

The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2007: A Youth Lens

An Overview



UNITED NATIONS



LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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PREFACE

This booklet is the result of a collaborative effort between several United Nations agencies in the Arab region and the League of Arab States that has been coordinated by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). It is a practical example of United Nations inter-agency cooperation under the umbrella of the Regional Coordination Group (RCG) within the United Nations reform efforts to enhance system-wide coherence.

In advance of the second regional report, “The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2007: A Youth Lens”, this booklet provides a brief overview of current trends and progress in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Arab countries at the regional and subregional levels. The upcoming full report will move beyond statistics to examine why improvements in certain subregions in the Arab region have been slow, and will make recommendations to assist countries in the Arab region to meet the MDGs by 2015.

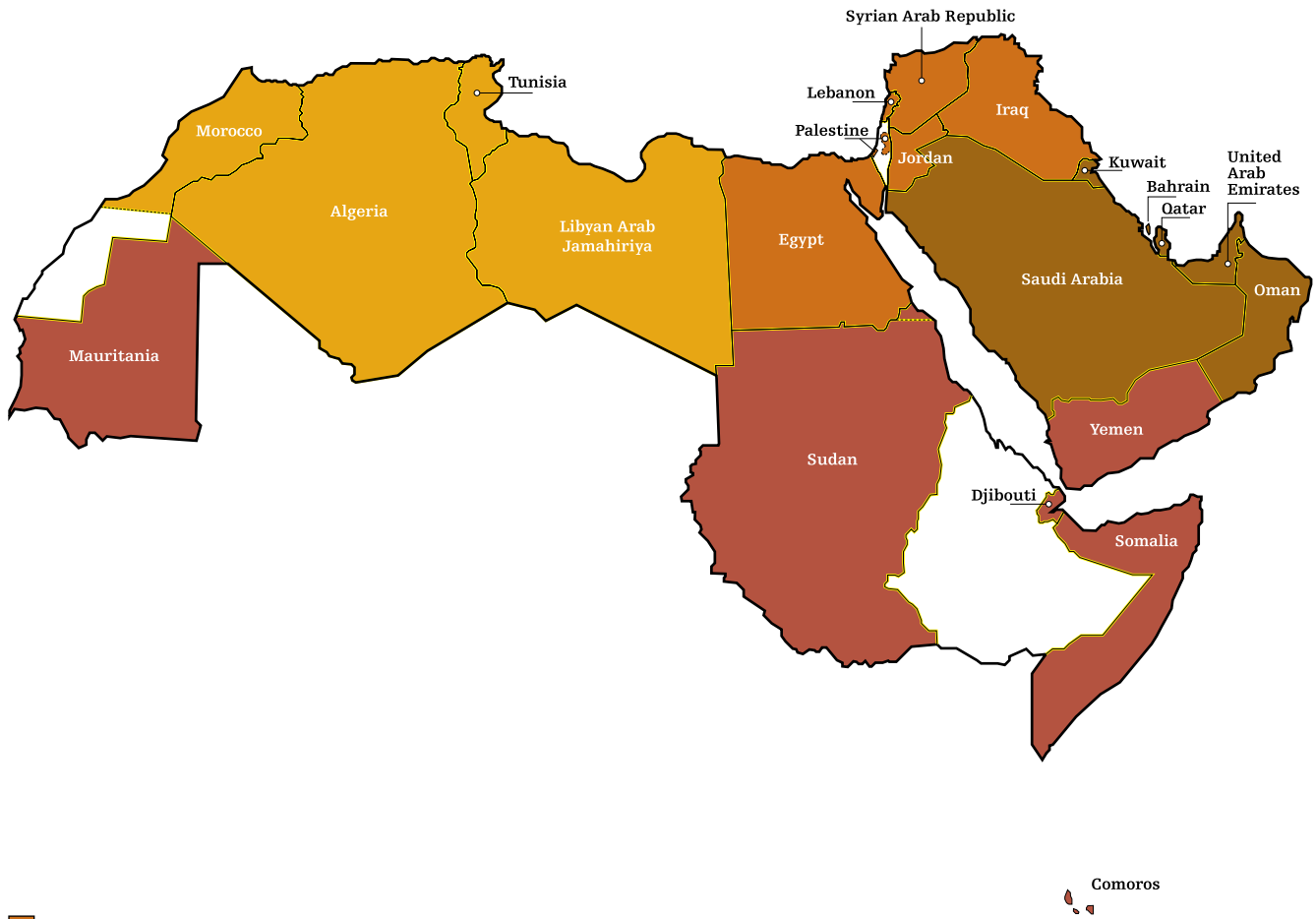
The prospects of the Arab region as a whole for achieving the MDGs are encouraging; however, wide gaps and significant disparities in progress, both among and within Arab subregions, remain. Although the region will probably continue to make progress in reducing income poverty, Iraq, Palestine, and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) will likely fail to meet the poverty related targets by 2015 without drastic improvements in their economic and political situation. There has also been notable improvement in women’s access to education and health care in the Arab region, but these changes have not been translated into a significant increase in opportunities for women’s political and economic participation. Accordingly, for the Arab region to reach the MDGs by 2015 it has to step up the pace of its efforts through well designed and focused reform and development policies, supported by regional cooperation and integration programmes among the Arab countries, especially in the areas of inter-Arab trade, private direct investment, labour mobility, official development assistance, and the building and consolidation of regional physical and cultural infrastructure.

Considering that the Arab world has the largest share of youth among developing regions, this booklet highlights critical development issues faced by male and female youth in the Arab region along with overall progress in meeting the eight goals.



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On behalf of the Regional Coordination Group

SUBREGIONAL GROUPINGS



- **Mashreq:** Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic.
- **Maghreb:** Algeria, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Tunisia.
- **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC):** Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates.
- **Arab Least Developed Countries (LDCs):** Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen.

The division of countries into regional sub-groupings adopted in this report is based on a combination of per capita income levels, geographical proximity and similarities in economic and social characteristics and conditions.

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in the publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

GOAL 1

ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

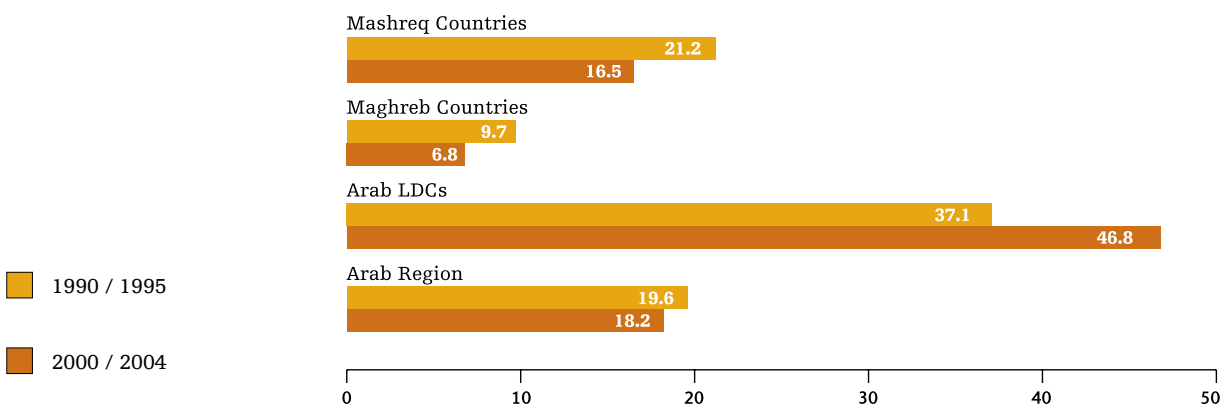


Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day.

Adopting the income poverty line \$1/day per person does not reflect reality in the Arab region: some countries, namely in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), are classified as high income, while many of those in the Mashreq and Maghreb are considered middle income.

This section adopts the national poverty lines outlined in national MDG reports for evaluating poverty as it reflects more accurately the standard of living in every country. In addition, national poverty lines are a broader measure not limited to reflecting extreme poverty.

Proportion of Population Below National Poverty Line (%)



The trend in the proportion of people living below the lower national poverty lines indicates that the Arab region as a whole has not experienced significant progress in reducing income poverty. Vast disparities in performance appear between the Arab Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the other subregions. The region would remain tainted by a high poverty rate if the plight of the Arab LDCs is not addressed with determination. Based on data for 11 Arab countries representing almost two thirds of the region's total population, a slight decrease has been reported for the Arab region as a whole between the periods 1990-1995 and 2000-2004. The proportion of

the population living below the national poverty lines fell from 19.6% in the first period to 18.2% in the second period. At the subregional level, the proportion decreased between these two periods by almost 5 percentage points in the Mashreq and by almost 3 percentage points in the Maghreb. By contrast, it rose by almost 10 percentage points in the Arab LDCs from 37.1% to 46.8%. There is a general lack of data on income poverty in GCC countries. However, given the high per capita income in all countries of this subregion and their generous formal and informal social protection systems, levels of income poverty are likely to be low.

Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

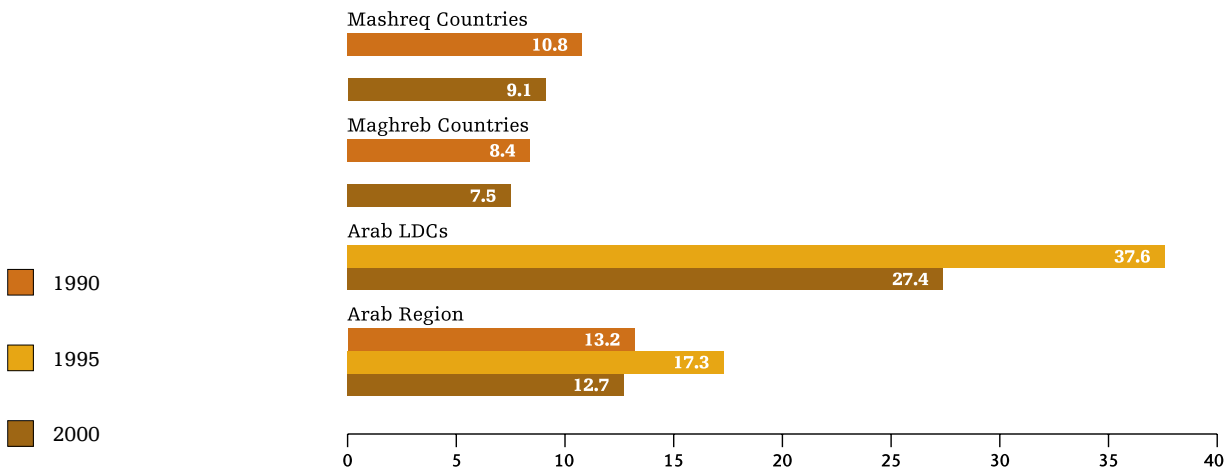
The region's malnutrition rate decreased sluggishly, indicating critical malfunctions in the region's development efforts. The proportion of underweight children under five years of age (U5) remained relatively high in 2000 at 12.7% with no noticeable improvement from its 1990 level of 13.2%.

This is due to the slow pace of progress in the economic and social determinants of the indicator: modest growth performance of the region as a whole; relatively high female illiteracy rate, particularly in the Arab LDCs; low access of the poor and underprivileged to primary health

care services; comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iraq; and conflicts in Palestine, Somalia, and Sudan.

The Arab subregions and individual countries exhibited vast differences in reducing the proportion of underweight children under-five years of age. In the Mashreq and the Maghreb, the proportion of underweight children declined from 10.8% to 9.1% and from 8.4% to 7.5% between 1990 and 2000, respectively. The Arab LDCs continued to suffer from the highest malnutrition rate in the region, at 27.4% in 2000, down from 37.6% in 1995.

