

Assessing the Millennium Development Goals Process in the Arab Region

A Survey of Key Issues

Prepared by

The Arab NGO Network for Development

Azzam Mahjoub - Manal Mohamed Abdel Halim - Riad al Khouri



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the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) is a regional network working on three main issues in the Arab region; development policies, democracy and socio-economic reforms, and globalization and trade. ANND members include 7 national networks and 27 non-governmental organizations from 11 Arab countries.

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Foreword



Overview

The Arab region is facing multidimensional challenges that heavily affect social, economic and living conditions of the citizens. Many reports and analyses issued by regional and international institutions and organizations during the last decade consistently concluded that the region is among the worst in the world on these fronts.

Indicators on poverty and other sectors such as education, health, gender and the environment are not satisfactory despite the availability of natural and human resources. Moreover, economic indicators show low productivity and competitiveness. They also show one-dimensional economic models heavily based on oil, real-estate and financial rents. Moreover, the lack of proper national and regional economic vision and strategies is a prevalent feature of the region.

The challenges are not limited to the abovementioned problems, but more fundamentally, the lack of peace and security makes the region one of the most unstable in the world. It generates all other challenges and exacerbates them. This includes internal conflicts in many Arab countries related to ethnic, religious or other political and social grievances, such as in Sudan, Algeria, Yemen, Lebanon and Somalia, as well as foreign occupation that provokes additional tension and more difficulties such as in Palestine and Iraq.

The lack of freedom is identified as one of the most important reasons behind the current status quo. Indeed, it is still a strong obstacle preventing effective citizens' participation and ownership of national development policies as well as holding policy makers accountable for these policies.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can serve as important tools for advocacy because they are concrete and measurable. They allow civil society to monitor and hold decision makers accountable and responsible on one hand, and can also be means to evaluate the adopted national policies and strategies in case they exist, and point to the lack of commitment in case they do not. However, and in order to operationalize them to that effect, CSOs should be allowed to be established and operate independently and need to have access to proper information. That is where the link between freedom and MDGs becomes clear and crucial.

The MDGs report prepared by ANND

One of the main objectives of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) is to contribute to enhancing the advocacy role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Arab region. To that end, ANND does not consider the MDGs as sufficient development goals that embody the aspired dynamic and sustainable economic and social policies that are needed in the region. However, as concrete and measurable goals and targets to which there is agreement and commitment by Arab governments, they can serve as a tool to measure progress and to assess the relevancy of the adopted national policies.

During the 2010 UN General Assembly, the world will witness a review of the progress on achieving of the MDGs. The United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) is supposed to review the accountability of UN Member States' to their commitments. Governments are supposed to present reports on progress achieved during the decade that elapsed since the year of the MDGs' launch in 2000. It is worth noting that many stakeholders in the Arab region are preparing national and regional reports in parallel to the official process.

Within this context, ANND has chosen to contribute to this process through discussing the MDGs through three dimensions: the extent of mainstreaming the MDGs in national policy making; the policies dealing with financing flows including official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment (FDI) and their relation to the MDGs, and the gender dimension of the MDGs-related processes.

The following report is divided into three chapters each prepared by a different researcher. The objective of the report is to complement the efforts of civil society groups and add to the analysis presented on the MDGs from a civil society perspective. It is worth noting that through the preparation and discussions of the report, ANND aims to promote an interaction between the expertise among CSOs and the practitioners and the research capacities and efforts undertaken by academics. Furthermore, it hopes that the report will be used by CSOs as a reference and tools to strengthen advocacy efforts around the MDGs.

Summary of the findings

Most MDG-related analyses highlight the challenges so far and conclude that the progress made during the last decade is very limited or completely inexistent with regards to several of the goals. The following report tries to look at some of the reasons behind the lack of progress in the Arab region and to come out with recommendations that can serve as demands by CSOs in their related advocacy campaigns.

The first chapter of the report is an attempt to analyze the situation of financing for development in the region. It highlights the gap between economic indicators and development indicators. It shows that the former ranks the region in a better level compared to other regions of the world, while the latter ranks it among the worse regions. Furthermore, these indicators show the huge disparities between the countries of the regions and within the same country. Consequently, just and transparent wealth and benefits redistribution is an area that needs serious consideration and reform in the Arab region.

The chapter looks at the ODA and concludes that it is very limited from within the region while the ODA from foreign donors reflects their own objectives and policy agendas that do not necessarily converge with genuine local and regional priorities.

The report calls for the clarification of these priorities and the need to address them properly. It also stresses the need to indentify the optimal use of ODA, avoiding all forms of political and policy conditionality and promoting national ownership, partnership, and good governance.

The second chapter clearly concludes that the MDGs are not properly addressed by national policy making processes in various Arab countries.

The author relates that to several reasons among which are the lack of democracy, the high military spending, and the lack of transparency and adequate governance. The demographic evolution paralleled with the lack of proper economic policy making is leading to accumulation of high unemployment rates, which remains the most crucial challenge facing the region.

The chapter puts forward the general observation that the Arab countries are not mainstreaming development goals. MDGs are not top priority for the policy makers, academia, and various social actors. Moreover the economic and social priorities are not properly identified in many countries. Social and economic policy-making is often top-down and not based on effective inclusion and consultations with various social stockholders.

Furthermore, the chapter highlights a significant message about globalization, and the impact of global policy-making and economic liberalization on increasing constraints on national developmental policy spaces.

The third chapter analyses the gender dimension of the policies adopted for the achievement of the MDGs in the Arab region. also It highlights the lack of commitment by many Arab countries to some core articles of the Human Rights conventions including CEDAW. Many countries still abstain on many articles, thus preventing women in the region from some of their basic rights.

The chapter highlights that gender issues are still marginalized and not respected by the decision makers in the region. This can be rooted in traditional relations and influence of religious backgrounds on legal structures and social stereotypes. Moreover, the chapter discusses the impact of conflicts on women and their roles in the Arab region.

Recommendations

The report analyzed the level of commitment to the achievement of the MDGs in the Arab region, the related policy processes, and the role of different stockholders.

One of the overall observations of the chapters tackled the impact of the economic models followed in the Arab countries and the adoption

of improper national strategies for social development. This obviously contributes to the weak progress on the MDGs in most of the Arab countries.

Consequently, the report focuses on recommendations to enhance MDG mainstreaming and thus the potentiality for their achievement. In this regards, there is a pressing need for institution building and reform as well as strengthening the foundation of credible, accountable, transparent, and responsible governance.

The report stresses the need to elaborate comprehensive and reliable MDG-related data, statistics, and information. Moreover, it focuses on the importance of establishing participatory processes to define national priorities is a prerequisite. This necessitates democratization of the overall political, social, legal, and civic constructs, thus allowing CSO to enjoy free access to information and more freedom and independence.

On ODA, the report strongly raises the necessity to to increased aid that takes into consideration funding policies beyond social services and social protection. While expenditures on development should be increased, military spending and debt servicing need to be limited. Moreover, effective international aid and assistance for development should be based on the local realities and priorities. Donors must ensure that funds have positive impact on the poor and vulnerable communities in the region. In this regards, the three main sectors that need the highest concentration of investments remain health, education, and housing.

Within this reality, the report calls for enhancing the role of CSOs, particularly at the level of monitoring and advocacy. This induces the need to use all the available international means and mechanisms for advocacy. This includes promoting the participation of women and providing the kind of supportive and enabling environment for those purposes.

Concluding Notes

The upcoming United Nations General Assembly in September 2010 will evaluate global, regional, and national efforts towards the achievement of the MDGs. At the center of this analysis should be the implications of the global crisis that the world faced during the past years and its implications on the overall enabling environment for

achieving the MDGs. Core to this consideration should be reflections on the interface between the policy choices undertaken in areas covered by MDG 8, including in the area of trade, aid, debt, and overall global partnerships for development, and the possibilities for achieving the first seven goals.

It is very important to learn from the crises that we witnessed during the last three years. Whether it is the economic and financial crisis, the climate change crisis, the energy crisis or the food crisis, the turmoil they created proved the systemic and institutional nature of the problem that the global system faces. Consequently, it is worth establishing an in-depth analysis about the root causes of the crisis, with the objective of adopting a bold approach in global policy reform that help face their impact on the poor and vulnerable and avoid possible crisis in the future. This report does not directly tackle implications of the crisis on the MDGs in the Arab region since major part of its related work was done at the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009. We would like to refer you to the analysis piece entitled “Facing Challenges of Poverty, Unemployment, and Inequalities in the Arab region; Do policy choices of Arab governments still hold after the crisis?” for more on ANND’s views on the implications of the crisis on the region (available at www.annd.org).

Thus, it is essential to reconsider the macro-economic models that our countries adopt and their impact on social realities and development objectives. Moreover, it is crucial to address the mechanisms for enhancing regional coordination and effective integration that help is facing developmental challenges. At the center of any successful processes in this regard lies the need for democratic practice and respect of human rights as well as empowerment of citizenship.

Ziad Abdel Samad
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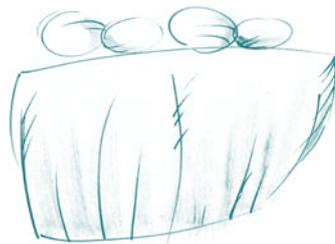
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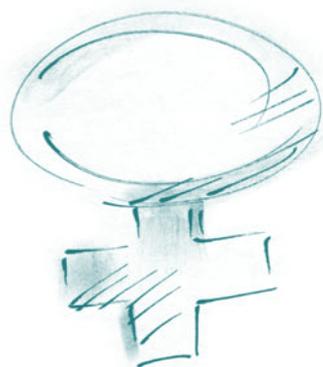
By

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Executive Summary



This chapter deals with the issue of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the Arab countries. ODA is a crucial issue when it comes to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); not only in terms of the sums spent but more importantly on the way they are spent. The chapter takes a look at the development landscape in the Arab region and its specificities to delve into the sources, forms and relevance of development funding with regards to achieving the MDGs.

The analysis starts with an assessment of development in the Arab region. A striking feature is the considerable difference between countries when comparing demographic, economic, social and human indicators. Most noticeable is the contrast between Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), such as Yemen and Sudan.

The author expands on another feature of the region; the Arab region's purchasing power parity (PPP) is higher than the PPP in developing countries but the Human Development indicators are lower. This brings to light the tenuous relation between economic growth and development in the region.

Having outlined the development situation in the region, the features of development assistance are expanded upon. A crucial element is the dependence on aid from outside the region. Indeed, inter-Arab ODA flows remain quite weak and the majority of ODA to the region comes from countries in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD), which represents 77.5% of funds.

This situation has a serious impact on development processes since aid received from DAC/OECD countries does not necessarily target the countries that are most in need but those that fit best within the policy priorities of donor countries. This reality hinders the MDG process, as it leaves some key sectors marginalized in terms of funding, such as

health and education.

Apart from this misdirection of funds resulting from the structure and sources of funding, countries in the region suffer from the problems of high military expenditures and high indebtedness, which further hinder the development processes even in middle and high income countries.

Throughout the chapter, recommendations are issued to improve external and inter-Arab funding and target specific sectors most relevant to the development process.

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The author wishes to extend special thanks to Imad Ben Rabeh who contributed in the preparation of the statistic tables.



I. Main demographic, economic, social and human characteristics of the Arab world

I.1 Population

The estimated Arab population (22 state members of the Arab League) is about 318 million people according to 2005 statistics, **4.9% of the world population**.

The demographic growth rate was 2.2% between 1995 and 2005. **The demographic dynamics remains intense in the Arab countries** despite its tiny decrease (2.1% between 1995 and 2005, and 2.4% between 2000 and 2005) and the demographic change achieved in many countries such as Tunis and Morocco (1.1% and 1.2% between 2000 and 2005).

The demographic challenge remains important in the Arab world.

I.2 Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Arab world GDP increased in 2005 and reached 1088,8 billion dollars, 2.7% of the world GDP. The growth average in the Arab world reached 6.6% per year between 1990 and 2005. From 1990 till 1995, the growth was only 2.3%. Then, it highly increased and became 8.1% between 1995 and 2000, and 9.6% between 2000 and 2005.

The oil prices fluctuations explain this economic development.

I.3 GDP per capita

The average of GDP per capita was 3423 dollars in 2005, 54.7% of the world average. This average conceals the big disparity among the Arab countries. For instance, GDP per capita in Yemen was 455 dollars in 2005, while in Qatar it was 54.024 dollars.

I.4 GDP per capita and the purchasing power parity (PPP)

When the purchasing power parity was considered in the Arab world, the per capita income reached \$5578 in 2005.

In comparison with the USA and the European Union (in particular the countries of the Monetary Union), we find that the GDP per capita is 14% relatively to the USA and varies between 19% and 20% in comparison with the EU (1/5). This gap between the Arab world and the USA or the EU has not been reduced since 1990.

Furthermore, regarding the comparison, it is important to see if the disparities among the Arab countries have decreased or increased since 1990. From this point of view, we have considered the average income in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states (the richest states such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) to be the basis of the comparison (index 100).

Except for Tunisia, gaps between individuals living in the rich Gulf states and the other Arab states did not change. In comparison with other Gulf states, GDP per capita in Yemen is 6%. For the less developed Arab countries : Djibouti, Sudan, Comoros, Somalia and Mauritania (12%-13%), the disparities remained the same or decreased weakly in the last 15 years.

This huge difference of wealth characterizes the Arab world: GCC states population constituted, in 2005, 10.8% of the Arab world population and had 56.6% of the Arab GDP (616 billion dollars). Less developed Arab countries contribute to 4.5% of the Arab GDP and represent 23.4% of the Arab world population.

1.5 External trade

The amount of external Arab trade is around 878.3 billion dollars, 4.2% of the international trade of 2005.

The Arab world participation in international trade increased between 1990 and 2005, from 3.6% to 4.2%. However, GCC states monopolized more than 2 thirds of the Arab world trade (65.1% in 2005).

Thanks to the trade openness, the Arab world trade increased to 80.9% because of oil exportations.

It is important to note the weakness of the inter-Arab trade (9%-10%), the exports among the Arab countries is only 9.3% and the imports reach 10%.

1.6 Foreign direct investment (FDI)

The foreign direct investment inflows rose to about 48.7 billion dollars,

5.1% of the international total FDI in 2005.

The Arab share during the decade 1990-2000 was only 2.1% (1% between 1990 and 1999). Then, it highly increased from \$6 billion between 1995 and 1999 to \$48.7 billion in 2005.

Moreover, **34.7% of the Arab world FDI's fluxes come from Arab countries.**

I.7 Human development

In 2005, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the human development index (HDI) was 0.699 in the Arab countries and 0.691 in the developing countries, although the Arab income per capita in PPP f was higher (\$6776 versus just \$5282 in the developing countries in general). This shows **the lack of efficiency in transforming the economic growth into human development.**

The Arab world suffers from severe lack in the education domain. Compared to developed countries rates, adult literacy rate is 76.7% in developed countries and only 70.3% in the Arab world. The Arab world net enrollment ratio is a bit higher with 65.5% in comparison to developing countries, where the ratio is 64.1%, but below the international average which is 67.8%.

Disparities between male and female regarding to adult literacy rate, school enrollment or participation in active labor force are relatively high when compared to developing countries. For example, labor women participation rate in developing countries is 52.4%, twice the rate in the Arab world 26.7%.

Women also suffer from unemployment.

Unemployment rate in North Africa and the Middle East is very high in comparison with the rest of the world.

In 2006, according to the evaluations of the International Organization of Labor, the unemployment rate was between 11% and 12% in North Africa and the Middle East while the world rate is 6.3%. The unemployment is affecting women more than men, mostly in the Arab world. In North Africa and the Middle East, the unemployment rates vary between 16 and 17% among women, and between 9 and 10% among men (difference of 7.9%). On the international level, the unemployment among men is 6.1% and 6.6% among women (difference of 0.5%).

II. Official Development Assistance (ODA): Introduction

The ODA organizes the loans (with payment facilities) or the assistance given to the states and regions stipulated in the first part of the list of the

beneficiaries from the assistance given by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to the developing countries. The DAC is formed by the states members in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The developing countries recipients are classified as follows:

- Less developed or low-income countries (in the Arab world these countries are: Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen and the Palestinian territories);
- Lower middle income countries (in the Arab world these countries are: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia);
- Upper middle income countries (in the Arab world these countries are: Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Libya and Oman);
- High income developing countries (Bahrain, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait and Qatar).

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The OECD statistics distinguishes the donors as following:

1. All donors:
DAC member states, mainly: USA, France, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom;
2. States that are not members in the DAC, some others Arab countries here are donors: Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait;
3. Multilateral organizations, such as: the European Union and the Arab agencies.

III. Official Development Assistance delivered by all donors to Arab countries

DAC donors contributed, within the OECD, to 77.5% of the ODA received by the Arab countries between 2000 and 2006.

Other donors contributed to 6%, and the Arab donors presented only 4.7% of the total received assistance. 16.5% were given by multilateral organizations, the Arab agencies only contributed to 0.23% of the ODA between 2000 and 2006. The rest, 7%, was offered by some UN organizations. The European Commission participation was about 9.2%.

The United States is in the top of the DAC donors list, the average of its ODA donated is 37.4% of the assistance the Arab world receives. Some

European countries follow the United States: France 8.3% - Germany 5.8% - United Kingdom 3.81% (around 18% together).

The Japanese share of the donations given to the Arab world reaches 8%. Other DAC donors are responsible for the rest which is around 14%. If we add the European donations, bilateral or multilateral, we find that the contribution of the EU and the USA are almost equal.

For the Arab countries donors and Arab donating agencies, it is important to note their weak participation in the ODA given to Arab countries between 2000 and 2006 (5% only).

The net ODA amount (calculated after paying the debts) given to 22 Arab state members at the Arab League by all the donors increased to 17.1 billion dollars in 2006, 19.6% of the total ODA donated by all donors to developing countries.

The assistance to the Arab states during seven years (2000-2006) reached 82.5 billion dollars, which means 18.9% of the Assistance given to all the developing countries. The annual average is about 11.9 billion dollars. The amount and the share of the Arab countries in the ODA highly increased between 2000 and 2006, from 4 billion dollars (11.4%) in 2000, to almost 29.2 billion dollars (31.63%) in 2005, but it decreased a bit in 2006 with 17.1 billion dollars (19.16%).

This evolution is related to the geopolitical and military events occurred in the region that reflect the strategies of the main international actors in the region.

Therefore, 46% of the assistance given between 2000 and 2006 to the Arab countries were transferred to Iraq (invasion and occupation). The Palestinian Territories got 9.4% and Sudan 7.5%. These three countries receive 63% of the total assistance.

As mentioned ODA is subject to a number of conditions dealing with politics and strategies, imposed by the big DAC donors corresponding to their interests (USA and EU in particular).

In 2000. Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Territories which were under the Fatah government, were in line with the dominating powers strategic orientations. Thus, Egypt got 37%, Jordan 12.5% and the Palestinian Territories 10%. These three countries received 60% of the net ODA given to the Arab countries.

However, since the occupation of Iraq, the conflict in Darfur and the outbreak of the second Intifada, especially the victory of Hamas in Gaza in the 2006 elections, Iraq has been getting 50.6% of the assistance, Sudan 12%.

It is clear that the assistance given to the Arab countries by the big

DAC donors is suaffected by strong political and geostrategic concerns that determined its distribution. As for the assistance offered to the Palestinian Territories, it remained the same in 2003, 2004 and 2005. It is explained later in the present report how the multilateral organizations compensated, to some extent, the lack of assistance to the Palestinians especially when the Americans and the Europeans had stopped this assistance after Hamas victory.

Another flagrant example is the status of Syria. This country received \$150 million in 2000 but the assistance decreased to \$27 million in 2006.

DAC donors reduced a lot of the assistance amounts given to Syria and it became negative in 2006.

The big DAC donors are applying a political and strategic conditionality. This bias appears clearer when comparing the share of the Arab countries to that of the developing countries. In total ODA

The ODA dedicated to the Arab world is higher than the Arab demographic size. For instance, the total Arab countries population constituted 5.2% of the developing countries population, yet they received 11.4% of the ODA in 2005: demographically speaking, the Arab countries should get 5% -6% of the ODA but they actually get 33.6%!

This picture must be relativised, because Iraq received almost half of the arab assistance (46%). **Moreover, the share of the Arab ODA per capita was still higher in comparison with the the other developing country ODA per capita** in 2000 (\$15.2 in the Arab world and \$6.7 in the developing countries). The gap increased in 2005, each Arab was getting \$94.3 while in the other devolopping counties the part was only \$16.5 per capita.

The ODA represents 3% of the Arab countries GDP and 0.9% of the developing countries GDP. **The demographic size of the less developed Arab countries, Djibouti, Sudan, Comoros, Somalia, Mauritania, the Palestinian Territories and Yemen, is 23%. These countries part of the arab ODA was 25.3% between 2000 and 2006.**

Here one must insist on **the necessity for these countries to be considered as priority to get more important assistance that would exceed its demographic size.** For example, in 2005, the average per capita l of the assistance donated to the Arab world was \$94.3. But, this average in Comoros did not exceed \$42, \$62 in Mauritania, \$28.9 in Somalia, \$50.5 in Sudan, and \$16 in Yemen.

However, the Palestinian Territories average was \$293.6 and Djibouti \$99.1.

Obviously there is a need for the reorientation of the assistance to countries that suffer from a severe lack in human development. Without this significant change ,the millennium development goals are impossible to be achieved

In order to complete the approach related to the distribution of assistance, it is necessary to note that Egypt received from DAC donors between 2000 and 2006 10% of the arab ODA(23% of the Arab population). The ODA was reduced in Egypt from \$19.6 in 2000 to \$12.5 in 2005!

Finally, for the three Maghreb countries Morocco's assistance increased to almost one billion dollars in 2006 while it was half this amount in 2000. Tunisia experienced a big progress, the assistance amounts doubled between 2000 and 2006 (220.4 million dollars in 2000 and 432 million dollars in 2006). Algeria also had a variable progress and reached almost 260 million dollars per year.

IV. Assistance Given by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Member States

The ODA from OECD/ DAC donors represent 77.5% of the total ODA received by the Arab countries (13.7 billion dollars in 2006), equivalent to 21.7% of the total ODA given to all the developing countries. Between 2000 and 2006, the Arab countries share was 21.1%, a huge increase from 11% in 2000 to 14% in 2003 and it reached 37.5% exceptionally in 2005 (3 billion dollars in 2000, 26.5 billion dollars in 2005 and 13.7 billion dollars in 2006).

Iraq, alone, received 56.5% of the total ODA dedicated to the Arab region, Egypt got 10%, Sudan 7.1%, the Palestinian Territories 5.3% and Jordan 5.2%. These four countries benefited from 71.1% of the ODA.

The same remark mentioned above should be repeated here concerning the political conditionality regarding DAC donors. The political and geostrategic factor explains why the assistance is being given to Iraq which share increased from 3% in 2000 to 64.8% in 2006. Sudan part also increased from 3% to 11%. However, the Palestinian part of assistance remained almost the same and the Syrian one became negative (the debts exceeded the payments).

