

7th Arab Women Development Report 2019

Gender equality in the **2030** Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Role of Civil Society and the Media



Gender equality in the
2030 Agenda
for Sustainable Development

The Role of Civil Society and the Media

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List of participants to the paper delivery Call (approved)

Full name	Country	Paper thesis
Amal ATHIMNI	Tunisia	The Fifth Background Paper: the 2030 Agenda and Gender "Integrated Local Intervention"
Malek SGHIRI	Tunisia	The new movements that played a key role in the Arab Spring
Aomar IBOURK	Morocco	Role of Civil Society and Media in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Analysis of the dynamics of associative movement in the field of literacy in Morocco: Issues, challenges and prospects.
Yusry MUSTAPHA	Egypt	The 2030 Agenda and Gender The cultural dimension
Rashid LBOUCHOUARI	Morocco	Request for sustainable development and the debate on development discourse and culture in Morocco: The situation of rural women in the national strategy for sustainable development 2016 - 2030.
Dorra HARARR	Tunisia	Sustainable development: the case of the village of Douiret, Assets, handicaps and prospects
Youssef EL GUAMRI	Morocco	Management of water resources and a gender approach in rural areas.
Azza DARBALI	Tunisia	Compare the paths of Tunisian civil society organizations from different categories
Mina HOUJIB	Morocco	Sex for Work through a Moroccan journalist's file pursuing the trafficking charges in human beings How did the Moroccan press deal with the event?
Alaa ABO DAYA	Palestine	The enrolment of Palestinian refugee's woman in university education and her role in development process in the Gaza Strip - case study

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Foreword and thanks

The document in your hands is a translated version of the seventh Arab Women Development Report on «Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The Role of Civil Society and Media» aimed at non-Arab readers.

It was prepared thanks to the concerted efforts of three institutions: the United Nations Development Program, the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research, «CAWTAR», and the Gulf Program Arab Development.

This is not to mention the efforts of Arab female and male researchers who contributed to its preparation and members of the CAWTAR Arab Network for Gender and Development «@NGED» who enriched it with field initiatives.

Both the report and translation seek to highlight a renewed approach from the perspective of the Arab region itself to the region's problems and development challenges, not just a reproduction of the international discourse in its consideration, while adhering to human rights trends and the concept of modern development and the 2030 agenda.

The report is also an Arab knowledge contribution to the development system and to approaching gender equality issues at the global and regional levels alike.

The report first sought to understand the interconnections between the Arab and international context in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

It secondly worked to examine the foundations and means for achieving equality in general and gender equality in particular through it.

Thirdly, the report looked at new-old roles that civil society and the media can play in implementing the development agendas and in addressing attempts to roll back on women's rights and equality between them and men.

It is not possible to talk about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to reproduce its goals, objectives and implementation and follow it up in the Arab region without stopping at the historic turning-point that occurred in the region since 2011 and which was called «the Arab Spring⁽¹⁾ and changed the face and perception of the region.»

The effects of this pivotal moment are continuing in the second wave of The Arab Spring as of 2018 given what is happening in Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon, and Iraq⁽²⁾.

These changes have also brought about counter-reactions and interventions that have driven a number of countries to violence and war, as in Syria, Yemen, Libya... etc.

1. Began in Tunisia with December 17, 2010/January 14, 2011 protests and called the Arab Spring that we use here in its neutral sense
2. In 2019, the two countries witnessed a change in the existing regimes, and protests are still continuing to establish a just and democratic system



The Arab region has not been able to test the effects of its new-old challenges nor those emerging as a result of wars, until it found itself facing the test of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Agenda has added requirements that are objectively difficult to achieve in a region whose countries without exclusion experience the repercussions of wars and transitional stages imposed by political events on them. This is not to mention the impact of the coronavirus pandemic that affected everyone and which repercussions for Arab women are expected to be double.

In the issue of gender equality in particular which is the area of concern for CAWTAR as it is an Arab center that focuses on women's issues and conditions, the «new» situation in the Arab region in the post-2010 constitutes a specific and restrictive framework (or driving) for the development process in the Arab countries. It equally sets objective limits for achievement and progress.

How can equality - stipulated in all Arab constitutions - that forms the core of at least two of the sustainable development goals in the Agenda (5 and 10) and intersects intimately with the rest of the seventeen goals, can be implemented amid wars, armed conflicts, and fighting between multiple parties to a conflict internally and externally ? How can the gender approach be effectively integrated into the rest of the goals in the service of inclusive development «that excludes no one»?

While we just referred to some data, we realize the extent to which it is difficult to talk about the implementation of the 2030 agenda, which appears, at least on the surface, to be inconsistent with the conditions of the Arab region with regard to the five major areas targeted by the 2030 agenda, namely the people, the planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships, which are extremely important areas for the Arab region.

We are used to adding the knowledge-cultural field to it, which poses a great challenge to our countries and peoples, especially when it comes to women's human rights and gender equality.

The report in its English version was made possible thanks to a partnership that brought together «CAWTAR» and the United Nations Development Program - a member of the Board of Trustees of «CAWTAR» since its establishment in 1993, which thankfully translated it into English so that it provides the world with knowledge emanating from the Arab region and with Arab competencies adding to the international scientific background in this area.

Dr. Sakina Bouraoui
Executive Director of CAWTAR

Summary

Overview of the Report's Content and Recommendations

Contents:

- Methodological Introduction
- **Chapter One:** Development Challenges in the Arab Region
- **Chapter Two:** The 2030 Agenda from the Perspective of Gender Equality
- **Chapter Three:** The Impact of War and Conflict on the Status of Women
- **Chapter Four:** Civil Society After the Arab Spring: New Questions
- **Chapter Five:** Local Development: Field Experiences
- **Chapter Six:** The Role of Culture and Media in Transforming Our World

Executive Summary:

1. This report begins with a methodological introduction which presents the relationship of the report to the 2030 Agenda. It also clarifies the conceptual framework adopted in the 2030 agenda towards development, which consists of the five dimensions of sustainable human development corresponding to the five principal 'Areas' contained within the agenda. This framework stresses the importance of taking the reality of our societies and countries as the starting point for the process of considering, analysing and adapting the global agenda. From its outset, this report illustrates that understanding the approach to development, societal transformation and the 2030 Agenda from the perspective of gender equality and the empowerment of women is essential for the success of the entire development process.
2. The first chapter deals with the main challenges to development in the region, in line with the commitment of this report to prioritise the reality of our societies. In light of this, a thorough review of these challenges has been conducted, and it is clear from this that several of them fall into the following two categories:
 - The first category consists of structural and chronic challenges (including political and economic/social issues related to the trends of globalisation) and the challenges of poverty and inequality. The importance of the latter issue has been extensively highlighted by recent studies, which have identified the Arab Region as one of the most 'unequal' areas in the world. Particular attention was given to demographic challenges, especially those related to youth and the elderly, alongside population movements from a development perspective.
 - The second category is concerned with emerging challenges (some of which are also structural) with a focus on the level of societal disintegration that has resulted from war and conflict, the paths of transformation after 2010, and future prospects related to resolving current conflicts and moving towards reconstruction. This chapter emphasises the organic connection between aspects of development and the principles that govern development work, such as the link between the empowerment of women and people with disabilities, and political reform. Another example is the relationship between poverty, inequality and economic policies. The English language version of this chapter also contains some discussion of the COVID-19 pandemic, analysing its impacts on development both in theory and practice.



3. The second chapter is devoted to gender equality, the 2030 Agenda and its approach to development. The first section of this chapter deals with gender equality and women's empowerment in terms of specific indicators of equality, and from the perspective of 'dynamics.' It is noteworthy that there are some indications of progress in the field, even dynamic change in some countries. Unfortunately, though, the dominant tone is stagnation. Progress is slow, if not retrograde. This chapter includes a detailed presentation of the 2030 Agenda's approach to the issue of gender equality, and the link between SDG5 (gender equality), SDG10 (equality in general) and the remaining goals. The chapter also deals specifically with the targets and indicators of SDG 5. This chapter contends that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (SDG5) plays an important part in the 2030 Agenda, and is of exceptional importance in the Arab Region and its societies in terms of living conditions and the integration of a gender-equality-centred approach into the understanding of all the SDGs. Following debates in politics, the media, and even in constitutional and legal arenas, it has become clear that the main points of contention in this area revolve around the political-cultural dimension of the issue, and questions such as equality between men and women, the limits of women's freedom, their role in society, and issues related to legislation.
4. The third chapter broaches the reality of wars and conflicts in the Arab region, and their impact on women and development. The conditions found in countries facing extreme violence, and examples of their situation and its impact on society are presented, from Palestine to Iraq, Syria and Yemen. This section also includes an extensive case study of the political participation of women in Gaza. It analyses the network of reasons that limit participation, starting with occupation and ending with political division and the patriarchal culture. Gaza, despite its uniqueness, is a model for these interconnected factors, common to all Arab societies – especially those which are facing war and general internal conflict. This chapter makes clear that the interdependence between peace, security and development is a central issue in the 2030 Agenda. In this, it is distinct from previous development agendas. Although this understanding was always present in development thought, in the human rights system, and in global development agendas approved by the global summits of the 1990s and the Millennium Development Goals, it did not translate into specific goals or objectives at the time. This chapter also demonstrates that viewing women as victims of all forms of violence in war and conflict is not enough, the discussion here highlights the role of women in efforts to end conflict and bring peace to multiple countries.
5. The fourth chapter deals with civil society after the Arab Spring. The discussion begins with an analysis of the nature of the popular mobilisation of 2011, and the role of old and new civil society organisations within it. This leads onto some questions concerning the new roles that have emerged within civil society that were not prioritized in previous eras. Examples are taken from the new movements in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. The chapter presents a 'modelling' of new forms of movement that express:
 - a. The development of civil society that has taken place through the coexistence and interaction between traditional forms of civil society organisations and new movements.
 - b. The emergence of new movements and their transformative role.
 - c. The response of some organisations, including traditional ones and trade unions, to new tasks.

6. The fifth chapter deals with field experiments in local development, based primarily around a discussion of the experiences that contributed substantially to it. It also touches upon the way that the COVID-19 pandemic may change how we view decentralisation, resilience and its absence. Additionally, it includes examples of the role of women in managing natural resources at local level, with particular emphasis on water management, land ownership, rural development, and the relationships between, and respective roles of, women and men within a patriarchal community. This discussion concludes that local development cannot be considered a simplified version of development in general, nor bound to the 2030 Agenda in a way that imposes its theoretical model upon the work of local people and agents.
7. The sixth chapter concerns culture and the media as mechanisms capable of transforming the world and its societies in accordance with the 2030 Agenda. This rests on the renewed challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda to culture, media in general, and local media in particular, since it is a transformative agenda, although it has not given enough significance to culture and media. The relative complexity of the 2030 Agenda makes it difficult to condense its content, issues, discussions, and position on transformation and cultural change into an accessible form for the general public. A genuine effort is required to simplify the content without changing or removing its meaning. According to the findings of this chapter, the ambiguous nature of the concepts within the 2030 Agenda means that it is only ever selectively addressed by media professionals. Discussions related to the SDGs tend to focus on a limited number of topics without reference to the relationship between them and the SDGs.

Report Summary:

In the context of the processes, analysis and data contained within this report, the following are the main conclusions drawn.

General Conclusions:

1. The 2030 Agenda is a universal framework for development policies, valid for any country who wants to use it. However, its efficacy and success largely depend on critical understanding of the agenda, adhering to its principles of integrity, correlation and complementarity, and adopting a coherent approach to achieving development, in a form which is inclusive of everyone and committed to human rights. Successful use of the agenda also requires applying it in a way that is appropriate to the state, sector and area concerned, making sure that the approach is compatible with the reality of development within that country. This reality should be reflected in intelligent and creative ways that avoid imitation, cloning and formal promotion of the agenda, and focus instead on its content, whatever that may be. Efforts must be made to bridge the gap between the agenda itself and the concrete reality that is reflected in policies and in people's daily lives.
2. The issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women is a pillar of the 2030 Agenda and an essential precondition for the success of the entire development process. This is especially true in Arab countries and societies, given the effect of the political system and the patriarchal nature of the structures of power. These topics are vital to the 2030 Agenda, since the success or failure of the global agenda and its national manifestations largely depends on the extent of progress achieved in bridging the gender gap and curbing unequal dynamics that continue to reproduce, persist and expand.
3. The organic connection that exists between development and human rights is both necessary and essential. It plays a critical role in consolidating the gender approach to understanding and implementing the 2030 Agenda. This approach involves integrating the gender-equality dimension into all the SDGs and targets.



It must be done critically and with respect to the distinct realities of the different countries and societies and their priorities. The next step in implementing this approach is the selection of gender-sensitive indicators that can monitor the gender gap and its causes. Such indicators go beyond the (necessary) task of disaggregating data by sex, they also require a special effort from statistical agencies, policy-makers, policy-bodies and experts in gender equality and women's empowerment to identify appropriate formulations for the targets and the indicators to measure whether enough progress has been made.

4. The work strategies of civil society, especially trade unions and developmental, human rights and feminist organisations, must start from the top. Any genuine, sustainable progress cannot be achieved by infiltration, but rather requires the development of a multi-dimensional work strategy (from global to local) incorporating all dimensions of sustainable human development (economic, social, environmental, political and knowledge/cultural), while covering immediate, intermediate and long-term realities at the same time.

Conclusions related to civil society:

1. The development of systems of governance, alongside democratic and institutional reform in the Arab region is dependent on the active, established and continuous participation of civil society, with women's and feminist organisations at its core.

Governments must respond to these national needs on the basis of respect for civil society. This entails neither subordination to government, nor hostility towards it. The participation of civil society adds no value if it does not offer a distinct viewpoint from that of the government and the private sector. It is in the interest of national governments, within their domestic, regional and sub-regional frameworks, to develop spaces and structures for institutionalised interaction with civil society organisations at every level, in a way that does not weaken but enhances their commitment to implementation of the sustainable development plan.

2. The events of 2011 and beyond have promoted civil society and its organisations, including women's and feminist associations, into new, unexpected roles. This has occurred in light of widespread popular mobilisation in the street, the descent into violence and armed conflict in more than one country, and the rise of extremism and terrorism that is the antithesis of civil society, its principles and methods. This new role sometimes takes on a national, political, character (as in the case of the Tunisian Quartet), which raises concerns about the civil-political relationship in these contexts, the balance between the division of labour in various spheres, and the neglect or delay of the demand for equality between the sexes, alongside demands that effect a specific group as part of a societal whole. It is essential for civil society to provide answers to these problems and ensure that they do not slip into partisan action or abandon the national tasks that are objectively posed by the situation. It is assumed that these issues will be at the forefront of the agenda of civil society organisations in the time ahead.
3. This conclusion is concerned with the methods that need to be employed by civil society organisations, at all levels, in order to play a more effective role in dialogue with governments and at regional level. In light of the emphasis of the 2030 Agenda regarding the close relationship between all dimensions of the development process, civil society organisations must abide by these four practical imperatives:
 - a. Building a healthy and interactive relationship with new movements, so as to strike a good balance between the spontaneous and the institutionalised natures of the civic movement.
 - b. Developing and consolidating the relationship with trade union movements and interacting between the contents and principles of work in the two fields.

- c. Building good relationships with donors and international organisations that prioritise domestic agendas, independence and mutual accountability.
- d. Abolishing insular patterns of work within the five main categories of CSOs: development organisations, human rights organisations, environmental organisations, women's organisations and trade unions. This will involve a transition from a formal, superficial relationship to a genuine and deep interconnectedness that unifies the directions and strategies necessary to achieve development goals which, as has been mentioned, are profoundly inter-related.

Conclusions related to the knowledge/cultural dimension of development and the media:

1. This report considers the media and the knowledge/cultural dimension to be transformative tools, means of ensuring that human rights and development culture become widespread convictions and behaviours among all people. Putting these tools to work for this purpose will require: shifting programs, interventions and plans so as to duly recognise the knowledge/cultural dimension, building effective partnerships with the media and media professionals and crystalizing communication plans, using all available means and technologies to formulate and circulate information on equality and human rights. This will include addressing any cultural grounds for discrimination against women, which is a transformative priority for society.

Challenges

This report finds that the Arab region today faces several challenges that it must address if it is to move forward in achieving the 2030 Agenda:

1. The three most important issues impeding development in Arab countries are: war, the weakness or absence of democracy and patriarchal culture. Civil society must take these interconnected challenges into account when developing strategies. Wars, conflicts, extremism and terrorism constitute a pretext for a withdrawal from human rights, gender equality, democracy and the requirements of good governance, especially in terms of participation, both that of women and civil society. Moreover, these issues in turn contribute to the formation of an extreme and exclusionary culture that revives past discriminatory ideas against women (and other social groups), and reduces their role, especially in leadership. This deprives society, the state and the development process of their vital contribution to the advancement of society and the state.
2. The facts, analysis of development processes in Arab countries, and the conflicts that they have borne over the last three decades, have illustrated the very strong correlation between the growing risk of descent into war, violence and extremism, and attitudes towards women and their rights. Discrimination against women, the violation of their rights, the growth of violence towards them and the social and cultural acceptance of this, are among the early signs of conflict, war and extremism. Addressing discrimination and violence against women and resisting its cultural and social foundations is tantamount to immunising society against threats of war and extremism. It is also plays a vital role in ensuring the effectiveness and safety of the proposed political solutions and reconstruction plans.



3. The third challenge is the slow, confused and unstable progress towards achieving gender equality, the resulting dynamics of regression and discrimination, and the discriminatory ideas that are present in political, institutional and cultural tools, with few exceptions.
4. The next challenge is the emergence of acute polarization in discourse, thought and practice between different social groups and stratum. Previously, the general tendency was towards the progression of a large and central social group within society, which gradually moved towards a system of values, concepts and practices that reduced discrimination against women and an inferior view of them, accompanied by the spread of education and expansion of participation in the work force, urbanisation, and the spread of the values of equality and openness to all cultures etc. In spite of this, the current situation is characterised by a large degree of polarisation as the central political ground recedes. There is an ever-increasing disparity between groups that adopt clearly discriminatory positions supported by a system of values, concepts and institutions of a strongly conservative character, often based on religious interpretation, and those on the other end of the spectrum who take their views to the radical extreme in posing the issue of equality and rights in direct opposition to conservative trends.
5. Another challenge concerns tackling the issue of the equality and empowerment of women and their status after the Arab spring. These dimensions are intrinsically linked to political and societal transformation, whether in a negative or positive direction. On the one hand, the exclusion of women from the public sphere has been used to impede democratic transformation, through physical violence on the streets or through ideologies, and by harnessing the media and the means of producing and disseminating values so as to impede the democratic process. On the other hand, the issue of gender equality and women's rights has become a prominent issue in constitutional, legal and cultural reform, and a significant concern in civil society in general, including among human rights, women's and feminist organisations.

Practical and Procedural Recommendations

1. Translate the gender-based recommendations of civil society organisations from the Beirut preparatory meeting for the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development in 2018 (which addressed the cultural pillars of discrimination against women) into a joint strategy and action plan for women's and feminist organisations, and a platform for regional and national civil society networks in various areas.
2. Create a working group from diverse civil society networks in order to critically study the SDGs and targets from the perspective of gender equality, diversity and inclusion. This will involve coordination with statistical agencies and research centres so as to adapt goals that are regional or national and decide upon appropriate indicators which take note of both the gender aspect of development and pay special attention to the integration of people with disabilities and all social groups.
3. Establish a platform of regional dialogue among Arab networks, in order to foster an exchange of shared knowledge on how civil society organisations should respond to the requirements of this time and its numerous strategic challenges. This work will include breaking down the barriers between different kinds of organisations, in order to form a whole that includes trade union, women's, environmental, human rights, and development organisations. Additionally, this will foster relationships between civil society and governments, the Arab League, donors and international organisations. The necessary research will also investigate emerging problems, especially those related to: politics, the problems of a balance between spontaneity and formality within an organisation, working in conditions of war and among dominant extremist ideologies, the correlation between general and specialised demands, and the transition from campaigns to social movements and popular movements etc.

4. Coordinate efforts to launch a joint initiative with the Arab League, based on the 2004 Tunis Summit, which called for a greater role for the private sector and civil society in the work of the League, as part of its Arab Civil Society Contract, and the aim to build a coordinated path forward in the context of the 2030 Agenda. This relationship with the Arab League will also be important for advancing the role of women, women's organisations and people with disabilities within the mechanisms and work of the League.
5. Conduct practical research into advancing the work of the regional platform of the 2030 Agenda, whilst also developing a multi-level work strategy to keep up with its follow-up mechanisms (especially preparing national reports for the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, and the World Political Forum). This strategy includes a role for civil society, which will involve the use of independent mechanisms to prepare parallel reports raising issues from a civil society perspective, to complement the image presented by official reports.

Does the spread of COVID-19 change anything?

The preparation of the English translation of this report in 2020 coincided with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the world, including the Arab region. Impact of this have been observed in more than one area. The spread of the pandemic has revealed the great fragility of health systems and the prevalent models and paradigms of development (growth, progress etc.) This should lead to a renewed willingness, from all developmental parties, to be open to radically modifying their approaches, options and policies on many levels. The pandemic has also posed a serious challenge to the entire pattern of civilisation. We should be prepared to seriously examine society in order to overcome the structural, moral and value imbalances that have been exposed. In the end, the pandemic itself will draw to a close. Humanity will defeat it, and a vaccine will be discovered. However, the distortions it has exposed within society will take longer to heal and will be more difficult to overcome.

Methodological Introduction

Development Challenges in Arab Countries

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is now receiving unprecedented attention from governments, international organisations, civil society organisations, the private sector and academic institutions. This kind of reception was not enjoyed by its predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals, which represented a limited program of global priorities for developing countries between the year 2000 and 2015. Wider engagement with the SDGs is, of course, a positive thing. It brings with it, though, a risk of straying from a firm, critical understanding of the agenda and the serious work necessary to achieve it, veering instead towards a focus on promotion that is entirely bound up with slogans and prescriptions. This may involve, for example, preparing reports directed to the United Nations and donor countries, using only superficial matching between the agenda and national policies in order to obtain funding. This report pays special attention to the topics of development, societal transformation and the 2030 Agenda from the perspective of gender equality and the empowerment of women, a critical criterion for the real success of the entire development process. Furthermore, it considers the active participation of civil society an essential indicator for assessing the strength of democracy and participation within a society, particularly within the Arab region.



1. Context

The path to development in different countries did not begin in 2015 with the 2030 Agenda, nor in 2000 with the Millennium Development Goals. Development is made up of social, political, cultural and environmental transformations that every society (and the whole world) pursues, the policies and interventions that come with it, an aim to achieve the well-being of citizens, a constant pursuit of justice within and between generations and the continued sustainability of the planet, society and life. This purposeful path, governed by the ideas of well-being, justice and sustainability, became widely known as ‘development’, in the 1950s and 60s in the wake of the Second World War. Later, it became known as ‘sustainable human development’, a neutral (non-partisan) concept that was formulated before the birth of the United Nations system. It is an idea adopted today by most international and national parties and accepted in academic circles. This report, too, adopts the concept/paradigm, using it to represent the broader framework in which the 2030 Agenda exists.

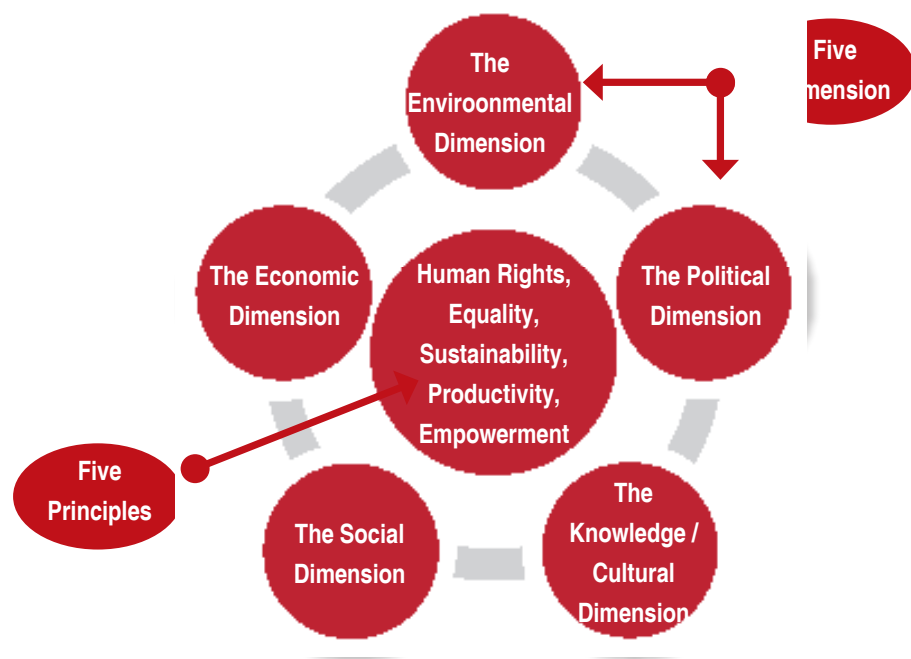
The series of global summits held in the 1990s sought to transform the general concept of sustainable human development into plans of action for each area. This culminated, in the year 2000, with agreement upon a specific list of priorities that were formulated from the perspective of developing (or least developed) countries. This was the Millennium Declaration, from which emerged the Millennium Development Goals (2001). In evaluating this experience, a transition has been made to the 2030 Agenda, which is distinguished from its predecessor in that it is an ambitious development agenda, relevant to all countries of the world, formulated through an analysis of global development challenges and the ways they can be overcome. The 2030 Agenda adopts a human-rights-based approach and seeks to achieve development in a way that leaves no one behind. Like its predecessors, this new agenda gives special importance to gender equality, as the gender gap is one of the most widespread, dangerous and significant inequalities in the world.

2. On Sustainable Human Development and the 2030 Agenda

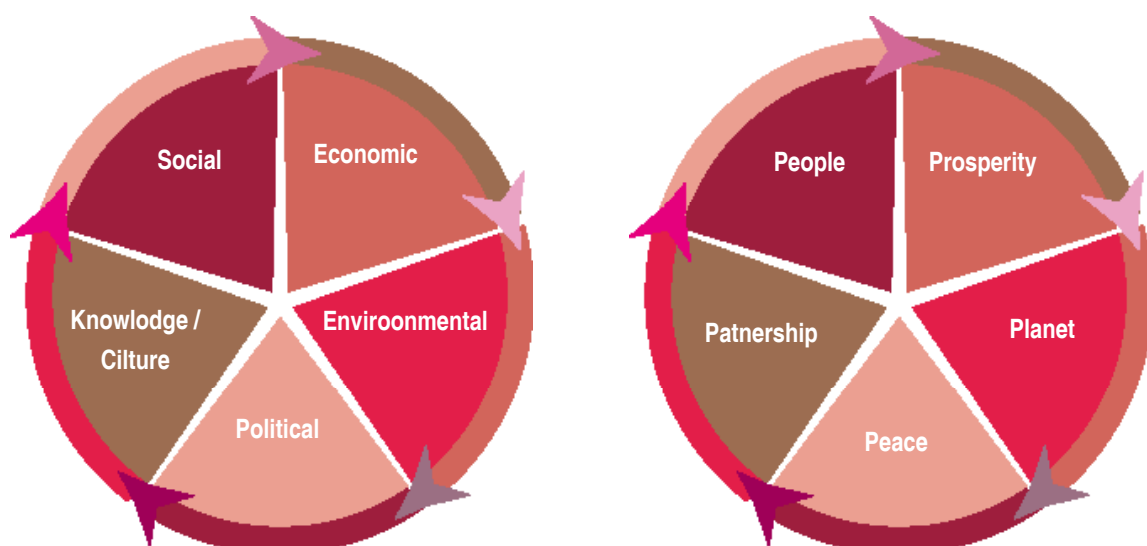
The concept of sustainable human development constitutes a theoretical and normative framework for approaching the 2030 Agenda in its entirety, and for understanding the interdependence between the goals and targets. It provides agents of development with a logical framework for making choices and adopting development policies which do not neglect any relevant dimension. This kind of approach is essential when dealing with the agenda, especially when adapting it to national circumstances. Without this, coherence and complementarity are transformed into technicalities and fractured parts, which is not the optimal approach to achieving the SDGs, especially the strategic ones.

Furthermore, sustainable human development consists of five dimensions, which correspond with the five areas stipulated in the Preamble and content of the 2030 Agenda. Previous work by civil society organisations in the Arab region (including CAWTAR, the Arab NGO Network for Development, and United Nations organisations like the UNDP and ESCWA), have contributed to advancing this concept and attributing sufficient importance to the political and cultural dimensions of development, which are often neglected in relevant literature. This neglect can, for example, take the form of an overly simplistic formulation of the concept of sustainable human development, which limits and divides it into just three dimensions: economic, social and environmental.

Graphique 1: An Improved Conceptual Framework for Development in Five Dimensions



Graphique 2: A Comparison of the Areas of the 2030 Agenda and the dimensions of sustainable human development.





Conversely, the 2030 Agenda stresses that it itself is an indivisible unit, consisting of a preamble, declaration, action plan (17 SDGs), and means of implementation, follow-up and review. In other words, the agenda cannot be reduced to the goals of sustainable development. It must be dealt with as a unit, with special consideration given to the preamble and the declaration, which form its ruling logic and the thread that connects all the goals and objectives.

3. An Agenda to Meet the Challenges of the Present and the Future

The 2030 Agenda was developed to confront the shortcomings of past and present agendas, in order to successfully and efficiently combat the major global crises facing the world. The agenda summarises these challenges as follows: wars and conflicts, poverty and inequality, and environmental degradation that threatens life on the planet, including climate change. The global agenda has been set in order to confront these problems, thus conserving both people and the planet, and achieving prosperity, security, peace and good governance for all. This can only be realised through a true partnership between all parties at the global, national and local levels. Any approach which does not revolve around human-rights, the principles that come with this, and a commitment to the equality of all people (and genders) will also fail to successfully achieve the agenda.

Transforming the global agenda into national and local action plans (or regional where necessary), requires adapting and reproducing it in a way that adequately responds to regional and national challenges. It must be ensured that global problems (such as climate change), and issues in the immediate surrounding environment (the wars taking place in the Arab region, for example) are addressed. This will involve tackling specific issues that may have been overlooked in the global agenda (for example, migration and asylum). In summary, the 2030 Agenda, when adapted nationally to suit the Arab countries, should address the particular circumstances that these countries face individually and collectively, ensuring that the problems of the region and the country concerned are fully addressed. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are among the most important issues faced by Arab countries and societies. Due to ingrained patriarchal and masculine values within the systems, politics, cultural discourse and social relations of the region, it is considered one of the most regressive parts of the world in terms of gender parity and the elimination of violence against women. These issues will be explored further throughout this report.

The 2030 Agenda seeks to transform our world so that we might attain a version of development that does not exclude anyone, and achieves prosperity and peace for all without depleting natural resources or threatening the planet. It is this broader vision, not the details, that will truly constitute its success. Consequently, aligning national plans with the 2030 Agenda should not be a process of integrating objectives and indicators into national plans in a purely technical and rigid way. Rather, success in this endeavour will depend upon consistency and commitment to the core principles behind the agenda.