Proportion of Underweight Children Under Five Years of Age (%)

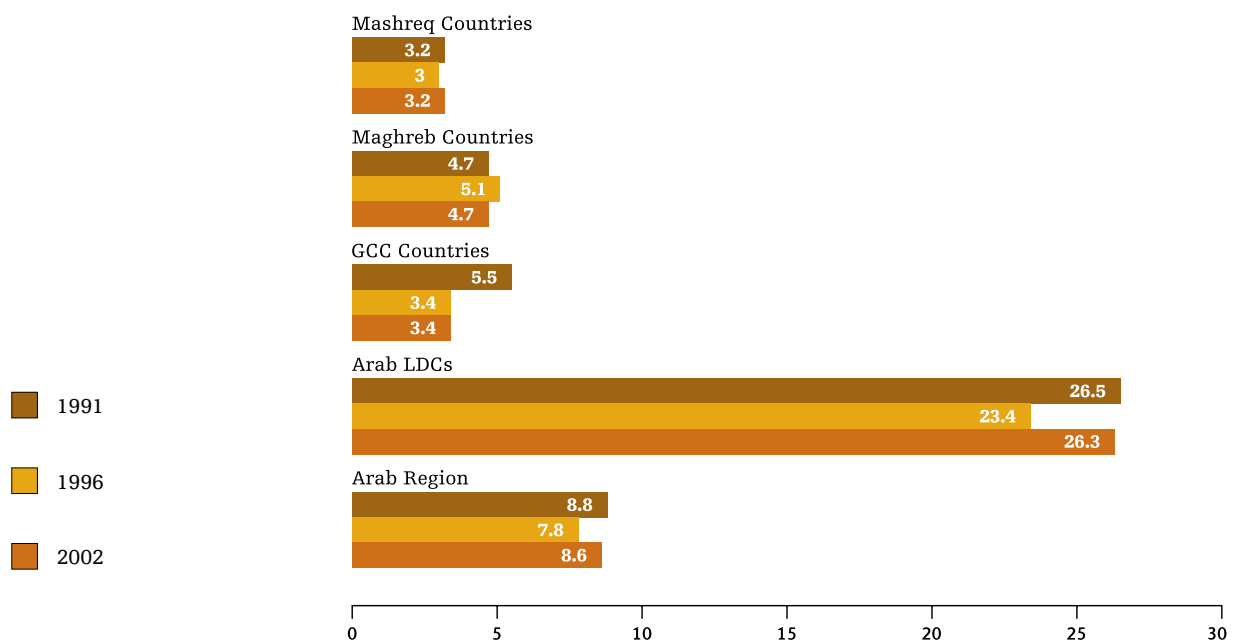


In 1991, food deprivation was a disconcerting threat to overall social welfare in the region and remained so in 2000. Individuals living on less than the minimum level of dietary energy consumption accounted for 8.8% of the Arab population in 1991 and 8.6% in 2002. According to these rates, the number of food-deprived persons rose from approximately 20 million in 1991 to around 23.3 million in 2002. This implies that the set target is unlikely to be met by 2015.

The negligible change in the region's proportion of food-deprived persons is the result of stagnant rates in the Mashreq, Maghreb and the Arab LDCs. The relatively

high levels of food deprivation in the Arab LDCs pulled the regional average significantly above the three other subregional averages. In the Maghreb and Mashreq, the proportion of people living below the food deprivation line remained low in 1991 and 2002. The Arab LDCs also did not make any noticeable progress in this area. The number of food-deprived persons amounted to 26.5% of the population in 1991 and 26.3% in 2002. Only the GCC countries showed good progress on this front, though all progress took place in the first five years. Available information shows that the proportion of the food-deprived in the GCC countries dropped from 5.5% in 1991 to 3.4% in 1996, but remained unchanged since then.

Proportion of Population Below the Minimum Level of Dietary Energy Consumption (%)



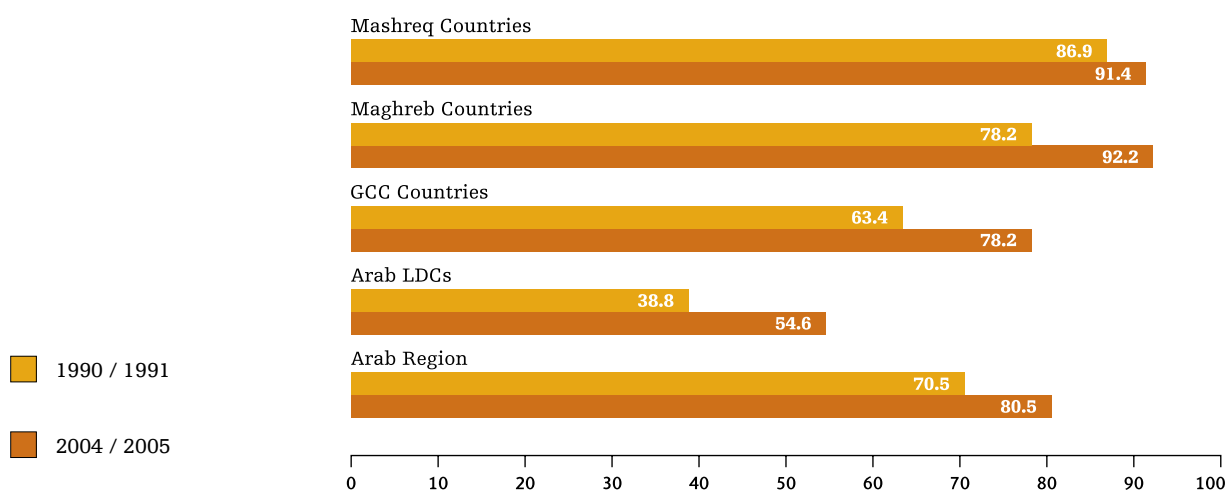
GOAL 2

ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION



Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Net Enrolment Rate in Primary Education (%)

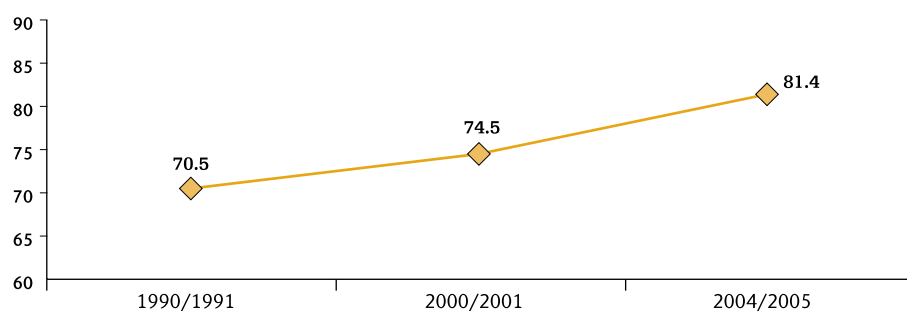


The net enrolment rate in primary education in the Arab region increased by 10 percentage points since 1990/1991; it reached 80.5% in the school year 2004/2005. The respective gender parity index (GPI) increased from 0.81 in 1991 to 0.92 in 2005 as most subregions are on track towards reaching gender parity at the primary level by 2015. Nonetheless, the Arab region needs to accelerate the rate of progress substantially in order to ensure universal primary enrolment by 2015.⁽¹⁾ The net enrolment rate in primary education and the rate of progress achieved since 1990 vary significantly across the subregions. This is exemplified by the fact that almost two thirds of the more than 7.5 million out-of-school children in the region live in the Arab LDCs. Despite considerable progress over the past 15 years, about one child in two was out of school in the Arab LDCs in 2005. By contrast,

the Mashreq and Maghreb subregions have attained primary net enrolment rates of more than 90%. In the Maghreb, the number of out-of-school children decreased by almost two thirds since 1990. Thus, this subregion is on track towards meeting the goal. This can be attributed primarily to a remarkable improvement in Morocco where comprehensive reform efforts addressed low enrolment rates, particularly focusing on rural areas and vulnerable groups. The modest progress in the Mashreq is mainly a result of the deterioration of enrolment rates in conflict countries. Indeed, enrolment rates have dropped by over 6 percentage points since 1990 in Iraq, due to economic sanctions and, subsequently, war, and by over 16 percentage points since 1999 in Palestine due to continued Israeli occupation.

(1) For GCC countries, data from national sources are in some cases higher than those provided by UNESCO mainly due to different population estimates.

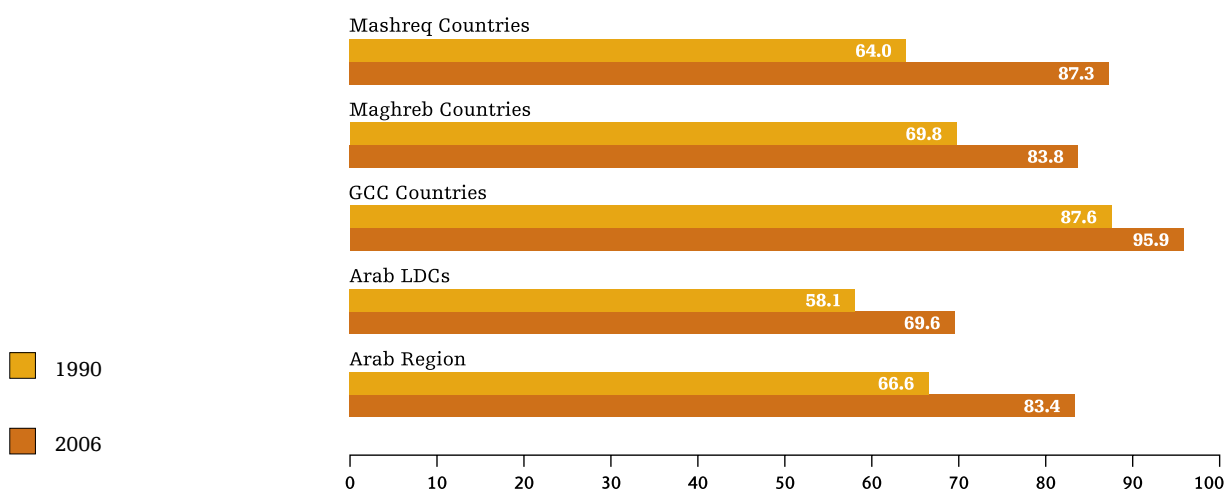
Completion Rates in Primary Education, Arab Region (%)



Completion rates reflect the extent to which the educational system is capable of retaining children in school. In the Arab region, completion rates in primary education have been rising steadily since 1991. In 2005, around 81% of the students eligible to reach the last grade of primary school did so. However, progress in completion rates over the past 15 years has not been fast enough to place the region on track towards meeting the goal.

Arab LDCs had a very low average completion rate of 48.3% in 2005. This detracts from the improvements in the net enrolment rate in this subregion as less than half of the children who are eligible for enrolment in primary school complete it. As in the case of net enrolment rates in primary education, the Maghreb countries have registered the highest rate of progress, particularly due to considerable strides in Morocco.

Literacy Rate of 15-24 Year-olds (%)



In line with enrolment and completion rates, youth literacy in the Arab region has improved notably since 1990 when only two thirds of the population aged 15 to 24 were able to read and write. According to data released in 2006, the youth literacy rate in the region increased to 83.4%.⁽²⁾

Recent data indicate that the average youth literacy rate in the GCC countries rose to 95.9% - the highest rate in the

Arab region. By contrast, in the Arab LDCs, almost one out of three young people is illiterate. The low literacy level in these countries is largely related to low enrolment and completion rates. On the other hand, higher enrolment and completion rates in the Mashreq and Maghreb have translated into strong gains in youth literacy rates since 1990. The positive trend in the Mashreq countries mainly reflects the considerable improvement in the youth literacy rate in Egypt.

