17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

SDG 17 encapsulates the interdependence, complementarity, and shared and differentiated responsibilities of all countries to support transformative change. Means of implementing the 2030 Agenda are not determined by national conditions alone. SDG 17 targets capture the broader focus of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. They implicate global frameworks and dynamics that structure the flow and management of resources, whether financial, economic or natural; that determine the mobility of people; and that define the exchange and transfer of knowledge and capacities.

In addition to the pressing challenges facing Arab countries in securing means of implementation at the national level, global economic structures remain unsupportive. They drive inequality between and among countries and regions, while international aid and transfer of knowledge and expertise remain far below expectation and need. Regional entry points are also crucial. They can facilitate or stunt the ability of countries to mobilize political will, expertise and resources to tackle transboundary priorities, which are stark in the Arab region, including those related to water, food security, climate change and peace. Arab countries have yet to consolidate the political will to enhance regional integration across different dimensions of sustainable development and realize its potential to advance the 2030 Agenda.

Key facts

Tax revenue to GDP

Ratios of tax revenue to GDP vary between oil-rich and oil-poor countries in the Arab region. For example, the ratio stood at 2.95 per cent and 4.86 per cent in Iraq and Qatar, respectively, in 2017, compared to 21.82 per cent and 21.92 per cent in Morocco and Tunisia, respectively.[1]

$1 in = $1.5 out

Between 2011 and 2016, for every $1 of debt inflows received, the region paid back $1.5 in arrears on outstanding debt stocks.[2]

Illicit financial flows

Since 2013, illicit financial flows in the Arab region have outstripped the combined growth of ODA and foreign direct investment (FDI).[3]

25%

Of the total ODA received by Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen in 2018, 25 per cent was provided by Arab donors (Kuwait and United Arab Emirates).[4]

$59.7 billion in remittances

The region received around $59.7 billion in remittances in 2019, representing 8.45 per cent of global remittances.[5] On average, high-cost corridors involving large transfer fees and similar features deprived the region of an estimated $1.7 billion in annual development finance between 2011 and 2016.[6]

FDI

The region is a net exporter of both capital and primary income. For every $1 in FDI the region generated, a corresponding $1.80 left in outflows and primary income on FDI.[7]

0.64% of GDP to R&D

The region is home to only 2 per cent of the researchers in the world. It allocates 0.64 per cent of GDP expenditure to R&D, less than half the global average.[8]

GII

None of the Arab countries are in the top 20 on the Global Innovation Index.[9]

Internet use ranges from 21.84 per cent of the population in the least developed countries to 78.35 per cent in the GCC countries.[10]

The share of women using the Internet is still lower than that of men in most Arab countries, with the GCC countries having a much lower gap than others.[11] The most recent data point to an increase in the gender gap in the region overall, from 17.4 per cent in 2013 to 24.4 per cent in 2019.[12]

Internet Use

The highest use of the Internet is for social media applications followed by news and job searches.[13]

ICT 0.6% to 6.0%

The ICT sector's contribution to GDP is still weak, varying between 0.6 per cent and 6 per cent during 2016–2018.[14] The sector is concentrated in telecommunications. There is minimal export of technology-related products.[15]

Total Trade to GDP

The trade openness of Arab countries, indicating dependence on the global economy, and measured by the ratio of total trade to GDP in 2016, varies across the region, from 151 in the United Arab Emirates to 78 in Tunisia, 50.6 in Saudi Arabia, 26.1 in Egypt and 24.5 in Yemen.[16]

The major oil-exporting countries (Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) have the largest share of the region's external trade, with exports accounting for over 88 per cent of total exports.[17]

Intra-Arab Trade

The share of intra-Arab trade in goods was around 13 per cent in 2017,[18] but remains well below the share of intraregional trade in the European Union (64 per cent) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (24 per cent).[19]

27%

Around 70 per cent of exports from the Arab region are petroleum products mostly directed towards other regions. When excluding petroleum exports, the intra-regional trade ratio increases to 27 per cent, but is still far lower than that of other regions.[20]

Public-private partnerships (PPP)

The majority of public-private partnerships in the region are in the GCC countries, and they are concentrated in water and energy. In the region as a whole, public-private partnerships are largely in energy and telecommunications.[21]

9 countries

Nine Arab countries currently have laws on public-private partnerships: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates.[22]

Despite national variations in SDG data availability, regionally, data are available for less than half of the global SDG indicators, with the vast majority of indicators lacking disaggregated data.

SDG Indicator Coverage

Across the region, data availability is particularly weak on indicators measuring the environmental dimension of sustainable development, including for SDGs 12 and 13.

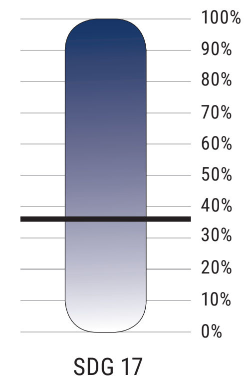
Measuring SDG 17 in the Arab region according to the global SDG indicator framework

Data are available for 9 out of 25 indicators, covering 7 out of 19 targets under SDG 17.

Available data mostly relate to the indicators of targets on data, monitoring and accountability, as well as those related to trade. Data are largely unavailable for targets on multistakeholder partnerships, some aspects of financing and policy coherence. A number of indicators do not capture the complexity of the target, including capacity-building, which is measured in dollar value. The majority of indicators are input rather than output indicators.

The 19 targets of SDG 17 cannot entirely capture all elements of the means of implementation. A full picture requires the so-called alphabetical targets across the 16 other SDGs. Those include indicators on mobilizing resources, policy coherence, financing, capacity-building, technology transfer, and engaging different stakeholders, including local actors and women. In addition, those means of implementation targets often relate to intersecting levels of input and output between national (as well as local), regional and global levels. Therefore, measuring SDG 17 can only be indicative if it addresses these levels of intersection and it remains partial without attention to their dimensions across the 16 other SDGs.

