**Youth at the heart of the fight against corruption**

In a region marked by vulnerabilities and conflict, corruption remains endemic in the Arab states. Scoring 33.38 out of 100 in the 2017 Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International, compared to a global average of 42, the region is making small yet positive steps towards increasing transparency and integrity.

Fighting corruption is everyone’s business. Contributing to the substantial reduction of corruption and bribery in all its forms, as stated in the SDG 16.5, is not just a responsibility of the public or private sectors. While strengthening national institutions and working with policymakers to develop strategies and plans, the UNDP-RBAS Anti-Corruption Initiative in Arab States (ACIAC) launched an innovative approach that places youth at the heart of the battle against corruption.

“Universities Against Corruption” is an initiative that aims to raise awareness among Arab youth about the risks of corruption and its different manifestations at different levels of society. Most importantly, the initiative aims to empower youth and provide them with the knowledge and tools to advocate for transparency and integrity, and tackle the corruption phenomena in their countries through a bottom-up approach.

Piloted since 2014, “Universities against corruption” was officially launched in late 2016 and has to date established partnerships with more than 20 universities from Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia and is planning to gradually expand to additional countries in the region.

The partnership served to support the establishment of integrity clubs in universities which have reached to date more than 2,000 students through awareness activities, integration of related materials in university curricula, and organization of extra-curricular activities such as training sessions and meetings with politicians and practitioners.

To ensure sustainability and regular engagement with the youth, ACIAC linked these integrity clubs with national anti-corruption agencies and associations. For example, the Jordan Transparency Center (JTC) has organized a series of interactive training sessions for university students, to learn more about the different anti-corruption instruments and to brainstorm on how students can contribute to promoting transparency and integrity in their societies.

Through this initiative, ACIAC is building a long-term engagement with youth from different countries in the region and connecting them through an integrated online platform to share experience and tips across Arab States. Through this regular interaction, the vision of “Universities against corruption” is to establish a corruption-free culture among leaders, businessmen and businesswomen of tomorrow.