(2) The data presented in the graph correspond to the 1990 and 2006 UNESCO release, respectively. They refer to the most recent data available.

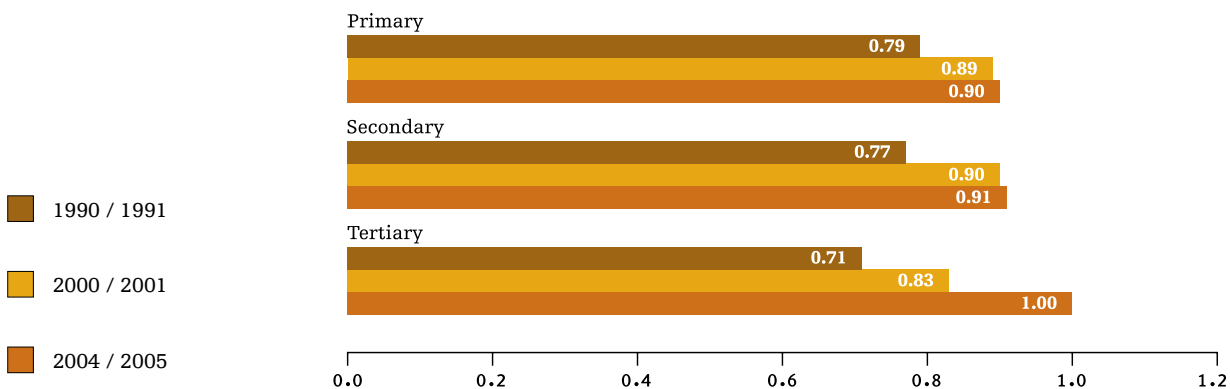
GOAL 3

PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN



Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015.

Ratio of Girls to Boys at All Levels of Education, Arab Region

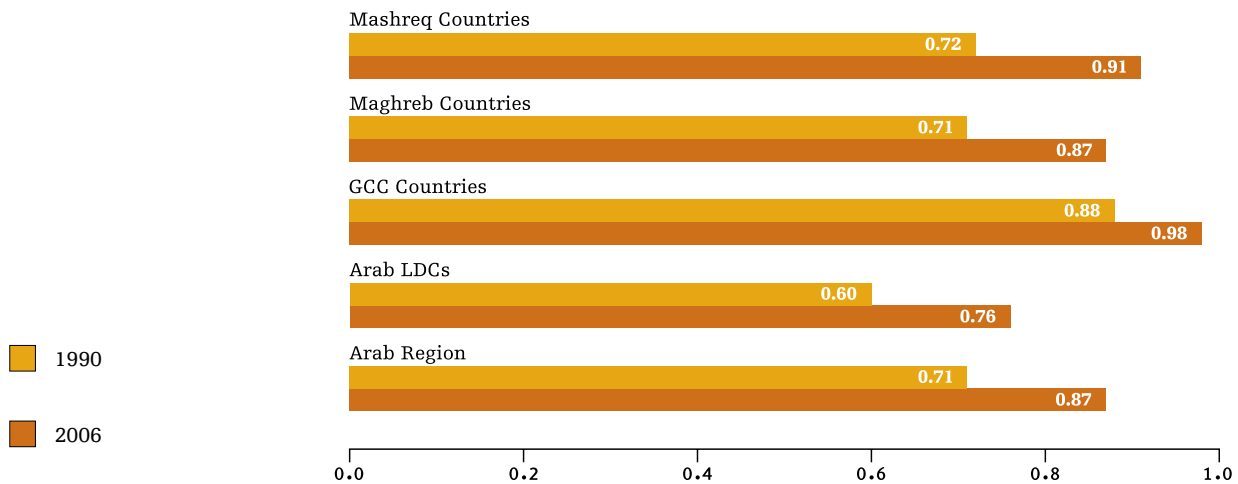


Gender Parity in Education

The region has taken important strides towards providing equal access to education for young boys and girls. Though gender parity at the primary and secondary level has not been achieved for the region as a whole, most subregions are on track towards reaching the target by 2015. However, large disparities remain between subregions. The GCC countries have achieved gender parity at this level of education; the Mashreq and Maghreb have almost closed the gender gap at the primary level, whereas the Arab LDCs are still lagging behind. Despite the remarkable improvement accomplished by the Arab LDCs - the GPI rose from 0.54 in 1990/91 to 0.81 in 2004/05 - concentrated efforts need to be made to reach the target.

Subregional disparities are even more apparent at the higher levels of education. In the Arab LDCs, only around eight girls to every ten boys receive secondary education whereas the Maghreb and the GCC have attained parity. At the tertiary level, the latter two subregions as well as most Mashreq countries have registered GPIs greater than 1, indicating that more girls are enrolled than boys. This phenomenon is partly explained by the fact that young men are much more likely to have the opportunity to study abroad than their female counterparts, and that girls often outperform their male peers at secondary levels, thus gaining higher acceptance at tertiary schools.

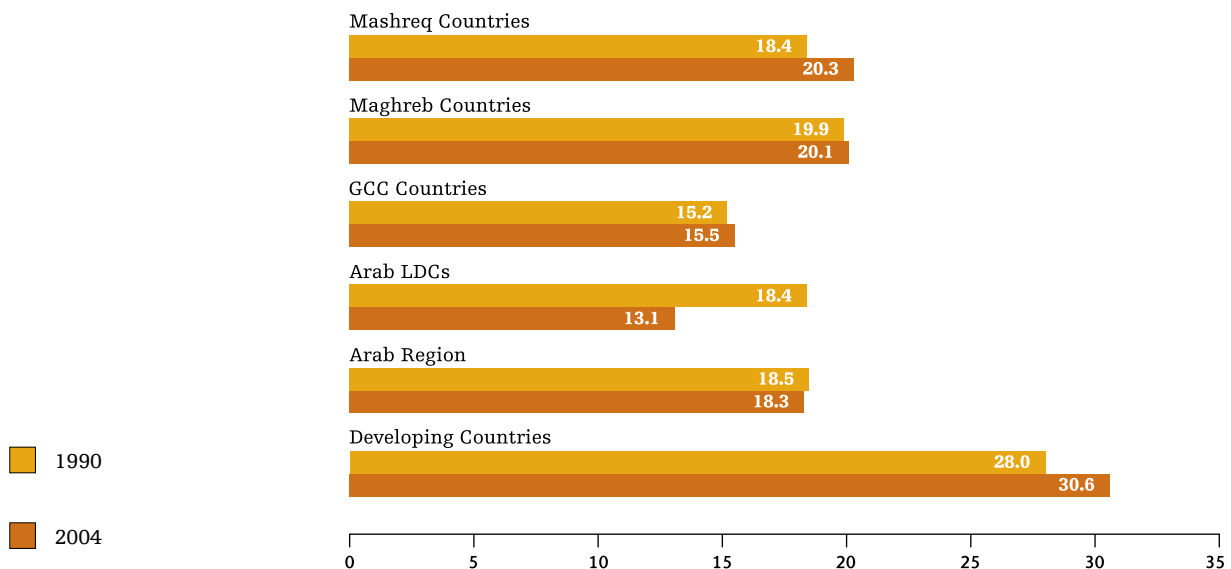
Ratio of Literate Women to Men



Increased access for girls to education at all levels has been accompanied by a marked reduction in the literacy gender gap across the region. The Mashreq countries succeeded in increasing the proportion of literate young women by 30 percentage points to 83%, the largest

advance of any subregion. This has resulted in a jump in the literacy GPI from 0.72 to 0.91. On the other hand, female youth literacy rates are still low in a number of Arab countries, particularly in Mauritania and Morocco.

Share of Women in Wage Employment in the Non-Agricultural Sector (%)



Gender Parity in Employment

The gains in education attained since 1990 have not been translated into higher participation rates in non-agricultural labour markets. On average, women accounted for only 18.3% of total paid employment in the industrial and services sector in 2004.

The proportion of women in non-agricultural wage employment in the Arab LDCs decreased by almost 5 percentage points between 1990 and 2004. This is partly explained by the fact that cuts in public sector employment, which are not sufficiently absorbed by the private sector, affect women disproportionately. The other subregions witnessed only marginal increases, the

largest being a 2 percentage points rise in the Mashreq. By comparison, developing countries around the globe succeeded, on average, in raising the proportion of women employed in services and industry by 2.6 percentage points.

Women in the GCC countries and the Arab LDCs tend to comprise a considerably lower share of total non-agricultural wage employment than the rest of their Arab counterparts. Across the region, a myriad of educational, social and economic factors continue to hinder greater participation of women in formal sector employment outside agriculture. Though employment regulations do not explicitly discriminate against women, family laws and conventions limit women's access to jobs. Many employers, especially in the private sector, tend to shy away from hiring women workers considering costs of maternity leave provision required under the law. Moreover, institutional constraints and traditions frequently impede women's access to productive resources, credit and assets.

Gender Parity in National Parliaments

Much effort has been invested by national and international organizations to enhance the role of women in politics in the Arab world. However, by April 2007 women held, on average, only 8.7% of the region's national parliamentary seats, a figure among the lowest in the world.

Up to April 2007, eighteen of the twenty-two countries in the region had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia adopted the quota system as stipulated by CEDAW, bringing about an influx of women into national parliaments. Iraq witnessed the most substantial increase of any Arab country when women's representation in parliament reached 25.5% with the 2005 elections. Jordan saw the percentage of women in national parliament rise from 1.3% in 1997 to 5.5% in 2006, while in Morocco it jumped from 0.6% in 1997 to 10.8% in 2006.

In some GCC countries, striking changes in the political representation of women have recently taken place. In the United Arab Emirates, nine women acceded to parliament after the 2006 elections, comprising 22.5% of seats. Kuwaiti women gained massive political ground in 2005 when they attained comprehensive political rights, though they failed to win any seats in parliamentary elections in 2007. Bahraini women managed to obtain one out of 40 seats in the 2007 elections.

The Arab LDCs experienced varying trends: women's participation in parliament in Yemen actually fell from 4.1% in 1990 to 0.3% in 2006, while the number rose in Sudan from 5.3% in 1997 to 17.8% in 2007. In Djibouti, 10.8% of the parliamentary seats have been held by women since 2003.

