in radio stations, youth houses etc., whereas only 24 have been employed as sports teachers in the educational sector.

The figures are more or less similar in Jordan, which shows that 150, out of 241, of the attendees (62%) are employed, starting at only 105 (44%) in 2017. 60% of these recount that the skills and networks acquired through participation in Cross Cultures activities have had a more or less direct impact in their achievement of the current employment.

Moreover, a significant number of new jobs have been created within the grassroots sports sector, i.e., local grassroots clubs, within the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS) Youth Houses or so-called animators. The majority of these cases are informal employments, created to benefit the local community of the organizer. What is positive about this, is that most of these jobs created are created by the volunteers who attended our programme, because they saw a need in their local communities for the specific job. One of the interviewed from Medenine explained it like this: *“through educational activities regarding the protection of the children and non-competitive play, I created a local network based on a need in my area to help the children and provide them with fun activities to keep them off the streets. I do it voluntarily, but now the kids and parents ask me to do it so often, that it almost becomes fulltime. So now I need to find out how to get financial support for this.”* This shows that they acquire meaningful, tangible and innovative skills applicable in their local communities. Furthermore, we in Cross Cultures argue, that our youth leadership education has tremendous success; even though all of these people have only gone through the basic level training, out of a 3-level programme ranging from basic level to “Step 3: Own project – Community Organizer”, they already show the skills and engagement of a Community Organizer by addressing special needs in their community.

Correspondingly, the most common employments are within the grassroots sports, MOYS, Ministry of Education or self-made employments through innovative and entrepreneurial endeavours. Most of the leadership education-participants work today in youth houses, as animateurs or day-to-day jobs to pay the bills besides their work as voluntary coaches. These are what we call “informal” cases, as opposed to formal employments, meaning jobs without a steady, monthly salary, contract, or job security.

## Strategy of Intervention

### Social concepts

The social concepts and assumptions behind Cross Cultures leadership education has its off-set in our Open Fun Football School (OFFS) programme, which builds on Cross Cultures innovative, tried, and tested approaches<sup>1</sup>, inspired by social concepts provided by amongst other: Robert Putnam<sup>2</sup> and his insights on how citizenship and social capital in the voluntary sector connect communities, helping to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to live the life they dream of. Preben Astrup<sup>3</sup> who argues that volunteering, heterogeneous social networking and community mobilization are fundamental prerequisites that can help unite communities and form the foundations of peace, social cohesion and democracy. The American-Israeli professor Aaron Antonovsky<sup>4</sup> who links resilience – people's ability to cope and handle long-term stressors – to what he terms a "sense of coherence". This, he further links to the concepts of (1) comprehensibility, (2) manageability and (3) meaningfulness, while arguing that the stronger an individual's "sense of coherence" is, the more resilient he or she is likely to be when faced with stressors, demands and challenges. Sara Lei Sparre<sup>5</sup> that argues in her PhD dissertation on how young people's resilience is enhanced when they gain practical experience in communicating and operationalizing their ideas and visions for society and when they are given the opportunity to be positive role models for other young people and for children. And finally, Peter Krustrup, Daniel Parnell et. al<sup>6</sup> who argues that football is an excellent broad-spectrum prevention for children and youth – in club and school settings.

### Logical pathway (ToC)

#### Narrative:

In general youth in the MENA-region are situated at a social disadvantage in joining institutions, organizations, education, influence, and not least employment. Hence, many young people find themselves

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ccpa.eu/impact/reports](http://www.ccpa.eu/impact/reports)

<sup>2</sup> Putnam Robert, (2001) *Bowling alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Shuster Ltd

<sup>3</sup> Astrup, Preben, (2018) *Frivillighed*. Aarhus Universitetsforlag 2018

<sup>4</sup> Antonovsky, Aaron (1987). *Unravelling the mystery of health*. Josey Bass Publishers. p. 19 And: (1984) *The sense of coherence as a determinant of health*. In J. D Matarazzo et. al. (eds.), *Behavioral health: A handbook of health enhancement*. NY: Wiley.

