

NHDR Write-Up: VDA Practitioner Course on Human Development

The Rise of Women in the Arab World 2005

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The human development report for Arab region represents an example of regional reports that tackles human development issues/ challenges on different series of publications. The reports provide the Arab region with a needed neutral (away from religious or political sensitivities) forum for initiating dialogues and advance the human development agenda from within the region.

In the first Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) released in 2002 identified challenges in Arab region these were addressed in subsequent reports:

- Lack / insufficient freedom /2003.
- Lack / inadequate knowledge /2004.
- Gender inequality/2005.

The rise of women in the Arab world was written by an independent group of Arab scholars, policy makers and practitioners. It focuses on the history and the power dynamic for economic, political, and social e affecting women in the region. The report provides details on different human development aspects that affect gender and how gender can impacts HD.

The report comes as a strong advocate for women empowerment and gender equality in Arab region; whereby male predominance is evident in all aspects of the life. While the report focuses on gender challenges and propose solution it doesn't provide intra- regional in depth analysis for causes of discrepancies in the gender indicators for among the Arab countries.

In spite of the fact that the report was well perceived by the regional media; it was never owned by the countries. As a regional initiative it could have build a stronger ownership through the Arab union that coordinate the region response for HD obstacles. This would have enhanced the implementation of the recommendation and probably create windows for inter-regional knowledge/learning exchange.

Since the report calls for adoption of time-bound affirmative action, tailored to the specificities of each Arab society, in order to expand the participation of women in all fields of HD. Along with the fact that gender/ women empowerment issues are quite sensitive in the Arab region a neutral platform for discussion and strong regional ownership are prerequisites for success.. HDR was able to provide the neutral and free platform successfully; however the HDR needed to move from an independent entity/party process to a regional/ country ownership for stronger commitment, wider audiences and monitoring of the time bound action. Of course independent entity will

give unbiased results about gender issues in the region but with the absence of good governance system in which HD is the main agenda no much change is expected.

In order to improve gender situation in the region there is a need for a governance system that monitor commitment to HD and implementation of HDR recommendation. This is quite possible provided that the governance system in the region or the countries is able to identify the added value of gender equity and women partnership for sustainable HD. There is also a need for policy change in advocacy from comparing countries data to setting role models whereby one country in the region has made success and benefited from the fruits of equitable HD can set example for other countries.