

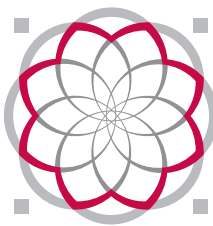
Implementation of the

2030 AGENDA:

opportunities and challenges

REGIONAL REPORT

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This report examines the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab world from a regional perspective. It draws, in part, on the national reports tracking progress/regress towards sustainable development in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia.

The report highlights in particular the structural obstacles at regional and subregional levels for the implementation and success of the 2030 Agenda. It also sets out the regional efforts and initiatives taken in order to properly implement the Agenda. Furthermore, it proposes some specific policy changes deemed necessary to make progress towards the achievement of the SDGs at regional level

1. THE TRANSITION FROM THE MDGS TO THE SDGS IN THE ARAB REGION.

Although some achievements have been recorded with respect to the MDGs targets in the Arab world, noticeable failures have been identified in strategic and crucial areas such as gender, poverty (UNDP, 2011, p 3) and hunger and food insecurity. Besides, the limitations of the MDGs framework have contributed to the sociopolitical upheavals that sparked in the region in the years 2010-2011.

- Some achievements: According to the Arab Millennium Development Goals Report (United Nations and the League of Arab States, 2014) progress was made towards realization of some goals and targets which were to be fulfilled by 2015. The most important achievement in the Arab region was the improvement of primary school enrolment and literacy, many countries managing to close in the gender parity in education.
- Noticeable failures: Although still very low, extreme poverty, measured by the proportion of people whose income is less than 1.25 United States dollars (US\$), is on the rise due to conflicts, political uncertainty and unchallenged neoliberal economic policies. A more realistic measure of extreme poverty shows that more than one-fifth of people in the Arab region are poor and that this situation remained unchanged between the 1990s and 2010 (United Nations and League of Arab States, 2014). In addition, the region lags behind when it comes to important issues, particularly those related to hunger, food insecurity, lack of access to water, lack of improved sanitation in rural areas, and child and maternal mortality (United Nations and League, idem p xi). Furthermore, “progress on the

goals has been uneven across subregions and countries, and within countries” (ibid).

As a matter of fact, the MDGs framework neglected the deeply rooted foundations of socioeconomic and political problems that the Arab world has been facing since the 1980s. These problems were caused by neoliberal policies (“free-market and trickle-down economics) and lack of democracy and political repression. For instance, the MDGs’ assumption that neoliberal economic policies (liberalization-privatization-fiscal austerity) are the best means of poverty reduction actually inhibit forming the universal public services necessary for development. In addition, the focus on GDP has resulted in growth without decent employment (ADCR, 2011), crony capitalism, widespread corruption and alarming socioeconomic and spatial inequalities (between rich and poor, rural and urban residents, or men and women). It is commonly acknowledged that the issues of human dignity, social justice and democracy represent the principal motive behind the Arab Spring.

- The SDGs from an Arab perspective.

The SDGs are considered more ambitious than the MDGs adopted in 2000, whose deadline expired in 2015, and aim to bridge the gaps that marred the MDGs. While the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development goals (SDGs) maintains the focus of the MDGs agenda on eradicating poverty, it also emphasizes the interdependence of development issues (economic, social and sustainable) and covers topics not fully taken into account in the MDGs, including inequality, governance and peace and inclusive societies. In addition, unlike the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals include not only Goals but also the means for achieving them. The means of implementation include financing for development, fair and equitable trade, development and transfer of technology and capacity-building for sustainable development, especially for the developing countries.

The Arab region has to address persistent challenges and priorities from the SDGs lens such as peace and security, democracy and popular participation, poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and undernourishment, gender disparities, child and maternal mortality, access to safe drinking water and alarming inequalities between social classes as well as between rural and urban areas. Yet, this region has to overcome daunting obstacles and challenges if it is to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

2. MAIN STRUCTURAL OBSTACLES AT REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL LEVELS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA

Several challenges hinder the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. Firstly, the Arab countries lack the policy space they need to pursue transformative and productive policies that will help diversify their economies and strengthen their industrial and productive capabilities. This is due to the failure of the 2030 Agenda to properly address the structural factors that impede sustainable development and reinforce poverty and social exclusion, particularly power relations imbalances among countries (power imbalances between developed and “developing” countries, predominance of transnational corporations and inter-governmental institutions- particularly those dealing with trade and finance such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank- and technocratic elites).Oblivious of power relations , the Agenda “fails to confront the current state of society and the state, and to deliver commensurate transformative ideas (Koehler, 2016).

