

WDA Forum



University of St.Gallen

# The WDA – HSG Discussion Paper Series

*on Demographic Issues*

## The Youth Bulge and the Changing Demographics in the MENA Region: Challenges and Opportunities?

*by Nabil M. Kronfol*

*No. 2011/8*



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**Nabil M. Kronfol MD, Dr.PH**

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## Introduction

Understanding the relationship between population change and economic growth has taken on added importance in recent years because the world's developing countries – home to the vast majority of the world's population – are in varying stages of a demographic transition from high to low rates of mortality and fertility. This transition produces a “boom” generation that is gradually working its way through each nation's age structure.

As the boom generation enters working age, there is the opportunity to unleash an economic growth spurt, provided the right kinds of policies are in place to ensure the extra workers are productively employed. For this reason, policymakers should benefit from a clearer understanding of the relationship between economic development and the changes in age structure that result from the unfolding demographic transition.

For decades, economists and social thinkers have debated the influence of population change on economic growth. Three alternative positions define this debate: Population growth either (1) restricts, (2) promotes, or (3) is independent of economic growth. Because people's economic behavior and needs vary at different stages of life, changes in a country's age structure can have significant effects on its economic performance<sup>1</sup>.

Because birth rates remained high until the 1980s and then declined sharply, the proportion of young, active, working-age individuals in the current MENA population<sup>2</sup> is exceptionally large. Those born between 1975 and 1995 (now young adults) are providing their home societies with a demographic "gift." In other words, young people entering the labour market today do not have to mortgage the future benefits of their work to support either numerous children (as they did in the recent past), or the elderly (as they will in the near future). This situation, favorable to savings and investment, can theoretically yield a dividend for the entire population. However, the gift is temporary: the youth bulge will eventually pass from the working age to the retirement age.

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<sup>1</sup> Bloom, David E., David Canning and Jaypee Sevilla. 2003. *The Demographic Dividend: A New Perspective on the Economic Consequences of Change*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/2007/MR1274.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *It is generally agreed that the MENA region includes Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Djibouti, Somalia, Comoros, the Levant countries (Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Iraq), the Gulf Cooperation countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates), Yemen, the Maghreb (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania), a total of 21 countries. Data from Turkey, Pakistan, Iran and Israel is often used for comparison purposes. International organizations such as ESCWA, WHO, UNFPA, the World Bank include some but not all of these countries.*

Young people need to be able to save money, for which they need to first earn a sufficient income. But earning money is not an easy task in countries still confronted with high unemployment, underemployment, low wages, and poor returns on education. On average, it takes a young educated person two to three years to find a first job, followed by another two to three years to accumulate enough savings for marriage. Transition to adulthood occurs at the price of a long period of expectation and exclusion, first from the labour market and then from the marriage market<sup>3</sup>.

Nations undergoing this transition have an opportunity to capitalize on the demographic dividend offered by the maturing of formerly young populations. The demographic dividend is not, however, automatic. The critical policy areas include education, employment, health, migration, participation in public life, gender matters and ageing. Policymakers must plan for the future health care and pension-income needs of this baby-boom generation when it ages. Seizing it could prove vital to the economic and social development of their countries.

This is a review of the demographic situation in the MENA region and the impact of education, employment, migration, health status, participation on the further development of the region, including their impact on Ageing and the gender issues. This review draws on published reports and studies by international organizations and researchers. No new data or findings are presented in this paper. The intent is to draw attention to the importance of these demographic changes and highlight the need for action to maximize the potential benefit to the population in this region.

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Dyer and Tarik Yousef, "The Tyranny of Demography: Exploring the Fertility Transition in the Middle East and North Africa" (working paper 08-11, Dubai School of Government, 2008). Also Philippe Fargues, "Women in Arab countries: challenging the patriarchal system?" *Reproductive Health Matters* 13, no. 25 (2005):161-65.

## The Demographic Dividend

1. The UN population division has defined it as the period when the proportion of children under 15 years falls below 30 percent and the proportion of people 65 years and older is still below 15 percent. Simply stated, the demographic dividend occurs when falling birth rates changes the age structure, so that fewer investments are needed to meet the needs of the youngest age groups and resources are released for investment in development. The demographic dividend is characterized as being delivered during a limited time span, i.e. does not last forever (Table 1). That is, it is a limited window of opportunity. Another feature of the demographic dividend is that it is irreversible – once started it will continue. However, the dividend is not automatic, i.e. some countries will take better advantage of that than others.

Table 1: Demographic Window and Dependency Ratio, MENA countries

Country	Demographic Window			Dependency Ratio		
	Start	End	Length (years)	Start	Minimum	End
Algeria	2010	2045	35	49.3	42.8	49.5
Bahrain	2000	2040	40	47	37.3	48.2
Comoros	2035	2070	35	51.5	47.1	50.7
Djibouti	2045	2080	35	52.8	46	50.6
Egypt	2020	2050	30	56.2	46.7	48.9
Iraq	2035	2065	30	51.3	46.8	48.6
Jordan	2020	2050	30	50.1	45.6	49.5
Kuwait	1995	2030	35	44	35.4	44
Lebanon	2005	2035	30	51.6	42.6	47.9
Libya	2005	2045	40	51.8	41.6	49.7
Mauritania	2045	2080	35	54.9	46	50.6
Morocco	2010	2045	35	50.8	46.2	50.5
Oman	2030	2065	35	54.7	49.7	49.7
Palestine	2045	2070	25	53.6	47.8	48.9
Qatar	1985	2025	40	40	35.4	48.2
Saudi Arabia	2025	2060	35	52.3	46.9	48.7
Somalia	2065	2095	30	50.1	44.9	50.8
Sudan	2030	2065	35	53.9	47.6	49.3
Syria	2020	2050	30	51.9	44.1	49.6
Tunisia	2005	2035	30	47	41.4	46
UAE	1975	2025	50	43.3	32.2	45
Yemen	2060	2095	35	54.1	44.7	49.7

Source: UN Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision.



<b>Category</b>	<b>Definition and countries</b>
Countries reached the peak or will reach before 2020	Tunisia, Algeria, Qatar, Lebanon, Morocco
Countries reaching the peak 2020-2030	Jordan, Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Egypt
Countries reaching the peak after 2030	Comoros, Djibouti, Iraq, Mauritania, Yemen, Oman, Somalia, Palestine, Saudi Arabia

2. The demographic dividend is delivered through a number of mechanisms; the three most important are labour supply, savings and human capital (Bloom, 2003).

- a) The demographic transition affects labour supply in several ways; the generations of children born during periods of high fertility finally leave the dependent years and can become workers. The labour force temporarily grows more rapidly than the population dependent on it, freeing up resources for investment in economic development and family well-being. Furthermore, women are more likely to enter the workforce as family size declines and they have fewer children than before. They tend to be better educated than older cohorts, thus, more productive in the labour force. Eventually, lower fertility reduces the growth rate of the labour force while continuing improvements in old-age mortality speed growth of the elderly population.
- b) The demographic transition could also encourage the growth of savings as working-age adults tend to earn more and can save more. Personal savings grow and serve as a partial resource for investments that fuel economic growth.
- c) The demographic transition involves larger life expectancy which in turn causes fundamental changes in the way people live. Attitudes change in favor of better education, later marriage, retirement, role of women and late entry into work all tend to shift, i.e. there are gradual deep-rooted changes in cultures' prevailing norms and values. Furthermore, another shift observed by social scientists is some degree of disaffection from traditional public mores and a decline of guidance and protection within families furthering the generation gap.
- d) Women's health will be enhanced due to having fewer children, while participating more in the labour force will enhance their social status and personal independence (parents are under less strain to provide for many children).

3. There are many complicated, interrelated factors that may lead young people to participate in activities that undermine social peace and stability. With the region's youth bulge and the expansion of higher education, growing numbers of young people are hardly able to find gainful employment. Earning an income through paid employment strengthens self-esteem and independence and is an essential component of the

transition to responsible adulthood. Under such circumstances there may be increased risk of political violence. This may be aggravated by negligible participation in public affairs, political exclusion, poor social protection and expanded informal economy (UN, 2002). Demographic change, combined with persistent poverty and unemployment, are a source of conflict. Young people are typically dynamic, resourceful and receptive to change, but if they are uncared for, unguided and unemployed, their energy can turn in destructive directions. The “youth bulge” could signal an upsurge of violence unless preventive measures are taken now. Thus, the failure of governments to meet the youth needs may prompt the youth in inciting riots and violence.

4. The flow of information and ideas, boosted greatly by the Internet and access to expanded media sources can enable youth to learn more rapidly and can facilitate networks. Because the literacy rates are higher than before, the young use more frequently the Internet which provides them with the most available information. This wave of technological developments requires skills that differ greatly from those obtained by just completing primary school. Thus, a potential key to successful integration of Arab youth with their societies is the use of technology. Providing access to technology is only one of the many important means of promoting educational and economic opportunity.

5. The Arab countries are experiencing an unprecedented “youth bulge” with over 30 percent of the population in the age group 15-29 representing over 100 million people. The pool of the 15-24 young people in 2010 is estimated at about 74 million (Table 2).

