



Human Development Report: Five Arab countries among top leaders in long-term development gains

2010 UNDP Report shows 40-year progress driven by dramatic increase in life expectancy and reduction in child deaths

United Nations, 4 November 2010— The 20th anniversary edition of the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Report*, launched today in a ceremony with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UNDP Administrator Helen Clark, spotlights the countries that have made the greatest progress in recent decades as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), with five Arab nations placing among the world's "Top 10 Movers."



The 2010 Report, titled *The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development*, examines gains over 40 years in health, education and income, as measured by the HDI, for the 135 countries for which complete, accurate and comparable data are available. The countries include more than 90 percent of the world's population.

40-year trends

The analysis identifying top movers relative to the starting point in 1970 ranks Oman first out of 135, followed by Saudi Arabia (5th), Tunisia (7th), Algeria (9th) and Morocco (10th).

"This progress is not attributable to oil and gas earnings, as might be assumed," said Jeni Klugman, the lead author of the *Human Development Report*. "The high-achieving Arab countries can attribute their success largely to impressive long-term improvements in health and education, the non-income dimensions of the HDI."

Life expectancy in the Arab countries generally increased from 51 years in 1970 to almost 70 today, the greatest gain of any region in the world, while infant mortality rates plummeted from 98 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1970 to 38 in 2008, below the current world average of 44 per 1,000.

School enrolment in the Arab states nearly doubled over the past four decades, rising from 34 percent in 1970 to 64 percent today. The average years of education for the current adult population of the Arab countries is now estimated at 5.7 years; less than the world average of 7.4 years, but significantly above the levels of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, with 4.5 and 4.6 years, respectively.

Only two Arab countries—Lebanon and Djibouti—performed below their expectations given their 1970 starting points. In the case of Lebanon, this was a consequence of

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prolonged armed conflict and political instability, a central factor hampering human development throughout the region in recent decades, from Iraq and the occupied Palestinian territory to Yemen, Somalia and Sudan.

“The Report’s 40-year trend analysis must be contextualized in the Arab region, given the adverse effects of military conflicts on human development, which should not be underestimated,” stressed UN Assistant Secretary-General Amat Al-Alim Al-Soswa, director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States. “The Report shows that on average, the Arab region has suffered almost three times as much as any other region in the world in terms of years of conflict; over an 18-year period—from 1990 to 2008.”

2010 HDI update

The 2010 *Human Development Report* introduces three new indices that capture inequality, gender gaps and extreme multidimensional poverty, as well as a strengthened 2010 HDI.

The 2010 HDI illustrates the wide range of development in the region. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) ranked highest among the Arab states—number 32 in the world, in the top or ‘very high’ human development category—while Sudan, in the ‘low’ category, was 154th among the 169 countries included in the Index. This year’s HDI should not be compared to the HDI that appeared in previous editions of the *Human Development Report* due to the use of different indicators and calculations. (Iraq, Lebanon, Oman, Somalia and the occupied Palestinian territory are not included in the 2010 HDI rankings due to a lack of current, verifiable and comparable data in one or more of the HDI’s three dimensions.)

The Report measures the effect of inequality on human development, taking into account disparities in health, education and income. The Arab countries suffer a large HDI loss of 28 percent because of substantial inequality in the three areas; only sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia had greater losses due to inequality in general. The Arab countries collectively had the highest overall loss of any region in the education dimension: 43 percent, compared to the average of 28 percent for the 139 countries assessed on the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index.

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“The most significant losses for Arab countries in the Inequality-adjusted HDI can be traced to the unequal distribution of education,” Jeni Klugman noted.

The Report’s Gender Inequality Index—which captures gender gaps in reproductive health, empowerment and workforce participation in 138 countries—notes that losses from gender inequality in the Arab states average 70 percent, compared to the worldwide average of 56 percent. Only 32 percent of women in the region over the age of 25 have completed secondary education, compared to 45 percent for men, for example. University enrolment however, shows the reverse pattern, with 132 women for every 100 men.

With a reduction of 85 percent, Yemen suffered the largest overall HDI loss from gender inequality in the world; Qatar is the farthest from gender equality among countries in the ‘high’ human development category.

Women’s representation in Arab parliaments has been rising, from 18 percent in 1980 to 27 percent in 2008. There are still some restrictions in the region on women’s voting rights, the Report notes. Elsewhere in the political sphere, the Report takes note of recent reforms in the region—representative assemblies in the

UAE, Oman and Qatar, and multi-candidate presidential elections in Egypt—but contends much more remains to be done in the areas of civil liberties and democratic governance.

The Report's new Multidimensional Poverty Index—which identifies serious overlapping deprivations in health, education and living standards in 104 countries—shows that the Arab region has an estimated 39 million multidimensionally poor people. This is far more than the 6.8 million people estimated to be living on less than \$1.25 per day in the region, but still much lower rates than in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia. The incidence of multidimensional poverty in the region ranges from below one percent in the UAE to a stunning 81 percent in Somalia.

Note to Editors: The *Human Development Report* includes the following countries in its regional calculations for the Arab states: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, occupied Palestinian territory, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The Comoros Islands and Mauritania, though also members of the League of Arab States, are in the Report's sub-Saharan Africa grouping.

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For more information on the 20th anniversary *Human Development Report* and the complete press kit please visit: <http://hdr.undp.org/>

ABOUT THIS REPORT: Since its inception in 1990, the *Human Development Report* has provided fresh insights into some of the most pressing challenges facing humanity. The *Human Development Report* is an independent yearly publication of the United Nations Development Programme. Jeni Klugman is the lead author of the 2010 Report, which is translated into more than a dozen languages and launched in more than 100 countries annually. The Report is published in English by Palgrave Macmillan. Complete texts of the 2010 Report and all previous Reports since 1990 are available for free downloading in major UN languages on the Report website: <http://hdr.undp.org/>

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