Secondly, occupation, war and conflict –especially Israeli occupation, wars and conflicts, terrorism and global and regional powers in the internal affairs of Arab States- significantly contribute to poverty and vulnerability in the region. Security and stability are of paramount importance for creating the environment that would help address poverty. For example, war has paralysed farming and the capacity for food production not only in those countries suffering from starvation, such as Yemen and Somalia, but also such countries as Sudan and Iraq, which had previously been known as the breadbasket of the Arab world, (ESCWA, Arab Forum final Report, 2017, p 18). Additionally, the prospects of spreading conflict dampen investment and impose a drag on economic, social and institutional development.

Thirdly, the Arab uprisings have not brought about democratic changes that people were fighting for. Instead, except for Tunisia, one can observe that authoritarianism is fighting back and civic space is shrinking dramatically in the Arab region. Attempts of silencing critical voices have not only increased in number, but they are becoming more radical and violent.

Fourthly, at the socioeconomic level, Arab countries are still committed to carrying out neoliberal policies that have demonstrated their limitations in the past (privatization of public services such as education and health for example, a persistent blind faith in the private sector, austerity and public spending cuts, etc.). Furthermore, religious fundamentalism and patriarchy constitute a real threat for human rights, especially women’s rights in the Arb region.

Finally, the potential contribution of regional integration to the Agenda 2030 might not materialize unless geopolitical issues and interstate disputes are tackled in a serious and effective manner.

Box 1: National experiences with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

--Some achievements:

- Measures to institutionalize sustainable development (for instance, Ministerial Committee chaired by PM in Egypt; National Committee to monitor Jordan Vision 2025; Ministry of Development and International Cooperation in Tunisia; “SDGs in Lebanon: Analyzing gaps and Reporting Progress” Project in partnership with UNDP).
- Three Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan and Morocco) have volunteered to review their efforts to implement 2030 Agenda at the High Level Political Forum).

--Challenges and obstacles:

- Political instability, war, conflicts and “forced” migration; bad governance and lack of democracy; shrinking of policy space due to donors’ conditionalities and free market policies focused only on economic growth; unfairness of tax systems; debt spiral; lack of roadmap or concrete plan of action and means of implementation for achieving the targets; lack of a bold rights-based approach.

Main obstacles and priorities at regional level to achieving Goals 1,8 and 10

Poverty and inequalities (Goals 1 and 10)

While extreme poverty is relatively low in the Arab region, there are signs that it has started to increase again as a result of conflicts and political instability in the Mashreq sub-region. The situation has become so grim that migration and flight are the only recourse as economic, social, demographic, and environmental vulnerabilities keep worsening. It is worth mentioning that the poverty level is much higher when measured in terms of national poverty line. Furthermore, multidimensional poverty (inequalities in health, education and living conditions) is widespread in the Arab world as nearly two thirds of the Arab population are either poor or vulnerable to poverty (ESCWA, League of Arab States, Unicef, 2017).

Exclusionary neoliberal growth models, lack of decent work and wages, crony capitalism and corruption, informalization of Arab economies, deterioration of public services and weak social protection are the main obstacles to the eradication of poverty in the Arab world.

At another level, while income inequalities in the Arab region are relatively moderate according to the Gini coefficient, there is an acute concentration at the top of the income pyramid, the share of the 1% income receivers exceeding 25% of the region's income (compared to 20% in the United States) (Alvaredo and Picketty, 2014).

Goal 8: Sustainable growth and decent work.