Table 2: Percent of the population aged 15-24 compared to size of the labour market and their proportion in it

	<b>Percent, aged 15-24 2000</b>	<b>Percent, aged 15-24 2010</b>	<b>Percent, youth to working 15-64 2000</b>	<b>Percent, youth to working 15-64 2010</b>	<b>Size of youth 15-24 (000s) 2000</b>	<b>Size of youth 15-24 (000s) 2010</b>
Algeria	22.6	20.5	36.6	30	6894	7262
Bahrain	17.1	17.9	24.7	24.8	111	144
Comoros	22.7	19.3	39.5	32.7	125	133
Djibouti	20.2	21.6	37.3	36.6	148	190
Egypt	20.9	20.2	35.5	32.5	14666	17063
Iraq	20.5	19.9	38.2	35.5	5054	6262
Jordan	21.8	20.4	37.8	32.7	1058	1320
Kuwait	14.9	14.4	18.7	19.3	332	439
Lebanon	18.3	18	29.1	26.6	690	766
Libya	21.1	19.1	32.7	29.2	1128	1250
Mauritania	20.5	20.1	37.1	34.7	533	677
Morocco	21.1	19.7	33.9	29.6	6082	6379
Oman	23.7	20.5	38.8	31	569	595
Palestine	18.7	19.9	37.6	40.5	589	876
Qatar	13.9	17.9	19.1	21.6	86	270
Saudi Arabia	18.9	18.9	31.9	29.1	3933	4960
Somalia	19.3	18.6	36.3	35.4	1427	1735
Sudan	19.9	20.3	36.4	35.2	6946	8768
Syria	23.1	20.5	41	33.4	3814	4614
Tunisia	20.7	19.8	32.6	27.4	1957	2002
UAE	16.5	11.9	22	14.9	534	560
Yemen	20.3	22.1	40.9	40.8	3673	5361
<b>Totals</b>					<b>62349</b>	<b>73636</b>

Source: UN Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision.

6. The exit response to frustrated expectations may take the form of emigration. Surveys of Middle Eastern youth reveal that the proportion of young people who wish or intend to emigrate ranges from one-quarter to an enormously high three-quarters of an age group. In a national survey in Tunisia (2006), 76percent of 15-to-29-year-olds (compared to 22 percent in 1996 and 45 percent in 2000) declared that they considered emigration an option<sup>4</sup>. They may simply dream without making concrete plans or taking

<sup>4</sup> Habib Fourati, Consultations de la jeunesse et desir d'emigrer chez les jeunes en Tunisie 1996-2005 (San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute, 2008).

actual steps, but their dreams illustrate the deep discomfort that is now common among MENA youth. In a recently published study on all the 2005-2008 graduates of the Saint Joseph University in Lebanon, Kasparian reported that only 75percent are living in Lebanon and that only 81percent are employed, mainly in the private sector (86 percent)<sup>5</sup>.

7. If one predicts that emigration from MENA countries will increase in the coming decade, one can also affirm that its profile will change in conjunction with the demographic transition. Family profiles of young MENA migrants are going through radical changes. Yesterday, male migrants left their families behind so they could feed and educate them. Remittances were the main reason for leaving, and, in many cases, return was part of the migration project. Tomorrow, all young emigrants will typically have no children or spouses at home, and their ambition and the desire for self-accomplishment will drive them, whether they contemplate staying abroad permanently or returning to their country with increased capital and skills (Fargues).

8. Despite major improvements over the past decades in health and education, and despite a wealth of oil resources, “[MENA’s] political, social, and economic systems have not evolved in a way that effectively meets the changing needs of its rapidly growing young population<sup>6</sup>, especially employment<sup>7</sup>” (Table 3). The lack of these systems has resulted in a youth population with very few proactive outlets and opportunities. As economies are faced with absorbing this new generation into the workforce, unemployment in the region may increase and exacerbate problems such as homelessness, poverty, and increased rates of crime. The extent to which this large group of young people will become healthy and productive members of their societies depends on how well governments and civil societies invest in social, economic, and political institutions that meet the current needs of young people<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Kasparian, Shoghik, press reports, June 09 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Population Reference Bureau < <http://www.prb.org/pdf07/youthinMENA.pdf>>.

<sup>7</sup> Assaad, Ragui and Roudi-Fahimi, Farzaneh; “Youth in the Middle East and North Africa: demographic opportunity or challenge?” PRB April 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Population Reference Bureau < <http://www.prb.org/pdf07/youthinMENA.pdf>>.

Table 3: Activity rates by gender in labour market and amongst population 15+ years in some Arab countries (percent)

Country	Year	Total Employed	Men Employed	Women Employed	Youth employed	Youth employed
					15-19	20-24
Algeria	2003	27	47	6.6	NA	NA
Bahrain	2001	47.1	64	29.1	12.8	66.5
Egypt	2005	29.6	45.7	12.8	22.6	49.5
Kuwait	2007	52.3	66	32.3	6.2	61
Lebanon	2007	32.7	49.6	16.2	16.1	45.2
Tunisia	2003	33.2	48.8	17.5	21	45.1
Morocco	1999	38.2	59.4	22.2	48.0*	
Oman	2003	36.6	53.3	15.3	13.8	59
Qatar	2004	59.7	76	27.1	7.9	66.6
Syria	1999	28.1	44.4	11.1	57.8	50.6
UAE	2005	62.3	78.9	26.6	10.4	70.9

Source: [www.ilo.org/employment](http://www.ilo.org/employment).

9. Political participation and civic engagement are other important means of providing the youth populations in the region with the tools they need to build successful futures. With that said, the creation of programmes that keep disadvantaged [youth] in school, or promote their return to school, and teach them literacy and life skills are important for reducing social isolation and promoting broader social and economic development.<sup>9</sup> Although programs and policies implemented regionally or by the state are of utmost importance, the use of non-governmental organizations or civil society organizations is an effective way to provide youth with the tools they need to adapt to and prosper in their societies.

10. The secretary-General of the League of Arab States (Mr Amr Mousa) stressed that the youth bulge “is a demographic opportunity, not a disaster. It holds the potentials for a positive transformation in the Arab World if properly invested in it through the right social and economic policies, and through engaging the young society in all aspects of life. I consider this a smart investment in the future”<sup>10</sup>. The Secretary-General underlined the following:

- Youth participation in development should be assured especially in realizing the MDGs.
- Addressing the inequalities, and the needs of the most disadvantaged, should be sustained.

<sup>9</sup> Population Reference Bureau < <http://www.prb.org/pdf07/youthinMENA.pdf>>.

<sup>10</sup> Model Arab League: Background guide, Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers, 2010-2011 [www.ncusar.org/modelarableague](http://www.ncusar.org/modelarableague).

- Promoting female youth, and ensuring their equal participation in public life.
- Building more scientific knowledge for the youth would enhance their ability to actively and effectively engage in the planning and implementing programs pertaining to building societies and achieving better economic achievements.
- Supporting Youth organizations.
- Strengthening partnerships among governments, youth organizations, universities, civil society, and media as well as private sector.

## Definition of Youth

11. The United Nations defines youth as people aged between 15 and 24 years<sup>11</sup>. Apart from the statistical definition of “youth” mentioned above, the meaning of the term “youth” varies in different societies around the world. Definitions of youth have changed continuously in response to fluctuating political economic and socio-cultural circumstances<sup>12</sup>.”The results of the survey conducted by ESCWA showed that only seven (Bahrain, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Yemen) out of the thirteen member countries that completed the questionnaire define youth as the 15-24 year age cohort, while the others give definitions in which ages range from 10 to 35<sup>13</sup>.

12. It can be said that youth is a socio-demographic group. Within this group, it is useful to distinguish between “adolescents”, whose ages range from 15 to 19 years, and “young adults” whose ages range from 20 to 24 years, since these two subgroups have distinct needs and face distinct challenges.

13. Youth is a very important phase in the human life cycle, with features that distinguish it from other phases (childhood, adulthood and old age). Economically, youth are in transition from being consumers of resources to becoming producers of wealth. In other words, they are in transition from economic dependency to economic productivity. In terms of family formation, youth are often at the stage of identify-

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations. *Youth and the United Nations: Frequently Asked Questions*. Available at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/qanda.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> ESCWA Population and development report - issue no. 4; “Youth in the ESCWA region: situation analysis and implications for development policies, 24 November 2009.

<sup>13</sup> For the results of the survey conducted by ESCWA on the response of member countries to the World Programme of Action for Youth, see the report on the Workshop on Reinforcing National Capacities in Responding to the World Programme of Action for Youth: National Reports and Systematic Documentation of Accomplishments, Beirut, 17-18 December 2008, (E/ESCWA/SDD/2009/2) (in Arabic).

ing a partner, marriage, childbearing, and establishment of an autonomous family. Mostly, youth is the stage of personality formation and self-realization.

14. Shakoori (2008) proposes four basic methodological approaches to youth as follows<sup>14</sup>:

1. Youth as a phase in the human life cycle: This approach considers that knowledge, attitudes and behaviour vary while human beings progress through the human life cycle, from childhood, through adolescence and adulthood, to old age.

2. Youth in the context of development philosophy: This approach stresses the importance of empowering young people in the areas of education and health, and of providing them with opportunities to engage in employment and participate in decision-making in public and political life.

3. Youth in the context of demographic transformation: This approach considers that the demographic shift involves challenges that need to be addressed and opportunities that could be utilized.

4. Youth in the context of the size of population and the size of natural resources: This approach builds on the idea that rapid population growth eventually leads to insufficiency of available resources and inability of Governments to meet the needs of youth. This situation could lead to young people creating problems and committing violence while demanding their rights. In this context, Batool Shakoori indicates that the increase in the number of youth from 20 to 30percent of the total population, in a context of deprivation and lack of social and economic equity, may make young people a source of instability and violence, leading to terrorism<sup>15</sup>.

15. For decades, the United Nations has been giving priority to youth issues<sup>16</sup>. In 1995, the United Nations adopted the “World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond”<sup>17</sup>. The programme is

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<sup>14</sup> Shakoori, B., Response to the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Formulation of National Policies for Youth (in Arabic) prepared for workshop on Reinforcing National Capacities in Responding to the World Programme of Action for Youth: National Reports and Systematic Documentation of Accomplishments, Beirut, 17-18 December 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Shakoori, B., op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> In 1965, the UN General Assembly approved the Declaration on the Promotion Among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples. In the ten years following the Declaration (1965-1975), it focused on three key themes for young people, namely: (a) participation; (b) development; and (c) peace. The General Assembly proclaimed the year 1985 “International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace”, during which the international community stressed on the importance of fair distribution, public participation and quality of life for youth. Other international conferences included the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), The Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) and the Millennium Development Goals (New York, 2000).

an unprecedented initiative by the international community to recognize the value of young people. The programme focuses on fifteen priority areas within the three clusters, as below:

<b>Priorities within the cluster “Youth and the global economy”</b>	<b>Priorities within the cluster “Youth and civil society”</b>	<b>Priorities within the cluster “Youth and their well-being”</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Globalization;</li> <li>- Poverty and hunger;</li> <li>- Education;</li> <li>- Employment;</li> <li>- Environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leisure-time activities;</li> <li>- Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making;</li> <li>- Intergenerational issues;</li> <li>- Information and communications technology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health;</li> <li>- HIV/AIDS;</li> <li>- Substance abuse;</li> <li>- Juvenile delinquency;</li> <li>- Girls and young women;</li> <li>- Armed conflict.</li> </ul>

The effective implementation of the programme will require a significant expression of commitment by organizations and institutions responsible for its adoption and implementation and the involvement of such organizations and especially of youth from all sectors of society.