<sup>5</sup> Sparre, Sara Lei (2016). *A generation in the making – The formation of young volunteers in Cairo*. PhD dissertation: Faculty of Social Sciences. University of Copenhagen. Department of Anthropology

<sup>6</sup> Krustrup, Peter, Parnell Daniel et al. (2019) *Football as broad-spectrum prevention for children and youth – in club and school settings*. *Football as Medicine - Prescribing Football for Global Health Promotion*, pp.66-78.

in a limbo where they are waiting for their life to begin. They are waiting for the opportunity to study, work, earn money and gain participation and influence.

As the next generation is expected to take over in the reconstruction and development of society, young people should have the best opportunities to learn, build a network and express their views and ideas for the future. In this context, the partner organizations are inspired by the social concepts listed above, and in this context, we use the Danish sports model (organized sports), including the Danish Information Act, as an inspiring framework in our development engagement.

**ASSUMPTION:** If young people learn to communicate and operationalize their ideas and visions for the community and are given the opportunity through practical experiences to express themselves and become positive role models as voluntary leaders and coaches and within their local community, then it will improve their life skills. This, in turn, will provide them with a strong community anchor and enhance their “sense of cohesion” / resilience.

Furthermore, by educating the young leaders and coaches as Community Organisers at the Cross Cultures Youth Leadership Education, the young leaders and coaches get theoretical knowledge and tangible hands-on experiences that will improve their life opportunities and in the best-case scenario their employability, and create new jobs.

<p><b>INPUT:</b></p> <p><b>IF</b> Cross Cultures and our local partners mobilize youth to facilitate social activities for children which they find meaningful and worth investing energy in, inside and across local communities and on a voluntary basis (meaningfulness),</p> <p><b>IF</b> Cross Cultures and our local partners provide training in self-organization, club formation, and social entrepreneurship with the purpose of bringing order and structure into an initially uncertain and disordered daily life (comprehensibility), and</p> <p><b>IF</b> Cross Cultures and our local partners empower young volunteers train young people and enable them to adapt and transform their social structures and means for living in the face of long-term stressors, change and uncertainty (manageability)</p>	<p><b>OUTPUT/OUTCOME:</b></p> <p><b>THEN</b> the young leaders and coaches have created an inter-regional/inter-sectarian youth network that provides young people with a platform to exchange experiences and perceptions with peers from neighbouring regions/districts and conflicting communities, and to express their ideas and visions for society and the future,</p> <p><b>THEN</b> the young leaders and coaches have gained hands-on leadership experience as well as opportunity to engage in sustained and in-depth dialogue with relevant community stakeholders such as for example parents of the children, local authorities, sports associations, civic organizations, public schools. Thereby they become active community participants, role models and actors for a better future.</p>
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**IMPACT:**

Contributes to giving the young participants an "anchor" in their community and strengthens their life opportunities and resilience by participating in tangible activities that they consider meaningful, understandable, and manageable. The young participants thus appear active community participants, role models and actors for a better future that positively affects their communities and helps to improve their employability and their personal lives in general.

### What is social entrepreneurship?

In Cross Cultures we work with employability through social entrepreneurship, amongst others. We do so, because it is a natural evolution of social and civic engagement, thus the foundation of our youth leadership education. Social entrepreneurship is to be understood as the approach by individuals, groups, start-up companies and the like, in which they develop, fund and implement solutions to social, cultural or environmental issues. These businesses vary between non-profit or blend for-profit goals with generating a positive "return to society". Social entrepreneurship is furthermore characterized by attempting to broad social, cultural, environmental, and gender goals often associated with the voluntary sector in areas such as poverty alleviation, health care and community development. Bellow we will unfold such cases from the field.