The Arab region still records the highest unemployment rates worldwide, especially among the youth, and the lowest women's participation in the workforce, along with the highest levels of labour migration. The situation has worsened due to recent conflicts and political instability (ESCWA, 2017. Poverty and Prosperity). Unemployment is particularly high among youth (25% in 2005/2011) and women (16% compared to 8% for men). Another alarming feature of the Arab labour market is informality, which has grown in the region during the last two decades (ANND, Arab Watch Report, 2017).

The challenge of job creation and decent work is expected to worsen in the future: According to an estimate for the non-GCC countries, in order for countries of the Arab region to reach full employment by 2030, they have to create ninety two million jobs (escwa, 2014. Sustainable Development Goals... p 12).

Several factors help explain the poor employment record in the Arab region. Neoliberal economic policies- especially premature liberalization, decline of public investment and inability of private investment to take over- explain, at least partly, the continuous labour challenge the Arab region has faced. In addition, economic structure has changed little since the 1990s. The emphasis on oil, gas and mining in the oil-rich countries and the predominance of service activities with low-productivity and low wages do not help generate decent jobs. Furthermore, one of the main reasons for a high youth unemployment rate is the problematic transition from school to work, particularly for university students (Arab Development Challenges, 2011, p 41).

Priorities: Reports from several regional organizations (ESCWA, UNDP, ILO) suggest concrete priorities and policy actions:

- Challenging neoliberal policies in order to build domestic demand rather than focusing solely on cutting labour and other costs in the hope of being competitive in export markets. To that end, a broad and vigorous mobilization of civil society and social movements is required.
- Full employment has to become the central objective of economic policy, and Arab countries have to use all their levers- fiscal, monetary, regulatory and industrial- to achieve it.
- Make the economic growth process more inclusive and employment-intensive, providing direct resources to the sectors in which the poor work (such as agriculture and informal activities), areas in which they live (relatively backward regions), factors of production which they possess (unskilled labour) and outputs which they consume (such as food) (Ghosh J, What does wage-led growth mean in developing countries... in ILO, 2011, There Is An Alternative, Geneva).
- There is a need in the Arab region to develop more precise measures of poverty and inequality.
- A comprehensive social protection system is much needed.
- Adopting progressive tax policies.

3. REGIONAL EFFORTS AND CAMPAIGNS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA

3.1 Regional follow up and review (FUR) institutions.

While progress on the implementation of 2030 A is reviewed primarily at the country level, the regional level is more focused on identifying trends, obstacles, commonalities, best practices and lessons learned. In the Arab region, ESCWA's leadership role in the regional follow-up and review processes help accelerate progress towards attainment of SDGs at country level but also address issues and challenges, which cannot be dealt with by countries acting alone. In addition, the League of Arab States and Arab Forum for Sustainable Development help develop regional approaches and offer space for dialogue and discussion on sustainable development issues.

Escwa 's initiatives: As a UN regional organization, Escwa coordinates the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and would play a leading role in monitoring progress on the 2030 Agenda and publish regular progress reports with UN partners. Escwa is expected, in particular, to provide support for member States to incorporate SDGs in to their national development plans; support for statistics systems; oversees regional follow-up processes, such as Arab Forum on SD; and monitors progress made in the Arab region towards the achievement of SDGs; and preparations of regional follow up (Escwa 322 [EC.2] Strategy and plan of Action on Agenda 2030).

Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD): In collaboration with the League of Arab States, ESCWA established the Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development in 2014 as the main component of regional architecture for monitoring and following up on the 2030 Agenda. AFSD offers a space for information sharing, discussion and peer learning and assess of progress and policies; it allows for discussions on overall trends, gaps, lessons learned, best practices, and issues specific to the region and boosts regional cooperation and partnerships. In its inaugural session in April 2014, the AFSD stressed the importance of partnership, enhancement of regional productive capacities, development-oriented trade and investment policies, social protection, human rights and gender equality, among others. (Annex: Arab Forum's Outcomes (2017).

While the AFSD is an important achievement per se, questions have to be raised regarding how CSOs are selected, how much space is provided to CSOs to interact, and what mechanisms to hold decision-makers accountable on the implementation of the 2030 AGENDA to Arab citizens.