Indicator coverage



SDG 17 CONTAINS TWO TARGETS TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2020

TARGET 17.11 - Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports

TARGET 17.18 - Enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts

SDG 17 ALSO INCLUDES A TARGET TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2017

TARGET 17.8 - Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology

The main barriers to strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development in the region

Finance

With one decade remaining to implement the 2030 Agenda, the Arab region continues to face a large financing gap, estimated to be in the trillions of dollars. The potential to mobilize resources across funding sources (public, private, blended, multilateral, etc.) remains stunted and far below need. These challenges take place against a global backdrop of increased inequality and unmet ODA commitments, threatening the region's ability to move forward on all 17 SDGs.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE KEY BARRIERS TO FINANCE AS A MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN THE ARAB REGION

Fiscal policy

Inefficiency in public spending as well as ineffective or inequitable use of taxation limit domestic resource mobilization. Gaps persist despite attempts in some countries to broaden the tax base and remove some tax exemptions and inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies, among other measures. Oil-rich countries continue to rely on oil revenues with all the attendant volatility this entails. In those countries, taxes as a share of government revenue remain negligible. Where taxation has increased, it remains linked to hydrocarbon industries.[23]

Oil-poor and middle-income countries depend on tax revenue but their tax-to-GDP ratios are low, and they are generally burdened with heavy debt-servicing. Taxation is often indirect and regressive rather than direct and progressive, with the largest impact borne by households in middle- and lower-income brackets. In many Arab countries, the top-tier tax rates have not changed in the last decade.[24] All these issues together increase inequality among groups at different income levels. Where taxation has shifted towards more progressive models, compliance and enforcement remain weak overall.

Structure of the economy and low investments

Arab economies are largely characterized by non-productive sectors that do not generate adequate opportunities for decent employment. Industry and manufacturing and intraregional trade are weak, while the bulk of economic activity occurs in the financial sector and real estate. Efforts to diversify economies are not sufficient; the informal sector is large and unintegrated. This impacts the quantity as well as the quality of foreign direct investment.

Long-term, responsible and development-oriented private finance in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, both domestic and foreign, lacks the nurturing competitive investment climate and cross-border arrangements that facilitate the movement of capital and people in the region. Risk factors loom large, further hampering efforts to channel sustainable private finance to SDG achievement. Intra-regional remittances and FDI flows, especially from oil-rich Arab economies, provide some support. Overall, however, the investment climate remains unstable and risky, riddled with corruption and burdened with outdated regulations and red tape.

Illicit financial flows

Curbing illicit financial flows is critical to the ability to mobilize resources, implement the 2030 Agenda and enhance governance. The region's average illicit financial flows through trade misinvoicing in non-oil sectors averaged 8.2 per cent of total non-oil trade in the world, the equivalent of $60.3 billion a year between 2008 and 2015.[25] Illicit flows from drug trafficking, illicit arms trading and undeclared oil trading also contribute to the erosion of the regulatory environment, and undercut effective mobilization and use of resources.[26]

Debt servicing

The region's percentage of debt servicing to exports of goods and services is more than double the world average of 4.62 per cent, with the Mashreq reaching 17.52 per cent.[27] Since concessional debt has been on the decline in middle-income countries, interest rates are increasing, further enlarging debt burdens.[28] Debt servicing is syphoning off vitally needed resources, curtailing fiscal space and threatening sustainable development. While globally net debt inflows to low- and middle-income countries fell considerably in 2018, Arab countries recorded the fastest accumulation in external debt stock, on average 6 per cent, propelled by Egypt, which posted a 17 per cent increase between 2017 and 2018.[29] Lebanon stands out with an estimated gross government debt-to-GDP ratio of 155 per cent in 2019.[30]

Unmet ODA commitments

Few developed countries have delivered on their commitment to provide the equivalent of 0.7 per cent of GNI in development aid. Arab countries, like other developing nations, bear the cost. The nature and quality of ODA has changed significantly in recent years, with funds not channelled proportionately to critical human development priorities, including health and education. A substantial proportion of ODA remains tied, with benefits accruing to developed and donor countries.

Conflict

Conflict has reversed development gains, severely damaged industries and productive capacities, and destroyed vital infrastructure as well as entire cities in some cases. It has diverted domestic resources and foreign aid towards humanitarian relief and already bloated military expenditure. The cost of rebuilding infrastructure, including hospitals and schools, now comes on top of already chronic funding gaps for development needs. Estimates of the economic cost of conflict vary. By one calculation, the cost was $752 billion between 2011 and 2015, covering direct costs incurred by Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, and the indirect spill-over effects on neighbouring countries.[31] The diversion of a proportion of humanitarian aid to in-donor refugee services[32] shrinks its potential to support productive investments and necessary infrastructure.

In urging a stronger response to climate change, the **Paris Agreement** calls for "a balance between adaptation and mitigation" based on national priorities. While Arab States are committed to addressing both, they have clearly identified adaptation as a national and regional priority. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change data for 2016, however, show that developed country bilateral support to the Arab States for mitigation exceeds finance for adaptation by a factor of 5 to 1; loans also exceed grants by 5 to 1. The Arab least developed countries have received just 2 per cent of bilateral climate finance flows to the region.

Source: ESCWA, 2019b.

Technology

Technology's potential in Arab countries is immense. It can empower individuals and communities, decrease inequality and contribute solutions for development challenges across the 17 SDGs in areas such as climate change, public health, water and sanitation, sustainable use of energy, good governance, poverty reduction and education, among others. It can also create new job opportunities, enhance job conditions and improve the competitiveness of the private sector. This is particularly so for a region with a high concentration of young people and the potential to absorb technology and engage with its possibilities. There are some attempts to grasp technology's potential for economic and social change, especially in middle-income countries. These efforts have been limited, however. The region remains a consumer rather than a producer of technology, with weak links between science, technology and innovation, and the market.