### Cross Cultural Exchange

It has initially been a challenge for organized youth-led grassroots sports in both Tunisia and Jordan to assemble, as the local youth, and our youth leaders, have experienced a barrier within the access to field and pitches. This pointed to the fact, that sports facilities stood unutilised by the hundreds in both Jordan and Tunisia. Most of these facilities are in connection with the local primary schools as well as the MOY(S)'s youth houses. These facilities are controlled and mediated by locally hired concierges who initially wouldn't allow anyone to play and use these facilities, as it would result in extra working hours and cleaning. Therefore, Cross Cultures went into negotiations with MOY(S) in both Jordan and Tunisia with the purpose of creating unmediated access to these facilities for our volunteers and other similar youth initiatives given they organized themselves as a volunteer association, with (a) Statutes with a clear purpose, (b) a general assembly and an elected board, (c) Non-profit, (d) Open for all that sympathizes with its purpose, and (e) Active membership with a minimum of 5 members.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The above five pillars are inspired by Denmark's unique Public Information Act, which is neutral vis-a-vis the association's purpose. Instead, it focuses on how the organization organizes itself to promote a grassroots democratic framework and an organizational structure that encourages active citizenship and helps to promote "a sense of cohesion".

These negotiations led to cooperation agreements between Cross Cultures and MOY(S) and even though the ministries do not understand the fundamentals of the Danish Information Act or enforce the social concept of the voluntary associations the agreement helped to un-block the youth houses for Cross Cultures young volunteers as well as for other NGO's in both Tunisia and Jordan. Furthermore, it is within the framework of the MOY(S) youth houses that most of the jobs have been created.

Correspondingly, the general figures above paint a clear picture: Cross Cultures and partners have observed a positive development through voluntary social entrepreneurship in both Tunisia and Jordan; the youth have (a) been empowered to engage in civic society work in cooperation with stakeholders from various relevant sectors, especially parents, youth houses, local CSO's and authorities, (b) been empowered to work in conjunction with cross sectorial partners, for peaceful co-existence, gender equality, respect for human rights, and cultural and social diversity. Hence, through voluntary activities, leadership education, life-skill training, and club formation mediated by Cross Cultures, the involved participants, according to the data, has gained considerable practical skills making them attractive to future employers or creating their own jobs as well as several others. Thus, via the youth houses we have succeeded to bring people together, create a sense of togetherness, breaking barriers between antagonizing parties instead promoting cohesion and trust (cf. Putnam; Astrup).

### Differences in our beneficiary groups in Tunisia and Jordan

On request from the MOYS, our Tunisian programme has been developed with an outset in the premise that more than 80% of our beneficiaries must be graduated but unemployed teachers. Thus, since the revolution, there has been a general termination of employment within the public sector, and the then minister encouraged us to do something for this group. If we did so, the minister promised the Tunisian government to match Denmark's contribution to the program via our partner organization *Fédération Tunisienne du Sport Pour Tous* (FTSPT).

This proved to be a very good deal for all parties involved in the programme. Eg. in 2014 when we began our cooperation, FTSPT only had a yearly annual budget of 20,000 EUR. In 2020 FTSP turned around approx. 600,000 USD of which MOYS is their biggest donor with funds all earmarked to support youth-led grassroots sport within the framework of their youth houses (DAPP is their second biggest donor).

In Jordan Cross Cultures have built our programme with young voluntaries in an urban setting, with a focus on the integration of Syrian refugees in host communities. The program has enrolled 96 voluntaries coaches recruited by MOYS-youth houses, which was a prerequisite for getting access into their facilities, and 145 recruited by Cross Cultures. Unfortunately, we had no Syrian refugees enrolled our youth leader education,

as their free time was limited to a degree that they had no time for voluntary work, as their precarious situation forced them to focus on day-to-day work, to sustain their families, barely paying for their cost of living. However, many Syrian refugees participated as beneficiaries in our OFFS and day-to-day activities. Furthermore, our Jordan partner has involved the community police as part of the child safeguarding initiative, and to create a friendly liaison to the OFFS participants.