## **The Demography**

16. The population of Arab countries has increased between 1980 and 2010, moving from 170 million (3.8 percent of total world population) to roughly 366 millions in 2010 (about 6 percent)<sup>18, 19</sup>. Although the population has grown rapidly in all countries in the region, the rate of expansion has been most dramatic in the GCC states, where the number of residents has increased nearly seven-fold since 1960 (UN 2007). This is partially attributable to the unique migration patterns prevailing in the area, which translated into extremely high labour force growth rates over the past several decades (UN, 2007)<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> United Nations, General Assembly resolution 50/81, *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond* (A/RES/50/81), 13 March 1996.

<sup>18</sup> U.N. projections (2008 revision/medium variant).

<sup>19</sup> During the same period, the population of Europe grew by only 12 percent and that of the USA by 52 percent.

<sup>20</sup> Atef M. Khalifa; “Youth bulge and the demographic window of opportunity in the Arab world; ESCWA; “Expert Group Meeting on Moving the Development Agenda Forward: Opportunities and Potential Gains, Beirut, 5-6 November 2009.



Table 4: Population size and growth rates 1980-2025- Arab and MENA countries

Country	Population (In Thousands)					Annual Growth rates percent					
	1950	1980	2000	2010	2025	1980-2000	2000-2005	2005-2010	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020-2025
Algeria	8753	18740	30506	35423	42882	2.39	1.48	1.51	1.45	1.29	1.08
Bahrain	116	347	650	807	1021	3.34	2.25	2.08	1.77	1.56	1.37
Comoros		387	552	691	907	3	2.21	2.29	2.07	1.78	1.57
Djibouti	62	327	730	879	1111	3.56	1.97	1.76	1.61	1.51	1.57
Egypt	21834	43915	70174	84474	104970	2.17	1.9	1.81	1.66	1.44	1.24
Iraq	5158	12962	24652	31467	44692	2.92	2.72	2.17	2.63	2.29	2.11
Jordan	472	2225	4853	6472	8088	4.08	2.74	3.02	1.44	1.55	1.46
Kuwait	152	1375	2228	3051	3988	2.46	3.84	2.44	2.04	1.77	1.55
Lebanon	1443	2669	3772	4255	4736	1.32	1.58	0.83	0.79	0.71	0.64
Libya	1029	3043	5346	6546	8144	2.71	2.05	2	1.79	1.46	1.12
Mauritania		1609	2604	3366	4443	2.49	2.74	2.4	2.07	1.84	1.65
Morocco	8953	19382	28827	32827	37865	2.03	1.13	1.2	1.17	1.06	0.9
Oman	456	1187	2402	2905	3782	3.94	1.72	2.08	1.92	1.78	1.58
Palestine	1005	1476	3149	4409	6553	3.85	3.56	3.18	2.87	2.63	2.42
Qatar	25	229	617	1508	1848	4.65	7.23	10.65	1.55	1.31	1.21
Saudia	3201	9604	20808	26246	34176	4.18	2.53	2.12	1.95	1.77	1.56
Somalia	2264	6487	7394	9359	13992	1.48	2.44	2.27	2.74	2.64	2.57
Sudan	990	19387	34904	43192	56688	2.42	2.06	2.2	2	1.83	1.61
Syria	3495	8959	16511	22505	28592	3.07	2.94	3.26	1.69	1.56	1.54
Tunisia	3530	6469	9452	10374	11797	1.93	0.88	0.98	0.96	0.87	0.74
UAE	70	1015	3238	4707	6109	5.11	4.67	2.82	1.97	1.72	1.53
Yemen	4316	8140	18182	24256	35509	3.97	2.91	2.86	2.74	2.57	2.31
<b>Totals</b>	<b>67324</b>	<b>171914</b>	<b>293551</b>	<b>361729</b>	<b>463918</b>						
<b>Non Arab MENA</b>											
Afghanistan	8151		21391								
Iran	16913		66443								
Israel	1258		6042								
Pakistan	39659		142654								
Turkey	21484		68281								
<b>Totals</b>	<b>87465</b>		<b>304811</b>								

Source: UN Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision.

17. The annual population growth reached a peak of 3 percent around 1980 (2 percent in the world). For the region as a whole, the rate of population growth will decline during the period 1980-2000 to 2.61 percent (1.6 percent world) and further to 2.04 percent during 2000-2020 (ESCWA, 2005). The world as a whole reached its peak of population growth of 2 percent per year in the mid-1960s and is currently grow-

ing at 1.2 percent a year<sup>21</sup>. In spite of the reduction in population growth rates, the population of the Arab world will grow significantly for several more decades (Table 4).

18. Most Arab countries have also experienced large population movements from rural areas to urban centers, as youths gravitated for urban employment. Whereas in 1970 less than a third of the Arab region's population resided in urban areas, today slightly more than half live in cities. By 2050, close to three-quarters of the projected 600 million Arabs are expected to be urbanites. Rapid population growth is evident in Arab capitals: Since 1970, the population of Cairo, doubled from 5.6 million to 11 million. Equally remarkable has been the growth of Sanaa (Yemen) and Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) from relatively small towns of about 100,000 and 400,000 in 1970 to large urban agglomerations of approximately 2 million and 5 million inhabitants, respectively.

## **The Fertility**

19. Although mortality in the MENA region began to decline in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the decline in fertility (births per woman) did not start until the 1970s. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is a useful summary measure of actual fertility behavior (Table 5). High fertility rates prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s (on average, fertility in the Arab region declined from 7 children per woman around 1960 to 3.6 in 2000) but tended to decline gradually starting in the early 1980s.

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<sup>21</sup> Farzaneh Roudi, *Population Trends and Challenges in the Middle East and North Africa* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2001); and United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision* (New York: United Nations, 2005).

Table 5: Total fertility (children per women) by country, medium scenario: selected periods

Country	1950 1955	2000 2005	2050 2055	2100 2150	2150 2200	2200 2205	2250 2255	2295 2300
Algeria	7.28	2.80	1.85	1.9	2.05	2.05	2.05	2.05
Bahrain	6.97	2.657	1.85	1.9	2.055	2.053	2.051	2.051
Djibouti	7.80	5.695	2.165	1.85	2.05	2.042	2.04	2.039
Egypt	6.56	3.29	1.85	1.85	2.052	2.051	2.05	2.05
Iraq	7.18	4.77	1.85	1.85	2.05	2.05	2.05	2.05
Jordan	7.38	3.566	1.85	1.85	2.051	2.05	2.05	2.05
Kuwait	7.21	2.662	1.85	1.85	2.035	2.033	2.032	2.031
Lebanon	5.74	2.179	1.85	2.05	2.055	2.052	2.051	2.05
Libya	6.87	3.015	1.85	1.85	2.053	2.051	2.05	2.05
Morocco	7.18	2.745	1.85	1.85	2.051	2.05	2.05	2.05
Palestine	7.38	5.571	2.133	1.85	2.05	2.051	2.051	2.05
Oman	7.20	4.964	2.005	1.85	2.054	2.051	2.051	2.05
Qatar	6.97	3.221	1.85	1.85	2.051	2.05	2.05	2.05
Saudi Arabia	7.18	4.53	1.85	1.85	2.054	2.052	2.051	2.05
Somalia	7.25	7.25	2.716	1.85	1.9	2.032	2.03	2.03
Sudan	6.67	4.388	1.911	1.85	2.061	2.056	2.055	2.054
Syria	7.20	3.318	1.85	1.85	2.053	2.051	2.05	2.05
Tunisia	6.93	2.006	1.85	2.079	2.073	2.071	2.071	2.07
UAE	6.97	2.815	1.85	1.85	2.056	2.053	2.052	2.051
Yemen	8.20	7.005	2.822	1.85	1.9	2.05	2.05	2.05
<b>Non Arab MENA countries</b>								
Afghanistan	7.70	6.8	2.49	1.85	1.97	2.07	2.065	2.062
Iran	7.00	2.33	1.85	1.97	2.052	2.051	2.05	2.05
Israel	4.16	2.701	1.85	1.85	2.066	2.063	2.061	2.061
Pakistan	6.28	5.08	1.888	1.85	2.057	2.052	2.051	2.05
Turkey	6.90	2.433	1.85	1.97	2.05	2.05	2.05	2.05

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division  
World Population to 2300

20. Coupled with a significant decline in child mortality, this has led to an increase in the proportion of children under 15, and then to an increase in the proportion of young people ages 15 to 24. The increase in the proportion of 15-to-24-year-olds in the total population, referred to as the “youth bulge,” combined with the rapid growth in the overall population, has resulted in the most rapid growth in the number of young people in the region’s history in the transition from high to low fertility. Nearly one in five people living in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is between the ages of 15 and 24 – the age group defined as “youth.” The current number of youth in the region is unprecedented: nearly 95 million in 2005.

The youth bulge is more pronounced in countries where the onset of fertility decline occurred later and the decline was sharper. Thus, the share of the youth population in MENA countries ranged from 25 percent in Iran to around 15 percent in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar. Fertility is generally the main factor determining the age composition of MENA's populations and their population growth. The pattern of fertility decline varies considerably among Arab countries – a matter that has a direct impact on the timing, speed and magnitude of the demographic transition.