The nature of the agenda as transformational is its most important feature, meaning that the questions to be asked when designing national (or even global) plans and policies are: Is this development plan transformative? i.e. Does it address the root of the problem and not just its results? Will it generate productive dynamics of progress? Does this plan or policy reflect a human-rights perspective, comprising justice, equality and non-discrimination? Does it take into account the requirements of inclusion and integration of poor and marginalised groups, and the requirements of gender equality?

4. The Key Issues of the 2030 Agenda

Determining the main characteristics of the global development agenda is one way to gain a better understanding of its most important criteria. These ideas will aid the transition from theory to practice, through the process of national adaptation.

In this context, we can summarise the main characteristics of the 2030 Agenda, which should be implemented (along with other elements) in national and local agendas and planning:

1. It is a transformative agenda: it addresses causes and dynamics, not simply results.
2. It adopts a human-rights-based approach to development
3. It is inclusive of all people
4. It is a sustainable agenda
5. It has procedural rules/principles that regulate its implementation in practice. These are:
 - a. Integrity
 - b. Coherence
 - c. Correlation
 - d. Complementarity
 - e. Effectiveness

The emphasis of this report on the methodological aspect of understanding the 2030 Agenda stems from experience of the previous Millennium Development Goals, and the years that have elapsed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. The fragmented and divided approach to development and the agenda that has been observed is one of the factors that led to failure to achieve the development goals as expected and to the best possible level.

5. Moving from a Binary Perspective to a Tripartite Perspective

In terms of global development thought, the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women is considered a pivotal issue and a definite priority, as has been demonstrated in all international (and regional) contexts. This report adopts a tripartite approach to the issue of gender equality, that is: understanding women's empowerment firstly as an issue in its own right, secondly as an issue deeply connected to all the other dimensions and development plans, and thirdly as an issue that represents the limits and criteria for evaluating the development process as a whole.

To reiterate, this report proposes to consider each dimension of development to be, at once, a stand-alone issue with its own goals, plans and policies, an issue that must be integrated into all the other dimensions in order to achieve the development principles of integrity, coherence and complementarity, and, finally, an issue that represents an outcome of development, and is therefore a marker of capacity, and a criterion for evaluating its success. For example, it cannot be assumed that the SDGs have been achieved if environmental degradation continues, regardless of the achievements made in other areas. In the same way, the goals will not have been reached if poverty still exists, if inequality rises, if gender equality remains unachieved, if the status of women in society remains inferior for any reason, in any field.

It is clear that the status of women is both a marker of development, and a criterion for its success.



6. Starting from an Awareness of Reality

The ideal starting point for drawing up national development plans (and regional agendas) is an awareness of the problems and challenges that are being faced, how they can be resolved and overcome, and the means available to make this happen.

In light of this, this report rejects a promotional approach to the 2030 Agenda, and instead seeks to benefit from it as much as possible as a tool for analysis and planning which centres around gender equality and human rights in both national and local settings. This report seeks to strike a positive balance between: the reality faced by Arab societies and countries at the heart of contemporary globalisation, using the 2030 Agenda as an analytical framework to reproduced according to circumstances and, finally, enriching all of this with experiences and case studies from multiple countries and sectors, giving the report a realistic and practical element.



Chapter I

Development Challenges in Arab Countries

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Development Challenges in Arab Countries⁽³⁾

Foreword

When we consider the development path of the modern world, there is no need to elaborate on the well-known fact that regional, national and global conditions are all dependent on one another. This report will pay greater attention to the deep-seated connection between developmental issues and the principles governing developmental work. We will present an analysis based on the current situation in Arab countries and societies, concentrating on the distinction between challenges that existed before 2010/2011, the events that unfolded after this date, and anticipated future scenarios.

The unprecedented popular mobilisation of 2010 and 2011, generally referred to as ‘the Arab Spring’ - a title used here in its neutral sense – represented a milestone and a turning point in the development of Arab countries. The subsequent wave of violence, war, conflict, dissolution and extremism that has persisted into the present, also constitutes an extraordinary, entirely unprecedented situation. It has had a particularly grave impact on culture and civilization in the region. For this reason, it would be a serious mistake to attempt to examine the reality of development, its paths and prospects in Arab countries, while ignoring these issues. This would depart entirely from the real issue: societal development, which is the essence of all development.

1. Old-new challenges

Recent developments in the Arab region have not obscured the reality that preceded 2011, nor the ensuing problems, although these vary significantly and may have diverged over time. The major challenges are structural in character, and have their roots in globalization, its policies, mechanisms, impact on the region and its peoples, and the interaction of all of these with governments and institutions. Structural challenges can also arise from chronic political, economic, social and demographic problems, or certain characteristics of Arab societies, including patriarchal relations and machismo culture. All of these remain critical factors in determining the nature of our current problems, the dynamics of development in our societies, and the resulting future prospects.

3. See: The Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States, E/ESCWA/29/11, a paper submitted to the ESCWA 29th Ministerial Session, 13-15 December 2016. See also the major challenges facing Arab countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a paper submitted to the civil society organizations meeting on 22 - 23 April 2018 as a contribution to the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD). The second paper is based on the first, with additions and amendments. The ESCWA paper was mainly based on previous studies, most notably regional reports on progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals released by the United Nations and the League of Arab States, including ESCWA's Millennium Development Goal Report 2011, the first Arab Human Development Report released by the UNDP in 2002 and subsequent reports, the Arab Development Challenges Report (UNDP 2011), ESCWA's Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030 (2015/2016), the Arab Sustainable Development Report (2015), and ESCWA's Technical Paper.1 produced by The Economic Development and Integration Division (EDID) (2016). All of these reports included an analysis of the development conditions in the Arab countries, as well as a presentation of specific challenges that have national and regional significance. The civil society paper based its additions and amendments on a series of documents issued in regional meetings and workshops organized by civil society networks in the Arab countries, namely three workshops held in Beirut and one held at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo between 2014 and 2017.



1.1 The paths of globalization and its impact

During the first decade of the twenty-first century the paths of political, economic and social globalization followed a clear downward trajectory. The September 2001 terrorist attacks were a turning point and consolidated a shift that had begun to develop earlier, especially in the period following the collapse of the bipolar system in the early 1990s.

a. Regarding political and cultural paths: since the September 2001 attacks, the global climate has been defined by a shift in world order from a focus on peace and development, to security, militarization and counter-terrorism. This is one reason behind the failure to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including MDG8⁽⁴⁾. This adverse, not to say hostile, climate persists at various levels. The philosophy of global governance continues to move towards militarization and security, at the expense of human-rights-focused and developmental perspectives. The Arab countries are in the eye of the storm. They bear the brunt of this shift, ranking first in the world in terms of the proliferation of wars, conflicts, occupation and all the consequences of this. Military spending is increasing at every level. The arms trade has become the main driver of policies and the foremost fuel of warfare. Global military spending reached \$ 1.7 trillion in 2017, with 5 Arab countries ranking among the top ten countries importing arms, namely Saudi Arabia (second globally), Egypt (third), United Arab Emirates (fourth), Algeria (seventh), and Iraq (eighth)⁽⁵⁾.

Recently, counter-terrorism has been a prominent global priority. Linked to this issue are questions of international migration and asylum. This is especially true from the perspective of the European Union (the neighbour and first partner of a number of Arab countries) with most of their domestic and foreign policies centring around this issue. This has led to the imposition of new, stricter migration policies on citizens of countries of the southern Mediterranean. It has also contributed to the rise of the far right in Europe, as in other regions of the world. It is crucial to note that the shifting political and economic attitudes of some major powers are clearly reflected in their increasing withdrawal from the work of the United Nations, seen in their ever-increasing reservations and prevarications. This is bluntly and clearly manifested in hostile attitudes towards the Paris Agreement, and a refusal to meaningfully commit to rationalizing production, consumption and the utilization of natural resources, and controlling them in accordance with the principles of sustainability. This places environmental and sustainability considerations in a critical, highly dangerous situation.

b. In regard to the economic path, since the 1990s globalization has been characterized by a series of economic and financial crises, each hitting one country after another. The most important of these was the triple crisis of 2007-2008: the food and fuel price crises and the major economic-financial crisis in 2008 (the most serious since the Great Depression (1929-1939)) the impact of which is still felt today. Against this background, there is a failure to achieve MDG 8 (to further develop an open, predictable, rule-based, non-discriminatory trading and economic system, to deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries). Globally, the space for national policies (especially economic ones) continues to shrink, in blatant contradiction of the right to development (one of the pillars of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development). Furthermore,

4. Reports drawn up by the United Nations and other international organizations tend to focus on what they consider successes achieved during the Millennium Development Goals period, providing data and indicators of progress achieved with regard to the individual goals, in particular the reducing the poverty rate by half, progress in relation to the goal of education, as well as some health indicators. On the other hand, these reports recognize success varied greatly by region and by country, and it acknowledges, in general, the failure of the MDGs to achieve goals in sub-Saharan Africa. It also acknowledges that the goal of reducing maternal mortality by the established rate was not achieved, nor were the environmental goals, as there was a clear and persistent failure in relation to the Kyoto agreements and the Copenhagen climate summit. Even now, there is a crisis in the decisions of the Paris Summit with the withdrawal of the United States (and other countries such as Brazil) from Paris Agreement. No real progress was achieved with regard to MDG 8, neither in terms of reforming the global trading system, nor addressing the debt problem of developing countries, nor the commitment of developed countries to allocate 0.7% of their national product to development aid. Therefore, a number of researchers, as well as civil society organisations involved in the path of the Millennium Goals and the 2030 Agenda, tend to hold a bleak view of the outcomes, considering that the successes to be partial.

5. Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2017. SIPRI Fact Sheet March 2018. <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2019/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-international-arms-transfers-2018>

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) continue to pressure developing countries to adhere to the same economic trends that prevailed before the 2008 crisis. These trends are at least partially responsible for the crisis, the decline in economic growth, and the social and political explosion that ensued in the Arab world. This crisis also led to a shift in the financing of development (this being closely linked to the political path discussed above), which has affected the conditions of developing countries. Furthermore, the emergence of protectionist policies, particularly in the United States, as well as in Britain (Brexit), represents a retreat from the most important characteristics of neoliberal globalization. We can see this especially in trade liberalization, and the emergence of trade wars between major allies, and with emerging powers (China).

c. The coronavirus COVID 19 pandemic that spread tragically from China early in 2020 and has since then invaded almost every country in the world, has a profound significance from the perspective of the global economic system and from the perspective of development itself. The economic impacts of this pandemic are enormous in quantitative terms (at the time of preparing the translation of this report, estimates at an acceptable degree of accuracy had not yet been issued for these losses), but what is more important is what it has revealed in terms of qualitative distortions in the global economic system, and in the allocation of resources. During the recent decades of globalization, the global economy asserted a model of growth characterized by the concentration of wealth and the detachment of wealth accumulation from the real economy, in which stock exchanges and financial markets dominated and overshadowed everything else. As for the resources, they were allocated to profitable investments, the largest share of which went to giant transnational corporations, especially in the telecommunications and information technology sectors. All the while, vital social sectors were being neglected, especially the health sector. Consequently, it transpired that health systems the world over were not prepared to deal with such a pandemic, despite considerable technological progress. This constitutes a renewed and profound condemnation of the economic model and the current globalization pattern.

These trends have direct and indirect implications for individual Arab states and the region as a whole. The shift towards the globalization of militarisation, security, and the war on terror, has increased the economic importance of the military and security sectors at global and domestic levels. The Arab region is at the heart of these influences, both in terms of military spending, and the wars that have led to a large-scale destruction of material, i.e. capital accumulated in countries that have experienced wars and conflicts, as well as in neighbouring countries or those participating in these conflicts in various ways. On the other hand, oil-rich Arab states who enjoyed a financial surplus became, in light of the triple crisis of 2007-8, the safety valve of the globalized economy. Consequently, these countries paid a heavy price when oil prices fell, causing financial imbalances in their financial reserves and sovereign funds. This necessitated a reduction in spending and the adoption of various tax and austerity measures. Oil revenues in the Arab countries declined from about 816 billion dollars in 2013 to 447 billion dollars in 2018. This included the revenues of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which fell from 627 billion dollars to 336 billion dollars. The decrease in oil prices also resulted in a significant decline in the total value of Arab exports, which amounted to about 115 billion dollars in 2015-2016. Foreign currency reserves declined as a result of the outflow of funds by about 124 billion dollars, 80 billion of which came from Saudi Arabia, and 30 billion from Algeria⁽⁶⁾.

6. Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region 2016-2017. ESCWA.

<https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/survey-economic-social-development-arab-region-2016-2017-arabic.pdf>

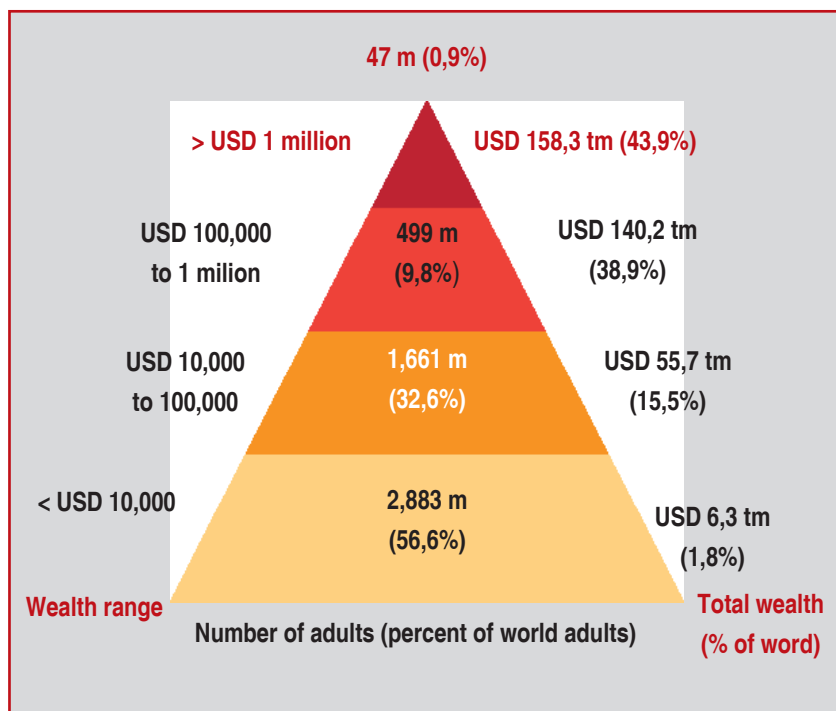
7. Global Wealth Report 2019. Credit Suisse. <https://www.credit-suisse.com/media/assets/corporate/docs/about-us/research/publications/global-wealth-report-2019-en.pdf>



1.2 Poverty and inequality

According to researchers, experts and a great many development agents, the correlation between poverty and inequality is undeniable. This concern is a given in global agendas, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The latter includes a special goal (SDG) concerned with reducing inequality (alongside the goal on ending poverty) as inequality is a common phenomenon that exists in all developed and developing countries. The World Wealth Report⁽⁷⁾ annually documents the phenomenon of wealth concentration and its characteristics, it has revealed that less than 1% of adults (0.9%) in the world own about 44% of global wealth, while about 57% of the least wealthy own less than 2% (1.8%) of global wealth. This trend towards deepening inequality and polarization is an organic component of the globalization pattern that has prevailed since the 1980s, an analysis embraced in the 2030 Agenda⁽⁸⁾.

Graphique 3: Global wealth databook 20019



Source: James davies, Rodrigo Liuberas and anthony Shorrocks,

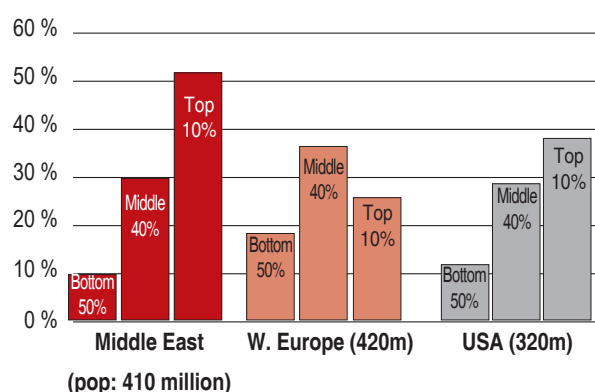
As for the Arab countries, what must be addressed is the shift that has occurred in the narrative on poverty and inequality in the Arab region. This was based on the dual assumption that the poverty rate in the Arab region is low compared to other areas, and that it is one of the best regions in terms of equity in income distribution. This narrative, which was popularized in recent years in international and regional reports, is today under serious review, using new research methods and measurements of poverty. These measurements have revealed significantly higher poverty rates than those reported previously. The narrative about inequality has been reversed, with recent studies indicating that the Arab region is the most unequal region in the world. The reason for this is that the share of the top 10% of incomes amounts to more than 60% of national income, and the top 1% of income amounts to 25% of national income, while the lowest 50% amounts to less than 10% only⁽⁹⁾.

8. Paragraph 14 of the 2030 Agenda states, «There are rising inequalities within and among countries. There are enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power. Gender inequality remains a key challenge.» Also see a report on poverty, inequality and politics, entitled Combating Poverty and Inequality: Structural Change, Social Policy and Politics. UNRISD Geneva, 2010.
9. Measuring Inequality in the Middle East 1990-2016: The World's Most Unequal Region?».FacundoAlvaredo, Lydia Assouad, Thomas Piketty. We draw the reader's attention to the fact that some reports measure inequalities in wealth while others measure income inequality. Inequalities in wealth are more severe than income inequality.

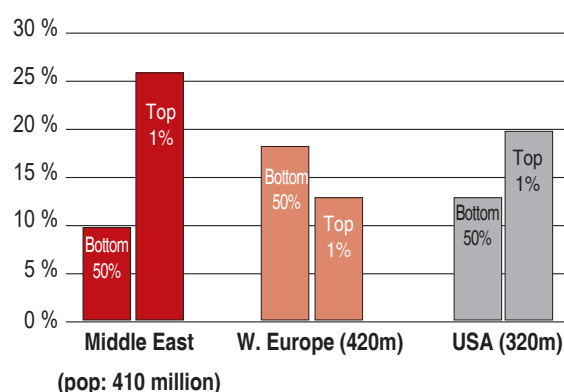
This new narrative is consistent with analysts and activists' view that inequality and poverty are among the most important reasons behind the popular mobilisations labelled the Arab Spring. These issues remain at the heart of the protests that have broken out sporadically in most Arab countries⁽¹⁰⁾. In the context of current globalization, some of the main characteristics of the economic and social conditions in Arab countries are: the reality of inequality, widespread poverty and marginalization, a lack of social protection and high levels of unemployment, especially among youth and women, and the limited decent work opportunities associated with the expansion of informal economic activity. These are crucial issues to bear in mind when determining the development policies required in the region.

It should also be noted that women's empowerment is a core priority here, as women are deeply affected by the failure or absence of social protection systems. They may also be subject to discrimination within the framework of the current systems, especially when they combine the requirements of paid work in the labour market with taking sole responsibility for domestic and household work. Moreover, women account for a significant proportion of workers in the informal sector, where wages are low and protection and healthy working conditions are lacking. Informal labour constitutes about 50% of the total labour force in Arab countries (except in Algeria and Tunisia), with a greater contribution of women. The proportion of female workers in the informal sector is 49% in Algeria, 83% in Morocco, 87% in Mauritania, 59% in Egypt, 77% in Sudan, and 52% in Iraq, however in Tunisia it is 30% (and therefore lower than men's). These proportions increase outside the government and agricultural sectors⁽¹¹⁾.

Graphique 4a: Bottom 50% Middle 40% vs 10% income shares



Graphique 4b: Bottom 50% vs 1% income shares



Source: Piketty et al. 2017

Measuring poverty is complex the world over but is extremely confusing in the Arab region in particular. This is due to problems in measuring income/monetary poverty according to the World Bank methodology. The current trend, which aims at transitioning to a multi-dimensional measurement of poverty, is still experimental and under examination. Add to this, the statistical and political problems that surround the measurement of poverty in all Arab countries, alongside the desire of governments to adopt criteria and measures that reduce the appearance of poverty in their countries. In this regard, the international poverty line set at \$ 1.9 per day is unfit in most Arab countries. In general, it is possible to distinguish between three different groups of Arab countries: those with a low to moderate poverty rate that is less than 20% according to close national and regional standards

10. For example: the protests in Sudan in January 2019 following the removal of subsidies on bread and the deteriorating living conditions, the general strike in Tunisia called by the Tunisian General Labor Union on January 17 due to the deteriorating economic and social conditions, Jordan's demonstrations that led to a change of government in October 2018 in protest against increasing taxes, and sporadic protests in other Arab countries, from Morocco to Egypt and Lebanon.

11. Samir Aita, Arab Watch Report. Arab NGO Network for Development, Beirut 2017.



(including GCC countries), those middle income/development countries with a percentage ranging between 20% and 40%, and the least developed countries, suffering from the impact of crises and wars, with over 40%-50% of the population affected by poverty. Such estimates remain discretionary but do reflect reality according to what can be deduced from overall national, regional and global assessments⁽¹²⁾.

1.3 Conditions of the youth and elderly

Often, issues concerning different population groups do not receive adequate attention. At other times, attention is restricted to developing short-term remedies, which will meet immediate needs in terms of providing services to the relevant groups, without giving due attention to the structural dimensions and long-term impact of age composition, population distribution, migration, displacement, and population movements. These issues play a decisive role in shaping Arab societies at present, determining development priorities and shaping the future. Therefore, taking them into account is one of the requirements of sustainable development, and should underlie today's response to the requirements of societies in the region. We must draw particular attention to two categories: the youth and the elderly (women's issues are dealt with in detail throughout the report), along with other points related to population distribution and movements.

a. The youth and children

The various groups of youth and children represent more than half of the population in Arab societies, with this varying slightly from one country to another. The Arab Human Development Report 2016⁽¹³⁾ sums up the situation as follows: «...while young people between the ages of fifteen and 29 make up nearly a third of the region's population, another third are below the age of fifteen.» (the proposed age for the youth age group) The 2018 Statistical Update released by the UNDP states that the median age in Arab countries is 24.3 years⁽¹⁴⁾ i.e. half of the population is under this age (about 25 years). This means that the 15-24 age group (another 'youth' category) represents more than 20% of the population. It is not enough to describe this demographic as the 'future generation' or 'shapers of the future', they are also the present generation, and shapers of the present.

Unfortunately, most strategies that deal with young people are fragmented, treat their issues in isolation, and use only conventional methods. The problem is restricted to either: education, unemployment, or irregular migration (regular migration that focuses on competencies does not receive the same attention), and sometimes participation in public life etc. From the perspective of the youth, however, all of these issues are indivisible. Furthermore, it must be noted that young people are not a homogenous group, neither in terms of the conditions they face, their interests, their social characteristics, nor even in terms of their age.

The youth are a reflection of society as a whole. This means that any attempt to address the problems of young people must attempt to achieve social, cultural and economic transformation. Strategies to achieve this must be forward-looking and strive to tackle the problems and common bottlenecks that youth issues reveal at all levels. Unemployment and labour market problems are often related to demand for work generated by a rentier economic model that repels competencies, resists renewal, and leads to an expansion of indecent work conditions and informal economic activities.

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12. The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2018. UNDP, OPHI, Oxford, QEH, 2018.
Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle - Frequently Asked Questions II. World Bank, 2018.
The Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report. ESCWA, the League of Arab States, UNICEF, OPHI, 2017.
Human Poverty in the Arab Countries: a comparative study of the standard of living in seven Arab countries (Algeria, Djibouti, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen). League of Arab States, UNDP, Arab Program for Family Health, 2009.
 13. The Arab Human Development Report 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality. UNDP, The Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS), 2016.
 14. Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update. UNDP, New York, 2018.

The lack of youth participation in the so-called transitional path, electoral processes and institution-building, should not be viewed as a lack of awareness among young people, rather, in all likelihood this is caused by the inadequate institutional mechanisms themselves, a lack of confidence in decision-makers, and the failure to respond to the demands of the youth. Transforming into a culture of rights and equality will require making the new culture, its tools, and its advanced and critical content, one that promotes social and cultural transformation to overcome discrimination against women, youth marginalization, as well as the culture of extremism and the glorification of power and violence, which does not foster creativity, innovation, science, critical thinking and so forth. This is what youth agendas are supposed to be: a reflection of a larger agenda of societal change, and one of its main tools. In this, young people are removed from the dominant patriarchal pattern of society and become an effective force in the transformation process.

The youth and children demographic is the group most closely associated with the prospects for the future development of the region's societies. They are also the group most affected by the paths of social and technological developments, i.e. the behavioural changes, the new value system, and the new forms of recruitment and participation in public life. that will result from development.

These developments do not always occur in a systematic, balanced and planned sequence. Rather, they are more often determined by the technological developments themselves and the motives of profit and gain, which are not always in line with the progress of society as a whole, nor the value and legal control of this massive expansion in the use of communication technologies in particular, and their repercussions.

The parties involved are trying to redress the imbalance by regulating this field retroactively, always falling behind the technological developments occurring at a very rapid pace. Young people are the largest and. most responsive consumer group of these services, goods and technology.

b. The elderly

Concern for the young people does not mean neglecting other groups such as the elderly, who are only increasing in importance, both in terms of the present and the future. This group (60 years and above), which represented about 6.7% of the population in the Arab countries in 2015, is expected to reach 9.5% in 2030, and 15.1% in 2050⁽¹⁵⁾. The needs of this group are almost always neglected, as the proportion of those covered by pension plans and health and social protection systems (often beyond the age of 64 or 65) is about 36% of retired people in the Arab countries, compared to a global average of 71%⁽¹⁶⁾. If we combine this reality with the developments affecting the family in Arab societies, and its ability to meet the needs and aspirations of its members, it is anticipated that the difficulties of life will increase for this population group unless appropriate public and specific policies are developed. Studies have shown that the reproductive ability still occupies an important place in the lives of women, who are always required to identify with the typical image of fertility. As they grow older and lose their reproductive role, physical violence turns into further psychological, symbolic and verbal violence during menopause. This is one of the most prominent ways of maintaining «the low status of women» and disrespecting them.

15. Population and Development Report Issue No. 8: Prospects of Ageing with Dignity in the Arab Region. ESCWA, 2018.

16. Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update. UNDP, New York, 2018.



Here again, we see that this is not solely a matter of welfare policies, although these are very important. Rather, this issue involves the adaptation of society, cities and villages to meet the needs of the elderly. This must be done in addition to adapting the system of social relations and values, which will include enabling this population group to be self-reliant and live with greater independence. Furthermore, we must work to utilize the elderly's considerable experience, expertise and knowledge for the good of the development process. Their ability to contribute does not diminish after they exceed the working age. Life, vitality, ability and rights continue beyond this.

For women, the issue of gender equality is also linked with the general progress of society, including the transformation of culture and values, and the transcendence of patriarchal, 'macho' culture. In light of this, the status of women in society becomes a basic criterion for assessing progress towards development, and a new civilization/culture. Gender equality is not a subsidiary matter or category-based issue, nor can it be limited to one dimension without the others.

If we consider, for instance, the situation of the elderly from a gender equality perspective, we will discover that the gender gap in this age group is larger than that of any younger age group. The following characteristics are identified⁽¹⁷⁾:

- The proportion of elderly women is higher than that of men, as the gender ratio is 92 men for every hundred women.
- The proportion of widowed women is many times that of men. The study conducted in Egypt indicates that the proportion of widowed men (above 60 years) is 12%, while the proportion of widowed women is 60%.
- A higher proportion of women live alone compared to men. According to the statistics available in Lebanon, Egypt and Oman, the highest proportion of elderly men living alone, 7%, is in Oman and Lebanon, while the corresponding proportion for women is 40% in Oman and 18% in Lebanon.
- Regarding education levels, the illiteracy rate among elderly women was 74% in the Arab region in 2015, compared to 44.5% for men. This gap is set to persist in the coming years, despite the overall decrease in illiteracy which has resulted from the expansion of education in Arab countries. By 2030, it is expected to fall to 25% among elderly men and 50% among elderly women.

The situation of the elderly is an example of how gender gaps often require integrated solutions, starting with providing an effective pension system and social and health protection, down to bridging educational gaps, and pursuing appropriate policies, including those pertaining to family relationships, social behaviours and the prevailing culture. This applies to all other areas of social life

c. Population Movement

It must be noted that the rapid expansion and growth of cities (rarely studied) as well as the expansion of suburbs and slums, represent major issues in the Arab region, where urban dwellers constitute around 59% of the total population. While it is true that cities reflect the intensification of economic, environmental, social and cultural development challenges in general (including those that relate to technology), at the same time they represent the intersection of most of society's capacities and capabilities, and the place in which a country's future path crystalizes.

17. The data presented here is derived from the ESCWA Population and Development Report Issue No. 8: Prospects of Ageing with Dignity in the Arab Region. ESCWA, 2018.

Therefore, balance between cities and rural, surrounding areas occupies a fundamental place in development agendas, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and regional and national development plans.

The issues of internal population mobility, whether voluntary, or forced (i.e. displacement, which is of particular importance), as well as emigration and refugee situations caused by wars and conflicts, represent a crucial factor in the present and future of Arab countries. The Arab region is one of the areas of the world that is receiving, exporting and transferring the most migrants. These migrants comprise all groups and nationalities, and have emigrated for a wide range of environmental, economic, political and security reasons. This is an important factor in domestic politics as well as in foreign relations, a reality that is set to persist in the coming years. It is impossible to conceive of development plans for any Arab country that do not address these issues, either in terms of the contribution of immigrants to the economy of the host countries, or in terms of the pressures and problems generated by migration to some countries, especially the massive migrations that occur in short periods of time. All these issues have become part of our contemporary world and must form essential components of development plans.

Migration figures and their indicators demonstrate profound problems in Arab societies and their prevailing policies. About a quarter of the population in Arab countries have expressed their desire to emigrate, the main reason being the pursuit of better living conditions (74%), then security and political reasons (19%) and pursuing one's studies (4%)⁽¹⁸⁾.

Conversely, between 1990 and 2015, the number of people migrating to Arab countries increased from about 15 million to 35 million, i.e. by 150%. The Arab region also hosts around 12% of all migrant workers in the world. Migration involves both sexes. The number of female migrants in the Arab region doubled from 5.6 million in 1990





to 11.6 million in 2015. Although they now make up 33% of the total number of migrants, we must bear in mind that the figure reached 39% in 1990. This means that the migration of men has increased at rates higher than that ⁽¹⁹⁾ of women. Overall, insufficient attention is paid to changes in the social roles of men and women, the relationship between generations, and the family relations that result from migration. A critical aspect of these issues is the clear effect they have on the status of women and their roles in society and the economy.

2. Emerging challenges

We focus below on three points of current interest, all related to anticipated developments in the near future.

2.1 The level of disintegration caused by wars and extremism

Over the last few decades, countries in the Arab region have faced occupation, war and conflict. This has had a profound and negative impact on the development path, and its current and future agendas. We pause here on a specific aspect related to the deep, structural damage caused to society and institutions by the breadth and intensity of recent wars and conflicts, which have led to a cultural/civilizational decline that will take decades to overcome.