## Combatting structural barriers on the job market

The preliminary findings suggests that most of the unemployed youth coaches and leaders are not letting their chance of getting employment go by passively. Rather they are subjects to a systemic and structural issue in their respective countries, economic stagnation, cessation in jobs and budgeting, because of the recession. One of our Tunisian coaches thus stated that *“generally, there is no opportunity to achieve a job in the first place, neither in the private nor public sector”*, which points to the fact that the negative employment numbers are a structural issue. Our coach was echoed by several coaches in Jordan and Tunisia, as she continued, and explained that *“it’s not your qualifications that gets you a job, but the people you know.”*

Also, one cannot neglect the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, as it has put many industries to a halt. Albeit, a large part of the unemployed coaches and youth leaders remain vigilant towards the job market and entrepreneurial in their social and civic engagement, in order to provide and help their local communities beat the solitude of unemployment, confinement or simple loneliness. This is done proactively through projects such as Corona-awareness campaigns<sup>8</sup>, opening dance- and aerobics-studios for women in parts of Tunisia outside of the capitol region, empowering gender equality and political awareness in Jordan. Providing young delinquent in juvenile facilities with vocational days of sports, arts and craft to bring joy to an otherwise dire life-situation, finally mobilizing youth in local rural areas of both Jordan and Tunisia in youth houses enabling them to access football training fields, basketball courts and dance classes has been the result of the above mentioned. These activities focus on at-risk youth, pass-time activities and beating religious radicalization by using sports as sites for socialization, integration and empowerment.

However, many more of our youth leaders wish to establish sport academies within youth houses or football clubs reaching out to vulnerable children and at-risk youth. But unfortunately, it is not easy because children and young at-risk people rarely have the money to pay a membership fee, and neither the Jordanian nor Tunisian government will support the establishment of such projects financially. One of the interviewees from the Sidi Makhoulouf area in Medenine, Tunisia thus said, *“It’s difficult, practically impossible, to start*

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<sup>8</sup> Please confer to the CISU report 2021 for further elaboration upon the matter



*anything from new as there is a total absence of the government in terms of employment and resources to sustain grassroots sports academies and other innovative activities for local youth in need. The only support I have got in this matter is education and access to facilities and equipment provided by the Cross Cultures programme.”*

Thus, the Cross Cultures programme is supporting the young volunteer leaders with both the facilitation of access to training fields and equipment, contributing with a positive impact, socially and locally, through our programme and (later on) proxy presence through local partners. In the end, this impact is fuel for the younger generation's hope and engagement in the future, as we see and experience it on our young leaders and coaches and it is a great asset for the local employability as it feeds into awareness opportunities through sport festivals, caravans, etc.

### Structure of our educational programme and why it targets employability naturally

Based on the number of interviews, and preliminary surveys conducted throughout the autumn of 2021, our findings suggest, that our programme offers the necessary tools and inspires an innovative and creative spirit amongst said youth in terms of creating local community-based networks and activities as well as entrepreneurial projects creating a revenue and jobs. This is a positive asset to our basic level youth leader education, as we are able to see traces and concrete examples of what is supposed to be the result of the final level of the education programme; attaining the level of “community organizer”, entails addressing a special need in the community based on the learnings from the basic and advanced (2<sup>nd</sup>) level. The Community Organizer must design, plan, organize, execute and evaluate their own project to meet special needs in their community. This we have numerous examples of, although the voluntary youth coach only has the basic level training. The advanced level is organised as an action-learning process in two modules around the main topics: (a) Sport-for-change, (b) Organisation, and (c) Community.

The end-goal of our youth leadership education, is to have the young voluntaries come up with a tangible and community-beneficial project of their own; be it a dance school, sport academy, afterschool-help for (out of school) children, targeting elderly through active lifestyle, or any kind of start-up business.