21. Decline in fertility is attributable to a variety of correlated factors including better levels of education, particularly among women, including their relatively increased participation in the labour force, later marriages and increased contraceptive prevalence rates (ESCWA, 2005). Decline in fertility rates is expected to continue in the coming decades, yet clearly with variable speed from one country to another. The Arab countries may be classified according to when to reach replacement level (approx. TFR=2.1) as follows:

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- Reached or will reach replacement level before 2020: Tunisia, Lebanon, Bahrain, Algeria, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait.
  - Reaching replacement level between 2020-2030: Libya, Qatar, Morocco.
  - Reaching replacement level between 2030-2040: Jordan, Syria, Egypt.
  - Reaching replacement level after 2040: Comoros, Djibouti, The Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Oman, Palestine, Mauritania, Yemen.
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22. During the 1980s, policymakers attempted to curb runaway population growth by encouraging birth control and promoting family-planning programmes<sup>22</sup>, which were effective in stabilizing, and even decreasing, the number of annual births. This means that the composition of the largest generation has changed from newborn infants to the young adults born 20 to 25 years ago. Consequently, the largest generation ever born in the MENA region is now entering the workforce<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> All MENA governments adopted these policies, with the exception of the gulf countries, whose leaders still encourage population growth as a means of addressing labor needs.

<sup>23</sup> *When the fertility transition starts, i.e. historically high birth rates begin to decline, we can expect to see decreasing numbers of new entrants in the labor market around 20 years later or, in other words, rising numbers until then. In the MENA region, numbers of new entrants in the labor market are expected to peak somewhere between 2005 and 2030 depending on when fertility started to decline.*

23. Until at least 2030 in MENA, the generation reaching working age will be much larger than that reaching retirement age. Even though the number of new additions to the labour market has stagnated and will even slightly decrease between 2015 and 2025, the size of the total working-age population will continue to rise sharply during the next two decades.

Table 6: The Demographic Dynamics of MENA, 2005 to 2030<sup>24</sup>

<b>(in Thousands)</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2005-2030</b>
Working population Ages 15-64 yrs	286,836	322,423	354,452	384,648	414,696	443,154	
Increase with each 5 yr-age bracket		35,587	32,029	30,196	30,048	28,458	156,318
Annual numbers of New entrants (age 25)	8,744	9,562	9,855	9,770	9,821	10,351	
Increase within each 5-yr interval		818	293	- 85	51	530	10,351

Source: UNPD, "World Population Prospects."

24. Over the next two decades, the youth populations in Iraq, Yemen, and the Palestinian Territories – where current levels of fertility are the highest in the region – will experience the fastest growth. In these countries, well over 40percent of their populations are currently under 15 years of age. On the other hand, women in Lebanon, Iran, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates give birth to no more than 2.5 children on average today. By 2025, the share of youth in Iran, Lebanon, and Tunisia is expected to drop to 15percent or less. The rate of growth in the youth population in the region as a whole will slow in the next two decades as these and other countries experience fertility decline. The overall share of youth in MENA’s population is expected to decline to 17percent by 2025 – although the number of 15-to-24-year-olds is still expected to increase by more than 7 million for the region as a whole. The number of youth in the MENA region is projected to peak at 100 million by 2035 and to decline slowly thereafter.

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<sup>24</sup> Philippe Fargues; “Emerging Demographic Patterns across the Mediterranean and their Implications for Migration through 2030”; Migration Policy Institute, November 2008.

## Ageing and the older Population

25. Along with the demographic changes noted above, the MENA region will witness the gradual (and fast) increase of its older population (65+ years). Whereas the proportion of the old people is still in the range of 1-4percent in most of the region, Lebanon and Tunisia report that the old constitute already more than 7percent of their respective population (Table 7). Therefore while considering the “youth bulge” and the “demographic opportunity”, Governments ought to plan for the needs of the older population, needs translated into better access to health care, social protection, pension plans and combat of poverty especially amongst the older women.

Table 7: Age bracket 65+ years (1990-2010)

	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2009</b>
	<b>65+ yrs</b>	<b>65+ yrs</b>	<b>65+ yrs</b>	<b>65+ yrs</b>	<b>65+ yrs</b>
Bahrain	2.23	2.53	2.83	2.61	2.27
Egypt	3.71	4.01	4.27	4.48	4.56
Iraq	3.37	3.32	3.45	3.41	3.27
Jordan	3.17	2.49	2.91	3.47	3.64
Kuwait	1.21	1.20	1.37	1.76	2.21
Lebanon	5.21	6.21	6.80	7.12	7.31
Oman	1.93	1.90	2.15	2.56	2.99
Palestine	3.39	3.88	3.47	3.06	2.92
Qatar	1.11	1.20	1.40	1.30	1.05
Saudi Arabia	2.31	2.41	2.72	2.78	2.91
Sudan	3.03	3.11	3.25	3.44	3.62
Syria	2.67	2.82	3.02	3.13	3.20
UAE	1.27	1.16	1.08	1.08	1.00
Yemen	1.94	2.55	2.38	2.35	2.39
World	6.08	6.45	6.82	7.26	7.50
Developed regions	12.51	13.59	14.35	15.32	15.77
Developing regions	4.31	4.60	4.99	5.41	5.67

Source : United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision

Pension reforms have already been legislated in several Member States. Policy makers have started in some countries to discuss the needs for social security and welfare systems for the older population. Much of the care required by the elderly is currently provided by family caregivers. However, with an increasing share of older people likely to live apart from their families, this is likely to change. Providing social and healthcare, as well as adapted housing and other facilities for this population group will be a major challenge. The demand for services of this type will not only depend on the absolute number of elderly persons, but also on their future health.

## **Education**

26. Education is a fundamental human right. Providing universal education, especially secondary education, is an indicator of youth participation in the development process and their equal and equitable benefit from it. Furthermore, education helps mobilize youth as a major force in shaping the present and the future of their societies, in addition to providing them with the information, capabilities, resources and opportunities needed for participation; for gaining their rights, including rights of citizenship; and for contributing to the advancement of their communities.

27. Over the last two decades, the Arab region has achieved remarkable progress in all educational indicators. From the period 1990/1991 to 2004/2005, the average rate of inclusion in primary education for the Arab region increased from 70.5 percent to 80.6 percent, while the proportion of literate young people between 15 and 24 years of age increased from around two thirds to 83.4 percent (Table 8). Moreover, the gender parity index for literacy increased from 0.81 in 1991 to 0.92 in 2005. The investment of Arab governments has paid off in terms of educational attainment for girls, the gender gap in education among youth has almost disappeared. However, despite the progress made, the goal of universal education has not been achieved, nor has the standard of achievement been uniform across sub-regions and countries in the Arab region.

Table 8: School enrolment ratios and average years of schooling for selected Middle Eastern Countries

Country	Primary Enrollment	Secondary Enrollment	Tertiary Enrollment	Average years of schooling 1970	Average years of schooling 2000	Drop out Rates from Iry cycle 2006
Algeria	95	83	22	0.82	4.72	
Bahrain	98	101	32	1.82	6.09	1.7
Egypt	94	88	35	1.32	5.05	2.8
Iraq	89	45	16	0.76	4.34	12.3
Jordan	90	89	40	2.29	7.37	7.4
Kuwait	83	89	18	2.88	7.05	
Lebanon	82	81	48	1.35	2.87	5.7
Libya		94				
Morocco	88	52	12			
Oman	74	89	25			22.3
Qatar	94	101	19			
Saudi Arabia			29			
Syria		70		1.67	5.74	
Tunisia	96	85	30	0.91	4.20	1.9
UAE	88	90		2.88		24.0
Yemen	75	46	9			

Source: Primary enrollment from UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2006), secondary and tertiary enrollment from World Bank Development indicators (2006), average years of schooling of the total population aged 25 and over from Barro and Lee (2000). Quoted in” Middle East Youth Initiative Stalled Youth Transitions in the Middle East”

28. In comparison with primary education, secondary education is still less prevalent in the Arab countries. Data issued by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in 2002 show a decrease in the rates of transition to secondary school in the Arab countries, especially the least developed ones, and to a lesser degree in other countries, including Algeria, Kuwait, Morocco and Tunisia, while in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, the two stages, primary and secondary, are on par<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Najib, K. Development of Arab Education Systems to Empower Youth: Challenges and Future Prospects (in Arabic), Series of *Population and Development Studies*, Department of Population and Migration Policies, Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States, 2005, p. 98.



29. Generally, university education is still limited in the Arab countries, because admissions are associated with the scores for secondary education. Statistics show that in 2000, the percentage of Arab youth in the 18-24 years age group enrolled in university education did not exceed 39 percent compared with at least 60 percent in Japan<sup>2627</sup>. Moreover, Higher education tends to focus on academic rather than scientific disciplines.

30. Generally, the region is still unable to bridge the educational gaps between rich and poor, and urban and rural. Notably, in most ESCWA member countries, outputs of the educational system, namely the disciplines studied by students, are incompatible with the needs of the labour market.

31. Education in the Arab region suffers quantitative and qualitative deficiencies. The sector suffers from centralization and bureaucracy, low levels of enrolment in pre-school and curriculum deficiencies. These challenges are manifested in deficiencies in educational infrastructure and institutions, in the financial and human resource, weak managerial competencies in public schools as well as low demand, especially among the poor and in areas vulnerable to conflicts and disasters. There are indications that educational opportunities for young people, if and when available, are often of low quality due to the overcrowding of classrooms, poor infrastructure, lack of teaching materials, and shortage of teachers and well-trained staff<sup>28</sup>. A report presented by the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to the Summit of Arab Kings and Presidents, held in Riyadh in March 2007, stressed the seriousness of educational problems in Arab countries (below).