- The USA gave the Arab countries 37.2% of the total assistance between 2000 and 2006.

The USA destined 2/3 of the assistance to Iraq, while Egypt got 11.4%, Jordan 8.5% and Sudan 7%.

Palestine received 3.6% and the other Arab less developed

countries did not get more than 1%.

- **France – Germany – the United Kingdom – Japan** dedicated respectively 22%, 17.8%, 11.2%, 14.8% of their bilateral ODA to the Arab countries between 2000 and 2006 (in comparison with the 37.2% given by the USA). The above mentioned countries respectively represented 8.3%, 5.8%, 3.8%, 8% of the total ODA the Arab countries received.

Briefly, **the ODA evolved in both volume and orientation due to political and military factors:**

- France and, to a certain extent, Germany focus more on the Maghreb countries, Egypt and Iraq after its occupation.
- The United Kingdom focuses on the Arab Mashreq countries in general, Sudan and eventually Iraq.
- Japan is mostly concerned by Iraq and offered it 83% of its donations in 2006.

In conclusion, the political and geostrategic factors play a key role in the ODA given to the Arab countries.

V. Assistance Given by Non-DAC Donors

The non-DAC donors offered 6% of the total ODA to the Arab countries between 2000 and 2006 (the annual average is about 710.5 million dollars), representing 41.15% of the total ODA donated to the developing countries.

This percentage was high during the period 2000-2006 (69.7% in 2002 for example), and decreased to 15.1% in 2006.

The Arab donors, Saudi Arabia – Kuwait – United Arab Emirates, offered 59.1% of the total non-DAC donors ODA to all developing countries.

According to OECD 2002-2006 statistics, Saudi Arabia was classified as the top Arab non DAC donor. It donated 85.6% of the Arab ODA to all the developing countries (1.9 billion of 10.6 billion dollars from 2000 till 2002) Kuwait and the UAE respectively donated 8.6% and 5.8%. The Arab donors contributed to 4.7% of the ODA received by the Arab countries (568.1 million dollars as an annual average between 2002 and 2006).

From 2000 till 2006, the Arab ODA was mostly oriented towards other Arab countries (3/5 to 4/5), but in 2006 it decreased to 10.5%.

The annual inter-Arab ODA volume was varying, it rose to 2 billion dollars in 2002 then fell to 200-250 billion dollars in the following years. The annual average has become around half a billion dollars between 2000 and 2006: 4.7% of the annual ODA average given to the Arab countries, as mentioned above (half a billion of 12 billion dollars).

As for the distribution of the inter-Arab ODA, we remark that the Palestinian share was 29.6% in the period 2002-2006, but the ODA in 2002 was around 776 million dollars and became zero in 2006!

Morocco is classified second among the beneficiaries of the inter-Arab assistance between 2000 and 2006 with 12%, followed by Yemen 10.7%, Egypt 10.3% and Lebanon 8.6%.

By adding the Arab less developed countries share, except for Palestine: Comoros 0.16% - Djibouti 10.3% - Mauritania 0.16% - Somalia 1.5% - Sudan 6.8% - Yemen 10.8%, we get 30% (). However, the ODA is still low and inconstant, it might become negative (when the debts are higher than the assistance), as it is the case in Mauritania and Syria in addition to Iraq that did not receive any Arab help between 2000 and 2006.

In conclusion, it is obvious that the inter-Arab assistance is relatively very weak and is being subject to political influence (decrease of the ODA dedicated to Palestine and its absence in Iraq). The inter-Arab assistance was much lower than the direct foreign inter-Arab investments in 2006: 240 million dollars for the assistance and 17.6 billion dollars for the investments, 1.3%! Saudi Arabia and the UAE have had more than 3/4 of the Arab investments from 1995 till 2006.

VI. Assistance Given by Multilateral Organizations

The Arab countries represent 11.4% of the total ODA given by the multilateral organizations to all developing countries. The annual assistance is estimated to be 2 billion dollars (2000-2006), this amount remained approximately the same from 2004. The MO's contribute to 16.5% (1/6) of the ODA the Arab countries received between 2000 and 2006 as mentioned previously.

The Palestinian share of the ODA presented to the Arab world by the MO's was 22.7% due to the ODA cessation by OECD/ DAC dominating countries (USA and EU) after Hamas taking over the government in the Palestinian Territories.

Sudan is the second country after Yemen and Palestine to receive the ODA offered by the MO's to the Arab countries (9.6% and 7.1%). The shares were as follows: Djibouti 0.6%, Comoros 1.5% and Somalia 3.4%. **Thus, the low income or the less developed Arab countries**

received 45% of the total ODA destined to the Arab world from 2000 till 2006. This shows that the MO's targeting towards the ODA is closer to less developed countries priorities and needs .

According to 2005 and 2006 statistics about the ten multilateral first donors mult, and to the Arab countries where the statistics are available, the first multilateral organization providing the Arab world with the ODA is the European Commission followed by the Arab agencies, then the International Development Agency (IDA), and United Nations organizations such as United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTA) – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) - United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) – United Nations Population Fund (UNPF).

Regarding the primordial role of the European Commission and the much less important role of the Arab agencies, it is necessary to highlight them.

VI.1 The European Commission

From 2000 till 2006, the European Commission donated 42 billion dollars to all the developing countries. The Arab countries part was about 7.6 billion dollars, 18.2% of the total donation, the annual average was equal to 1.1 billion dollars.

The European ODA given to the Arab countries was less than 1/10 (9.2%) of the total assistance received by these countries during the period 2000-2006.

The European ODA handed to the Arab countries remarkably increased to 627 million dollars in 2000 and 1.7 billion dollars in 2006. The Arab share of the European ODA rose from 16.5% in 2000 to 20.2% in 2006. **The Arab Mediterranean member states of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership/ Barcelona Process presented 73% of the European ODA destined to the Arab countries:** Morocco 18% - Palestine 15.5% - Egypt 11% - Tunis 10% - Algeria 5% - Jordan 4.8% - Syria 3%.

The 2000-2006 European ODA is listed in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership MEDA II program (MEDA I program was carried out between 1995 and 1999).

The Assistance was affected by the political evolution of the Palestinians. The European Commission assistance increased between 2000 and 2002 from 62.5 to 171 million dollars, it remained the same during the years 2002, 2003 and 2004, and then it rose in 2005 and 2006. **This oscillation is due to the political conditionality imposed by the European Commission.**

The European Commission dedicated 11.5% of the total Arab destined ODA to Iraq and Sudan only got 3.7% of it.

The 2005 and 2006 OECD statistics show that the among top ten developing countries that receive European ODA, Turkey is in the first place followed by Morocco, then Sudan and Egypt, and Palestine is classified 7.

The European ODA given to Algeria was reduced: it was around 51.5 million dollars in 2000 and became negative in 2006 (Debt reimbursement > Gross ODA).

The assistance given to Jordan fell from 80.5 million dollars (12.8%) in 2000 to 50 million dollars (3%) in 2006. The share of Sudan, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon increased. Sudan got the highest share increase.

40% of the European ODA were destined to the social sectors.

VI.2 Arab Agencies (table 12)

The Arab funds contribution to the ODA given by the MO's is low, 1.8%, in 2006. The ODA donated to the Arab world between 2000 and 2006 is almost marginal, **with an average that equals 27.7 million dollars, 0.23% of the total ODA the Arab countries received during this period.** Figures below show, for example, that in the years 2000 and 2001 the ODA debt reimbursement was higher than the gross ODA. Thus, the Net ODA was negative. The Arab countries share of the Arab funds ODA constituted 22% of the total amounts in 2005 and 19% in 2006. The three Arab countries that benefited from 60% of the Arab agencies ODA were: Yemen 23% (annual average = 6.3 million dollars), Palestine 19.2% (annual average = 5.3 million dollars), and Mauritania 17% (annual average = 5 million dollars). As for Egypt and Morocco, each one of them got 15% of the ODA (annual average = 4.2 million dollars).

The Net ODA was low as the following table shows:

Million dollars	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Gross ODA	298	202	536	491	680
Net ODA	139.4	44.1	280.2	252	411
Gross ODA/Net ODA (%)	46%	2.2%	52.2%	51.5%	60%

Except for the year 2003, the Net ODA was very weak. The average

Net ODA / Gross ODA was between 40% and 60% knowing that the assistance evolution was swinging (it decreased in 2003 and 2005 and increased in the other years – check the table). For instance, the Net ODA (the difference between the ODA and the debt reimbursement) of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (the most important Arab agency for donations) was relatively low between 2000 and 2006.

VII. Distribution by Sectors of the ODA

The 2005 and 2006 international available data classifies the ODA in 5 sectors as follows:

Sectors	Percentage %
Social infrastructure and services .1	31.9
1.1 Education	6.9
1.2 Health	
Housing and reproductive health 1.3	4
1.4 Provide water and sanitation	
1.5 The government and the civil society	17.2
1.6 Social infrastructure and other services	
2. Economic infrastructure	11
3. Production sectors	5
4. Cross cutting sectors	9.5
5. Other sectors	46
5.1 Including debt reimbursement	24.5
Total: 1+2+3+4+5	100%

Sectors with social dimensions get 31.9% of the Gross ODA given to all developing countries under a bilateral frame (2005-2006).

Education is receiving 6.9% of the ODA while health, housing and reproductive health are receiving 4%. Other social sectors such as providing water and sanitation and supporting the government and civil society, and other social sectors get 17.2%.

Debts resulting from the ODA are 24.5% of the ODA itself.

By focusing on the social sectors and examining the available figures in most, not all, of the Arab countries that got a part of the ODA from 2000

till 2006, we find that the average of social sectors benefiting from the bilateral ODA is lower than the international average (31,9%).

In Mauritania (19.8%), Sudan (23%), Yemen (22.3%), Iraq (22%) and Jordan (14.05%).

Thus, it is highly recommended to reconsider the ODA sectorial distribution to avoid this deficit. The education sector does not get a sufficient part in comparison with the international rate (6.9%) in both of Sudan (2.5%) and Iraq (0.8%).

Health, housing and reproductive health sectors in most of the Arab countries are getting a very low percentage of the assistance. In addition to the fact that one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) related to maternal mortality reduction will not be achieved in most of the Arab countries within the requested time period. It is inevitable to highlight this crucial issue and to concentrate the ODA more efficiently on health.

Other social sectors (water, sanitation, civil society, etc.) shares are below the international average, mainly in Mauritania, Somalia, Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia.

VIII. Government Expenditure in the Social Sectors

VIII.1 Education

Comparing Arab countries to each other shows many differences related to public expenditure on education (as a proportion of the GDP).

5 Arab states assign 6.7% to 9.6% of the GDP to this sector: Yemen 9.6% - Djibouti 7.9% - Tunisia 7.3% - Saudi Arabia 6.8% - Morocco 6.7%. However, taking into consideration the gross school enrollment rate (in all levels of education) it is relatively low in the 5 countries, which raises the issue of the public expenditure efficiency: In comparison with other developing countries. This fact indicates that the enrollment ratio is weak if compared to the public expenditure.

Allocating part of the ODA to enforce the institutional education capacities, to rationalize the public expenditure and increase the efficiency is thus necessary.

Contrary to these countries that allocate high rates to education, other countries assign very low rates to this sector such as UAE 1.3%, Qatar 1.6% and Mauritania 2.3%. Enrollment rates in Mauritania (45.6%) and UAE (59.9%) are weak. This raises the issue of using the ODA in Mauritania in particular to support and rationalize the government effort in the education sector.

By comparing Kuwait to Mexico, we find that the public education expenditure rate in Mexico (5.4%) is close to Kuwait (5.1%), but in Mexico the enrollment rate is (81.5%) higher than the rate in Kuwait (74.9%).

In conclusion, Arab countries suffer, in different degrees, from a weak government effort on the education sector. Arab the average per capita income in 2005 was \$6716 (PPP) and \$5882 in the developing countries. Enrollment average is 65.6% in the Arab countries and 64.1% in the developing countries. Thus, **it is necessary to orientate ODA towards improving the education sector in general.**

Saudi Arabia and Oman are the top two countries that urgently need to prioritize the education. Djibouti and UAE also have to improve this sector through using government efforts and ODA.

VIII.2 Health

Here we consider life expectancy and public expenditure in this sector.

Health sector does not get enough priority from the governments in the low income countries where life expectancy is relatively low. In general, Arab governments assign health related rates varying between 1.8% in Comoros and 3.8% in Lebanon with a life expectancy at birth between 61.5 years in Yemen and 77.3 years in Kuwait.

Other indexes related to health conditions, such as child mortality rate, show, according to UNDP reports, that three countries need very urgent implementation of the MDG's: Iraq – Somalia – Sudan. Three other countries have to do the same: Djibouti – Lebanon – Yemen.

As for the maternal mortality, as previously mentioned, the situation in the Arab countries does not show that the MDG's are likely to be achieved.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended to orientate the ODA towards the health sector and to improve the government targetting and efficiency in this vital sector.

IX. Government Expenditure in the Military Sector, Indebtedness and ODA

It is important to mention some other aspects related to the public behavior in dealing with obstacles to development.

IX.1 Military expenditure

There is no doubt about the importance of the Arab world due to its geostrategic location and large fuel reserve, in addition to the Arab-

Israeli conflict and the foreign ambitions. Therefore, most of the Arab countries allocate high amounts for military issues (military expenditure as part of the GDP). This allocation is very high in Oman (11.9%) and Saudi Arabia (8.1%), high in Yemen (7%), Jordan (5.3%) and Syria (5.1%), and less high in Kuwait (4.8%), Morocco (4.5%), Lebanon (4.5%) and Djibouti (4.2%).

This public military expenditure is a diversion of national resources devoted to human development

IX.2 Debt

The annual debt service rate as part of the GDP is very high in Lebanon about 16.1% in 2005!

Contrary to Syria where this rate is 0.8%, considered to be very low, which is the case also in Comoros 1%, Yemen 1.4% and Sudan 1.4%.

As for Maghreb countries, they suffer from high rates, Tunisia 7.2%, Algeria 5.8% and Morocco 5.3%.

Contrary to Syria where this rate is 0.8%, considered to be very low, which is the case also in Comoros 1%, Yemen 1.4% and Sudan 1.4%.

At last, by comparing the ODA to public military expenditures and debt service, we find the following:

1. In the Arab less developed countries, the ODA plays a major role because it compensates to some extent the lack of resources and capabilities usually devoted to development in general and social expenditure in particular and that might be used for armament and debt reimbursement. **Without the ODA, these countries could not survive.**
2. In the Arab middle-income countries, the ODA only contributes to **decrease the lack resulting from the military efforts and debt reimbursement.**

The main issue in Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria¹, Jordan, Tunisia and Egypt is the indebtedness, and then comes the reduction of the military burden especially in Morocco, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

For these countries the received ODA as part of the GDP is relatively weak, around 1%, except in Jordan 4.9%. Thus, **the reduction of the debt and or the raise of the ODA amounts and the improvement of the targetting process are on the agenda.**

¹ The situation in Algeria is less complicated because the high gas and fuel returns help this country to reimburse a big amount of debts.

Table 1

Donor	All Donors, Total									
Amount	Current Prices (USD millions)									
Type of aid	ODA Total, Net disbursements									
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	Moy. 2000-2006	
Total Arab Countries	4817,85	5379,86	6802,82	8358,12	11389,16	29330,53	17149,28	83227,62	11889,66	
Total to all recipients	40791,37	43177,91	51122,8	57305,25	63460,77	92489,86	89355,9	437703,9		
%	11,81%	12,46%	13,31%	14,59%	17,95%	31,71%	19,19%	19,01%		

Table 2

Donor	DAC Countries, Total									
	Current Prices (USD millions)									
Amount	ODA Total, Net disbursements									
Type of aid										
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	Moy. 2000-2006	
Total Arab countries	3085,19	2993,29	3264	6090,67	8900,44	26445,63	13725,57	64504,79	9214,97	
To all recipients	28002,59	27671,11	32605,75	40391,97	42630,48	70550,97	63280,37	305133,2		
%	11,02%	10,82%	10,01%	15,08%	20,88%	37,48%	21,69%	21,14%		

Table 3

Donor	United State, Total									
	Current Prices (USD millions)									
Amount	ODA Total, Net disbursements									
Type of aid										
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	MoY 2000-2006	
Total Arab Countries	982,82	952,77	1460,6	3397,77	4846,02	13011,68	6482,79	31134,45	4447,78	
To all Recipients	5442,22	6188,6	8083,76	12159,01	12535,17	21895,65	17439,35	83743,76		
%	18,06%	15,40%	18,07%	27,94%	38,66%	59,43%	37,17%	37,18%		

Table 4

Donor	Germany, Total									
Amount	Current Prices (USD millions)									
Type of aid	ODA Total, Net disbursements									
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	Moy. 2000-2006	
Total Arab Countries	245,91	406,67	243,53	318,81	325,78	2419,67	870,09	4830,46	690,07	
To all recipients	2222,03	2377,82	2834,35	3536,42	3213,54	6751,27	6172,04	27107,47		
%	11,07%	17,10%	8,59%	9,02%	10,14%	35,84%	14,10%	0,18		

Table 5

Donor	Frensh, Total										
	Current Prices (USD millions)										
Amount	ODA Total, Net disbursements										
Type of aid											
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	May, 2000-2006		
Total Arab Countries	696,1	642,29	568,81	734,8	851,46	1606,52	1795,52	6895,5	985,07		
To all recipients	2357,06	2015,94	3295,54	4792,27	4920,03	6574,2	7418,08	31373,12			
%	29,53%	31,86%	17,26%	15,33%	17,31%	24,44%	24,20%	21,98%			

Table 6

Donor	Japan, Total									
	Current Prices (USD millions)									
Amount	ODA Total, Net disbursements									
Type of aid										
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	May. 2000-2006	
Total Arab Countries	580,57	348,52	192,27	300,33	880,57	3491,44	941,49	6735,19	962,17	
To all recipients	8176,49	6321,13	5650,05	5224,63	4677,61	9211,97	6167,2	45429,08		
%	7,10%	5,51%	3,40%	5,75%	18,83%	37,90%	15,27%	14,83%		

Table 7

Donor	United Kingdom, Total									
Amount	Current Prices (USD millions)									
Type of aid	ODA Total, Net disbursements									
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	Moy. 2000-2006	
Total Arab Countries	54,07	60,55	98,71	260,64	528,02	1602,62	565,83	3170,44	452,92	
To all recipients	2133,77	2040,56	2735,65	2890,92	4206,98	6949,16	7384,64	28341,68		
%	2,53%	2,97%	3,61%	9,02%	12,55%	23,06%	7,66%	11,19%		

Table 8

Donor	Non DAC Members		Current Prices (USD millions)									
	ODA Total, Net disbursements											
Amount												
Type of aid												
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	Moy. 2000-2006			
Total Arab Countries	457,12	668,71	1986,97	392,37	373,75	532,73	562,5	4974,15	4974,15			
To all recipients	902,65	1189,07	2852,53	785,02	1031,18	1605,1	3723,3	12088,85				
%	50,64%	56,24%	69,66%	49,98%	36,24%	33,19%	15,11%	41,15%				

Table 9

Donor	Arab Countries									
	Current Prices (USD millions)									
Amount	ODA Total, Net disbursements									
Type of aid										
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	Moy, 2000-2006	
Total Arab Countries	438,84	622,2	1957,94	277,61	202,4	237,47	240,47	3976,93	568,13	
To all recipients	581,03	878,69	2460,41	301,34	280,55	358,82	2285,22	7146,06		
%	75,53%	70,81%	79,58%	92,13%	72,14%	66,18%	10,52%	55,65%		

Table 10

Donor	Multilateral								
	Amount	Current Prices (USD millions)							
Type of aid	ODA Total, Net disbursements								
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	Moy. 2000-2006
Total Arab Countries	1275,54	1717,86	1551,85	1875,08	2114,97	2352,17	2861,21	13748,68	1964,10
To all recipients	11886,13	14317,73	15664,52	16128,26	19799,11	20333,79	22352,23	120481,8	
%	10,73%	12,00%	9,91%	11,63%	10,68%	11,57%	12,80%	11,41%	

Table 11

Donor	European Commission EC									
Amount	Current Prices (USD millions)									
Type of aid	ODA Total, Net disbursements									
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	Moy. 2000-2006	
Total Arab Countries	627,06	857,54	757,18	1125,48	1277,81	1313,14	1703	7661,21	1094,46	
To all recipients	3786,96	4862,48	4548,85	5594,2	6980,52	7690,62	8489,95	41953,58		
%	16,56%	17,64%	16,65%	20,12%	18,31%	17,07%	20,06%	18,26%		

Table 12

Donor	Arab agencies		Current Prices (USD millions)									
	ODA Total, Net disbursements											
Amount												
Type of aid												
Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 2000-2006	Moy. 2000-2006			
Total Arab Countries	-0,29	-1,74	31,66	-1,17	35,09	52,88	77,72	194,15	27,74			
To all recipients	35,16	139,56	139,43	44,11	280,26	251,98	411,05	1301,55				
%	-0,82%	-1,25%	22,71%	-2,65%	12,52%	20,99%	18,91%	14,92%				

Table 13 - Net ODA Arab Countries by donors (2000-2006)

Donors	All donors	DAC Members	USA	Germany	French	Japan	United Kingdom
Total Arab Countries (milions US £)	83227,62	64504,79	31134,45	4830,46	6895,50	6735,19	3170,44
%		77,50%	37,41%	5,80%	8,29%	8,09%	3,81%

Table 13 (continued)

Donors	Non DAC members	Arab Countries	Multilateral	European Commission EC	Arab Agencies
Total Arab Countries (milions US £)	4974,15	3976,23	13748,68	7661,21	194,15
%	5,98%	4,70%	16,52%	9,21%	0,23%

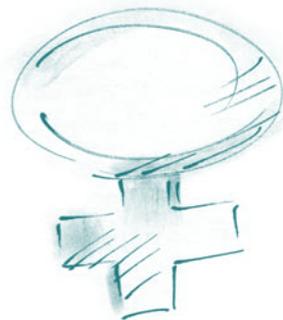
Gender issues and the achievement of Gender Equality in the Arab region

A Reading into the Added-Value of MDGs Related Policies and
Campaigns

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By

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Executive Summary



This chapter deals with the gender dimension of the MDGs and the challenges facing gender equality in the Arab region. Women in large parts of the Arab region still face serious socio-economic difficulties such as discrimination, lack of political and economic rights, illiteracy, maternal mortality, weak participation in political decisions, and parallel legal systems, among others.

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A particularly influential factor is conflict. Violence and rape face women in countries and regions enduring civil strife. Additionally they end up heading households when they lose family members in war. During conflicts, the social role of women changes and post-war initiatives can give women new possibilities. In recent years, there has been an attempt to include women's issues in peace negotiations (Sudan, Somalia). However, women are still not included in peace negotiations and when they are, often as token observers.