The spread of war to a large number of Arab countries, the vast number of people involved in and affected by conflict, and extremist and violent ideologies, have launched or reinforced a path of national, social, institutional and value disintegration. This reality has also revived discriminatory ideas against women in extreme and violent ways, especially in countries that have experienced full-scale and devastating wars (Syria, Yemen, Libya, and also Iraq in preceding years). At the present time, the idea of the nation state and belonging to it is waning in favour of identifying with various tribal, ethnic, political or religious-sectarian groups. The notion of the rule of law (positive law in particular) has receded, replaced by the authority of power and ideology (religious, nationalistic and so forth). Loyalty to a common homeland has also weakened in the midst of proposals to reconsider national borders. In all this, the boundaries between the right to respect ethnic and cultural specificities, and independence of private entities are often blurred, meaning that such entities are unlikely to survive.

2.2 Transformation paths after 2011

Nearly a decade on from the Arab Spring, the so-called transitional or democratization phase that is in process may reveal important weaknesses and shortcomings at more than one level. Women's rights and gender equality have become a major focus of discussions during this phase, sometimes resulting in intense confrontation. Youth participation, in particular, is lower than expected. The new election systems and plans for constitutional reform were confused, and failed in more than one area, which sometimes resulted in their outright overturn.

The political process is moving slowly. Even in areas where inclusive, and relatively long-term national dialogues took place (such as in Yemen), this did not prevent conflict from turning into war, as is the case in other countries (such as Syria and Libya).

18. The Arab Opinion Index 2017/2018. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Doha, 2018.

19. The 2017 Situation Report on International Migration: Migration in the Arab Region and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ESCWA, International Organization for Migration. 2018.

Furthermore, the economic and social agendas of the new authorities did not create any significant change. They neither addressed domestic problems, nor dealt with external parties. The pre-2011 policies have been, for the most part, upheld. As such, the inequality, unemployment, expansion of poverty, and foreign dependency that these policies produce is likely to continue. This paved the way for the new wave of social protests that have erupted in more than one Arab country (e.g. Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, among others, in 2019).

These events have made clear that it is necessary to reject 'ready-made' prescriptions and strive to devise solutions and formulas that are based on the demands of broad segments of the population. This will be achieved through development agendas that involve political and legislative reform, whilst simultaneously seeking the reform of economic and social policies, to align with the perspective of justice and equality. This will also involve a cultural transformation: a movement towards the values of solidarity, tolerance and human rights, which goes beyond limited scrutiny of priorities which constantly postpones action on gender equality.

2.3 Future prospects towards the cessation of conflicts and reconstruction

In the context of the two previous paragraphs, some of the scenarios we expect to face at the next stage are as follows:

- Prioritizing the cessation of existing conflicts in the region, especially in Syria, Yemen and Libya, and giving Iraq an opportunity to overcome the impact of the war with ISIS. With regard to Palestine, pressure to enforce the so-called «Deal of the Century» continues. The cessation of war is always positive, and this is especially true when the war, like the ones we have referred to above, has been completely devastating. Too often, though, 'ending a war' is thought to simply refer to the end of military operations, without any attempt to find sustainable solutions that address the causes of war and conflict. A second problem here is that these wars are often concluded through large scale intervention by foreign powers. Moving forward, this fosters a tendency to promote solutions that guarantee influence for international and regional bodies, at the expense of the people. This approach also forcefully consolidates the role of the military on both sides, yet again at the expense of the people and civil society. In this approach to conflict cessation, any solution arrived at is nothing more than a «truce» that fails to address the root causes of the violence. Consequently, conflicts are likely to eventually reoccur.
- While seeking the cessation of conflicts (without real political solutions), the idea of reconstruction is often put forward. Rather than addressing the conflict, this encourages states, giant transnational corporations, owners of capital and those with local influence - including those controlling the 'war economy' in the relevant countries - to seek profit by participating in the expected reconstruction. Based on experience, both at a global and regional level, this reconstruction process is likely to focus on physical reconstruction, and may turn into an opportunity to award construction contracts to mixed transnational and national companies. This will be done under the guise of partnership between the public and private sectors, in countries characterized by a high level of corruption and neopatrimonialism. Throughout this process, they will neglect the social, cultural and political aspects of reconstruction that ought to be given priority. Physical reconstruction should be a tool for reconciliation, and rebuilding peace and the social fabric - the fear at this stage is that a failure to acknowledge this will result in displacement, population exchanges, expropriation, and reinforced social divisions, the opposite of what true reconstruction should yield.



- A final point that must be made is that all Arab countries (including those that enjoy relative stability and security) will be placed under international pressure on several grounds. Foreign powers exert this pressure by:
 - Observing all restrictions related to financial exchanges and financing for development under counter-terrorism laws, such as the obligation placed on associations to pledge not to obtain funding from certain donors.
 - Imposing regulations on private-public partnerships that favour the private sector and foreign investors,
 - Exerting pressure to adopt trade agreements and investment agreements more appropriate to developed countries. This has become especially common due to the growing trade war between former international allies, and the increasing influence of Russia and China in the region (for instance, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreements (DCFTA) with the European Union that give rise to political controversy and opposition in Tunisia, as well as in Morocco),
 - Pressure related to migration and counter-terrorism policies.

3. Statistics at the service of development: a special kind of challenge

In development literature, the expression «evidence-based policies» is often used to refer to policies designed objectively and without bias. What is really implied by this phrase is knowledge-based policies, since evidence is a means of building knowledge, examining its content and limits, and enhancing its credibility and objectivity. However, from a development perspective, it is not sufficient to formulate policies based on knowledge alone. Rather, knowledge must be coupled with a system of values, and a balance between conflicting interests. Policies must be reasonable and built on a participatory basis, through social dialogue, in order to have the broad social support that makes them achievable and demonstrable.

This interpretation of the idea of 'evidenced-based policies' broadens its meaning to align with its original intent. Yet, this kind of interpretation may sometimes go too far, limiting the meaning of the expression. As a result of this, the interpretation of evidence is limited to statistics, fostering a climate in which figures and statistical data are thought to be the only reliable form of evidence.

The scientific approach in this area acknowledges the great importance of numerical statistical data in our contemporary world, especially with the disappearance of technological obstacles that hindered the widespread use of accurate numerical indicators in planning, monitoring and evaluation. On the other hand, it is necessary to place the statistics within the broader framework of the planning and development process, so that statisticians do not replace policy makers and the various development actors who also fulfil tracking and monitoring tasks using multiple scientific and objective tools. Statistical work has always been, first and foremost, a scientific and technical pursuit, falling within the broader knowledge and policy framework.

3.1 A world that counts

While producing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁽²⁰⁾, the independent expert group, commissioned by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, prepared a report on the «Data Revolution», which includes a specific view of this revolution and the statistical work required to keep up with the new agenda⁽²¹⁾. The report has an interesting title: «A world that counts». There is a dual meaning here, referring both to the counting process itself, and the importance or significance of the world. In light of this, the Arabic translation reads as follows: «A world that counts, a valued world.»

Prevailing trends place more importance on so-called 'Big Data', a phenomenon through which the contagion of dependence on the private sector is allowed to spread to the statistical field, and the boundaries of statistics (a process subject to specific scientific rules) become blurred, moving away from statistics proper into the obtaining of various types of crowdsourced information using modern technology, especially mobiles, the Internet etc. It must be noted that these companies monitor and track the personal activities of individuals, and they sometimes illegally utilise the users' data. The UN report contained a timid reservation regarding the need to respect personal data and privacy. On the other hand, experience and scientific assessment have shown that policy goals are often pre-determined, and data collection is being tailored towards promoting these policies, not the other way around.

3.2 The statistical aspect of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

There are some statistical problems with the design of the 2030 Agenda, the most important of which are:

1. The agenda was approved in 2015 and included a sustainable development plan with 17 goals and 169 targets without specifying any indicators. Designing these was a job left to the Statistical Commission⁽²²⁾.
2. The Statistical Commission made a long list of 244 indicators (232 when the repeated ones are removed), classified them into three categories⁽²³⁾ and requested their disaggregation by gender, age, housing environment, disability and so forth. The first category (made up of 115 indicators) provides clear definitions, and relevant data on most countries is available. The second category (made up of 95 indicators) provides clear definitions but lacks data on a large number of countries. The third category (made up of 19 indicators), involves indicators lacking clear definitions or data, and two multiple classification indicators. This essentially means that the list of indicators for most countries is made up of only 115 indicators.
3. Not all indicators have been phrased in a way that meets the technical requirements of an «indicator» (which must be specific, unambiguous and articulate the subject being measured). The International Council for Science (ISC) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC) published a review of the goals of sustainable development outlined in the 2030 Agenda from a scientific perspective. The report reached the following conclusion: out of the 169 goals, 29% are appropriately worded, 54% are not worded precisely enough, and 17% need to be seriously reviewed⁽²⁴⁾.

20. See a working paper prepared by Adib Nehme (an ESCWA regional advisor at the time): The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Human Development: Indicators and the Statistical Dimension, submitted at the Iraqi Society for Statistical Sciences in Baghdad, December 22, 2016. What is stated here is based on this paper.

21. A World that Counts: Mobilising the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development. IEAG, November 2014.

22. Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, Statistical Commission, ESCWA. Forty-seventh session, March 8-11, 2016, *E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1. The report includes a list of indicators.

23. The disaggregation of the SDG indicators changes with the progression of the work of the assigned Statistical Commission, and the figures received until April 17, 2020. See the link: [sdgs/tier-classification/](https://sdgs.tier-classification/)

24. ICSU, ISSC (2015): Review of the sustainable development goals – The science perspective. Paris: International Council for Science ((CSU).



3.3 Statistical gaps in the Arab countries

As for the Arab region, it is estimated that around 40-45% of SDG indicators will have access to relevant data. A detailed assessment of the available indicators is provided in the main paper submitted by ESCWA to the 29th Ministerial Session held in Doha⁽²⁵⁾. Beyond the indicators of the 2030 Agenda, the lack of data is also serious, a fact that was made clear during our work on this report. It is very difficult to obtain data on several topics from unified, coherent sources, especially at regional and national levels. This applies particularly to data disaggregated by sex, disability, age groups, standard of living, informal labour, migration, or via administrative subdivisions. This is a well-known problem, so all conferences and forums, especially the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD), frequently include recommendations about data provision, particularly that disaggregated by gender and other criteria, or concerned with issues of violence against women etc. Although there are several projects funded to improve statistical capacity, coordination is still poor in this area, and the results are unsatisfactory.

Furthermore, there is a problem related to gender-sensitive statistics, where the lack of data and methodological gaps in designing the process of collecting and investing statistical data acquire greater significance. The 2030 Agenda, as well as global recommendations on statistics, call for adopting the principle of gender-disaggregated data in all statistics where possible (age, place of residence, disability and so forth). Data disaggregated by sex is a necessary step in designing policies that take into account gender and differences in social roles between women and men. This disaggregation is only a first and preliminary step, and the resulting data cannot, on its own, form the basis of women's empowerment policies that strive for gender equality. In practical and statistical terms, there is a difference between gender-disaggregated statistics/data and gender-sensitive statistics/data. It is necessary to design statistics and select indicators that capture the phenomenon of gender mainstreaming and discrimination in social roles and opportunities, and in the conditions of women and men, whether the data or indicator is disaggregated by gender (which is ideal) or not. For instance, measuring economic and development performance through the ratio of GDP growth suffers from a blatant gender bias. It is not simply a matter of detailing the proportion of men and women contributing to GDP or GDP per capita disaggregated by gender (this does not answer the question). The real problem is that the definition of GDP and how it is calculated does not take into account important elements such as environmental loss, nor does it take into account the contribution of the care economy, which consists mainly of domestic and care work done by women. This latter issue in particular causes the size of the GDP to appear lower than it is in reality and inflates the contribution of men while diminishing that of women. If the care economy were included in the calculation of GDP, growth rates would be reflected far more accurately than in the current system. Another example of data which poorly records the contribution of women is illustrated in attempts to measure women's contribution to economic activity and entrepreneurship through the commercial register records. This approach fails to take into account that the majority of business conducted by women is small-scale, informal, and not listed in the commercial register. As such, the commercial register records are not considered a gender sensitive indicator of development. Data that heavily relies on them will fundamentally underestimate the contribution of women to the economy and labour market. It is clear that developing statistical plans and methodologies in order to make them more responsive to gender sensitivities (and to diversity in general) is a critical, if unconventional, task, which goes beyond the simple idea of disaggregating data. These new methods must form a part of national plans to implement development agendas, including monitoring and measurement processes.

25. Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Arab countries.
<https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/1600266.pdf>

Figure: An exploration of the challenges facing development in Arab countries⁽²⁶⁾

Culture and knowledge-based challenges	Good governance challenges	Peace and security challenges	Environmental challenges	Social challenges	Economic challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reforming education • The development of universities and research centers • Strengthening the system of human rights and development values. • Reforming the system of values including religious reform. • Dismantling the cultural foundations of discrimination against women • Developing the education structure, the press, and institutions concerned with culture, media, education, and religious affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post - 2011 political and institutional democratization, including constitutional and legislative changes • Respecting the human rights system and incorporating it into practice and legislation • Building the state and its neutral apparatus based on citizenship, the rule of law, and anti-corruption • Development of regional institutions in keeping with the requirements of good governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Israeli occupation of Palestine, and the Arab-Israeli conflict • All-out wars in more than one country, with their international and regional dimensions • Conflict situations, security tensions, or local instability • Security problems related to extremist and terrorist armed movements • The major problem related to refugees internally displaced and forcibly displaced persons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food security and sustainable agriculture • Water resources management • Sustainable energy • Preserving natural resources and reducing pollution, including in cities • Rationalization of consumption and behavioral transformation towards reducing waste production • Sustainable management of cities and human settlements • Building resilience to disasters, including climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty and inequality • Employment and decent work • Discrimination against women and youth • Social protection for everyone • Social disintegration • Managing population growth • The proportion of youth and the elderly • Migration, displacement and refugee status • Accelerated urban growth and population distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The low rate of economic participation, especially by women • Improving productivity and sustained growth • Economic diversification and technology • Regional economic integration • Active economic participation in the global economy • Shifting from the rentier economy to a productive and inclusive economy • Transcending duality of modern and traditional sectors • Adopting just systems of taxation that reduce inequality sustainably

26. Based on the ESCWA paper and the civil society organizations paper.



Conclusion

The challenges outlined earlier in this chapter are derived from multiple sources, and each one is unique in terms of its nature, time, and impact. In spite of this, these issues cannot be tackled disjointedly: they are interactive components of a whole, and together will constitute a beneficial or harmful environment in which the development process can evolve. They all contribute to shaping the real process of development, and the outcomes it achieves now or in the future. As a result, multilevel complex analysis tools are needed, in order that we might understand the factors influencing the global development path, and its impact at the regional and national levels.

This applies equally to development strategies, which must reflect the same level of complexity if they are to deal appropriately with the dynamics, causes and results of development. They must also take into account the short, medium and long term future, as this is a necessary condition for achieving the overall aim of the human rights system and the concept of sustainable human development. The 2030 Agenda is one formulation of this aim, which seeks to transform our world in order to attain a version of development in which all participate without exception, and in which all enjoy the full benefit of their rights in an atmosphere of freedom, peace and justice.

However, the spread of the COVID 19 pandemic and its progression into a global catastrophe raises questions that go beyond what has been stated above. The question raised is: Do the development models of the 2030 Agenda provide sufficient, relevant critique of the current pace of globalization, and the prevailing models of growth and development? Or is there a need to go further, and reconsider the entire development paradigm in all its various forms, all of which are based, in their multiplicity, on the idea of material growth, maximizing production and prioritizing the economy, though with an emphasis on respecting the requirements of social justice and the safety of the planet. The Coronavirus pandemic is the product of the broader context of civilisational development. This context clearly demonstrates the connection that exists between three major crises, which the 2030 Agenda referred to as the most important global challenges: peace and security, poverty and inequality, environmental degradation and climate change. The agenda stated that the current development path would lead to the demise of the planet and of human civilization. The truth of this has been made abundantly clear by COVID 19, which has revealed the deep-seated connection between these three crises, and the extremely destructive consequences of this, as seen in the threat to people's health, the social fabric, the value system. The pandemic has also exposed the weaknesses of the global governance systems, the shortcomings of their mechanisms and structures, and the rampant, serious distortion of priorities, which gives precedence to the means over the ends: making profit, not people, the centre of attention.

The world after COVID 19 will not be the one we knew before, nor should it be. If we return to our previous approach to development (i.e. partial solutions, the promotion of vested interests over rights, and power circumventing what is right) we will continue to face the same unending crises, ranging from war, climate change, poverty, populist dictatorships to the collapse of health and social systems. These crises represent an extremely serious threat to our civilisation, culture and planet.

In the midst of such an unfavourable international, regional and national environment, it is imperative for the Arab countries and their development agents (from the government to the private sector and civil society) to make effective and efficient efforts to formulate a development program that combines improving the conditions of the daily lives of citizens, and addressing the causes of structural problems, in order to avoid non-sustainable/unsustainable solutions, which will result in renewed conflicts, wars and social tensions in the region.

Without doubt, this will be a difficult task. A return to 'business as usual' is no longer an option. The 2030 Agenda provides an opportunity to effectively address these challenges, and set out on the path towards overcoming them. However, deriving any benefit from the global agenda and plans inspired by it (such as the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, the Paris Agreement and others) is contingent on possessing a genuine political will to pursue development, and a profound understanding of these agendas, and the problems affecting Arab societies.



Chapter II

The 2030 Agenda and the Perspective of Gender Equality

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The 2030 Agenda and the Perspective of Gender Equality

Foreword

Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, as stipulated by SDG5, is of great importance in the 2030 Agenda, and is especially crucial in relation to Arab countries and societies. Following political, constitutional, legal and media debates, it is clear that the major points of contention in the region relate to political-cultural issues, such as gender equality, the limits of women's freedom and their role in society, as well as the sources of law. Added to this is the fact that overcoming the political challenges, such as terrorism and extremism, cannot occur without religious reform - one of the region's most prominent challenges since the first Arab Renaissance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It must also be noted that such challenges cannot be overcome without the dissemination of the values of citizenship, productive work, creativity and gender equality, and a rejection of consumerism and patriarchal, 'macho' culture.

The issue of gender equality has always enjoyed great importance in global and Arab development agendas (though more so among civil society, feminist and human rights movements, than among governments). This issue gained considerable momentum after the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, in which new movements, organizations, networks and research centres were established to promote gender equality. This took place in the context of preparation for the conference and beyond, while associations already in existence intensified their activities in preparation for the summit. The issue of women's emancipation, education, and participation in public life was a pillar of the Arab Renaissance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Feminist movements, national women's federations, regional networks, and women themselves played vital roles in liberating the region from colonialism/mandate, and in building the national state in its early stages of independence.

The current approaches to gender equality (including within this all relevant human rights issues and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls) represent the culmination of an approach that has crystallized in a coherent and cumulative manner. This has come about since the first World Conference on Women, held in Mexico in 1975, followed by the second such conference held in Copenhagen in 1980, the third one held in Nairobi in 1985, and the Beijing conference in 1995. The international community has made use of a number of different tools in order to achieve equality, most prominently the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in December 1979. While most Arab countries still have reservations about some of its provisions, Yemen, Djibouti and Comoros ratified the convention without reservation, Tunisia lifted its reservations except for the general declaration in 2014, and the Palestinian Authority acceded to the Convention in 2014 without reservations⁽²⁷⁾. The first Arab Human Development Report released in 2002⁽²⁸⁾ mentioned three major 'gaps' that are hindering development in the Arab countries: freedom, discrimination against women, and knowledge. The Regional Bureau for Arab States of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP RBAS) at the time devoted a separate report to each gap.

27. Fifth Arab Women's Development Report 2015: Arab Women and Legislations, CAWTAR, Al-Ajfund, in cooperation with the UNDP and UN Women, 2015.

28. Arab Human Development Report 2003: Building a Knowledge Society.

http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/ar/home/library/huma_development/arab-human-development-report-2003-building-a-knowledge-society0.html



The Arab Sustainable Development Report, 2015⁽²⁹⁾ which monitored achievement during the MDGs period, and sets the baseline for the SDGs, outlines the evolution of the gender gap in the labour market and in economic activities. It indicates that little progress was made during this period as regards women's political participation, particularly in parliamentary representation, which is still low in comparison to the global average. The report also states that there are no clear trends towards progress in bridging this gap, or that which exists in terms of economic participation. It should be noted that the percentage of parliamentary seats varies significantly between countries, especially among those that adopt the quota system and those that do not, and there are also sharp contrasts between different versions of electoral law. This makes it hard to identify trends in this area. On the other hand, at both a global and regional level, progress has been observed regarding education indicators, as well as health. As such, the significance of these particular issues to the dynamics of gender discrimination has reduced, both in Arab countries and at the global level.

Figure 3: Employment-to-population ratio for females aged 15+ years

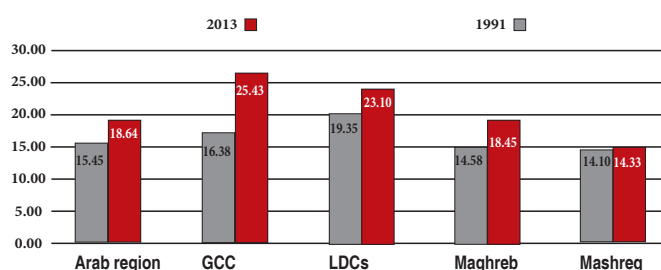
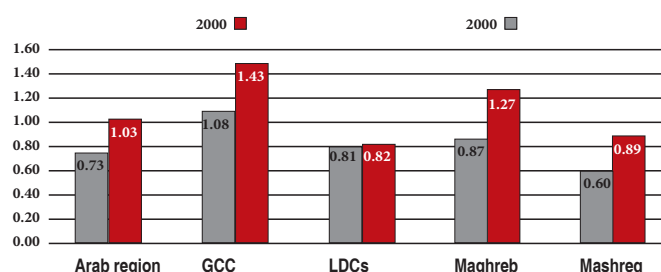


Figure 3: Female-to-male ratio enrolment in tertiary education



Source: The Arab Sustainable Development Report, 2015

The Global Gender Gap Report (2018)⁽³⁰⁾ does not contradict these results. According to the report, the Arab region has the largest gender gap anywhere in the world, which is 40% against a global average of 32%. A slight improvement was observed in the Arab region (the Middle East and North Africa)⁽³¹⁾ during the 2006-2018 period, as indicated by the report, in view of the fact that other regions of the world also witnessed an uneven improvement, while North America saw a decline.

As for the dimensions of the index, as previously indicated, the gap is lowest in the field of health (4%) and education (5%), while it rises to 41% in the economic sector (economic participation) and 78% in the political arena (political participation). The overall average of the index is a gender gap of 32%. This indicates that while equality has almost been achieved in education and health, the gap in economic and political participation is still very significant. A similar pattern can be identified in the Arab region - as explained above. This compels us to prioritize the economic and political areas, as well as other dimensions neglected by the report and index, such as the cultural and legislative dimensions of gender equality, and the existence or absence of explicit forms of discrimination against women.

29. The Arab Sustainable Development Report, First Issue 2015. ESCWA, UNDP. <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/arab-sustainable-development-report-1st.pdf>

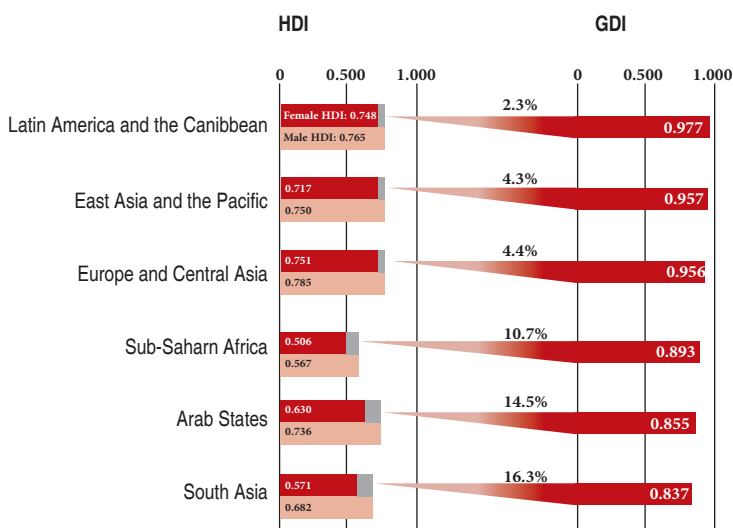
30. The Global Gender Gap Report 2018. WEF. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf

31. It should be noted that the Global Gender Gap Report uses a disaggregation that is different from the one used in this report regarding the 22 Arab countries that we adopt. According to the report, the MENA region includes 19 countries, out of which three are non-Arab countries: Israel, Iran, and Turkey. This means that the results are different, especially with regard to the general regional average, as Israel is ranked 46 globally (Gender Gap Index is 0.722) while Turkey and Iran rank similar to Arab countries. Therefore, adding Israel to the Arab countries improves the value of the regional index, albeit by a small percentage.

According to the report, Tunisia is foremost among the Arab countries in terms of its reduced gender gap, achieving the 119th rank globally, with the index value of 0.648, which falls below the global average. Conversely, Yemen is ranked worst in the world (149th) with a value index of 0.499. We must remember that it is necessary to deal cautiously with the results of global indices, since the indicators that determine them inevitably affects the rankings produced. In other words, the gap suggested by this report may result from factors not necessarily related to gender discrimination. For example, poverty and lack of resources is not a gender-related issue in itself, but it affects women more harshly than men, meaning that countries that are experiencing poverty may be recorded as having a greater gender gap. Additionally, culture and legislation can play a role in these issues but are not mentioned in the index.

The findings of the Gender Gap Index are also reflected in the value of the Gender Development Index (GDI). According to this, the gender gap reached 14.5% in the Arab region in 2017⁽³²⁾. The region ranks second to last globally, with South Asia lagging behind on a gap of 16.3%. The levels of political participation are low (17% in parliamentary representation compared to 27% in Europe and the Americas), as is economic participation in the workforce (25%). The percentage of women's participation in entrepreneurship is only 4% compared to 27% globally, and representation on corporate boards in the business sector does not exceed 7% compared to the average of 15%⁽³³⁾. Despite the efforts made, legislation and laws are still fraught with discrimination against women, and there is a clear failure to keep pace with the legal and theoretical developments in this area⁽³⁴⁾.

figure 3: Human development Index by gender, gender gap and Gender Development Index, by developing, 2017



Source: Human Development Report Office

At the level of societal relations and culture, Arab countries and societies are among those most saturated with patriarchal, 'macho' ideology⁽³⁵⁾. This can be seen in the systems of governance, and in the dissemination of hard-line and conservative concepts that dominate various aspects of culture, such as religious interpretation.

32. Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update. UNDP, New York, 2018.

33. Women: Arab Horizon 2030. ESCWA, 2017.

34. This point will be dealt with below.

35. Social Development Report 2: Inequality, Autonomy and Change in the Arab Region. ESCWA, 2018. See the paragraphs on gender equality in the report in particular, where it is stated more than once that the level of acceptance of inequality is higher in the Arab region than in other regions of the world, discrimination against women is strongly influenced by the prevailing patriarchal culture and it extends to all areas, in addition to being socially, and even legally, acceptable.



1.2 Confused legislative framework

One element of promoting women's rights was launched in certain Arab countries in 2004. It involved revisions to family, nationality and domestic violence laws, and the adoption of the quota system. After the Arab Spring (2011) this approach spread to a large number of Arab countries, including those that experienced a change in their systems and thereby in their constitutions, together with those that initiated legislative reforms incorporating women's rights in several areas. The Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) released The Arab Women Development Report 2015: Arab Woman and Legislations that documented major legislation related to gender equality, starting with constitutions and moving on to other legislation. While we can see reasonable legislative progress in the texts, the report highlighted some issues that still hinder necessary progress in this area. One of these is the fact that «[While] some of the examined constitutions show that they safeguard [the] civil and political rights of men and women equally, other constitutions were discriminatory and contradictory in safeguarding men and women's civil and political rights. Other constitutions contain vague texts that may be interpreted as in favour or against equality on the basis of sex⁽³⁶⁾.»

The report⁽³⁷⁾ found that the human and legal rights of women remain obstructed. This is largely caused by the contradictions and inconsistencies that arise from simultaneously applying parallel legal systems, i.e. the constitution, statutory law, customary law (tribal and clannish customs and traditions) and religious law (whether Islamic law or that outlined by the various Christian sects). In most of the countries concerned, both implicitly and in practice, family law supersedes all other laws, including the constitution. In some countries, the constitution itself includes an article that overrides the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination that is provided for in another article of the same document. In this way, precedence is given to other texts and standards that consolidate discrimination between men and women, and between women from different communities or sects.

On the other hand, the «Arab Spring» has noticeably impacted legislative action, constitutions and other laws in Arab countries, especially with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment. A multidimensional movement was created, parts of which exercised pressure to ease reservations about CEDAW, while others worked on enacting legislation to protect women from violence and human trafficking, and amending penal and social security laws and so forth. Some members of this movement even affected national constitutions, especially in countries that witnessed political and institutional changes after 2010. In more than one country, the issue of gender equality is one of the most discussed areas when it comes to constitutional amendments.

In Tunisia, for instance, which has experienced the most advanced constitutional and legislative change, gender equality did not occur spontaneously. Rather, it was an issue that stimulated outright political and cultural clashes. The draft constitution submitted in 2012 stipulated that «The state shall guarantee the protection of the rights of women and shall support the gains thereof as true partners to men in the building of the nation and as having a role complementary thereto within the family.» This sparked a wave of objection from civil society that succeeded in changing the text. Now, Article 21 of the 2014 constitution reads «All citizens, male and female,

36. The Arab Women Development Report 2015, p.33

37. Fifth Arab Women's Development Report 2015: Arab Women and Legislations, CAWTAR, Al-Ajfand, in cooperation with the UNDP and UN Women, 2015.

have equal rights and duties, and are equal before the law without any discrimination. The state guarantees freedoms and individual and collective rights to all citizens, and provides all citizens the conditions for a dignified life.» However, putting the sentiments of this text into practice is an issue that still needs to be addressed.

The exceptional importance of the issue of gender equality in Arab countries and societies stems from the fact that it represents a microcosm of most of the political, institutional, cultural and social obstacles that can impede development.

1.3 Are there any regressive dynamics?

One of the findings of the gender gap report is that if we continue on our current trajectory, it will take 108 years to bridge the gender gap - 61 years for Western Europe and 154 years for the Middle East and North Africa⁽³⁸⁾. Putting aside any reservations we may have about these calculations, they undoubtedly highlight the very slow rate of progress across the globe, and particularly in Arab countries. In response to this, a critical question arises: Can the current path of development really be considered 'progress'?

It should be noted that the advancement of women is not only partial, stagnated and slow, in some areas, the rights of women and their social status are actually in decline⁽³⁹⁾. This is the result of a complex blend of structural and situational factors, and completely contradicts the logic of development and progress. In the past, Arab societies have experienced previous modernizing/modernist movements, which were to some extent consistent with the current tide of modernity, women's emancipation, religious reform, and the trend towards building a civil state, even from within the religious system itself.

