



**Conference on
“Arab Women in the Sustainable Development Agenda 2015-2030”
Cairo: 29 November – 1 December 2015**

**17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS**



**Goal 17: Revitalize the Global
Partnership for
Sustainable Development**



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**Revitalize the Global Partnership
for Sustainable Development**

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I. Introduction

In the Arab World, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can only be realized with a strong commitment to regional and global partnership and cooperation within an integrated approach across all the goals. Despite the exceptional dynamism that marked the participatory process of designing the 2030 Development Agenda at the national, regional and global levels, the SDGs will mean little to the people without the effective means and channels to implement them in a progressive manner. Finance, technology, capacities and data are the primary tools, but without an innovative and supportive environment of partnerships driven by a political will that speaks up to the aspirations of the people, success is far-fetched. In a global context of financial crises, unprecedented humanitarian challenges, and rising violent radicalization, the Arab World should reaffirm and reactivate a joint commitment at many fronts. Gender equality and the empowerment of Arab women should be at the center of this new era of development and the implementation efforts that accompany it.

Within the scope of SDG 17, this paper will discuss how gender equality is central to all of the SDGs and argue that investing in gender statistics is critical to defining the most efficient ways to achieve gender equality and to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda. Here, the ability of Arab countries to produce and publish timely, reliable and disaggregated data is indispensable to prioritize the national and regional agenda and guide funding gaps accordingly. Understanding the national context... Based on an assessment of the partnerships that emerged following within the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the paper will then present a normative analysis of the different levels of partnerships that would position the Arab World on the right track.

II. Monitoring Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A Closer Look at the Arab World

The Arab World is home to 385 million people, of which 199 million and 186 million, are men and women respectively. In a region where women make up almost 50% of the population¹, empowering women and achieving gender equality is key to achieving development at many levels. A striking example on this is unemployment in the Arab World. Female unemployment rate is very high in practically all Arab states, and the rate of female unemployment is 2-3 times higher than the male one. This is not to say that unemployment is not important for all the population, but statistics show that unemployment rate in the Arab region is very much a gender issue as much as it is a demographic one, given the high unemployment rate of 30% among young Arab.²

¹ UN World Population Prospects.

² Figures date to 2012. ILO Database.

A stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda to achieve gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment is an important achievement for all women, but this should not come at the expense of mainstreaming gender equality throughout all other areas. Addressing the structural causes of gender inequality in the Arab region cannot be achieved without looking at how the set of proposed targets and indicators across all goals relate to the status of women in the Arab world. This includes a detailed mapping of the availability of all indicators at the national and global levels.

This paper argues that women should act as a powerful driving force in putting the words in action and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Formal statistics on the engagement of women in the formal channels of political participation and civic engagement do not do women justice. Women in the Arab region have shown that they are becoming increasingly vocal in public space, impacting many public policies that affect their lives and that of their families. In this regard, strengthening country ownership over development and building more inclusive partnerships for development that take into consideration the interests of a wide spectrum of players cannot be achieved unless women take

BOX 1: METHODOLOGY OF STOCK-TAKING

Analyzing data gaps of gender indicators from national sources without conducting a direct survey with NSOs is a difficult exercise. However, the comparison of data availability between national and international sources was useful in identifying the needs of the NSOs. The results of this stock-taking exercise yield three main possibilities. First, the indicator is published both by international and national sources, and the figures are matching. In case the figures are not matching, then further investigation is needed. The second possibility is that the indicators are published at the national level but not adopted by the international organization due to various reasons. Finally, the last possibility is that both national and international parties do not publish an

the lead. Peace-building and conflict-prevention should be an essential pillars that thread all seventeen goals together, and it is women who will have to act as the custodians of the next fifteen years.