The three levels of the education comprise 300 hours of theoretical and practical training in child-centred and community-based activities, such as the OFFS, child safeguarding, financing and fundraising of own project, as well as feedback and evaluation from teachers and instructors. The realization of the programme-participant's own project is due by the end of the third and final level of our youth leader education. However, all of the interviewed, except five in Tunisia (2 women, 3 men have the 2<sup>nd</sup> level) have only had the basic level training, which paints a clear picture; Our youth leaders' education's basic level targets community beneficial issues and fuels the entrepreneurial desire to move forward and out of unemployment.

However, where the 1<sup>st</sup> level creates awareness and sparks inspiration for social entrepreneurship and networks, we see a clearly that our 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> level coaches act as focal point for these networks created, keeping them tightly together – they act as community organizers and youth leaders.

### Feeding into local innovative and creative spirits

Circling back to some of the examples of entrepreneurial and innovative projects, we wish to highlight the impact of four cases: The first being a set of twins, age 23, opening a dance- and aerobics-studio for women in Télirouine, in the Khef region of Tunisia, after finishing their basic level youth leader education. The majority of the region is very conservative, and, according to the interviewed, lacking a progressive view on gender equality. The twin sisters, after completing their basic level, saw a special need for and lack of activities for women. They localized a “gap in the market”, so to speak: *“It’s a new spirit, because normally there was no such thing as dance or aerobics in our region. We are specialists in dance and aerobics, and now we are locally known as the first female aerobics instructors to integrate it in our region. Every woman and child want to join us.”* Through the aerobics and dance, women shared stories and knowledge, political and social networks formed, and gender equality moved up on the agenda to mentioned but a few results. Women empowerment was the main result of the twins’ academy, as well as a sustainable revenue and new jobs created in their local community.

Another of our coaches from Aqaba, Jordan, has been working with various NGO’s ranging from Save the Children, Care, DRC and now a Japanese child protective organization. The latter she got employed by due to her participation in our Child Safeguarding seminar within this project and her success in establishing child protective networks as well as community-organized professional gatherings during sports festivals. The other NGO’s she worked for contacted her after having seen her working with kids as part of the youth leadership education. In regards to awareness opportunities for future employers she explained, *“voluntary workers have to make themselves known towards future employers through festivals, self-made community projects and so on. It’s the only way for us to beat the unemployment plague.”*

One of our Tunisian youth leaders, who started the education programme in 2014, was employed on an informal basis the same year until 2016 by the Ministry of Youth to work in an integration centre with delinquent youth and kids in precarious situations. Her informal employment was thanks to her skills and experiences acquired at the OFFS-programme, based on the integration of youth and kids through sports. In 2016 she was formally employed as a teacher in said ministry. Since 2014 She has been a voluntary at CCPA. In 2018 she was integrated as “coach of the coach” responsible for the “child safeguarding and sexual harassment prevention”-programme in collaboration with CCPA headquarters. She was appointed regional and national instructor, got more responsibility, and started working with psychologists, sociologists and other professionals working with at-risk children, finally hired by the Ministry of Social Affairs and is today responsible for coordinating sport and safeguarding measures within probate centres across Tunisia.

This was the direct cause of our Child Safeguarding seminar in 2018, and her idea of working with youth and children in terms of bringing them joy and healthy core values in an educative manner<sup>9</sup>: “*I wouldn't have come up with this if it wasn't for Cross Cultures non-competitive child play philosophy, and the Child Safeguarding seminar*”, she said during the interview. Her main issue is, that they are in need of more coaches, “*we don't cover enough ground*”, she explained.