Technology transfer into the region is weak. While more efforts by developed countries and multinational corporations are needed, the region has to improve its capacity to absorb technology transfer, both in terms of human capacities (educational systems, research infrastructure, innovation ecosystems, etc.) as well as logistical frameworks.

Few studies assess the preparedness of Arab countries to receive technology transfer. A recent study focused on the GCC countries concluded that readiness for technology transfer is hampered by lack of industrial management expertise, weak technical skills among the local population, and bureaucratic and cumbersome legal codes.

Source: S. Elmuti and S. Abou-Zaid, 2013.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE KEY BARRIERS TO TECHNOLOGY AS A MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN THE ARAB REGION

Weak absorptive capacity

The prioritization of and investment in human capabilities is weak compared to other regions. Educational systems as well as political structures and social norms do not emphasize critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving. This has prevented the emergence of a critical mass of people effectively using, innovating and producing technology, in contrast to East or South Asia. Some middle-income countries, such as Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, have notable initiatives, but most efforts remain limited. Many lack critical funds.

Weak absorptive capacity has resulted in a consumerist approach where people use technologies and products, but do not produce or tailor these based on local needs. With some exceptions, most technologies are developed elsewhere. Weak absorption limits investment in technological production and industry, and is exacerbated by limited regional cooperation, which has undercut prospects to broaden markets and make production more viable. The majority of private-sector activity in technology, whether by domestic or multinational firms, is concentrated in sales and marketing, and in some countries, the development of software that partially satisfies local needs.[33]

Technological infrastructure and regulatory arrangements

A number of countries, especially the least developed countries and those suffering the impact of conflict and occupation, lack resources to provide the necessary infrastructure for Internet and connectivity services. In many middle-income countries, while physical infrastructure is in place, access to technology and services might be uneven, driven in part by the weakness of legal and regulatory frameworks that would ensure inclusive coverage of different areas or communities. Urban-rural disparities are evident. In Egypt in 2016, the Internet reached 51.1 per cent of individuals in urban areas compared to 33.5 per cent in rural areas. The same year, in Morocco, the rates were 66.9 per cent and 44.4 per cent, respectively, and in Oman, 72.6 per cent and 61.3 per cent, respectively.[34]

Lack of an enabling environment for science, technology and innovation, and technology transfer

A strong science, technology and innovation ecosystem is an important prerequisite for producing, transferring and adapting technology. The Arab region is home to 2 per cent of the researchers in the world and allocates 0.64 per cent of GDP expenditure to R&D, less than half the global average.[35] Some recent national development plans/visions for 2030 or similar exercises—for example, in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia—have included pillars for science, technology and innovation. Yet implementation, planning and funding remain unclear or missing.[36]

In addition, countries lack clear direction for engaging the private sector, academia and research centres, and local communities to promote cooperation and effective partnership in the transfer and adaptation of technology. Incentives to engage researchers and academics in industry are extremely limited. In the few attempts at technology transfer, attention to social and environmental problems has been limited or even absent.

Few incentives for entrepreneurship and small business

National or regional funds to support emerging, innovative ideas and small businesses are insufficient in the region. Efforts to incubate new initiatives or provide support—both in terms of logistics and knowledge—remain limited. Often, these deficits prompt the migration of youth and promising talent away from the region.

The business environment is generally marked by cumbersome, outdated or costly regulations that make it harder for young people, women and small businesses to access credit, markets and know-how. The cost of registering a new business or closing an existing one is often prohibitive, and might work to expand the informal economy. Seventeen Arab countries rank sixtieth or below on a global index of a conducive business environment (out of 187 countries, with the most conducive being first), while five countries – Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen – are among the most difficult countries globally for doing business.[37]

Capacity-building: large gaps and little evidence of delivery

Capacity-building is greatly needed to overhaul approaches to development planning and implementation to achieve the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. Different SDGs call for capacity-building support to equip countries with the right knowledge, technologies and skills. At least nine targets across SDGs 1 to 16 call specifically for capacity-building. Many indicate support by developed countries, such as by sharing scientific knowledge and technological know-how (target 14.a), building infrastructure (target 11.c) or direct training (target 3.c). Capacity-building therefore cannot be considered a target solely under SDG 17.

An assessment of capacity-building support as the dollar value of financial and technical assistance committed to developing countries reveals that the region received a total of $3.97 billion in 2016, or about 15 per cent of such assistance globally.* Arab least developed countries received less than all other subregions, however. Egypt and Jordan received the most, indicating a possible lack of correlation to need.

Across the 16 other SDGs, capacity-building gaps loom large. Limited capacity in fact emerges as a barrier to achieving a number of the goals, particularly those more directly linked to the environmental dimension of sustainable development—natural resource management, risk assessment, and mitigation and adaptation measures (SDGs 2, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14 and 15). The persistence of these gaps indicates that support lags far behind need and demand as well as the global commitment to enable developing countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

* Calculated by ESCWA, see figure 5.

Trade

The region is not well-integrated into global value chains, and intraregional trade is low. Anaemic trade infrastructure (both logistical and physical) and uneven connectivity between and within countries impact the implementation of other goals. The least developed as well as other countries continue to suffer the impact of unequal access to and representation in global economic governance institutions, which hampers the role of trade in addressing global inequalities, strengthening economic performance, and bridging knowledge and resource gaps between societies to achieve the SDGs.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE KEY BARRIERS TO TRADE AS A MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN THE ARAB REGION

The structure of Arab economies

Overdependence on oil in some countries, the concentration of low-productivity sectors and limited manufacturing, and a weak agricultural sector challenge the region's participation and competitiveness in global trade. Integration into global value chains has not seen a significant improvement in the last 20 years.[38]

Weak political will to improve and operationalize the Pan Arab Free Trade Agreement and related instruments

As the primary framework to organize trade among Arab countries, the Pan Arab Free Trade Agreement remains focused on trade in goods. It does not facilitate the necessary mobility of people, services and investment. The agreement also remains vulnerable to political dynamics in the region, impacting the consistency and sustainability of intraregional trade.[39]

Fragmented and not forward-looking trade negotiations

Trade negotiations with other regions or economic entities are not coordinated and not optimally used to trigger growth in productivity and services at the national level; agreements are rarely rooted in a vision of what could be produced and traded, reducing the potential of trade agreements to mobilize resources, capacities and support.[40] Arab countries need to strengthen their negotiating position as a bloc, similar to African or Asian countries.