II.1 Statistical capacity of Arab countries to report on SDGs³

To assess the ability of Arab countries to report on gender and sex-disaggregated statistics within the scope of the SDGs, a rigorous stock-taking exercise (check Box 1) on data availability focused on four main levels (i) indicators available at the international level disaggregated by sex and not available at the national level, (ii) indicators available at the national level disaggregated by sex and not found at the international level, (iii) indicators available at the international level not disaggregated by sex and not available at the national level, (iv) indicators available at the international level disaggregated by sex international and available not disaggregated by sex at the national level. Out of the 100 proposed indicators under the SDGs, 81 indicators are either directly related to women or can be disaggregated by sex, of which 11 are proposed to be developed in the future. This reduces the scope of assessment down to 70 indicators. This assessment indicates that there is a need to enhance the statistical technical assistance and capacity building to Arab countries in implementing surveys, enhancing administrative database produce disaggregated statistics and to offer advice on new dissemination technologies.

Available at the international level but not produced nationally

³ This preliminary assessment is the result of a thorough mapping of the indicators posted on <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/> in October 2015 and comparing the indicators with indicators published by the main international organizations and UN agencies and the official national statistical offices (NSOs) of Arab countries. On the availability of indicators at the national level, the assessment only considers the data published on the websites of the NSOs as it was impossible for the team to keep track of statistics published only in hard copies, i.e. in the form of statistical yearbooks or other paper publications.

The comparison between indicators availability at the national and international level by country shows that on average there are 12 gender indicators per country published by international organizations but not produced or disseminated by the respective authorities at the national level. Algeria, Sudan, and Comoros score the highest number of indicators published by international organizations but not by national authorities, with the number reaching 21, 20 and 19 indicators, respectively. There are also cases where indicators are available at the international level and disaggregated by sex but only the aggregate is offered by national authorities. This is the case of Sudan and Morocco with respect to five indicators and Oman and Qatar with respect to four indicators. There are other cases where even though some indicators are disaggregated at the national level, they are not disseminated by the international organization, such as Bahrain with respect to three indicators. In general, the number of indicators available disaggregated by sex and not available at the national level is high (310 indicator for all Arab countries). Table 1 shows that there are many indicators that are available internationally and disaggregated by sex but not available at the national level.

Table 1: Comparison between indicator availability at the national and international level by country

Country	Available international disaggregated by sex and not availability national	Available disaggregated by sex national and not available disaggregated by sex international	Available national not disaggregated and not available international not disaggregated by sex	Available disaggregated by sex international, available not disaggregated by sex national
Algeria	21	4	2	3
Bahrain	11	3		
Comoros	19			
Djibouti	13	1		1
Egypt	18		1	2
Iraq	11		1	2
Jordan	15		2	2
Kuwait	16		1	2
Lebanon	11	1	2	3
Libya	11	2	2	3
Mauritania	10	1	1	2
Morocco	11	2	1	5
Oman	12		1	4
Palestine	14	2	3	1
Qatar	13	1	3	4
Saudi Arabia	14			
Somalia	17			
Sudan	20		3	5
Syria	11	1	1	1
Tunisia	18			2
UAE	12			
Yemen	12			2

Source: Stock-taking exercise conducted by Arab Development Portal, UNDP-RBAS in October 2015

Amending household surveys to include none available indicators is the short-run solution. At the same time, investing in statistical infrastructure through modernizing administrative databases can be on the medium and the long run the optimal solution for increasing indicator availability and enhancing at the same time indicator accuracy and periodicity. Household surveys have the advantage of offering quick snapshots on the social, economic, and health conditions of a population on a specific time. On the other side, modernizing administrative infrastructure of public institutions has more advantages than surveys as it offers continuous time series on measured indicators that can allow researchers to conduct longitudinal and cross sectional analysis over a long period of time. One challenge of the latter solution is the running cost of modernizing the public sector databases.

II.2 An integrated approach to gender equality and women empowerment: Why statistics matter?

Statistical knowledge offers information on status of Arab women, but statistical capacities of countries have affected the region's understanding of how different policies and socioeconomic and political developments have affected the lives of women. It indicates the level of data monitoring and impact the extent of accountability citizens can enforce.

Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, but it also has a multiplier effect across all other development areas. In many nations, gender discrimination is still woven through legal and social norms that shape the economic and public spheres. Wide gaps between men and women in the labor market, discriminatory laws and practices, limited access to public decision-making and sexual violence and exploitation all remain huge barriers. The Arab countries share various common cultural and

historical aspects; indeed societies in all Arab countries are traditional/patriarchal where women suffer from legal, economic, socio-cultural and political discrimination.⁴ Inequalities against women should be highlighted through all stages of their life cycle; mainly at times when they are most vulnerable, namely: young women, elder women, widows, heads of household and women in conflicts and post conflict situations.

This section will look into poverty, health, education, energy, employment, and the nature of institutions in the Arab region.

Poverty

“Eradicating Poverty in all its Forms” (SDG 1) remains one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. Poverty and gender are highly interlinked, and one way to examine their relationship is to look at how the gender distribution of people in poverty compares to that of the total population. Yet, the methodologies used to measure poverty, with the majority based on household surveys, do not take sex disaggregation into consideration and the generated findings hide gender dimensions. Of the seven Global Monitoring Indicators (GMIs) proposed under Goal 1, five indicators have been identified as gender indicators, but data availability for gender indicators at the international level is only limited to Indicator 7 “Total Fertility Rate”⁵ and complementary national Indicator 1.2. “Percentage of population using banking services (including mobile banking)”.

⁴ UN WOMEN For Arab States &The Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee) Regional Consultation for the Proposed General Recommendation on Women Human Rights in Situations of Conflict and Post Conflict contexts; Amman, 2013.

⁵ Indicator 7 “Total fertility rate”: The total fertility rate is the average number of live births a woman would have by age 50 if she were subject, throughout her life, to the age-specific fertility rates observed in a given year. The calculation assumes that there is no maternal mortality. Falling total fertility rates may demonstrate an improvement in women’s ability to exercise their right to make informed and free choices over if, when, and how many children they would like to have.

Under SDG 1, Indicator 4 “Percentage of eligible population covered by national social protection programs” and Indicator 5 “Percentage of women, men, indigenous peoples, and local communities with secure rights to land, property, and natural resources”⁶, and complementary national indicator 1.3. “*equal access to inheritance*” are very important for women empowerment and directly feed into the call to end all forms of discrimination against women (target 5.a, Goal 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”) and undertake necessary reforms that give women all rights to economic resources as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, some relevant indicators under Goal 1 should be disaggregated by sex. However, data related to the eligibility and access of women to national social protection programs, tenure rights of land, property and natural resources and inheritance rights (Indicator 4, indicator 5, and national indicator 1.3.– to be developed), remain unavailable or undisclosed by the National Statistical Offices in the Arab countries and which might reveal patterns of gendered disadvantages.

Health

From eradicating poverty to pursuing healthy lives, SDG 3 “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” is wide-ranging and covers many health priorities initially excluded from the MDGs, namely non-communicable diseases, reproductive health, mental health and injuries. According to the World Bank Development Indicators, maternal mortality ratio, which was among the MDGs, declined by 30% in the Arab region between 2000 and 2015. Maternal mortality ratio has specifically decreased in Bahrain, Egypt, Djibouti,

⁶ measured by (i) percentage with documented or recognized evidence of tenure, and (ii) percentage who perceive their rights are recognized and protected

Iraq and Qatar between 2000 and 2015 based on the World Bank Development Indicators, however, on the national level, maternal mortality ratio has stagnated or even increased for those countries. For instance, in Bahrain maternal mortality ratio increased from 6.6 percent in 2005 to 16.9 percent in 2009; in Egypt the ratio increased by 20 percentage points between 2000 and 2012. In the Arab region, the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel increased from 54 percent in the 1990s to 77.6 percent in 2011 according to World Bank database. On the national level, there is an overall increase in the percentage of births attended by skilled personnel for the countries for which data are available. Disparities exist between Arab countries, the percentage ranges from 44.7 percent in Yemen in 2013 to 99.7 percent in Oman in 2014.⁷