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#### **Box. Major issues facing Education in the Arab countries**

- According to the Shanghai League Table of 2006, not a single Arab university is among the top five hundred;
- The schooling index, indicating the average number of years a learner spends in education, is 7.7 years in Arab countries as a whole, but falls to 2.7 years in some of the least developed Arab countries;

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<sup>26</sup> University education enrolment ratio is the highest in Lebanon (42 per cent), followed by Egypt and Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (39 per cent) and Jordan (29 per cent). At the other end is Mauritania (4 per cent), the Syrian Arab Republic (6 per cent), the Sudan (7 per cent), Oman (8 per cent), and Iraq (14 per cent).

<sup>27</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003*.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, *Goals and targets for monitoring the progress of youth in the global economy*, Report of the Secretary-General, Addendum (A/62/61/Add.1-E/2007/7/Add.1), 2007.

- Traditional curricula are based on memorization, merely testing learners' ability to recall information;
- The distribution of students over disciplines is uneven (low enrolment in science and technology disciplines);
- The knowledge structure and institutional relationships are based on domination, coercion and unilateralism;
- Most stages of education suffer from dualities that give rise to contradictions such as those existing between public and private education, education that follows foreign systems and education that adopts an Arab system, technical and general education, religious and non-religious education, sex-segregated education, and other divisions within the educational system;
- Educational gaps between male and female, rich and poor, and urban and rural areas persist.

32. Despite poor labour market outcomes for educated youth, parents continue to invest in the education of their children based on the signals they receive from the labour market. This is because parents and students alike perceive “good” jobs as requiring a university degree. Access to universities, however, is highly dependent on passing national tests which are designed primarily to measure the acquisition of facts and knowledge through rote memorization rather than critical and independent thinking. One should note the increase in the post-secondary enrollment in private establishments over the last decade (Table 9)

Table 9: Post-secondary education enrolment

	<b>Egypt 1997-98</b>	<b>Egypt 2003-4</b>	<b>Morocco 2003</b>	<b>Morocco 2008</b>
<b>Private percent</b>	13	20	05	19
<b>Public percent</b>	87	80	95	81

Source: The road not travelled: Education Reform in the Middle East and North Africa (World Bank)

33. Gains made in enrolment and survival rates since 1990 have been translated into improved youth literacy rates. Between 1990 and 2007, the youth literacy rate in the region climbed from 72 to 86 percent with significant increases recorded in the Maghreb, the LDCs and the Mashreq. In 2007, the highest sub-regional literacy rate was seen in the countries of the GCC (97 percent), while in Mauritania, Morocco, the Sudan, Yemen and Egypt, considerable further progress is required to improve both literacy rates and literacy gender parity index (GPI) ratings (Table 10).

Table 10: Illiteracy in ESCWA member states

	<b>Adult Illiteracy Rates 15+ yrs 1995-2004</b>	<b>Adult Illiteracy Rates 15+ yrs 2005-7</b>	<b>Youth Illiteracy Rates 15-24 yrs 1995-2004</b>	<b>Youth Illiteracy Rates 15-24 yrs 2005-7</b>	<b>Gender Parity Index Adult Literacy 15+ yrs 2005-7</b>	<b>Gender Parity Index Youth Literacy 15-24 yrs 2005-7</b>
Bahrain	13.5	11.2	3.0	0.2	1.0	1.0
Egypt	44.4	33.6	26.8	15.1	0.8	0.9
Iraq	25.9		15.2		0.8	0.9
Jordan	10.1	8.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0
Kuwait	21.6	5.5	8.0	1.6	1.0	1.0
Lebanon		10.4		1.3	0.9	1.0
Oman	18.6	15.6	2.7	1.6	0.9	1.0
Palestine	7.6	6.2	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.0
Qatar	11.0	6.9	4.1	0.9	1.0	1.0
Saudi Arabia	17.1	15.0	4.2	3.0	0.9	1.0
Sudan	39.1		22.8			
Syria	19.2	16.9	7.5	6.3	0.9	1.0
UAE		10.0		5.0	1.0	1.0
Yemen	45.9	41.1	24.8	19.6	0.5	0.7

Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision

34. Due to continued fertility decline and the slower rate of growth of the school-age population, governments face less pressure to increase the number of seats in primary schools, and, with some time lag, secondary schools, and therefore have an opportunity to focus on improving the quality of schooling and expanding higher education. Such measures could include:

- University admission policies should be used to influence what students learn.
- Governments ought to announce that the public sector will no longer be the main employer of educated youth.
- Employment policies need to be reconsidered.
- Private employers should signal what skills they deem productive.
- Stringent labour laws ought to be relaxed.
- The high cost of layoffs should be reduced.
- Social protection must be strengthened.

## Work and Employment

35. The Arab world is experiencing unprecedented turmoil. Any evaluation of its root causes would include unemployment for youth between the ages of 15 and 24. More than 25 percent of youth in the Middle East are unemployed, the highest such rate in the world. Unemployment among young females is even higher, reaching and exceeding 30 percent across the region<sup>29</sup>. Unemployment rates vary from one country to another. It reaches 6.3 percent in the United Arab Emirates, 15.7 percent in Morocco, 17 percent in Qatar, 18.7 percent in Yemen, 19.7 percent in Oman, 21.34 percent in Lebanon, 25.8 percent in Egypt, and 38.9 percent in Jordan<sup>30</sup>.

36. The enormous labour-supply pressures in MENA are due to a combination of population growth, the youth bulge, and increasing participation of women in the labour force. According to a World Bank report, MENA's labour force is expected to increase by 40 percent between 2000 and 2010, and by nearly 80 percent between 2000 and 2020<sup>31</sup>. Another study estimates that 43 million are expected to enter MENA's labour force during this same decade, compared with 47 million people who entered the labour force during the four-decade period of 1950 to 1990<sup>32</sup>.

37. Employment is an important phase in the life cycle of youth, for it enables them to achieve economic independence and transit from dependence on family to self-reliance. Providing decent work opportunities for young people requires the integration of relevant sectors and coherent social, economic and population policies. Transition from school to work is one of the most important stages of life, for it determines the future economic and social well-being<sup>33</sup>.

38. Transition to adulthood is an inherently difficult period for youth everywhere. Tapping the full potential of youth is one of the most critical economic development challenges facing the Middle East in the

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<sup>29</sup> Linking jobs and education in the Arab world; "Education for employment: Realizing Arab youth potential".

<sup>30</sup> Arab Labour Organization, estimates are based on Arab and international statistical resources, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> World Bank, Unlocking the Employment Potential in the Middle East and North Africa.

<sup>32</sup> Nader Kabbani and Ekta Kathari, "A Situation Analysis of Youth Employment in the MENA Region," presented at the conference on Urban Children and Youth in the MENA Region: Addressing Priorities in Education, held in Dubai, May 16-18, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> *Data from 60 developing countries indicate that young people engage in temporary or intermittent work for an average of 1.4 years after completing their education along with periods of unemployment before acquiring a permanent stable job. In some cases, the period extends to more than four years.*

twenty-first century<sup>34</sup>. Education generally is expected to ease the transition to employment, but fails to do so in the Middle East. The wait for a first job is measured in years rather than months. A large majority lives with their parents well into their twenties and delay marriage despite greater social taboos on relationships outside marriage. Cultural norms also affect youth transitions in other ways, especially the transition to marriage and family formation. In Middle Eastern societies, the institution of marriage, which is a rite of passage to adulthood, is under stress because of the high costs of marriage. Strong demographic pressures, oil income, rigid institutions, and social norms have paved the way for *waithood*: a long phase which refers to the bewildering time that a large proportion of Middle Eastern youth spend waiting for a full state of adulthood. “Waithood” conveys the multifaceted reality of the transition experience<sup>35</sup>.

39. Globalization has faced Arab youth with many challenges, most notably because of the mismatch between outputs of education and skills needed in the labour market. Arab university graduates tend to specialize in humanities, and social and educational sciences, rather than in natural sciences such as physics and engineering and others (Table 11). The percentage of students enrolled in scientific disciplines such as natural sciences does not exceed 30percent of overall university enrolment<sup>36</sup>.

Table 11: Distribution of University Graduates by Field of Study

	Arab World (1)	Asian Countries (2)	Latin American Countries (3)
Education and Humanities	37	20	9
Social Sciences	31	34	39
Medicine	6	6	11
Scientific, Technical and Engineering	18	31	24
Other	8	10	9

(1) Represented by Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Palestine

(2) Represented by China, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand

(3) Represented by Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Mexico, Peru

Source: The road not travelled: Education Reform in the Middle East and North Africa (World Bank)

Arab youth have to reconsider their acquired skills, and make every effort to acquire new skills, especially in information and communications technology.

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<sup>34</sup> Salehi-Isfahani, Djavad, and Navtej Dhillon, 2008, “*Stalled Youth Transitions in the Middle East: A Framework for Policy Reform*,” Middle East Youth Initiative Working Paper.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Assaad, R. and Roudi-Fahimi, F., Youth in the Middle East and North Africa: Demographic Opportunity or Challenge? Population Reference Bureau, *MENA Policy Briefs*, April 2007, p. 5.

40. Arab labour markets are experiencing a decline in rates of economic activity and a rise in unemployment rates among youth, especially females. Moreover, youth unemployment rates are high in countries that suffer from occupation and conflict where they were estimated at 27 percent in 2004 and 17.5 percent in 2006 in Iraq; and, at approximately 29.8 percent in 2006 and 28 percent in 2008 in Palestine. The workforce is expanding at a rate > 3percent per year, which means that the region will require the creation of 100 million jobs in the next 20 years. The Region needs 6-7 percent sustained economic growth in order to keep up with its growing population.

41. Unemployment in Arab countries is concentrated among secondary-school and university graduates, in comparison with primary-school graduates and the illiterate. This situation is caused by the gap between labour market requirement and educational outputs<sup>37</sup>. High rates of youth unemployment have contributed to the very high migration rates among young males looking for work.

42. In a recent report (May 21 2011), the director general of the Arab Labour Organization, Mr. Ahmed Luqman, noted that Arab countries will need to spend \$85 billion over the next ten years in order to create new jobs and address an unemployment crisis. This investment will help create 18 million new jobs to accommodate new entrants to the Arab labour markets. Luqman called on Arab leaders and governments to adopt a package of economic measures to curb and eradicate unemployment<sup>38</sup>.