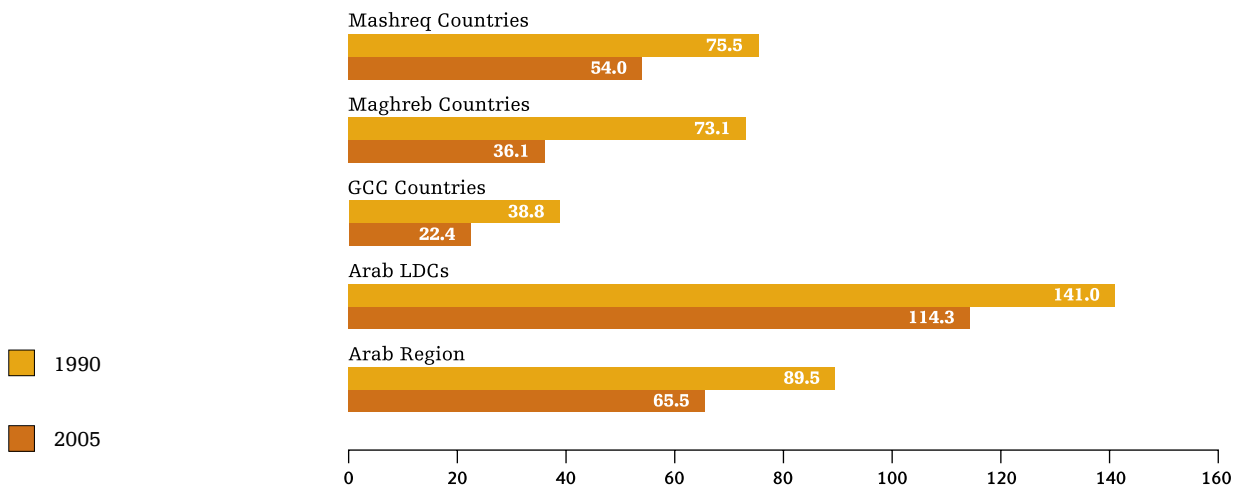


GOAL 4 REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY



Target 5: Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate

Under-five Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)

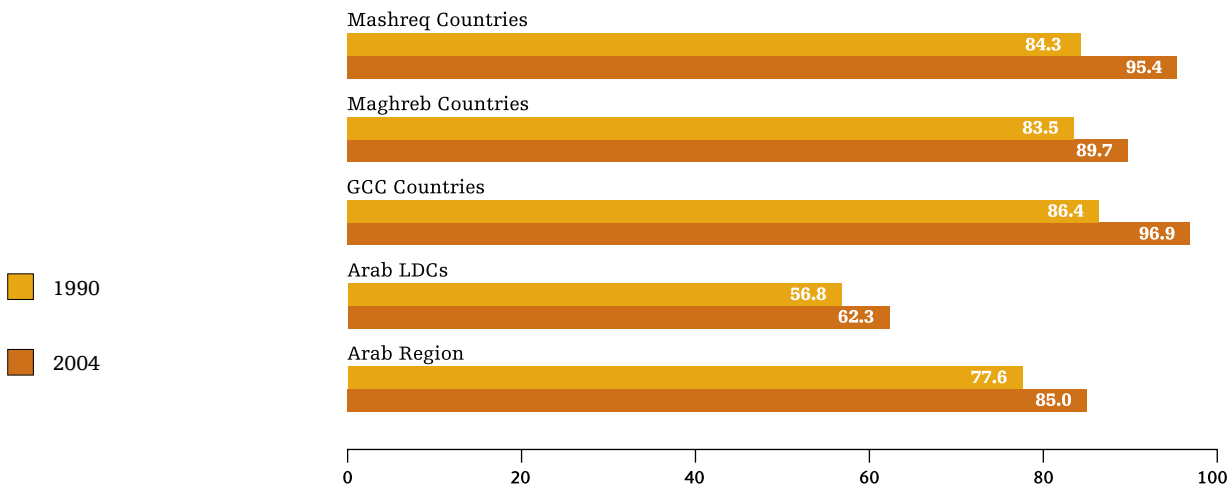


The average under-five mortality rate per 1,000 live births in the region dropped by 27% between 1990 and 2005 as a result of improved access to basic health services as well as more hygienic conditions and better infrastructure. Despite this substantial progress, the Arab region as a whole is not on track to meet the target of reducing the under-five mortality rate by two thirds between 1990 and 2015. In fact, average progress in the region has fallen significantly short of the 40% reduction required by 2005 to be on track.

Strong disparities between the subregions continue to exist. In the Arab LDCs, more than one in ten children die

before reaching the age of five – around 5 times as much as in the GCC countries. Over the period 1990-2005, progress in the Arab LDCs, excluding Comoros, was slow. This contrasts sharply with the experience in the Maghreb, where all four countries are likely to meet the target and the average under-five mortality rate has decreased by 51% since 1990. In the Mashreq region, average progress has been restricted by the continuously deteriorating health situation in Iraq, where child mortality rates have more than doubled since the early 1990s, primarily due to economic sanctions and war. By contrast, Egypt has succeeded in reducing the under-five mortality rate by 68%, the largest improvement among all Arab countries.

Proportion of 1-Year-Old Children Immunized Against Measles (%)



Reducing measles mortality is one of the key elements towards achieving the goal on child mortality, and the rate of immunization is an important indicator of infants' access to medical care and of the degree of knowledge surrounding the need for vaccination. Routine immunization coverage of 1-year-old children in the Arab region increased to 85% in 2004, a number significantly above the developing regions' average of 73%. With the exception of Iraq and Algeria, the countries of the Mashreq, the Maghreb, and the GCC have managed to attain almost complete vaccination coverage of children. By contrast, only around six out of ten children living in

the Arab LDCs were immunized against measles in 2004. In Somalia, immunization coverage remained below 50%, while in Comoros and Djibouti it decreased considerably between 1990 and 2004. In countries where coverage is lagging behind, many measles deaths can be prevented by making more efficient use of existing immunization services. Increasing the percentage of children in a community that are vaccinated is critical for preventing disease in the community as a whole. Even those children that remain unvaccinated benefit from "herd immunity" since immunization decreases the rate of transmission of the disease.



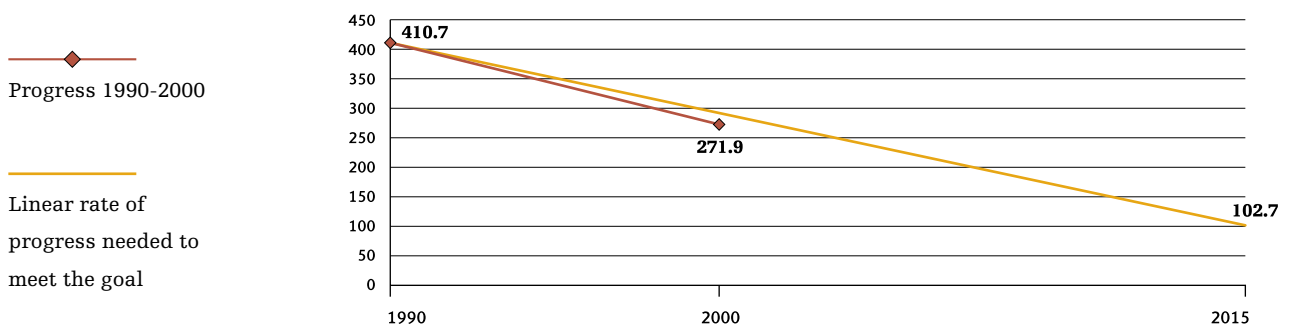
GOAL 5

IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH



Target 6: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

Maternal Mortality Ratio, Arab Region (per 100,000)



The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in the Arab region fell to about 272 per 100,000 live births in 2000, a decrease of almost 34% from its 1990 level. Assuming that the rate of progress achieved between 1990 and 2000 can be maintained, the Arab region as a whole will meet the goal of reducing the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015. The considerable decline in maternal mortality is linked to the significant increase in births attended by skilled health personnel. In fact, this ratio rose by over 16 percentage points over the decade. In addition, the reduction in adolescent pregnancy - associated with high risks - has contributed to the overall decline in maternal mortality. Indeed, adolescents aged 15-19 are twice as likely to die and those under 15 are five times as likely to die during childbirth, as women in their twenties.

Progress across the region is diverse due to the socio-economic differences between the subregions. Accordingly, while the region as a whole is on track, this is

not the case for all of the four subregions. In 2000, the MMR was lowest in the GCC countries at about 17 per 100,000 live births, mostly since 98.2% of births in the GCC are supervised by skilled birth attendants. On the other hand, while the MMR in the Arab LDCs dropped by 37.9% to 637.6 per 100,000 live births in 2000, it remains significantly above the developing world average of 450 per 100,000 live births. The average MMR in the Arab LDCs was the highest in the Arab region; only 44.8% of newborns were delivered by skilled birth attendants in 2000, up by 22 percentage points from 1990. The trends in maternal mortality and births attended by skilled personnel in the Arab LDCs are largely influenced by the respective trends in Sudan, which accounts for almost 50% of live births in the subregion. Slightly less than half of these births are not attended by skilled personnel. As such, the MMR in Sudan was 509 per 100,000 live births in 2000.

GOAL 6

COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES



Target 7: Have halted by 2015, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS | Though the prevalence of HIV/AIDS continues to be relatively low in Arab countries, risks and vulnerability are high as the epidemic has been on the rise during the past two years. Algeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and Morocco, for example, are witnessing HIV epidemics localised in certain areas, whereas both Sudan and Djibouti face a generalised epidemic (i.e. have an HIV prevalence rate in the general population of 1% or more). In 2005, Djibouti recorded a 3.1% rate while Sudan saw rates range from 0.8% to 2.7%. Unprotected sex remains the main mode of transmission of the virus in the region. Injecting drug use also accounts for a large proportion of infections in many countries.

A general lack of awareness on modes of transmission and prevention measures of HIV is pervasive in the region, particularly among youth. In response to the epidemic and its challenges, the majority of Arab countries have adopted Multi-sectoral National Strategic Plans (NSPs). However, implementation on the ground faces many obstacles and concrete action frequently remains insufficient. It is estimated that in 2005, only around 5% of HIV patients who needed anti-retrovirals (ARVs) had access to them. Efforts need to be expanded on several levels including data collection, awareness-raising, non-discrimination and non-stigmatization, legislation, and the provision of care and support.

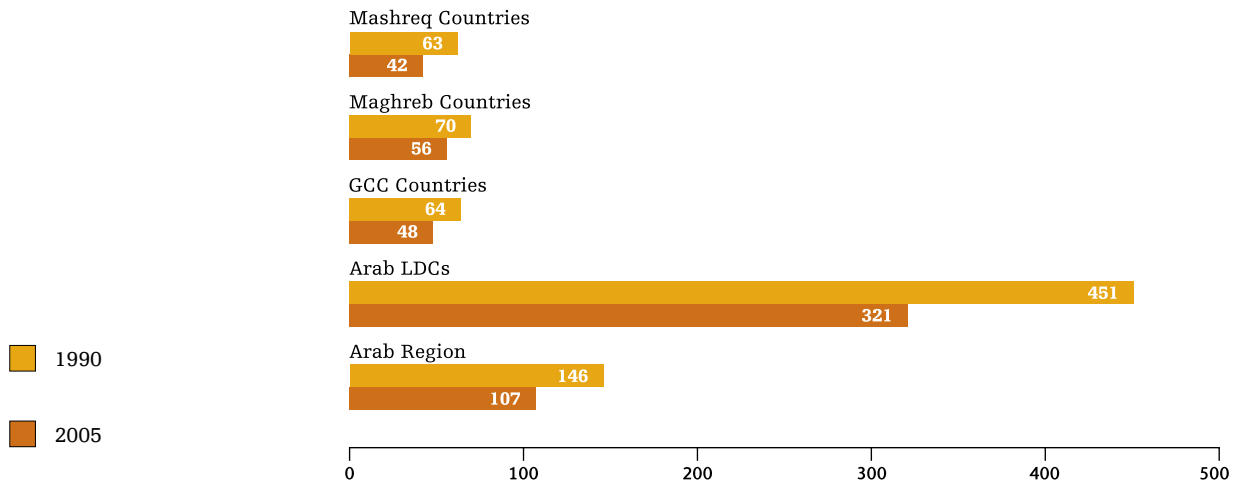
Target 8: Have halted by 2015, and begun to reverse, the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

Malaria | While malaria has been almost eliminated in the majority of Arab countries, it remains highly endemic in the Arab LDCs, where on average 3,313 cases per 100,000 were reported in 2005. Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen accounted for 98% of notified cases in the region; Sudan alone bore about 76% of the regional burden. Achievement of the MDG target in the subregion, and in the region as a whole, is therefore heavily dependent on progress in Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. Furthermore, malaria notification in these countries understates the actual number of cases as surveillance is weak and, in some areas, nonexistent. Lack of adequate health care and laboratory facilities and adverse security

conditions are some of the factors hindering progress in survey efforts. Though all four Arab LDCs have adopted effective malaria treatment policies (treatment with ACTs⁽³⁾), coverage of malaria-risk areas by these measures is still very low. A survey of Sudan in 2005 estimated that a mere 11.2% of the population in malaria-risk areas were sleeping under insecticide-treated bed nets (ITNs) and 10.5% were treated with ACTs. Despite major difficulties, Sudan has been taking massive scaling up efforts of ITNs and ACTs over the past two years. Hence, current coverage is likely to be higher than what the available figures suggest. In Somalia, only 0.4% to 3.8% of people in various risk zones were using ITNs.