The overall observation of the chapter is that gender equality has not been mainstreamed in MDGs-related policies. The process has generally been UN driven rather than nationally driven. Most CSOs do not have a clear gender policy enshrined in their long term strategies as they often respond to changing donor expectations.

Going further than the global assessment, the author delves deeper into four case studies of national MDGs reports: Bahrain, Lebanon, Morocco and Sudan. These reveal discrimination against women stemming from different sources: different and controversial religious interpretations, state policies based on specific political and religious ideologies, prevailing of traditions and customs and discriminatory laws. Apart from the case of Morocco, gender equality is not treated as a cross-cutting issue that is reflected in all aspects of the socio-economic and political sphere. While Lebanon, Morocco, and Bahrain ratified the CEDAW, the ratification is still a matter of debate in Sudan.

The chapter also highlights some best practices gathered by the Center

for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR), such as literacy through poetry in Yemen, Gender-based violence and civic education in Darfur, Narrowing the gender wage gap in Morocco, and countervailing forces shaping transformative dialogue on citizenship rights for women in the Arab Gulf.

The chapter concludes with some recommendations directed to the region's civil society organizations to help strengthen their involvement in MDGs-related processes. These include orienting their work towards international human rights framework, broadening the framework of their gender-focused interventions, and linking with decision makers by proposing alternative policies.

The author stresses that adopting a gender based approach in the MDG process is crucial. It should be part of a holistic analysis that recognizes gender as an integrated part of a larger context. The gender equality framework is highly needed at state level as well as at regional level.

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I. Background

Over the last three decades important steps have been taken towards the advancement of women in the Arab region, primarily by fostering a consensual commitment to gender equality. Currently there are considerable numbers of organizations working at various levels on bridging the gender gap and tackling its root causes in the region. The issues tackled by such organizations include, but are not limited to: human rights, rule of law, good governance, conflict and peace building, HIV/AIDS, combating harmful traditional practices, eliminating violence against women, income generating activities and other themes and activities.

Different strategies and approaches are used in this process, such as advocacy & lobbying, gender mainstreaming, media engagement, service delivery etc. For more than three decades, the strategies that have been deployed by various civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Arab region were successful in mobilizing public support, campaigning on legislative reform, advocating for economic policy reform. All the activities and efforts exerted have definitely had positive results and numerous groups and individuals have benefited from the work they have carried out.

Despite all these efforts in identifying and addressing women's issues, they seem to be taken up separately and are not addressed within the broader societal, political and economic context. The work carried out to address gender imbalances does not effectively and sufficiently deal with their root causes nor provide a deep analysis of unequal power relations and the structure of political and social struggles.

Women's issues and the dimensions of gender equality:

Socio-economic Situation:

Gender equality refers to the participation of men and women, boys and girls on an equal basis in all aspects of development and their enjoyment of equal rights. Gender equality is an intrinsic part of maintaining human rights, democracy and development. In order to achieve gender equality, all forms of discrimination against women and men must be addressed².

Women in the Arab region still suffer from discrimination in all aspects of life. They are still considered second class citizens on issues of nationality, personal status and penal codes. They are also disadvantaged in terms of political and economic participation. Women's economic participation in the Arab region is considered the lowest in the world and their political representation is, despite some recent progress, very limited. Furthermore, progress in regards to women's equality is hindered by the impact of power relations and gender culture that is constituted by patriarchal institutions of both the religious and tribal dimensions³.

Indeed, the Arab region has one of the highest rates of female illiteracy, whereby approximately half of the women and girls are illiterate compared to one third of males. There is a persistent gender gap in primary education enrolment, especially in Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti. The maternal mortality rate average is 270 deaths per 100,000 births and reaches more than 1000 in Mauritania and Somalia. Women and girls are increasingly infected by HIV/AIDS and they represent half the total number of people carrying the virus. The probability of infection for young girls (aged 15-24 years) is double that of males of the same age group.

On the political scene, women's participation in parliaments in the Arab region stood at 8.7% in 2007, which is among the lowest in the world⁴. This is despite the fact that the constitutions of the Arab countries guarantee equal political rights for men and women. Restricting women's participation in the public domain and decision making are the male-dominated structures of political parties, stereotype divisions of gender roles, as well as cultural and religious prejudices.

Besides, women's participation in economic activity and production is undermined. Women often work without pay, including domestic work

² South Africa civil society speaks on MDGs, 2005, issued by People Budget Campaign

³ Dr. Alatyat's contributions to this report.

⁴ The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region, 2007 – A youth Lens.

and contribution to family enterprises. Their economic participation in the non-agricultural sector averages around 33%. Unfortunately, information on female participation in agricultural activities is not precise and is not reflected by the MDGs regional and country reports. In Sudan, for instance, the female participation in agricultural production - particularly subsistence farming varies between regions. In Darfur and other traditional farming areas, female participation reaches 90% whereas in the mechanized farming areas women sometimes represent 100% of seasonal labor. Despite this high rate of participation, women generally face unfavourable conditions compared to men, including unequal access to land, credit, extension services, modern technologies and training⁵.

Gender dimensions of food crisis:

During recent years, the food crisis has been pushed to the top of the agenda of United Nations agencies. The food crisis has worldwide implications, particularly in war-torn countries of the African continent, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Gaza Strip, apart from Somalia and North Korea. This indicates that more than half of the Arab states will face a very critical situation, particularly war torn areas such as the Gaza Strip, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, and Lebanon.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 60 to 80% of food in the developing countries is produced mainly by women. Despite this, women are facing persistent discrimination and have very little access to financial services and credit facilities, land ownership, land tenure, inheritance of land and access to resources. To guarantee increased production and improved distribution of food, new gender equality principles should be injected within the food production cycle⁶. Women play a crucial role in every link of the food chain: production, storage, marketing, and finally in the preparation of food for the family. Therefore it is important to look at some of the obstacles preventing more efficient production and the possibilities of transformation of the role of women in agriculture. There is also a need for better understanding of the decision-making process in the family and in local kinship and neighbourhood groups.

Legislative Gender gap:

Significant efforts have taken place during the last three decades to enhance and promote women's legal status and bridge the gender gap in legislation in various Arab countries. Several countries, including

5 Dr. Aisha Elkarib, 1999, women and development, Gender centre, Khartoum.

6 Rene Wadlow: Meeting the World's Food Needs: Women and Transform - tion, article posted by mediaforfreedom.com, August, 2008.

Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar and Tunisia and Djibouti, have amended family and personal status laws, granting women expanded rights in divorce alimony and the custody of children. Age of marriage has been amended to conform to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Algeria, Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia amended their citizenship laws to give children born of non-national fathers the right to the nationality of their mothers. In Jordan honour killings were criminalized. In Sudan and Somalia considerable steps have been taken towards reaching the impact of a parallel legal system on women's legal rights.

However, the situation of women's legal rights in the region is affected by the lack of adequate legal awareness programs, prevalence of discriminatory laws and acts and existence of parallel legal systems⁷. In general, three parallel laws such as customary, Shari'a, and secular/civil laws are practiced in some Arab states. The International committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has considered the co-existence of multiple legal systems to be a source of great concern. It impeded the implementation of international conventions standards that protects the rights of women⁸. Indeed, the existence of parallel legal systems affects women's legal rights negatively, complicating women's legal status in several countries, such as Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, Mauritania, and Lebanon.

Most laws in the Arab countries, including labour laws, nationality laws and personal status laws do not adequately address the critical issues related to gender equality. Legislation reform led by some civil society groups often face resistance of a political, social and cultural nature, particularly when it addresses labour law, personal status law, and nationality law. Further to the legal content itself, practice poses a significant problem in the region. The culture and attitudes of the people have a very significant influence on interpretations of the law and general functioning of the legal system⁹.

Moreover, the application of the international human rights frameworks and conventions remain inadequate, and in many cases disregarded. Using cultural norms as an excuse for disregarding obligations under international human rights conventions, such as CEDAW, have created serious problems and generally hindered progress on respect of basic rights in the Arab region, especially women's rights. Domestic legislations and policies often reflect lack of conformity with international standards of human rights¹⁰.

7 Manal Adelhalim, 2004, Legal Awareness Rising, Best Practices World V - sion International.

8 Cassandra & Sohail, same difference, parallel legal system, concept paper, for AI, first draft, May 2007.

9 Zienab Abbas, statement, 2005, manual on combating violence against women in conflict areas, Sudan, SIHA.

10 For examples, please refer to the Annex.

Violence against Women:

Violence against women has been widely addressed by social movements and women's groups in the Arab region, which mobilized around international conventions such as CEDAW (1979), the Vienna Declaration (1993),¹¹ and The Beijing platform of Action (1995). They all have great influence on the women's freedom of movement.

Violence against women, especially rape and other forms of sexual violence have been widely used as a weapon of war. Darfur (in Western Sudan) is one example where the VAW, specifically sexual violence, has gained attention and is highly publicized by the international community and international media.

Formal, legal and administrative procedures in the region, usually, undermine the rights of female victims of violence. For instance, the obligation imposed on victims to produce medical certificates and present witnesses discourages them from coming forward with their claims.

Crimes of honour have long been practiced in some Arab societies, especially in rural areas. It is practiced to uphold tradition of maintaining "family honor". According to official figures, 28 Jordanian women are killed annually in incidents specifically attributed to honour killings. They often take place in rural and Bedouin areas, and are not reported because they are hidden by society to avoid scandal¹².

Violence against women has gained little attention so far and remain inadequately addressed. In most cases, it is considered as one of the private "family/tribal issues" that is not supposed to be addressed publicly. The main challenges facing campaigns that address violence against women are the scarcity of data and statistics and non-recognition of the issue by decision-makers.

Civil war and conflict:

Women are amongst the communities and social groups that are most affected by armed conflicts. They are left to shoulder the burden of loss of family members, displacement, fragmentation, identity crisis, and insecurities. Also, their accessibility to food, shelter, resources, markets and income becomes increasingly limited. For example, according to the 2004 MDGs report on Sudan, the main obstacle to gender equality and greater women's empowerment is conflict and civil strife prevailing all over the country.

11 Adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993

12 Yusuf Mansur, Compendium of Best Practices, project successful in a - dressing discriminatory social beliefs and practices and gender equality (under publishing), CAWTAR.

During the last decade, collective advocacy for conflict resolution and the consolidation of peace has become a main agenda issues for many CSOs. One of the main gender-focused objectives of such work is including women's issues within peace negotiations. In Sudan for example, a lot of efforts have been directed to by CSOs, UN agencies, and some international organizations towards preparing women to undertake influential positions in the peace process¹³. Despite those efforts women have been excluded from the peace negotiations held in Kenya during 2004-2005. The resulting Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) has been criticized by a number of CSOs in the North and South as a gender-blind document.

In Somalia, clan-based armed conflicts dating back to the early nineties have claimed millions of lives. Kidnappings, enslavement and rape were common practice, and men were fleeing villages and leaving women and children behind. Efforts made by women's movements towards ending armed conflict were countered by the cultural practices of the clans, which limited the ability of Somali women organizations to advocate and mobilize for peace and stability.

Overall, and despite the negative effects of war on women, there are great changes in gender roles in war-torn areas. Indeed, women's stereotypical roles change as a result of different programs and activities targeting women under conflict, such as, legal counsel services, income generating activities, intensive awareness-raising programs etc¹⁴.

13 In June, 2000 Unifem sponsored a group of Sudanese women from NGOs and political organizations to go to the USA to be exposed to the negotiations and meet with key UN officials as well as religious groups and some peace activists.

In 1999 a peace colloquium had been held in Washington for 100 women's from over the world, sponsored by the Women Waging Peace Network. The group included 10 Sudanese women activists from both North and South. Intergovernmental organization for drought and desertification in the Horn of Africa (IGAD) had held two consultation meeting, in 2002 to facilitate women participation in the peace process. Following the recent conflict in Darfur, the Sudanese government has held a series of parallel and consecutive negotiations, whereby the government has engaged with different opposition and armed rebel groups. Women and civil society organizations have been excluded from the process and the same scenario has been repeated, with the Darfur negotiations. In December, 2005 and with the help of Unifem, the "Sudanese Gender Gxpert Group" has attended the seventh round of peace talks in Abuja as "observers." and has submitted the "Women Priority" issues paper, which includes many suggestions fir the negotiators, such as women's participation in peace talks, drafting of new laws to protect women, guaranteeing women's participations in native administration (no less than 40%) and guarantee women's participation on the land commission so as to guarantee their access to land in Darfur.) The same scenario of the CPA and was repeated and the Abuja document produced by the two parties (the government and the Justice & Equality Movement) disregarded all women's and priority issues.

14 Manal Abdelhalim, Compendium of Best Practices, project successful in

Many weaknesses can be highlighted when reviewing cases of recent women's participation in peace-related processes, including negotiations, rehabilitation, transitional justice and reconciliation. These reflections are based on processes undertaken in Sudan and Somalia. Often, women who participate in such processes are selected based on their tribal, ethnic belonging and their affiliation to some political parties, with complete disregard of their actual negotiation skills or competences. This leads many who participate in peace negotiations to be absorbed by tribal and clan interests, losing sight of national interests. Women usually are not part of the pre-negotiations process; usually they catch the negotiation at a late stage level (at the ratification stage). Also, there persists lack of recognition and acknowledgement by the negotiating parties (government and rebel/opposition groups) as well as international mediators for women's roles. In addition, negotiating parties often perceive peace talks as gender neutral, thus marginalizing actual existing imbalances. Overall, peace negotiations remain male-dominated processes. Women who get the chance to participate are selected by male counterparts.

Challenges facing Arab CSOs Addressing Gender Equality

During the last three decades, several campaigns aiming at ending discrimination against women and achieving gender equality have been undertaken by civil society groups across the Arab region. For more than 10 years, women's organizations in different Arab countries have been advocating full and equal citizenship rights for women and calling for amending nationality laws. Women activists succeeded in bringing amendments to nationality laws in Syria, Sudan, Egypt and Morocco.

In Bahrain, the Supreme Council for Women has been established to safeguard Bahraini women's interests based on laws and regulations. The Council implements measures to eliminate discrimination against women, including drafting new laws and proposing amendments to existing ones.

In Sudan the Gender Forum (GF) was established by the Gender Centre for Research and Training (GCRT) to act as a public forum for discussing the issue of gender imbalances within the national policies (education, health, employment etc.) as well as within decision-making and resource-sharing processes. It seeks alternative solutions through women's empowerment initiatives.

Despite such achievements, a lot of obstacles and barriers, both exogenous and endogenous to civil society groups, face their work in this area. Indeed, gender equality has not yet taken root in the policies

addressing discriminatory social beliefs and practices and gender equality (under publishing), CAWTAR.

and principles of CSOs. Women's issues are not appropriately addressed contextually and on a societal basis. They are also not mainstreamed in national political, economic and social agendas, in terms of strategies, policies, methodologies and approaches. Furthermore, establishing proper advocacy engagement with policy makers is still limited among CSOs working on gender equality. Moreover, CSOs engaged in advocacy work are not effectively using evidence-based approaches, such as research, situation analyses and findings reports in their work.

In many instances, the focus on meeting donors' expectations results in a lack of focus, sustainability, and long-term vision among CSOs working in this area. Some CSOs deal with different fields, such as human rights education, legal aid, peace-building and income generating activities, without cohesive coordination nor logical goal for such combinations of activities. Furthermore, fund limitations at the national and regional levels constraint CSOs, which are highly dependant on foreign aid and financial assistance. The issue of gender equality funding has been greatly pushed by the international coalition "The Women's Working Group on Financing for Development" during the Doha International Revision Conference on Financing for Development. The working group, comprising more than 10 international NGOs and NGO networks dealing with gender equality and women's empowerment issues, have focused on the actualization of the commitments on gender equality in the main conference document.¹⁵ The working group strongly called for decisive address of the issues that underpin poverty and misdistribution of power and resources in the global political economy. Unfortunately, Arab CSOs have not yet developed a strong consensus or position so as to influence the funding agencies at international, regional, or even at national levels. Within this context, the technical assistance offered by UN agencies in this area remains isolated and does not fall within an integrated coherent plan uniting different UN agencies and CSOs at regional and national levels.

In addition, while most CSOs in the region are characterized by high turnover of qualified personnel, gender experts remain scarce and gender training tools not yet well-articulated. Most of the CSOs lack written gender policies as well as lack gender-sensitive indicators (quantitative and qualitative) to measure gender related changes in societies over time.

II. The Millennium Development Goals; Perspectives from Civil Society

The MDGs were agreed on by global leaders during the United Nations

¹⁵ Press release, by women working group on women's rights and gender equality, Dec., 2008 International conference on financing for development, Doha

Millennium Summit in September 2000. A total of 189 countries adopted the Millennium Declaration, which specifies a set of 8 time-bound and measurable goals and 18 targets to be achieved by 2015, as well as 48 indicators to measure progress in the different areas. The eight MDGs range from eradicating poverty to promoting women's rights, reducing child and maternal mortality rates and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Following the launch of the MDGs, most of the countries have taken different steps to mainstream the goals within their national development policies and mechanisms, while many countries have reported to UN. Civil society organizations around the world have issued their concerns as well as criticisms on the goals and indicators of MDGs.¹⁶ Whilst the MDGs have been broadly welcomed, they present merely the bare minimum for development efforts. The indicators set by the MDGs do not match the tasks of poverty eradication, achieving the rights to health and education, and achieving gender equality.

Poverty indicators and gender dimensions:

The indicators disregard gender issues and dimensions related to poverty, such as the method of measurement, data and information on poverty, the complexity of family income, reflections of women's control over resources and women's situation in the most vulnerable situations, especially in war torn areas and poorest zones.

The target chosen under the first goal- halving the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day between 1990-2015- is purely statistical and numerical. The MDGs poverty elimination target is defined in terms of income-expenditures (US dollars). Using one US dollar a day remains absolutely arbitrary and contradicts the internationally promoted approach of dealing with poverty as a broader concept, which should be reflected in the choice of goals, targets and indicators.

Gender Equality versus Gender Parity:

The main target of the third goal of the MDGs is to “eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015.” The indicators set under this goal are quantitative¹⁷, thus equating gender equality with gender parity.

¹⁶ MDGs Monitor, Track, Learn, Support – Tracking the Millennium Development Goals website. Write web-address

¹⁷ Four indicators have been set as follows:

Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education;

Gender parity is a purely numerical concept; reaching gender parity in education implies that the same proportion of boys and girls- relative to their respective age groups- would enter the education system and participate in its different cycles. Gender equality, on the other hand, means that boys and girls would experience the same advantages or disadvantages in access to education, treatment, and outcomes. Gender equality results from addressing the unequal power relations between the sexes and requires the achievement of equal outcomes for women and men.

The Millennium Development Goals - the Arab Region Report (2007)

The report was produced by the League of Arab States (LAS) with assistance of UN agencies in the Arab region. The report reflects the progress achieved by Arab countries since the adoption of the eight goals, in many areas particularly in education and health. The report also reflects the poor economic performance in the region during the 1990s, inadequate financing of social policies, lack of administrative and managerial competencies, and increasing political tensions and conflicts. According to the report, the region was divided into sub-groupings (Mashreq countries, Maghreb countries, Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC), and Least Developed countries). This division is based on a combination of per capita income levels, geographic proximity and similarities in economic and social characteristics and conditions.¹⁸

Poor poverty analysis

The reduction of poverty and the quality of poverty analysis in the report has been solely linked to rapid economic growth. The report overlooks dealing with possible side impacts of rapid unbalanced growth such as environment degradation, social disruption and rising inequality. Poverty analysis in the report appears to be heavily influenced by international financial institutions, namely the IMF and the World Bank, which often social implications in individual countries.

Equal ratio of literate women to men 15–24 years-old;

Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

¹⁸ The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region, 2007 – A youth Lens, prepared by League of Arab States and United Nations. Lack of consistency in sources.

Sudan is classified in the MDG report among the four Arab countries which were able to raise average per capita income levels by more than 40% between 1990 and 2005. Despite this, Sudan is still classified as an LDC and ranks 147 in the 2008 UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI). According to UNDP's HDI of 2008, the percentage of primary education enrolment is no more than 54% which is among the lowest rates in the region. Half of the population is illiterate, two thirds of which are women and girls. Educational opportunities for women and girls are very limited; drop outs amongst girls in primary school remain high and are much higher in conflict areas. Maternal mortality rates are about 600 per 100,000 live births, and the infant mortality rate is about 115 per 1000 live births. The war in Sudan left great numbers of the population living in miserable conditions, particularly those internally displaced, living in camps and as refugees in neighbouring countries. The Sudanese experience indicates that very high rate of growth does not necessarily result in social development nor does it necessarily have positive impact on people lives.

Furthermore, the lack of appropriate institutionalized participatory frameworks related to the report preparations has led to poor participation of various stakeholders concerned with the MDGs process, including any relevant bodies in the governments, civil society organizations, parliamentarians and other community forces. This has negatively affected the quality of the MDGs' report content. This in turn reflects the unwillingness of governments in the region to undertake a participatory discussion of economic and social policies with various stakeholders.

Moreover, information and data used by the reports is quantitative data and does not reflect the gender features of the different activities. The report uses the gender parity index (GPI) as an indicator for gender equality promotion; it lacks an analysis of the various dimensions of gender equality.

GPI measures only the percentage of girls to boys in primary and tertiary education, percentage of women to men in national parliaments, percentage of women to men in jobs (government and private sector) etc. However, the greater percentage of girls in education enrolment does not indicate that gender equality has been achieved in education. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, for example, are the only Arab sub region that has reached full gender parity at the level of primary education. All six countries of the GCC have an almost balanced girls-to-boys enrolment ratio at the primary level, while enrolment at the secondary level is also characterized by a balance between girls and boys. National GPI values for tertiary education show a strong dominance of females. In spite of such advancement,

women in GCC countries - compared to men - still do not enjoy the same legal protection, balanced share of resources and power, nor equal opportunities in the labour markets, and the political or social spheres.

Saudi Arabia, which imposes almost complete gender segregation, prevents Saudi women from participating meaningfully in public life. Saudi Arabia has made significant progress on female education and literacy in the last four decades but despite these achievements, the general framework of education continues to reinforce discriminatory gender roles and women's second class citizen status. According to the Saudi Arabia policy on education: "A girl's education aims at giving her the correct Islamic education to enable her to be an exemplary wife and a good mother".

III. Critical Reading of National MDGs Reports

60

The following section presents observations from examining national MDG reports in four Arab states - namely Sudan, Lebanon, Morocco and Bahrain-, and the way "women's empowerment" and "gender equality" have been addressed by the reports. It is worth noting that national MDGs reports include the official record of progress on the MDGs and the government's commitments to policy interventions aiming at achieving progress on the MDGs.