43. Governments have not focused sufficiently on a vital component of the employment picture: how to ensure that the region's young people have the right skills for the jobs being created (Table 12). To do so, it will be necessary to orient education directly to work opportunities—full- or part-time or even self-employment. There is even less focus on how to encourage the private sector (both employers and education providers) to play a role complementary to that of the government in addressing the region's pressing needs. A new report based on research by McKinsey, *Education for employment: Realizing Arab youth potential*, highlights the dramatic gaps in education and employment across the region and provides a pri-

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<sup>37</sup> In Tunisia, the unemployment rate was estimated at about 40percent or more among those with higher education, compared with 25percent among those with primary education<sup>37</sup>. The national report of Jordan stated that the unemployment rate is around 30percent among secondary-school graduates and 15percent among university graduates, compared with 8percent among those with only primary education.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.al-jazirah.com/20110521/ec2d.htm>, accessed Saturday, May 21, 2011.

vate sector–based road map for closing them. Surveyed private employers report that only one third of new graduate employees are ready for the workplace when hired.

Table 12: Employers survey questions: Do graduates hired in the last five years have the appropriate skills<sup>39</sup>.

	<b>University Graduates Hard skills</b>	<b>University Graduates Soft skills</b>	<b>Vocational Graduates Hard skills</b>	<b>Vocational Graduates Soft skills</b>
Egypt	29	26	16	12
Jordan	22	25	10	16
Morocco	33	28	36	25
Saudi Arabia	51	45	41	38
Yemen	29	26	23	19

Source: e4e stakeholders; PRB; “Middle East Youth Bulge”; March 12 2007

44. Despite the insufficient quality of the expanded educational offerings and mismatches between education and employment<sup>40</sup>, education has boosted human capital in the region<sup>41</sup>. However existing legislation has resulted in increasing difficulty in hiring and a greater rigidity in working hours and employment<sup>42</sup>.

45. MENA’s unemployment rate is the highest among world’s regions, primarily because of very high youth unemployment rates. MENA’s youth unemployment rate is more than twice that of South Asia<sup>43</sup> (Table 13).

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<sup>39</sup> Percentage of HR Managers, who agreed that newly hired students have appropriate skills.

<sup>40</sup> United Nations Development Program, Arab Human Development Report 2003, Building a Knowledge Society (New York: UNDP/RBAS, 2003), [http://hdr.undp.or/en/reports/regionalreports/arabstates/Arab States 2003 en.pdf](http://hdr.undp.or/en/reports/regionalreports/arabstates/Arab%20States%2003%20en.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> *Human-capital measurements for any MENA country or the region are not available.*

<sup>42</sup> World Bank Development indicators (2006), World Bank Doing business 2008 report and Heritage Foundation 2008; Quoted in” Middle East Youth Initiative Stalled Youth Transitions in the Middle East”.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations, Millennium Development Goals Report 2006 (New York: United Nations, 2006): 24.

Table 13: Unemployment rate among youth by selected world regions 2005

<b>Region</b>	<b>Unemployment Of youth 2005</b>
MENA	26
Sub Saharan	18
Latin America	17
South East Asia	16
South Asia	10
East Asia	8

Source: ILO “Global employment trends for youth”; Geneva ILO 2006

In most countries in the region, according to an analysis by the World Bank, workers with little or no education and those with postsecondary education constitute a smaller share of the unemployed. Most of the unemployed workers are either semiskilled or have intermediate or secondary educations, a sign of the undervaluation of their training in the economy. Even for the most educated workers, the analysis suggests that the private sector rewards their education less than the public sector<sup>44</sup>. However, a recent analysis in Egypt has shown that the highest rates of unemployment have now shifted to university graduates. There are two reasons for this shift: University students were the fastest-growing group among new entrants and the group most dependent on government employment, which is not growing as fast or might even be shrinking<sup>45</sup>.

46. The oil-rich and labour-receiving Gulf countries are faced with the additional challenge of addressing the employment balance between their nationals and non-nationals. A rapidly growing number of young nationals are entering the labour force at a time when their governments are no longer able to guarantee lifetime employment in the public sector, on which citizens have customarily relied. Nearly all of the Gulf states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates) are now instituting policies that push the private sector to hire more nationals. Such policies range from setting mandatory quotas and targets for private businesses to hire nationals, to charging businesses taxes on their foreign workers.

47. Entrepreneurs in the region regularly cite the lack of both general job readiness skills and specific occupational skills as important constraints to hiring. The mismatch between the quality of the labour supply and the requirements of the labour market can largely be tackled by improving the underlying quality of

<sup>44</sup> World Bank, *Unlocking the Employment Potential in the Middle East and North Africa*.

<sup>45</sup> Ragui Assaad, “Unemployment and Youth Insertion in the Labor Market in Egypt,” Egyptian Center for Economic Studies (ECES) Working Paper 118 (2007).



education. The combination of skill mismatches in the labour market and the rapidly growing number of new entrants to the labour market has created a situation in which too many young people have a hard time finding jobs (Table 12).

48. The social and political turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa has given renewed urgency to the need to counter chronic joblessness, particularly among young people. Governments can implement a number of immediate measures to step up job creation and enhance the employability of their young populations<sup>46</sup>. To illustrate:

- Evidence suggests that infrastructure investment can have a sizable impact on employment generation – about 40,000 annual direct and indirect new jobs can be created in the short term for every US\$1 billion spent on infrastructure projects.
- Policymakers can also provide tax incentives or credit guarantees to viable labour-intensive small- and medium-sized enterprises.
- Cooperate with Industry to assess demand for skills and provide corresponding tailored training programs for young people.
- To have a lasting effect, however, short-term measures have to be combined with a comprehensive job strategy that fosters inclusive growth, transforms education systems, and provides adequate social protection to workers and job seekers.
- To enhance skill formation, primary, secondary, and tertiary curricula need to be better aligned with the needs of the private sector. In this context, reforming university admissions policies to test a broad range of skills – writing, critical thinking, and problem solving – would give incentives for students at the primary and secondary levels to acquire such skills.
- The region also suffers from overly rigid labour market regulations (high cost of firing). Policy should therefore aim at relaxing rigid labour market regulations, while at the same time preserving the right to collective bargaining and providing effective social protection, including unemployment insurance, for workers.
- A fundamental shift from curricula that rely on rote and non-participatory learning to those that promote problem-solving and application of knowledge is required to help ease the path to gainful employment for youth.

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<sup>46</sup> Ahmed, Masood, (Director, Middle East and Central Asia Department, International Monetary Fund), “Creating Jobs in the Middle East and North Africa”; Published in *Asharq Al Awsat*, May 20, 2011.

49. Political, economic, and social reforms that could encourage greater participation of MENA's youth in society are long overdue. In its report, *Unlocking the Employment Potential in the Middle East and North Africa: Toward a New Social Contract*, the World Bank argues that MENA countries must adopt new development policies that realign their economies in three important ways:

- Reinventing the private sector. Entrepreneurs continue to face problems that stem from weaknesses in infrastructure and legal and financial systems.
- Integrating with the world economy. MENA remains one of the least integrated regions in the world, having failed to take advantage of the expansion of world trade and foreign direct investment.
- Managing oil resources better. Diversifying productive activities is a growing priority, as governments need to develop new sources to enable more effective and sustainable public spending.
- In addition, the report emphasizes that MENA countries must redefine their “social contracts”—implicit agreements between governments and citizens about the rights and duties of each side. As the population is growing rapidly and economies are changing, the existing safety nets are increasingly becoming outdated and stretched beyond their capacity.
- Reforms are needed to balance the need for labour market flexibility and new job creation with social protection and income security for workers. MENA's labour market prospects largely depend on how successfully its governments can develop new social contracts for the 21st century.

## Migration

50. Several triggers facilitate emigration from the MENA region. Young workers, particularly the well-educated, face poor employment conditions at home in part due to failed economic policies. Population density is growing to untenable levels in several MENA countries and most importantly unresolved conflicts continue to cause migration within and from the region.

51. MENA countries as a whole are home to just as many first-generation international immigrants as emigrants (Table 14)<sup>47</sup>. After slowing down in the 1990s, emigration from Arab countries regained mo-

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<sup>47</sup> Philippe Fargues, "International migration in the Arab region: trends and policies, UN expert group meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region, Beirut, 2006".

mentum in the early part of this decade. The 20 million migrants from MENA countries represent about 5percent of the region's total population. Four source countries have more than 2 million first-generation emigrants each: Turkey, Morocco, Iraq, and Egypt. Next are Iran, Algeria, Yemen, and Sudan, with 1 to 2 million emigrants, followed by Tunisia and Lebanon with 500,000 to 1 million emigrants.

Table 14: Migrants\* Originating from Selected MENA Countries by Region of Residence

Country of origin	Year Data	Europe (000)	MENA (000)	Other (000)	Total (000)
Algeria	1995	992	66	14.1	1072
Mauritania	2004	26	31	193	250
Morocco	2005	2719	213	254	3185
Tunisia	2005	779	129	26	934
Egypt	2000	286	1813	538	2737
Lebanon	2001	157	124	326	607
Iraq	2007	150	2000	150	2300
Yemen	1999	na	810	na	1000
Iran	na	na	na	na	1200
Palestine **	2004	na	4435	na	4983
<b>Totals</b>		<b>5109</b>	<b>9721</b>	<b>1500</b>	<b>181093</b>

\*First-generation migrants. No estimates based upon solid records were found for Jordan, Sudan, and Syria.

\*\*Palestinian refugees; most of them are not first-generation but second- or third-generation migrants.

Sources: Consular records and other national sources compiled in Fargues, Philippe, "International Migration in the Arab Region: Trends and Policies" (United Nations Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region, Beirut May 2006, 35 p.), <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/EGM Ittmig Arab/P09 Fargues.pdf>.