Data availability on health-related issues indicate the ability of countries to monitor the proposed indicators, especially from a gender equality perspective. Ten of fourteen indicators proposed under Goal 3 can be disaggregated by sex and two are gender indicators, namely Indicator 17 "Maternal mortality ratio" and Indicator 29 "Contraceptive prevalence rate". At the international level, namely from the database of the World Bank and United Nations Population Division, data on these two indicators are available for almost all Arab countries , whereas only 12 countries produce these two indicators at the national level. On the national level, twelve Arab countries publish data on the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel, five countries publish data on the antenatal care coverage.

⁷ World Bank, World Development Indicators Database.

Education

Gender inequality in education is a cause and a consequence of gender discrimination in the society in general. At the same time, education is considered as the pathway towards gender equality.⁸ Gender equality in education was given a preeminent focus in the post-2015 agenda. According to UNESCO, 12 Arab countries achieved gender parity in primary schooling in 2011, Djibouti and Yemen did not reach a Gender Parity index of 0.9, while data for the remaining countries do not exist.⁹ Under SDG 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all", all of the six indicators are gender indicators, and the 7th is to be developed. Based on UNESCO's database, sex-disaggregated data in the Arab region is limited to 2 indicators and a proxy indicator, namely Indicator 33 "Primary completion rates for girls and boys, Indicator 37 "Tertiary enrollment rates for women and men" and "Gross school enrollment in pre-primary education of students" acting as a proxy for Indicator 31 "Percentage of children (36-59 months) receiving at least one year of a quality preprimary education program.

Over the period 2007-2014, 12 out of the 19 Arab countries encountered an increase in the primary completion rates for girls compared to the early 2000s. In Morocco, for example, the "Gross intake ratio into the last grade of primary education for girls" increased from 51.3% in 2000 to 99.72% in 2014. On the other hand, war-ravaged Syria and politically unstable Lebanon exhibited the largest decline in this rate (from 88% in 2000 to 63.7% in 2013 and from 117.2% in 2000 to 87.4% in 2013). This rate has also declined for Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar and Sudan. In all the Arab countries, the percentage of

⁸ Karam, A. (December, 2013). Education as the pathway towards gender equality. UN Chronicle, accessed at: <http://unchronicle.un.org/article/education-pathway-towards-gender-equality/>

⁹ UNESCO (May 2014). [Education for All: Regional Report 2014 for the Arab States.](#)

girls reaching the last grade of primary education exceeded 70% according to the latest available data except for Sudan at 53%, Djibouti at 55% and Iraq at 56%. In addition, in all of the Arab countries, the latest available data shows that the primary completion rate for boys is higher than, equal to or slightly less than that of girls. According to UNESCO data, the highest latest available tertiary enrollment rates are observed in Bahrain (59.4% in 2014) followed by Saudi Arabia (58.8% in 2013). The latest available tertiary enrollment rates for girls are below 10% in countries such as Mauritania, Djibouti, Yemen and Comoros. Female tertiary enrollment average rate is higher than that of male in Arab countries. This rate has increased from 16.7% in year 2000 up to 28.1% in year 2013, compared to an average rate of 26.8% for males in 2013. Remarkably in Qatar, the tertiary enrollment rate for girls in 2013 scored 43.6% compared to 6.5% for boys. In Bahrain, this rate for girls scored 59.4% in 2014 compared to 27.3% for boys. The largest gender disparities are observed in Yemen and Djibouti with a Gender Parity Index scoring at 0.44 and 0.68 in 2011 respectively. According to national available data, the latest tertiary enrollment rates improved when compared to the beginnings of the millennium. This increase is most notable in Palestine, where the tertiary enrollment rate for girls increased by 296% between 2000 and 2013.

Can Arab countries monitor progress on SDG 5?