The MDGs review process in the Arab countries has often been led by UN agencies rather than governmental institutions. The MDGs implementation process holds its own set of challenges. Some of these challenges have their roots in weak policy content and formulation, whilst others relate to technical, financial, as well as practical problems in implementation systems. Others are rooted in the lack of political will at the level of policy making. In this regards, it is worth noting that conflictual relation between economic growth, social development, and environmental protection affects the prioritization of policies and actions that are focused on poverty reduction and appropriate poverty indicators based on gender-sensitive data.

With the exception of the Moroccan experience, the MDGs process is often inadequately linked to other national planning policies and tools such as the national budget and employment policies. It also often does not identify the mechanisms for co-ordination of strategies and activities among national and local levels of government. In addition there is often poor communication and coordination both within and between ministries and between the national and provincial levels of government.

A wide variety of weaknesses has been evident in the participatory

aspects of the preparatory processes of MDGs reports. In the cases addressed here, the preparation process of progress reports has not provided spaces for involvement of stakeholders at the national level, and lacked a clear and appropriate framework for participation. Besides the lack of institutional framework, weak participation can be referred to the weak credibility and legitimacy of the MDGs process overall, and the perception of various stakeholders in regards to its inadequateness as a process addressing poverty.

Accordingly, civil society groups in the region have not invested significant efforts in following the MDGs processes. In some countries, there have not been ample opportunities for civil society groups to participate in discussing progress reports or accessing information and statistics that allow them to actively participate in the process. Yet, there is significant importance for civil society groups to take part in discussing poverty definitions, strategies, policy recommendations and monitoring mechanism of gender equality and related principles. In some countries such as Sudan, few civil society groups have been participating at the early stages of consultations around reporting on MDGs process, yet not at stages related to policy formulations and implementations.

Gender discrimination is interlinked with various factors, dimensions, and policy decisions including different and controversial interpretations of the religions, state policies based on specific political and religious ideologies, prevailing of traditions and customs, as well as discriminatory laws -particularly personal status laws-, which are considered one of the main sources of discrimination. Often, analysis related to women's issues in MDGs reports falls short of a comprehensive analysis of these various dimensions. Moreover, there is often the lack of gender disaggregated data (GDD) in MDGs-related reporting; for example the gender features of education enrolment are totally overlooked, so are the share of education in the general budget, the drop-out rates of females in primary education compared to that of males, and the quality of the curriculum. With exception of the case of Morocco, gender equality is handled as a separate issue and not a cross-cutting issue that affects all aspects of socio-economic and political policies and projects.

Literacy through Poetry in Yemen

The project was initiated by the Social Fund for Development and aims to teach reading and writing skills to adult women and to renew community interest in women's endangered oral heritage. The illiteracy rate for rural women in Yemen is 78.2%, almost double the rate for urban women (39.9%) and double the rate for men (32.5%) in rural areas. Rural women participate actively in the subsistence economy, enjoy more mobility, and have significant, albeit informal, input in community affairs. Unlike other literacy programs in Yemen, the project focused on rural women and perceived educational needs for classes not tied to a school curriculum, a shorter learning period and flexible scheduling. Traditional women's oral poetry were used to facilitate their teaching of reading and writing skills. This approach affirms the learners' values and builds on their competence. Graduates of the program were each given a bound copy of the texts that they developed in class, and they were given an easy to read published book as a gift. It capitalized on learners' competencies which allowed learners to create their own texts. The immediate indicators of success of this project were low withdrawal rates from literacy classes. The others dropped out for health reasons. Out of the 95 learners who completed 9 months of instruction in Phase 1, 72% could read and write new material.

Countervailing Forces Shaping Transformative Dialogue on Citizenship Rights for Women in the Arab Gulf

The study was carried out by the Transnational Feminist Networks (TFNs). In some cases transnational NGOs aim to examine the dynamic relationship between local NGOs and the links between global and local discourses on social justice and gender equity.

Innovative strategies are adopted by TFNs and transnational NGOs in shaping public discourse and agendas on women's empowerment and rights.

The great success is raising new ideas to mobilize efforts on women's issues in the Gulf such as:

Researching and documenting social issues: as higher education and academic research are still in their nascent stages. There is very little original or raw social data on the Gulf region (apart from basic economic indicators).

Understanding the context and shifts that are occurring: preliminary analysis of print and online media indicates that since 2002, the public sector in countries like the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain has become more responsive to the international discourse on equality and empowerment of women in the public arena.

Seizing new political opportunities for change: for collective action to evolve into social movements much larger in scope, there are prerequisite conditions that need to exist, namely political opportunities.

Gender-based Violence and Civic Education: Combating Violence in Darfur

This project was initiated by the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA). It was implemented after a conflict period that brought to light the region's massive violations against women and girls who experienced rape, killings and other forms of sexual violence by the militia and armed forces of warring parties. Also, their accessibility to food, shelter, resources, markets and income became increasingly limited. Although the overall women's situation is devastating and their needs are overwhelming, they are heads of households and community keepers. They struggle to keep their families, communities and their identity intact to surpass the armed struggle.

The objectives of the project are the provision of services to victims of violence, enhancing and developing the capacities of social networks and actors to change attitudes towards sexual & gender-based violence (SGBV) through direct provision of services and the use of innovative approaches, such as theatre, arts, and music. SIHA applied comprehensive and complementary activities by establishing a centre at the Bilail Camp (in South Darfur), that included providing medical, psychological counselling, and legal counselling services. The centre also provide a referral pathway for SGBV survivors. Training packages were developed on the following topics: advocacy and lobbying, strategies to combat SGBV, designing a referral pathway mechanism, proposal & reports writing, monitoring & evaluation and income generating activities.

Theatre was used as a mobilization tool and played an important role in influencing social change around the world. The main goal is to use theatre as a forum for IDP's women who, for the most part have no access to formal education, which resulted in the high illiteracy rate. Women in Darfur are usually familiar with the customary law that govern them but they are less knowledgeable about their constitutional and human rights. The most important outcome of the project was the establishment of networks of local actors with the purpose of sharing knowledge, enhancing capacity, and creating a base that will ensure the sustainability of activities. The local network is also supporting strategies and projects of local partners with resources and know-how to raise the level of civil society in addressing violence against women and to document experiences of women in the region to serve as evidence and advocacy tools.

Gender wage gap - Morocco

The initiative focused on identifying the causes of the gender wage gap in Morocco during the past two decades. The analysis is based on two national censuses and the national survey of family livelihood which were conducted from 1990-1991 and from 1998-1999. The purpose was to examine the upcoming national survey on family livelihoods which the government would undertake in 2008 and also to monitor and evaluate the changes and set future strategies focusing on removing the barriers created by gender discrimination in the employment market.

The most important outcome of this initiative was narrowing the gender gap, due to the issuance of legislation protecting equal pay. When the public and private sectors were compared, the wage gap in the public sector went from 31.5% in 1991 to 21.8% in 1999. It was less significant in the private sector where it went from 37.5% in 1991 and to 33.5% in 1991.

IV. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Globally, civil society groups have gained increased political space by engaging in official and parallel MDGs processes. The following section highlights policy issues that ought to be at the core of civil society's involvement with the MDGs process. It raises several recommendations in regards to each issue, with a focus on strengthening the involvement in MDGs processes and stronger with regional and global partners in this area.

Addressing women's issues necessitate proper linkages with the broader societal, political, and economic context. It is necessary that civil society groups in the Arab countries working on gender issues establish strong alliances and networks to influence the core policy processes, such as the peace process, economic adjustment policies, and poverty reduction policies.

A deep analysis of the root causes of the gender imbalance should be one of the core activities of these groups, so as to bridge the gender gap and gender imbalances evident on the political and social fronts. Assessment of any progress towards gender equality needs a gender-sensitive agenda. Quantitative data and statistics are not enough in such as assessment. Gender-sensitive indicators and development of gender disaggregated-data (GDD) is of high importance.

GDD could help point out the changes in the status and roles of women and men over time. Using gender-sensitive indicators will also feed into more effective future planning and program delivery. Good gender-sensitive indicators should be policy-relevant to key policy issues and concerns¹⁹, derived from a framework which allows the interpretation of figures (such as women's participations in agricultural production), and technically sound, valid, reliable and comparable.

Focus on identifying the kind of policy, research, and analysis needed to influence the next round of MDG implementations is a crucial for engaged groups.

In addressing MDGs- related policies and gender issues, civil society groups need to build relevant capacities around economic literacy, advocacy, education and research that are necessary to influence national policy making processes and policy issues. In doing so, CSOs need to address the definitions of poverty used by the governments, poverty-related statistics and indicators, and official poverty related data, which often does not reflect the real situation on the ground. CSOs should work on developing alternative polices and indicators.

Within this overall work, CSOs ought to promote adequate gender equality strategy through collaboration with other social stakeholders.

19 The UNESCO World Education Report 1991

Such collaboration would help enhance information dissemination to the public and awareness raising. Collaboration with media and use of various media tools is essential in this process.

In relation to MDG implementation and monitoring, CSOs need to design rapid assessment tools and appropriate impact indicators to enable local organizations to conduct local poverty monitoring and evaluate the impact of adopted policies on local communities. Groups need to specify acceptable indicators and clear monitoring mechanisms, with specified time-frames and clear division of responsibilities. Additional indicators are crucial in order to disaggregate data by gender such as: macro-indicators according to wealth, geographic location, economic sector, and other sectors. One of the monitoring tools that ought to be followed by CSOS is public budgeting; groups need to ensure that budgeting is very clear and transparent while development oriented actions prioritized. State planning strategies and tools should be consistent with national development plans.

Moreover, CSOs in the Arab region ought to make additional, more focused use, of the International Human Rights instruments (conventions, covenants, and treaties) to monitor rights. This includes building skills and capacities in relation to human rights mechanism-their availability and viability; international human rights committees and their mandates and tasks; procedures that different institutions follow; as well as remedies available within the international and regional framework.

Well established CSOs located in the main cities ought to establish strong links with groups and other development actors in the provinces and rural areas so that they can help follow implementation of MDGs related policies and assist with monitoring at the national level.

NGOs need to establish and strengthen clear and open lines of communication with the relevant line ministries, keep the public well informed and raise awareness of constituencies around the ongoing issues regarding the MDGs and the importance of participation, and actively involve the media, to ensure that the public is kept aware of the progress and limitations.

-International Aid (financial & technical assistance)

During the 1970s, wealthy countries had committed to dedicating a small portion (0.7%) of their income to development aid. The G8 countries have re-iterated their commitment to meet this portion and front load those commitments, without donor imposed policy conditionality. In 2003, only five countries in Northern Europe have kept their commitment, while on average the OECD countries only devoted 0.24% to ODA. Developed countries have often failed to meet their aid commitments, which also stayed quite modest and insufficient to achieve the MDGs. Moreover, international aid commitments for supporting women's rights declined severely and grassroots organizations across the world found little interest in supporting them.

It is worth noting that the final document of The International Conference on Financing for Development in Doha 2008 has stressed gender equality as a fundamental human right and an issue of social justice. The Conference highlighted gender equality as essential for economic growth, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, and development effectiveness.

Effective aid should be based on local realities. The Arab region's communities are not homogeneous. The conditions associated with aid - especially that channelled through multi-donor institutions - should take into consideration the needs and priorities defined by local actors. Donors have a role in ensuring that funds have a positive impact on the poor and the vulnerable, that it is not fuelling corruption, and that it does not violate the rights of project-affected communities. Moreover, donor agencies and UN agencies have an important role to work with governments on efficiently channelling funds to different municipalities, so as to avoid resource dispersion and duplication of efforts.

Conclusion: Towards a Gender-Based Approach

Adopting gender-based approaches in the follow-up and implementation of MDGs processes is crucial. It takes into consideration the influence of power relations, which are absent in women-based analysis and approaches. It allows comparison between men and women's situations and establishes the understanding of how women are disadvantaged in relation to men in similar positions, including in access to resources, and power and participation in decision-making. Indeed, the focus on women issues only, versus the broader gender discussion, hinders the development of holistic analysis and strategies that take in consideration the gendered nature of societal values and relations, as well as laws.

The gender equality framework is highly needed, at state level as well as at regional level. Gender equality in economic life as well as equal participation and representation in decision-making are top priorities in the region.

An affirmative action programme is crucial to ensure the means and competences to implement the gender related strategies, through increasing the participation of women in all spheres of political, social, and economic policies and support them by appropriate financial and technical assistance.



Annex:

Country Case Studies



The Annex examines and analyzes the national MDG reports in four Arab states namely Sudan, Lebanon, Morocco and Bahrain. It addresses how “women’s empowerment” and “gender equality” issues are perceived and covered in national MDGs reports.

Sudan

The 2004 report is composed of two sections, section A reflects the situation in all Sudan with the exception of the SPLM/A controlled areas and section B reflect the situation in areas controlled by SPLM/A. Data and information used in the report have been taken from different sources which are non-poverty specific and outdated surveys for assessing progress in achieving the MDGs. There is no systematic data and information for the whole of Sudan after 1978. Another problem with the report is that the analysis lacks qualitative data and statistics that relate to gender features, presenting only quantitative data.

According to the report, “Sudan is primarily an agricultural country with approximately 67% of the Sudanese deriving their livelihood from it. In 2001, agriculture accounted for about 36% of the country’s GDP and more than 90% of the non-oil export income”²⁰.

The report does not include an analysis of the gender nature of the agricultural production such as: distinctions between male and female grown crops (cash and food crop), tasks shared between men and women in agricultural fields, socio-cultural effects on both sexes roles, such as who has more access to land ownership, banks loans and other financial facilities technologies etc. On the other hand and despite women’s significant contribution to the household income there is no indication as to who has power to decide on income and resource distribution.

In the field of education the report indicates that the general enrolment

²⁰ MDGs report, 2004, Sudan.

rate for both girls and boys rose from 53% in 2000/2001 to 59.6% in 2003/2004. This ratio compared to other Arab countries is classified as the lowest in the region.

Higher levels of enrolment are found in the more prosperous northern regions that are not directly affected by the conflict, whilst the lowest ratios correspond to the conflict affected regions of the South, West and Eastern regions.

Illiteracy rates in rural areas are 62% for females and 44% for males and in urban areas 34% for females and 21% for males. They are considered as some of the highest rates in the region.

Educational opportunities for women and girls are still limited, drop-outs amongst girls in primary school is high. The curriculum is gender biased and does not consider cultural diversity; it perpetrates stereotyping of the roles of women and girls.

Economically, women have very little access to financial services and credit facilities. Women also experience unfair competition in the labor market and they hardly ever accede to leading positions in different sectors. This discrepancy is brought about by existing biases in legislation, as well as official policy.

Compared to women in other Arab states, Sudanese women are considered pioneers in political participation. Sudanese women have been granted the right to vote and run in elections since the 1950s. Despite that advancement their participation in politics is very minimal due to cultural and traditional factors. Absence of appropriate means integrating gender in national development strategies and plans is a third factor.

Sudanese women's representation in the National Parliament has increased since 1965; from 0.4% to 9.5% in 2004 (this percentage covers both, elected and appointed women).

Despite the lack of documentation and references about the numbers of people being killed, violated, displaced and being refugees during the enduring conflict between North and South, Darfur and Eastern Sudan, it is an accepted fact that women are the most affected by armed conflicts. They always end up shouldering the burden of loss of family members, displacement and fragmentation.

The Darfur crisis revealed an extreme level of brutality and women are the primary target during civil and tribal conflicts. The current conflict brought to the region massive violations against women. Darfur women and girls experience killing, displacement, rape and other forms of sexual crimes. Violence against women continues to feature heavily in the agenda of agencies working in Darfur, yet women continue to

experience systematic and ever increasing violence.²¹

The MDG report did not indicate the effects of conflict on people (men and women's lives), instead they use conflict consequences as an explanation for inappropriate plans and absence of gender policy and economic, social and political deteriorations.

Section B of the Sudan report reflected the endorsement of MDGs by Sudan's People Liberation Movement (SPLM). The SPLM has adopted the MDGs as an effective way of addressing poverty in post-conflict Sudan. The SPLM's overall vision for post-war Sudan is based on building a new society and systems of governance, addressing the root causes of recurrent civil wars, creating a strong basis for a permanent and sustainable peace and addressing urban bias and adopting a development paradigm that favors rural and decentralized development.

While Southern Sudan's development strategy focuses on combating poverty by encouraging sustainable economic growth, through using its own resources, including oil; Northern Sudan's MDG reporting period presents data that does not include oil revenues, as these figures were not yet available.

As section B is supposed to reflect the situation of the SPLM controlled areas, the information and recommendations seem to cover the whole of Southern Sudan. The two separate sections of the report do not reflect a comprehensive and coherent situation for Sudan, as the information overlaps and seems to be politically biased.

According to the MDG monitor (the UN mechanism tracking the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals), there has been no systematic data or information collection for the whole of Sudan since 1978. Sudan is an example of a country recovering from decades of conflict where this factor continues to pose serious challenges towards attaining the MDGs including structural problems, such as inadequate capacities at state and local levels, unreliable data, lack of policy coordination, inequity in allocation of resources, poor infrastructure, high levels of debt and continued conflict in Darfur.

Bahrain:

The MDG report for the Kingdom of Bahrain revealed that the MDG indicator to measure extreme poverty (**\$1/day per person**) is invalid because **no** single individual lives on less than US\$1 per day. According to the recently completed MDGs household survey, only 12.2 per cent (147 families) have an average daily income of less than US\$5 per person.

21 UNSC inquiry mission report to Darfur, Jan., 2005.

The information (data & statistics) for the report was provided by the MDG survey. According to the survey, the social policy pursued by the government has had a positive impact on the welfare of the people. A significant number of families are receiving assistance in the form of cash handouts, 69.2% of families headed by females are receiving cash and non-cash assistance. The ministry of Labor and Social Affairs provided small amounts of cash assistance to 10,804 families in 2002, disbursing a total of US\$ 11.3 million, a figure which has almost doubled over the past 12 years.²²

In 2001 the Supreme Council for Women was established as an advisory body to assist the government in formulating gender related policies. The council is to propose public policy to the government on issues concerning women and advocate amendments to existing legislation. The establishment of such a body corroborates the Kingdom's commitment to eliminate gender disparities in education, society and the economy. NGOs play a major role in supporting women and acknowledging their rights. The government is committed to work closely with these NGOs especially on matters relating to the formulation of gender policies to be integrated to all sectors of society.

The report does not indicate what kind of positive impact the social support system has had on the Bahraini people, and to what extent this policy affects the labour market.

Although the Kingdom of Bahrain's ratification of the CEDAW Convention is considered a notable achievement, the shadow report for CEDAW reflects shortcomings with women empowerment and gender equality policies.

According to the report, much legislation recognizing women's rights was not enacted. A fair personal status law has not yet been enacted due to cultural, social and political influence. This is the case with regards to the citizenship law which does not allow women to grant citizenship to their children.

The reservations of the State on core articles of CEDAW (Art. 2, 9, 15, 16 and 29) hinder the efforts of civil society organizations to push women's empowerment ahead, specifically in the field of legislation and political engagement.²³

The right of suffrage and nomination for women has been asserted by the new constitution of the Kingdom, issued in 2002.

Only one woman succeeded, uncontested, in the legislative elections of 2006, while the government appointed six women to the Second Bureau (The *Shourah* Council). The shadow report on the CEDAW

²² MDGs report, 2003, Bahrain.

²³ MDGs national report of Bahrain, 2003

links these poor results to a number of reasons such as the traditional social and cultural legacy towards women and the manner in which voting districts are defined. The electoral law is restricted to a single vote system for each district; there is no candidate list system, which contributed to no women reaching or winning in the past two elections. The relatively new democratic experience of the one vote system for each district has contributed to men winning all seats²⁴.

In the field of education the enrolments in primary education have almost balanced the girls-to-boys enrolment ratio, while enrolment at the secondary level is characterized by a balance between girls and boys, national GPI values for tertiary education show a strong dominance of females. Despite this advancement in all levels of education enrolment, the curriculum applied in Bahraini schools at different levels is still based on a stereotypical image of women, in general the image of women and girls portrayed in school books is not compatible with their position and actual role in the Bahraini society.

Lebanon:

The poverty data indicated by the MDGs report does not reflect the progress in living conditions measured against the MDG target (**halve the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day**); instead several alternative indicators have been adopted. These indicators show regional disparities in levels related to income poverty and disparities in the wages of workers in different economic sectors as well as the disparities and widening gap between different social groups.

These alternative poverty indicators do not reflect the gender features of poverty in terms of women's participations in economic and social activities compared to men, household expenditures and income distribution.

Education enrolment witnesses a significant success. Females' education right has been protected by law; the ratio of girls to boys has significantly improved over the past two decades, girls enrolment has reached 80% for compared to 90% for boys. Net enrolment in primary education reached 98.3 percent in 2000²⁵. Despite the advances in enrolment narrowing the gap between men and women at all educational levels, the CEDAW shadow report identifies some qualitative differences between public and private education. One discriminating factor identified is the family favouring boys' education.

²⁴ Shadow reports on implementation of CEDAW, Sept., 2008, Bahraini NGO's.

²⁵ MDGs report, 2003, Lebanon.

The CEDAW Committee notes that there has been no progress at all toward implementation of the comments and recommendations; with respect to some concerns raised in the Committee's previous concluding comments. Those concerns were mainly on gender equality policy initiation, legislative reform, particularly the recommendation to have a unified personal status law as well as mechanisms to deal with women participating in a peace building process²⁶.

The committee urges the State to consider its recommendations to include provisions guaranteeing equality on the basis of sex in the Constitution or in other appropriate legislation, in line with article 2(a) of the Convention. It also urges a systematic revision of all existing legislation to bring it fully into compliance with the Convention and to design and implement a comprehensive awareness-raising program to foster a better understanding of and support for equality between women and men at all levels of society.

The committee highly criticizes the performance of the National Commission for Lebanese Women. The Committee notes that the Commission is a semi-governmental body with weak institutional capacity. It notes that it is severely under-resourced and understaffed and does not have the authority or capacity to effectively promote implementation of the Convention, and thereby support gender mainstreaming across all sectors and levels of Government.

The access of Lebanese women to decision making on a national level and their participation in political life remains weak. Parliament seats held by women did not exceed 3 out of 128 (1995/2000), i.e. 2.3 percent of the total seats. Very few women have held ministerial posts. The proportion of women as public servants of the first and second categories is low (2 percent and 10 percent, respectively), while it is higher in the third category (19 percent)²⁷. Women's representation in municipal elections of 1998 was higher, and 139 out of 353 female candidates were elected as members of municipal councils, with considerable regional variations.

The shadow report on CEDAW states that: "women's issues are not represented by powerful institutions which specifically promote them. Despite of the efforts made, no significant change occurred. National Committee for Women's Affairs is subject to the religious and political dictates prevalent in the country".

The religious and politically influenced institutions hinder the progress of women and fail to bring about any results affecting practical changes to the numerous demands made by NGOs.

The CEDAW shadow report is highly critical of the the lack of

²⁶ CEDAW shadow report, Lebanon.