Developed countries' limited efforts to enhance the trading position of developing countries

Commitments to provide higher market access to goods and services originating in developing countries, and revise enforced trade agreements to increase access and lower tariffs remain either unfulfilled or at a scale that is too small to improve the trading possibilities for Arab countries. This is particularly detrimental for the least developed countries, where prospects for economic growth largely hinge on differential trade treatment, regionally and globally.

Systemic issues

Multistakeholder Partnerships: Fragmented attempts, a shrinking civic space, and limited partnerships for the public good

The engagement of civil society in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its follow-up and review processes remains uneven, falling short of its potential. An enabling environment is largely absent. Engagement has mostly centred on consultations for preparing the Voluntary National Reviews presented to the High-level Political Forum mandated to review SDG implementation. Consultations have yet to generate more systematic engagement of civil society at subnational and local levels, even though this is critical to achieving the SDGs. Multiple goals call for collaborating with beneficiaries and local actors; they also prioritize the accountability of the State to its people. Shrinking civic space in the region has been documented in the majority of countries in recent years; legislative limitations on the work of civil society and access to information are major challenges (SDG 16).

Public-private partnerships in the region are concentrated in sectors that are profitable for multinationals and other private sector companies, including energy, electricity, telecommunications and transport. Such partnerships rarely target so-called social sectors or those that invest in human capabilities or social innovation. While laws exist to structure these partnerships in some Arab countries, more work is needed to ensure they are scrutinized for alignment with human rights and the principles of inclusivity and equity.*

*Alsaidi, forthcoming.

Policy and institutional coherence

Efforts to enhance policy and institutional coherence are a global, regional and national challenge. Globally, the meaningful alignment of different frameworks, including those related to economic governance and performance, climate change, financing for development, support to the least developed countries and international human rights, to name a few, have yet to materialize. Across the SDGs, regional integration in areas as varied as trade, natural resources governance, migration, climate change and transport needs to be enhanced for individual Arab countries to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

At the national level, the majority of Arab countries have established intersectoral committees to coordinate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, often at the ministerial level and headed by the office of the Prime Minister or equivalent. The inclusivity of those committees and the weight given to the different dimensions of sustainable development vary from one country to the next.

The extent to which such committees are spurring intersectoral work is not yet clear. Weak coherence between sectoral strategies aimed at achieving specific SDGs or national priorities remains a major handicap, despite the urgent need to integrate or reformulate strategies to address interlinkages and trade-offs among the different SDGs. One example involves agricultural and water management strategies, which are not adequately integrated in a number of countries in the region. Similarly, though gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are increasingly part of national agendas, they are rarely mainstreamed in strategies to enhance economic growth and prosperity, or to address climate change.

Policymakers often cite the difficulties of information- and data-sharing across sectors, indicating the need for a cultural change across the cycle of planning, implementation, and follow-up and review. **Implementation of the 2030 Agenda provides the opportunity to trigger this cultural change and optimize integration to increase benefits and minimize trade-offs.**

Data, monitoring and accountability

Little is known about results-based implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region and the impact of policies to achieve the SDGs. Periodic assessments or evaluations of policies and interventions are infrequent; public sharing of these is rare. Mechanisms to uphold State accountability to citizens are not always in place. Shrinking civic space effectively limits the assessment of State efforts, government expenditures, public-private partnerships and other concerns. In recent years, the Voluntary National Reviews, though jump-starting some coordination and consultation efforts, have remained largely descriptive rather than evaluative of implementation efforts, with a stronger focus on quantitative rather than qualitative analysis at the national level.

Despite notable efforts by national statistics offices to produce data to inform and monitor the implementation of the SDGs and national priorities, large gaps exist, particularly in the environmental dimension of sustainable development. Although disaggregation, including by sex, is critical in ensuring that policymaking and implementation meet the needs of all social groups and communities, it is very weak. This effectively limits the ability of the 2030 Agenda to reduce inequality and reach those who are the furthest behind. The production of timely, high-quality, disaggregated data is not only a technical pillar of achieving the 2030 Agenda; it is also a political one as it is fundamental to ensure inclusivity and justice.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE KEY BARRIERS TO DATA, MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY AS MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN THE ARAB REAGION

Capacity and funding

Many Arab countries have established monitoring and follow-up and review mechanisms, where the national institution leading coordination of the 2030 Agenda works with the national statistics office or ministry of planning to develop periodic progress reports on key performance indicators most relevant to national development. Several countries have also conducted a mapping exercise involving the SDGs, their targets and indicators, and the national vision, strategies and development plans.

Data production remains inadequate across the 17 SDGs, however. In some cases, as in SDG 1 or SDG 10, methodological challenges become a barrier to achievement. Political considerations in some countries limit the production or release of data. The inability to define and measure poverty and inequality accurately and comprehensively has stunted the ability of policymakers to tackle social and economic challenges, and exacerbated injustice and discontent. Likewise, the limited capacity to produce data on climate change and biodiversity, among other examples, contributes greatly to the lack of responsive policies.