(3) ACTs are artemisinin-based combination therapies for malaria.

Tuberculosis Prevalence Rate (per 100,000)



Tuberculosis | Tuberculosis remains a significant public health problem, and probably the leading cause of communicable disease deaths in adults in the Arab world. It is estimated that in 2005, 240,000 people developed tuberculosis and 43,000 died from it. The Arab LDCs are the countries affected the most, accounting for almost 56% of all new tuberculosis cases in the region.

All Arab countries have shown good progress in tuberculosis control. Care based on the Directly Observed Therapy Shortcourse (DOTS) strategy - the internationally recommended strategy for TB control - has been widely expanded to encompass, on average, more than 90% of the general population. In addition, the regional treatment success rate under DOTS had reached around 82% in 2003, only three percentage points below the global target of 85%. Mashreq countries and the Arab LDCs

achieved the most progress on this front since 1995, increasing their rates by 27 and 10 percentage points, respectively. Prevalence rates of tuberculosis dropped in all subregions between 1990 and 2005. The average prevalence rate in the region decreased from 146 per 100,000 in 1990 to 107 in 2005.

However, the speed of decline in the region has not been rapid enough to guarantee the accomplishment of the target especially as the average level of incidence has remained the same (191 per 100,000). One important reason behind this is that detection rate under DOTS has been low in the region as a whole: the percentage of cases detected was around 59% in 2004 whereas the global target is 70%. This implies that 41% of tuberculosis patients do not have access to quality care.

GOAL 7 ENSURING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



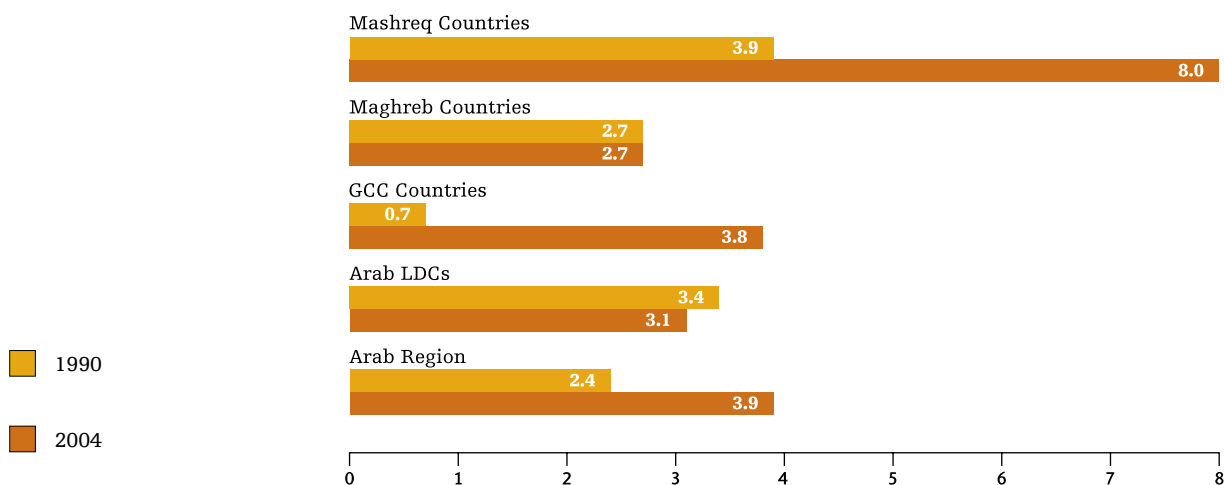
Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

Protected areas, land degradation and desertification

The percentage of land area covered by forest in the Arab region decreased from 7.4% to 6.7% between 1990 and 2004. This implies that the Arab region as a whole is not on track to meet the set target despite reforestation

efforts in many Arab countries to increase green areas. Some of the challenges facing the region include high population density, deforestation due to high demand for energy resources, especially in the Arab LDCs, lack of institutional capacity, and lack of legislation and incentives encouraging reforestation.

Protected Area to Total Surface Area (%)



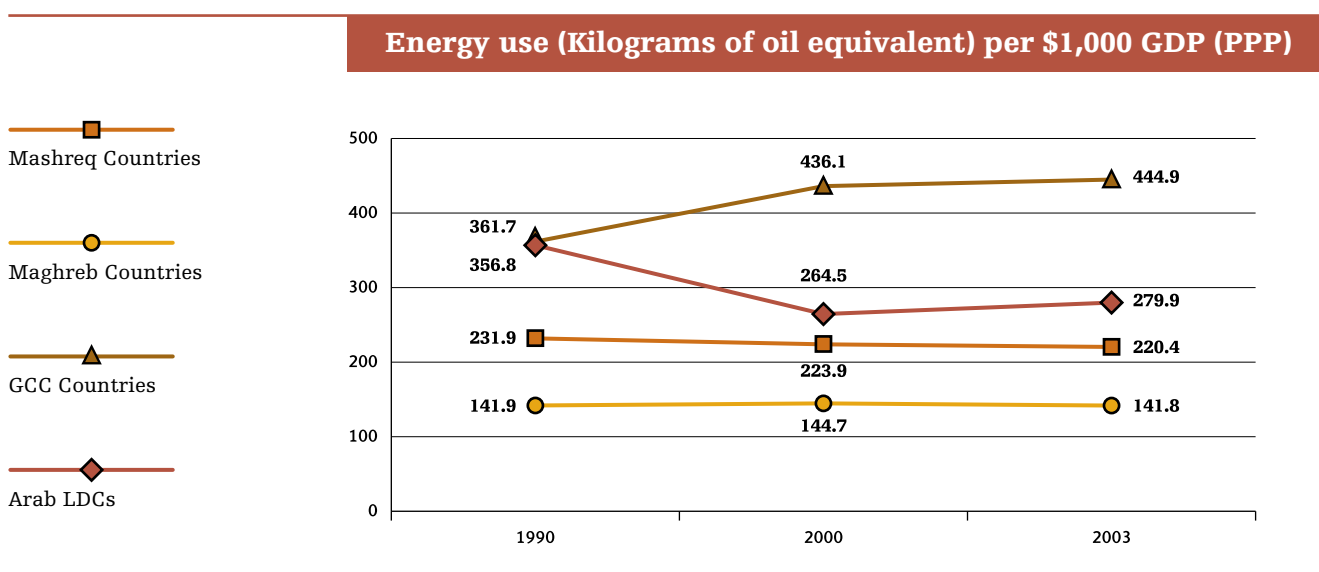
Despite the lack in institutional capacity, legislation, and incentives, the Arab region has witnessed a significant increase in protected areas since 1990. The proportion of protected areas in the region increased from 2.4% to 3.9% between 1990 and 2004. However, the protected area average in the Arab region remains about three times

lower than the world average of 13% in 2004. The increase is mainly due to efforts in the GCC subregion where the size of protected areas has more than quadrupled since 1990. This is partly attributed to the protection of 64 million hectares as a wildlife management area in Saudi Arabia, the largest protected area in the world, in 1994.

The increase in the region is also due to progress in Mashreq countries where the size of protected areas has doubled between 1990 and 2004. The lowest proportion of protected areas compared to surface area is in the Arab LDCs, which have the highest biological diversity and which have not witnessed any successful efforts in expanding protected areas in the past 15 years.

Drylands account for over 50% of total area in the Arab world. These are characterized by harsh environment, fragile ecosystems, limited water resources and arable lands. Land degradation in the Arab region is widespread, due to misuse, and is proceeding at an accelerating

rate. A growing population and changing patterns of consumption have resulted in increasing food demand, hastening land degradation in this arid environment. Wind erosion, salinity and water erosion constitute the major threats. Failures of resource management policies are aggravated by overgrazing, overexploitation of water and land resources, overcultivation of marginal lands, deforestation, and the use of inappropriate technologies. Despite governmental efforts to prevent and reduce land degradation at the national and regional levels, only limited success has been achieved, mostly due to the severity of the problems. More extensive cooperative and participatory efforts are urgently needed.



Energy Use

Rapidly expanding populations, rural-urban migration, and widespread subsidies have contributed to a rising demand for energy in the Arab world since 1990. On average, energy consumption per \$1,000 GDP⁽⁴⁾ increased by 10% between 1990 and 2003. While the Mashreq and the Arab LDCs witnessed decreases of 5% and 22%, respectively, energy consumption per \$1,000 GDP in the GCC countries rose by 23%. The Maghreb maintained a constant average level over the same period.

In per capita terms, a large discrepancy in energy use persists between the GCC countries and all other Arab countries. Per capita electricity consumption in the former remains among the highest in the world. Transport, water, and power sectors have witnessed increasing

shares in energy use, as electricity generation and water desalination are energy intensive processes.

Electrification rates also varied widely among Arab countries, averaging 80% in 2005. While Kuwait boasted a 100% electrification rate, some Arab LDCs have limited electricity coverage. Across the region, about 63 million people, almost 20% of the Arab population, had no access to electricity, and one fifth relied on non-commercial fuels. Another 20% of people living in poor urban and rural areas had limited and unreliable access to energy. Countries in the region have elevated efforts to enhance the sustainability of the energy sector in the recent past. There is an urgent need for increased access in remote and rural areas to efficiently distribute energy and alleviate human poverty.

(4) Kilograms of oil equivalent per 1,000 dollars (PPP) of GDP.

Carbon dioxide emissions and consumption of ozone-depleting substances

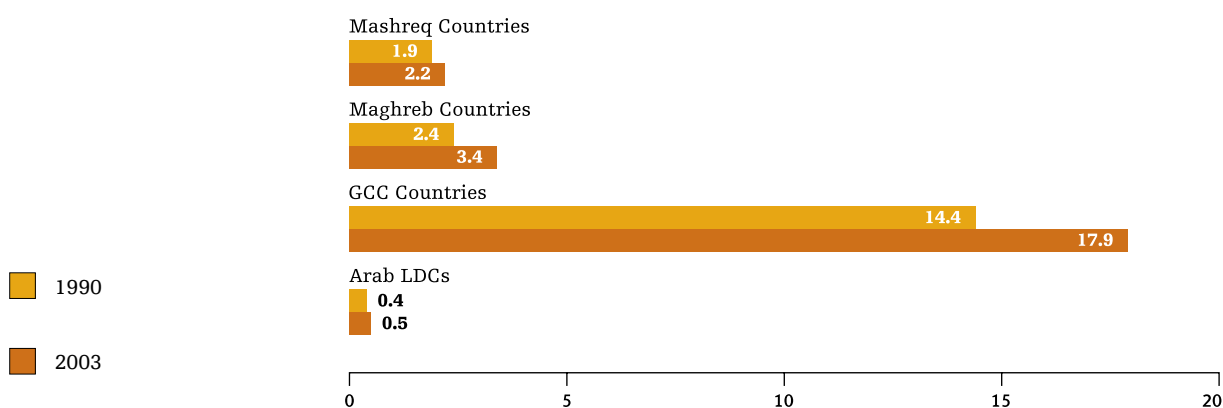
Total emissions in the region soared to 1.2 trillion metric tons in 2003, an 81% increase since 1990. This jump is partly accounted for by the 35% surge in the region's population. In addition, per capita carbon dioxide emissions also intensified, contributing to the increase in total emissions. The regional level of per capita emissions rose by 28% in the same time period, from 3.1 to 3.9 metric tons.