²⁷ MDGs report, 2003, Lebanon.

coordination between the National Council for Woman's Affairs and other NGOs and the Parliamentary Committee on Women's Affairs, leading to isolated efforts and inconclusive results.

While the CEDAW committee urges the state to take post conflict measures towards mainstreaming the role of women in peace building, decision-making, development and rehabilitation processes; the MDGs report has totally overlooked the effects of the conflict on men and women, in terms of poverty prevalence, primary education enrolment, health care, economic activity, refuge and displacement and the role of women in post-conflict arrangements and process.

Morocco

Morocco was selected as one of the pilot countries for a Global Gender and MDGs program, the data for the 2005 MDG report was provided by the High Commissioner's Office for Planning, which coordinates the MDGs process.

The report raises concern about rural poverty and according to the indicators developed by the Commissioner, Morocco may not be able to halve poverty by 2015, a target that could only be achieved by 2040.

Unlike other countries Morocco has established a broad framework to achieve the MDGs, at a national level.²⁸ A Gender Budgeting/MDG Costing study was developed in 2006 by the Ministry of Finance, with the technical support of UNIFEM as part of this framework.

Morocco's MDG report reflects the concerns of Morocco – at the official and non-official levels - on the issues of gender equality and progressive efforts to recognize and actualize gender balance at all aspects of the MDGs with special concentration on poverty reduction strategies.

Morocco has one of the strongest representations of women in Parliament (10%) among Arab countries. This significant achievement is a result of the great influence of the women's movement in Morocco. Political parties decided to reserve all seats of the national list for female candidates, which allowed 35 women to seat in Parliament (30 elected from the national list and 5 from the regional lists).

The data and information presented by the report reflect the capabilities of research institutions to generate and use gender-sensitive data. As a result UNDP supports two initiatives related to the achievement of MDG 3. The first project is a joint program launched in February 2007, in partnership with UNICEF, UNIFEM and the Ministry of Justice on “Strengthening the Capacities of Family Tribunals/Sections for a sound

28 MDGs Monitor, Track, Learn, Support – Tracking the Millennium Development Goals website, Morocco MDGs report.

implementation of the New Family Law”, and the second project is “Promoting Women’s Entrepreneurial Activities”.

The framework of the MDG process is an inclusive one, in which there is a reasonable degree of coordination between official and NGO efforts.

The MDG framework can be described as a comprehensive one; it looks at all aspects of gender equality and women’s empowerment. The UNDP project on: “Strengthening the Capacities of Family Tribunals/Sections” is a good example of such broad and comprehensive process.

The CEDAW Committee highly appreciates the work of the Royal Commission in the field of human rights and especially its efforts to eliminate existing discrimination against women, such as the adoption of the family Code, the nationality law, law on civil registration, labour code and the code of criminal procedure as well as amendments to the penal code.

Although the Constitution guarantees equality before the law, the committee is concerned about enshrining the principle of equality between women and men in all spheres and that legislation does not contain an explicit definition of the principle of equality between women and men or of discrimination on the basis of gender.

The Committee expresses concern that traditional discriminatory practices and strong stereotypical attitudes persist about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in family and society. These stereotypes present a significant impediment to the implementation of the Convention and are a root cause of the disadvantaged position of women in all areas, including in the labour market and in political and public life, negatively affecting women’s enjoyment of their rights and impeding the full implementation of the Convention. The Committee is also especially concerned about the role played by the media in perpetuating such stereotypes.

Despite of the great efforts on women’s empowerment, the CEDAW shadow report has revealed the instability of the national mechanisms for women’s empowerment characterized by changes in mandate and structure (high centralization), lack of authority and competence.

According to the report the national mechanisms are highly dependent on foreign funding which is undermining the sustainability of the central national mechanisms and other sectoral mechanisms and the absence of a formal mechanism for consultation with various stakeholders on major strategies.

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Mainstreaming of MDGs in Arab Countries

By

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Executive Summary



This chapter deals with mainstreaming and embedding of the MDGs in national developmental agendas. While this is becoming widely recognized as a potentially significant element in helping to improve developing countries' socio-economic conditions on a sustainable basis, Arab countries still lag behind in this respect.

The multidimensionality of the MDGs covers the breadth of poverty reduction and development efforts, but they do not necessarily grasp the depth of those issues. However, and irrespective of what the actual progress in moving towards achieving MDGs has been in the Arab countries, mainstreaming and embedding these goals will improve the situation and make it more sustainable. Partly because the MDGs are not mainstreamed and embedded, progress in achieving goals has sometimes faltered.

The author notes that before true national embedding is achieved, genuine mainstreaming has to take place through national ownership of the development agenda, which has not happened in the Arab countries. International organizations have an important influence in this regard within several Arab countries, especially some of the poorer ones.

National public agendas exist in many Arab countries, and in most cases, MDGs are part of such agendas, but their seriousness remains in question. National agendas formulated in Arab countries remain a top-down exercise, with little genuine consultation. This remains true for any effort in mainstreaming MDGs. As such, progress towards achieving them is erratic and slow. On the other hand, had the mainstreaming been initiated by grassroots action in a genuine public-private partnership, the national embedding spurred by the government and others could have been more meaningful, helping to overcome obstacles to achieving some goals.

Globalization, dependence on rents, missing development statistics on the MDGs, weak media coverage of the MDGs, low academic interest

in MDGs, notes the author, have negatively affected the mainstreaming and embedding process on a local or regional level. Differences among Arab countries are vast. The overlap between domestic, regional, and international factors serves to heighten political tensions in the region, as geostrategic confrontations have set the tone for conflicts and tensions at both the regional and national levels.

Case studies from countries that have attempted to mainstream the MDGs, namely Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Lebanon show that the challenges vary from country to country. Some goals are of major relevance for the development agendas of the four Arab countries chosen, while other MDGs are less important.

In light of this context, an important factor in effective mainstreaming is the buttressing of the role of civil society to better define national priorities, based on a participatory process and national discussion. It may also be the case that new or adapted MDG indicators are required for the Arab region in order to reflect regional and country specificities. Country-specific Arab MDGs may be required to enhance national ownership and embedding. Furthermore, the author recommends establishing and validating an MDG Baseline for individual countries as a step that could help in defining more precisely national needs and agreeing on priorities. But, this could be costly and politically difficult.

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I. Introduction

“Mainstreaming” means to introduce a certain way of thinking and acting into the society and economy, developing into positive natural behavior. The “national embedding” of goals is their adoption in a non-superficial and sustainable way by political systems, irrespective of the actual government or decision-makers in power.

The mainstreaming and national embedding of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in developmental agendas of countries of the South is now widely recognized as a potentially significant element in helping to improve their socio-economic conditions on a sustainable basis. However, Arab countries still lag in this respect.

The Arab development effort is still sapped by many factors, probably the most important of which is lack of democracy. Other vital elements in this respect wasteful arms spending, widespread corruption, and various outbreaks of civil and regional conflict. These and other elements play a major negative role in impeding progress towards MDGs.

Economically, fast demographic and labor force expansion has led to high unemployment and slow growth in per capita incomes. Unsustainable management of the environment and natural resources further threatens prospects for long-term economic growth.

Poverty in the Arab region is associated directly and strongly with unemployment, social and economic marginalization, young population structure, high fertility, large family size and high dependency ratio, low education levels of the labor force, and lastly low wages and productivity together with soaring prices and declining purchasing power. Also, while achieving high economic growth would be the basis for generating jobs, raising incomes and alleviating poverty, yet, the nature of growth and the fair distribution of its fruits stand as the determinants of success or failure of the social and economic policies.

Against this background, since the launch of MDGs in 2000, the Arab region has made little progress in embedding and mainstreaming them. Yet, despite efforts Arab countries have invested in this respect, there have been setbacks and constraints due to various factors, including lack of administrative and managerial competencies, and political tension that downgrades longer-term development priorities in favor of short-run crisis management and the need to deal with emergencies.

The region in fact continues to see such tension often degenerate into widespread violence. Conflict is thus a problem in several Arab countries, often fueled by external factors. This creates development specificities in **conflict-ridden areas (CRAs), including Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine.**

There and elsewhere, though country specificities account for many observed disparities, common issues can be clearly discerned across the Arab world and within groupings of countries, namely:

- **The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)**
- **The least developed countries (LDCs): the Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, and Yemen²⁹.**
- **Middle income states (MISs), comprising the rest of the region**

Disparities exist not only in the level of development among these four groupings but also in terms of progress made towards mainstreaming MDGs. Though national specificities do, for the most part, account for disparities, common issues can be clearly discerned across all Arab countries or within sub-groups.

MDGs are unprecedented in their ambition to galvanize national commitment and mainstream a set of broad and global economic, social and environmental priorities in the development agenda. In particular, they have lent political weight to issues of poverty reduction and made governments more accountable. However, MDGs may lack the rigor and specificity to serve as a policy framework.

The multidimensionality of the MDGs covers the breadth of poverty reduction and development efforts, but they do not necessarily grasp the depth of those issues³⁰. Partly because MDGs are not mainstreamed and embedded, progress in achieving goals has sometimes been faltering. For example, after improving in previous decades, the proportion of children in primary schools in Arab countries has stalled at around 80% and about 10 million children in the region still do not go to school.

²⁹ For purposes of this report, unless otherwise specified, the expression LDCs refers to these Arab Least Developed Countries, and not to LDCs as a whole globally, which of course is the common meaning of the abbreviation
³⁰ ESCWA The MDGs In The Arab Region 2007 UN, New York, 2007

Even where progress is clear, there are problems. Bahrain is a case in point: though the country has achieved 100% primary school enrolment, authorities there are under pressure to invest more resources in education to accommodate increasing numbers of enrolled children. The main challenge facing the Bahraini government in this area is how to bring the content of the education system up to a 21st century standard by giving greater attention to educational quality, trying to improve teaching methodology, modernizing curricula, and creating separate schools for distinguished students. For countries that are lagging, national embedding of mainstreamed goals would help achieve the broad elements of the relevant MDG; in addition, as is the case in Bahrain, national embedding and mainstreaming could help make an achieved goal more meaningful and sustainable.

As a result of this lack of mainstreaming and of embedding, actual achievements in reaching MDGs has been mixed and tenuous.

MDG1: the Arab region, as a whole has not experienced significant progress in **reducing income poverty**. The proportion of population living below the national poverty lines fell only slightly across the region since 2000. Data also confirm a big rise in poverty in Iraq and Palestine. The malnutrition rate for the region fell slowly, indicating critical malfunctions in development efforts. Labor markets in most Arab countries show widespread underemployment and very high rates of youth unemployment, around 25%. Throughout the countries of the region, labor forces are growing at up to 4% annually, and Arab economies will have to create around 60 m jobs over the next decade to bring the rate of unemployment down to the global norm. Yet, this will be a tough challenge, despite some recent positive indicators. In the last five years unemployment in the Arab world has come down to a region-wide average of around 11%. Though this masks serious differences among countries, with GCC states enjoying the lowest levels of joblessness, while CRAs have high unemployment, the trend since 2004 has been one of a falling percentage of the labor force out of work. The situation is particularly grave for young women. As such, many young Arab people are resorting to migration, leading to a serious brain drain.

MDG2: the region as a whole has achieved significant progress in access to **education** despite rapid population growth, which constitutes a main challenge to the provision of basic education. Yet, due to socio-economic differences between the four subregions, progress among Arab countries has not been homogeneous. This is exemplified by two thirds of the 7.5 m out-of-school children in the region living in LDCs. Despite significant improvements, about one child in two was out of school in Arab LDCs. In addition, though the youth literacy rate in Arab LDCs improved, almost one young person out of three in Arab LDCs is illiterate. Moreover, 73% of out-of-school children in Arab

LDCs are girls. As a whole recent progress towards universal primary education was not consistent and was insufficient for the region to meet the MDG target. Progress has been uneven across countries, with less than eight of every ten children in primary school in the Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania and Morocco. Mauritania and Sudan in particular are grappling with decreasing efficiency.

MDG3: the region has recently witnessed a surge in efforts by governments and CSOs to tackle all forms of **discrimination against women**, and to invest in women's issues on a large scale. On the education front, Arab women have moved closer to equality, with the gender parity index measured by the girls-to-boys gross enrolment ratio, having substantially increased at all levels of education. Indeed, progress towards gender parity has been significant. Yet, despite recording the most progress of all subregions in primary education, Arab LDCs still face a major challenge in guaranteeing girls equal access to secondary and tertiary education. Moreover, the gains achieved by Arab women in access to education have not yet been translated into greater economic and political participation. The share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector has mostly remained constant in all subregions. Yet, official statistics measuring female participation in labor markets fail to accurately reflect reality as they exclude all forms of non-paid work.

MDG4: the Arab region continues to be characterized by strong disparities across the four subregions and among individual countries in **child mortality** rates. No other part of the world records such wide contrasts in that indicator. Indeed, while the region has made significant progress since 1990, and is not far off track to meet the target of reducing the under-five mortality rate by two thirds over the period 1990 to 2015, more than one child in ten dies before reaching his/her fifth birthday in Arab LDCs. In addition, almost 75% of deaths before the age of five in the Arab region occur in the first year of life. The proportion of underweight children under five years of age remains relatively high, with little improvement from the 1990 level and significant differences in progress among individual countries. Moreover, individual country data indicate wide disparities in the proportion of underweight children. In Yemen, for example, the percentage of children who are underweight is about fifteen times higher than that in Lebanon³¹.

MDG5: the region as a whole is on track in **reducing the maternal mortality** rate by three quarters from its 1990 level by 2015. The decline in maternal mortality is linked to the significant increase in births attended by a skilled health professional. However, despite the generally improving situation, there are great variations in the maternal death level among countries of the region; the burden of maternal death in the Arab region is primarily carried by Arab LDCs and, to a lesser

31 *ibid.*

extent, by Iraq and Morocco. The decrease in maternal mortality in the Arab region can also be attributed to the reduction in adolescent pregnancy.

MDG6: Though the prevalence of **HIV/AIDS** continues to be relatively low in Arab countries, risks and vulnerability are high as the problem is on the rise. In the most affected countries the level of knowledge on HIV, especially among the young, and the percentage of people adopting preventive practices are extremely low. Access to antiretroviral therapy is only available for a fraction of people living with HIV in the Arab countries. Regarding **malaria**, while it has been almost eliminated in the majority of Arab countries, it remains highly endemic in Arab LDCs with on average 3000 cases per 100000 persons annually. Djibouti, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen accounted for 98% of notified cases in the region³². Achievement of the MDG target in the subregion, and in the region as a whole, is therefore heavily dependent on progress in those four countries. Factors that have hindered progress in Arab LDCs include: limited coverage of primary healthcare services; poor quality of malaria diagnostic services; lack of mechanisms for delivery of therapy at the community level; high cost of new drugs; weak logistic and supply system for timely delivery of drugs; low compliance of the private sector to new treatment guidelines; and presence of counterfeit drugs in the market. As for tuberculosis, it remains a significant public health problem, and Arab LDCs are most affected, with Djibouti recording the highest rate.

MDG7: all Arab countries share, in varying degrees, the major challenge of improving **environmental governance and integrating environment resource management** into poverty reduction strategies and national development plans. A significant part of the environmental problems the region is facing is related to poor management, weak institutional capacity and insufficient public expenditure on environmental issues. The region as a whole faces a severe problem concerning water resources. Seven of its countries rank among the ten water-poorest in the world. Most Arab countries receive a large part of their water resources from outside their borders, or share their resources with other countries. If Arab countries maintain current trends, an estimated 124 m people in the region will be without access to basic sanitation in 2015, half of them living in Arab LDCs, where slum-dwellers still represented a significant part of the urban population.

MDG8: **trade** has had less of an impact on the economies of Arab countries than in other parts of the world. Intraregional trade accounts for only around 11% of total Arab trade, a figure far below that of other world regions. This can be attributed to lack of complementarities among Arab economies, non-compliance by many Arab countries with their obligations under trade agreements, the absence of credible

³² *ibid.*

dispute settlement mechanisms, high transaction costs, and excessive regulation. Yet, most Arab countries have taken serious steps towards liberalizing trade and introducing measures to facilitate integration into the world economy. Currently, 12 Arab countries are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), while six are engaged in membership negotiations. Official development assistance (ODA) to Arab countries has been on a steady upward trend, in part due to large debt forgiveness grants provided by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) members to Iraq. The distribution of ODA among Arab subregions and countries is far from equitable, as strategic political reasons, economic interests, and past colonial ties often prevail over developmental needs when decisions concerning aid allocation are made by major donors. At the same time, access to information and communications technology in Arab countries has increased steadily since 2000. Yet, despite progress, the region as a whole lags considerably behind the world average in terms of fixed telephone lines, personal computers and Internet users. Moreover, disparities between Arab countries remain very high. The digital divide is most noticeable when comparing the GCC states with CRAs.

In any event, and in all cases, irrespective of what the actual progress in moving towards achieving MDGs has been in the Arab countries, mainstreaming and embedding these goals will ameliorate the situation and make it more sustainable. However, before true national embedding is achieved, genuine mainstreaming has to take place through national ownership of the development agenda, which has not happened in the Arab countries.

II. The importance of national ownership of the development agenda

The important factor of national ownership of the development agenda has not been achieved in the Arab world; and international organizations have an important negative influence in this regard within several Arab countries, especially some of the poorer ones. Though UN agencies focus more directly on MDGs in individual development programs, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), as well as bilateral aid agencies, are heavily involved in guiding the development process in many of the Arab countries, especially the MISs and the LDCs. The WB in particular seeks through its Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) to encompass a set of principles to guide development and poverty reduction, with Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRs) underpinned by the CDF seen as a way to enhance country ownership and the achievement of the MDGs.

In the Arab world, the WB first applied the CDF methodology in Jordan

and Morocco (among a group of a dozen countries worldwide) at the end of the 1990s on a pilot basis. In Morocco CDF supposedly was to serve as a basis for a new long-term vision for Moroccan society, moving away from a predominantly government and donor-co-ordinated approach to one in which both the government and civil society organizations (CSOs) are allied in formulating the development agenda. The CDF process there started out by focusing on sector analysis of constraints, and by organizing broad-based seminars with various actors within society and pilot projects on a wide range of subjects such as education and health. The government used the CDF process as a platform to debate sensitive topics, such as corruption and civil service reform. In the context of the CDF, the government was to have taken the lead in promoting the participation of civil society in this process.

In fact, almost a decade later, governments in Jordan and Morocco maintain a strong hold on the development agenda, and such problems as corruption remain serious. There as in some other Arab countries, the impression among some is that CDF allows such agencies as the WB to create the impression of national embedding of MDGs, without the mainstreaming actually needed to make that meaningful.

The shift in the WB's approach to development policy and conditionality can be explained primarily as a response to the negative experience of the failure of its own policy prescription. The WB's revised its view of what constitutes development, moving to a conception which elevates the poorest as the focus of development policy and which relativizes the importance of economic growth. The WB's approach to conditionality has been modified accordingly, but while claims are made of national ownership, the new conditionality severely constrains the potential for genuine democratic involvement development policy.

An example of the failure of this process came in Morocco after 1999, when a new king came to power, offering an opportunity for change. For a while, the role of Moroccan CSOs was gaining importance, particularly in their ability to contribute to formulation of the country's development agenda. However, CSOs did not move beyond debate to concrete development, build consensus, or enhance the participation of Moroccan citizens in development issues. The impact of civil society on decision-making was not sustained, and less than a decade later Morocco's path to equitable development is still very difficult. Clearly, democratic national ownership was not seriously offered or pursued by the government, preferring to work with the WB and others behind a façade of change. Democratic national ownership that would allow mainstreamed MDGs to become embedded in socio-economic policy could have ameliorated this situation.

The CDF supposedly advocates: a holistic long-term vision; the country in the lead, both "owning" and directing the development agenda, with

the WB and other partners each defining their support in their respective business plans; stronger partnerships among governments, donors, civil society, the private sector, and other development stakeholders in implementing the country strategy; and a transparent focus on development outcomes to ensure better practical success in reducing poverty. However, given an undemocratic basis for Arab politics, such a vision will not work, as the example of Egypt shows.

Since 2004, the Egyptian government has set a constant pace of structural reforms and economic liberalization. Policy papers of the governing National Democratic Party provide a framework for the government reform agenda in more specific terms. This is particularly the case for the health sector, environmental policy, and education. The Ministry of Planning's Five-Year Plan (FYP) covering 2002-07 served as a framework for this, based on a long-term vision called *Vision for Egypt's Development by 2022*³³. The FYP contained broad goals that aim for the achievement of the MDGs. These included poverty alleviation, social safety provision, and better quality of life through expanded service delivery particularly in rural areas, female participation in development, job creation, and support to small and medium enterprises.

However, participation of national CSO stakeholders in strategy formulation and implementation remains weak. The Ministry of Planning is the locus of initiative for the FYP, development programs of which are driven largely by central and local authorities. These authorities engage in consultations to formulate the FYP, its annual submissions, and the resulting budgetary allocations, but these are not genuinely open or extensive. Consultative mechanisms have supposedly been built into the planning process. The Government has announced that the drive to decentralization will be coupled with greater opportunities to involve CSOs in the consultative process, but given the continuing state of emergency under which the state operates, there is little margin for free public debate about governance and development issues.

The FYP is discussed and approved by the Parliament, which has the responsibility to both approve the budget for the forthcoming fiscal year and close the account of the expiring fiscal year. Yet, government delays in submitting the full budget documents and accounts to Parliament on schedule have in the past weakened parliamentary control over national budgets and accounts.

External partners are making efforts towards harmonization of monitoring and evaluation requirements through dialog led by the UN Development Program (UNDP) on ways to operationalize the MDGs. However, irrespective of any other issues, an impediment to this process is that the quality and availability of poverty-related data is somewhat

³³ The Vision for Egypt's Development by 2022 was completed in 2002.

weak. The 2005 WB study on progress toward the MDGs highlights missing or outdated data in a number of important areas, such as HIV/AIDS and malnutrition.

Visions for sustainable socio-economic development are increasingly being articulated in Arab countries, sometimes in parallel with and promoted by Arab region and National Arab Human Development Reports (HDRs). Yet, in many cases these visions remain part of a superficial exercise by regimes, with no effort at mainstreaming or national embedding.

A case in point is Yemen's vision to achieve development goals and objectives, known as the Strategic Vision 2025 (SV2025), which was drawn up in 2000 to tackle Yemen's long run challenges. The SV2025 points out that to reach the status of middle human development Yemen has to accelerate economic growth to an annual average of at least 9% during 2000-25. Meanwhile, in the earlier years of the century, the strategy envisions that the economy should achieve annual per capita GDP growth of at least 2.5%. However, these goals are not being met; and in any case, irrespective of such failures or even partial successes, this and other Arab "visions" remain more or less irrelevant. In terms also of Arab or global HDRs, there is no particular progress by Yemen in this respect; according to the UNDP *HDR 2006*, Yemen ranked 150th out of a total of 177 countries; while in the UNDP Human Development Index for 2005, Yemen was 151st out of 177 countries, a fall of two places from its 2004 standing. In Yemen as elsewhere in the region, the shocks previously achieved by such indices appear to have worn off, and the reports are taken less seriously and presented as less relevant.