The League of Arab States (LAS). The interest of the LAS for sustainable development goes back to 2002 when the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment adopted the sustainable Development initiative in the Arab Region. While some accomplishments have been recorded- in particular a new Arab Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development 2015/2025 was presented in 2012 at Rio+20, it is worth mentioning that Sustainable Development is still largely viewed in the region as an environmental issue .

In addition, there is a lack of close linkages with the regional economic, social and environmental institutional framework provided through LAS (in particular the Economic and Social Council and Summits and the Council of Arab Ministers responsible for the Environment) to attract high-level participation of Ministers across relevant portfolios as well as Heads of State. What is actually needed is a paradigm shift so that SD is viewed as an integrated economic, social and environmental agenda of the highest priority for the Arab region.

The UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States convened the First Arab regional Meeting on SDG 4- Education 2030 I 2015. At this occasion, Arab member States and partners adopted "Arab Regional Roadmap for Education 2030".



Box 2 AFSD : Regional priorities:

1 Gender Equality and empower of Women

2 The environment and sustainability

3 Population: incorporate issues of international migration in development policy at national and regional levels as drivers of economic and social development; make investments designed to benefit from demographic dividend of growing numbers of young people by investing in their health, welfare and education empowering them economically by giving them employment

4 Food security: reduce reliance on food imports by investing in development of technology to ensure sustainability of food production ..; grant priority to developing agriculture technology, science resources, good governance and regional and international cooperation all have a decisive role to play in addressing problems of food security and must be alongside the means of implementation when formulating strategies. It is also essential to adopt an approach linking women, environment and food sectors at regional level.

5 Health

6 Disability

7 The family.. through formulating integrated development plans that take into account needs of all family members

8 Human rights: commit to international human rights standards as a precondition for achieving SDGs; adopt a rights-based approach to social policy; foster regional efforts to put in place inclusive social protection system.

Box 3 :ESCWA Strategy- key areas of intervention

1 Integrating SDGs into national development planning and fiscal framework (escwa mandated to support the implementation of Sustainable Development by promoting integration of SDGs into plans, models and fiscal framework, assisting in the understanding and analysis of cross-cutting issues and emerging issues, and providing support to integrate the three dimensions of SD

2 Promoting policy coherence, consistency and coordination: providing countries with "one-stop shops" for policy advice to facilitate the integration of the three dimensions of Sustainable Development, offering technical cooperation to implement SDGs and operationalizing their means of implementation at regional, subregional and country level

Arab Forum for Sustainable Development will serve as the primary regional platform for cohesive and coordinated implementation of the Agenda 2030...in order to facilitate member state consensus on regional roadmaps for the implementation of SDGs, producing regional annual reports, conduct peer review mechanisms, setting norms, and examining opportunities to strengthen national institutional frameworks for a coordinated implementation of SDGs...

3 Enhancing data and statistical capacities of member States to implement the Agenda 2030: Statistical capacity in the Arab region remains limited. Many Arab countries were unable to report fully on the 45 MDG indicators using national official data. To overcome this data gaps, governments need to improve transparency and accountability (Escwa/Unep, 2015.Arab Sustainable Development Report, p 23).

4 Identifying and promoting alternative and innovative sources of financing for development. : Escwa will promote domestic resource mobilization, including tax reforms, capital market development, international tax cooperation and public private partnerships.

5 Leveraging science, technology and innovation in support of the Agenda 2030.

6 Tapping South/South and regional partnerships

7 Translating regional models into global public goods. (ex. Legally binding inter-government agreements, norms and standards, and good practice guidelines including for transportation, environment, sustainable development and statistics).