The last prime example from Tunisia, is a coach in the capitol region, who established a large network and association, in Tadhaman, a very poor and precarious area known, among others, as Africa's China Town which fostered a great part of the radicalized fighters for ISIS. It is the most densely populated city of Africa, with around 33.000 children. The story of Marwen is not so much as a person, it's about the impact of our OFFS ongoing activities in Tadhaman, which he had success with. He moved from unemployed graduated youth leader to a teacher in an elite sport university specialised in sport promotion in difficult areas, and president of a local association, managing 25 coaches and leaders in many sport activities and dealing with many sport federations and international NGO's. His way of working is a direct result of a professional exchange in Copenhagen with Cross Cultures. Today he is supported by Cross Cultures and USAID. In his association, which is a perfect continuation of our CCPA day-to-day activities, he has around 1.700 children aged 6-18 showing up every day, around 12.000 pr. Week. Still, Marwen is not satisfied, and he has, with the support of Cross Cultures, created programmes targeting radicalized youth (*Sport contre le terrorisme*), handicapped children, girls and gender equality. For the time being he only has around 30% girls, which is partly due to conservative ways of living prohibiting women and girls from doing sports, among other things. With the help of CCPA he strives to make it from 30% to at least 45% within the coming year.

In Cross Cultures we consider all of the above cases as efficient community organisers, which is the goal of our 3<sup>rd</sup> level - “Own Project”.

## Unintended results

What is most peculiar about all these cases of social entrepreneurship is that political awareness of gender equality and job offers follow the entrepreneurial fire, essentially sparked by Cross Cultures youth leadership education. Thus, many of the innovative and creative academies, youth houses and vocational activities create a network of engagement through employability. In our leadership education, we strive to have a minimum of 40% women and girls attending, to put gender equality in the limelight as one of our core values

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<sup>9</sup> She developed a system for everyday use, to measure the mood and align with the expectations of the kids; three smiley faces, ranging from sad to happy, would be her off-set for structuring the day's activities and engage them, thus including everyone. She came upon this idea, as a result of how her peers treated and excluded the kids who were angry and causing trouble. By encouraging and empowering these angry kids, designating them as the group leaders of the day, giving them responsibility and tasks for the purpose of the group, they suddenly became kids with purpose and drive. They gained self-confidence and esteem, and their peers regarded them with respect and happiness instead of despise and discontent. The child-psychologists whom our youth coach worked with were astounded by her method.

in conflict management and community-based activities.

However, let us go back to the beginning and observe why our interlocutors started the educational programme, and most importantly what they have acquired by participating as volunteers.

## Social and civic impact

Most of whom we interviewed, described how they are loved and locally known in their areas due to their voluntary work and civic engagement with kids. They tell how they help kids stay out of the streets, and engage in a scheme for a better future, by giving them hopes and dreams through their creative and sporting activities.

Furthermore, when asked about the societal impact of the programme, not only vis-à-vis employability, all answered that the youth coaches with the knowledge and skills taught by Cross Cultures has a general “trickle-down”-effect in their communities and societies; it is uplifting for the local spirit, helps to combat sedentarism and religious radicalization, people get a general knowledge about what a “healthy” lifestyle means, thus starting to practice sports, even at an old age. Finally, it helps increase the employability and political awareness as future employers see these young entrepreneurial spirits start up their own projects. The most positive is, that kids are encouraged to participate and do various sports, especially in regions, as explained, which are hard to reach due to lack of infrastructure and transportation. Many points to the south-south exchange between Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and Denmark, allowing the youth coaches and leaders to travel between the three countries and learn from each other, as a part of the increased political awareness. The cultural exchange is regarded as a catalyst for such changes.

All of the employed cases, in all countries in question, are a direct result of the basic level youth leader education and the child safeguarding seminar. As stated above, the youth coaches and leaders, are local heroes, some with informal employments earning next to nothing, and still doing their voluntary activities for the local children and youth. Some have become so popular, that they are asked to do daily activities for the children to such a degree that it becomes either part- or fulltime projects. This has led to increased awareness from employers and employability through festivals, caravans and vocational activities in continuation of the programme; some of our coaches and leaders have become teachers in private schools, professional sport academies either in country or abroad, or employed by local NGOs working with at-risk youth and children.