However, in the wake of these movements a gradual and general deterioration began, resulting in a decline in the status of women. This downward trajectory was instigated in some areas during the 1980s, due to the acceleration of globalization in the economic field, eventually producing what is now considered a wholly regressive dynamic (with a few exceptions). This trend began to intensify further around the millennium, with the emergence of the war on terror.

38. The Global Gender Gap Report 2018.WEF.http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf

39. Examples of such a decline are provided in various parts of the report, in addition to examples on decline in the area of women's economic participation in Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, where a decline in the situation of women is understood as an expression of general developmental decline. Even in Morocco, where the climate is more favorable for women, their contribution to the workforce declined from about 27% in 2000 to 24.4% in 2017, within the framework of general decline in the rate of economic activity and increased unemployment, despite the improvement of other indicators related to health and education in particular, as well as legislative progress. See: Human Development Report 2017. Inequalities and Human Development: Contribution to the Debate on Human Development Model in Morocco. Head of Government, Kingdom of Morocco, and National Observatory of Human Development (ONDH), 2018.



Aziz Al-Azmeh: The Question of Women

The relationship between women and culture in the Arab region is unique, and has been so since the beginning of modernization at the end of the nineteenth century. This era of modernisation and colonialism brought with it a huge shift in the position of women, who became the very centre of the debate around social and cultural transformation. Aziz Al-Azmeh has written that «the question of women had always been the pivotal question in matters of personal freedoms, knotting together in a complex fashion a variety of issues, the unravelling of which...facilitates the undoing of numerous social impasses. The issue arose in the folds of the tension generated between the realities of social change on the one hand and, on the other, the religious formulation of social conservatism and backward-looking practices, armoured by conservative misogyny» [Dr. Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Secularism in the Arab World Contexts, Ideas and Consequences*. Centre for Arab Unity Studies, Third Edition, Beirut, April 2008, Translated by David Bond, Edinburgh University Press, 2019, p.257]

In this sense, defending one's social and political rights in the face of a changing, modern society is based on the principle of defending one's identity. Women, who some conservative forces consider lack full mental capacity, are in reality the guardians of collective identity.

The emerging question in this area relates to the cultural dimension of gender issues, and the ideological struggle that can ensue from this. If we look to the findings of common indicators, we notice a significant improvement in the education and health of women in almost all Arab countries, as well as a sporadic improvement in their participation in the business sector, and the higher echelons of management. These are all objective facts, but they do not necessarily reflect the true nature and existing reality of the societal transformation towards equality, and defeating the patriarchal, 'macho' culture.

All Arab countries face similar circumstances in this regard, with varying or conflicting trends often contained within a single nation. Tunisia is perhaps the most prominent example of a coherent trend towards gender equality at the governmental and popular levels. A similar situation is found in Morocco, where feminist, human rights and political movements as well as civil society organizations, translate legislative progress into action on the ground through ensuring implementation of legislation, both in the judiciary, and in actual practice. On the other hand, the trends are less coherent in other countries, in spite of progress made at the legislative and institutional levels. This includes the recent developments in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, related to granting driving licenses to women. This particular shift came alongside an expansion of cultural, sporting and artistic activities in which women are allowed to participate, and the political participation of women in the municipal councils and the Shura Council. Such advances never occur without setbacks, or confrontations with conservative groups.

At the cultural level in particular, severe polarization has emerged (as reflected in the case study contained within the report of the Committee on Individual Freedoms and Equality (COLIBE) in Tunisia). Religious or tribal ideology has often returned to prominence in order to justify withdrawing from what was accepted in previous decades regarding the status of women. We can see this currently in both the raging political and ideological conflict, and the open rejection of universal values (including human rights and gender equality) in the name of cultural specificity, dismissing such ideas as 'Western' values. This, combined with the economic downturn, is what is meant by a 'regressive dynamic'.

In the last decade, sectoral and piecemeal approaches to development have been among the causes of its failure. Similarly, sectoral and fragmented approaches that isolate different issues from each other, and from overall societal transformation, are among the main causes behind the failure of gender equality strategies and women's empowerment. Success will never be achieved unless the principles of coherence, correlation and complementarity are observed.

Case study: Summary of the Report of the Committee on Individual Freedoms and Equality in Tunisia (COLIBE)

The approach adopted by the COLIBE Report was based on the correlation between patriarchal, 'macho' culture in both public and private domains, i.e. considering patriarchy to be a societal and cultural pillar of the established state model, and one of the foundations that confers legitimacy on the existing authority and system of government. This implies that the actual and sustainable transformation towards gender equality and women's empowerment is inseparable from the shift towards a state, political system, social environment and socio-political culture built upon the values of human rights, democracy and citizenship. In other words, transformation cannot be achieved sequentially or partially, hence the significance of the cultural dimension in development, and in political and institutional transformation, and the importance of challenging the cultural foundations of discrimination against women that stem from the patriarchal, 'macho' relationships that dominate both public and private life. The report notes that interest in individual freedoms was sporadic and irregular. The concept itself was for a long time restricted to a narrow meaning, which reduced freedom of the individual to the right to protection from arbitrary arrest. The other rights that ought to be encompassed in personal freedom, such as the right to protect one's private life, were forgotten, not protected by any legislative umbrella. The concept of individual rights and freedoms, in its comprehensive sense, has been long awaited by the Tunisian legal system.[Report of the Committee on Individual Freedoms and Equality (COLIBE), the Republic of Tunisia, Presidency of the Republic, June 1, 2018]

The new approach to 'individual rights' proposed by the COLIBE Report assumes that this phrase does not refer to a specific right. Instead, it seeks to translate the principle of the protection of individual freedoms, contained within the constitution, into a course of action and an integrated, fundamental component of the legislative system, as well as of political, legal and popular culture.

Regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, the report adopts a different approach. It incorporates the issue of 'gender equality' into a broader framework of individual freedoms and equality, instead of isolating it from these issues. This is the first qualitative development made by this report. Furthermore, this approach includes everyone in the process of awareness that leads to modernization. This essential process paves the way for, keeps up with, and results from the path of democratization, from which it is inseparable.

The approach of the COLIBE report does not constitute a departure from the issue of gender equality, nor the issue of development and its requirements. Rather, it gives the gender equality agenda its rightful place, making it a core component of societal transformation. This kind of approach reflects the positive transformations that are being made in development work at the theoretical level. A key example of this is the reconsideration of the concept of development, with its cultural dimension included, embracing this dimension as a means to achieving comprehensive development in the Arab countries.



Conclusion

From the above we conclude that the present moment, as far as the issue of gender equality is concerned, is characterized by:

- Slow, confused and unstable progress towards achieving gender equality. The dynamics of decline and discrimination continue to exert their influence both in theory and practice, and remain widespread within all available political, institutional and cultural apparatus, with little exception,
- The emergence of severe polarization in the discourse, paradigms, and attitudes maintained by different social groups and strata. Previously, gradual progression was underway towards a societal centre ground, and towards a system of values, concepts, and practices that reduced discrimination against women and the inferior view of them. This was accompanied by the rise of education, wider participation in the workforce and urbanization, and the rise of the values of equality and openness to other cultures. Nevertheless, the present situation is characterized by sharp polarization, as the central political ground recedes. There is ever-increasing disparity between groups that adopt clearly discriminatory positions supported by a system of values, concepts and institutions of a strongly conservative character, often based on religious interpretation, and those on the other end of the spectrum who take their views to the radical extreme in posing the issue of equality and rights in direct opposition to conservative trends⁽⁴⁰⁾.

2. Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda

2.1 Preamble and Declaration

Gender equality and the empowerment of women is firmly present in the preamble of the 2030 Agenda and in the Declaration. It represents a major component of human rights, which form the basis of the agenda and its broader framework. In the Preamble, it is stated that the aim of the SDGs and the entire development plan is to «realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.» The Declaration also approaches the issue of gender equality as a condition for successful, comprehensive development. This is because: «Realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities.»⁽⁴¹⁾

The 2030 Agenda places gender equality at the core of its theoretical framework and governing principles, viewing this issue as a fundamental component of human rights. The agenda also presents gender equality as: a condition for the success of development in various fields, an issue that must be integrated into the working development platform and into all policies, and finally, a benchmark by which to assess the success of the entire development process.

40. In this regard, see the Political Participation of Women, a study prepared by HowaidaAdly and others (Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2017), which shows that «society produces patterns of discourse hostile to the idea of women's participation, a discourse that is disseminated while finding supporters everywhere, and gradually approaches influential circles. The experience of Egyptian women in the area of political participation also indicates that they face many restrictions that are essentially attributed to the nature of societal culture inherited across generations, which is determined by a number of factors, most notably religious discourse and patriarchal, 'macho' culture that dominates Egyptian society in general, thus leaving an impact on the Egyptians' perceptions of women's existence and freedom of movement in the public sphere. https://www.fes-egypt.org/fileadmin/user_upload/images/Political_women_final_for_Web_25-3-2018.pdf

41. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, The Declaration, paragraph 20. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

2.2 From MDG3 to SDG5

The content of SDG5 far exceeds that of MDG3, for although the wording of SDG5 has not changed substantially («Achieve gender equality and empower women» vs. «Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls»), there is a significant qualitative difference between the two goals. There has been a shift from a goal with a single target (gender parity in education) and three traditional indicators (education, employment, political participation), to a goal with nine targets (6 outcome targets, 3 means/policies targets) and 13 indicators. This is not simply a numerical increase, but a qualitative transformation in the nature of the issues dealt with. Equality in education disappeared from SDG5 (incorporated into SDG4 on education), and the range of issues dealt with by the targets has widened to include discrimination, violence, domestic work and family responsibilities, in addition to health and reproductive rights, access to resources and equal opportunities.

Means of Implementation			SDG5	Achieve gender equality and empower all woman and girls
5.A Undertake reforms to give women equal rights in economic resources	5.B Enhance enabling technologies, in particular information and communications technologies	5.C Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion. of gender equality	5.1	End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
			5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
			5.3	Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
			5.4	Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
			5.5	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
			5.6	Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the programme of action of the international conference on population and development and the Beijing platform for action and the outcome document of their review conferences



Both the MDGs and the 2030 Agenda promoted the integration of gender equality (and a gender-focused approach) into the overall development agenda. However, MDG3 suffered from several shortcomings that reduced its effectiveness, and provided the relevant parties with an opportunity to withdraw from any real commitment to achieving gender equality.

MDG3 included one, sole target, namely gender parity in education, and this is its fundamental weakness. There are three main reasons for this:

- **First:** the targets are the first things governments look to when it comes to achieving goals. They are what must be adhered to and translated into policies. Restricting MDG3 to one target (gender parity in education) wasted an opportunity to draw attention to other critical issues, such as legal discrimination, violence against women, and the effect of inequality in the private sphere (family, personal status and so forth), all of which are priority issues.
- **Second:** the connection between MDG3 and its singular target is very limited, especially in terms of empowerment. Despite its importance, gender parity in education does not always lead to the empowerment of women, and so should not serve as the basis for policies that have empowerment as their goal. Measurements of gender parity in education can only ever partially reflect overall empowerment and equality. Furthermore, the indicator that was selected to determine the levels of education was completely inappropriate, and its results remain ambiguous. According to its assessment, many countries had achieved the target (and the goal) before 2000 or immediately afterwards. With nothing left to measure, many countries were able to 'achieve' MDG3, despite the situation of women in their country remaining virtually unchanged.

The formulation of MDG3 meant that most Arab countries could claim great success in attaining it (including these 'achievements' in reports etc.) while in reality, these 'achievements' made little difference to the gender gap, the status of women, or the multi-level discrimination against them. SDG5 remedies these failings, and discards the target of gender parity in education (dealt with in SDG 4). Instead, this goal highlights other extremely important aspects of inequality and discrimination, as will be demonstrated below.

2.3 SDG 10: Equality

The Sustainable Development Goals include one directly concerned with equality: SDG10. It calls for «[Reducing] inequality within and among countries», a clear improvement on the content of the MDGs. SDG10 includes targets related to international inequality, and others that focus on the economic aspect and on poverty. In our discussion, we will pay particular attention to Targets 10.2 and 10.3. The former focuses on «[empowering and promoting] the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status» while the latter seeks «equal opportunity and [to] reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.» Both of these targets clearly refer to the achievement of gender equality, empowerment, and economic, social and political inclusion of women (and all groups).

In addition, they emphasize equality in outcomes (bridging development gap indicators between women and men) and eliminating all forms of discrimination, both in legislation and practice. Goal 10 should be understood in light of its pivotal role in the whole agenda. Equality is a basic pillar of human rights, as well as the final outcome that is sought in all development policies.

In a way, SDG10 represents a general framework for the gender equality dealt with by SDG5. The novelty of the 2030 Agenda in this sense, is that it paves the way for enhancing action on the achievement of gender equality: it emphasizes the correlation between SDG5 and SDG10, and addresses them in an integrated way, both in analysis and policy development. This promotes placing the issue of gender equality at the core of the human rights and justice agendas, without negating the special importance of SDG5 itself.

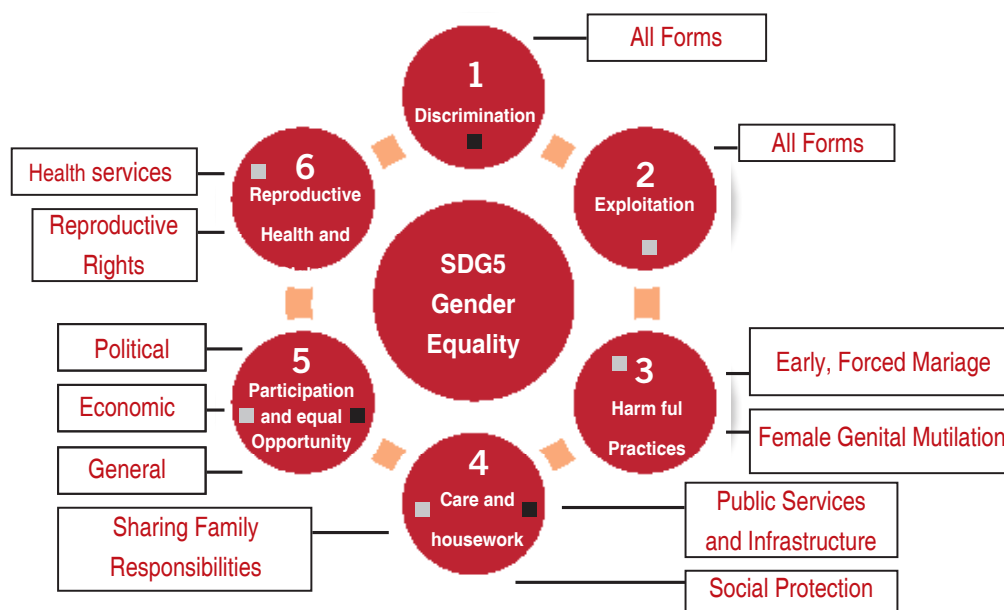
3. SDG5 in Detail: Targets and Indicators

Before starting this discussion, it must be emphasized that development is an inclusive and indivisible process. All SDGs are correlated and integrated with one another, and any attempt to deal with each of them in isolation runs counter to the logic of the Agenda. In light of this, the detailed examination of SDG5 which follows aims to identify all the components and implications of the goal, without leading to its isolation from the general context, or the other goals and dimensions that it complements (that it is integrated with).

The first priority of development actors when dealing with any goal must be to view it holistically. It is not possible to attain SDG 5 without attaining all the other goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda that influence the status of women (and men). Equality is holistic and indivisible, as are the targets that must be reached if these goals are to be met. It should be noted that success will not be achieved all at once, but gradually, without compromising the unity of the goals, or fragmenting them in an artificial and subjective manner. The SDGs represent facets of equality and empowerment, not isolated issues separate from the ultimate objective.

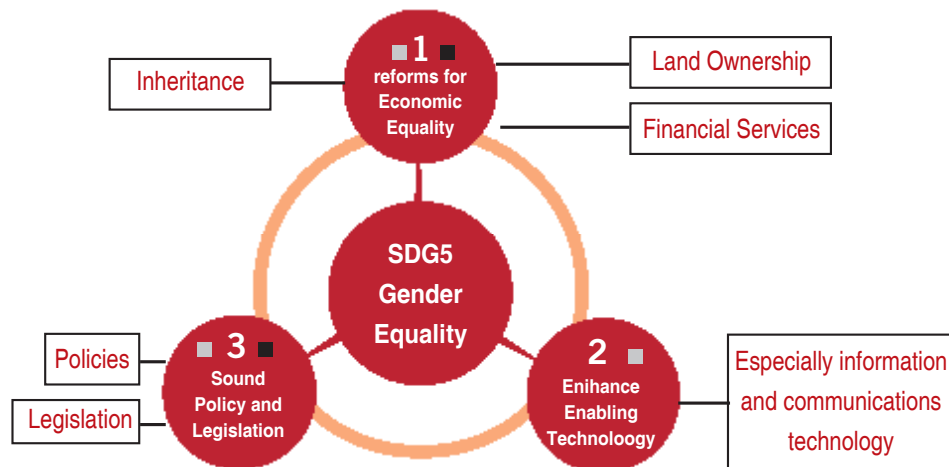
The wording of the goal itself involves two integrated dimensions: equality vs. discrimination, and empowerment vs. exclusion or marginalization. SDG5 contains six outcome targets, and three targets for means/policies.

SDG5: Detailing the Content





SDG5: Means of Implementation



Remark: The small red square in the figure refers to the equality / discrimination dimension, and the blue square refers to the empowerment dimension

It should be noted that the targets deal with all of the five main dimensions of development: social, economic, political, cultural and environmental (meaning that the requirement of covering all development dimensions is fulfilled). Additionally, there is an obvious, strong link between these targets and the general goal of achieving equality and empowerment, therefore, it is expected that achieving all targets and adhering to their proposed methods, is likely to produce real, effective progress in achieving gender equality.

3.1. The novelty of SDG 5

As has already been mentioned, SDG5 omits gender parity in education from its targets, as this is dealt with by SDG4. The new elements of SDG5, as compared to MDG3, include:

- A clear commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere (Target 5.1). This is directly linked to CEDAW and General Recommendation No. 19 (11th session, 1992) entitled Violence against Women⁽⁴²⁾. It also addresses the issue of violence against women in all its forms, and rejects all harmful practices (Targets 2 and 3).
- Addressing traditional issues in a more integrated way, especially political and economic participation and reproductive/health rights (Targets 5.5 and 5.6).
- Adding a special target on recognizing the value of the care and domestic work done by women in the family, providing public service requirements around this, and sharing the responsibility of care within the family. This is a clear improvement upon MDG3, as this target deals with the private sphere (the family) and with the cultural dimension of the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment.

42. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom19>

- The inclusion, in this goal and others, of targets concerned with the means of implementation, called 'Policy Targets' (i.e. directions to be followed when drafting policies in order to achieve the goals). There are two important and correlated policy targets for SDG5: 5.A, which calls for economic reforms, to achieve equality and equal opportunities in the economic arena, and access to natural resources, and 5.C, which promotes the adoption of non-discriminatory and empowering policies and legislation. According to this approach, primary responsibility for achieving the goals rests with public policy, not individual programs, projects and actions.

3.2 Remarks on the relevance of the indicators

It is imperative that we assess the relevance of targets and indicators to achieving national and global goals. This will involve identifying which manifestations of the gender gap are a particular priority in each country and, beyond that, each region.

For instance, if the phenomenon of female genital mutilation does not exist in a country, whilst this is a positive sign, it does not excuse the country from identifying other harmful practices, noting where they exist, prioritizing them, and assigning an indicator to measure them. Conversely, if the level of women's participation in parliament is acceptable, attention should then be devoted to the 'quality' of this participation and its impact on legislation, or perhaps the participation of women in trade unions, economic bodies etc. alongside developing appropriate/relevant indicators to measure these trends.

Another novelty of the SDGs is that the success of their targets is no longer assessed only through traditional, quantitative indicators, but also through qualitative ones. The indicator of Target 5.1 on eliminating all forms of discrimination is qualitative (Are there legal frameworks for monitoring gender discrimination?). However, this indicator is composite, and cannot be measured without diligently determining the nature of legal frameworks and whether they are relevant or not. The wording of this indicator also sparks some confusion, due to its complexity and its multiple levels/functions. According to the text, this indicator is concerned with: whether «legal frameworks are in place to promote, monitor and enforce equality and non-discrimination». Including these three distinct functions makes measuring success difficult. It becomes a composite assessment exercise, the criteria of which are not well defined, and could not be standardized at the global level. Another example of an inappropriate indicator is Indicator 5.B.1 (Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by gender) which in reality tells us little about women's empowerment in the use of technology, and appears to be an irreparably flawed method by which to measure progress towards reaching this target.

The use of the Agenda in development planning requires a significant effort be made to understand both the actual intent of the goals and targets, and the characteristics of the country, society and the issue concerned. It is only after this that it becomes possible to implement targets and indicators innovatively, and with due respect to national characteristics and priorities, rather than simply monitoring progress according to irrelevant international indicators. This task is different from, although not contradictory to, the setting of national policies and goals. It is abundantly clear that localizing the goals is absolutely critical, as it is this process that enables their transition from ideas to reality [See the reference training manual «Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Arab World from the Millennium Development Goals MDG's to beyond 2015. CAWTAR, ESCWA, UN-Women, 2013].



3.3 Strategies to prevent gender equality

We have already pointed out that development, democratization, modernization, gender equality and women's empowerment are topics that often spark conflict, and attract diverse, and sometimes opposing, points of view. It is therefore essential to know which matters give rise to the greatest resistance among conservatives, in order to adopt effective strategies to achieve the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The major points of contention, and potential obstacles on the path towards equality, are the following:

- a. Circumventing the integrated approach:** this involves trying to isolate the issue of gender equality from the overall path of societal transformation, including the political and cultural dimensions of sustainable human development. This can take the form of isolating SDG5 from other goals (SDG10⁽⁴³⁾ in particular, as well as the guiding principles of the rights-based agenda). Conversely, the best strategy to achieve gender equality emphasizes the correlation between SDG5 and SDG10, deals with them as an integrated pair, linked to the rest of the goals, promotes adherence to the principles contained in the Preamble and the Declaration, and incorporates the overarching issues expressed in all the goals, not just SDG5, into the national action plans to achieve equality.
- b. Fragmentation of the goal itself and separation of its targets:** A fragmented approach will likely produce the same issues that arose with MDG3, the sole target of which focused on gender parity in education. As previously mentioned, reaching this one specific target was presented as achieving gender equality. With regard to SDG5, we must resist any approach that prioritises some targets (and indicators) over others, or restricts their implementation to women-only national institutions or civil society organisations. If we want to achieve SDG5, it is not sufficient to achieve progress in one target or through one specific indicator. In other words, it is essential that progress is made in all the major areas that represent the path to gender equality and women's empowerment, as stated in SDG5 (and frequently elsewhere in the agenda).
- c. Emphasizing projects rather than policies:** The obstacle here is when some seek to prevent progress by overwhelming the evaluation and assessment procedures with endless projects, financed by numerous different donors, and a large number of beneficiaries. Alternatively, they shift focus to the success of specific campaigns undertaken by civil society organizations, institutional procedures, or amendments to one or several legal codes, at the expense of assessing overall progress. The response to this is to stress the necessity of assessing the overall status of women along with the public policies that play a critical role in progress, with emphasis on their transformative impact.
- d. Hindering coherent legislative transformation:** This obstacle develops when governments and conservative movements are forced to accept a legal amendment as a result of a national or regional campaign, or under popular pressure, perhaps from civil society. This can sometimes be accompanied by international pressure and officials seeking to improve the government's image vis-à-vis public opinion (for instance, several Arab countries responded to national campaigns by introducing amendments or adopting new legislation at more frequent intervals. The issues covered in these new laws included: combating violence against women, the repeal of law that stops the prosecution of rapists who are married to their victims, granting mothers the ability to pass nationality onto her children etc.). However, this legislative change does not always occur in a systematic manner and does not always reflect a genuine commitment

43. «Reduce inequality within and among countries.»

to equality and empowerment at all levels on the part of the government (with exceptions in some countries). Although these amendments are imposed by the struggle of women and civil society, they are often used to defuse tension, improve the government's image, and confine the work of feminist and human rights movements to seeking isolated reforms (which takes a long time, and obstructs the use of other strategies that address the requirements of comprehensive institutional and legislative reforms). The response to this obstacle must be to diversify strategies, and prevent the struggle for equality from being reduced to partial measures or draining the energy of civil society.

e. Isolating the cause of women from the adoption of coherent development policies: This obstacle often presents itself in the demands made by feminist movements and women's associations that have a very narrow focus. Often, these demands refer to the relevant parties only in long and winding ways, while some of their goals actually divert attention away from the major requirements of the developmental approach in public all-inclusive areas. For instance, such organisations will start dialogues on assistance for women-headed households, while research on a comprehensive rights-based social protection system is completely overlooked (including the Social Protection Floor Initiative). In response to this, it is important to distinguish dispassionately between private, factional matters and public, universal issues, including related measures for disadvantaged or marginalized groups.

f. Overlooking the societal and cultural aspect of the issue of gender equality: The cultural dimension of sustainable human development, is poorly represented in the 2030 Agenda compared to other dimensions. It is partially mentioned in Target 5.4, which concentrates on assessing care and domestic work performed by women and creating provisions around this, including shared responsibility within the family. The last point will involve confrontation with cultural traditions and customs. Target 5.4 does not usually receive the attention it deserves, and is often ignored by those who have reservations about the principle of gender equality, both due to its transformative nature, and the affect it would have on the private sphere, the family, and the roles of men and women within it. This goal calls for the development of a system of family values and relationships that subvert the prevailing patriarchal, 'macho' patterns which limit women, young people and children. A focus on societal and cultural transformation (including the prescriptions of Target 5.4) should be a priority in the strategy of gender equality and women empowerment in Arab societies

Empowerment of women at the local level between fiction and reality: A case study from Egypt

The subject of this case study is the role of Egyptian grassroots associations in empowering women, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda⁽⁴⁴⁾. It is made up of a participatory study of 60 Egyptian grassroots associations, who responded positively to a question about their work and its relationship with the agenda. The case study aims to explore how these associations understand their role in empowering women.

Associations against hunger and poverty (with religious motivation)

66% of the associations that took part in this survey actively provide loans, grants and production tools for women. The associations' administrators admit that these economic activities provide small sums to women and their families, but do not contribute to a fundamental change in their conditions. Some women participating in the focus groups discussions said that microlending has become a new burden for them, when they are already exhausted by the duty of caring for their family, land, poultry and ensuring the education of their children.

44. The field study was conducted by Jihan Abu Zayd, as part of a wider scope research paper specifically prepared for this report under the title: Big Visions in Small Hands. Gender Analysis of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.



The study shows that food distribution is witnessing unprecedented activity, with the most important motivation behind this being a desire for closeness to God, living according to religious teachings and extending mercy to the poor and needy. Despite the fact that almost half of the surveyed associations serve rural communities, women farmers are not represented in their agendas. Only 11.6% of all associations support women farmers, and half of these focus on training urban women in rooftop farming, while 9% of all associations reported providing activities for women with disabilities.

Combating violence against women

92% of the associations that took part in the survey conduct activities aimed at combating violence against women. It seems that these organisations believe that they do not possess capacity to confront the root causes of violence against women, and that their role is limited to providing psychological support to survivors of violence, as well as raising awareness. The findings of the report revealed that NGOs are unable to adopt decisive mechanisms to stop harmful practices such as female genital mutilation. It also found that some associations engage clerics in their campaigns, some taking a stand against female genital mutilation during meetings for training sessions and program preparatory meetings, in addition to playing a supportive role, within the framework of performing their religious function.

Participants in focus-group discussions believe that the local community rejects the concepts of gender equality, and women's emancipation, also adding that NGOs should respect the conservative and traditional values that govern men's relationship with women. The points of agreement shared by them were limited to: the importance of female education, and the need to support women to work outside the home.

Perception of the 2030 Agenda

Participating associations questioned the effectiveness of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt's Vision 2030. They considered them both to be replications of previous, failed plans, and fundamentally lacking in realism. From their point of view, the agenda is merely UN political propaganda, and the national plan merely Egyptian political propaganda. This pessimistic view of the agenda does not reflect ignorance, nor a lack of knowledge, but conclusions drawn from years of bitter experience with global and national development plans, and a lack of trust in the State and its institutions. This viewpoint must be taken into account, as it is derived from real knowledge and experience.

In order to change the circumstances of women living in villages, we must: address youth unemployment, improve transportation, expand road networks, develop schools, and ensure true security in remote areas. Then, we should offer women positions in companies which are exclusively held by males at present. Can NGOs reach this objective unless the State is genuinely committed to the eradication of poverty and empowering its women and men?

Member of the Board of Directors of the Assiut Business Women Association

The text versus reality

One of the findings of this study is that there is a significant gap between development plans, and the real perception of gender equality among associations. As we explore this, we should bear in mind that gender equality is a central issue in the 2030 Agenda, as well as development as a whole, and also that the participating organisations are women's associations working in the area of women's empowerment and aware of the 2030 Agenda (all organisations confirmed this, and were selected on this basis), and they are supposed to be working towards achieving gender equality.

Empowerment, in the opinion of these associations, consists of helping girls complete their education and find jobs until they get married. Equality is summed up as «equality between males and females in receiving food rations and access to education.» A woman's place, according to the prevailing opinion, is in the home (unless she is forced to work to provide for the family) and her most important role is to raise her children, allowing leadership in the family to be exclusively assumed by men. In spite of this, these NGOs are convinced that they are working towards women's empowerment. All the while, they directly or indirectly promote these convictions, which, far from contradicting or challenging the prevailing culture, play an active role in reproducing it.

This conviction does not reflect ignorance, but rather a different kind of awareness, common among grassroots groups. Once again, we are confronted with the fact that development, and its core issue of gender equality, is not a simple matter. Approaching in a traditional manner (i.e. through top-down projects, activities, working methods and discourse, parachuted onto populations) will prove totally ineffective. This course of action is selective, fragmented, performative, and a far cry from what is needed: a transformative, integrated intervention, which takes into account all elements of discrimination of inequality,

Conclusion

The achievement of gender equality, the elimination of discrimination against women, and empowering all women and girls, is not a simple matter. It cannot be reduced to SDG5, nor even to all the content of the 2030 Agenda. This is an important lesson that must be learned.

Discrimination against women is a phenomenon dating back thousands of years. It represents one of the first manifestations of the dominant logic of power and violence in social relations and has spanned from ancient times up to the present day. In light of this, researchers and scientists measure the development of human civilization/culture itself, by evaluating the status of women in society. The achievement of equality is not a technical matter, nor even simply a developmental issue, but rather a civilizational/cultural matter par excellence, which relates to the development of society, its structures, relations and culture. Gender equality strategies must rise to the challenge, and address developmental problems at the civilizational/cultural level as integrated and universal issues.