3.2 REGIONAL CAMPAIGNS ON THE 2030 AGENDA.

Several regional campaigns aimed at building public awareness and promoting a clear understanding of the benefits of aligning national priorities and policy-making processes with the 2030 Agenda and SDGs have been organized in the Arab region. Examples of such activities include:

- In 2016 Escwa in partnership with Oxfam and the Arab NGOs Network for Development held a Regional Workshop for civil society organizations in the Arab region on “Regional approaches for the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”;
- In March 2017 the UN system in the Arab/Mena region kicked off International Women’s Day with an eye on Planet 50-50 by 2030.
- Arab week for Sustainable development (organized by Arab League, Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation, the WB and UNDP (July 2017): This event in particular stressed the need for setting up and broadening alliances between all stakeholders (international and regional organizations, CSOs, private sector and governments) and providing the required support to implement 2030A
- Partnership of the Arab Forum for Environment And Development (AFED) and the AUB as part of the latter 150th Anniversary program of events. On that occasion, the AFED launched its 2016 Annual Report on the State of Arab Environment, entitled “Towards 2030: Sustainable Development Goals in a Changing Climate”. While focusing on water-energy-food nexus, this report also explored issues of finance development and enabling conditions required to achieve the goals set for 2030 (AFED Conference, AUB 150TH Anniversary: Sustainable Development Goals in a Changing Arab Climate, press release, Beirut, 18 July 2016).
- Straddling the border between capacity-building and advocacy, the UNDP Regional Bureau of Arab States (RBAS) launched the First annual Youth Leadership Programme in 2015.

4. HOW THE PRIVATE/CORPORATE SECTOR AND THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS) INFLUENCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GOALS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL.

No regional and coordinated initiatives have been taken by the IFIs to influence the implementation of the SDGs so far. Instead, an international financial institution such as the World Bank intends to develop “ a new approach which attempts to tackle the underlying causes of fragility and conflict, while simultaneously supporting resilience, reconstruction, and recovery efforts”. This new strategy will be implemented “ in partnership with other regional and global institutions like the UN, and the Islamic Development Bank” (The Role of the World Bank in Implementing SDGs in Arab Countries Mahmoud Mohieldin, nov 2016, WB website).

Similarly, the International Monetary Fund focuses on three common threads to implement the 2030 Agenda: “sustainable growth” through macroeconomic and financial stability; “inclusive growth” via fiscal policy and structural reforms; “environmental sustainability” by means of “energy and water price reforms” associated to “mitigating measures in favour of the “ most vulnerable” (Fabrizio S and alii, 2015).

Following the IMF’s approach, the Arab Monetary Fund intervenes at the regional and national level to support “ efforts of its member countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda in different ways, including supporting economic reforms, enabling a conducive environment for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), enhancing financial inclusion, and contributing to capacity development and building in Arab countries. (Arab Monetary Fund, 2017).

It is worth mentioning the Multilateral Development Banks (MDB) and IMF consider that it would be unrealistic to rely on the Official Development Assistance alone to finance a trillion-dollar project, which is the total amount required to implement the 2030 Agenda. They state that “this requires enhancing existing partnerships and building new ones with the private sector- including institutional investors- to mobilize financing for development” (Delivering on the 2030 Agenda, 2016).

As for concrete regional projects supported by MDBs and regional financial institutions in the Arab region, the only one worth of interest is the “Arab Financing Facility for Infrastructure” (AFFI)- a partnership between the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank. This initiative aims to “ support Arab infrastructure

development for economic growth and regional integration". Eligible sectors are energy (power plants, transmission lines and distribution services); transport (rail, road, airport and ports); water and waste (water supply, sanitation and solid waste); information and communication technologies (optical fibres, sea cable); social infrastructure (hospitals, schools). (AFFI Brochure).

Given the great need for basic infrastructure and fiscal constraints in the Arab region, private finance is deemed to help overcome this obstacle and provide water, power, transportation, sanitation and housing to people. In this regard, an Escwa report advocated for the establishment of an Arab Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) platform (Escwa, 2013).

The fact is that the region has been unable to attract private investors to upgrade its deteriorating infrastructure due to political uncertainty, insufficient financial return and weak institutional framework. For instance, during the period of 1990-2012, the Arab region attracted fewer infrastructure projects than other developing countries, roughly one third of the number undertaken in sub-Saharan Africa (471) across the sectors of energy, telecommunications, transport, and water and sanitation. Total investment for the region was also the lowest, at US\$ 9.1 billion (Escwa, *ibid*, p 10). As a matter of fact, the ways in which PPPs are designed (mainly to meet multinational corporations objectives and priorities first, with the states and populations subsequently being left accountable to these corporations) and the costs and abuses linked to these practices highlight the inability of private finance investment to serve the needs of peoples in the region (Bankwatch Mail, 2015).