## When Social and civic engagement becomes social entrepreneurship

Through our work of bringing grassroots sport activities to rural and distant regions of the two countries in question, many unemployed, at-risk- and out-of-schoolkids have been reached and helped to turn their situation in the best possible manner. In total, in Jordan and Tunisia 16.128 children have been helped and

attended our day-to-day trainings between 2017-20. However, the focus in Tunisia has been in the development of local employability through social entrepreneurship whereas in Jordan we have had a focus on working with integration of Syrian refugees, youth houses, and child protection.

In Jordan most of our employed coaches from the 2017 programme have obtained employment – the majority of them in the Ministry of Youth. Besides that, many work as voluntary “animateurs” at hotels, local radio stations, youth houses in addition to working as voluntary coaches at Cross Cultures – In Tunisia this is the case as well. They do so, because they believe, as is the general assumption in Scandinavia, that voluntary work is an asset on their CV. This is conversely something we in Cross Cultures, as an organization, as evidential as many of our voluntaries coaches and youth leaders have been employed elsewhere since they started their journey with us. Several are studying parallel to their voluntary work. Thus, finishing their academic studies in combination with the lack of employment opportunities is one of many reasons to join our programme. Unanimously, every coach said that working with children and learning how to work with them, has been a general reason and interest in joining the programme as well. A Tunisian coach who started a tae kwondo academy in the Kef governorate addressed the lacking engagement and help of the local community and government like this: *“I don’t have to wait for the government to get me work – I want to get to move my life by myself”*.

In Tunisia the FTSPT has a great part in activating university graduates from the Physical Education Universities and from the Higher Institution of Youth and Cultural Activism, to make activities in each of their governorates. With the help from Cross Cultures these activities have been improved with the influx of resources and coaching educations in order to target the unemployed youth and give them the necessary vocational clarification and training. As a result, grassroots sport-Caravans were invented under the observation that several regions were hard to reach due to rural area’s lack of infrastructure, placement and demography. These caravans turned out to have a great impact on the areas involved, activating youth and giving them a better view on the future they want to inhabit through vocational clarification and training, as explained by one of our Tunisian coaches. Furthermore, they mediated awareness opportunities for future employers, who could come and see our voluntary coaches’ skills and professionalism.

## Acquired competencies

When asked about how the basic level education has helped them in general, everyone stated that the real and practical experience of the OFFS, and festivals, are incomparable to the experience and knowledge they acquire from their academic studies. They emphasized that without the experience gained through voluntary work, they, as unemployed university graduates, wouldn’t have the possibility to gain employment. Our educational programme has helped them get motivated, gain practical and organizational skills, knowhow on the development of a personal project or start-up business as well as searching for financial support.

The Child Safeguarding Seminar is in general a great asset on their CV, and a seminar they wish to dive further into in future. Furthermore, as an addition to the child safeguarding seminar, it was suggested by multiple voluntary coaches, that the seminar and acquired competencies would benefit from having to work with developing the children's minds and sociality, to empower them and make them more self-confident. Therefore, further elaboration and practical work in regards to the child safeguarding seminar is high on demand; after completing the theoretical formation, many wish a period of practical work within the frame of child safeguarding by, for example, going to youth houses and juvenile centres to use these newly acquired competencies in praxis rendering them tangible and comprehensible.

Furthermore, more knowledge on communication and marketing is preferable as well, for the young coaches' entrepreneurial activities and future endeavours. This would, as they recount, help them grow their star-up projects bigger and stronger in their communities as well as reach a larger audience.

### What could be done differently in the educational programme?

When asked if anything could be done differently in the educational programme many suggestions arise:

- Mentor schemes: Pairing the young coaches and leaders with an experienced mentor in a certain field of interest, in order to get more guidance on the matter of entrepreneurial development.
- Involvement of the older generations, as these are often the gatekeepers of conservative and religious thinking, thus putting a barrier between progressive (grassroots sport) movements and gender equality.
- Engagement of the parents, involving them in the daily activities with the kids and making them participate with their kids. The goal is to enhance parental interest and make conflicting parties engage in concrete and tangible "problem-solving" activities along with their children. Vice-versa, it will show a parental support towards the children.
- Financial aid during festivals/ caravans/ OFFS would result in a bigger variety in activities, and the possibility to much more in general. In Jordan, the problem lies with the government, as the festivals and football schools need a "permission stamp" from said government in order to carry out activities.
- Lastly, the facilitation and support for the coaches and voluntaries in the rural areas of both Tunisia and Jordan; both experience trouble in reaching the local youth in these areas due to long traveling distances. This is also the case with youth in precarious situations, which is a general issue in most parts of Tunisia and Jordan, except parts of the capitol regions.
- Creating liaisons to, and working with private sector actors and enterprises in our professional integration through sports.

### Reasons for dropping out

Unfortunately, as is often the case in many educative programmes, there will always be drop-outs. Some of

our programme participants dropped out as well, and the most common answers point towards marriage – for the women –, issues of infrastructure and long traveling ours complicated by having to take care of elderly or disabled family members, long working hours or having to take a paid job due to poor and precarious circumstances.

Many of our people in the field, watch these people leave or drop out of the programme with distress, because, as they state *“the children need these activities, to keep them out of the streets, criminality, and give them hope and dreams for the future.”*

The primary reason for the high level of unemployment is due to the fact, that the majority of people working in the public sector depend on the government for jobs, such as the Ministry of Education in both Jordan and Tunisia.

## Moving forward

In Cross Cultures we are determined to further develop our youth leader education to increase employability in relevant countries and fit our coaches with the necessary tools and vocational training to inspire them to stay entrepreneurial whenever the job market fail them. In order to do so, we have partnered with a Moroccan organization, School of Second Chance – Tibu, in Casablanca who work with professional integration through sports. Their schooling programme targets school drop-outs, migrants and returnees. We have partnered with them because we believe their systematic approach to social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment adds brilliantly to our vision of bringing people together alongside enhancing employability through grassroots sport.

Thus, we have started Cross Cultures Morocco, in collaboration with Tibu since April 2021: We already have a clear communication strategy, helping our new coaches to find work and present their skills. The Facebook page of each CCPA-country office helps the coaches to access a broader audience, thereby getting noticed even further by potential employers. This has led to our first success story in Morocco vis-à-vis jobs created, and many more to come: One of our female coaches in Morocco, got contacted by two different football associations. She participated in the OFFS basic level of our leadership education programme in May. After the seminar, she and other coaches decided to organize an OFFS festival in a rural area - Casablanca, with the participation of 60 children (boys and girls). She integrated 3 volunteers as assistants from her neighbourhood, then shared all the posts and photos of the festival from our Facebook page “CCPA Morocco” on her Facebook timeline; thanks to that, she has been contacted by one female football club and a sports association to sign a job contract with them.

## Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the Survey shows that Cross Culture's action-based youth leadership training has had a positive impact on the young participants' employability and their life opportunities in general (resilience).

Thus, the young leaders interviewed emphasizes that they through voluntary activities, leadership education, life-skill training, club formation and social entrepreneurship in both Tunisia and Jordan have (a) been empowered to engage in civic society work in cooperation with stakeholders from various relevant sectors, especially parents, youth houses, local CSO's and authorities, (b) been empowered to work, in conjunction with cross sectorial partners, for peaceful co-existence, gender equality, respect for human rights, cultural and social diversity.

Or put another way, through tangible and self-organized activities the youth leaders consider to be meaningful, understandable, and manageable, they have experienced that Cross Cultures Youth Leadership Education and their volunteer commitment have had a positive impact on their current job situation just as the program has helped them strengthen their sense of cohesion and life opportunities in general (resilience).

However, despite the fine results of the survey, Cross Cultures and our partners believe that it is possible to further strengthen and streamline the social entrepreneurship and employability even better within Cross Cultures Youth Leadership Education by among others introducing a mentoring scheme for upcoming youth leaders/community organizers, integrating job placement as part of the education and incorporate best practice cases and start-up businesses within the value chain of the grassroots sport sector.