Since this is not a simple matter in any society, Arab or otherwise, civil society organizations and the media both play a role of paramount importance in advocating for gender equality, especially in any relevant initiatives they undertake. Change does not occur spontaneously, nor can it be limited to the upper echelons of society. Rather, it is rooted in the base of society, the reality on the ground, which is more diversified and complex than any perception or template, no matter how advanced. The issue of gender equality is further complicated by wars, conflicts and internal strife. The Arab region knows this more than any other. Due to its unique experience of simultaneous occupation, wars and conflicts, women in the region are at the same time victims of war, and active seekers of peace, justice and the resolution of all conflict.



Chapter III

Wars, Conflicts and their Impact on the Status of Women

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Wars, Conflicts and their Impact on the Status of Women⁽⁴⁵⁾

Foreword

The correlation between peace, security and development is a subject that permeates the developmental mindset, the human rights system, and global development agendas (including those approved by the world summits held in the 1990s, and the MDGs, although this was not translated into specific goals and targets at the time). This correlation is brought to the fore in the 2030 Agenda, and is especially evident in the Preamble and Declaration. These sections forcefully emphasize peace, security and good governance, as crucial components of development, and conditions that must be met if sustainable human development is to be achieved. In other words, peace provides an environment that enables development, while conflict hinders and disrupts it.

The 2030 Agenda took a decisive step forward by assigning SDG16 to this issue. It calls for «[Promoting] peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provid[ing] access to justice for all and build[ing] effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels». This shifts focus away from the analytical correlation between peace and development, promoting instead an approach to this issue that makes peace, security and good governance policy goals and targets, the success of which can be measured in practical terms.

It should be noted, here, that the wording of this goal, its targets and the proposed indicators suffers from several shortcomings, the most important of which are:

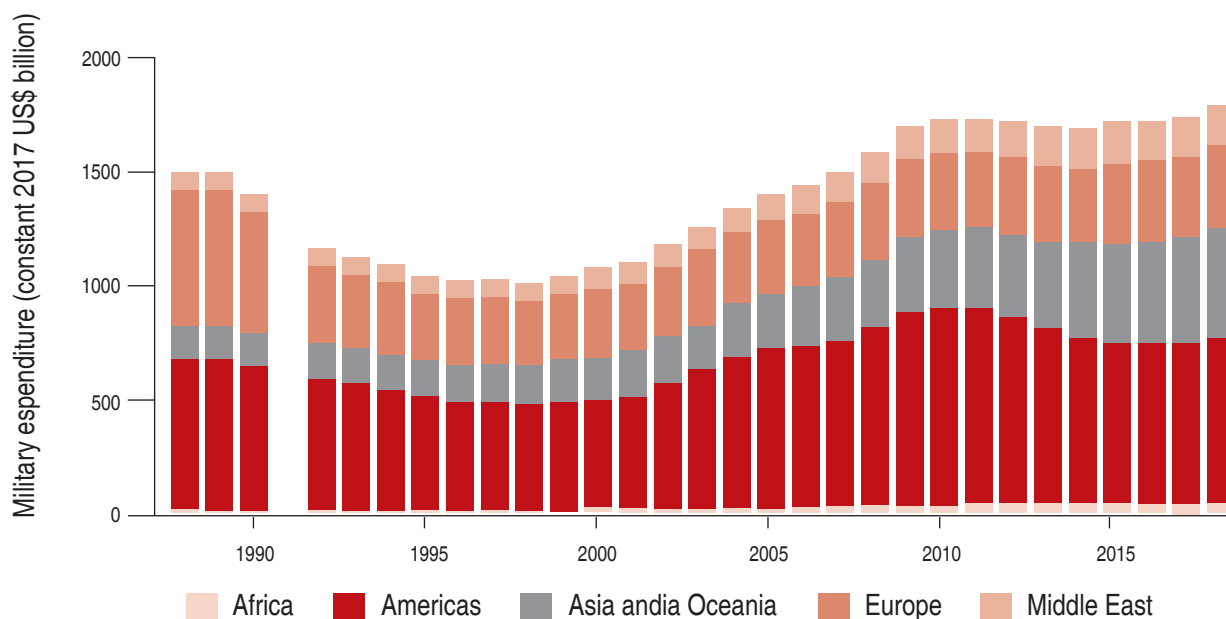
- Combining peace, security, good governance and respect for human rights into a single goal. These are all issues of great importance, and the agenda might have benefited from assigning each of these issues its own goal, or at least dedicating one goal to peace and security and another to democracy and governance.
- Failing to distinguish between different types of war, conflict and violence, despite the obvious variation in the nature of violence in each case, and the actors and policies needed to handle them.
- Failing to clearly and specifically identify issues, including those related to governance, and confusing the international and domestic spheres.
- Focusing on specific issues (such as the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons), whilst overlooking other more important problems (such as the arms trade and its role in sparking wars).

Unfortunately, the world does not appear to be moving towards peace. World military expenditure, which registered two declines between 1990 and 2000, has continuously increased since the beginning of the new millennium. In 2018, it exceeded \$18 trillion, i.e. 3 trillion more than world military expenditure in the final years of the Cold War.

45. Important parts of this chapter are based on a research paper specifically prepared for this report by Hanan Rabbani under the title: Arab Women and Sustainable Development in War and Armed Conflict Zones: Challenges and Perspectives



Figure : World military expenditure, by region, 1988 - 2018*



*No total can be calculated for 1991 as no data for the soviet Union is available for that year

Source: SIPRI⁽⁴⁶⁾ Military Expenditure Database (29 Apr. 2019)

These signs draw attention to the importance of peace, security and good governance in Arab countries, which suffer far more than most from occupation, war and conflict (even though the wording of SDG16 fails to outline this).

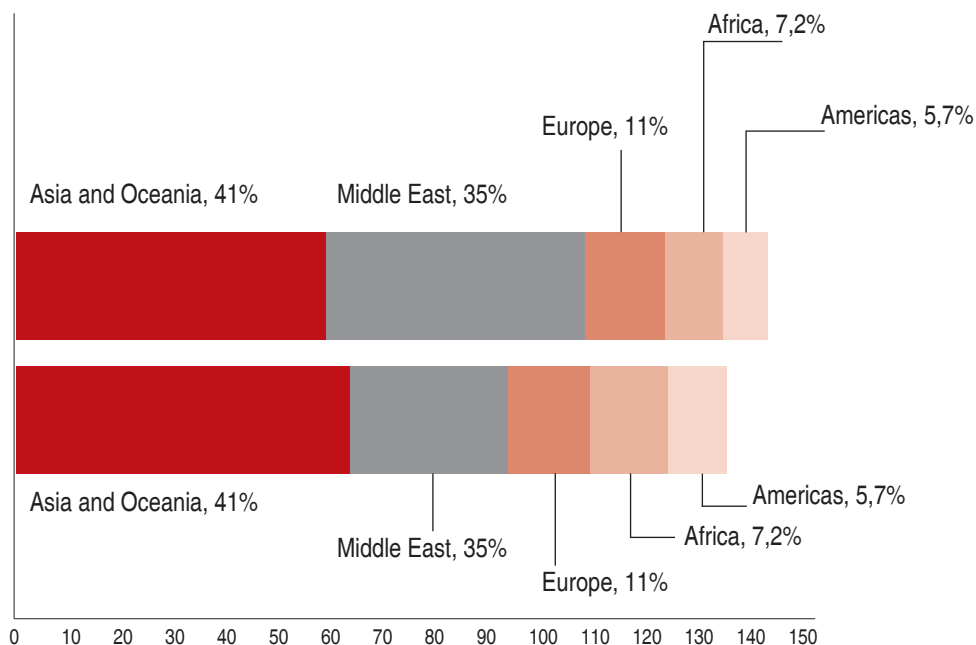
1. Describing the situation in the Arab region

Seventy-three years have elapsed since the end of the Second World War. During this period, all Arab countries were liberated from colonialism and gained their political independence. The one exception is Palestine, where the British Mandate has been replaced by the Israeli occupation. However, even the countries that gained independence during or before the 1970s (the last of which was Djibouti in 1977), have not enjoyed peace and security since then. Instead, one country after another has suffered from external wars and occupations, and has been ravaged by civil war and internal conflict. Some of these conflicts lasted for many years, causing irreparable damage and untold loss (e.g. the recurring wars between Israel and a number of Arab countries, the Lebanese war, the decade of bloody conflict in Algeria). These issues have continued to escalate, and we are now witnessing a level of internal fighting and civil war that threatens to cause near total destruction of some countries. In light of this, the whole Arab region can be considered to be in a state of war and conflict. This is not limited to countries under occupation, those coming under direct attacks, or those in which military confrontations take place, as the impact and causes of these wars and conflicts, and sometimes participation in them, affect all countries in the region without exception. In fact, the repercussions of these conflicts extend even further than this, affecting the world on a global scale.

46. <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2019/world-military-expenditure-grows-18-trillion-2018>

One of the effects of this situation has been an increase in arms imports in the Arab region - the Middle East is the only region in the world that has registered a significant increase in its share of total arms imports globally. Its share increased from 23% of the global arms import between 2010-2014, to 35% during 2015-2019. The Middle East is also the region with the highest military expenditure in the world as a percentage of the GDP (4.6%, vs. 3% spending on health) followed by North Africa (4.2%, vs. 3.8% spending on health) according to the 2013 data⁽⁴⁷⁾. (This percentage has recently increased, as is demonstrated by the diagram).

Figure: The Importers of Major Arms by Region and Percentage of Global Share, 2010 - 14 and 2015 - 19



Source: SIPRI⁽⁴⁸⁾

In light of this situation, it is worth questioning the relevance and credibility of the international discourse on development and peace, as well as the initiatives undertaken within this framework. Experience has shown that peace initiatives often fail to meet the needs of the sheer scale of suffering and destruction, and are ineffective in putting an end to wars. There is a shared conviction among the Arab peoples that the usual approach to conflict is wracked with double standards: words call for peace, while actions stimulate war. This compels us to deal more seriously with conflicts in the Arab region at all levels, as well as the problem of war and peace in general. Peace is a prerequisite for global stability, and a precondition of respect for human rights (including women's rights) ranging from the right to life, to development and its requirements.

47. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2016/04/22/global-health-and-military-expenditure-in-comparison-infographic/#1930eaa53020>

48. <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-and-military-expenditure/international-arms-transfers>

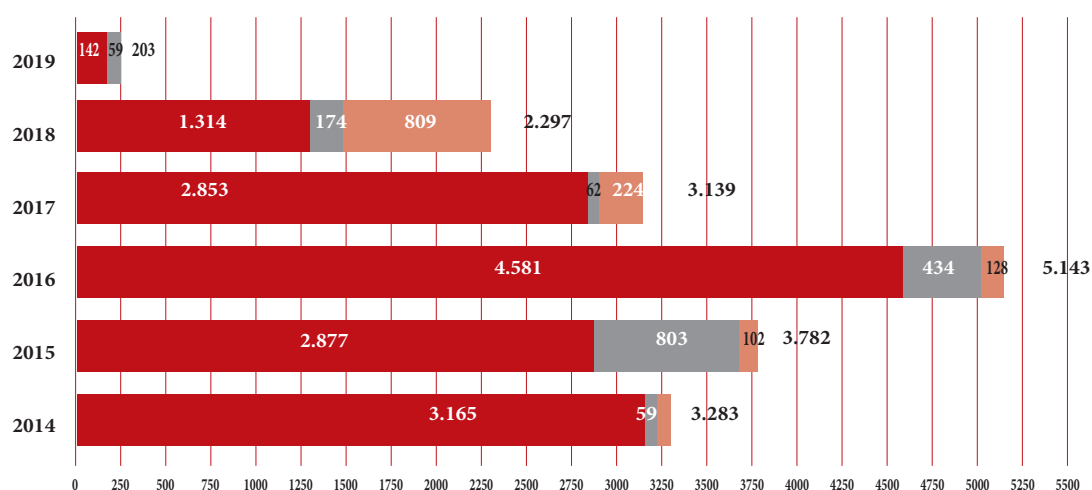


2. The impact of armed conflicts on the region

Since the 2010/2011 uprisings, armed conflicts in the region have escalated and become more entrenched and complex. New internal conflicts supported by regional and international powers and alliances have emerged. Their impact extends beyond regional borders, whether through the direct intervention of international and regional actors in military actions, or through refugee waves. This situation has been accompanied by the growth of religious extremism and armed groups, and their spread in the region. The result of this has been the destabilization of security and peace, and the spread of terrorism across Arab countries and beyond. The succession of wars and internal conflicts faced by some Arab countries, in addition to the instability that has accompanied political transformations in others, have led to chaos, insecurity, distrust of the existing systems of government, and little hope of bringing about genuine change at the political, economic and social levels.

Other serious issues facing the region include deteriorating economic conditions, the growing disparity between social classes, discrimination against women, young people, minority social groups and some regions, increasing levels of poverty and unemployment, and restrictions on rights and freedoms. Together, these factors have led to a widespread state of frustration among large segments of the population. This situation manifests in various ways, including a rising number of people risking death through irregular migration across the Mediterranean. Thousands of illegal migrants have died in these waters, the rates peaking at 5,143 deaths in 2016, and reaching 2,297 deaths in 2018, 1,885 deaths in 2019, and 219 deaths between January 1 and March 23, 2020.

Figure: Number of migrants killed while crossing the Mediterranean



Source: <https://missingmigrants.iom.int> ⁽⁴⁹⁾

49. <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>

3. Women, war and rights in Arab societies

3.1 The consequences of wars on women

The consequences of wars are catastrophic at all levels, and their structural impact goes far beyond the material losses or sectoral degradation they create. The destruction caused by war leads to a sort of formative (genetic) defect in the structure of society, its institutions and the value system. This results in the birth of new, broken systems and relationships, in which crises and problems breed, grow and spread. In these scenarios the regressive elements of society, supposedly eliminated in the development process, reappear.

In general, men are the main target of the assaults that come with war. These include murder, arrest, torture, enforced disappearance and recruitment as soldiers into the regular army and armed militias. Children also experience profound and long-term traumas as a result of conflicts, which can sometimes lead to the loss of parents or relatives, as well as insecurity, displacement and migration. Their fundamental rights to education, safety and healthcare are violated, and they are exposed to violence in all its forms (one of which is the growing phenomenon of the forced child marriage). Conflicts also bring with them further marginalization of women, forcing them to bear the brunt of the suffering born from war.

Studies have shown that levels of domestic violence increase significantly during times of conflict. This is due both to the increased levels of violence that prevail within society, and the other circumstances that accompany war, such as poor living conditions, a lack of security, the availability of weapons, the general collapse of the rule of law and the weakening of social and family structures and value systems. The result of these factors is the «normalization» of gender-based violence⁽⁵⁰⁾.

Women are also often the direct targets of the violence of conflict, in the form of the murder, physical and sexual assault represented by rape as a tool of war. In exceptional cases women have even been forced into sexual slavery, as perpetrated by the militias of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq. Displacement caused by war makes women even more vulnerable to physical abuse, sexual exploitation, and discrimination by their communities, and violation of their rights by their host countries. In these scenarios, women are made extremely vulnerable, in the same way that girls / children are. The situation of Syrian refugee women in neighbouring countries is a striking example of such discrimination and violation.

3.2 Violent crime and murder against women and girls in circumstances of war and beyond

Studies have shown that violent crimes, including the murder of women and girls, have endemic causes in Arab societies. Often, these offences are met by society with varying levels of disregard or even acceptance, based on justifications provided by religion, traditions, and cultural specificity, all of which mask a strong commitment to patriarchal, 'macho' culture, as well as the exaltation of violence and power. This power ensures tight control over the public and private spheres, and, in this way, the subjugation of women in both areas. This is true in peacetime. In times of war, conflict or occupation, amidst the resulting societal disintegration and widespread violence, the situation becomes even more dangerous.

50. Women's Human Rights and Gender-related Concerns in Situations of Conflict and Instability. United Nations Human Rights. Office of the High Commissioner. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/PeaceAndSecurity.aspx>



In a 2019 study published by ABAAD Organization under the title «Gender Based Violence in Syria»⁽⁵¹⁾, it was asserted that displacement and migration pose a great danger to internally displaced persons, especially if they are female, and that present conditions of displacement and migration present real risks. In displacement, women face all nine types of gender-based violence: sexual, physical (including domestic), economic, verbal, psychological, emotional, religious and social, as well as neglect. The study also showed that among the most vulnerable groups are minors, including girls (45%), followed by adult women (41%), and people with special needs and disabilities. As in other countries, cultural constraints, weak legal protection, and the authority maintained by clannish, tribal, and religious leaders, play a highly significant role in preventing female survivors from reporting the crimes perpetrated against them. The reasons given by women themselves include: fear of scandal and disgrace, the lack of family and social support, mistrust of the legal system, and fear of reprisals that could amount to murder to wash off the «shame» (including by the family). Such crimes become common place in areas controlled by violent, extremist organizations.

Iraq is another example of an environment that is hostile to women. Although it succeeded in ending ISIS's «occupation» of some provinces of the country, the impact of recent history is still plainly visible in the precarious circumstances of thousands of women, children and families who have lived in these areas and been the victims of bitter social rejection, revenge and violence. Everything that has happened in Iraq in recent decades has served to strengthen the general climate of violence, especially against women, justifying this in the same way as other Arab societies.

The Iraqi government does not seek to hide or ignore this phenomenon. Rather, those in power refer to the problem often, and publish relevant statistics. Even so, the effectiveness of the plans for eliminating this issue remain limited. There are often clashes between official legal mechanisms, tribal and religious authorities, and what is considered the dominant culture (despite the fact that its political power is weakened, from the perspective of decision makers, through its accumulation of other priorities).

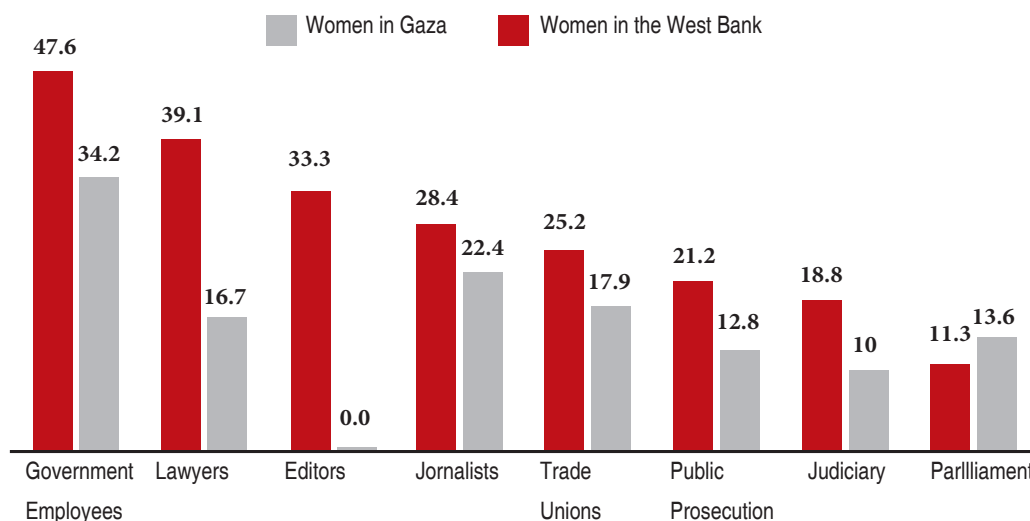
3.3 Case study: the political participation of women in Gaza⁽⁵²⁾

The case of Palestine, especially the situation in Gaza, is a special example of the overlapping effect that various factors can have on the status of women during wartime and blockade. Palestinian women have played an influential and prominent role in the history of Palestinian struggle and have always been a pillar of Palestinian national resistance. Their militant participation is not limited to carrying weapons or throwing stones, but also involves all forms of national struggle and humanitarian work, including maintaining the social fabric, engaging in relevant intellectual discourse, and playing a prominent role during the First Intifada in 1987. However, Palestinian women's contribution to society throughout history has not improved their status in a stable and lasting manner, although this role and the appreciation of it were significant at times. Women still bear the burden of customs and traditions based on the patriarchal ideology that prevails in Palestinian society. This limits their independence and confines them to the private sphere, allowing men to control the public arena. The same applies to political participation, where the establishment of the Palestinian Authority has done little to improve the status of women.

51. <https://www.abaadmena.org/documents/ebook.1555064679.pdf>

52. This case study was prepared by researcher Dr. Alaa Mohammad Zakout specifically for this report. It deals with the period starting in 1996 when the first Palestinian elections were held, down to the creation of the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2018. The situation in Gaza is totally unique, combining Israeli occupation, blockade and the consequences of this, the impact of Palestinian internal divisions, the presence of an authority that embraces Islamism i.e. Hamas, in isolation and under the blockade, and the impact of this complex situation on women's political participation in the Gaza Strip, without isolating it from the general Palestinian context.

Figure: The percentage of women's participation in the Gaza Strip compared to their participation in the West Bank



The political participation of women is low in both the West Bank and Gaza, although the disparity is tilted in favour of the West Bank. The credit for increasing parliamentary representation goes to the quota system, which increased the number of women in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) from five in 1996 to 17 women in 2006, or 12%, with the disparity tilted in favour of Gaza. However, the Legislative Council is dysfunctional, its mandate expired in 2010, and membership is by no means an indicator of participation in decision-making at present.

The opinion of women in Gaza

The analysis of the study sample shows that women have sufficient awareness of, and a strong desire for, political participation, 94% considered themselves capable of change and political action, and 96% believed that women's ability to hold elected positions was a part of their constitutional and legal rights. Women also emphasized the absence, in Gaza, of a democratic political environment which facilitates free political and partisan participation. They also highlighted the absence of a fair, uniform and democratic legal system: 74% considered honest political representation to be lacking in the Gaza strip due to political divisions, and 62% considered freedom of political opinion to be non-existent.

Women feel they face discrimination in terms of exercising their right to political participation. Those surveyed also referred to the reluctance of men to see women in decision-making and senior positions (72% believe that women are discriminated against with regard to freedom of political participation, and 74% believe that men do not support women's attainment of senior positions). They also confirmed the existence of rampant discrimination in the media, which diminishes the role of women (76% considered that the media contributed to diminishing the role of women and highlighting the role of men). It is worth noting that despite the widespread poverty in the Gaza Strip, the majority of Palestinian women (70%) affirmed that poverty cannot prevent them from actively participating in political life and militant action/the struggle.

Influencing factors

The three main factors that limit the participation of women in Gaza are: the Israeli occupation and the blockade, Palestinian political divisions and the system of power, and cultural/social factors.



First: The Israeli occupation and the blockade

The Israeli occupation and blockade have greatly impeded the participation of women in public life, including their broad and continued political engagement. The reason for this is that Palestinian men and women are each day subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, and exile⁽⁵³⁾. This unstable reality limits their ability to exercise their political rights, or engage in political life⁽⁵⁴⁾.

In addition to this, Israel's policies towards the Palestinian economy have resulted in widespread unemployment (42%) due to the lack of job opportunities in Gaza. This, in turn, has led to high levels of poverty and social vulnerability, which place a heavy burden on women⁽⁵⁵⁾. The unemployment, economic stagnation and lack of basic services (especially electricity, water and housing) that the blockade has caused place increasing pressure on the care economy, and the work primarily performed by women. Furthermore, situations of war, blockade, and collective oppression create a general climate of violence that bleeds into the private sphere, family relationships, and attitudes towards women. This environment also stimulates and intensifies patriarchal tendencies, justifying their social and cultural acceptance on the pretext that facing the occupation and the blockade should be prioritized.

Second: Political and partisan divisions

In both Gaza and the West Bank, the climate created by division, internal political tension, and frequent constitutional and institutional crises, fosters exclusionary tendencies among the political parties in power. In practice, this leads to a fundamental change in the rules that govern political life for both the parties themselves and the general public. This means that when conditions of crises and intense competition for power arise, flexibility declines. The logic of confrontation and exclusion replaces the logic of negotiation, and any hope of real compromise is lost. Actual agendas are also reduced, now serving only as instruments through which to maintain power and outdo political rivals. Critical issues, such as women's participation, equality, civil rights and freedom of expression, are excluded from policies on the pretext that they are not a priority at this time. In reality, this subjects women to additional discrimination, especially in the public sphere. This often involves a shift towards total segregation of males and females in schools and universities. These practices would not be possible without the partisan divisions generated by the struggle for power between Fatah and Hamas. The negative effect that this has had on rights and freedoms in general is massive. It has paved the way for further discrimination against women, especially in Gaza.

Third: Social and cultural factors

The prevailing social and cultural perception of women in Gaza is no different to that found in other Arab countries. Patriarchal, 'macho' culture occupies a prominent place in everyday life, which results in the same stereotyping of women that we have seen elsewhere. In effect, this culture confines their role to childbearing and looking after their families. The challenges of this role increase exponentially in light of limited and unavailable public services (which is the case in Gaza). Placing this heavy burden on women jeopardises any chance they may have had of occupying leadership positions, especially if they have children, and significantly marginalises their role in society⁽⁵⁶⁾.

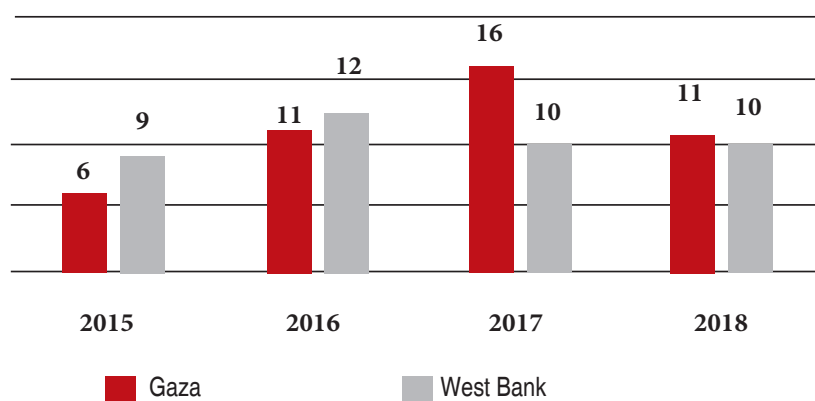
53. HaninJadallah, *State Planning of the Development and Activation of Women's Political Participation in Palestine (1996-2006)*, Master Thesis, College of Graduate Studies, An-Najah National University, Nablus, Palestine, 2007.

54. The number of martyrs in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, from September 29, 2000 to June 1, 2018, reached 6,738 including 613 female martyrs and 929 children. More than 144 persons have also become martyrs since the beginning of the Great March of Return on March 30, 2108, while over 9,620 have been wounded, most of whom are children, in addition to 283 women.

55. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017. *Women and Men in Palestine: Issues and Statistics*, 2017. Ramallah, Palestine

56. Basma al-Naji. *Increasing Women's Participation and Representation in Decision-Making and Policy Positions in Public Education*. Note No. 3. Policies in the Education Sector and the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gaza Strip, Palestine, p. 8. September 2016.

Figure: **Female Murder and Suicide in Palestine**



Source: Fact Sheet, Women's Affairs Centre, Gaza

Violence against women has its roots in the same source, namely, the patriarchal, 'macho' culture, and social relations that exalt power and violence. Because of the Israeli occupation, blockade, war and recurring attacks, this culture has spread rapidly and is widely accepted. Intense conflict has fostered a general climate of violence in Palestine that has infiltrated the fabric of social relations, both public and private. Furthermore, the framework of statutory law in Palestine does not provide adequate protection for women. In cases of domestic violence, assistance is sought from social committees - especially reform committees or clans that rely on customs and traditions to address these cases - which directly contradicts the principles of the rule of law. This leads to the dissemination and legitimization of patriarchal ideology and denies women the right to defend themselves.

Summary of the case study

This case study shows that the political participation of women in Gaza is largely in line with what we see in other Arab countries, despite the harsh political, social and economic conditions that have resulted from the decades-long Israeli occupation and blockade. The deterioration of living conditions faced by women in Gaza (and in Palestine in general) is not generated by the occupation alone, but rather by the deadlock, and the weak international support for Palestinian rights. Deadlock and despair are caused by political and societal divisions, with each side giving precedence to the struggle for power over everything else, and letting the people suffer as a result. Crucially, this places restrictions on public and private freedoms, and violates human rights. As usual, women's rights and freedoms are the first to be sacrificed, and discriminatory customs and traditions, disguised as religion and culture, prevail.

Women and peace

Understanding women who have experienced conflict and war simply as 'victims' fails to do justice to the role they play in society and is inconsistent with the human-right-based approach to development. As citizens, women are active partners in the overall societal landscape. It is for this reason, among others, that it is necessary to take into account all forms of discrimination and the additional pressures women face in the private sphere. They have always participated actively in protests against wars and conflicts, the pursuit of effective solutions that address their root causes, and in interventions that address their impact.

Women have clearly played a significant role – sometimes even a leadership role - in the popular mobilisations and



movements that began in the streets of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and arose a second time in Algeria, Sudan, Iraq and Lebanon. However, this role was diminished, especially at the institutional and legislative levels, in what was called the path of «democratization». Unfortunately, the political participation of women has generally receded in the Arab region. There is an exception to this in the case of Tunisia, and possibly Morocco, which deviate from the trends that can be observed elsewhere in the region. In Tunisia, the battle for gender equality represents a vital pillar of the country's political transformation process.

The United Nations has also developed special mechanisms to enhance the role of women in achieving peace and security, most notably Security Council Resolution 1325 and other complementary policies. These draw on the contribution of women in improving the content, mechanisms and outcomes of negotiation processes, seeking to maximise their role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This aim has been translated into plans, policies and practices at the national level, but some very serious structural gaps remain on the path to peace (as in Syria, Yemen or Libya). These issues obstruct the political participation of the people of these countries, including women, giving power instead to international and regional powers and armed groups affiliated with them.

United Nations mechanisms: Security Council Resolution 1325

The United Nations has established international mechanisms to promote the role of women in peacebuilding. This includes the Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000), which recognizes the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls, and the essential contribution of women and girls to peacebuilding efforts. This is considered one of the most critical, relevant resolutions in this area, as it establishes UN mechanisms that call for the protection of women, and the promotion of their participation in the peace process. 1325 was followed up by a series of complementary resolutions in subsequent years, all of which enforced its aims, formalised follow-up and monitoring mechanisms, and drew attention to emerging dimensions of this issue, such as those related to terrorist organizations, i.e. international outlaws (Resolution 2242 of 2015).

Palestine: Security Council Resolution 1325 versus Occupying Forces

Resolution 1325 is of especial relevance to Palestine, and its national plans should centre around the issues it raises.

The resolution is of particular importance in the Palestinian context because it relates directly to the Israeli occupation, where the opposing sides of the conflict are two states (with reservations about the 'state' description in both cases) who should abide by International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and Resolution 1325. Even in the case of Palestine, this resolution is primarily relevant to violence against women by the occupying state, and less so to domestic division and internal conflicts. Nonetheless, it was thought that Resolution 1325 could be of use to the Palestinian Authority when addressing the United Nations and the international community regarding Israeli violations of international law. This justified formulating a multi-level national plan for this purpose.