52. All MENA countries, except for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Libya, are both origin and destination countries for international migrants. This represents a marked shift from the 1960-1990 period, during which the MENA region was sharply divided between destination countries, namely the capital-rich, oil-producing states in the gulf and Libya, and migrant-origin countries, the rest of the region<sup>48</sup>. At preset, even large oil-producing countries, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, are now faced with domestic unemployment. Countries like Morocco and Egypt have become unwilling recipients of

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<sup>48</sup> *Algeria, Iraq, and Iran were both oil and labor exporters between 1960 and 1990.*

migrants while remaining major origin countries<sup>49</sup>. By contrast, emigration from Turkey and Iran has continuously decreased as a result of economic successes in Turkey and political stabilization in Iran<sup>50</sup>.

53. Migrants originating from the Maghreb and Turkey are found mainly in Europe, whereas those from the Machrek (The Levant) and Iran tend to reside in other MENA countries or in North America. To a certain extent, Gulf states and the West compete for Eastern Arab migrants<sup>51</sup>. In Machrek countries, the popular as well as the administrative terminology classifies migration to the Gulf states and Libya as "temporary" whereas emigration to the West is classified as "permanent." Like the West, oil-producing states host both short- and long-term migrants, including second-generation migrants.

54. Refugees come from some MENA countries, namely Iraq and Sudan, as well as sub-Saharan Africa (mainly Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Eritrea) due to conflicts in their countries of origin. The last category is transit migrants who are on their way to their intended destination – usually Europe or the Gulf states. Local governments generally do not want to integrate them because they strain resources, compete with natives for jobs, and are sometimes seen as a threat to security.

55. Conflicts and wars produce the largest numbers of migrants. Over the last 60 years, some of the most notable examples include the following:

- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has caused the Palestinian exodus. It has also an impact on the whole region by bolstering Arab authoritarian regimes and political repression combined with poor economic performance, all favoring emigration.
- The October 1973 war between Israel and Egypt indirectly triggered a massive wave of Egyptian migration to the GCC countries.
- The gulf war of 1990-1991 resulted in 3 million legal immigrants being driven out of Iraq, primarily Arab citizens.

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<sup>49</sup> *This paper is limited to emigration from MENA countries and will touch immigration to, or through, these countries only to the extent as it affects the former. It will not deal with Gulf states and Libya except for the purpose of comparing them with the West.*

<sup>50</sup> Philippe Fargues; "Emerging Demographic Patterns across the Mediterranean and their Implications for Migration through 2030"; Migration Policy Institute, November 2008.

<sup>51</sup> *This is also true of Turkish migrants, whose preferred destinations have become the Gulf states and Russia. See Ahmet Icduygu, "Turkey, the demographic dimension of international migration," in Mediterranean Migration Report 2007 (Italy: European University Institute, 2007), 305-314, <http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/e-texts/CARIMAR2007.pdf>.*

- The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 resulted in the largest flow of refugees in the Middle East since 1948, with over 2 million refugees at the end of 2007<sup>52</sup>.

A number of dangerous situations in the MENA region could potentially escalate and trigger large-scale emigration: the unresolved Israel-Palestinian conflict; the foreign occupation of Iraq; ethnic conflicts in Sudan; religious tensions between Muslims and Christians in Sudan, Lebanon, Iraq, and potentially Egypt; religious tensions between Shia and Sunni Muslims in Iraq and Lebanon; and the exposure of migrant workers to changing legislation on entry, stay, and labour in GCC countries and Libya.

56. Remittances paid to MENA countries increased from US\$8.8 billion in 1980 to US\$28.5 billion in 2007 (current prices)<sup>53</sup>. Remittances increased by the largest percentage in Morocco and by the smallest margin in Turkey. The MENA region is home to several economies that depend on remittances such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia (Table 15), as well as to some of the largest country-sources of remittances worldwide, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait<sup>54</sup>. Migrant remittances are one of the least volatile sources of foreign exchange earnings for developing countries<sup>55</sup>. The research on the subject has shown that expatriates' remittances tend to be stable or even counter-cyclical in response to political crisis, economic downturn or even natural disasters in the recipient country<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "The Continuing Needs of Iraq's Displaced," <http://www.unhcr.org/cp,i-bin/texis/vtx/iraq?pag4e=intro>.

<sup>53</sup> World Bank, "Middle East and North Africa," in Migration and Remittances Factbook, eds. Dilip Ratha and Zhimei Xu (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2008),

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/MENA.udf>. ao.

<sup>54</sup> The Global Crisis and Expatriates Remittances to Lebanon: Trends and Elements of Resilience; In Focus, Byblos Bank, May 2011.

<sup>55</sup> Ratha, D 2003, Workers' Remittances: An Important and Stable Source of External Finance, Global Development Finance 2003, World Bank.

<sup>56</sup> Mohapatra, S. George, J, & Ratha, D 2009, 'Remittances and Natural Disasters: Ex-Post Response and Contribution to Ex-Ante Preparedness', World Bank, Washington D.C., Policy Research Working Paper 4972. *Their research findings suggest that remittances play a positive role in helping households cope with the losses caused by natural disasters. Their analysis also shows that remittances increase in the aftermath of natural disasters in countries that have a larger number of migrants abroad. Also, Ratha, D, 2005 Worker Remittances: An Important and Stable Source of External Development Finance', in S Maimbo and D Ratha (eds), Remittances: Development Impact and Future Prospects, World Bank, Washington D.C. However, Lueth and Ruiz-Arranz (2008) report that remittances do not seem to increase in the wake of a natural disaster and appear aligned with the business cycle in the home country, suggesting that remittances may not play a major role in limiting vulnerability to shocks.*

Table 15: Remittances as percent of GDP

<b>Country</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>Change percent</b>
Algeria	1.3	1.5	0.2
Egypt	5.4	3.8	-1.6
Jordan	16.7	14.3	-2.4
Lebanon	23.9	21.7	-2.3
Morocco	7.8	6.9	-0.9
Sudan	5.3	5.5	0.1
Syria	2.6	2.5	-1.0
Tunisia	4.4	4.5	0.1
Yemen	5.2	5.5	0.2

Source: “The Global crisis and expatriates’ Remittances to Lebanon”; In Focus, May 2011 Byblos Bank.

57. Statistics on international migration in the ESCWA region are scarce. Certain countries in the Arab region, notably Lebanon and Syria have a long history of migration. The early flows of emigrants from these two countries, primarily to North America and Africa at the start of the twentieth century are well-documented. Fourteen million people of Lebanese descent and 20 million people of Syrian origin are living outside their home countries<sup>57</sup>. Political instability and armed conflict, along with unemployment and underemployment, have been major push factors behind population movements in the region. Likewise, economic and financial conditions have been major pull factors underlying the extensive migration flows to the GCC countries.

58. The connection between migration and development has featured widely in the literature on international migration<sup>58</sup>. The debate has changed noticeably in recent years, moving from a negative perception (particularly when referring to brain-drain migration) to the current view, in which there is a growing acknowledgment of the positive effects of international migration on development in the countries of origin. In the Arab region, the inflow of workers’ remittances, the transfer of knowledge and skills, and the reduction in unemployment are among the positive effects of international migration on development<sup>59</sup> (ESCWA).

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<sup>57</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, International Migration in the Arab Region (UN/POP/EGM/2006/14), a paper presented at the ESCWA Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region (Beirut, 15-17 May 2006).

<sup>58</sup> International Organization for Migration, 2005, IOM Migration Research Series: The Millennium Development Goals and Migration. Geneva: IOM.

<sup>59</sup> ESCWA, op. cit.

59. In 2010, the international migrant population constituted 11.5percent of the total population of the ESCWA region. Between 1990 and 2005, the migrant stock in the region rose from 13 million to almost 20 million (Table 16), of which 9 million in 1990 and 13 million in 2005 was hosted by the GCC countries<sup>60</sup>. In both 1990 and 2005, five of the top 30 countries with the highest number of international migrants were in the ESCWA region<sup>61</sup>.

Table 16: International Migrant stock in ESCWA countries and other regions (1990-2010)

<b>(in Thousands) At mid-year</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Percent Change 1990/2010</b>
Bahrain	173	206	239	278	315	82.1
Egypt	176	174	169	247	245	39.2
Iraq	84	134	147	128	83	-1.2
Jordan	1146	1608	1928	2345	2973	159.4
Kuwait	1585	1090	1500	1870	2098	32.4
Lebanon	524	656	693	721	758	44.6
Oman	424	582	624	666	826	94.8
Palestine	911	1201	1408	1661	1924	111.2
Qatar	370	406	471	713	1305	252.7
Saudi Arabia	4743	4611	5136	6337	7289	53.7
Sudan	1273	1111	854	640	753	-40.8
Syria	690	817	924	1326	2206	219.7
UAE	1330	1716	2286	2863	3293	147.6
Yemen	344	378	414	455	518	50.6
<b>ESCWA Region</b>	<b>13772</b>	<b>14689</b>	<b>16793</b>	<b>20250</b>	<b>24587</b>	<b>78.5</b>
World	155518	165969	178499	195245	213944	37.6
Developed regions	82355	94123	104434	117188	127711	55.1
Developing regions	73163	71845	74065	78057	86232	17.9
<b>ESCWA share percent</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>29.2</b>

Source : <http://esa.un.org/migration>.

60. In the Arab region, only 36percent of international migrants are female<sup>62</sup>. In certain ESCWA member countries (Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic), refugees still form a large proportion of the migrant stock<sup>63</sup>. With some 6.5 million resident foreigners, Saudi Arabia has the largest foreign population in the region, followed by the United Arab Emirates (3.6 million) and Kuwait (1.3 million).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> UNHCR, 2006, The State of the World's Refugees. Geneva: United Nations.

61. A high percentage of foreign population is common throughout the GCC countries. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates rank highest (at 80.8 and 80.7 percent respectively) due to their relatively small national populations. The annual growth of international migrants is highest in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar (15.9, 10.2 and 8.7 percent respectively), while Iraq and Egypt have the lowest average growth rates (Table 17).