5. GENDER AND G 8: POLICIES FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION, GAPS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

This section examines the relationship between Sustainable Development Goal 5 and Sustainable Development Goal 8 (footnote: This paragraph draws in part on Al Jondi S.G. 2015 ; UN WOMEN, UN ESCWA and League of Arab Arab States, 2015).

Gender equality which is a necessary condition for social justice is integral part to the attainment of sustainable development. Both the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda and the Secretary General's High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda underscored the central place of GE in the emerging Agenda, and drew attention to the crosscutting and intersecting nature of inequalities.

The targets for achieving gender equality and guaranteeing the rights of women and girls are clearly identified in SDG 5.

Goal 8 refers to the inclusion of employ. And decent work as an integral component of sustainable development, along with economic growth, industrialization and technological innovation.

Goal eight includes ten targets, six of which relate explicitly or implicitly to gender equality or women's rights (box 3).

Box 4: Targets related to Goal 8

8.5 (achievement of full and prodVE employ. and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and pers. w/ disabilities, and equal pay for equal value)

8.6 (substantial reduction of the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training), 8.7 (eradicating forced labour, ending of modern slavery and human trafficking and prohibiting and eliminating the worst forms of child labour)

8.8 (protecting labour rights and promoting safe and secure working conditions for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment) refer explicitly to gender equality or women's rights. In addition, targets

8.3 (promoting development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encouraging the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services)

8.9 (devising and implementing policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products) refer implicitly to gender equality or women's rights.

5.1 Gender and G8: policies formulation and implementation.

Over the last decades many countries in the Arab Region have developed national gender equality strategies (Cawtar /Mena- OECD,2014). As for female participation in the economy and workforce, most countries have amended their labour laws, especially with regard to equal wages and maternity leaves. They have also adopted mechanisms to integrate rural women in economic activities and launched strategies and programmes to improve the professional environment for women. Likewise, most Arab countries ratified core International Labour Organization(ILO) conventions. Despite this progress, men and women are not entitled in practice to equal treatment and equal opportunities, and in many countries employers tend to discriminate against women.

5.2 Gaps and challenges.

Target 8.5: Closing the gender gap in the labour force in order to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men is a vital element for creating a stronger and fairer economies, and the promotion of the rule of law through substantive equality. In fact, estimates from OECD suggest that reducing the gender gap in employment is correlated with an increased impetus for economic growth, amounting to an overall rise of 12% of GDP over 20 years in OECD countries (Cawtar/ OECD, 2014). In the Arab world, working women would raise their household income by up to 25 per cent (Jalbout M, 2015).

In the Arab region, data for the year 2013 showed high female unemployment rates (around 21 per cent compared to a world average of 6.4 per cent) and a larger gender unemployment gap (around 9 per cent for men compared to 21 per cent for women). Pay gap is still a big issue in most Arab countries: the median salaries of women remain lower than those of men, which may reflect the philosophy of the male "breadwinner" model. Women are confined in the public sector or in jobs that are socially acceptable. As Al Jondi (2015, p 14) put it, "As long as women continue to face limited job opportunities, high gender wage gaps, limited social care services, exclusion from social protection systems (including maternity protection), the access to decent and productive jobs for all will not be attained". Besides, the Arab region suffer from weak monitoring, evaluation and analysis capacities and gaps related to the availability of data and information on labour market.

-Target 8.6

The Arab world is home to the largest number of unemployed youth in the world. In addition, an important share of youth in the region is not in education, employment. To reduce significantly the proportion of the "NEETs" (Not in Education, Employment or Training) among Arab youth, it is important to overcome the political, economic and social environment that causes their exclusion. Changing this environment should in particular increase opportunities for young people to engage in official politics; stimulates a macro-economy capable of producing decent work for young people and entrenches the values of justice, equality and equal opportunity in society (Arab Human Development Report 2016, Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality, UNDP, NY.).