It is difficult to separate methodological challenges from those related to funding. Some countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, State of Palestine and Tunisia) have established mechanisms that periodically conduct household surveys to generate data. Limited resources, however, impact survey breadth and quality.

Weak coordination

Institutional frameworks such as national reporting platforms or central databases to coordinate data flows among different entities at the national level and from national to global are often not in place or not fully operational. A wealth of administrative data remains tied to sectoral processes, preventing policymakers from accessing and using data in a coordinated fashion. Civil registration and vital statistics often remain contentious with conflicting figures recorded by different entities. To a lesser degree, data related to marriage registration and divorce are also scattered among courts and administrative units. This fragmentation has an adverse effect on the ability of the State to gather information from multiple perspectives and design effective, integrated policies. The fragmentation of data leads directly to the fragmentation of policies and interventions.

Limited political will to generate and disaggregate data and make it public

The commitment to transparency is weak in some countries, especially when it comes to indicators relating to migratory status or unemployment. In over two thirds of the 14 Arab countries surveyed, a legal vacuum means disaggregation of data by specific groups or certain characteristics is not prioritized, despite increasing demand for such data.[41] Across the SDGs, those at risk of being left behind include groups such as non-nationals and domestic workers. Data are not adequately or routinely collected for groups with specific needs such as children, adolescents, the elderly, or persons with disabilities. For many SDGs, progress is also uneven at the subnational level, leaving many areas, especially rural ones, those far from the centre or pockets of informal urban settlements, at risk of falling further behind.

Arab countries have increasingly used Voluntary National Reviews as opportunities to broaden the scope of data collection. Nevertheless, the inaccessibility of data produced by national statistics systems including line ministries is detrimental to the increased accountability of the State and its institutions. Where national reporting platforms or dashboards have been established, data may not be available in Arabic and transparency remains limited. Civil society, academics and the media, to name a few, are not always able to access information easily and routinely. This discourages reflection, assessment and engagement with processes related to policies, public budgets and the like.

What the region can do to accelerate progress on SDG 17

SDG 17 requires national, regional and global efforts with a view to how global and regional frameworks influence the national level, help address inequalities among countries and regions, and support a coherent and complementary shift towards sustainable development across the board.

Finance

1. Introduce SDG-centric fiscal policies:

- Reform fiscal policies to enhance the efficiency of public spending and allocate adequate resources to national sustainable development priorities.
- Reform tax policies given each country's socioeconomic realities, and adopt equitable and progressive models.
- Enhance compliance regimes and enforcement of tax legislation to use taxation effectively.

2. Shift economic policies towards enhanced productivity and sustainability:

- Gear economic planning towards more productive and employment-generating sectors, and support diversification.
- Gear FDI towards productive industries and initiatives with a focus on medium- and long-term returns as well as technology and knowledge transfer.
- Strengthen the legal framework to reduce and mitigate risks and attract FDI.

- Reduce the cost of remittance transfer, and introduce regulatory frameworks to facilitate their investment and enhance the contributions of migrants to development in their country of origin.

3. Curb illicit financial flows:

- Enhance legislation and regulatory frameworks as well as enforcement mechanisms to prohibit illicit financial flows and trade misinvoicing, including practices related to the manipulation of prices, value and the quantity of goods.

- Build the capacities of law enforcement agencies and public prosecution offices to identify and target financial crimes.

- Enhance coordination at the regional level to address illicit financial flows and harmonize policies.

4. Address the debt crisis and strengthen the region's position in related global negotiations:

- Advocate multilateral debt relief for the least developed and conflict-affected countries.

- Reverse current trends in lending to improve access to concessional loans for middle-income countries, and renegotiate interest rates for non-oil economies to reduce the debt burden commensurate with their levels of growth.

5. Among developed countries, honor ODA commitments in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda:

- Increase the quantity of aid at least up to 0.7 per cent of the GNI of developed countries and in line with developing countries' national sustainable development priorities.

- Increase the quantity and quality of aid that supports human capabilities in developing countries, and ensures necessary knowledge and technology transfer.

- Enhance the transparency and accountability of ODA, and curb double counting and in-donor counting.

- Strengthen the integrity of different funding commitments, including those for medium and long-term sustainable development, climate finance and short-term humanitarian assistance.

Technology

1. Prioritize and invest in building the absorptive capacity of populations to use, adapt, customize and develop technology applications according to developmental needs:

- Reform educational systems and introduce pedagogical methodologies to encourage critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving across academic subjects and disciplines, and levels of education (early education to postgraduate).

- Invest in lifelong learning initiatives to build the absorptive capacity of those not enrolled in formal education.

- Integrate vocational education training at secondary and post-secondary levels in national educational reform policies with a view to increasing the scope of skills, addressing the scarcity of mid-level or craft competencies, and contributing to industrialization.

- Promote the digitalization of certain public services and transactions as an effective vector for developing the required infrastructures and private sector initiatives to boost this sector.

2. Ensure inclusive access to technology:

- Improve regulatory frameworks to expand coverage of necessary infrastructure to all areas and communities.

- Invest in local development, and promote technological centres or units in different areas, including rural ones.

3. Introduce strategies to improve R&D:

- Increase allocated budgets for investment in R&D, and enhance the conditions for researchers in universities and research centres.
- Improve links between universities, the research system and industry, and focus research priorities on productive sector needs.
- Encourage private sector contributions to R&D and innovation initiatives.
- Lift restrictions on freedom of speech to encourage the vibrant and active engagement of researchers with public policy and implementation of the SDGs.

4. Facilitate the emergence and establishment of small and medium enterprises:

- Establish national and regional funds and reform laws to facilitate loans, grants, venture capital, equity sharing, etc. to support new entrepreneurs.
- Simplify and mainstream regulations to establish and close new start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises.