Goal 5 proposes seven Global Monitoring Indicators (GMIs) and five complementary indicators.

Data on Indicator 38, titled "Prevalence of girls and women who have experienced physical or sexual violence [by an intimate partner] in the last 12 months" exist for four countries in UN Women database; while the National Statistical Offices of only two Arab countries, Palestine and Morocco, produce statistics on this indicator. In 2011, the prevalence of physical violence in Palestine was of 22.4 percent and in Morocco 6.4 percent while that of sexual violence was of 11.8 percent in Palestine and 6.6 percent in Morocco.

No data exist on Indicator 39 "Percentage of referred cases of sexual and gender-based violence against women and children that are investigated and sentenced" at the international level, while at the national level, only Morocco reports that the aggressor was arrested in 1.3% of the referred cases of gender-based domestic violence in 2011. Data on Indicator 43 "Percentage of seats held by women and minorities in national parliament..." are available for all Arab countries from international sources. According to statistics published by the World Bank Development Indicators, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments increased from 5 to 18% in the Arab world during the last fifteen years. At the national level, only Iraq publishes data on the proportion of women in national parliaments that reached 27 percent in 2008.

Data on the "Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FMG/C" (Indicator 41) are produced in only two Arab countries, namely Mauritania (18.5%) and Yemen (72.2%). At the international level, UNESCO publishes data for seven Arab countries: Djibouti (93%), Egypt (91%), Iraq (8%), Mauritania (69%), Somalia (98%), Sudan (88%) and Yemen (23%)¹.

Despite the importance of Indicator 42 "Average number of hours spent on paid and unpaid work combined", since measuring unpaid work helps to expose the full range of possible economic contributions, including the home production of goods and services, data are not available for Arab countries. Only six countries have data on Gender gap in wages, by sector of economic activity from international sources.

No data are available on the share of women on corporate boards of national/multinational corporations, the percentage of young people receiving comprehensive sexuality education and the percentage of women without incomes of their own at both the national and international levels.

The Adolescent birth rate, an MDG Indicator, is available for all 22 countries from international sources; at the national level, only Jordan publishes data on a proxy indicator that is adolescent fertility rate.

Indicator 40 titled "The percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married or in a union before age 18" is available for 14 Arab countries on the World Bank database. At the national level, only Morocco published data on that indicator; in 2007 the percentage of Moroccan women aged 20-24 who were married or in a union before age 18 reached 43.4 percent. Twelve Arab NSOs publish data on the average age at first marriage for men and women.

Data on the met demand for family planning, a modified MDG Indicator are published by the United Nations Population Division for all Arab countries; however the NSOs of only three Arab countries publish this indicator, namely Iraq (82.2%), Mauritania (27.5%) and Yemen (46.9%)¹.

Energy

Despite the functional and inherent role of women in energy management, women are underrepresented in the industries that produce modern sources of renewable energy, comprising only 20 per cent of the workforce.¹⁰ They are also largely absent in governmental positions in the field of energy and are rarely considered as key participants for energy initiatives, especially in the Arab region. Some indications also suggest that women are more likely than men to conserve energy and they are more willing to change their everyday behavior to save energy. This is why, policymakers need to be aware of the importance of women in the energy sector, increase their role in policy making and advance women's leadership in order to promote the access to sustainable energy solutions for all and to reach internationally agreed development goals. In April 2012, a partnership of nine countries launched the Clean Energy Education and Empowerment Initiative to attract more young women to careers and leadership positions in the energy field of which the United Arab Emirates was a member country.¹¹

Four indicators are proposed under Goal 7, of which two indicators can be disaggregated by sex. Indicator 50 titled "share of the population using modern cooking solutions, by urban/rural" is not found both at the international and national levels. The WHO on the other hand produces data on households using solid fuels for cooking by urban and rural" for Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, which can be considered as a proxy. At the national level, Djibouti publishes data on "the percentage of household by the main source of energy for cooking", Palestine on

¹⁰ International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)