Mashreq and Maghreb countries and the Arab LDCs saw total emissions of CO₂ rise by 66%, 80% and 57%, respectively. The Mashreq and the Arab LDCs maintained rela-

tively stable levels of per capita emissions, while those in the Maghreb rose by 42%. The GCC remains the region with both the highest total and per capita emissions, where the former increased by 86% between 1990 and 2003.

Arab countries have expended serious efforts in implementing the Montreal Protocol.⁽⁵⁾ Legislation and programmes have been developed to reduce, control and monitor the consumption of ozone-depleting substances (ODS), especially chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). By 2004, the region had succeeded in decreasing the level of consumption of ODS by 31%. In fact, since 2000, all subregions had witnessed drops in total ODS consumption, the most significant of which in the Mashreq (40%). CFCs accounted for 64% of total ODS in the region.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions per Capita (metric tons)



Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

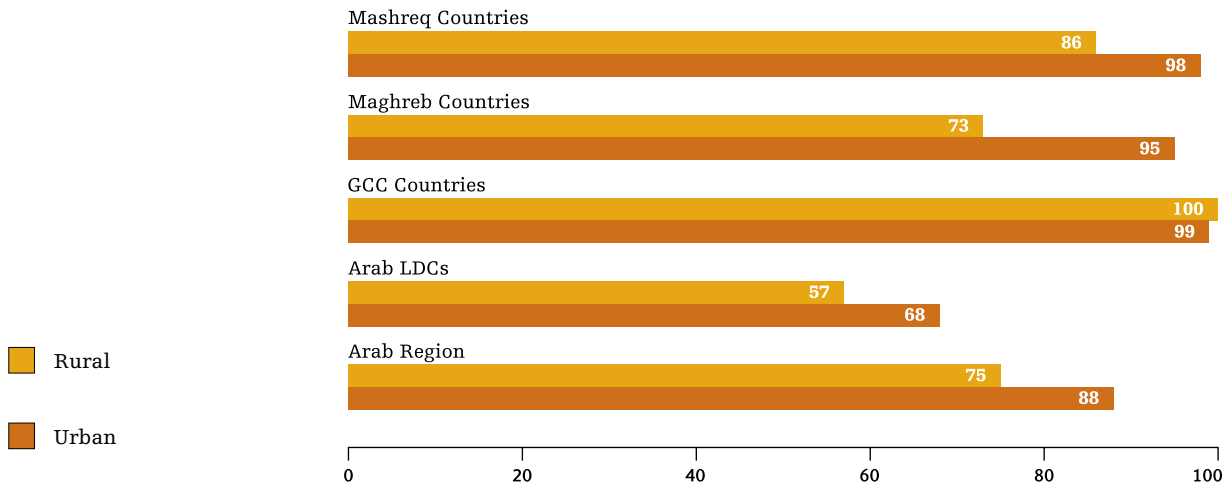
The proportion of the population using improved drinking water sources in the Arab region remained constant at 82%, between 1990 and 2004. It increased in the GCC, Mashreq, and Maghreb to 100%, 94%, and 86%, respectively, whereas it fell from 68% to 63% in the Arab LDCs. The lack of overall improvement in the Arab region suggests that significant efforts are still required to halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015.

In 2004, the proportion of the population using improved drinking water sources in rural areas was almost 13 percentage points less than those in urban areas. The sig-

nificantly lower proportion of people with access to safe water in rural areas is primarily due to the considerable urban-rural divide in the Maghreb region. In Morocco, which accounts for more than one third of the Maghreb population, only 56% of the rural population had access to safe drinking water, compared to 99% of the urban population. Furthermore, the figure for Arab LDCs indicates that almost half the rural population does not have access to an improved water source. Some countries in the region need to intensify efforts to mainstream water into national development strategies and to close the urban-rural divide especially since seven Arab countries are among the ten water-scarce countries in the world.

(5) The "Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer" is an international treaty governing the protection of stratospheric ozone.

Proportion of Population Using Improved Drinking Water Sources, 2004 (%)

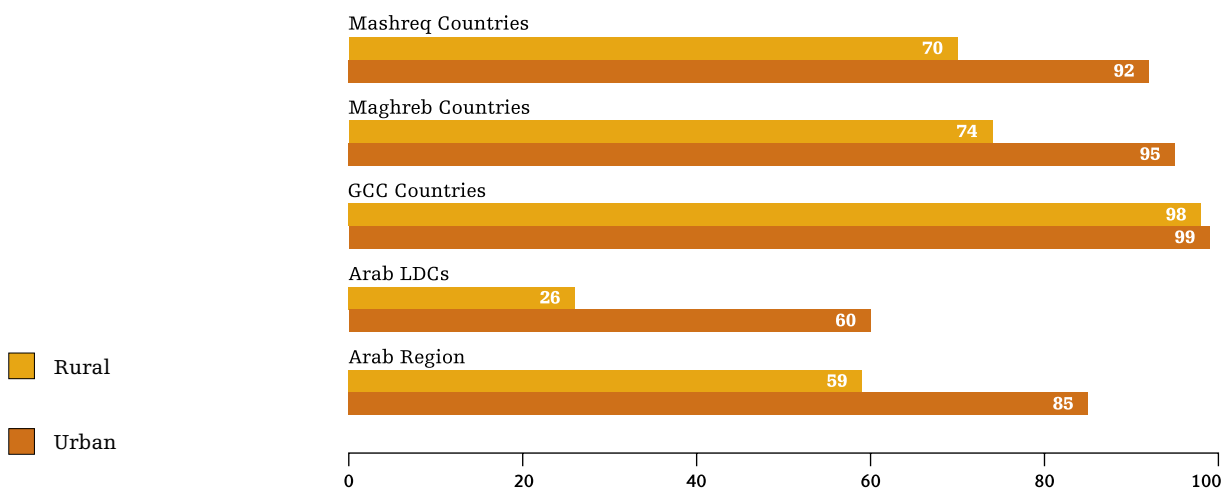


There has been slow improvement in access to sanitation facilities in the Arab subregions in the last 15 years. In 2004, the proportion of the population in Arab LDCs with access to improved sanitation facilities was only 42% compared to 99% in the GCC, 87% in the Maghreb, and 84% in the Mashreq. If Arab countries maintain their current pace, an estimated 124 million people in the region will be without access to basic sanitation in 2015, 50% of which will be living in the Arab LDCs.

Major disparities in access to sanitation facilities become evident when comparing urban and rural areas. In Arab LDCs, only 26% of the rural population have access to sanitation facilities, compared to 60% in urban areas. How-

ever, despite inequity in access to improved sanitation between rural and urban areas, the overall improvement in sanitation services over the past fifteen years is mainly due to increased access for people in rural areas across the region. In fact, the proportion of the rural population with access to sanitation facilities rose by 13, 14, and 8 percentage points in the GCC, Mashreq, and Maghreb countries, respectively. In the Arab region as a whole, this proportion rose from 54% to 59% in rural areas, while it declined from 87% to 85% in urban areas. The reduction in urban areas is mostly attributed to rural-urban migration and the exacerbated pressures on providing adequate sanitation facilities for a growing urban population.

Proportion of Population Using Improved Sanitation Facilities, 2004 (%)



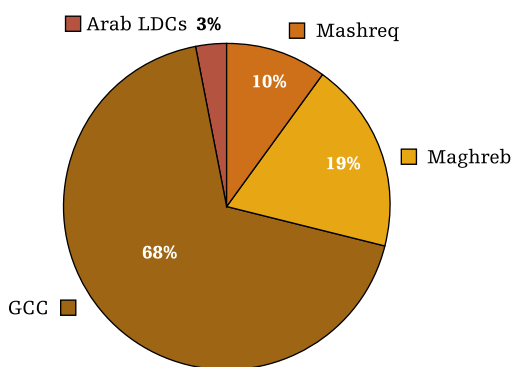
GOAL 8

DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

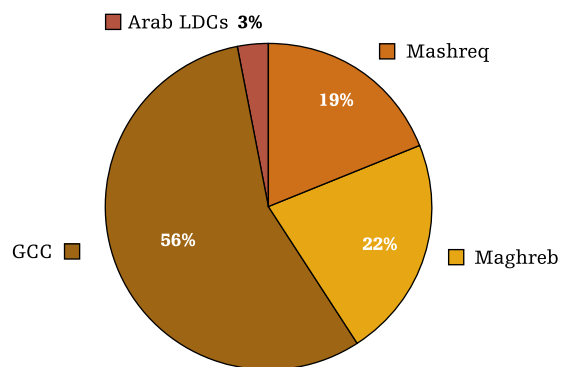


Target 12: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system.

Subregional Shares of Total Exports in the Arab Region, 2004



Subregional Shares of Total Imports in the Arab Region, 2004



The Arab region's share in world trade is small. In 2004, its share of world exports and imports was almost unchanged from the early nineties, at 4.2% and 2.8%, respectively.

The GCC subregion holds by far the biggest share of regional exports and imports, almost exclusively due to the large volume of oil exports. By contrast, the Arab LDCs account for only 3% of the region's total trade volume. As such, the distribution of trade in the region reflects its composition, namely that primary products and low value-added goods, mainly fuels, dominate Arab exports. In fact, fuel exports constitute an average of 75% to 90% of exports from the GCC countries, Algeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Yemen. Manufactured exports constitute a mere 10% and 5% of GCC and LDC exports, respectively,

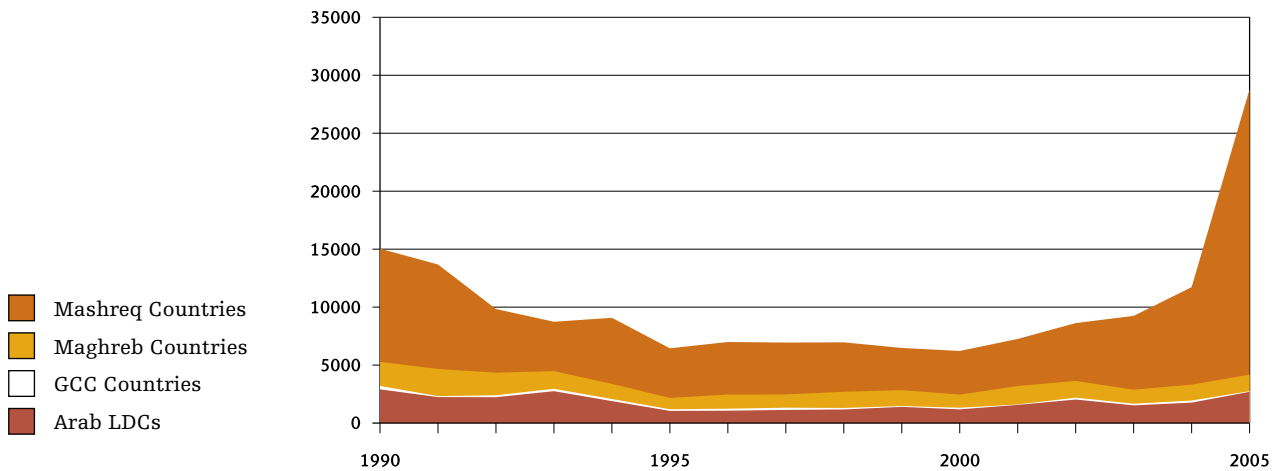
while they account for 26% and 21% of the Mashreq and Maghreb exports, respectively.