The Palestinian Authority prepared a national strategic framework document that was released in May 2015. The plan outlines the national vision for implementing Resolution 1325 and developing methods for follow-up and progress assessment. The bulk of this plan revolves around making use of the provisions provided by the resolution, in order to draw attention to the status of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation, and the violations commit-

ted against them. This will also involve highlighting the resolution's references to human rights and using these as a basis for demanding protection for Palestinian women. This protection will take the form of mobilisation, pressure campaigns at the international level, filing legal complaints against occupying forces before international judicial institutions, and calling on the international community to take responsibility for the violations of the rights of women and all Palestinians perpetrated by Israel. The strategy here also includes clear goals and mechanisms for enhancing women's participation in decision-making, diplomatic representation and peace negotiations. A coalition of women's civil society organizations was formed in 2011 with the aim of implementing the resolution through a unified, national, strategic plan. Unfortunately, due to the failure of international bodies to find a peaceful and fair solution to the Palestinian question, the efforts of Palestinian women (and Palestinians in general) can bring about only limited change⁽⁵⁷⁾.

Yemen: The surgery was successful but the patient died

Yemen is a unique example of the successful implementation of procedures which promote women's participation in the national dialogue, and making «achievements» in this regard, under direct UN auspices. This success might be considered implementation of the content of Resolution 1325. This implementation was possible without the need of a national plan drawn up by the state (like that of the Palestinian Authority), as the UN played a direct role in managing the dialogue on the basis of the GCC Initiative. Women made up 30% of the members of the National Dialogue Conference (565 members total), which lasted ten months (2013 - 2014), and two important committees, out of a total nine, were chaired by women (the Rights and Freedoms Committee and the Saada Committee). Efforts were made to ensure the attendance of Yemeni women representatives in all committees. The gender equality dimension was taken into account in all committee outcomes, albeit at varying levels, in addition to devoting discussion to women's rights, even including reference to progressive issues, such as granting citizenship to children, setting the marriage age at 18, constitutional and legal guarantees of the right to work, and so forth. The dialogue ended with everyone agreeing to the outcomes of the national dialogue.

Then, in September 2014, the situation completely reversed, and internal war broke out. Regional and international powers soon joined what was to become the most destructive war in the history of Yemen, and any outcomes of the national dialogue were put aside.

Yemeni women have repeatedly raised their voices to demand a cessation of war, and protection from its consequences, all the while increasing their active participation in peace negotiations. Some active feminist initiatives were launched in the framework of the dialogue for peace, including the Yemeni Feminist Consensus for Peace and Security that was established in October 2015, which called for an end to the war in Yemen. Women participated in the delegations of the warring parties, within the framework of the Geneva peace talks. This participation had little impact on the process, however. This was entirely expected, as the focus of those involved was very much on war, and struggling to achieve victory on the ground. There was little to no desire to pursue negotiation, or work towards a political solution⁽⁵⁸⁾.

57. <http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-Palestine%20NAP.pdf>

58. Yemen's National Dialogue Conference website and its outcomes: http://www.ndc.ye/ndc_document.pdf



Conclusion

Transforming the accurate conclusion that «there is no peace without development, there is no development without peace» into a slogan or cliché empties it of its true meaning. It becomes a straightforward comparison between selected indicators, in one sector or another, before and after the conflict. The genuine connection between these two concepts lies first and foremost in the notion of development itself and is ethical and philosophical in nature. The relationship between peace and development is apparent in over-arching medium and long-term results, not specific issues or sectors.

Wars, including World War II, have been major catalysts for economic growth and technological development in contemporary history. Does this mean that wars are conducive to development? Certainly not. Reasons for this include:

- First, the concept of development itself involves freedom and the ability to control one's own destiny, including living in peace and security,
- Second, it is necessary to look at the overall impact of wars, especially on institutions, the social fabric, and irreparable human, economic and material losses,
- Third, we should pay special attention to the perspective from which we are assessing war and its aftermath. For example, the assessment of the situation from the perspective of peoples and citizens will be very different from that of the conflicting parties (who can claim victory), or that of arms dealers. In all cases, a complex and multi-level analysis is required, not simple one-dimensional prescriptions.

It must be acknowledged that the approach to peace and security issues in the 2030 Agenda, even within the overall development discourse, does not appear to reflect the facts. It does not take into account the fundamental differences between occupation, international wars, civil wars, other conflicts, security disturbances and so forth. The discourse on peace and development does not sufficiently take into account the role of major external players in the outbreak of wars.

What this means is that we now need a new theoretical framework to address the issues of war, peace and development (and reconstruction). This must take into account both the perspective of rights, and the perspective of the peoples and countries that are suffering. It necessitates the adoption of reconstruction policies where peacebuilding, the social fabric, human rights protection, and gender equality are the ultimate goal of economic and reconstruction policies, not a secondary issue. Furthermore, the human rights-focused approach to development cannot, for any reason, allow the deferral of work to address inequality and discrimination against women. These are not issues that can be postponed. They are fundamental parts of peacebuilding, reconciliation and reconstruction policies. Due attention must also be paid to the cultural dimension of sustainable human development, and to social relations, without which a new society cannot be built.



Chapter III

Wars, Conflicts and their Impact on the Status of Women

Chapter IV

Civil Society After the Arab Spring⁽⁵⁹⁾: New Questions⁽⁶⁰⁾

Preface:

Civil society and its diverse organizations in the Arab world are keenly affected by the nature of the state, and by the political, security-related, economic and cultural climate of each country or region. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) interact with three principal players/spheres: first, political authority, which, at present, focuses on the political dimension of sustainable human development, second, market mechanisms, which are particularly relevant to the economic and social dimensions, and third, society and culture, which are bound up with both values and the knowledge/cultural dimension.

The shape of the popular mobilisation during the «Arab Spring» raises two fundamental points for discussion:

1. First, the peaceful, popular mobilisation clearly demonstrated the difference between the definition of civil society (in this case, represented by the peaceful popular street mobilisation since 2011) and the definition of Civil Society Organizations, thereby shifting the debate in sense from the theoretical to the practical level.
2. Second, the popular mobilisation - which is a mobilisation of civil society – was implemented in order to achieve political change/reform through direct political slogans and goals. This raises important questions about the role and objectives of civil society and its organizations, and the relationship between the 'civil' and the 'political' in the Arab world and in general.

1. Popular Mobilisation Since 2011:

Both waves of peaceful popular mobilisation, the first in 2011 and the second in 2019, proved that increasing levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, combined with pervasive exclusionary or abusive practices that violate human dignity - including women's human rights and their empowerment in the public and private sectors - cannot go unaddressed. In the Arab world this often-spontaneous mobilisation has, despite its spontaneity, led to regime change. The participation of women has played a major role in the success of recent popular mobilisation for several reasons. One of these is the fact that popular mobilisation is among the oldest and most prestigious forms of social movement, often launched to defend the women's cause in general, and their political, economic, social and cultural causes in particular⁽⁶¹⁾. Additionally, the participation of women brought with it the engagement of all other social groups, across all ages, transforming the popular mobilisation into an expression of society par excellence.

59. This report adopts the commonly used term «Arab Spring» to denote the peaceful mass popular street uprising that occurred between the end of 2010 and 2012, before the conflict turned into violent forms and before the military confrontations with armed, extremist or terrorist organizations dominated the front of the scene. It refers to the first wave of the Arab Spring, while the 'second wave' denotes the popular uprisings that other countries witnessed in 2019, especially Algeria, Sudan, Iraq and Lebanon.

60. This chapter was based in large parts on a research paper by Ziad Abdel Samad entitled: *دور المجتمع المدني والبعد المتعلق بالنوع الاجتماعي: آفاق وتحديات* (The Role of Civil Society and the Gender Dimension: Prospects and Challenges). It also benefited from specific contributions from the Arab NGO Network for Development work team.

61. *أفكار في ظل ثورات الشعوب. نصوص حول حقوق المرأة والعدالة الاقتصادية والاجتماعية في المنطقة العربية* (Ideas amid the peoples' revolutions. Texts on women's rights and economic and social justice in the Arab region). ANND. First edition: September 2012. <http://www.annd.org/data/item/188.pdf>



On the other hand, the results of popular mobilisation (especially in its first wave) revealed an inability to achieve democratic transition of power peacefully, through institutions. This was a result of several factors, including the relatively weak capacity of popular and civil movements to implement this major shift, especially in light of the absence of organized and qualified alternative political forces. The situation was made even more difficult by the presence of expert «counter-revolutionary»⁽⁶²⁾ forces, which strove to circumvent the demands of the popular uprising. These forces went on to forge internal and external alliances that ultimately enabled them to partially reclaim and suppress the movement, often thanks to external support. Furthermore, the institutional mechanisms adopted in the «transitional phase» have fundamentally failed to respond to the needs of women and young people. Neither group has been actively included in the transitional political process, despite the fundamental and significant role they played in the period before and during the mass popular uprisings. For this and other reasons, the forces of the old regime have managed to protect their interests, and retain their power or, at least, return to it in various ways and in many places. This ‘holding on’ has occurred through electoral mechanisms, coups, excessive use of violence and military force in the face of opponents, or even through external intervention. We cannot yet predict the outcome of the uprisings in Sudan, Algeria, Iraq and Lebanon, even though the methods they employed indicate great maturity and learning from the lessons of the first wave of the Arab Spring in 2011, and the developments that followed (particularly in terms of women’s participation throughout the process). Furthermore, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world, and across the Arab region in particular, has either slowed or entirely halted the process of transition. This has made predicting outcomes far more difficult (March 2020).

2. New Forms of Civil Work

Protest rallies in the Arab world fostered several new social movements, fundamentally different in their demands and methods from traditional civil movements. The preliminary mapping of non-typical⁽⁶³⁾ or institutionalized rallies and movements shows a tremendous diversity in organizational structures, areas of intervention, methods of work, forms of protest and advocacy. This diversity of approaches exists not only within a single country, but often within a single city. According to our approach, which focuses more on content than on form and literal interpretation, these new movements contribute both directly and indirectly to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where:

- Their core philosophies intersect with the universal moral principles framing the Agenda and its goals,
- Their approaches and working methods are consistent with the Agenda guidelines, such as the adoption of participatory approaches, human-rights-based and global development, among others,
- Their areas of activity intersect with those found in the Agenda, which are: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

This intersection with the 2030 Agenda can be seen through the content, working methods and principles of these movements, rather than in the form of an explicit declaration of support for the global development agenda or its national manifestations.

62. The use of the term counter-revolution is also frequently used, and is intended to refer to all the forces and movements which opposed the peaceful, civic goal expressed by the popular street uprising, epitomized by the watchwords of the modern democratic civil state: justice, dignity, employment, freedom, and «living/bread».... etc.

63. NGOs and associations are often divided into categories based on multiple criteria. They are described as ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’ according to their organization pattern. Other terms used include: ‘traditional’ «Ahliyah» (linked to primary affiliations), ‘civil’ (i.e., modern based on secondary affiliations), care/services focused, developmental, or charity/rights...etc. We use the term ‘non-typical’ organizations here to distinguish between the types of associations and organizations that prevailed before 2011 (i.e. those, whether traditional or modern, that belonged to any of the categories mentioned above, including unions, all of which have a regulatory framework modeled on the organization, union or institution), and the types outside this model that emerged during or immediately after the popular street mobilisation, which do not resemble in their organization, operation and work those that existed before. The term does not imply any value judgment, but rather refers to the new movements whose characteristics will be presented in this chapter.

2.1 Birth of the New Movements

The emergence of these new movements is best understood when framed by the historical and socio-political context of the Arab world. We might look to the Arab Renaissance and national independence, or to more recent periods, depending on the purpose of the research and the approach adopted. In this report, however, we do not need to delve too deeply into this historical context. It will be sufficient to introduce some contemporary milestones, so that we might better comprehend the new movements that emerged after 2010, and their direct antecedents.

One of the most important historical milestones that shares common features with the movements of the so-called «Arab Spring», is the first Palestinian Intifada in 1987. This was another peaceful, popular civil movement. Other significant uprisings include the Kefaya movement in Egypt (2004), the 18 Coalition for Rights and Freedoms in Tunisia (2005), the Independence Uprising in Lebanon (2005), the Libyan Khalas Movement (2005), the Damascus Coalition (2005), the National Coordinating Committees Against the High Cost of Living in Morocco and the Youth Action Rally in Algeria, the 2008 protests and social movements in the Mining Basin of Tunisia, Sidi Ifni in Morocco and Ghazi Al Mahalla factories in Egypt.

The interrelatedness of these examples justifies considering them as a prelude to the new social and popular movements which have played a direct role in the 2011 events and onwards. The new movements emerged across the Arab world in response to restrictions on freedoms and rights. These spontaneous uprisings quickly turned into mass popular demonstrations and sit-ins that raised new issues (citizenship, dignity, justice, employment, bread, equality, freedom etc.) and sought radical change.

2.2 Main Characteristics of the New Movements

Despite the great diversity of the new movements found within individual Arab countries, and across the entire Arab region, all share many common characteristics. The first of these is their broad social and popular base, which spans all generations and levels of society. The second is their vision for change regarding the relationships, institutions and legislation that will lead to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The third is their field activity, their default 'horizontal' tactics, and the persistence of their operations.

These new movements are characterized by ways of thinking, organizing and acting that differ greatly from those that are prevalent within Civil Society Organizations, including even modern Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that adopt a human rights and development approach.

The main differentiating factors are as follows:

1. The adoption of clear and radical political goals (the people want to overthrow the regime), whilst still remaining civil movements. This stands in contrast to the kind of activism that is prevalent within typical, traditional CSOs, which tend to avoid making radical demands, particularly any that are political in nature.
2. The bridging of the deep gap which exists between the work of NGOs – which tends to avoid direct popular work, with the exception of some particular campaigns – and direct popular action. This is achieved by combining the traditions of NGOs, unions, associations and political parties, with those of direct citizen participation (a direct style of democracy that goes beyond representative or participatory democracy).



3. The largely spontaneous nature of said movements⁽⁶⁴⁾, combined with an absence of conventional leadership, party organization and the like. If organizational forms are adopted, they tend to avoid hierarchical systems in favour of more horizontal and flexible organization, networking and campaigns. This often involves an increasing role for the virtual space and its tools. These points raise questions concerning continuity and the balance between spontaneity and organization - issues that have emerged strongly in recent years.
4. The significant role played by women and young people in movements, rallies and networks, which is accompanied by a new culture with respect to goals. Within this new culture we see unity around common, non-factional goals, in which everyone finds a way to achieve their own aspirations, without any being neglected. We also see the true, bright face of popular culture highlighted in these movements, particularly in terms of advancing the status and value of women in society (one shining example being the absence of harassment despite street crowds - except in Egypt at a later stage, after the rally had left the streets). We also see a clear improvement in the status of all marginalized groups (women, girls, the poor, the unemployed, the middle classes, adolescents, people with disabilities, etc.) and the complete rejection of social hierarchy

Another critical point in this area is that the popular mobilisations, and the new movements formed in response to them (before, during and after), not only reject tyranny, political systems and the problems they generate (poverty, unemployment, inequality, violation of rights, etc., epitomized in the expression «dignity revolutions»), but also object to all political parties, including the opposition, which is often fundamentally incapable of providing a convincing political alternative.

These movements also frequently challenge the shortcomings of CSOs – including modern, human rights and development organizations - which are governed by inadequate and unconvincing agendas and strategies, and which often fail to fulfil their commitments to human rights, dignity, justice and genuine participation.

2.3 Presence of Women and Gender Equality Issues in the New Movements

The massive presence of women in new movements resulted in changes to the form of protest as well as the ways in which the authorities dealt with it, from the security forces to the senior political officials. The participation of women brings with it the participation of the whole society. If both the father and mother participate, so does the neighbourhood and town. One example of the role of these movements in fostering awareness, changing mentalities and achieving the SDGs, is the recent rise of anti-violence and anti-sexual harassment movements in Egypt. These adopted the feminist cause by bringing together transformation, feminism and rights through the established collaboration of various organizations and campaigns such as the «Tahrir Bodyguard», the «Imprint Movement», the «I Saw Harassment», the «Nazra for Feminist Studies» organization and online groups such as «Girls Revolution». Activists have directly linked radical change to a woman's right to safety on the streets and squares. For many, such a link was a conscious shock that exposed the issues of sexual and male violence, and the justification of violence and discrimination against women.

64. This does not fully apply to the Algerian and Sudanese movements that arose in the second wave of the Arab uprisings. The mass popular mobilisation was launched in the same way as the first wave in 2010/2011, but the role of unions, CSOs and even political movements, was both clearer and more organized - obviously drawing on previous experience. The other characteristics remained very similar. However, we are witnessing in Algeria and Sudan a greater emphasis on civilian power in the sense of rejecting the military character of any alternative authority, including in transitional stages – another attitude drawn from previous experience.

With regard to women's rights in general, enshrining their personal, civil and political rights has been the focus of attempts to empower women and defend their freedom for many years. Throughout this time, intense political differences have emerged within a polarized culture, seeking to counter a conservative view that threatens the gains achieved. On the other hand, the economic and social rights of women, which cover issues such as equal pay, fragile employment mechanisms and the situation of rural women, have remained relatively neglected in the media and in political debate. It is well known that women are more at risk than men of unemployment and chronic poverty. This is due to the gender disparity in social roles, and discrimination in various social, economic and political institutions as well as in legislation. The result of this is an unbalanced distribution of resources, which often favours men over women. The active participation of women in movements on the ground has changed the dominant patriarchal character of the protest arena, and has transformed civil action into an inclusive, societal pursuit.

2.4 «Transition» Phase

Two main features of the «transitional» political process can be identified. The first relates to the progressive marginalization of the social forces that played a major role in the revolutionary uprising, especially women, young people and those in disadvantaged and marginalized areas. The second feature is that this political process, while enhancing some personal freedoms (by placing certain parameters on political citizenship) has kept the vast majority of citizens beyond the remit of social and economic citizenship, that is, outside the circle of enjoying basic rights that guarantee their social security and ability to act politically. Furthermore, the adoption of new constitutions, and the organization of democratic elections (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt...etc.) has not resulted in any significant changes to the structure of influential economic and social interests. This process has not even succeeded in imposing transparent monitoring mechanisms on the State's performance in the field of economic policy (such as levies, loans' system and natural resource governance).

Often, the institutionalization of political transitions and the establishment of representative democracy may bring with it the removal of «dangerous groups» from the political and social arena, to the point of criminalizing some forms of struggle⁽⁶⁵⁾. Consequently, even seven years after 2011, alienation between youth and State is still deeply present. This alienation is embodied in the slogan raised by the Lebanese popular uprising «KellunYaaniKellun» («all means all»). A statement that clearly represents their view that no part of the ruling coalition (or even the opposition) is beyond their mistrust. The slogan of the Algerian uprising «Yetnahaw Ga3» (let them all go) or the slogan «Yasgot Bas» (just fall, that's all) in Sudan, also firmly declare the lack of trust between citizens and authority institutions.

65. Law No. 34 of 2011 in Egypt criminalizing strikes and sit-ins under the pretext of disrupting production and social peace. It was issued by the Military Council in Cairo on 9 Jumada al-Awwal, 1432 AH, corresponding to April 12, 2011. It is the first law issued after the January Revolution in Egypt.



3. Case study: Civil society in the transition process in Tunisia⁽⁶⁶⁾. Condensing and summarising the interactions between old and new approaches:

Tunisia is a very telling example of the evolving role of CSOs, where older, more traditional organizations have integrated relatively successfully with new movements, and conventional approaches have blended with innovative ones.

Prior to 2011, Tunisian civil society played an important role in keeping the issue of civil and political rights alive, and organizing broad segments of society despite legal and political obstacles. Even so, the post-revolution period saw profound changes to its composition, role, and relationship with the state. The extent of this change was so considerable that Tunisian civil society, in addition to receiving the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize, is internationally celebrated. This is due in large part to the role played by the «Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet» (comprising the Tunisian General Labour Union, the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts, the Tunisian Order of Lawyers, and the Tunisian Human Rights League), in leading a national dialogue between political parties, and drawing up a road map for the conclusion of the first transitional phase and the ratification of the constitution.

Since 2014, new kinds of active and influential civil bodies have emerged that can be considered Civil Society Organizations (Al Bawsala, I WATCH... etc.), despite the fact that they were not legally enrolled in the associations system (in their early stages, at least). Due to their efforts to present development goals from an economic, social, gender and environmental rights perspective, they have become a major force in driving governments towards reform and encouraging traditional CSOs to further develop their role and integrate new approaches into their activities.

The intensifying civil and political conflict that followed the revolution in Tunisia, led to an overlap between the realms of politics, associations, art, media and sports. The extent of this was so significant that connections began to be forged between the parties in government or opposition and a network of associations, bodies and affiliated clubs, in violation of Decree 88 (2011) which regulates the work of associations. The government's announcement of its intention to implement Decree 88 in 2013 did not prevent the situation from deteriorating to the brink of collapse. Had it not been for the intervention of civil society through the Tunisian Quartet's dialogue initiative, the emerging democratic process would have been devastated.

Old Organizations with New Roles:

The revolution re-energised society and opened the door to popular, civil and political engagement previously monopolized by state authority. From the start, civil society was a key player in establishing reform: in addition to the Tunisian General Labour Union, the National Constituent Assembly and the «Higher Authority for the Realisation of the Objectives of the Revolution» included organizations and entities such as: the National Bar Association, the Tunisian League of Human Rights, the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, the Association of Tunisian Women for Research on Development, the National Council of the Order of Physicians,

66. See the paper prepared by Malek Saghiri and Azza Derbali for this report entitled: «المجتمع المدني التونسي و تحقيق أهداف التنمية» (Tunisian Civil Society and Achieving Development Goals)

the National Council for Freedom, the International Association for support of Political Prisoners, the National Union of Tunisian Journalists, the Unemployed Workers Union, and the General Union of Tunisian Students. These organizations, individually and collectively, have played a critical role, within the framework of the Higher Authority, in bridging the gap in representation after the fall of the regime, securing a smooth transition, preparing for the Constituent Assembly elections, and playing a foundational role in the drafting of laws and decrees prepared, proposed, and approved at a later time (including Decree 88 (2011) itself which regulates the work of associations). The role played by these organisations was invaluable, and falls outside the normal function of CSOs. It should be noted that the associations and organizations that assumed this role are traditional unions, human rights and development institutions, including women's associations, rather than new movements. They responded to the new tasks imposed by current developments and needs. What this shows is that established patterns of civil action can converge with the new allied and horizontal patterns of civil action. This is one of the most important lessons of the Tunisian experience and its strengths.

New Organizations and Movements

By the time Tunisia's National Constituent Assembly was elected, a first wave of newly formed associations was ready to participate in the new structure, and address issues of democratic change and development from multiple angles, via different methods. Thanks to the success of a number of these associations in developing their capacity, promoting their projects, influencing new legislation, drawing up public policies and monitoring their proper implementation, it is possible to talk about the features of new civil movements that have reenergised Tunisian society. A manifestation of this renewal is the widespread participation of youth outside traditional frameworks. In this, we see the growing unrestricted societal demand for a just state, capable of achieving goals. Examples of this can be seen in movements such as «I WATCH», «Al Bawsala», «ManichMsamah» and others.

Fragmented Agendas and Insufficient Mechanisms

The work of the majority of these new organisations has focused on the mechanisms of political and institutional reform, consolidation of civil and political rights, drafting a new constitution and forming constitutional bodies. The absence of any focus on the economic and social dimensions of development has had a clear effect on the ways in which the dissent of youth and women has developed. This is also true of the entities who spearheaded new approaches to social action, such as coordination and local committees i.e. grassroots bodies that meet, make decisions, write statements, engage in protests and negotiate with the authorities, all without having any legal grounds under the Law on Associations. Nine years after the revolution, this space continues to evolve substantially, with political and civil awareness rising in response to the ideological or technocratic approach to development, employment and youth issues that were among the main causes of the 2011 revolution. This new civil space is generally developing with citizens and civil society in mind, with a focus on achieving goals related to the right to life, and the economic and social nature of political citizenship. This has also manifested in the growing interest of unions and CSOs in the economic and social crisis in Tunisia, including the macro policies expressed by the founding of coalitions against the Tunisian government's handling of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. The European Union is seeking to «convince» the Tunisian government to sign this document amid widespread opposition, due to the negative impact it would have on the economic and social situation in the country.



4. Looking Ahead: Civil Society, What Roles and Options?

Profound development in Arab countries, societies, and international relations, as well as the adoption of the transformative 2030 Agenda, require all concerned parties to move beyond the traditional working methods and content. Instead, it is essential to consider new tools, working methods and content. This also applies to CSOs, who must respond to recent developments and cultivate a new and improved understanding of: their role, their strategies for networking and joint action, and the contents of their work programs. These changes will allow them to effectively and successfully address the challenges and requirements of the new era.

The recognised, traditional roles of Civil Society Organisations can be divided into the following categories:

1. Executive, developmental, and service provision role
2. Advocacy and outreach role
3. Monitoring and accountability role
4. Influencing policy and decision-making role
5. Transformative role

In response to recent developments in Arab countries, and the requirements of societal transformation/change at this stage, it has become necessary to strengthen what might be called the transformative role of civil society and its organizations (the fifth role), at various levels, including the local.

4.1 The Transformative Role of Civil Society in light of the Arab Spring

The importance of this specific role became clear during the Arab Spring and its aftermath, in light of the unprecedented events that countries in question may have experienced at that time. Political crisis and exceptional circumstances, such as occupation, war, or political and social instability, can lead to serious disruption in the work of the state and society. Grave failings or shortcomings at the level of state institutions and political parties drive civil society to fill the void they have created, address the potential deterioration of the country's circumstances, confront the major challenges that impede development and decent living standards, and take the initiative at the local level. This is especially true of the horizontal action that characterised the new movements, often due to the wide disparity of circumstance between different regions in the same country. A first example of this vital role can be seen in the first intifada in Palestine (1987), in which Palestinian civil society faced the occupation with peaceful, popular, civil action, and prior to that maintained its national identity for decades under occupation. A clear second example is the Arab Spring, both at its first stage during the street movement in 2011, and then in the second wave in 2019, which played a direct political role in confronting regimes. A third example is the role of the Tunisian Quartet⁶⁷ in launching an internal political dialogue, thereby preventing the fall of Tunisia into political crisis and the danger of violence (in the Tunisian case, the decisive role of institutionalized civil society differentiates it from the previous two examples, in which civil society manifested its role directly through popular mobilisation of citizens).

67. A group of organizations which played the mediating role in the democratic transition process in Tunisia in the summer of 2013. The quartet mediation consisted of the four organizations: The Tunisian General Labour Union, the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts, the Tunisian Order of Lawyers, and the Tunisian Human Rights League, and was established in summer 2013 when the transition to democracy was facing risks from political assassinations and widespread social unrest.

In early 2019, trade unions (engineers, doctors, teachers...) took on a distinctive role in the Sudanese uprising. We also continue to see this role enacted at the local level, through the hundreds of very diverse local initiatives in cities, villages and regions across various Arab countries.

The transformative role - national and local – of civil society and its organizations is a comprehensive one given the exceptional circumstances faced by the region and Arab countries. It goes beyond conventional notions about the purpose of civil society, and its relationship with politics.

4.2 Challenges of the Role of Civil Society

Before societal transformation and coherent implementation of development agendas can be achieved, several challenges must be overcome. One of the most important of these is the lack of conviction among global, regional and national decision-making bodies in addressing the structural challenges that hinder development. This includes the radical shift towards democratic governance⁽⁶⁸⁾ that enables not just superficial, limited civil participation with little impact, but genuine participation of civil society in the formulation of macro-policies specific to development.

On the other hand, recent decades saw the authoritarian nature of the state weaken civil society and dismantle modern social structures, all the while strengthening the traditional structures that prevent the formation of an independent civil society. The post Arab Spring period saw some traditional forces and religious movements that do not oppose the prevailing economic system manage to occupy the public scene and regulate its political life. Furthermore, the outbreak of armed conflicts and civil wars prevented any progress towards the desired democratic transformation, encouraged the emergence of different sub-identities and dismantled the existing modern values system (in spite of its defects), in favour of reinstating a system of archaic and extremist values that contributed to the spread and infiltration of terrorism in society. This was a climate that was completely hostile to any civil thought, let alone civil society and its organizations.

These and other events paved the way for applying an unhelpful environment to the work of civil society. This has fostered a society solicitous of its independence from governments and donors, one which embraces developmental and human rights thought, and places itself in fervent opposition to extremist organizations, terrorism, and to military and security forces who exercise political power.

4.3 New View of Networking

The difficult circumstances and major challenges limiting the work of CSOs require exceptional strategies to combat them. These must respond to the organisations and their requirements, which will include building a broad and diverse alliance between CSOs, and boldly developing new work programs and methods.

Building a horizontal partnership is an essential and urgent priority, which will entail transforming work strategies and reducing the effort exerted on dealing with donors, international organizations (and even governments), in favour of building an effective alliance between the components of civil society itself.

68. The term 'democratic governance' was used by the UNDP when interest in government issues rose, in order to differentiate their work from that of the World Bank's, who preferred 'good governance'. 'Democratic governance' is clearer as it emphasizes the political aspect of governance and goes beyond dealing with governance as a simply technical matter. This phrase is no longer common as the World Bank approach has prevailed. See example: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/democratic-governance/oslo-governance-center/democratic-governance-reader/DG_reader-2009.pdf



The main elements of this transformation are:

1. Networking and building a strong partnership with new movements: Typical development and human rights organizations need to expand the limited scope of their work to converge with direct grassroots action, and with broad social movements. For their part, the new movements that have emerged in the wake of popular uprisings need to improve their new ways of working and establish appropriate institutional structures. This collaboration will benefit both parties.

The gap between typical institutionalized development (including the work of human rights organizations) and new movements must be bridged. This is an essential condition for the success of transformative tasks, and for influencing policies.

2. Networking with unions: This refers to trade unions, employee unions, and liberal professions unions in particular. The organisations often still operate according to traditional concepts, and have a broad, representative character (this is particularly true of unions independent from authorities as well as independent CSOs). Conversely, the development organizations that adopt modern concepts often lack a broad social base, except in the case of social movements or campaigns.

The adoption of modern development theory by unions would improve their ways of working, enrich development theory with practicality, respond to people's actual lives, and enhance the chances of successful networking with other organizations.

3. Cross-sectoral and factional networking between networks and organizations: Just as human rights are indivisible and irreducible, and just as the 2030 agenda is an interconnected agenda that cannot be divided, strategic demands for sustainable human development that require policy change cannot be fulfilled in one sector without another.

The experience of women's participation in popular and civic Arab uprisings has shown that engagement reached its peak, and concerns crystallized in their most advanced form, when women's participation was a strong and active component within the overall social mobilisation. Later, it remained at the forefront of work to shift society towards the values of freedom, equality, democracy and rights. This requires a thorough and honest review of all movements in order to build broad and cross-sectoral networking, before requiring organizations to partner with governments, donors or the United Nations. The Tunisian example also indicates that coalition and cooperation can sometimes also extend across class affiliations, as was the collaboration between the Labour Union and the Union of Customs (business community) in order to ensure the continuity of democratic rule and prevent the slide towards violence, these events also reflect the experiences of other countries. This must be the subject of deep reflection.

There should be advanced forms of effective coordination, integration and networking between the major components of the CSOs, particularly the human rights organizations (including women), environmental organizations, development organizations and unions, stepping out from their own circles and demands to meet in the common development and human rights space, including collaborating with service and charitable associations and unions. This maximizes the chances of success for the transformative functions of civil society.