Trade

1. Strengthen trade policies and enhance synergies with economic planning:

- Design forward-looking trade policies that capitalize on the potential of existing human, natural and financial resources, and link to a vision of progressively improving trade competitiveness.
- Restructure the economy to prioritize productive sectors, support sustainable manufacturing and invest in green technologies.
- Enhance sustainable agricultural practices, agricultural productivity and related infrastructure, and harmonize logistical frameworks for food production and distribution.

2. Enhance intraregional trade:

- Ensure the full implementation of the Pan Arab Free Trade Agreement, extend its coverage to services and reinvigorate work towards an Arab Customs Union.
- Enhance efforts to facilitate the mobility of people, labour and investments, and harmonize related standards, policies and procedures.

3. Improve the region's representation in global economic governance institutions and enhance its standing in negotiations:

- Take political steps to ensure common or harmonized positions among governments in trade agreements, and identify the necessary capacities to improve negotiations.
- Lift restrictions on regional and global market access for products and services originating in the least developed countries, including through elimination or reduction of prohibitive tariffs.

Data, monitoring and accountability

- Scale up the production and use of high-quality data in line with international standards, link statistical capacity and funding in national development plans, and commit necessary financial resources to producing harmonized, high-quality, disaggregated data.
- Prioritize the production of high-quality and timely data disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

- Increase coordination between national statistics offices and all national entities producing data, including administrative data; increase coordination between national statistics offices and United Nations entities working at the national, regional and global levels.
- Establish and fully operationalize national reporting platforms with clearly defined sources for each indicator as per standardized metadata, systematic channels of coordination between all data sources, and dissemination and transparency mechanisms according to international criteria.
- Increase transparency in the production and use of data, enhance the legislative framework, and operationalize commitments to make data publicly available and facilitate access.
- Increase open access to data, including microdata, to generate knowledge on sustainable development in the region, advance intersectoral analyses, and enhance the engagement of different stakeholders in monitoring and evaluating policies and interventions.
- Integrate and build capacity to use alternative data sources, including big data and geospatial data.

SDG 17 targets and indicators in the Arab region

Target	Indicator	Data
Finance		
17.1 Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection	**17.1.1** Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, by source	Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.
	17.1.2 Proportion of domestic budget funded by domestic taxes	Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.
17.2 Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA/GNI) to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries	**17.2.1** Net official development assistance, total and to least developed countries, as a proportion of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee donors' gross national income (GNI)	Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.

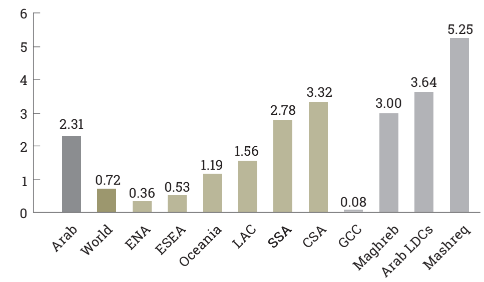
17.3
Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources

17.3.1
Foreign direct investment (FDI), official development assistance and South-South cooperation as a proportion of total domestic budget

Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.

17.3.2
Volume of remittances (in United States dollars) as a proportion of total GDP

Figure 1 Volume of remittances (in United States dollars) as a proportion of total GDP (percentage)

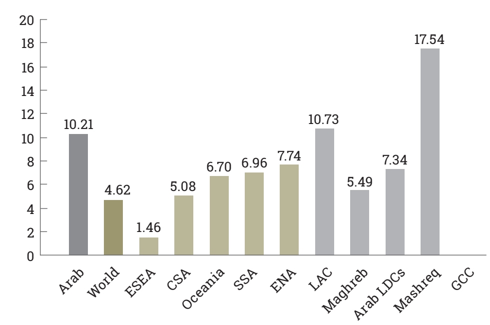


Note: All means are weighted by total GDP in current United States dollars (i.e., the denominator) for 2016, taken from the World Development Indicators (World Bank 2019). The calculated Arab regional aggregate includes the data values of the following countries and years: Djibouti (2015), Algeria, Comoros, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen (2016).

17.4
Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress

17.4.1
Debt service as a proportion of exports of goods and services

Figure 2 Debt service as a proportion of exports of goods and services (percentage)



Note: All means are weighted by total exports of goods and services in current United States dollars (i.e., the denominator) for 2016, taken from the World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2019). The calculated Arab regional aggregate includes the data values of the following countries and years: Comoros (2014), Djibouti (2015), Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia (2016). According to SDG Indicators Metadata Repository (United Nations Statistics Division 2019b), "this indicator is the percentage of debt services (principle and interest payments) to the exports of goods and services, where debt services refer only to public and publicly guaranteed debt". This is one measure of whether debt levels are sustainable. A lower ratio indicates a more sustainable country/territory/regional debt structure. Data for this indicator cover only 116 countries/territories. High-income countries/territories, including the GCC countries, all have missing values for not reporting, which should be taken into account when analysing the averages.

17.5
Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries

17.5.1
Number of countries that adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries

Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.

Technology

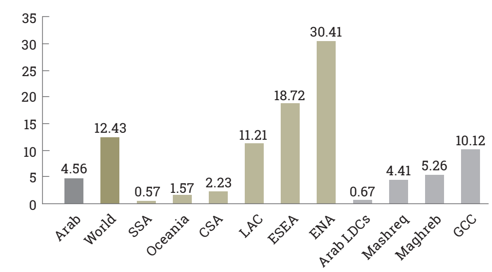
17.6
Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge-sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism

17.6.1
Number of science and/or technology cooperation agreements and programmes between countries, by type of cooperation

Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.

17.6.2
Fixed Internet broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, by speed

Figure 3 Fixed Internet broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants (percentage)



Note: All means are population weighted using the latest (2015) population estimates (United Nations Population Division, 2017; United Nations Statistics Division, 2019b). The calculated Arab regional aggregate includes the data values of Iraq in 2010 and all 21 other countries in 2016.