¹¹ UN women and UNIDO (2013). Sustainable Energy for All: the gender dimensions

“the percentage distribution of households who are cooking by region and the main fuel used for cooking”, Sudan on “the percentage distribution of household and population by type of cooking and mode of living” and Syria on “the percentage of people who are deprived from appropriate cooking fuel“. Indicator 51 titled “Share of the population using reliable electricity, by urban and rural” shows that 14% of the Arab world’s population lacks access to electricity, and a larger share suffers from persistent power failure.¹² When dealing with energy access, electricity is given usually the first indicator to look at. This is due to the fact that electric energy is flexible in providing different services from lighting, heating and cooling, to motor and other forms of services and applications. Moreover, access to electricity helps boosting productivity and reduces time required to perform basic jobs. This indicator is not disaggregated by sex both at the national and international levels.

Employment

The gap between male and female unemployment rates remains high and especially in the Arab region as indicated earlier; where despite the progress in female’s labor force participation in the region and gains in education attainments, the participation of women continues to be extremely low compared to men and to their female counterparts in other regions. According to the WDI, female labor force participation rate in 2013 levelled at 23.3% compared to 75.4 % for men. This low participation of women compared to men is largely linked with structural barriers, among which is maternity leave and benefits. According to the ILO, about 82% of the countries in the Middle East give

¹² World development indicators, World bank (2013)

less than 12 weeks of maternity leave. In some countries, even though women equally contribute to the social security fund, they don't enjoy the similar rights that male employees enjoy. In Algeria, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon female employees are not allowed to pass on their benefits to their children after their death.

Peaceful and Inclusive Societies and Institutions

In the Arab region, the exclusive nature of many social, political and economic institutions and processes, the lack of or limited pluralistic participation in social, economic and political life, and in some cases, the manipulations of diversity and identity, has manifested itself in social discontent and popular uprisings since 2011. Against the backdrop of current challenges and pressures on individual, ethnic and social communities and states in the region, the relationships between the citizen and the state and between various social groups in some countries have further deteriorated, making the question of how to restore social cohesion more acute than ever. Women often have fewer resources to protect themselves and, together with children, frequently make up the majority of displaced and refugee populations. Moreover, sexual violence, crime, exploitation and torture are prevalent where there is conflict, absence rule of law or when institutions are not at equidistance from the people.

Gender-sensitive indicators and disaggregated data by sex provide policymakers with detailed information for targeted intervention. However, most Arab countries do not collect nor compile data that reflect gender inequalities for indicators under SDGs and women continue to be excluded from dialogues peace and security in many Arab countries. Out of the seven Global Monitoring Indicators (GMIs), three indicators can be disaggregated by sex. Indicator 88 titled

"Violent injuries and deaths per 100,000 population" shows that 5.8 million people die each year as a result of injuries, which accounts for 10% of the world's deaths. This indicator offers a practical push forward in both recognizing the link between conflict and development and counting, at a disaggregated level, violent deaths. Right now, there is no official database that counts violent deaths by country especially by age and gender; so putting this indicator forth would go a long way in tracking violence globally. UNHCR publishes data on indicator 89 titled "number of refugees" for all Arab countries. Data on indicator 92 "percentage of children under age 5 whose birth is registered with a civil authority" is published by UNICEF for all Arab countries except for the GCC countries and Libya.

III. Towards a Multi-Level All Inclusive 2030 Agenda for the Arab World

War, occupation and several brutal conflicts mark the situation in Many Arab countries with destabilizing factors trickling down to others. This frustrating situation can only be overcome by joining forces to design a forward-looking 2015-2030 agenda that address the sources of deprivation and roots of conflict. In the vast majority of cases, and simply said: men exclusively initiate and participate in wars, only to later reconcile and transition back to peace, or otherwise remain in indefinite hostility. During such transitions, women and youth are often discussed as victims of war and its collateral damages. Little due notice is thus given to the particular sufferings, concerns and demands of women during warfare, and especially after within peace talks. The importance of women's participation in reconciliation and peace-building has but recently been acknowledged and conceptualized within formal international conventions—namely the United Nations

Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000), on women, security and peace and the subsequent Resolution 2122—setting high-grounds for the essential contribution of women in peacebuilding, peacemaking, and peacekeeping.¹³ The pre-eminence of the contribution of women (and youth) to the culture of peace is grounded not only on the basic assumption that in the developing world only, adolescent girls represent 600 million, and that the global population as a whole witnesses a youth bulge, but also on the proven impact of women as ‘key drivers of the radical change’ of mindsets, institutions and cultures.’¹⁴ The acknowledgment and advancement of women as agents of conflict prevention, reconciliation and peace building, their recognition and credit as mediators in conflict resolution, and their inclusion and participation in donor conferences and post-conflict meetings and decisions, present vital, inclusive and unique visions and resources for peace—conductive for long-term stability.

To cut a long story short, from 1992 to 2011, only 9 per cent of negotiators at peace tables were women from 1992 to 2011¹⁵, despite the landmark UN Security Council resolution 1325 in 2000, which recognized that women must play central roles. In the Arab region, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments increased from 5% up to 18% in the Arab World during the last fifteen years (as of August 2015).¹⁶ But these formal statistics on the engagement of women in the formal channels of political participation do not do women justice. Women in the Arab region are becoming increasingly vocal in public space, impacting many public policies that affect their lives and that of their families. In this regard, strengthening country

¹³ For more details: [United Nations Security Council Resolution \(UNSCR\) 1325 \(2000\)](#).

¹⁴ United Nations, (9 September, 2014). [Speech by UN Women Deputy Executive Director Lakshmi Puri](#). *High-level Forum on the Culture of Peace*, New York. See also: http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/events/culture_of_peace.shtml

¹⁵ UN Women (2012), *Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections Between Presence and Influence*, pp. 2-3

¹⁶ World Bank, World Development Indicators.

ownership over development and building more inclusive partnerships for development that take into consideration the interests of a wide spectrum of players cannot be achieved unless women are considered and act as a strong driving force in finalizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For the Arab region, peace-building and conflict-prevention should be an essential pillars that thread all seventeen goals together.

With this context in mind, revitalizing a regional and global partnership for development should revolve around strengthening the countries' ability to prioritize on the short term and strategize in the medium- and long- term within the framework of the SDGs. As a first step, countries need to assess the institutional capacities of ministries and other public institutions to develop and implement results-driven national development strategies within the framework of the new development agenda. Here, the role of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) as the main body responsible for data compilation and dissemination is key in coordinating what would be needed from each institution. Institutional capacities include advancement to human resources and to the database architecture to facilitate provision of statistics and run quality checks.

Data harmonization is also an important issue that should be addressed without compensating country-specific and relevant targets, but it will open the door for a regional peer review mechanism among all NSOs in Arab countries especially since some offices have passed through a similar path of advancement. The SDGs framework offers an opportunity for countries to prioritize the targets at the country or sub-national level and to tailor the SDGs to best fit their own national context. At all levels, strengthening human resources and providing capacity building will ensure that the institutional reform will be

implemented by civil servants who have the skills and the incentives to plan, manage, implement and account for results.

The scale and ambition of the new agenda require the inclusion of new partners such as national parliaments, regional and local authorities, academia and civil society organizations. Implementing and accounting for the results should follow a participatory approach, where citizens and civil society organizations find the space to play a proactive role to act as monitoring bodies and to set the priorities of their countries. With new digital trends and data revolution shaping the future of governments and governance structures, access to information is becoming a reality. Dissemination of data and information using open data technologies and knowledge exchange platforms should be put to use by the respective authorities. Here, it is important for governments to offer data in a common format to facilitate a proactive role of civil society organizations and to adopt open platforms of engagements. Some countries in the Arab region making use of the endless tools that data revolution and technologies offer, and it is now the right time for others to follow suite.



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