-Target 8.7

According to the ILO, 15 per cent of all children in the Arab region are child labourers. The real level may be higher as the majority of the children who work are actually in the informal sector. Another issue that plagues the region is child trafficking, which has reached alarming levels. This situation constitutes serious violation of the children's rights; it also makes the realisation of decent work impossible in countries where child labour persists. Implementing properly ILO core conventions on child labour remains a high challenge in the Arab world. In addition, addressing this socioeconomic phenomenon requires the improvement of statistical data on the prevalence and determinants of child labour in the Arab states.

-Target 8.8

The informal economy is thought to be quite large in the Arab region. Defining informality as "lack of social security coverage", the World Bank considers that "a typical MENA country produces one-third of its GDP and employs 67 per cent of its labour force informally (World Bank, 2011).

According to the ILO, the gender social protection coverage gap is evident globally and more profoundly in the Arab region (Badran M.F., 2017). As a result of gender gaps at work (including the gender gap in employment and job quality, lower rates of formal wage and salaried employment, fewer hours and fewer years in insured employment for women), coverage by contributory compulsory social protection schemes is lower for women than men.

Migrant workers

In the GCC subregion, migrant workers constitute almost 62% share of workers in the Gulf labour market. The gap between local and expatriate wages in the private sector remains considerable, even when controlling for skill level (escwa,2012). The private sector tends to focus on short-term rent extraction from low-skill, low-cost foreign labour (ESCWA, idem, p 35). In addition, domestic workers are primarily migrant women. Many of them are exposed to deplorable working conditions, labour exploitation and abuses.

5.3 Some recommendations.

These recommendations do not attempt to cover the exceedingly wide range of aspects of gender equality. We rather identify a range of issues that are fundamental to women's economic empowerment in the workplace.

- Need to adopt new development pathways that break with austerity policies as they cause crises of care and undermine women's rights and dignity. Instead, it is of paramount importance to promote progressive fiscal policies and allocate sufficient budgets with a gender perspective to cover all areas of public policies aimed at reversing gender inequalities and guaranteeing women's rights.
- Combat patriarchal culture and sexist stereotypes.
- Design and implement employment policies that are oriented towards gender equality.
- Set up units or mechanisms endowed with the needed human resources and independent funding in order to promote gender mainstreaming within labour ministries.
- Guarantee the effectiveness of labour inspection and judicial machinery that can settle problems and conflicts over the application and compliance with employment legislation and collective agreements.
- Those whose well-being is at stake must get involved in decision-making, through community groups, women's organizations, social movements and other forms of collective action and engagement.

- Adopt new development paths that balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development, reducing asymmetries in power between countries and between countries and corporations, and promoting enabling structural conditions for sustainability and equality. It also requires that the State plays a crucial role in guiding development processes towards the guarantee that all women will be able to fully exercise all their human rights (Bidegain N.P., 2017, p 49).

6. SOME POLICY CHANGES TO MAKE PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GOALS AT REGIONAL LEVEL.

At the global level:

- Putting an end to austerity through "a globally coordinated strategy of expansion led by increased public expenditures, with all countries being offered the opportunity of benefiting from a simultaneous boost to their domestic and external markets (UNCTAD, 2017.).
- Need for sufficient policy space to advance 2030 Agenda (UNCTAD 2014). More specifically, developing countries need sufficient policy space to make macro and industrial policies work effectively to support structural transformation. In addition, international and national action is needed to combat tax evasion and avoidance. Furthermore, multilateral and regional institutions need to focus on promoting the public interest as much as boosting market confidence and reducing financial risks. This is particularly true in the Mediterranean region where many elements of EU economic policy diverge sharply from the global ideals (Holden P, 2016).

At the regional level:

- Achieving the SDGs requires a climate of peace and security. This entails in particular ending the Israeli occupation putting an end to wars and armed conflicts. It is also contingent upon the adoption of comprehensive approaches to the root causes of the instability in the region, which lies in the political, economic, social, and cultural prevailing in the region.