Several Arab countries have already taken serious steps towards trade liberalization. Twelve Arab countries are WTO members, while six are in the process of negotiating WTO membership.⁽⁶⁾ Intra-regional trade is a mere 10% of total trade in the Arab world, a trifling figure compared to other regional groups in the world. This sluggish performance can be attributed to a myriad of factors, such as, a lack of complementarities among Arab economies, non-compliance by many Arab countries to their obligations under trade agreements, absence of credible dispute settlement mechanisms, high transaction costs, and excessive regulations and legislation.

(6) The WTO member countries are: Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and UAE; countries in negotiations are: Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen, and Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Target 14: Address the special needs of the least developed countries.

Official Development Assistance to Arab Countries, 1990 - 2005 (Net real flows, millions of USD)



After decreasing throughout the 1990s, official development assistance (ODA) to Arab countries was on a steady upward trend between 2000 and 2004. Following the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, total aid to the region rose from a low of \$6.2 billion to \$11.7 billion in 2004. The GCC countries are among the major donors both to the region and to developing countries in general. An increasing share of foreign aid to Arab countries has been channelled to social sectors, such as education and health, at the expense of economic sectors. The extraordinary increase of ODA observed in 2005 is mainly the result of large debt forgiveness grants to Iraq, which account for almost half of total development assistance to Arab countries in that year. Aid flows to the region have not primarily targeted the poorest countries

as geopolitical reasons, economic interests, and past colonial ties often dominate developmental needs in the aid allocation decisions of major donors. In the period 2000-2005, only 15% of total aid flows to the region were directed to the Arab LDCs, which account for 22% of the total Arab population. In 2005, official development aid to each of the Arab LDCs, excluding Sudan, was below the level of 1990. Moreover, many Arab countries, particularly the least developed and those in conflict, are faced with a high volatility of aid flows, which hampers medium- and long-term planning. It is therefore vital that both Arab and non-Arab donors commit to larger and more predictable development assistance to the countries in the region that are most in need of external financing.

Target 16: In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.

Labour markets in most Arab countries are characterized by widespread underemployment, very high rates of youth unemployment, and a low employment-to-population ratio. In 2005, around 25% of Arab youth were unemployed, a rate three times higher than that for adults. The situation is particularly grave for young women, whereby the unemployment rate for females aged 15 – 24 was estimated at around 34% in 2005. The discrepancies at the subregional and country level are

very large. Both total and youth unemployment rates in the GCC countries are much lower than in most other Arab countries. Labour market conditions are especially difficult in the countries beset by conflict and in the Arab LDCs.

Given the high number of new entrants expected over the coming years, the pressure on labour markets in the region will continue to increase. While the Arab region as

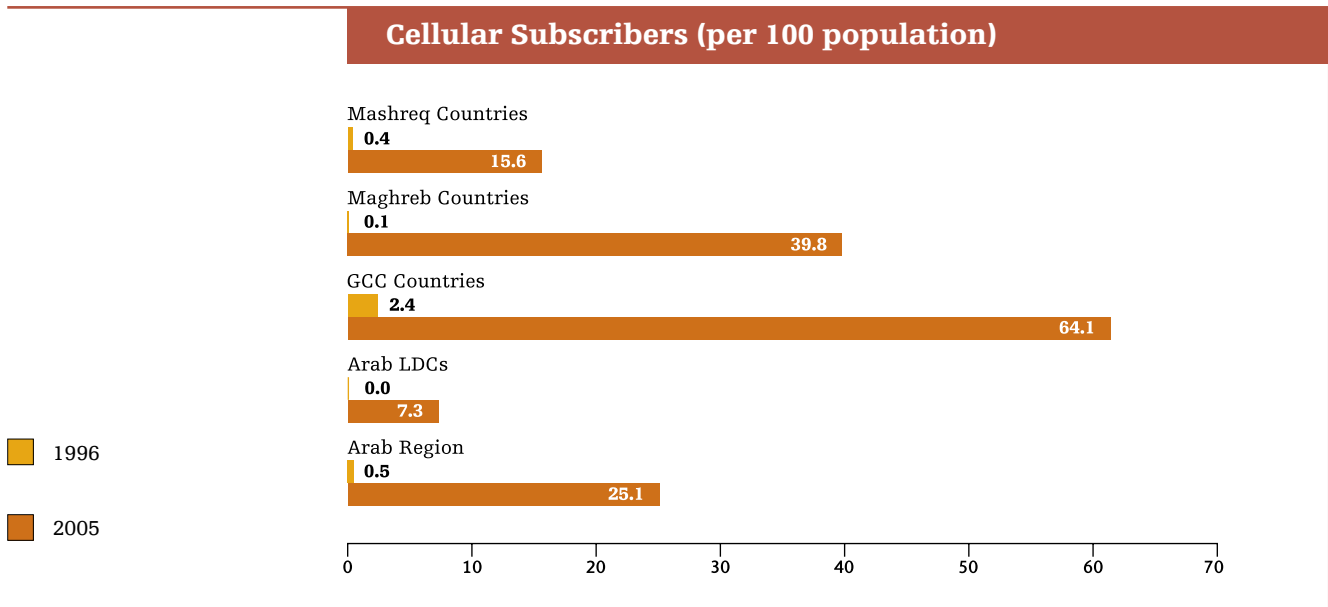
a whole has experienced strong economic growth during the period 2003-2006 - real GDP growth averaged around 6% per year - the impact on total and youth unemployment rates has so far been very limited. It is vital that policy

interventions address both the supply and the demand side of the labour market, with a focus on the specific challenges facing youth.

Target 18: In cooperation with the private sector make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.

With very few exceptions, access to information and communication technologies (ICT) in the twenty two Arab countries increased steadily over the last decade and a half. However, despite this progress, the region as a whole lags considerably behind the world average

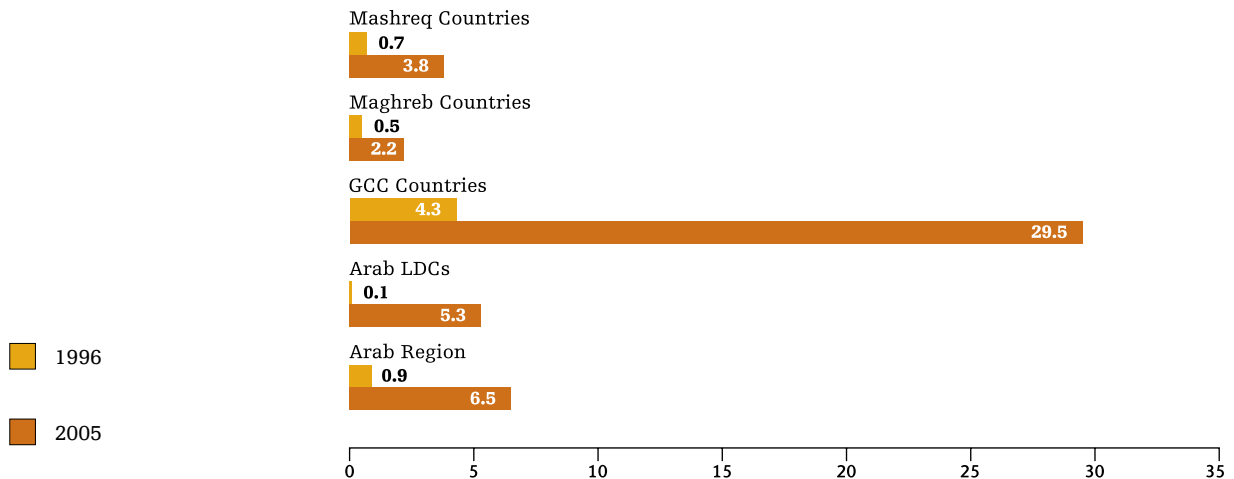
in terms of fixed telephone lines, personal computers, and internet users. Moreover, disparities between Arab countries remain very high. The digital divide is most noticeable when comparing the advanced countries of the GCC with many poorer Arab countries.



The mobile sector in the Arab world has grown very rapidly during the past decade. Between 1996 and 2005, the number of cellular subscribers has increased by a factor of 50 and, today, there are on average more than 25 subscriptions per 100 people. It is the only indicator of this target for which the average of the Arab countries comes close to the world average. However, in Comoros, Iraq, and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, there are still less than 5 cellular subscriptions per 100 people.

In contrast to the mobile sector, the number of fixed telephone lines in the Arab region has grown at a slow pace since the early 1990s. By 2005, the average number of fixed lines in operation per 100 people had reached only 9.5, around half of the world average. While fixed telephone markets in some of the GCC countries, namely Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE are showing signs of saturation, the penetration rate remains below 4% in all six Arab LDCs.

Personal Computers (per 100 population)



While still less than half the world's average (6.5% as opposed to 13.4%), the number of personal computers (PCs) in Arab countries has increased notably since the mid 1990s. The average number of PCs in the four Arab subregions clearly illustrates the digital divide that separates the GCC countries from the rest of the region. Excluding Lebanon, all Mashreq and Maghreb countries and the Arab LDCs, have rates below 10%. The relatively high average number of PCs in the Arab LDCs in 2005 is primarily due to a significant increase in PC usage in Sudan.

Access to and use of the internet in Arab countries has grown at a very fast pace over the past few years. In 2005, 7.2% of the Arab population was using the internet, compared to only 1% in 2000. However, the average number of internet connections in the Arab countries is still well below the world average of 15.2 per 100. Internet use is particularly limited in Iraq, Mauritania, and Yemen, where less than 1% of the population use the internet. This may be in part attributed to the low number of websites available in Arabic.



YOUTH AND THE MDGS

Youth are core stakeholders, beneficiaries of, and instruments for the achievement of the MDGs. All of the eight MDGs address issues that directly affect youth: reducing poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and tackling youth unemployment. The success of the MDGs for youth today will ensure the well-being of future generations. Along with greater investment in education, employment, human rights, and youth health, involving young people in the efforts to realise the MDGs will greatly help in assuring future sustainability of the achieved goals.

Choosing “youth” as the guiding theme of this year’s report is in recognition of the fact that Arab countries’ populations have relatively more young people than ever. In many of these countries, mainly because of the decline in fertility and in infant mortality, the proportion of young people in the Arab population may have peaked. While this presents a number of challenges, it could also bring many rewards, if development strategies and policies place the right focus on issues affecting younger age groups and the working-age population.

Youth currently comprise over 20% of the overall Arab population. The 15 to 24 age group numbered around 66 million in 2005 (or 20.6% of the population), up from 33 million (19.5%) in 1980. This age group is projected to reach 78 million in 2020 (18.2%). Arab youth are more educated and marrying at a later age than before. Over the last few decades, school enrolment rates have risen markedly throughout the region for both young men and women. The numbers, however, have not translated into higher rates of employment and wages. Too many young people have a hard time finding work, leaving one in each three young Arabs unemployed. The gender gap is still prominent with respect to indicators such as education and employment, whereby a gender bias against female primary enrolment and labour participation is pervasive. Faced with increasing marginalization, many Arab youth resort to migration, which results in increasing loss to human capital in these countries. Others express their frustrations by turning to violence and extremist activities.