17.7
Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed

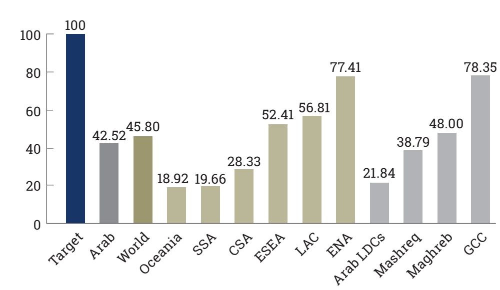
17.7.1
Total amount of approved funding for developing countries to promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies

Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.

17.8
Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology

17.8.1
Proportion of individuals using the Internet

Figure 4 Internet users per 100 inhabitants (percentage)



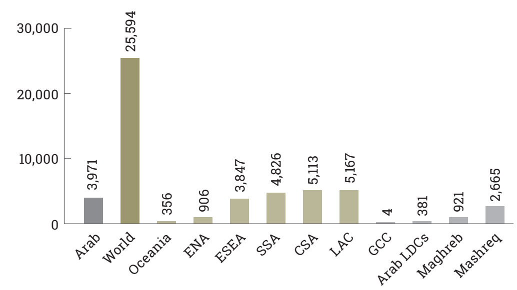
Note: All means are population weighted using the latest (2015) population estimates (United Nations Population Division, 2017; United Nations Statistics Division, 2019b). The calculated Arab regional aggregate includes the data values of all 22 countries in 2016.

Capacity-building

17.9
Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation

17.9.1
Dollar value of financial and technical assistance (including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation) committed to developing countries

Figure 5 Total official development assistance (gross disbursement) for technical cooperation (millions of constant 2016 United States dollars)



Note: Aggregates are the total sum of country values. The calculated Arab regional aggregate includes the data values of the following countries and years: Oman (2010), Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen (2016). This indicator only covers recipient countries/territories. It excludes the 33 donor countries/territories from different regions that are listed by the OECD.

Trade

17.10
Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda

17.10.1
Worldwide weighted tariff-average

Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.

17.11
Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020

17.11.1
Developing countries' and least developed countries' share of global exports

Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.

17.12
Realize timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries, consistent with World Trade Organization decisions, including by ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries are transparent and simple, and contribute to facilitating market access

17.12.1
Average tariffs faced by developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States

Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.

Systemic Issues

Policy and institutional coherence

17.13 Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence	**17.13.1** Macroeconomic Dashboard	Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.
17.14 Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development	**17.14.1** Number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development	Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.
17.15 Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development	**17.15.1** Extent of use of country-owned results frameworks and planning tools by providers of development cooperation	Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

17.16 Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries	**17.16.1** Number of countries reporting progress in multi-stakeholder development effectiveness monitoring frameworks that support the achievement of the sustainable development goals	Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.
17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships	**17.17.1** Amount of United States dollars committed to public-private and civil society partnerships	Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.

Data, monitoring and accountability

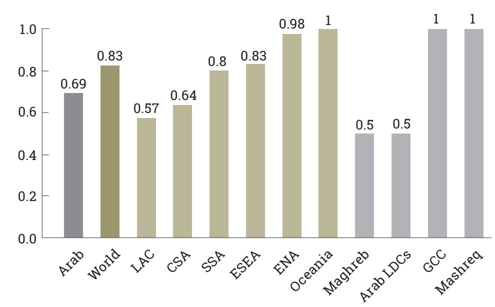
17.18
By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts

17.18.1
Proportion of sustainable development indicators produced at the national level with full disaggregation when relevant to the target, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Adopted criteria to obtain a regional average are not met for this indicator.

17.18.2
Number of countries that have national statistical legislation that complies with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

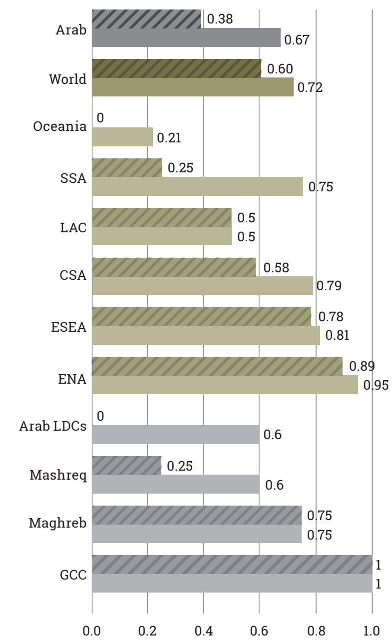
Figure 6 Countries with national statistical legislation that complies with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (1-0 dummy variable)



Note: Global, regional and subregional aggregates are the simple means of the country values, thus representing the share of countries with national statistical legislation that complies with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in a certain region/subregion. The calculated Arab regional aggregate includes the data values of the following countries in 2018: Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, State of Palestine, Sudan and Tunisia.

17.18.3
Number of countries with a national statistical plan that is fully funded and under implementation, by source of funding

Figure 7 Countries with national statistical plans that are fully funded, and countries with national statistical plans that are under implementation (1-0 dummy variables)



Note: Global, regional and subregional aggregates of both series are the simple means of the country values, thus representing the share of countries with national statistical plans that are fully funded or under implementation, respectively, in a certain region/subregion.

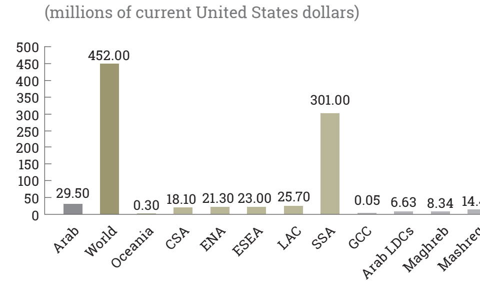
The calculated Arab regional aggregate of the first series includes the data values of the following Arab countries in 2018: Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, State of Palestine, Sudan and Tunisia.