Alongside "visions", national public agendas exist in many Arab countries, and in most cases, MDGs are part of such agendas, but their seriousness remains in question. National agendas formulated in Arab countries remain as top-down exercises, with little genuine consultation. An example of the weakness of national consultations is Jordan's National Agenda, which had been due to be released in mid-2005 but was postponed due to "printing and proofreading" issues. Jordan's National Agenda - the detailed road map to political and economic reforms in 2006-15 – was prey to fierce internal arguments over its contents and recommendations, and over what will happen upon its release.

The National Agenda Committee was reportedly planning to take advantage of the delay in the Agenda's release to embark on a wide ranging public relations campaign, including meetings and consultations with journalists and opinion leaders. However, failure of the Committee to engage in such a wide-ranging public dialog during the drafting process was a key reason for the Agenda's ultimate lack of impact.

The Agenda failed to spark a constructive national debate or to build a public consensus for its vision of reform. The proposal regarding

membership in the Journalists Association infuriated the media, turning many opinion makers against it before its release. Conservatives resented its attack on entrenched privileges; Parliament was against the move to change the electoral system; liberals worried that it would sacrifice political reforms; and the country's active professional associations feared that it would challenge their political role. In addition, ethnic Jordanian nationalists fanned fears that the Agenda would transform the identity of the state, empowering Palestinians or even paving the way to Jordanian rule of the West Bank.

The problem was that the Committee should have at the outset of its work engaged the public in a serious debate about different reform ideas, rather than consulting among experts and then delivering a ten year plan from on high. The failure to engage the public left the National Agenda bereft of political support from the grass roots.

The problem with such a top down approach is that even if it appears to be more efficient, it almost guarantees a hostile popular reception and weakens such an agenda even before its dissemination. This pattern in fact reflects the reality of the contempt felt by some officials for the Jordanian public, and this, in turn helps explain why the National Agenda Committee seemed much more interested in economic and bureaucratic reforms than in anything to do with democracy.

However, the National Agenda Committee was an extra-constitutional royal commission. Given that its members were not elected, letting the NAC have such a powerful say in the country's development was not democratic. Reform led by an unelected commission thus failed to achieve a blueprint for real change. In any case, the published agenda made no direct mention of MDGs, and referred to development goals only in a secondary manner.

III. Participatory processes: the role of development partners

Leading the development process in the Arab region is still the task of the higher reaches of the executive branch of government in partnership with multinational entities such as the WB. The role of the legislative branch, the private sector, and CSOs is still constrained, despite the supposed changes introduced in the context of the WB CDF.

Although there has been some progress in achieving MDG indicators over the past few years, as discussed above, this has often been spearheaded by foreign donors working mainly with the central government executive, and not with CSOs or the private sector. Regarding the latter, the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become more important in the Arab world over the past few years, but this has not so far been linked in a significant way with the MDGs. Examples of this

relative neglect came in the Greater Amman Municipality CSR forum of March 2007, as well as a national conference in March 2008 organized by the private Urdun al-Jadid Research Center. Though both events saw references to such social issues as childhood development and education, the MDG element was largely absent from the proceedings.

In this domain and many others, linking a national development strategy to MDGs-based strategies thus has yet to be achieved in most of the Arab region. However, a few attempts in such directions are being made through a national development needs assessment, leading to sectoral assessments required implementing specific reforms. In that respect, mainstreaming of development goals in general and MDGs in particular is being attempted in the Arab world and elsewhere through poverty reduction strategies (PRSs) as set out in various published Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). In fact, the development of PRSPs in the Arab region is driven by the WB working in some cases with the IMF, not necessarily according to priorities set by CSOs.

One of the earlier examples of this process in the region was the Yemen PRS of 2003-5. The SV2025 discussed above coincided in time, format and content with similar preparations for a PRSP which in turn was part of the country's FYP then current and a major component of its strategies and objectives. Implementing the PRS2003-5, which especially targeted sectors where the poor are very numerous, was especially significant in terms of providing job opportunities and basic services.

The PRSP completed in 2002 set out four key policy challenges: achieving economic growth; developing human resources; improving infrastructure; and ensuring social protection. To those ends, the PRSP mapped out approaches to adjusting to Yemen's declining oil revenues, while noting that the scope for raising more state income from taxation is limited by a fragile tax base. In particular, the government had to ensure that the possible terms of WTO accession and their implementation were in line with the overall goal of export-led and pro-poor growth spelled out in the PRSP. As such, this macro-economic based approach gave undue emphasis to fiscal and other financial factors, at the expense of poverty alleviation, and in any case not in an MDG framework.

That this could be the case is in large part attributed to the influence of foreign donors on Yemen. In fact, these donors have succeeded in co-ordinating aid activates more closely in Yemen as well as in some other Arab countries. For example, Egypt's external partners have taken numerous initiatives to co-ordinate their support: WB projects in the area of human development are prepared and implemented in co-ordination with the EC and other partners. WB co-ordination with Germany and the Netherlands in the water and irrigation sector is strong. Co-ordination between the WB and Japan exists in the urban and transport sectors. USAID, the EC and the WB offer support to governance and

anti-corruption programs in a co-ordinated way. Analytical partnerships among external partners are also strong. The WB and the IMF have together finalized a number of joint diagnostic documents including Public Expenditure Reviews, also supported by the Netherlands and the EC. The Egypt Country Environmental Analysis, piloted by the WB to help assess the environmental aspects of the development strategy, has been adopted in policy papers by several multilateral banks.

The extent to which Arab region and country HDRs and national MDG reports promote national MDG embedding is still limited. Regarding the HDRs, their impact has fallen from the high levels of interest seen in the region during the first half of this decade.

As for national MDG reports, problematic indications in this respect came for example following the *MDGs Needs Assessment Yemen Country Report*. This refers to the low level of Yemeni human development, making the country one of the poorest in the world, but also to its slow progress.³⁴ According to Yemen's MDG Needs Assessment Report, Yemen will need to make significant investments to build capacity in human resources, infrastructure and institutions. With entrenched poverty what is needed urgently is international follow-through on the commitments the world has made. The Needs Assessment Report gives some indication of the enormity of the tasks the country faces to mobilize the resources required. What will be needed, in resource terms, to meet the MDGs over 2005-15 is USD48 b to halve poverty, improve the investment environment and better integrate in the regional economy. The report notes that such integration could be obtained by accelerating the process of accession to WTO, the effective participation in the Arab Free Trade Area, strengthened partnership with the GCC states, and attracting more regional and international investors.

However, three years after the publication of this report, the extent to which embedding of MDGs has taken place is limited, while at the same time the various targets in terms of aid and institutional change have not been met. In fact, the impression given by donors is that the extent of waste and mismanagement in the country is still considerable, which of course makes foreign countries less inclined to help Yemen through financial and technical assistance.

At the same time, the embedding of MDGs in Yemen has not taken place to any significant degree. Taking as an example MDG8, Yemen is still outside the WTO, despite years of negotiations; as for strengthening partnership with the GCC states, this process remains slow. Regarding

34 As expressed for example in the remarks by the UNDP Resident Representative in Yemen, who noted during the launch of the 2005 UN Human Development Report in Sanaa her "disappointment in Yemen's development pace" (al-Saqqaf, W and Morocco al-Jabri "Yemen Unlikely to Reach MDGs: UNDP" in Yemen Times, no 887, 20 October 2005.

attracting foreign investment, the country continues to suffer from an unclear policy in various areas, including free zone development. Finally, corruption at all levels is not being addressed to an extent sufficient to allay fears of Arab and other investors, including Yemeni expatriates.

In this context, the embedding of MDG8 and other goals has come from the top down, without real mainstreaming. As such, progress towards achieving them is erratic and slow; on the other hand, had the mainstreaming been initiated by grass roots action in a genuine public-private partnership, the national embedding spurred by the government and others could have been more meaningful, helping to overcome obstacles to achieving some goals.

IV. Arab socio-economic policy players

The executive branch of government in Arab countries remains paramount, with the head of state and his close advisors typically imposing development policies, which are not necessarily coherent, sustainable, or ultimately feasible. In this respect as in many others, Arab legislative and judiciary branches in a clearly subordinate position. The same subordination is also true of CSOs, the media, and the private sector.

Paying lip service to MDGs in some cases, the executive branch – often in conjunction with foreign stakeholders – appears to promote MDG mainstreaming and national embedding. In fact, this is often a façade designed to placate foreign donors or local public opinion.

Legislatures are increasingly weak in the Arab world. After a partial opening up in the earlier years of this decade, the legislative branch of government in most Arab countries has become even more subordinate to the executive. On the other hand, in some hitherto absolute monarchies, legislatures are emerging on a central level (e.g. in the UAE) or in the form of municipal councils (e.g. in Saudi Arabia). In addition, in Kuwait the legislature is generally stronger than it has been over the past few decades. Yet, the general trend in MICs and LDCs is towards legislative weakness.

In any case, whether legislatures are becoming stronger or not, they are generally not focused on MDGs, or even on overall issues of socio-economic development. In many cases, legislators are seeking personal gain by attempting to join the executive as ministers. In other cases, legislatures are more or less paralyzed due to a general crisis in the country, as for example in Lebanon and Palestine.

By contrast, grass roots organizations such as professional syndicates,

trade unions, and CSOs are across the region sporadically becoming more articulate, with a selective increase in focus on MDGs. However, in the absence of democracy, the efforts of these entities are generally thwarted by a powerful executive, or ignored by a weak legislature that is anyway often pre-occupied with personal or other narrow issues, or is weakened due to national crises.

In such a situation, external states and blocs, especially the United States and the European Union, increasingly play a crucial role in influencing policies in Arab countries³⁵. The political situation in much of the Arab region is subject to persistent tension due to the Arab–Israeli conflict, the war in Iraq and its spillovers to other countries, and sporadic upsurges of terrorism. In addition, some countries face serious domestic political tensions, a lack of political openness, and the increasing popularity of extremist opposition groups.

Increased economic co-operation between the Arab countries, on the one hand, and the US and the EU respectively, on the other, aims not only at ostensibly promoting growth and development but also fostering more stable political environments. However, insofar as the status quo is unfavorable to democratization, sustainable development, and equitable growth, the deals struck between the Western powers and unrepresentative governments may actually be irrelevant or even to inimical to the welfare of many people in the region.

Since the 1980s, both the European Union and the United States have sought stronger positions in the Arab region through free trade agreements (FTAs) and related commercial diplomacy. Starting with the North African states in the late 1960s, through the early 1990s, the European Union had signed a series of broad co-operation agreements with most Arab countries on the Mediterranean, as well as with Jordan, and the United States had concluded its first FTA with Israel in 1985. These were important first steps toward free trade, but not necessarily in line with sustainable human development.

After the Israeli–Palestinian Oslo peace agreement in 1993 and the Israel–Jordan treaty the following year, free trade initiatives increased; with the European–Mediterranean (Euro–Med) Barcelona Process launched in the middle of the 1990s, and US–Jordanian steps toward freer trade, including the first qualifying industrial zone (QIZ) trilateral diagonal cumulation accord—between the United States, Jordan, and Israel—in the late 1990s. In all cases, these agreements aimed to increase stability in the Arab countries involved while enhancing the security situation in favor of Israel and regimes friendly to the West, the development element being generally subordinate.

The US drive to sign new FTAs with Arab countries continued in the

35 al Khouri R EU and US Free Trade Agreements in the Middle East and North Africa Carnegie Middle East Center, Beirut 2008.

following years, and it accelerated after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Although strategic considerations have always influenced American trade policies, they came to play an even larger role as the events of 9/11 highlighted the impact of Arab issues on US security. The United States argued that global trade liberalization was central to America's fight against terrorism. For example, the 9/11 Commission Report states that "a comprehensive US strategy to counter terrorism should include economic policies that encourage development, more open societies, and opportunities for people to improve the lives of their families and to enhance prospects for their children's future."

In 2004, Robert Zoellick, then US trade representative, described the signing of a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the UAE as solidifying: "the relationship between our two countries on an economic level which complements our strong partnership in our fight against terrorism." He concluded, "Expansion of trade with the [UAE] is part of our efforts to promote democracy and economic vitality in the Middle East and the Gulf Region³⁶". Yet, little mention was made of MDGs in this regard, despite general emphasis in other countries or regions by the US MDG-related issues such as gender or economic integration.

The EU drive for free trade with the Arab countries through the Euro-Med Partnership was also influenced by nontrade issues, including the desire to curb illegal immigration. However, these accords as well as later policy instruments of the European Union in the Arab countries, such as the strategies associated with the EU Neighborhood Policy or with the Union for the Mediterranean, generally do not emphasize development issues, including MDGs.

The potential impact of trade agreements with the European Union and the United States on the Arab economies is important. At the same time, competition between the United States and the European Union and its impact on the region is also a strategic factor in Arab-Western Relations.

As the holder of the bulk of the world's oil reserves and the location of several political crises that affect Western security interests, the Arab region is a strategic area for both Europe and America. At the same time, the region has an unfulfilled potential as a stronger trade partner with the West; thus, in recent years, both the United States and the EU have pursued more active trade agendas in the region, promoting stronger bilateral and regional trade ties — but with political ends in mind, and less concern for development issues in general or MDGs in particular.

The EU and the United States share the view that fostering economic

36 Robert Zoellick, US trade representative, "United States and UAE Sign TIFA," press release, March 15, 2004.

growth through trade will not only increase economic welfare in the region but also might encourage the promotion of much-needed domestic reform, which in turn would help curb emigration, tame extremist sentiments threatening Western security, and provide more support for friendly regimes. International trade issues, such as bilateral economic agreements and the formation of regional trading blocs are, unlike human development issues and MDGs, high on the national agendas of both Western and Arab countries. Implied in this movement for increased economic co-operation is the notion that consumers, industries, and the public sector all benefit from increased international trade, and that the ensuing growth and affluence will create a tendency away from North-South tension and interstate or non-state conflict. Clearly however, this has not been the case in the Arab region, as an increase in trade and commercial agreements has not been accompanied by reduced tension.

Although strategic considerations influenced US trade policy making in the 1990s and before, this emphasis intensified as the events of 9/11 highlighted the impact of the Arab region's political, social, and economic problems on US national security. Shortly after 9/11, the connection between trade policy initiatives and security strengthened as the US administration argued that global trade liberalization was a central plank of its national security and antiterrorism efforts. A few days after 9/11, US Trade Representative Zoellick wrote that "America's trade leadership [could] build a coalition of countries [in the fight against terrorism]," emphasizing that "open markets [were] vital for developing nations, many of them fragile democracies that rely on the international economy to overcome poverty and create opportunity³⁷". However, this trade-security linkage has also had other implications for US commercial policy, including the spreading of FTAs in the Arab region. Less dramatically, the EU drive for free trade with the Arab countries also increasingly links to security issues. Yet in both cases, the element of human development as embodied in MDGs is subordinated to purely commercial and political issues.

Because stability of the region is vital to Europe, security remains a key motivation from the EU side. From the Arab point of view, however, the process has been more a question of economic development and expanding trade with Europe. Therefore, there has been a contradiction in Euro-Med from the start, with Arab regimes in particular eager to have better economic relations with Europe but not welcoming civil society or political conditionalities. On both sides however, there was no emphasis on human development or MDGs.

At the same time, the security element has not really succeeded; in 2000, Euro-Med was to produce a regional charter of peace and stability, but the effort was stifled due to the Israeli-Palestinian and Western

37 Robert Zoellick, op-ed, Washington Post, September 20, 2001.

Sahara conflicts. However, especially after 9/11 and subsequent terror attacks in Madrid and London, there has been some progress in security co-operation at the bilateral level, though this has been intermixed with migration issues and therefore has had an economic and social dimension as well. The 9/11 attacks renewed EU interest in the Arab region and reinvigorated the Barcelona Process; given its geographical proximity to the region, the EU realized that the spread of militancy and growing unrest of its own Arab minorities was potentially explosive and needed tackling urgently. However, this policy has not necessarily focused on MDGs.

Like the US and the EU, international organizations also have a very important influence on policy making in the Arab world, but it should also be remembered that the latter are directly or indirectly influenced by Western countries. This is particularly true of the IMF and WB, and to some extent the UN; the latter naturally focuses more on MDGs, and the Bank is also paying some attention to them. Yet, the MDG-based PRSPs guided by these bodies need to be implemented through more ambitious and holistic socio-economic policies that are mainstreamed, and so sustainable.

In summary, it can be said that the main socio-economic policy players in the Arab region are the highest echelon of the executive branch of government, heavily influenced by Western governments in the framework of bilateral agreements. The end result of this process is to subordinate purely economic and security issues to those of human development, leaving MDGs as secondary; the role of the international organizations is also important in this regard, but with more emphasis on MDGs. However, in almost all cases, as these are not properly mainstreamed, their being sometimes embedded does not result in sustainable or equitable development.

V. Issues in MDG mainstreaming in Arab countries: constraints and challenges

Globalization: Globalization is a leading factor in contemporary Arab development, directly or otherwise influencing – for better or worse - the achievement, mainstreaming, or embedding of MDGS. In both its positive and negative aspects, globalization is sweeping Arab countries, introducing tremendous changes. The Arab world is continuing to emerge as one of the fastest growing and otherwise more important parts of the developing world. Yet, apart from oil and gas production, the region continues to underperform economically, and remains a relatively minor player in the area of international business, partly because so much of it still lies outside the globalized economic system, including regional and international treaties and bodies. The Arab world is also not as well integrated as some other regions in terms

of membership of or participation in international organizations, which can have negative implications for the mainstreaming or embedding of MDGs.

In particular, the Arab world remains seriously under-represented in the WTO, with ten out of 22 Arab countries not having acceded to the organization. Compared to other regions, this is the weakest representation of any grouping of countries worldwide. Moreover, there is a suspicion that Arab states that are already part of the organization are not making effective use of their membership; while those countries that are in the process of acceding or otherwise outside the WTO could enhance significantly their positions. This is clearly both a cause and a result of the lack of mainstreaming of MDG8 in particular.

On the non-state level, there are only three Arab organizations with observer status at the WTO, and the umbrella Arab League is not one of them. Another element of weakness in this respect is the absence from the WTO of the all-Arab UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), unlike its counterpart regional entities for Africa, Europe, and Latin America, all of which are observers.

At the same time, there is a great deal of interest in the WTO in the Arab region, and several countries have completed their accession over the past few years while other states are in the process of acceding or have otherwise expressed an interest in doing so.

Rentierism: National and local governance factors have tended to work against the effective MDG embedding and mainstreaming; this problem is caused by such issues as corruption and lack of democratization, often with an important impact on the awareness of MDGs. In the Arab world, persistence and in some case strengthening of the Rentier State model of government is behind these problems.

One factor that impedes democracy in the Middle East is the lack of government dependence on citizen support, the state instead relying on oil revenues directly, as in the GCC countries, or indirectly in the case of such economies as Jordan. The political implication of this concept is that because such states do not ultimately rely for survival on domestic taxation, they are under no obligation to allow for political freedom and so can limit independent political activity that may affect social stability. However, the vast amount of income from hydrocarbons in the GCC states in particular help underpin stability and so make resorting to repression less necessary. In such a situation, democratic practices can and do develop.

As the price of oil soared from under thirty dollars a barrel in most of 2003 to well over a hundred during 2008, the past half-decade has proven to be very good for oil exporting states. With world demand for energy strong and its price rising, government revenues in the Arab

Gulf countries have during that time benefited in a spectacular way. Kuwait is a case in point, with official revenues during the past fiscal year almost trebling from their 2003/4 level, mostly thanks to oil, as Table 1 below shows.

Table 1: Kuwait government revenue for fiscal years 2003/4 and 2007/8 (USD b)

	2003/4	2007/8
Total	23.1	67.3
From oil	20.5	62.7
Non-oil revenue	2.6	4.6
Oil as % of total	88.7	93.2

Source: calculated from Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance “Final Accounts 2007/8”.

These numbers viewed in isolation suggest that Kuwait remains a classic Rentier State, unwilling or unable to democratize or otherwise engage in systemic change. If anything, the emirate should show more signs of in Rentierism as state dependence on oil rises. Yet the politics of the country may belie this, at least on the surface.

Applying the notion of a Rentier State implies that democratization in the region is difficult to achieve. This analysis is based on the observation that the vast amounts raised by oil-rich governments have little to do with taxation, being instead unearned revenue from the extraction of a natural resource³⁸. So long as GCC states possess sufficient amounts of such income, Rentier State theory suggests that they may have little reason to democratize, reform, or otherwise evolve.

However, though Kuwait is a Rentier State where petroleum accounts for over 90% of government income, its politics may be atypical of Rentierism. Parliamentary elections give rise to a collection of disparate political actors; most recently, the poll of May 2008 producing a 70% turnout, a high figure compared to some Western democracies.

With different interests and ideologies increasingly independent of the ruling family, the country undergoes open debate about institutions.

³⁸ The idea of Rentierism is also being applied to non-energy Arab economies and sectors. For example, discussing Jordan as a quasi-Rentier State, or analyzing the case of tourism in Egypt in terms of Rentierism, as various writers have done recently, is instructive and sheds light on trends in Arab political economy and reform.

Parliament requests ministerial testimonies about possible corruption, and is allowed a modicum of open democratic politics according to constitutional rules. Yet, Kuwait still has a long way to go on the path towards democracy. Unfettered political activities are proscribed by a strong executive, and CSOs depend on the clemency of state agencies to operate.

However, despite all these limitations, traditional democratic development may be possible in the Kuwaiti Rentier State because of competing economic and social elites who benefit from the country's drive towards modernization, but have different points of view concerning it. However, this has not produced serious efforts to mainstream or embed MDGs, instead focusing mainly on religious or personal issues.

Future pressure on the Kuwait system may gradually produce better representation and participation: for example in terms of gender, where the last parliamentary poll failed to elect any women, even though they made up 55% of the electorate. While unruly and sometimes embarrassing, Kuwait's experience offers an example of what could be a future model for politics in a Rentier State.

Statistics: Government bureaus gathering statistics are more professional now than at any other time in the modern Arab world, but there is still a lot to be desired in this respect, including a focus on MDGs. However, though a wider range of statistics is available this is still a gap in the measurement of such vital indicators as poverty levels. On the other hand, indices of other important socio-economic statistics such as unemployment are more readily available: for example, Jordan has now for some years published quarterly figures for joblessness, thus helping to mainstream the question of poverty and MDG1. Yet, measuring poverty in Jordan remains less systematic, which hinders efforts at mainstreaming.

Media: Despite improved press coverage of development issues in general in the Arab countries, broadcasting and publishing related to MDGs in particular tends to be weak and sporadic. However, some more professional approaches are being made in this respect by Arab satellite TV as well as through some Arabic-language media located outside the region, which tend to enjoy more freedom to talk about development problems.