Summary

People are the real power behind CSOs. It is not their relationships with governments which facilitate their mission at the expense of their autonomy, nor their relationships with donors which pursue funding at the expense of their national agendas, nor their possible relationships with the United Nations - established in the hope that they might participate in international functions and promote their external presence, stressing the importance of this for the progress of their work and expanding their horizons. Priority now must be given to strengthening the power in CSOs by reinforcing the horizontal ties between them, whilst also strengthening their individual and collective relationship with the citizens: the source of their strength and independence. After all, the defence of the people's interests is the reason for their existence.

This priority requires smart strategies that allow for:

1. Achieving balance between three elements: the need for funding, commitment to national agendas that respond to the real needs of citizens, and development of visions and plans for how to dispense with both external and conditional government funding, as well as that which is not based on objective and stable criteria.
2. Achieving balanced, effective participation within available frameworks. These include governmental, regional and international frameworks. This will be particularly important during the implementation stages of the 2030 Agenda. It will also be crucial for establishing an independent course of action which allows CSOs to develop their autonomous vision, possibly provide their own assessment of the development process, and create parallel national, regional and global reports that include their vision for development and the progress made.
3. Emphasising autonomy above all else. CSOs add no value unless they are independent of governments, donors and the private sector. Autonomy is the opposite of both subordination and hostility.
4. Developing in-depth knowledge of development and human rights thought, and the current situation in those countries and communities in which CSOs are active.
5. Consistent commitment to the human rights system and the rejection of all forms of discrimination, particularly that against women, youth, adolescents, people with disabilities, groups with different religious, social, ethnic, political, cultural affiliations, and those with different personal tendencies, or positions on individual rights and freedoms, etc.
6. Adopting an objective approach to the roles of civil society, without being overly cautious or fearful of any important issue simply because it is political in nature. This will also involve refusing to exaggerate its role – understanding that civil society cannot be considered a replacement for the State, political parties and movements.



While stressing the importance of developing the vision and strategies of CSOs, it must be noted that the most important reason behind civil society and its organisations failing to play the required developmental role is external to them. It is the surrounding environment. Two main factors can be mentioned here:

1. Global and national macro policies often adopt goals, plans and means of action that are inconsistent with the concept of development, the 2030 Agenda and the human rights system. The absence of a general commitment to these requirements, not only limits the options of the traditional approach to growth, but also undermines the very foundation of the role of development agents in society.
2. The second factor, which is crucial for the Arab region, is the restrictive legislative, institutional and cultural framework that puts pressure on the participation of civil society, creating deeply embedded patterns around acceptable relations between governments and civil society. These foster limited or superficial cooperation, weak trust, and even communication breakdown, blocking and constraint.

On this basis, when it has reviewed the overall development trends, as well as the legislative and institutional framework that restricts civil society, and worked towards self-development according to the specified foundations, civil society can firmly establish a position of influence in the development process and in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In such a way it will contribute considerably to setting the development agenda itself on the right track.



Chapter V

Local Development: Field Experiences

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Local Development: Field Experiences⁽⁶⁹⁾

Preface

Decentralization or its promotion has been a common feature of constitutional reform in Arab countries since 2011, as has been the case in Tunisia, Morocco, and Iraq. It continues to be presented as a principal option for reform in countries currently suffering from wars and conflicts (i.e. Syria, Yemen, and Libya), as well as for other Arab countries. This is intended as impetus for reinforcing participatory democracy in the management of local affairs, with the aim of achieving better development results⁽⁷⁰⁾.

Decentralization and local development are also frequently mentioned in the 2030 Agenda, development literature and project documents implemented by CSOs. The role that decentralization and local development can be expected to play in achieving global or national development goals is sometimes exaggerated. Often, they are made out to be almost synonymous with democracy, participation and good governance. It is imperative to be clear from the start that isolating decentralization and local development from their true context is counterproductive.

From a gender equality perspective, decentralization is particularly important as it affects local communities, an area in which women can make potentially significant changes, perhaps more so than at the national level. However, the opposite may also be true, especially if the power structures at the local level are more authoritarian and patriarchal in character than the national ones. It is possible to find examples that support both of these theories. Local work can be easier or more difficult in terms of gender equality, depending on circumstances and each country's local areas.

Decentralization, when presented as a principle isolated from the overall system of governance in the country concerned, can be interpreted as an attempt to relieve the central authorities of their responsibilities, opting instead for lower levels of political and administrative organization. On the contrary, centralization and decentralization are not mutually exclusive principles, but two interrelated aspects of governance, mirroring the distribution of tasks and responsibilities at different levels within the national governance system.

Strengthening decentralized authorities does not mean weakening central authorities. On the contrary, it means a distribution of responsibilities that reinforces the role of both local and central authorities alike in performing complementary functions within a democratic and effective governance system. Effective decentralization also requires effective centralization.

69. This chapter was based on several contributions including 2 research papers prepared specifically for this report: by Monia Ibrahim: *الموارد الطبيعية ومقاربة النوع الاجتماعي* (Natural Resources and Gender Approach), and by Rim Aljabi: *دور المجتمع المدني في إدماج النوع الاجتماعي في أهداف التنمية المستدامة* (Civil Society Role in Gender Integration in SDGs). In addition to papers and case studies of several researchers who responded to CAWTAR request, and which were cited where used.

70. Mona Harb and Sami Atallah (2015): *Local Governments and Public Goods: Assessing Decentralization in the Arab World*, Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, Lebanon



In turn, the concept of local development is used excessively. The discourse on local development, participation and the idea that development can only be achieved at the local level, appears scientific, convincing and attractive, especially for individuals and Civil Society Organizations. This belief is valid in the sense that measuring development achievement by national averages is not enough. Furthermore, «development leaving no one behind» means that it must include everyone, throughout all sectors, population groups and geographical departments, down to the smallest and farthest from the centre. However, exaggerating the impact of local development conceals the desire to circumvent priorities that address economic, social or other public policies. Experience over the past decades has made clear that local interventions have a more significant, broader and sustainable transformative impact, when they fall within a broader national framework. The relationship between the national and the local is reciprocal. As has been noted, national policies help to ensure the success and sustainability of local interventions, while local interventions - particularly successful ones - can become a catalyst for the adoption of comprehensive and effective macro-economic, social and administrative policies which carry a developmental and sustainable dimension.

On the other hand, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020 will have a direct impact on approaches to decentralization and local development, both of which played a significant role in successfully confronting the pandemic, through advanced preparedness to face such events. This situation will also give new meaning to the concept of «resilience» at the global, national and local level. The response to the pandemic has uncovered serious structural and policy deficiencies at a global and national level, including within developed countries. Structural imbalances in opportunities, policies and institutions have been forcefully revealed. In the face of the pandemic, instead of strengthening international cooperation and confronting the problem in solidarity, regressive and isolationist tendencies emerged both at the global level and within specific countries. Most national responses emphasised the role that local authorities, local association and institution networks (including CSOs) and local administration bodies must play in responding effectively to the crisis. At the same time, isolationist tendencies also emerged at the local level, between cities and regions of the same country. This was largely due to the absence of prior preparation and the lack of effective national coordination to achieve national and local integration.

As for the concept itself, the current approach to the issues of 'centralization/decentralization' and local development have been found entirely insufficient in such circumstances, both from an administrative and top-down perspective. This fact compels us to move away from understanding decentralization as the "devolution" of power from the central to the local level. Instead, we must begin to understand it as the strengthening of local, institutional and individual capacities so that local bodies can manage their affairs and solve their problems unaided (as long as this is possible and effective), possessing the means, knowledge and skills to respond effectively to crises, while at the same time fostering integration with the national bodies, not isolation from them.

This will require making very different choices from those that are currently customary, whether in terms of policies, priorities, resources, means of action, or legislative and institutional frameworks. The current situation has given a new meaning to the concept of 'resilience', and clearly compels us to move beyond the narrow and administrative concept of decentralization which continues to be commonplace. This matter requires deep reflection in view of what has been revealed during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Women, Land and Natural Resources

The 2030 Agenda has a very strong environmental message. This is made abundantly clear in the preamble, the direct environmental goals (SDG12 to SDG15), and the goals with a strong environmental dimension (SDG2, SDG5, SDG6 and SDG11). Together, these make up eight of the 17 goals. It should be noted that the issue of environmental (and non-environmental) sustainability also features strongly in other goals, especially those that focus on economics. Sustainability is a comprehensive principle that underpins the whole development process and is intended to be integrated into every part of it.

It is worth noting that the convergence between environmental issues and gender equality does not feature so clearly and boldly in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, as it does in the theoretical sections of the 2030 Agenda. This means that reciprocity is achieved in both directions and does not appear automatically, but rather should be highlighted through practical analysis, planning and policymaking. This is evidenced in the move from theory to practice, being especially true at the local level, where there is a very strong connection between natural resources, the social (and economic) dimensions of people's daily lives, gender relations, and sustainability.

This chapter focuses on studying the organic interconnection between natural resource management (especially land and water ownership), women's empowerment, and the role of civil society at the local level and in local development.

1.1 Equal Access to Land

Steep inequality in land ownership and tenure is a characteristic of Arab society (and many others). This reflects the heavy legacy of pre-capitalist traditions, and the immense role that tribal/clan relations, and the patriarchal, «macho» culture that accompanies this, continue to play in both power structures and social relations. This reality restricts women's creative potential and hinders their economic role, particularly in the field of agriculture, where women make up a relatively high proportion of the agricultural workforce (40% in the Middle East and North Africa) while their share of land ownership is only 5%⁽⁷¹⁾.

In 2011⁽⁷²⁾, The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported significant disparity between women and men as agricultural land administrators. In some Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Algeria) the rate, at its most extreme, did not exceed 7%. This is well below the global average of 18%, and is far from comparable to other regional rates, such as those found in Europe and North America, which exceed 20%, and those of Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, which are around 19%. On the other hand, in 2014, a survey conducted in a number of countries in the Middle East and North Africa by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) confirmed that only 4% of land owners and administrators in Yemen are women, with an additional 3% of women being landowners but with no power of disposition. Furthermore, the percentage of women landowners in Syria does not exceed 5.3%.

71. <https://www.land-links.org/issue-brief/fact-sheet-land-tenure-womens-empowerment/>

72. We have to admit that the lack of data in this area represents a significant problem. When reviewing the various sources concerned (including the website of FAO, the World Bank... etc.) we find that most of the available data is outdated, or that the methodologies and indicators used are inconsistent in their definition and procedures. Given that data disaggregated by gender is already underreported in the Arab countries, there is little hope of finding appropriate data about agricultural sector and land ownership. This is one of the challenges that must be addressed in the coming years.



Often in these countries, there is no constitutional or legal reason to restrict or prohibit a woman's ownership of land and property, but there remains a distinct societal 'gap' between women and men. This gap does not have its roots in 'law' in the narrow sense, but in the overall legislative, social, and cultural environment. Customary laws and familial or tribal customs are often more revered in practice, which prevents women, especially in rural areas, from having equal economic opportunities, including in regard to inheritance law. Discriminatory practices and exclusionary customs affect women regardless of their religious affiliation (Muslim and non-Muslim). One example we can draw on, though, is the violation of inheritance law in favour of the provisions of the Sharia law adopted in the country, which differ from region to region and from family to family. The «gender-gap» here refers to a socio-cultural combination of factors that originally date back to feudal or pre-capitalist societies, where the rules of inheritance were based on discrimination in favour of the eldest son, and then in favour of men in general, in order to prevent the division of property ownership.

Success in bridging this gap requires that legal frameworks specify the issues surrounding ownership and inheritance. This includes movable and immovable property, and common bonds. It must be emphasized that secure tenure, in addition to ownership, is essential for the economic, social and political empowerment of women, as well as the increased well-being of their families and society. Secure tenure is a prerequisite of access to other resources, including financial services, which will increase women's access to income-generating projects, particularly in rural areas.

This issue is directly related to SDG2 (Targets 1 and 2 to be exact), since a key part of food security is ensuring the livelihood (social and economic) of small farmers and family agricultural investments that adopt modern or traditional, environmentally friendly methods, based on inherited agricultural traditions. In this type of agriculture, women often hold more important roles than their counterparts in large agricultural investments. Furthermore, larger scale agriculture often drains resources, contributes to the degradation of agricultural land and gives rise to the destruction of traditional production patterns. These are not simply patterns, but lifestyles, meaning that their elimination marginalizes both male and female farmers, with the burden of marginalization or exclusion falling specifically on women.

1.2 Women and Water Resources Management

It should be noted that the Arab region faces a major challenge in terms of water availability. Although the Arab region accounts for about 3% of the world's total population, it has only 1.2% of the world's water supply⁽⁷³⁾. Additionally, it is expected that climate change will reduce the amount of renewable water in the region by 20% by 2030. Climate-induced forced displacement - due to both drought and sea-level rise - represents a particular threat: about 9% of the Arab region's population live in coastal areas that are projected to be about five meters below sea level according to the latest predictions⁽⁷⁴⁾.

73. المرأة وتحقيق أهداف التنمية المستدامة في المنطقة العربية (Women and achieving sustainable development goals in the Arab region). A pilot study, Arab Women Organization, United Nations Development Programme and Cairo Center for Development Benchmarking, 2017 <http://www.arabwomenorg.org/uploads/study.pdf>

74. UNDP in the Arab States, Sustainable Development Goals <http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/ar/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-7-affordable-and-clean-energy.html>

Women bear the main burden of water collection in Arab countries. This is especially true in disadvantaged rural areas, where water and sanitation systems are highly insufficient. Water collection can be seen as some of the important «unpaid» work performed by women, which often prevents girls from making progress in education. Household tasks related to water collection keep girls under 15 years of age away from school. At the same time, the burden of water collection has a significant impact on the lives of women and girls of all ages, consuming their time and thereby preventing them from engaging and participating in other activities, such as politics, cultural activities, recreation, rest and health care.

A radical solution to this problem is to secure water for all regions and all families through public networks. Such an approach could liberate the energies of women and girls, and have a positive impact on schooling, health, social, cultural and leisure activities. CSOs and local authorities can play a role in this area, but a sustainable and comprehensive solution is to secure water (and sanitation) for all, primarily through public policies.

2. Rural Women in Morocco: Case Study⁽⁷⁵⁾

The status of women in rural Morocco, and their relationship with natural resources, especially water, constitutes a rich subject for a case study for more than one reason: rural areas and agriculture account for a significant proportion of the population (38%) and of the GDP (13%), the agricultural labour force represents 37% of the total workforce, with greater relative weight on the female labour force: agricultural female workers accounting for 57% of the total number of working women, while agricultural male workers account for 31% of working men. However, in past periods Morocco scored low insome indicators of rural development which was one of the reasons behind the decline in the country's ranking in the Human Development Index. The latter was due to low education indicators (notably among girls and women), in addition to low health indicators, especially the maternal mortality rate in rural areas. It is striking that this urban-rural gap persisted for decades before finally being closed in recent years. Notably, the failure in this area of development was not in line with successes in other indicators, for example, the maternal mortality rate which fell from 317 cases per 100,000 births in 1990⁽⁷⁶⁾, to 112 in 2009 / 2010, to 72.6 in 2015/2016⁽⁷⁷⁾.

The lack of infrastructure in rural Morocco, particularly in remote and isolated areas, is one of the reasons for the lack of development, which is reflected clearly in the status of women. This is especially noticeable in the lack of access to water systems, sanitary services and so on which has led to widespread failure to send girls to school. Instead they must devote long periods to the collection of drinking water for domestic use (a task which falls primarily to women and girls).

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75. This section of the chapter is based on two research papers prepared specially for this report, the first by Dr. RachidBouchouari entitled « سؤال 2030 – 2016 التنمية المستدامة وجدلية الخطاب التنموي والثقافة بالمغرب: حالة المرأة القروية في الاستراتيجية الوطنية للتنمية المستدامة 2030 – 2016 » (The question of sustainable development and the dialectic of development discourse and culture in Morocco: the situation of rural women in the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016 – 2030), The second by Dr. SoufQamari entitled: « المجتمع المدني والمرأة القروية: تدبير الموارد المائية بالوسط القروي بالمغرب » (Civil Society and rural women: water resources management in rural areas of Morocco).
 76. Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2015. Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group, and the United Nations Population Division - Executive Summary. WHO 2015
https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/193994/WHO_RHR_15.23_ara.pdf;jsessionid=3A3C58BCDFD360CAFE9A36863F801FDD?sequence=8
 77. Human Development Report 2017: Inequalities and human development: contribution to the debate on human development model in Morocco. Summary.Kingdom of Morocco – Prime Minister, ONDH – National Observatory for Human Development. 2018



Solving this problem required a gradual progression from fragmented, to territorial, to national and, finally, sectoral plans, in order to reduce the development gap in rural Morocco, and also to contribute to reducing the gap between women and men in rural areas in all fields. This has prompted Moroccan public authorities since the mid-1990s to adopt programs dedicated to the development of the rural community, ensuring the inclusion of provisions such as: schooling of village girls, village roads, drinking water and rural electricity etc. making these issues a top priority. Notably, these national plans sought to bridge the development gap between rural and urban areas, and between women and men, by improving the situation of rural women.

Rural women have benefited from the territorial rehabilitation program and effective collaboration between intervention programs and participatory action mechanisms, all of which has taken place in consultation with local development agents and in coordination with the Regional Commission for Human Development, chaired by the Governor or the Prefect⁽⁷⁸⁾. The indicators for education, health, service provision and increased participation at local level in project management have improved thanks to the contribution of local authorities and central government, its ministries and agencies, as well as civil society. However, the success has not met expectations regarding the potential emergence from social crisis.

Cooperatives: a Form of Solidarity Economy

Cooperatives have been one mechanism for women's empowerment in rural Morocco. In general, conventional figures and indicators (i.e. participation in the labour force or unemployment) are not sufficient to identify the genuine contribution of women to production in rural areas. This is because it is often difficult to distinguish between domestic and economic activity, since both these areas relate to production, management and consumption of materials necessary for the life and survival of the group. Cooperatives are one of the preferred methods of national and local intervention for the economic integration and empowerment of women.

From a socio-cultural point of view, the cooperative is a middle ground between the home/private and the public domain. If local traditions and customs consider women's going out to work as undesirable, noncompliance, their going out to work in a cooperative, alongside other village women, is considered a group outing and is therefore socially acceptable. This acceptance deepens when the tasks they work on fall within the scope of work traditionally reserved for women, such as the production of argan, preparation of couscous for sale, or preparation of sweets etc. In this way, women's cooperatives can partially and temporarily take women out from under the authority and direct control exercised by their husbands or fathers within the home, which becomes less potent in the cooperative space. However, women's cooperatives only constitute a true path towards emancipation when they engage women in activities beyond the purely economic, such as sensitizing women to their basic rights, literacy, education and raising girls in a different way etc.

78. Refer to INDH official site. *ibid*

The cooperatives which are more often accepted, are those that operate within a closed, female space and specialize in «women's tasks». These have only minimal impact on the local valuesystem and do not affect women's domestic work etc. Studies show that rural women engage in a dual activity, carrying out household chores whilst also working in the fields. Their activity outside the home is often related to serving their family, and is generally seasonal work, taking place particularly in rich farming areas⁽⁷⁹⁾.

A final point in this discussion concerns the work conditions at women's cooperatives. These projects led to a partial improvement in the living situation of women and their families, brought them out of extreme poverty into a slightly better living situation (in Moroccan literature, the transition from poverty to vulnerability), but did not deliver them decisively and definitely out of poverty, as cooperatives do not guarantee a stable and sufficient income. Moreover, the work conditions within them are sometimes harsh in terms of the strict timetable, transportation conditions and the low wages received. In fact, such situations can force rural women into a new form of fragility and vulnerability, especially in their submission to their boss (male or female) at the cooperative, without the ability to defend themselves⁽⁸⁰⁾.

3. Women and Men in Traditional Local Space: Case Study from Tunisia⁽⁸¹⁾

Douiret is a Berber village in the south-east of Tunisia, located 22 kilometres from Tataouine, the capital of the southern province, which bears the same name. Its climate is dry and its topography mountainous. The old village was made up of houses distributed at various levels on the hillsides in the form of caves «ghiran» (plural of cave) carved into the rocks, or modest houses built to form an extension of the rocks, overlapping with their openings. On the top of the mountain stands the castle - the citadel which is also the village's storehouse and refuge when invasions occur. The social structure of the region is tribal hierarchy, consistent with the village's spatial structure.

Agriculture is the main activity in the village and relies on a traditional method (bridge technique)⁽⁸²⁾ to collect scarce rainwater. This allows for a certain degree of diversity in the cultivated plants according to their water needs. This involves the preservation of «bridges and irrigation systems» which, in a mountainous and sloping environment, requires significant maintenance. Advanced organization and distribution of tasks and roles is deeply embedded within the social relations of the tribe and the entire community. In this community, sustaining individual and collective life relies entirely on social solidarity. This strong territorial and social organization also contributes to the formation of relationships which, despite being traditional, promote a certain degree of equality and equity between women and men (traditional relationships, of course, do not always and necessarily imply severe discrimination against women).

79. AichaBelarbi. (1996). Femmes Rurales(Rural Women).Morocco. Publishing house: Le Fennec. p:7

80. Gaëlle Gillot. (2016). Les coopératives, une bonne mauvaise solution à la vulnérabilité des femmes au Maroc ? (Cooperatives, a good bad solution to vulnerability of working women in Morocco?). Space Population Societies (Online).URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/eps/6619> , DOI: 10.4000/eps.6619

81. The case study was taken from a working paper prepared by Dorra Harrar, prepared specifically for this report, entitled: Développement durable: cas du village de Douiret, atouts handicaps et perspectives (Sustainable development: the case of the village of Douiret, assets, handicaps and perspectives)

82. A technique based on the construction of small dams on the slopes in the sluice and collecting them for use in the cultivation of fruit trees (e.g. olives, figs, almonds...) in direct vicinity of dams, and some grains (barley, chickpeas, beans, lentils...).The slopes that follow then make use of water that seeps from behind the dam from openings prepared for this purpose. This allows gravity-induced water flow to lower altitudes. It is a common technique in dry or semi-dry slopes.



In the middle of the nineteenth century, the village was inhabited by about 3,500 people, and Douiret - like the other villages in southern Tunisia - experienced early migration. It became a semi-deserted village, mainly due to the delay in arrival of public utilities to the area. This remained the case until 1974. After independence, in the glow of modernity, it was decided to build a modern (contemporary) village and to encourage the inhabitants of traditional palaces and houses in the foothills to move to new housing. Security considerations likely contributed to this trend. The total population today is about 580.

Women and Men in Douiret

The relationship between women and men in the traditional Douiret community was the subject of a 2003 anthropological study that reached the following conclusion: «There is no sharp male/female conflict, neither at the territorial level nor at the level of representation. There are areas designated for both women and men respectively, but these are not forbidden to the opposite sex, as there are bridges and pathways between the two areas, and an exchange of symbols, spaces, dialogues and things between the two areas»⁽⁸³⁾. Within the village and in the fabric of its traditional relations, the value placed on solidarity is paramount, due to the extreme nature of the location and the living conditions.

In the public spaces of the village, most women say they are not subjected to any harassment from the village's men, as this is not their custom. Parents allow girls to go for training courses in the city outside of Douiret and do not mind their travel abroad. The same applies to women's work, which is accepted, any reservations being directed more towards the terms of employment than the principle of work itself. For example, working as a domestic helper for individuals is unacceptable, which makes clear that value judgements are placed on different types of work, and in turn reflects the general concern for the personal well-being of girls and women from a protective perspective. Douiret women proudly say, «A Douiret man never beats his wife, and there is no Douiret woman working in a shameful occupation / no matter how poor the family is».

Soulless projects

Global development trends in the 1990s affected national policies which focused on regional development and several development projects were allocated to Tataouine and Douiret, including the provision of public services such as roads, electricity, a water network, schools and health centres in the province. The strategists considered that they had covered the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental). While they were very optimistic about the expected results in terms of development enhancement in the region, the inhabitants of Douiret took a negative view of the projects.

83. Macquart Emile. Les Troglodytes de l'Extrême-Sud Tunisien (The Troglodytes of the Tunisian Far South) in the journal: *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris*, V^e Série. Tome 7, 1906. pp. 174-187, doi: <https://doi.org/10.3406/bmsap.1906.8152>

In the end, the new village was confined to a primary school, a clinic, a mosque, a post office, a café and a grocery store. In response, the entire spatial social system that existed in the old village was dismantled, from the irrigation system to the traditional social and cultural activities and their products. The projects carried out by the associations suffered as similar projects tend to and had little impact. It can even be said that these projects were designed and based entirely around foreign funding and implemented by associations that were entirely foreign⁽⁸⁴⁾ to the region. The main point is that this approach is fundamentally at odds with the local development approach, because such projects have no soul. In reality, the condition for this particular project's success was the destruction of the village spirit, not its revival through economic interventions and «projects». It becomes abundantly clear that this 'soulless' intervention did not constitute a transformative solution for the village and was not consistent with the nature of the region and the perceptions of its inhabitants towards their present and future.

With regard to women and their role, understanding discrimination as directly related to the 'traditional', and equality as directly related to the 'modern' is a mistake. Rather the gender-specific approach is contradicted by researchers who investigate the social roles of women and men only as socio-cultural roles imprinted with the historical characteristics of a given society in time and space (noting the existence of commonalities and general principles across national or local communities, and short historical periods).

The case of Douiret (as well as other traditional societies) provides a clear example of the diversity in gender relations among different groups. What this demonstrates is the need to assess the status of women in an integrated socio-historical context, not to label certain traits positive or negative on the basis of gender, nor to categorically link certain positive or negative attributes with traditional or modern social patterns.

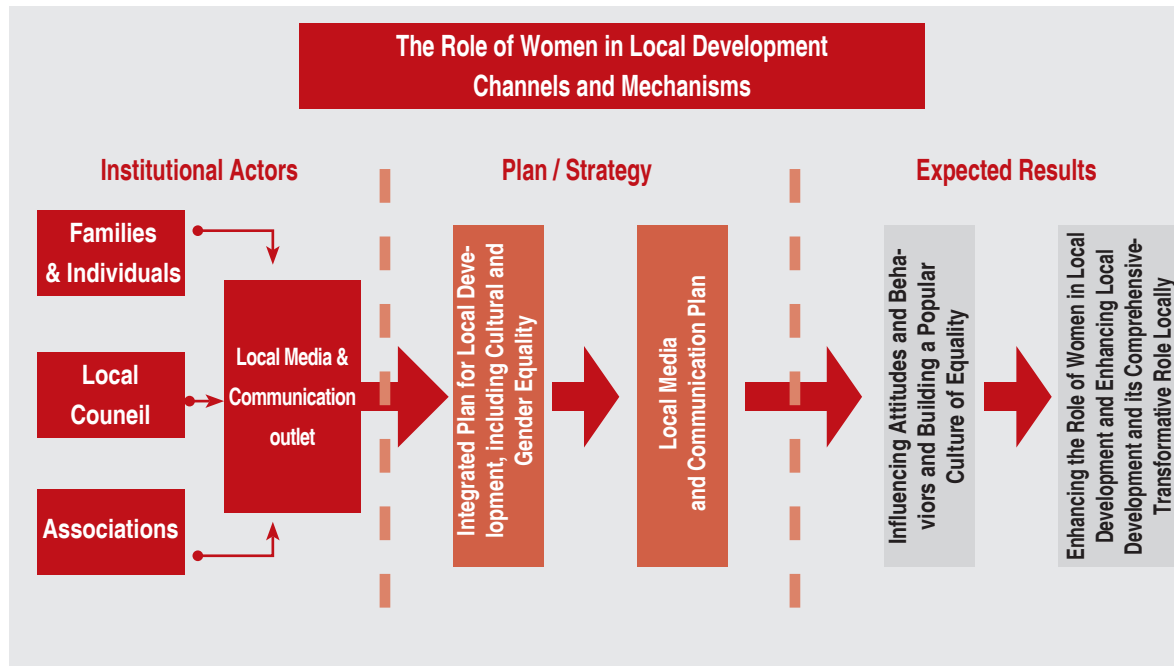
4. Local Media in Local Development

Although the cultural dimension, and in particular the role of the media, does not receive the attention it deserves in development literature (this is the subject of the next chapter of this report), local (and national) media can play a crucial role in the success of local development, particularly in breaking stereotypes and empowering women. In short, the media has the power to influence everything related to the behavioural dimension of families and individuals, and everything related to stimulating local participation and mobilizing local resources for development. There are, however, conditions to fulfilling this role that are often left unmet.

84. These projects were carried out by Spanish associations: Project financed by AECI (Spain) in collaboration with the Arid Regions Institute (IRA) Medenine and CERAI (Spain)



Figure: Simplified outline of the role of local media and communication in empowering women⁽⁸⁵⁾



The issue here is not simply the need for a comprehensive communication plan targeting all social groups, but also the need for local media or social media platforms to become one of the partner institutions/mechanisms in development planning and intervention. Local media/communication outlets are as important to the local development process as the municipal council, the local committee or community associations. Without it, local actors - including CSOs - cannot achieve the real community transformation which forms the basis of the development process. For the transformation process to succeed, it must include broad public participation. It cannot be done through limited working strategies based around institutional frameworks and must not exclude public communication with citizens. This approach will require institutional partnership at the local (and national) level, as well as via media agendas.

The first condition for successful transformation is for local (and national) media to understand the principles of the development agendas critically. The media can then play a role in translating or adjusting these principles to reflect the concerns of the people and the local population, thereby allowing them to contribute the transformation process⁽⁸⁶⁾. We can take this even further by urging media professionals to move beyond the attitude of sufficiency and satisfaction that may arise from meeting people's psychological and social needs and aspirations alone. Instead, we must move towards a media agenda which bases itself on articulating people's problems and concerns and on making these the focus of media organisations and decision makers⁽⁸⁷⁾.

85. This graph is a development of the graph contained in «Equality and Empowerment of Women in the Arab World: From the Millennium Goals to the Post-2015 Agenda. A Reference and Training Manual - Part I. CAWTAR, ESCWA, UN Women, 2013. In the current graph, the Media aspect was included though it was not mentioned in the original figure.

86. Ibid

87. Uses and gratifications and Agenda Setting theories. See Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research, Jennings Bryant, Mary Beth Oliver, routledge, third edition, 2009

Summary

Local development is not a simplified version of development in general, and adherence to the 2030 Agenda does not mean rigidly imposing its models, content and indicators on the work of local actors and people. Local development is a long and profound process of sustained and systematic work to improve people's living standards, led by local institutions that represent the population without being separate from them, always maintaining the direct participation of the people. This participation can only be effectively achieved with local media as a principal partner in promoting local development, breaking down stereotypes of women, and in building a new, non-discriminatory culture.

It also means that over-specialization and fragmentation of interventions within a community can lead to failure or limited results. To achieve a sustainable impact, community transformation at grassroots level must be integrated with coherent local and national development visions, as well as with national development strategies that are genuinely committed to the principles of development and human rights.