- Harnessing the potential for regional integration in the Arab world to implement the 2030 Agenda. The Arab region has not lacked for enlightened ideas, common goals, partnerships and institutions. What it has lacked has been real political and social unity or even wholehearted cooperation. Strengthening regional consultation and cooperation is needed in particular in areas of special interest (i.e. where the Arab region is lagging behind such as gender, unemployment...).
- Promoting an enabling environment to strengthen the role of civil society at the regional level. In this regard, all the legal, organizational and political conditions should be provided so that the Arab civil society is empowered to engage in A2030. Besides, there is also the need to get CSOs involved in all stages of the A2030 process: planning, policy implementation, programming, follow-up, and review. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the active role ANND plays in awareness raising and advocacy for a new social contract and development model grounded on the expansion of freedoms and social justice.

Box 4 : ANND Commitment towards sustainable development

As a regional network of non-government organizations, ANND provided, prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, regional exchange platforms for formulating civil society recommendations regarding the Agenda and supporting civil society advocacy for a rights-based approach. On this note, ANND organized several capacity development activities as well as making resource-material on mutual accountability available. In addition, right after the official adoption of the 2030 Agenda, ANND has engaged in effective monitoring and contributed with its members and partners in national reviews as part of the Reflection Group, a new 2030 watch initiative. Currently ANND is implementing a project dedicated to “ Mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab Civil Society agenda”.

On substantive matters, ANND looks at the 2030 Agenda with a critical eye. Specifically, it reproaches this agenda for adopting a non-obligatory approach and having a weak human rights dimension. In addition, the Agenda did not introduce significant changes to the development model, which has been implemented for decades and has failed to promote just and sustainable development.

The position paper issued by ANND and five other Arab CSO (ANND, 2015) made important recommendations, which include: Stressing that the 2030 Agenda is a whole, including the introduction, reference, targets and goals, implementation and financing methods, follow-up and review; Focusing on the need to commit to the consolidated approach and integration among targets and goals; suggesting mechanisms to monitor the plan’s implementation and progress; stressing the importance of monitoring the Agenda’ implementation according to the comprehensive and integral approach; dealing smartly and creatively with the 17th goal, related to the means of implementation.

- Need for a Regional Civil Platform in the Arab region regarding the 2030 Agenda.
- Monitoring and evaluation: To ensure that the Arab region’s Sustainable Development priorities are being achieved, it is imperative to put in place a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress, identify areas of concern, monitor financial resources allocated to the set of priorities, and assess the overall impact of the key policies and programs in meeting the SDGs. This review mechanism of the implementation of 2030A at the regional level while ensuring that CSO engagement include those with direct connections on the ground that have stories to tell about when development leaves people behind. It is also vital ensure that FUR at regional level is budgeted for (financial and technical resources).
- Need to actively engage in the assessment of financing requirements and articulating a financing strategy for the goals, and to inform or feed this into expert, development cooperation and informal dialogues. In this regard, it is of paramount importance to considerably step up mobilization of domestic financial resources in order to achieve the SDGs. These efforts can be reinforced by regional resources provided by ten regional and national Economic and Social Development Funds. These Funds have recently issued a joint declaration on their commitment to sustainable development and means of implementation, and created Coordination Group on Sustainable Development. They can play an important role in assisting Arab countries in implementing the SDGs, including through fostering partnerships with other providers of development finance. Arab countries need to align their priorities with the framework of the post-2015 development agenda, to accelerate the process of resource mobilization for achieving the SDGs (AFED report 2016).

* At the national level:

Revisit economic and social policies to ensure their alignment with the rights-based development approach; rehabilitate the developmental role of the State; tax justice; national anti-poverty plan; promote food sovereignty; implement positive discrimination in favour of disadvantaged regions; commit to a consolidated approach and adopt an integrated model among targets and goals; adopt a roadmap for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; establish an independent national mechanism to ensure coordination and monitoring; prioritize transparency, accountability and inclusiveness for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; broaden the reach of national security and ensure its financial sustainability; mainstream gender equality in development plans.

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