Across the Middle East and North Africa, youth—comprising approximately 70 percent of the population—drive development and innovation. Despite the numerous challenges they face, including unemployment, exposure to extremist ideologies, and limited space to express their aspirations and ideas, many are looking to channel their energy to advance their societies.

To empower youth and promote active citizenship, Eurasia Foundation (EF) developed a dynamic Critical Thinking Model grounded in transformative educational techniques. This model combines inquiry-based and experiential learning methods with practical skills youth need to take action to improve their communities.

Our interactive and collaborative approach offers youth a unique opportunity that begins with understanding and analyzing needs in their communities. This model features training workshops that incorporate critical thinking and advocacy skills with digital tools for media messaging to encourage youth to explore creative solutions and innovative ideas to address local challenges. The model also includes mentorship and coaching to support youth as they apply their skills through impact-driven community projects.

EF’s approach enables young people to build meaningful relationships with their peers and communities and to design and implement their own social initiatives.

“We came into the program as strangers and are leaving as a family.”
– Mimi Al Nusuf, n-mu facilitator

“The training was amazing; the trainers and materials were effective. They didn’t spoon-feed us the information. They let us discuss and get information…and that was amazing.”
– n-mu participant

“I witnessed behavioral shifts among the youth I trained; they stopped defending their opinions and began to listen to others.”
– Abdallah Al Khunani, n-mu facilitator
In 2015, in partnership with Kuwait-based civil society organization en.v, EF launched the “n-mu” project (“I grow” in Arabic) to promote active citizenship among youth in Kuwait ages 18-25.

Using innovative educational methodologies, including inquiry-based and experiential learning, EF developed an interactive and localized curriculum on citizenship, critical thinking, media literacy, and advocacy.

Complementing subject matter expertise with facilitation and coaching skills, our Training of Trainers prepared seven emerging Kuwaiti leaders to train youth in the Critical Thinking curriculum. In both Arabic and English, trainers introduced three diverse cohorts of participants from all six of Kuwait’s governorates to new ideas in community engagement and advocacy tools and helped them to develop problem-solving, critical thinking, and strategic communications skills.

Participants developed empathy and respect for multiple perspectives by learning to reflect on their assumptions and engage in meaningful discussions around pluralism and civic engagement.

The youths also worked together to design community projects that increased awareness of and addressed a number of key issues important to local youth: recycling, fitness and health, pluralism and tolerance, and entrepreneurship.

The n-mu trainers mentored the youth teams as they organized community events and workshops, created online media campaigns to raise awareness and garner support for their initiatives. To foster sustainability, the program helped participants to expand their networks by connecting to local media, universities, civil society organizations, and private sector entities.

To date, n-mu has reached more than 15,000 individuals across Kuwait and inspired an active community of diverse young people committed to realizing positive change.

Participants of n-mu’s Sustainable Youth community initiative organized Kuwait’s first free 5K run to promote physical fitness and mental well-being (February 2016).

This project was funded by IREX through its Regional Assistance Program and the U.S. Department of State.

Eurasia Foundation, an international non-profit organization, works to engage citizens and empower communities to take responsibility for their own civic and economic prosperity. Founded in 1992, EF utilizes best practices in advocacy, institutional development, and cutting-edge online training and education tools to foster the next generation of leaders in the Middle East and North Africa, China and the Eurasia region.

For more information contact:
Julie Garuccio
Director of Strategic Initiatives
202.234.7370 x129 . jgaruccio@eurasia.org

February 2017