The calculated Arab regional aggregate of the second series includes the data values of the following countries in 2018: Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, State of Palestine, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen.

17.19
By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries

17.19.1
Dollar value of all resources made available to strengthen statistical capacity in developing countries

Figure 8 Dollar value of all resources made available to strengthen statistical capacity in developing countries (millions of current United States dollars)

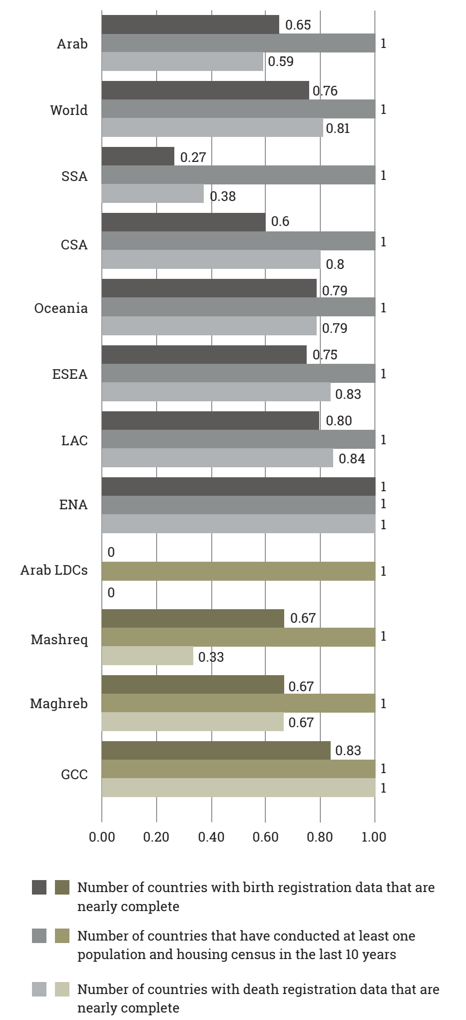


Note: Aggregates are the total sum of country values. The calculated Arab regional aggregate includes the data values of the following countries and years: Syrian Arab Republic (2012), Comoros, Saudi Arabia (2013), Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. This indicator only covers recipient countries/territories and excludes the 33 donor countries/territories from different regions that are listed by the OECD.

17.19.2

Proportion of countries that (a) have conducted at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years; and (b) have achieved 100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration

Figure 9 Countries with birth registration data that are at least 90 per cent complete, countries with death registration data that are at least 75 per cent complete, and countries that have conducted at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years (1-0 dummy variables)



Note: Global, regional and subregional aggregates of the three series are the simple means of the country values, thus representing the share of countries with birth/death registration data that are nearly complete or of countries that have conducted at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years in a certain region/subregion.

The calculated Arab regional aggregate of the birth registration data series includes the data values of the following countries and years: Syrian Arab Republic (2015), Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen (2016).

The calculated Arab regional aggregate of the housing and population census data series includes the data values of the following countries and years: Djibouti (2009), Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (2010), Kuwait (2011), Mauritania (2013), Morocco, Tunisia (2014), Jordan, Qatar (2015), Egypt, Comoros and State of Palestine (2017).

The calculated Arab regional aggregate of the death registration data series includes the data values of the following countries and years: Djibouti, Syrian Arab Republic (2015), Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia and Yemen (2016).

Note: Central and Southern Asia (CSA); Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (ESEA); Europe and Northern America (ENA); Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC); Arab Least Developed Countries (Arab LDCs); Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand); Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

All figures are based on the Global SDG Indicators Database (United Nations Statistics Division, 2018) except for the inclusion of updated data (United Nations Statistics Division, 2019a) for the following indicators: 17.18.2 [Countries with national statistical legislation that complies with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (1-0 dummy variable)], 17.18.3 [Countries with national statistical plans that are fully funded, and countries with national statistical plans that are under implementation (1-0 dummy variables)].

ENDNOTES

1. IMF, 2019b.
2. ESCWA, 2018b.
3. Ibid.
4. OECD, 2019.
5. World Bank, 2019.
6. ESCWA, 2018b.
7. Ibid.
8. UNESCO, 2015. See also the targets and indicators of SDG 9 (indicator 9.5.1).
9. Cornell University, INSEAD and WIPO, 2019.
10. Calculated by ESCWA, see figure 4.
11. ITU, 2019a.
12. ITU, 2019b.
13. ESCWA, forthcoming.
14. Ibid. Countries covered in this report are: Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Oman, State of Palestine, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates.
15. Based on values of the “share of medium- and high-tech activities” from UNIDO, 2019.
16. ESCWA, 2018a.
17. ESCWA calculations based on ESCWA, 2018a and trade data collected from national sources.
18. ESCWA calculations based on trade data collected from national sources. See also ESCWA, 2018a.
19. The value for the European Union is from 2016 and for the ASEAN region from 2015. Sources: European Union, 2017; ASEAN Statistics, 2016.
20. ESCWA calculations based on trade data collected from national sources. See also ESCWA, 2018a.
21. Alsaidi, forthcoming.
22. Ibid.
23. ESCWA 2019c.
24. Ibid.
25. ESCWA 2018b.
26. Ibid.
27. Calculated by ESCWA, see figure 2.
28. ESCWA, 2018b.
29. World Bank, 2020. Note that regional country grouping in this statement correspond with the World Bank definition of the Middle East and North Africa.
30. IMF, 2019a.
31. Sarangi and others, 2018; ESCWA, 2018b.
32. United Nations, 2019.
33. ESCWA, 2017.
34. ITU, 2019c.
35. UNESCO, 2015. See also the targets and indicators of SDG 9 (indicator 9.5.1).
36. ESCWA, 2019a.
37. World Bank Group, 2019.
38. ESCWA, 2015.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Jafar, 2019. Countries surveyed are: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

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