The better situation regarding development statistics could in principle make media coverage of development issues easier. In fact, this is still a gap between the publication of timely information and its dissemination through the mass media. This of course means that public discussion of development issues is weaker, and this weakness is also seen in the difficulty of mainstreaming and embedding MDGs.

Social science: The teaching of economics, sociology, etc in Arab universities has become more common and reached a higher standard over the past few years. This is partly due to more spending on higher education, especially through the setting up of private universities, sometimes with a foreign affiliation, including in the GCC countries, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan etc.

Development research and analysis in the Arab world has attained a higher degree of proficiency, with more universities, think tanks, and independent professionals working on issues relating to MDGs, including refining and redefining them to account for the peculiar developmental nature of the region. This has been promoted directly or indirectly by UNDP, as well as by UN regional commissions for West Asia and for Africa. The improved situation regarding development statistics is partly responsible for this amelioration.

However, the fruits of research are not necessarily disseminated widely, nor does mainstreaming or embedding become easier following publication of findings. This is partly the fault of the media, which remains focused on topics unrelated to development. In any case, MDGs are still not featured prominently in research or its dissemination.

Decentralization: In some Arab countries, decentralization and local development have positively affected the mainstreaming and embedding process on a local or regional level. For example, in the Jordanian city of Aqaba, MDG achievements are now highlighted in a local report. *The MDGs Report for Aqaba* indicates that the zone has succeeded in attracting investments and tourism, providing the national economy with an opportunity to overcome its current challenges. The Report, which was launched in May 2008, will serve as an important tool for decision makers in assessing Aqaba's achievements and the challenges it faces in reaching each MDG.

The report showed that there are huge gaps and discrepancies between the city of Aqaba and the rest of the governorate in terms of access to water and education, and other services. The report will help decision makers address this issue, Progress, which is mainly confined to Aqaba city, should spread to other areas in the southern governorate.

The goal to achieve universal primary education is on track while MDG1 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, as well as the goal to ensure environmental sustainability need more attention, according to the report, which also shows that gender equality can be achieved through greater access to education, while more needs to be done in terms of women's participation in the economy and decision making. Health indicators vary, also showing a clear need to improve statistical coverage of the sector.

The report by UNDP, the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and

International Co-operation and the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority indicated the area has succeeded in attracting investments and tourism, providing an opportunity to overcome current challenges. Average income per capita in Aqaba Governorate has improved, and is now more than triple the national level, while unemployment in the area has dropped compared to the national level. The creation of the Authority in 2000 also enhanced the capability to make quick decisions, which contributed to realizing sustainable development in the area and enhancing services³⁹.

VI. The Specificity of the Arab world

Differences among Arab countries are vast. Economic divides among rich and poor states within the region are among the largest in the world, especially the gap between the GCC states and the CRAs. Developmental differences are also big, but rich countries are nevertheless often backward in certain aspects of their development. Moreover, cultural diversity exists within and between Arab countries.

However, political conflict leading to violence and sometimes war is now the main problem in several Arab countries, in many cases fueled by external factors. Civil strife within some countries and clashes between states are extensive in the region. This of course is due in part to the region's strategic position, especially vis-à-vis Europe, Turkey, and Iran; as well as the crucial role played of a cockpit of international conflict and competition involving the US and other Western countries directly (as in Iraq) or indirectly (through alliances with Israel and other regional states). Lebanon is a case in point, with different factions within the country linked to regional and world powers in a destabilizing fashion.

The tendency in these cases as well as others is for such conflict to push MDGs and other development issues off national and factional agendas, except when convenient as propaganda for one side or the other, thus impeding mainstreaming. Embedding of MDGs is also prevented when parliaments cannot or do not convene for long periods, as in the case of the Lebanese legislature over the past two years.

Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, and Sudan have been particularly affected by conflict, high unemployment rates. The inter-relation of political tension, conflict and unemployment is significant. About 22% of the population in the Arab world is aged between 15 and 24. Moreover, the working age population, which is 25-64 years old, is estimated to be 40% in the Arab world. These significant age groups find themselves in a highly charged political environment and live in countries where

39 Jordan News Agency (Petra) "MDGs Report for Aqaba published" 12 May 2008.

economies are increasingly unable to produce jobs. Educational systems also lag in ensuring employability; in addition, political systems curtail the expression of their concerns and aspirations; under such circumstances, the jobless become susceptible to under-employment, frustration, permanent immigration, clientalism, criminal activity, religious or ideological extremism and militancy. Some political actors take advantage of such groups for their own political ends or confrontations.

The overlap between domestic, regional, and international factors serve to heighten political tensions in the region, as geostrategic confrontations have set the tone for conflicts and tensions at both the regional and national levels. Prospects for strong resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process are no longer sufficient for maintaining stability within Palestine. The strong links between the internal situation in the occupied territories, the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, and regional tensions have been reversed recently. Traditionally, instability in the region was attributed to the lack of peace in the occupied territory. Currently, regional disputes over other geopolitical issues serve to generate instability in Palestine.

The once-dominant Saudi-Syrian-Egyptian axis has been replaced with a new regional configuration: the US backed Saudi-Egyptian-Jordanian alignment facing off against the Syrian-Iranian alliance. The contest between these two alliances is taking place in different areas, and is exacerbating domestic political and socio-economic conflicts in them. This divergence between the two alignments, notwithstanding discrepancies among members of both, has developed. Loss of influence by either party in any part of the region is perceived as tantamount to an increase in the other's regional influence.

The 2006 War in Lebanon exacerbated the regional divide. Syria and Iran perceived themselves to be victors in this confrontation, with a corresponding increase in their regional influence and leverage. Additionally, tensions between Syria on one hand and Saudi Arabia and Egypt on the other are perceived as having spiked during the war and in its immediate aftermath. The increased tensions between the two alliances were translated into political/security confrontations in Lebanon, Iraq and Palestine. This was made possible by major local actors in those three countries who have seemingly aligned themselves to one of the two axes.

External intervention in Iraq has also intensified during recent years as different actors, namely the two alignments, attempt to consolidate their influence in Baghdad and other parts of the country. The dependency of local actors on the support to external powers, including the US, has transformed into a major arena for contention. The permeability of internal Palestinian conflict to external intervention has resulted in the

polarization of the political scene along the competing regional axes.

The regional geopolitical rivalry is laden with sectarian connotations. Sectarianism in the region feeds domestic political struggles but in turn is hardened by these struggles. The unabashed use of sectarian languages and symbols in what are otherwise geopolitical or domestic political struggles risks bringing sectarian tensions to new heights in the region. This, in turn, is bound to exacerbate geopolitical and domestic conflicts. However it does not seem that the sectarian wave in the region has reached its zenith.

The 2006 War in Lebanon led to a decrease in sectarian tensions in Lebanon and across the region. The animosity among Arab public opinion towards Israel at the time was more forceful than the sectarian divide. Yet, as soon as the war ended, sectarian rhetoric and tensions were re-energized.

The most evident and violent case of sectarian tensions is that of Iraq. Post-Saddam Iraq has steadily degenerated into sectarian civil war. Despite claims to the contrary, some parts of central Baghdad have experienced sectarian cleansing, and militias have assumed a greater role. As sectarian violence increases in scope and intensity, local communities have resorted to self-protection. These communities mistrust the state security apparatus, which is considered loyal to different political actors. Consequently, dissolving the militias, a precondition for achieving stability and a new political consensus, is becoming more difficult.

In Lebanon, sectarian animosity has also proved to be a ramification of the 2006 War between Israel and Hezbollah. The war served to intensify the internal power struggle over the Lebanese state. Despite talk of national unity in the face of external aggression during the 2006 war, the political struggle resumed immediately after the end of hostilities. The power struggle has assumed virulent sectarian undertones. Sectarian tensions are intricately linked to the contest for political power, as well as the regional contest, and its sectarian dimension, whether real or perceived. If this sectarian confrontation proves protracted, it risks unleashing more radical movements.

The aforementioned regional political trends of recent years serve to intensify socio-economic tensions in the region; conflicts over political powers and economic resources have become inseparable in the Arab countries. More importantly, political and military conflicts have devastating and far-reaching social and economic implications. Information on Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, and Sudan suggests a sharp increase in unemployment rates.

In Iraq, damage caused by insurgents and the lack of new investment affected adversely most productive sectors, particularly in high

violence regions. The agricultural, trade, and industrial sectors are acutely affected, leading to an increase in unemployment. Regarding agriculture, the problem remains with the lack of raw materials such as vitamins, pesticides and other essential products. Another problem is the lack of vaccination for cattle. This increases the risk of spreading contagious diseases within Iraq and in neighboring countries, leaving many farmers at low productivity or out of business.

Iraq faces serious socio-economic problems as a result of growing unemployment and the continuous impoverishment of the population. Over 5 m Iraqis are currently living below the poverty line. It is worth noting that this level of poverty has grown by 35% since 2003. The lack of growth in productive sectors poses threats to national food security. The decline in economic activities, especially in the agricultural, industrial and commercial sectors, coupled with security risks in the transport sector, has a significant effect on the supply of basic food needs and vital medical products, leading to shortages in many areas.

Internal displacement due to violence and unemployment in Iraq affects 1.5 m people⁴⁰. Job seekers migrate from all around Iraq to more work-abundant regions. This leads to a surplus in the unemployed labor force in major cities, where more work opportunities could be found, and deserted or labor-scarce zones in other parts of the country. The excessive supply of labor unmatched by job generation has led to soaring unemployment rates. Political affiliation also affects employment trends.

Internal displacement is coupled with the flight of Iraqi citizens to neighboring countries, mainly to Syria and Jordan. It is estimated that 1.6 m Iraqis, including those who left Iraq before 2003, are outside Iraq. Of this number half a million are in Jordan and a similar number in Syria⁴¹. More Iraqis are heading to other countries in the region including Egypt, Lebanon, and the GCC states. Iraq is expected to face a brain drain and a serious loss in manpower in the future if such current trends persist.

The cause-effect relationship between unemployment, poverty, and violence creates a vicious circle. Unemployment leads to delinquency, which in turn spurs violence and decreases investment. This leads to less demand for labor, causing more unemployment, and consequently further increase in delinquency. Such a situation has a direct effect on the general psychology of the average population. A feeling of uncertainty hovers above the country, creating a growing inactive class. Most ominously, this inactive class has disregarded the idea of seeking a job for three main reasons: the political-sectarian situation, the lack of security, and psychological disturbances.

40 UNHCR, "Iraq Displacement," Briefing Notes, 11 January 2007.

41 Ibid.

Psychological disturbances have a major impact on the non-working class, especially among the youth. Many youngsters are not attending schools anymore, and adolescents are not seeking higher education. This issue is very critical since it has a major impact on the nature of the future labor force in Iraq. If this trend persists, the reduction in illiteracy rates witnessed over the past two decades could be reversed. This will eventually lead to more poverty and greater delinquency, leading to an exacerbated economic crisis.

Another aspect that should be noted is the huge numbers of handicapped in the country. These people face bigger chances of living in poverty; they also encounter integration problems, and lack pensions, thus relying on the government to cover their living expenses.

Women employment is also affected by the current situation. One reason is the traditional status of women and their education. Women are also victims of sexual harassment and their social rights were undermined drastically during the 2003 war. Women are also victims of honor-crimes, public executions, and kidnappings.

In Palestine, dependence on Israel and on foreign aid has contributed to the decline in Palestinian economic performance. The intensity of violence coupled with growing internal and external conflicts, and more stringent restrictions by the Israeli government over the flow of goods, capital, and persons cause sharp deterioration in economic activity.

Many additional problems have evolved from the current increase in unemployment in Palestine. The overall effect of reduced aggregate consumption from lost income for the unemployed and the unpaid further reduces GDP growth and increases poverty. The problem is more acute in the Gaza Strip where most of the population lives in deep poverty. Another problem is the shortages in medical staff and supplies faced in all areas. More pressure was put on clinics run by international organizations and CSOs.

Future trends in this respect are not encouraging. The geopolitical confrontation in the Middle East will continue, with direct effects on the region's political and socioeconomic development. The Saudi-Iranian confrontation will shape political developments in the future. Sectarian sentiments will not subside anytime soon; sectarian violence in Iraq will continue and may spread to other parts of the region. The radicalizing impact of the Palestinian-Israeli crisis will continue in the future. The past trend of political crisis aggravating socioeconomic tensions and conflicts, which in turn intensify political challenges, is bound to continue. This vicious cycle will have devastating effects on the human security and socioeconomic development of the societies of the region. The economic sources of political radicalism will grow more intense in the region in the future. This will have grave political consequences on the young societies of the region. The trend of exit from Arab countries

in search of better economic prospects in others will continue. This will consecrate the lopsided regional economy in the making. All this has a major impact on MDG mainstreaming, seemingly making it an irrelevant issue. In fact, the reverse is the case, but governments and other political actors cannot cope in such situations of violence.

VII. Case studies from Arab countries

Yemen: The only LDC in the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen's vision aims at halving food poverty by 2015 and achieving its total eradication by 2025 while reducing the upper poverty line to less than 10%, but the country is not on track to achieve this without major changes. Mainstreaming of MDGs would help this process, but this is not yet the case, although embedding of some goals is being partly achieved, thanks in part to donor efforts.

Acceleration of increases in GDP should also go hand in hand with controlling high population growth, as reflected in Yemen's SV2025 where the focus has been on reducing annual population growth to 2.1%, with internal migration directed to the coastal regions. However, this has not been happening to the extent desired by the SV2025. Overall population growth, which averaged 3.02% annually in 1994-2004, has actually been rising. As for internal migration, some coastal governorates have seen annual population growth at above the national average in the past decade, while inland areas, including the capital, still have strong rates of demographic growth.

Among many social projects, literacy campaigns are at the heart of the SV2025, and the Vision is that illiteracy is expected to decline in the next two decades to below 10%. However, the drive to literacy has proven to be slow. In short, for the above as well as many other indicators, progress in moving towards achievement of the goals of the SV2025 has been uneven.

Objectives of the PRS are: in terms of demography, limiting internal migration, while reducing population growth; in public health, providing convenient acceptable services via government health facilities, particularly in rural areas, as well as basic drugs at prices affordable to low income groups, while raising the share of the health sector in GDP; in education, to raise basic education enrollment for girls, increase basic education's share of state spending; and raise the share of female students in universities, especially graduates from sciences and applied studies; for infrastructure, increase water production and raise coverage in urban and rural areas as well as expand sanitation services; provide electricity to the population; in terms of social protection, to promote the social safety network enforcing linkages among its components to provide social protection for the poor and the vulnerable, through

expanding coverage of the social welfare fund and of the social security, while improving service delivery and providing rehabilitation to the handicapped and street children; and in terms of integration into the global economy, establish the coastal link with roads starting from the northern borders leading to the Omani border in the east, connecting Yemen to the Arab road network, joining the GCC, and acceding to the WTO. Although some of these goals are being met, most remain to be achieved, thus not auguring well for the medium-and long-term fight against poverty in Yemen. A financing gap exists, and so the country requires considerable international assistance to overcome the challenges of meeting the MDGs, which in turn center on combating poverty.

SV2025 is widely recognized as the reference point for policymakers. Action is being taken toward streamlining medium-term plans in line with the long-term vision. There is a constitutionally-mandated Five-Year Socio-economic Development Plan linked to the Vision. The PRS refers to the Vision and the Plan. However, it is not integrated with the Plan. The Socio-economic Development Plan (SEDP) for 2006-10 continues to refer to the Vision as the reference point for development through 2025 and will become the new PRS. The goals identified in the Vision, the Plan and the PRS are consistent with the MDGs. However, some of the targets, including a 13% decrease in the poverty rate by 2005, were overambitious and were not achieved. Yemen is a UN Millennium Project pilot country and the SEDP takes into consideration progress toward achieving the MDGs, which form the core of the Plan and are tailored to country needs.

Civil society is participating in PRS implementation and revision. CSOs have been growing in number in recent years. A CSO umbrella organization, the NGO Forum, was established in 2003 to help monitor the PRS. The NGO Forum participated in the preparation of the SEDP. It was also actively involved in the work on Yemen's MDG Country Report. However, umbrella organizations and coalition-building among CSOs are still weak. The monitoring role of CSOs is less well developed than in SEDP preparation. Greater focus on strengthening the monitoring role of civil society is under consideration. CSOs are consulting among themselves and preparing joint inputs for the SEDP.

Action is being taken to strengthen private sector participation in policy formulation. While the private sector had limited impact on PRS formulation, it was more directly involved in the preparation of the SEDP. However, the private sector remains fragmented and has not yet developed an effective means to coalesce and interact with the Government. Parliamentary involvement was significant in the formulation of the Vision and the Plan, but less so in PRS formulation. The House of Representatives approved the Strategic Vision and the Second Plan, but not the PRS. It is constitutionally required to approve

the SEDP. While parliamentary committees were consulted during the formulation of the PRS, there is limited evidence of the House of Representatives' participation in the formulation of the SEDP. The House of Representatives is constitutionally required to approve the annual budget and the budget discussion does provide an opportunity for policy dialog between the executive and the legislature. A broad cross-party coalition of representatives has been increasingly vocal on anti-corruption issues.

Dialog among external partners is also strengthening. For example, external partners have co-ordinated around the preparation of the SEDP. The Millennium Project provided advice on the conceptual framework. UNDP provided resources and facilities for the inter-ministerial committees. The WB provided some support to the work of the inter-ministerial committees and is the lead technical advisor on economic growth and poverty. Germany takes the lead on water and education, the UK on public financial management, and UNFPA and the Netherlands on health. The major external partners are the WB, Germany, the USA, Japan, the UK and the Netherlands, who are coalescing around country objectives. Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE and Oman, are also active.

In 2006, the WB prepared a Country Assistance Strategy for FY2006-09, to update the Country Assistance Strategy FY2003-05, based on the PRS, and support implementation of the SEDP. Germany and the Netherlands are supporting the objectives of the PRS. Germany is willing to revise its strategy in line with the SEDP. Other partners, including the EC, the UK, and the USAID, have either revised their strategies to better align them with the SEDP or are in the process of doing so. Gulf countries and Arab Funds are renewing their interest in supporting Yemen and participated in preparatory meetings for the November 2006 CG.

In 2004, Yemen was selected to apply for a Threshold Program, managed by the US Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and USAID, to help countries work toward Millennium Challenge eligibility. In 2005, the MCC suspended eligibility for assistance through the Threshold Program because of limited progress in meeting corruption, regulatory quality, trade policy and fiscal policy indicators. The MCC is expected to review Yemen's eligibility, building on progress toward strengthening governance and anti-corruption.

UAE: A rich oil exporter, the UAE nevertheless has problems and serious development issues, some related to MDGs, that are unresolved both among the native population and migrant workers, particularly regarding gender-related issues; on the other hand, significant and growing ODA from the UAE to South states in general and Arab countries in particular is an important factor related to MDG8.

UNDP provides support in two main areas aiming at strengthening local government capacities and enhancing co-ordination between the federal and local governments. UNDP provided technical assistance and expertise to develop national strategies and action plans in key areas with emphasis on participatory approaches to include local stakeholders and partners, the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women.

The development of UAE women is an objective of government's policy, which is supporting women associations and organizations to greatly contribute women development. The right of women to take part in the development of all areas of society is already laid out in the UAE Constitution, adopted when the UAE women federation was founded in 1971. It states that social justice should apply to all and that, before the law, women are equal to men. They enjoy the same legal status, claim to titles and access to education. They have the right to practice the profession of their choice. Moreover, in accordance with the Islamic principles upon which the Constitution is based, the right of women to inherit property is guaranteed. The year 2004 has seen the signature by the country the convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), but with reservations on Article 15, paragraph 2, Article 16, and Article 29, paragraph 1. At the federal level, there are several prominent women working as undersecretaries or assistant undersecretaries, and women have been appointed as ministers.

The signature of CEDAW by the UAE provides women there with equal opportunities in political and public life, and officials would be legally bound to apply the decree provisions into practice, but it is also important that citizens should be educated in these issues. Besides the traditional fields of education and health, there are many female graduates working in various disciplines in the UAE such as engineering, science, media and communications, computer technology, law, commerce and the oil industry.

A significant development is that the armed forces of the UAE and the country's police have opened their doors to women workers. There is a women's corps within the Armed Forces, and a women's military training college has been established in Abu Dhabi. Their presence in this body is vital, as many of the distinguished visitors to the emirate in need of security protection are women.

The decree affirms the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination, but in parts of the UAE, people are affected by traditions whereby some families refuse to allow their daughters to work while others allow them to have jobs only in girls' schools; so there is still a need to correct social attitudes gradually to achieve mainstreaming.

While gender dimensions of labor are thus increasingly important in the UAE, the feminization of migration is creating new economic and social

realities. The demand for female migrants has increased, particularly in the service industries. These jobs are filled by women from the developing countries of Asia, principally Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. The majority of them tend to work in private households as domestic workers, but also in the hotel and entertainment industries, the latter sometimes being a euphemism for commercial sex.

This issue is particularly important for the UAE. With increasing regional visibility of female migrants and their contribution to the UAE economy, this group remains vulnerable to gender-based discrimination and exploitation. This is due to insufficient support from sending and receiving countries and policy gaps at both ends, as prevailing labor laws and sponsorship systems, as well as behavior of employment agencies contribute to the particular vulnerability of female migrants in this region.

While the labor laws of the UAE provide legal guarantees to some categories of migrants, they do not apply to domestic work and other low-skill jobs, which most migrant women undertake. As working conditions of migrants are determined by the work contract, those women are invariably paid less than the minimum wage and work beyond the legally maximum number of hours prescribed in the labor laws of the host country.

Women are attracted by promises of good domestic jobs in the UAE. At destination, some experience physical and sexual abuse, under-or non-payment, or are forced into sex work. Trafficking in women is a modern migration challenge demanding a strong, comprehensive and harmonized response from the international community. State, international and CSOs from sending, transit and receiving countries must all work hand in hand to ensure a more effective response to this alarming phenomenon. There is also an urgent need to come up with concrete programs that address prevention before victimization takes place. An effective information campaign is also a critical first step towards embedding this aspect of eliminating gender discrimination in the country.

Morocco: the country is a MIS with strong cultural influences from the West, as well as a backlash against them, that is nevertheless putting increasing emphasis on MDGs. The government has recently received donor aid from the African Development Bank and the MCC, some of which has been earmarked for rural development. However, the pressing problem is addressing water dependency in a country that cannot afford to rely on rainfall for crop success. With Morocco using 90% of its economically accessible water resources, by 2035 35% of Moroccans could have access to less than 500 cubic meters per capita (current per capita water access is 700 cubic meters).

Recent reform in particular enhanced eliminating discrimination against women, and legislative measures in place against prostitution and trafficking in women are being strengthened. The government, civil society and the media have undertaken increased awareness-raising and sensitization measures, particularly within the most vulnerable sectors of the population, to address the dangers of prostitution and trafficking.