Chapter VI

Culture and Media to Transform our World

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Culture and Media to Transform our World⁽⁸⁸⁾

Preface

Unfortunately, the cultural dimension has not received enough attention either in the discussion of the concept of development itself, or in global development agendas. The emphasis in the national agendas of Arab countries gives priority to issues surrounding identity and privacy, rather than culture itself. That does not mean that this dimension has not been addressed in the 2030 Agenda, but rather that it appears in a somewhat fragmented way, often discussed as a part of another component.

Particular emphasis has been placed on: education (SDG4, a key component of the cultural dimension), skills development, scientific research, and technological development, often from the perspective of capacity-building in service of other objectives (e.g., labour market rehabilitation and productivity improvement). The subject of knowledge and culture in the 2030 Agenda cannot be confined to SDG4, although it represents the backbone of this dimension. In addition to SDG4 (education), other goals contain direct targets and guidance related to culture, scientific research, innovation and skills development. Target 8.2 states the importance of « technological upgrading and innovation», and Target 8.3 calls for promoting «creativity and innovation». Goal 9 promotes «fostering innovation» as a condition for industrialization and the development of sustainable infrastructure. Target 9.5 strives to: «Enhance scientific research, [and] upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors ..., encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers...public and private research and development spending». Target 9.b compels us to «support domestic technology development, research and innovation in developing countries...» Furthermore, in Goal 11, we find a target that encourages the strengthening of «efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage».

Alongside this are those goals that, while not directly related to culture, cannot be fully grasped without due emphasis on the knowledge/cultural dimension. As with all issues related to sustainability and changing generated consumption patterns, the transition to a healthy lifestyle (as described in SDG3) requires a shift in nutritional patterns and overall lifestyles. The goal of maintaining peace, security and social cohesion (SDG16), in turn, entails building a culture of citizenship and tolerance, rejecting a culture of violence, extremism and hatred, and promoting a culture of production with functioning values, while rejecting a culture of dependence and consumption. It should also be noted that all the goals related to preserving the environment and addressing climate change incorporate goals related to raising awareness, promoting local culture and goods, improving education and enhancing knowledge to address the effects of climate adaptation.

Furthermore, all goals relating to the achievement of gender equality cannot be reached without subverting the cultural and social foundations of discrimination against women. The appropriate cultural transformation

88. This chapter benefited from a background working paper prepared specifically for this report by researcher Yusri Mustafa entitled. الثقافة وأهداف التنمية المستدامة (Culture and Sustainable Development Goals), as well as from the research and contributions of Itidal Mejri, the Director of the Media Training Center in CAWTAR, the team, and the Center's reports.



is essentially one of institutions and individuals, necessitating the engagement of broad groups of women and men in sufficient numbers to achieve transformation. We are therefore once again forced to confront the relationship between cultural transformation and the role of the media at the national and local level (as outlined in the introduction).

The Sustainable Development Agenda, as its name suggests (Transforming our World), is transformative in nature. This means that, according to the agenda, sustainable development is to be achieved through a process of knowledge development and cultural transformation that accompanies and supports transformation through various dimensions and goals. In all this, the media plays an important role as a major partner and development actor. In reality, its importance extends far beyond any limited references to this role implied by the 2030 Agenda and in development literature. In general, this literature focuses more on promotion and coverage in the media than on its transformative role.

Using Culture to Uphold Human Rights Principles

Culture occupies an important place in the reality and evolution of development in the Arab region. Any genuine commitment to democratic transition in Arab societies, to the 2030 Agenda, and to effective implementation of SDGs in this region of the world, intrinsically relies on taking the cultural dimension of sustainable human development seriously.

In the context of this report it will suffice to touch only briefly on the continuing controversy surrounding this topic in Arab countries. Of particular relevance are the events that have taken place in countries undergoing political and institutional change since 2011 through popular mobilisation, only to discover later that an important aspect of the controversy and conflict in the streets, in political institutions, in civil society and in the media revolves around issues of a very strong cultural character⁽⁸⁹⁾. Examples include: the political divide that exists in most Arab countries, superficially at least, between Islamists (or extremists of any religion) and secularists (or liberals), the problem of sources of legislation, the reservation on women's rights between specificity and universality which are described as Western, the controversy over principles contained in constitutions, the problem of national affiliation versus tribal, national, racial or sectarian affiliation, limited youth participation and restrictions of the right to public candidacy based on age or gender, and divergent positions on the issue of gender equality, which often differ to the point of conflict etc.

The disagreements that surround these issues do not necessarily have their roots in culture, rather, they tend to be interpreted as expressions of a struggle that is first and foremost political. They do, however, have clear cultural manifestations and forms. This points to the importance of the knowledge/cultural dimension (including its political ideology) in the ongoing transformation taking place in the Arab region. It also speaks to the value (or system of values) that the word «culture» carries and the focus on moral responsibility which characterizes the philosophy of the 2030 Agenda. The same is true of the principle of partnership, and the responsibility it implies.

This must be recognised without neglecting the growing role of the cultural dimension within ideologies, politics, and policies in the industrialized northern countries, represented by the rise of populist and extreme right movements in more than one country.

89. This led the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, to incorporate the slogan 'build your own future before others do it for you' into one of its latest publications (2016) entitled *الحال والمآل العربي: الوطن العربي: الدراسات المستقبلية في الوطن العربي* (Future Studies in the Arab World: Status and Prospects). This draws attention to «the necessity to renew efforts in order to address the current problems, [which] are the product of poor planning [in the past], failure in economic and social development, and catastrophic failure in education. «

In Arab countries, claims relating to 'cultural specificity' are one of the factors which continues to prevent the incorporation of human rights into national policies and practices. While the international community has sought to overcome this cultural barrier by emphasizing the universality, interdependence and indivisibility of human rights, the tendency to eventually return to, and magnify, the issue of culture has fuelled further discourse around cultural specificity.

In this way, cultural specificity, and its relationship with identity, has been one of the main instruments used by the political and social authorities in Arab countries to reject modern values, especially the principles of human rights, as well as public and individual freedoms. The result is a dual discourse that reaches the point of contradiction in the adoption of universal rights, on the one hand, and the attachment to cultural specificity, on the other.

Women at the Centre of the Specificity Discourse

It must be noted that in theory and practice, the cultural debate is more focused on women. In general, they are the main subjects of values and morals. Questions surrounding what is permissible and what is forbidden, what is pure and what is impure, tend to be heavily associated with women. In other words, culture, as a power, is more focused on women's lives. This is a phenomenon that has existed throughout history and still exists in all areas of the world, but its extent varies from one society to another and even within each society. There are some cultures that are crueller to women than others. The subject of 'culture' in relation to women's rights is a paradox. It is the subject of developmental and feminist transformative work, and a principal battleground against misogynist values and for the triumph of the values of equality, respect and justice. Consequently, the efforts of women's rights advocates have not and will not stop confronting cultural challenges.

In light of this, the issue of women's rights is often of upmost importance in discourse surrounding cultural specificity over and against the universality of human rights, which are often seen as an example of cultural globalization and the encroachment of Western culture. In this sense, women's rights are a political issue, in that their relationship with cultural identity not only entails control of women in private and public fields, but also control over them in the whole public realm. Many pro-women's rights trends are deeply bound up with the relationship between democracy, development and women's rights. For this reason, their demands, both in policy and practice, have expanded, and feminist and women's movements have become more active in demanding democracy and human rights in general⁽⁹⁰⁾.

The Role of Civil Society in Challenging Cultural Foundations of Discrimination

Civil Society Organizations submitted a list of 13 critical messages to the 2018 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, the seventh of which focused on: «Granting due importance to addressing the cultural foundations of discrimination against women in our societies and in public policies, and protecting women, especially in times of war and conflict, while fighting the culture of violence and exclusion against women and girls»⁽⁹¹⁾. This message

90. Rejection of women's rights is not a phenomenon unique to the Arab-Muslim countries. On April 23, 2019, the Security Council discussed some issues related to sexual assaults against women during wars and conflicts (an issue mainly affecting the Arab region. See Chapter 3). The United States went as far as to threaten to veto any reference to sexual and reproductive rights, which led to the deletion of the reference to this issue in the final version of the resolution. This act represents a withdrawal from protecting women, and addressing the consequences of assaults on women during wars. See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/25/us-stance-un-backward-step-womens-rights>

91. The regional meeting of CSOs in the Arab region was held on 22 and 23 April 2018 in Beirut in preparation for the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, which immediately followed, upon the initiative of the following organizations: The Arab NGO Network for Development, the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), the Arab Trade Union Confederation, the Arab Forum for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Arab Network for Democratic Elections, the Arab Network for Development and Environment, the Arab branch of Habitat International Coalition, and the Arab branch of Transparency International. This meeting was organized with the support of ESCWA, and attended by more than 50 CSOs, and about 65 participants/experts and a number of United Nations organizations (WHO, UNDP, UN Women, ESCWA).



was the summary of the working group's discussions on justice between women and men. The conclusion of the talks was that curbing systematic exclusion of women in various areas, and eliminating the legislative and de facto discrimination that still prevents women from achieving full equality, cannot be done without addressing the cultural roots of discrimination and violence against women, and the prevalence of a patriarchal, 'macho', exclusionary mentality. The influence of this mentality extends far beyond women, making a collective issue, relevant to all areas of community life, including politics. Patriarchal, 'macho' culture is based on upholding the concepts of power, authority, obedience and hierarchy in all economic, political and social spheres. It excludes all persons and groups who do not either belong to, or serve, the political, social, economic or cultural authority. This does not only apply to women (though they are among those most often subjected to discrimination).

This culture and practice persists through repression, violence, ideological hegemony and the generalised enforcement of its ways and values on both these marginalised groups, and people in general.

Civil Society Organisations propose to develop political priorities and approaches to work that will achieve gender equality and ensure the success of efforts to eliminate discrimination against women in Arab societies. They particularly emphasize the necessity of a comprehensive approach to the cultural foundations of discrimination against women in the patriarchal-machismo culture itself. This is an approach that strategies, action plans and «programs - projects» tend to avoid or enact only partially in the form of campaigns specific to one issue over others. Such strategies avoid direct criticism of the prevailing culture, especially when there is a suggestion of connection between that culture and the prevailing religious interpretation, or dominant traditions or customs.

The bottom line is that without addressing the cultural foundations of discrimination against women, all plans and strategies are destined either for failure, or for limited sectoral or factional success. Failing to address the cultural foundations of gender discrimination entails a serious risk of any progress that has been achieved eventually being reversed. All progress is prone to relapse, regression, losing its message and disrupting its own implementation. There are many examples of this, ranging from the limited impact of adopting women's quota schemes in electoral systems independently of other procedures and changes, to the limited establishment of institutional mechanisms to follow up on women and «gender» issues, to the amendment of laws with enduring judicial or social obstacles to their full application, to the limited impact of gender budgets and so forth.

CSOs unanimously agree that cultural transformation (i.e. a movement towards a culture which values equality between women and men, in contrast to the dominant patriarchal culture) is an essential first step towards achieving the goals of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, not only SDG5, but the essence of all the development goals set out in the 2030 Agenda, and any serious national development plans.

There are three distinct signs that make clear what Civil Society Organisations achieved in their preparatory meeting:

- In the 13 messages delivered by CSOs, recommendations were not issued exclusively by feminist or women's organizations, but rather by regional networks of CSOs active in all the various areas of development, without exception. This contradicts the principle of excessive and erroneous specialization in development work. It also defies the idea that gender equality issues are restricted to women and their organizations alone, by promoting the possibility of courtesy or solidarity among organizations working in other areas, and vice versa.

- The messages went beyond the understanding of gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women which sees it as, at heart, a sectoral or partisan issue. Dismantling this kind of understanding successfully undermines the dominant illusion that sustainable progress in gender equality can be achieved through successive, fragmented measures, independent of the comprehensive transformative process which targets society at all levels, including that of political and power institutions (a point which previous discourse often avoided, or addressed only timidly, without putting it into practice).
- The third important point is that CSOs did not simply settle for theoretical messages and recommendations. Rather, they took practical steps to translate their proposals into an action plan or strategy. The approach of this strategy to promoting employment is outlined in the form of three interrelated and integrated main themes or dimensions:
 - a. The Public Policies Dimension: Increase knowledge, economic and social empowerment, and end discrimination in decision-making positions, security and natural resources etc.
 - b. The Legislation and Laws Dimension: Reform the laws surrounding elections, political parties, the media, violence and harassment, agricultural and domestic work, and ensuring harmonization between these and international treaties and conventions etc.
 - c. The Mentalities and Cultures Dimension: Address the stereotyping present in education and learning, the political-religious relationship, the patriarchal-male culture, as well as media and communication etc.

Achieving gender equality is a critical component of the success of the social and political transformation towards democracy, human rights, social justice and a modern democratic civil state, notably in the form of modern constitutional democracies. It is also a key component of the transition towards modernity and its values (a process that was not completed in earlier historical stages: the renaissance at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, and the post-independence period of national State-building).

The following graph represents an attempt to summarize (or simplify) this approach, suggesting examples of indicator categories that can be adopted to measure progress.

The media also has a crucial and significant role to play in emergencies and disasters - as in the case of the spread of COVID-19 - where good communication strategies, and an open and responsible approach to addressing the people through credible agents, are some of the prerequisites for success. The painful experience of this pandemic has demonstrated how the media is a double-edged sword. It can contribute to the containment of the disease, or it can exacerbate the problem, flooding communication platforms with false or inaccurate rumours and misinformation, thereby making it extremely difficult to emerge from the crisis.

Media and the 2030 Agenda

The overlap between the methods of journalism that digitization facilitates in relation to information and communication technologies, and new public expectations, including a demand for proximity journalism (i.e. the local press), have resulted in an intersection between traditional media and new media. One of the consequences of globalization has been the emergence of controversial overlap between the roles of local, national, regional and even international media, forcing the treatment of events to take all these levels into account. The new methods of news reporting, represented by the simultaneous use of various news-drafting platforms such as crossmedia (text, picture, sound and graphics), has created an interactive relationship with the media, and has re-shaped professional practice in relation to dealing with media content, monitoring and retrieving news and information, and writing stories and media coverage of real-time events. It also gives media professionals the opportunity to adopt the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda and adapt them to become topics of general interest.

In this context, the media and mass communication in particular play an important mediating role in transforming the content of the 2030 Agenda and national development plans into a force for change. They do this through their adoption by people, who are the main actors in the transformation of the world visualised by the agenda. Therefore, any development plan that does not include an adequate and effective strategies for communicating with people, and developing their awareness and behaviour towards human rights values, will not be successful, at least from a development perspective. This applies in particular to cultural change which falls in line with development goals, and which represents the most controversial area (in terms of public opinion) within media and communications. This is especially the case when questions of culture touch upon the societal status of women, the fight against the cultural foundations of discrimination against them in both institutional and popular culture, sustainability and responsible behaviour towards the environment, the principles of citizenship, solidarity, social justice and human rights, and how to act in emergency and disaster situations.

Obstacles that Hinder the Role of the Media in Development

The most prominent impediment to the developmental role of the media is the overlap between politics, religion and money in the media field. This has been especially true since the emergence of satellite television in the Arab world and its unprecedented spread in the 1990s, which had negative side effects on media content and the extent of its compatibility with the requirements of sustainable human development.



This was noted by the annual report of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU)⁽⁹³⁾, which summarised the general atmosphere as one of quantitative inflation and qualitative decline. It further noted that it is necessary to adequately respect the gap between the public and the private spheres, and how the growing role of money in the media has negatively affected its content. The report also drew attention to the polarization of content, between «political or sectarian propaganda and the proliferation of advertising programs the only goal of which is commercial profitability, and all whilst news channels are employed in the service of specific political or ideological agendas». The report went further, affirming its view that « ideological, sectarian and tribal polarization [is] a curse of Arab satellite [media]». Yet at the heart of this «striking and chaotic» coexistence, the issues of many groups (including women) and many areas (including development), remain present. However, coverage of these issues varies in terms of depth, interest and advocacy, sometimes even reaching the level of blatant disregard, ignoring people's right to access information and knowledge so as to form decisions and opinions.

In this respect, and in response to this disorder, many media outlets and representative institutions (associations and syndicates) established charters of ethics and codes of conduct – or amended their charters and codes in line with a human rights approach. This was done in order to better reflect the principles of rights and development, the professional principles governing journalism and to maintain a high level of credibility in their relations with their audiences. Herein lies a point of convergence between these efforts and the 2030 Agenda: serving people and the planet by achieving prosperity, security, peace, and good governance for all – goals that the Agenda has set in order to confront the world's current problems.

The transformative tasks performed by media professionals are becoming increasingly important, as the media setting experiences rapid changes, rendering the separation between its traditional and modern (social) outlets a highly complex issue. Interdependence has become the dominant reality and contributes today to «the consolidation of a new communicative environment and the emergence of new communicative practices, thus leading to a reshaping of traditional media roles»⁽⁹⁴⁾. These points only further highlight the importance of the human rights approach in media and production practice, and its adoption as a «weapon» in the face of: «human dignity denigration», «rejection of human rights», «justification of equality rejection or fragmentation», «violation of people's private life», «distortion of fundamental issues», and «cases postponement claiming non-priority» etc. Under these labels shelters either the rejection, circumvention, or prevarication of equality in general and gender equality in particular.

In this sense, ideas can be a force for social change and transformation, in the pursuit of development, justice and gender equality. Yet, it can also be a factor in obstruction and reversion. In both cases, ideas cannot influence and change reality, unless they are embedded in people's thoughts and feelings, and transformed into convictions, attitudes and behaviours that push us in one direction or another.

Does the Media Play its Developmental Role as Required?

The 2030 Agenda presents renewed challenges to the media in general, and local media in particular. In view of the Agenda's goals and targets related to affirming the rights of all people, it is essential for the media to: pay greater attention to human rights issues, develop the capacity to include human rights as a fundamental reference point in its various content, and expand the scope of their communication and content to the local level as well. This is a challenge that will also require female and male media professionals to equip themselves with scientific capabilities

93. ASBU Publications, High Committee for Coordination Between Arab Satellite Channels, Arab Satellite Broadcasting, Annual Report 2016. http://www.asbu.net/6C3BA48C-55FF-48A6-90C8-37F6EEAF13D7/FinalDownload/DownloadIdC0DE54AADCF3AB86A75DF09E46FF0D7/6C3BA48C-55FF-48A6-90C8-37F6EEAF13D7/médias/NewMedia_2017/text/asbusatreport_2016.pdf

94. Arab Women in Virtual Debate: A Study of Women's Representations in Traditional Media Facebook Pages. CAWTAR and AGFUND. 2015

and professional skills. These will enable them to deal with various development issues, as well as those related to public affairs, from a human rights perspective. The reality of the current situation, as confirmed by many studies and research projects in the field, reveals that Arab media is still far from close to adopting human rights concepts. Reasons for this may include the culture and abilities of its personnel, or factors outside the media institutions themselves⁽⁹⁵⁾. This reality raises many difficult questions about the extent to which the media is dealing with human rights and women's issues, including: does the media really play a positive role in advancing women's causes by raising awareness of their rights and responsibilities, and focusing on a comprehensive human rights approach in addressing their issues?⁽⁹⁶⁾

The shortcomings of the media are also made evident by the content of the media codes of honour, almost none of which make any stipulations about the image of women in the media, meaning that media professionals are not required to ensure that this image is balanced, highlighting both negative and positive aspects. Instead, these codes merely call upon media professionals to 'uphold the ethics of the profession'. We exclude from this assessment the press code of honour for Jordanian journalists, which allocates article 13⁽⁹⁷⁾ to this issue, and condemns discrimination on the basis of gender, even going beyond this general prescription to stipulate specific appropriate behaviour as regards gender equality. The National Union of Tunisian Journalists took similar steps by including a fourteenth clause in their code of honour, requiring «the journalist's commitment to defend the values of gender equality, non-discrimination and individual freedoms»⁽⁹⁸⁾. Although some media organisations, especially those most widely spread, have also adopted provisions calling for respect towards women and the avoidance of stereotypes (as mentioned in the conditions brochures of the Independent High Authority for Audio-visual Communication in Tunisia and Morocco) the issue seems to be deeper than the development of restrictive, compulsory texts or moral clauses. The issue of respecting women and adopting gender and human rights-focused approaches, remains dependent on the awareness of (male and female) media professionals, and their personal commitment to promoting gender equality as an element of upholding the principles of citizenship, rather than as a piece of propaganda, a luxury or an attempt to keep up with global trends.

In accordance with this, the extent to which media professionals (male and female) have internalised the concept of gender-equality and non-discrimination, directly contributes to the societal image of women and men, and their respective roles, that is generated by the media. This image can be extrapolated by observing and analysing the choices made by media organisations concerning specific topics, as well as through the value analysis and general trends of media discourse on women in all its aspects, which, like other content promoted by the media, continues to be governed by professional standards and the choices and priorities of the editors-in- chief of media institutions.

95. Gender Arab Media: Training Kit: Human Rights and Women Issues Media Unit, Center of Arab Women for Training and Research, 2012

96. An unpublished study by CAWTAR, entitled: دور الإعلام العربي في تحديد الأجندات الوطنية لحقوق المرأة (The Role of Arab Media in Defining National Agenda for Women's Rights) includes an analysis of studies published between 2005-2014, focusing on 94 studies that monitored media reporting of women's rights, the results of which showed that in studies that were concerned with monitoring the Arab media, women's rights were casually presented and not analyzed or explored in depth. The rights of women were often mentioned without linking them to specific situations or women's lives, and the inequality they face. The reference to women's rights was limited to awareness-raising side without investigating or analyzing these rights, or exploring their content.

97. Ibid

98. <http://snjt.org/%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%81-2/>



Development and Empowerment of Women in Local Media

At the local level, and according to the CAWTAR's report on «Arab Women and the 2030 Strategy for Sustainable Development in the Local Media - Executive Summary»⁽⁹⁹⁾, coverage of Sustainable Development Goals in a number of Arab local media has been weak and selective. This is the case whether the topic is the SDGs as a whole, or Goal 5 on Gender Equality in particular. Despite the fact that there are more opportunities at the local level to address the sustainable development agenda in its goals, dimensions and targets, and to engage women in it, women's issues do not occupy a significant space in local media content.

Many media professionals (male and female) lack clarity of understanding when it comes to the SDGs, and this makes them selective about the kinds of subjects they are willing to discuss in this area. This approach tends to focus on a limited number of topics without reference to the connection of these topics with the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, the relative complexity of the 2030 Agenda makes it difficult to condense its content, issues, discussions, and position on transformation and cultural change into an accessible form for the general public. A genuine effort is required to simplify the content without changing or removing its meaning, and such an effort is seldom made.

The report presented a number of findings, the most important of which was the notable «lack of conceptual clarity in relation to the sustainable development goals among media professionals. Journalists and editors continued to adopt a traditional view in dealing with local development by reducing the media profession to explaining and reporting on the achievements of the State in the development field, without delving into specific SDGs or concerns raised at the local level»⁽¹⁰⁰⁾. On the other hand, the report revealed the new opportunities available for women in contributing to the management of local affairs, and the activation of development strategies, by virtue of the fact that their methods for dealing with the concerns and issues raised by their environment differ from 'traditional' ones. Furthermore, at the local level, women are more likely to raise innovative subjects, including natural resources management and environment protection, emerging priorities and new issues that have become matters of concern in global thought.

In this regard, local media has a long way to go at more than one level. Progress will involve:

- Establishing clear guidelines for the relationship between national and local interests, bringing local media closer to issues that affect local people,
- Expanding coverage of diverse development issues, not just those that are usually considered political priorities by the national media,
- Disseminating knowledge about real community issues, focusing on the role the media plays in fostering positive attitudes and behaviours in individuals, and not imitating the function of the media at the national level, but adapting it to suit local concerns,

99. «Arab Women and the 2030 Strategy for Sustainable Development in the Local Media». Arab Women's Development Report 2017. CAWTAR. This report reviews in detail the theoretical and practical aspects of the performance of the local media in development, and presents the strengths and shortcomings in carrying out its developmental role and requirements.

100. Ibid.

- Granting more attention to the concerns of women and marginalized groups in national media and adopting a human rights approach. This will involve promoting the empowerment of women. All of these issues feature heavily in the day to day lives of families, individuals and local community,
- Developing the professional and technical skills of media/communication professionals, and reinforcing their capacities and understanding of development, human rights, gender equality and gender discrimination, so that they can perform their role as development actors with conviction,
- Building institutional partnerships between traditional, local media and various social media platforms/groups within local reach. This will allow for the formation of a network between them and other CSOs such as associations, unions, research centres and campaigns, who can all work together to establish local communication spaces and strategies as a significant component of the sustainable development agenda, not something additional/external to it.

Case Study from Morocco: Do we dare Tackle Sensitive Issues?⁽¹⁰¹⁾

This case study deals with an event that has attracted much attention from the Moroccan public, as it is intrinsically linked to a topic that was and still is considered taboo. It represents one of the overlooked issues within Arab societies, including Moroccan society, namely sexual violence against women. This case, in terms of its nature, process, events and elements, raises issues of women's rights, equality and human rights in general. It also forces us to confront the relationship between these issues and the cultural and social legacies that persist in Moroccan society and the minds of its population, evidenced by the reactions and responses of the political, human rights and women's organizations, as well as the Moroccan media, to this issue.

If the phenomenon of human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of women, including in the workplace, is a global phenomenon - as are all social phenomena – and not unique to Arab societies, then it is clear that the reactions and approaches to it will depend on the political and cultural characteristics of the society concerned, and the extent to which human rights ideology (and commitment to it) pervades its various circles and institutions. In the face of a particularly sensitive and extreme situation of abuse, society sometimes reveals its strength, and sometimes its weakness.

Reactions and Positions

In general, the reactions to this particular case in Morocco varied by organisation. For the most part, however, they fell below the level of full compliance with the human rights system and the anti-trafficking law adopted by the Kingdom of Morocco.

101. The case study on Morocco was prepared by Mina Houjib specifically for this report, entitled: *الجنس مقابل العمل* (Sex in exchange for Work) through a Moroccan press file that follows up on charges of human trafficking. The case concerns the arrest of a Moroccan journalist on February 23, 2018 (the owner and chairman of a well-known media group) in what was at first thought to be a political case. It was soon revealed that it was in fact a case of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. The victims of the detained journalist were 18 women who worked with him. Three women filed a complaint against him before the court, and the police raided his office at the newspaper where photographic equipment and sex tapes were discovered in which he appears with 12 different women.



Politicians and Human Rights Activists

The events of the case were made abundantly clear when the investigation was declassified, the judicial police records leaked, the victims' statements concerning the sexual assaults against them revealed and the nature of the charges against this journalist publicized. Despite this, political parties⁽¹⁰²⁾, political figures and human rights activists continued to call for the arrest of this journalist based on his opposing political views, not his sexual crimes. It was even suggested that security services installed cameras inside his office, and fabricated videos in order to frame him. These attitudes reflect an attempt to minimize and diminish the sexual assaults perpetrated against 18 women by seeking political charges for the accused, effectively shielding him from the «moral» charges that would make him a prisoner of conscience.

Women's Associations

Despite the fact that hundreds of women's associations exist in Morocco, only four have been active in support of the female complainants and alleged victims in this case. The Federation of the Democratic League for Women's Rights, Jossour Forum of Moroccan Women, the Union of Feminist Action, and the Moroccan Association for Combating Violence Against Women issued a joint statement condemning the ferocious smear campaigns, insults and defamatory comments directed against the female complainants, asserting that this was an affront to their dignity. Some of these associations have appointed lawyers (female and male) to assist the victims. However, the rest of Morocco's associations, although their convictions and programs are based around protecting the human rights of women, although they are active defenders of equality and advocates against sexual assault, and although they have spoken up in other situations, have completely refused to act. The number of women's organisations that have failed to speak up about this case is thought to be in the hundreds⁽¹⁰³⁾. In fact, the reticence or refusal to act apparent among the women's associations, has its true source in political and cultural matters. The cultural legacies of the past still cast a long shadow over the prevailing response to a range of issues, in particular those that deal with rights and principles.

The Position of the Media

As soon as the judicial police reports were declassified, and before the start of the trial (which began on March 8th, coinciding with International Women's Day), several media outlets, especially websites, were busy with the journalist's profile, but the majority focused on the statements of the complainants and alleged victims. Because this case is related to the topic of gender, and affects a number of women, the reports published by the judicial police have become a rich source of material for articles and videos. These sources have used this case for their commercial benefit, stoking controversy and uproar around the issue, in direct contradiction of media ethics and the law. Many platforms also published pictures of the accused, his full name, and the charges against him. The first articles written about him promoted the idea that his arrest was connected to a press-related issue and his oppositional political views.

102. With one exception: the Socialist Party

103. The number of Moroccan feminist movements is described in the following article:

المنات من الجمعيات النسائية والحقوقية ختج على بن كيران + لائحة الجمعيات (Hundreds of women's and human rights associations protest against Benkirane + the list of associations). watan24.net.

It is abundantly clear from this that the media must refrain from adopting editorial approaches that are determined by profit alone, or on popular excitement and «Les trois S: Sou, Sexe, Sang» (Money, Sex, Blood). This approach to journalism constrains and confines media professionals, removing them from their position of trust as contributors to the development of society, the spread of human rights culture and the consolidation of equality values. The authorities responsible for public policies should motivate media institutions to develop a code of ethics. This should establish editorial lines which centre around human rights, and focus on portraying women without discrimination or stereotypes, in a manner that upholds their presence in all walks of life and values their efficient and effective contribution to the development of society at all levels.

Summary

It can be said that the knowledge/cultural dimension has not been given due emphasis in the final formulation of the concept of sustainable human development and the definition of its elements. We must continue to bear in mind that the transition from a focus on (economic) growth to a focus on people-centred, comprehensive development is, first and foremost, a transformation of culture and values, which aims to put things back on their logical course, in which the economy, growth and material production are means of achieving human well-being now and in the future, not goals in and of themselves. It also transcends utilitarianism and the policies, practices, behaviours and values rooted in it, moving instead towards re-evaluated morals, common values, choices and freedom, which should ultimately shape the evolution of human civilization, the development process, and individual behaviour, clearly defining the parameters of human and societal relations.

With regard to our focus in this report: no step towards achieving gender equality can be made without first subverting the cultural and social foundations of discrimination against women. Since the cultural transformation that this requires is essentially a transformation of institutional and individual cultures – with the implication that this cultural shift must be felt by large groups of women and men, in sufficient numbers to bring about genuine transformation – we are forced to confront yet again the deep-seated connection between cultural transformation, a component of and gateway into development, and the role of the media at the national and local level.

Understanding the media as an instrument for promoting advertising, the events and functions of political officials, or salacious stories, goes against what is required of the press from the perspective of development. According to which, the media and media professionals should be partners in development. After all, professional, objective and free journalism is an essential criterion of transparency, democracy and human rights. It expresses the genuine commitment of a society to transparency, and the right to access information. Furthermore, the media - from a transformative perspective - is a highly effective means of launching the values of human rights and human development into the mainstream, making a major contribution to the formation of a public opinion that supports the process of transformation. This could be achieved by increasing public information on policies and their outcomes, conveying their views to officials and representatives of the state, or by supporting behavioural transformation through the promotion of real and balanced alternatives to negative stereotypes, especially those relating to women, or social groups that are neglected and excluded from participation and the benefits of development.



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