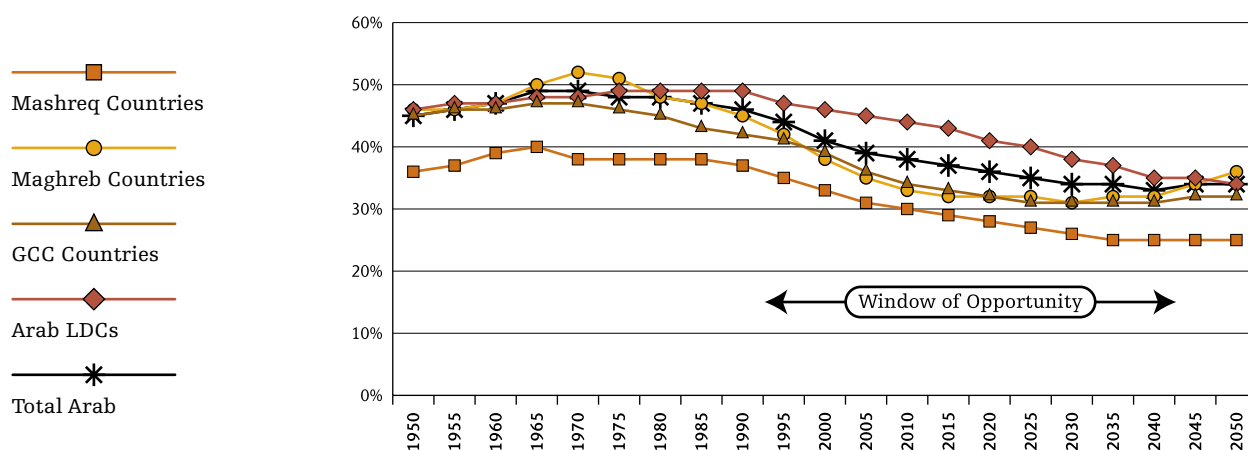
In Arab countries where fertility and infant mortality have declined sharply over the last two decades, the proportion of the working age population (15 to 60) will increase relative to the dependent population in the younger and older age groups, over the next few decades. With appropriate governance, policies, and investments, countries can take advantage of this unique “youth bulge” to launch fresh initiatives to accelerate economic and social development. When this generation reaches working age, and if it is productively employed, it will present a demographic “window of opportunity” that can potentially promote higher rates of economic growth. This window represents a larger labour force coinciding with fewer dependants (children and elderly to support), thus providing an opportunity for maximizing the rates of investment, economic growth, and employment. The opportunity will start diminishing as soon as the dependency ratio starts rising again. In the Arab region, this window of opportunity appeared in 1995 and is expected to last throughout the coming decades and close in 2045, roughly at the same time for all Arab countries.

The demographic “window of opportunity” in Arab countries

The ability of a country to take advantage of this opportunity depends, on the one hand, on whether young people entering the workforce are healthy, literate, educated, and skilled; and on the other hand, on whether parallel investments to expand productive capacity and create jobs will proceed at high and sustainable growth rates. Given the high unemployment among Arab youth, the region would not be able to reap the benefit of that demographic dividend if youth unemployment is not appropriately addressed. Failing to invest adequately in the full potential of young people could have devastating results for the Arab region, particularly in terms of increased unemployment and a growing demand for international migration.

It is worth noting that all countries covered in this report are party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention provides a comprehensive set of standards and entitlements that, if implemented and if

The demographic "window of opportunity" in Arab countries



sufficient budgets are allocated to give them effect, can help children grow up into healthy, confident and skilful youth that can contribute positively to their societies.

At this juncture in time, almost halfway through the time-frame given to reach the MDGs, four pressing issues affect youth development in the Arab region and the degree of progress towards the MDGs: regional political instability, violence, and conflicts; education and employment; political, social, and cultural participation; and health and environment.

Instability and Conflicts

In the Arab countries, youth activities, including their engagement in progress towards the MDGs, are constrained by the adversity of armed conflict and violence in the region. Conflicts impose enormous hardship, and countries involved in conflict and violence suffer everyday from the loss of human lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure. Post-conflict countries confront huge demands for economic and social reconstruction and require external assistance from international organizations and other countries. The destruction and instability brought about by conflict undermines the ability of any country to meet the MDGs.

During the 1990s, up to one quarter of countries around the world were affected by civil wars, with the Middle East having the most conflicts of any region. These conflicts have severe impacts on vulnerable groups, and

particularly on women, children, and youth, the adverse effects of which persist well after the conflicts end. Five countries in the region are ridden by armed conflict and internal civil tensions: Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Somalia, and Sudan. Grave and multiple human rights violations - including the killing of tens of thousands of civilian men, women, and children - have been reported since the war in Iraq began in March 2003. Similarly, increasing numbers of Palestinians were killed unlawfully and homes destroyed by the Israeli army in occupied Palestine, while internal conflicts also added to the number of casualties. The latest Israeli incursion on Lebanon in July 2006 as well as the ongoing conflicts in Somalia and the Darfur region in Sudan exacerbate the extent of human loss.

Education and Employment

Over the last few decades, literacy and school enrolments have risen markedly throughout the Arab region. The region is slowly advancing towards achieving full literacy among the young adults aged 15-24. Young women literacy rates are also currently quite high and, on average, most Arab countries are very near to achieving gender equality in youth literacy rates. Primary education is nearly universal in most countries and the gender gap in primary and secondary enrolment has disappeared in many countries.

Despite these improvements, the educational systems of the region are not producing graduates equipped with the range and quality of skills demanded by a

modern, productive, market-based, and internationally competitive economy. The majority of children are brought up in neo-patriarchal home and school environments, which, combined with traditional rote teaching methods in education, stifle creativity and problem-solving aptitudes, and discourage free and independent thinking. Secondary and tertiary enrolment rates in the Arab region remain lower than in Latin America and East Asia. Low returns to higher education coupled with uncertain labour market outcomes are the main factors underlying the low enrolment in universities across the Arab world. University graduates who can no longer be absorbed in the already overloaded public sectors are not retooling with the skills necessary to compete in the international market.

The economic performance of the Arab countries during the last two decades has been far from satisfactory. GDP growth did not exceed 2% and 3% during 1980-1989 and 1990-1998, respectively – very close to the growth rates of the population. While several of these countries witnessed strong growth since 2003 due to the hike in oil prices, the question of sustainability of this recovery remains paramount. A combination of relatively low levels of savings and investment, together with a bias towards low productivity investment such as in housing and real estate, resulted in a much smaller number of jobs being created than needed to close the unemployment gap.

Thus, the creation of jobs for the young entrants to the workforce at much higher rates than in the past is a crucial requirement for achieving MDGs' employment targets. However, promoting youth employment should not be at the expense of longer term interests of young people such as encouraging qualified students to prematurely dropout from higher education. Educational reform should be designed so as to reconcile short term needs of families, such as securing income, with the broader interests of society in order to optimize its human capital formation. The approach to such reconciliation may rest in measures such as waiving age requirements for admission to higher education and expansion of schemes for financial assistance to students, in addition to society-wide spread of the culture of continuous learning regardless of age.

Political, Social and Cultural Participation

Good governance which respects and facilitates political, social, and cultural participation by civil society is necessary for the achievement of the MDGs. Despite

progress, considerable reforms, and major improvements made in the Arab region, in the direction of reaching good governance, the overall advancement has been slow and uneven. Among the more plausible explanations are the weakness of national states in claiming citizen's allegiance, relative to tribes and families, and in containing rent-seeking and corruption. In addition, the pace of political and economic reform, towards states that serve equally all their citizens rather than dominant factions or interest groups, has been slow.

Within that political, social and cultural context, youth in many Arab countries are perceived as apathetic or disengaged. The social, cultural and institutional setups within which youth are brought up are still short on the democratic values of freedom of thought and expression, and the democratic practices of citizens' participation and representation. The exercise of political rights, especially those requiring freedom of expression and access to information on the part of citizens, and transparency and accountability on the part of the state, are limited. There are lacunae in the institutional setups that provide youth with the modalities and channels to discuss and deliberate answers to their concerns, solutions to their problems, articulation of their expectations and pursuit of their future needs. Regrettably, young people are the ones who suffer most from failure to deal with the challenges their countries are facing. Once these young people reach adulthood, they will most likely join the docile majority functioning at low and ineffective levels of performance.

Exclusion from active participation has serious consequences: rising levels of frustration demoralizes youth and undermines social cohesion, leading to aggravation of social problems such as poverty, crime, violence, and extremism. The marginalization of youth poses a threat to good governance and development, since most of the region's development challenges (poverty, unemployment, health problems, etc.) require the engagement of youth if they are to be effectively met.

Discrimination in economic, social, and political opportunities for participation is more evident with regard to female youth in the Arab world. Young Arab women typically face higher unemployment rates and deeper poverty levels than young men. With varying degrees among countries, pronounced contributing factors to gender inequality of opportunities are adverse social and cultural attitudes and mores such as early marriage, domestic restrictions and abuse, and honour crimes.

Health and the Environment

In the Arab region, health problems of youth include tobacco use, the neglect of sexual health, substance abuse, nutrition-related problems, mental and psychological health issues, and other risk factors. A large number of these health hazards can be prevented by education and guidance. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of information and data on youth health issues in the region – particularly with regard to the mental or psychological health of Arab youth. This is especially critical given the exposure of many young people in the region to conflict and violence. Similarly, data on other health-related issues, such as reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases, and other risks, are lacking. This reveals to a great extent the reluctance most Arab societies have in openly addressing their young persons' health needs.

The risks associated with sexual relationships are heightened by young people's lack of access to information and services related to sexual and reproductive health. Premarital sexual relationships are not accepted in mainstream society, and discussions about sexual and reproductive health issues are considered taboo, largely for fear that they might encourage unmarried youth to have premarital sex. Therefore, deprived of enlightened parental and school guidance, scientific knowledge, and accurate information, sexually active young people are at risk of unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases.

The Arab region remains one relatively least affected by HIV/AIDS. Despite this, women and girls are increasingly affected by the disease and now represent half the total number of people carrying the disease in the Arab region. Additionally, women endure significant inequalities in health status and in access to health education in many Arab countries. For example, early marriage, common in most traditional communities, tends to put women at health risks and limits their opportunities, usually depriving them of basic human rights such as the right to education.

Finally, the health of young people is influenced by the state of the environment. Youth are particularly vulnerable to environmental risks associated with pollution of all types, and with the depletion of health friendly resources such as safe drinking water, biodiversity, and sources of energy. Excessive use of natural resources in the present generation will to the same extent be matched with hardship inflicted on future generations. It is a

basic human right to provide youth with a healthy and sustainable environment where their vital interests in a resources-secure future are diligently safeguarded.

Despite distinct differences between the sub-regions of the Arab World, the exploitation of natural resources, expanding populations and urban growth are the major driving forces across all of them. With population growth rates close to 3% (but declining), unemployment rates rising above 20% and urbanization rates in excess of 60%, demographic pressures will continue to constitute a core development problem and to be a major challenge to the environment in the future. The security situation in the region, particularly the ongoing situation in Palestine and the recent conflicts in Iraq and Lebanon, also has implications for the environment.

The region's environment is predominantly dryland, with great variability in rainfall within and between seasons and frequent spells of drought, making water the most precious resource. Poor resource management over several decades has resulted in widespread land and marine degradation. Population growth and changes in consumption patterns have made urbanization and waste management major environmental issues.

With the unprecedented number of young people in the Arab countries, the period of youth has become an increasingly important stage for policy attention. The success of today's young people depends on their upbringing in an open and free society and a growing and equitable economy. Combined, such a background would provide them with the education, skills, and work opportunities that enable them to achieve their full potential. Investing in the quality of youth upbringing and promoting their engagement and participation in the political, social and economic developmental efforts will improve the quality of their livelihood now and will also yield handsome dividends for future generations.

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"We Arab kings and presidents, call for youth empowerment and active participation in the society by contributing in the economic, social, cultural and political development." The Arab Kings and Presidents Decree in Khartoum Summit 2006 concerning Arab youth empowerment.

"We (the United Nations General Assembly) recognise that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs." United Nations Millennium Declaration, General Assembly Resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000, paragraph two.

"We strongly support fair globalization and resolve to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our relevant national and international policies as well as our national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies, as part of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals." Operative paragraph 47 of the Outcome of the World Summit, A/RES/60/1 dated 16 September 2005.