The government also undertook efforts to improve the living conditions of disadvantaged social groups and focused particular attention on providing assistance to women victims of prostitution. Morocco had recently ratified a number of international conventions related to trafficking, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

The Nationality Code of the country had recently conferred equal rights to men and women with regard to the acquisition, change or retention of nationality. The government had also adopted a new Labor Code, which prohibited any form of discrimination. Morocco had ratified a number of international conventions and instruments affirming the principles of equality and non-discrimination in employment.

However, violence against women remains a source of concern in the country. The national strategy on violence against women has outlined measures including criminalizing various acts against women as human rights violations; development of innovative approaches to effectively intervene and provide treatment to women victims of violence; and establishment of adequate databases to promote scientific study and research on gender-based violence. Amendments to the penal code criminalized various forms of violence, including sexual harassment. These developments were reinforced by the promulgation of the new Labor Code, which protected women from all violations of their physical or moral integrity.

The strategy of UNDP's governance and institutional capacity-building program in Morocco is to promote an enabling environment for the implementation of administrative, judicial and legislative processes, as well as the management of a decentralized development approach focusing on the very poorest. UNDP's intervention in the governance area is focused at two levels: The upstream level involves elaborating a National Program on Governance to enable decentralization and participatory development; and the downstream level involves support to ongoing co-operation programs and establishment of regional audit account bodies.

Though laws guarantee the equal rights of boys and girls to education, and education is compulsory for all children above 6 years of age as well as free in all types of public education, the high illiteracy and school dropout rates in rural areas, particularly among young girls, remains a

major challenge faced by the government. Various ministries, including the Ministry for Youth and Sports, are recently taking further concrete measures to combat these problems.

Morocco's primary school attendance was linked to socio-economic conditions and the existence of infrastructure, such as roads and hospitals. As in the case of Yemen and other Arab countries, this implies that the goal of universal primary education must be looked at in conjunction with other factors in socio-economic development.

The number of women working in non-agricultural activities rose during the 1990s, but slowly. The average share of women employed in the non-agricultural sector remains modest, and it must be stressed that there was no progress in this area. To help address this issue, the UNDP Drylands Development program was launched in 2002 with the overall goal of realizing the MDG of halving global poverty by 2015, given that many of the people directly dependent upon drylands for their livelihoods are poor and marginalized. Supporting local governance for natural resources management is in Morocco a strategic entry-point for supporting implementation of the 2020 Rural Development Strategy.

The challenges to achieving universal primary education and high levels of literacy in Morocco are also considerable. Secondary schools enroll a maximum of eight girls for every ten boys in Morocco; poor management skills in public schools; and a lack of qualified teachers, particularly a shortage in female teachers in rural areas, which translates into lower enrolment rates for girls. Moreover, the lack of a proper incentive system poses a particular challenge. For parents from low-income households, the compounded effect of poverty and of a perceived low rate of return to education renders the opportunity cost of sending a child to school high. Morocco has attempted to address those problems, for example through school feeding programs. Furthermore, improving the quality of the curriculum is an important tool in enhancing the incentives of children to remain in school. The introduction of innovative ideas and a more application-oriented approach has been applied in curricular reforms in Morocco and is an example of successful embedding and mainstreaming of an MDG.

Lebanon: A CRA undergoing serious strain due to conflict, Lebanon's political problems have contributed to pushing MDG-related issues in general off the national agenda. At the same time, the country's development problems remain serious, as indicated in an international study published in 2008 by the International Poverty Center (IPC), an institute jointly supported by the Brazilian Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and UNDP. This estimates that the poverty ratio in Lebanon is around 29% of the population, accounting for almost 1 m Lebanese, with 8% of the population, or almost 300000 individuals, living under conditions of extreme poverty.

Although growth in real per-capita private consumption was at a notable average of close to 3% annually since 1997, the IPC stressed that the distribution of this growth across different regions within Lebanon was again uneven: It was the highest in Beirut, at around 5% annually, which is not surprising, considering the widespread investment and job creation that took place in the capital after 1997. Also, a higher-than-average growth rate was observed in the South and Bekaa, as it reached 4% annually. On the other hand, Mount Lebanon and the North saw trivial growth in consumption, which translated into a relative decline in their mean per-capita expenditure compared to the overall average. In parallel, the report sheds light on key elements to form a poverty-reduction strategy in Lebanon. It suggests the country is fully capable of meeting the MDG targets of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.

The study noted significant disparities in consumption in different areas of the country. In fact, it concludes that most of the inequality in Lebanon arises from regional inequalities. While Beirut has the highest mean per-capita consumption, which is more than 1.5 times the national average, the North has the lowest of around three-quarters the national average; the report also highlighted discrepancies in the distribution of expenditure within different income groups. The poorest 20% account for only 7% of overall consumption in the country, while the richest 20% account for 43%. Still, this inequality is similar to that in other middle-income countries; the study said that the poor are heavily concentrated among unemployed and unskilled workers, who in turn, are concentrated in the construction and agriculture sectors. Those two sectors were found to employ around 38% of all the poor. Thus, there should be an implementation of an economic agenda that promotes sustained growth, and thereby increased employment, in such sectors.

The second pillar of the fight against poverty involves expanding educational opportunities and targets the unskilled workers. Improving the educational level of the poor enables them to have better access to social and economic opportunities. Moreover, it raises their productivity, which induces higher economic growth for Lebanon. The third element of the poverty reduction strategy should be promoting a more balanced regional development; some regions, such as the North, lag behind in development and therefore more efforts should be exerted to create job opportunities and to promote further education in such regions.

Donor efforts in Lebanon have focused on support for building or revising national framework for decentralization, and empowerment of local government and CSOs for sustained local development. For example, UNDP in Lebanon decided to focus its intervention on two levels: centrally through providing support for decentralization and the formulation of laws that support the devolution of power from the center to the regions; and at the local level through building the

capacity of local actors, including local government bodies and local civil society organizations, to move the development agenda forward. Whereas the first cluster of activities aims at providing the overall legislative and regulatory framework for effective decentralization and its implementation, the second is designed to provide the building blocks for this framework to be efficient and effective in local development and poverty reduction - linked to the strategic framework developed at the national level.

On the local level, the intervention aims at building the capacity of local partners to identify, analyze and prioritize local issues and concerns through a participatory process involving local stakeholders; provide the municipality with the needed tools for enhancing the local community involvement and participation in planning and managing development projects; build the capacity of municipal council members to formulate and implement local development plans, acquire partnerships, and mobilize resources; support municipalities in the implementation of small community development projects.

These activities have been exacerbated by severe unrest; in particular, the economic and social costs of the July/August 2006 war on Lebanon are very high in all respects⁴². The unemployment rate has increased sharply in the period during and after the war. The war dealt a heavy blow to the positive expectations of growth in 2006. The first two quarters of 2006 witnessed signs of economic recovery with estimates for GDP growth amounting to 6% at the beginning of the year⁴³. In 2005, GDP growth declined to 1% reflecting the negative impact of political instability over economic activity. In addition to the direct costs, most of the productive sectors in the country, particularly, tourism, industry, agriculture, and energy suffered indirect costs in terms of lost revenues and business opportunities. The surge in short-term unemployment brought by the war has many socio-economic implications. Migration accelerated during and after the war. Though transfers from expatriates have supported private consumption and financed a huge current account deficit over the past years, the brain drain will reflect negatively on the job market in sectors requiring medium and high skilled labor. Other socio-economic problems are also felt to varying degrees, but are not being embedded, especially since lawmakers are pre-occupied with political disputes.

VIII. Success in mainstreaming MDGs in the Arab world

Some goals and targets are of major relevance for the development agendas of the four Arab countries chosen, while other MDGs are less important. Yet, this does not mean that such relevance is not shifting or

42 Lebanese Republic, "Recovery, Reconstruction and Reform: International Conference for Support to Lebanon," January 2007.

43 Ibid.

might not change in the near future.

In any case, an assessment of the situation with regard to the mainstreaming of MDGs in the four countries is conducted, classifying goals as being of major or minor relevance insofar as they are embedded or mainstreamed. Trends are also indicated, with goals becoming of greater, lesser, or unchanged importance in national agendas. These indicators have been developed as a result of desk research on recent documentation, consultation with other experts, and field visits to the four countries in question during 2007-8. It must be emphasized that this assessment is finally based on the author's interpretation of the above, and on his personal impressions of countries and systems with which he has worked for decades. However, the following rating should not be seen as a "scientific" surveying of the field, which the resources allocated to this paper would not allow.

1. ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

- **Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than USD1 daily:** In Yemen and Morocco, this target is of major and increasing relevance, partly as a result of the persistence of poverty in both countries; in the UAE, the goal is of minor and decreasing relevance; while in Lebanon it is of minor but increasing relevance due to perceptions of the opening up and deepening of new poverty pockets).
- **Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people:** in Yemen and Morocco, the target is of minor but increasing relevance as the issue of decent work becomes more mainstreamed but not yet embedded; in the UAE and Lebanon it is of minor but steady relevance due to a certain amount of interest among migrant groups.
- **Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger:** In Yemen this target is of major and steady relevance because of the indirect impact on household budgets of spending on qat; in Morocco and Lebanon it is of minor steady relevance; and in the UAE of minor and decreasing relevance.

2. ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

- **Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary**

schooling: In Yemen and Morocco, this goal is of major steady relevance due in part to pressure from CSOs and international organizations; in the UAE it is of minor steady relevance as girls' primary enrolment gains; and in Lebanon it is of minor and decreasing relevance as being considered met.

3. PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

- **Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably at all levels by 2015:** As with MDG2, in Yemen and Morocco, this goal is of major steady relevance due in part to pressure from CSOs and international organizations; in the UAE it is of minor steady relevance; and in Lebanon it is of minor and decreasing relevance.

4. REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY

- **Reduce by two-thirds in 1990-2015 the under-five mortality rate:** In Yemen and Morocco this goal is of major and increasing relevance due to perceived success in achieving it so far, which has encouraged governments and international organizations alike to push for meeting it in full; in the UAE and Lebanon it is of minor steady relevance.

5. IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH

- **Reduce by three quarters in 1990-2015 the maternal mortality ratio:** In Yemen and Morocco this target is of major steady relevance as it relates to attempts to improve the situation of women; in the UAE it is of minor steady relevance; and in Lebanon of minor and decreasing relevance.
- **Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health:** In Yemen and Morocco this target is of minor but increasing relevance, being supported by donors from the EU and elsewhere; in the UAE it is of major steady relevance as it is politically easy and economically viable; and in Lebanon it is of minor and decreasing relevance.

6. COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA, AND OTHER DISEASES

- **Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS:** With major changes in social behavior, this target in Morocco is of major and increasing relevance; though in

Yemen, the UAE and Lebanon it is of minor but increasing relevance due to the perception that the disease can somehow be contained without a large-scale state campaign.

- **Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it:** In Yemen, Morocco, and the UAE this target is of minor but increasing relevance as the costs of treatment come down and so is seen to be more easily deliverable; in Lebanon it is of minor and decreasing relevance due to CSO pre-occupation with other issues more closely related to the country's political situation.
- **Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.** In Yemen, malaria is endemic and the target is of major steady relevance; in Morocco, it is of minor steady relevance; in the UAE of minor but increasing relevance; and in Lebanon of minor and decreasing relevance.

7. ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- **Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources.** In Yemen and Morocco this target is of minor and decreasing relevance, being pushed off the national agenda by issues related to poverty; in the UAE and Lebanon it is of minor steady relevance, being the subject of activism by CSOs.
- **Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving by 2010 a significant reduction in the rate of loss** In Yemen and Morocco the target is of minor and decreasing relevance due to pre-occupation with poverty issues that are seen as antithetical in the short-term; in the UAE it is of minor steady relevance; and in Lebanon of minor but increasing relevance, spurred by CSO activism.
- **Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation** In Yemen and Morocco this target is of minor but increasing relevance under pressure from donors and the WB in particular; in the UAE it is of major steady relevance due to the country's basic water shortage; and in Lebanon of minor steady relevance as it is perceived to have been achieved in large part.
- **By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of a major proportion of slum-dwellers** In Yemen and

Morocco the goal is of minor but increasing relevance, UAE, Lebanon of minor steady relevance).

8. DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction-nationally and internationally:** This target in Morocco and Yemen is of major but decreasing relevance, as the government has not succeeded in dampening cynicism about the WTO and other international trade arrangements; in the UAE it is of minor but increasing relevance due to efforts by the private sector in the framework of CSR; in Lebanon it is of minor steady relevance, with efforts by the government and business chambers being me by public indifference.
- **Address the special needs of LDCs. This includes tariff and quota free access for their exports; enhanced program of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction:** as a donor, this target in the UAE is of major and increasing relevance due to the country's expanding role in international and regional development efforts; in Yemen as an LDC that is an important recipient of aid it is of major steady relevance; in Morocco and Lebanon it is irrelevant as they are not LDCs.
- **Address the special needs of small-island developing states:** this is not applicable to the present case studies, which is not focusing on the Comoros, the only member country of the Arab League that is a small-island developing country.
- **Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term:** As creditor UAE this target is of minor steady relevance since much of the country's development finance is in the form of grants not loans; as debtors in Yemen and Morocco it is of minor steady relevance as their debt situation is not seen as urgent; in Lebanon it is of major and increasing relevance with the rise in awareness of the country's debt problems.
- **In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs:** In Yemen and Morocco it is of minor but increasing relevance because of inflationary

pressure making medical products less affordable to the poor; for the UAE and Lebanon it is of minor steady relevance.

- **In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications:** For Yemen and Morocco this target is of minor but increasing relevance as poorer people are increasingly relying on such technologies; in the UAE and Lebanon it is of minor steady relevance.

Table 2 Mainstreaming and embedding of MDGs in Lebanon (L) Morocco (M) the UAE (U) and Yemen (Y)

“A” indicates major relevance, “B” shows it to be less, with + - or = indicating respectively a trend to greater, lesser, or unchanged importance in national agendas.

NA: not applicable

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than USD1 daily (YA+, MA+, UB-, LB+).
- Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people (YB+, MB+, UB=, LB=).
- Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger (YA=, MB=, UB-, LB=).
2. Achieve universal primary education
Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling (YA=, MA=, UB=, LB-).
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015 (YA=, MA=, UB+, LB-).
4. Reduce child mortality
Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate (YA+, MA+, UB=, LB=).
5. Improve maternal health
- Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio. (YA=, MA=, UB=, LB-).
- Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health (YB+, MB+, UA=, LB-).

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS (YB+, MA+, UB+, LB+).
- Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it. (YB+, MB+, UB+, LB-).
- Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases. (YA=, MB=, UB+, LB-).
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
- Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources. (YB-, MB-, UB=, LB=).
- Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss (YB-, MB-, UB=, LB+).
- Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation (YB+, MB+, UA=, LB=).
- By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of a major proportion of slum-dwellers (YB+, MB+, UB=, LB=).
8. Develop a global partnership for development Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction—nationally and internationally (YA-, MA-, UB+, LB=)
- Address the special needs of LDCs. This includes tariff and quota free access for their exports; enhanced program of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction (as donor UA+, as recipient YA=, M and LNA).
- Address the special needs of small-island developing states NA.
- Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term. (As creditor UB=; as debtors YB=, MB=, LA+).
- In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs (Y B +, MB+, U B=, LB=).
- In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications (Y B+, MB+, U B=, LB=).

Source: developed by the author from desk research, consultation with other experts, and field visits to the four countries in 2007-8.

IX. Conclusions and Recommendations

The above analysis shows a widely mixed picture of MDG mainstreaming in the Arab world, depending on various factors such as national wealth, socio-economic development levels, culture, the democracy deficit, and the degree of conflict. Yet in all case, scarcity of comprehensive and reliable MDG-related data, statistics and information continues to pose a serious challenge; and Goals are also threatened by weak institutional capacities. It is also evident that in some case there is sometimes paradoxical and potentially wasteful of development resources: for example, MDG awareness and mainstreaming in the UAE and in Lebanon are in general similar, due in the former to the application of greater efforts, and in the latter to greater cultural sophistication. This suggests possible resource misallocation, as Lebanon is in greater need generally of MDG mainstreaming than the UAE. It is therefore essential for local stakeholders to work with international partners to create, develop and implement a participatory MDG outreach strategy, to disseminate key development messages, obtain local feedback, empower communities, and impact on decision-making in order to achieve mainstreaming and embedding. Crucial to success is an innovative approach to carry out sensitive and productive community interventions.

Perhaps the most important element for more effective mainstreaming is the buttressing of the role of civil society by democratization to better define national priorities, creating a participatory process (including media involvement) and national discussion. It may also be the case that new or adapted MDG indicators are required for the Arab world to reflect regional and country specificities. Country-specific Arab MDGs may be required to enhance national ownership and embedding. Establishing and validating an MDG Baseline for individual countries could help in defining more precisely national needs and agreeing on priorities, but this could be costly and politically difficult.

Conducting or improving a visioning exercise to set long-term goals is vital to enable Arab countries to achieve MDGs treated not as abstract ambitions but as practical embedded policy objectives. Arab countries Goals are deemed unrealistic because they would require dramatic progress. Practical steps to achieve MDGs in each country should be diagnosed, mainstreamed, embedded, and implemented with the proper focus and actions, combined with suitable support from the international community. It is essential for donors to conform to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of 2005, which lays down a practical, action-orientated road map to improving the quality of aid and its impact on development, particularly on MDG attainment. At the same time, to monitor progress, the capacity for data collection, processing, and use needs to expand. In that respect, more resources could come from within the region through the GCC states to the poorer

countries. In this context, top priorities for action should include extra investments in human resources, and in hardware and software needed to obtain better statistics on MDG trends.

In every Arab country with basic conditions of stability, the starting assumption should be that they are feasible unless technically proven otherwise. In LDCs, the Goals are indeed ambitious, but in most countries they can still be achieved by 2015 if there are intensive efforts by all parties to achieve mainstreaming and embedding. LDCs or MISs with pockets of poverty or areas of specific policy neglect should adopt and implement a national development strategy ambitious enough to achieve the Goals. ODA should be generous enough to fill the financing needs assuming that governance limitations are not the binding constraint and that recipients are making their own reasonable efforts at domestic resource mobilization. Mainstreaming and embedding can encourage donors.

Conducting or strengthening realistic assessments of development progress in LDCs through PRSPs requires revision of these to align them to the MDGs. PRSPs largely have been prepared in a context of insufficient ODA. Even when the PRSPs claim to aim for the Goals, they rarely identify the path of public investments that would be needed to achieve them. PRSP is a powerful tool for achieving the Goals, but it needs to be deployed for that purpose, including targets and time horizons. The WB, as the international development institution with the most direct financing engagement with the PRSP process, should help countries prepare PRSPs that are MDG-based. Selecting or strengthening an institutional framework for the process that supports the implementation of a national strategy in LDCs involves PRSPs that usually have a three-year time horizon, so they need to be embedded within countries' longer-term plans. In addition, the process of preparing the PRSP needs to become more inclusive. In countries that do not use a PRSP to guide policymaking with full support from the international community, bold plans are on shelves without public discussion. An MDG-based process would enable such strategies to be empowered.

Examining the concept of Millennium Villages or similar zones, and introducing them where feasible helps Goals to be "localized" that is, translated into operational objectives or the level of government that will bear primary responsibility for their achievement. This is important for translating large-scale national goals into more manageable pieces those communities can own and pursue for themselves. For example, a city like Cairo might define its "Cairo Development Goals," setting quantitative targets for education, health, housing, water supply, sanitation services, solid waste disposal, transport services, and so forth. Similarly a town could identify its own targets for schools, clinics, water supply, sanitation, energy services, and so on. On the basis of localized goals consistent with the MDGs, local authorities and

regional governments should develop their own strategies that align with the national poverty reduction strategy and that partner with local community groups in service delivery.

There is a need to enhance information flow and transparency -- essential for accountability - to build civil society capacity in initiating dialog and maintaining good relations with government officials and policy makers, and to strengthen local governance. There is also a need to upgrade institutional frameworks, which have often been modernized insofar as to attract private investment but not so much as to encourage local participation and initiatives and to scale up from pilot programs and institutionalize good local governance. An incremental approach in scaling up local governance reforms is a key lesson learned from experience in this region. For example, municipal policy options that require minimum or moderate tolerance such as participatory budgeting, or creating citizen response centers (to deal with complaints), or e-government stand a better chance of achieving results in centralist regimes. Bold reform agendas working on intergovernmental fiscal relationships, election reform, and independence of the judiciary, requires much bigger margin of tolerance that might not be easily attainable. Urban planning as a technical exercise without participation of local actors and the private sector leads to making such plans irrelevant to local needs. Inclusive planning and management can yield a collective sense of ownership of the plan that would result in accelerated implementation and development, also demonstrating the mutual re-enforcement among the MDG goals as a whole.

There is a need to embed measures to bolster gender equality, which is the key to achieving the MDGs. Mainstreaming gender was essential to ensuring that women benefit as much from wealth creation as men. It is therefore important and critical to integrate a gender perspective into trade and development⁴⁴. Governments and CSOs must pursue policies that systematically build gender national ownership and mainstreaming, but this has not happened to any great extent in the Arab world.

Providing resources for mainstreaming and embedding MDGs is necessary for Arab LDCs and CRAs to reach the eight Goals by 2015. That requires more generous and effective financial assistance from GCC countries and a further strengthening of regional co-operation between Arab countries.

Developing necessary legislative and regulatory support through links with adoption and enforcement of UN Conventions will enhance mainstreaming and embedding. It is thus important to relate the Goals to the broader framework of values, principles and legal obligations enshrined in the UN conventions and summits on civil, economic, political, social and cultural rights to the particular social, economic

44 WTO Public Forum 2006 "What WTO for the XXIst Century?" p 244.

and political context of each country and community. Such a human rights-based approach to development is in line with that adopted by the UN Millennium Declaration, which explicitly places both human rights commitment and development goals at the center of the international agenda.

All eight Goals are closely related to basic rights that have been enshrined in a number of international treaties and conventions: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), CEDAW, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the ILO conventions, and others.

MDG 1 relates to the right to an adequate standard of living, as enshrined in UDHR and ICESCR, including the right to adequate food, clothing and housing. MDG 2 relates to the right to education, as enshrined in several of the core instruments, including UDHR; ICESCR; CEDAW and ICERD. MDG 3 relates to the non-discrimination standards enshrined in all human rights treaties, e.g. CEDAW. MDG 4 relates to several rights, including the right to life and the right to health. MDG 5 equally relates to the right to health enshrined in several treaties, including CEDAW, ICESCR, ICERD and CRC. MDG 6 similarly finds a legal framework in UNDH, CEDAW, ICESCR, CRC and ICERD, as does MDG 7, which relates to the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and the right to health, as enshrined in several core treaties. MDG 8 calls for developing partnerships, and is also linked to human rights provisions of the UN Charter and UDHR, as well as several treaties, including ICESCR and CRC. Working to relate Goals to these respective treaties and conventions would aid in mainstreaming and embedding.

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