Table 17: Annual growth of international migrants, selected countries, 1960-2005

	<b>1960-2005</b>
UAE	15.9
Saudi Arabia	10.2
Qatar	8.7
Kuwait	6.7
Oman	6.1
Bahrain	5.2
Jordan	4.0
Lebanon	3.5
Syria	3.5
Palestine	2.7
Yemen	2.3
Sudan	2.2
Iraq	0.8
Egypt	0.3

Source: Adapted from UNDP, Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development, based on data from UNHCR and the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, University of Sussex.

62. Palestine has the highest emigration rate (23.9 percent), followed by Kuwait (16.6 percent) and Bahrain (15.9 percent). The emigration rates for Lebanon (12.9 percent) and Jordan (11.6 percent) are also comparatively high. With the exception of Lebanon, emigrants from the ESCWA region are primarily concentrated in Asia. High proportions of emigrants from the Sudan live in Asia (45.9 percent) and Africa (42.9 percent), while emigrants from Lebanon are found worldwide, but with a greater concentration in North America (31.2 percent).

Migrants from Lebanon (67.2 percent) and Syria (40.9 percent) are more concentrated in countries with very high levels of human development, while the highest proportions of emigrants from Egypt (54.5 percent) and Yemen (65.9 percent) are in countries with high levels of human development. Iraqi emigrants are primarily divided into two groups: those found in nations with very high levels of human development (44.2 percent) and those in countries with medium levels of human development (48.7 percent). Emigrants from the other the ESCWA member countries are most commonly found in countries with medium levels



of human development. The highest percentage of emigrants holding higher degrees is from Egypt (47.3 percent).

63. Labour migration is the most important type of population movement in the GCC countries. The labour forces of all six GCC countries are predominantly non-citizen. Involuntary migration forms a major part of international migration in the ESCWA region. The principal source countries of refugees in the region are Palestine (4,953,000), Iraq (2,279,000) and Sudan (523,000). Palestinian refugees alone constitute nearly 35percent of world refugees.

## **Health**

64. The health of youth in the region has improved over past decades. However, such changes in youth lifestyles as not exercising regularly, spread of unhealthy diets, and spread of smoking, are exposing them to various health hazards, most notably, obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes. There is also an increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS, with data tending to be underestimated. Progress has also been made in reproductive health, with rates of unwanted childbirth and maternal mortality declining among young women, and the number of young people having comprehensive, accurate knowledge of how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, increasing considerably. Young people have become major beneficiaries of the progress of health and medical systems, and of the improved health services in all regions of the world.

Youth is a relatively safe stage of life. The health of young people in the Arab region is affected by a set of social, environmental, economic and political conditions, as well as by the quality and quantity of available services and the distribution pattern of these services over various social groups and geographical areas, be it rural and urban. Unhealthy life styles are considered the most significant threat to the health of adolescents.

65. The decline in death rates in the past few decades, coupled with steady increase in life expectancy was mainly a result of improvements in health interventions such as antibiotics, immunizations and sanitation as well as rise in levels of education. Death rates have dropped in all Arab countries and are expected to decline more in the next two decades (Table 18).

Table 18: Births, Death and Infant Mortality rates and Life expectancy at birth,  
selected MENA countries, 1980-2005

Country	1980	1980	1980		2000	2000	2000	2000
	1985	1985	1985		2005	2005	2005	2005
	CDR	IMR	LEB		CBR	CDR	IMR	LEB
Algeria	10.4	88	60.5			5	37.4	71
Bahrain	4.5	22	68.9		19.62	2.9	11.2	74.8
Comoros	13.7	105.6	52.9			7.6	57.7	63
Djibouti	19	132.5	44.7			11.7	85	53.8
Egypt	12.4	107.5	56.5		25.74	6	39.5	69
Iraq	8.1	73.8	62.3		34.11	5.3	36.5	70.2
Jordan	8.9	54.1	63.7		27.77	4.4	23.2	71.3
Kuwait	3.2	21.8	71.3		18.56	1.7	9.7	76.9
Lebanon	8.8	44.4	65.9		17.62	7	25.2	71
Libya	10.9	47	62.2			4.1	20.9	72.7
Mauritania	17.5	119.6	47.4			35.8	72.7	56.5
Morocco	11.4	95.9	58.3			6	37.5	69.6
Oman	7.7	98.3	62.7		23.95	2.8	15.2	74.2
Palestine	9.1	50.6	64.4		39.05	4.2	20.9	72.4
Qatar	4.9	34	67		15.70	2.5	9.8	74.2
Saudi Arabia	7.8	58.4	62.6		26.51	3.8	22.4	71.6
Somalia	22	143.3	43			16.2	40.6	49.4
Sudan	15.9	110.2	49.1		34.52	34.5	73.3	56.7
Syria	8.2	59.3	62.5		29.52	3.6	18.6	73.1
Tunisia	7.6	59.3	64.9			5.8	22.5	73
UAE	4	31.6	68.6		16.51	1.6	10.3	76.7
Yemen	16.8	125.9	49.1		38.58	8.6	69.3	60.3

Source: UN Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision.

66. Following are some problems and challenges that hinder attempts to promote the development of health of young people in the Arab countries:

- Young people face health hazards arising from social conditions, beliefs and traditions, as well as from harmful personal behaviour, such as smoking, consumption of alcohol, drug taking and unhealthy overeating;
- Young people lack sufficient knowledge of the consequences of their actions and deeds;
- Young people lack a healthy environment, support systems to promote specific patterns of behaviour in daily life that enhance health and nutrition, and services that meet their special needs;
- Many Arab groups suffer from a severe lack of information and services to help them understand their own reproductive and sexual health, and protect them from early childbearing and unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and female genital mutilation, as well as other practices;
- Young people do not participate in setting the policies and programmes related to their health and that of society.

## **Participation in Public Life**

67. Youths who have the opportunity to participate in the life of their communities have a better chance of successful transition to adulthood. Such activities promote social integration and provide young people with the skills necessary for the labour market and for participation in national and community development. Nevertheless, there are still obstacles to full participation of youth in society.

68. In the Arab region, such participation is limited. A report on the participation of Arab youth in planning the Millennium Development Goals<sup>64</sup>, issued by the United Nations Development Program, showed that Arab youth are not represented in Arab legislatures or parliaments. Moreover, Arab parliaments do not have separate committees for youth issues; instead, these are dealt with by committees concerned with sport, culture or family affairs as part of their wider scope of work. The participation of youth in boards of directors is limited and often on the basis of appointment and selection. Older people control the process

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<sup>64</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), DESA, Regional Bureau for Arab States, *Arab Youth Strategizing for the MDGs*, 2006.

and mechanisms of youth participation in those societies. Young people are averse to political participation as they lack confidence in its procedures, results and the winners<sup>65</sup>.

69. In 1998, Qatar enacted Law No. 12. This law gave young people the right to stand for election and vote, regardless of gender. The University of Qatar, the Doha Youth Centre and the Arab Cultural Centre for Training and Consultation launched initiatives and training courses designed to raise awareness among young people and citizens of the importance of participation in political life, to strengthen their capabilities, and to support efforts of women to stand for election.<sup>66</sup>

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**Box:** “Place the young at the head of the insurgent masses; you do not know what strength is latent in those young bands, what magic influence the voices of the young have on the crowd; you will find in them a host of apostles for the new religion. But youth lives on movement, grows great in enthusiasm and faith. Consecrate them with a lofty mission; inflame them with emulation and praise; spread through their ranks the word of fire, the word of inspiration; speak to them of country, of glory, of power, of great memories<sup>67</sup> (Guiseppe Mazzini).”

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## Gender issues

### *Economic Participation*

70. The changing age structure of the MENA population is not the only demographic development that will affect the labour market in the next two decades. The recent drop in birth rates has also strained the labour market. This drop is linked to two corollary trends - increased female employment and expanded educational opportunities - that have sharpened the competition for employment, primarily because they

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<sup>65</sup> Ameen Fareed, A., *Arab youth in civil societies – opportunities and obstacles* (in Arabic), *Report of Arab youth and participation*, chapter 4.

<sup>66</sup> Al-Hamadi, National report on responding to the World Programme of Action for Youth, the experience of Qatar (in Arabic), Expert Group Meeting Reinforcing Social Equity: Integrating Youth into the Development Process, op. cit.

<sup>67</sup> From a speech of Italian nationalist Guiseppe Mazzini, quoted in Herbert Moller, “Youth as a Force in the Modern World,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 10. Issue 3, April 1968.

have fundamentally altered the role of women and education in society<sup>68</sup>. Women in MENA countries have become more likely to delay marriage and join the workforce.

71. While women's labour force participation<sup>69</sup> in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) increased from 28 to 32 percent between 2000 and 2006<sup>70</sup>, it remains the lowest in the world (world average is 58 percent). Men's labour force participation, on the other hand, is comparable to other regions. There are great variations within MENA in terms of women's participation in the economy and the extent to which it has changed. In the 2000-2006 time period, Iran and Libya saw the most substantial increases in their female labour participation rates. The actual rates may be substantially higher as many women work in the informal sector. The 32 percent of women ages 15-64, who are in the labour force make up 28 percent of the total labour force in MENA. Women's economic activity has increased significantly in each age group and the most in the 25-29 age group, from 35 to 40 percent between 2000 and 2005. Therefore, the labour force growth in the region comes primarily from the rise in women's labour force participation.

72. Arab women still face barriers to employment. Data on the vulnerable employed<sup>71</sup> is available for only few countries. It suggests that the share of women in this group has been steadily increasing. Among the major world regions, the largest gender gaps in unemployment rates among youth are found in MENA. There are several reasons for the failure of private firms in MENA to substitute for governments in employing young women, including: highly segregated labour markets along gender lines; employers unwilling to assume the added cost of maternity leave and child care; women's limited geographic mobility; and the limited growth of labour-intensive, export-oriented industries that might otherwise employ women<sup>72</sup>. Educational gains have not necessarily reflected on employment opportunities as these remain limited for young women. Labour force participation among women in the Arab region has long been the lowest in the world. Female unemployment increases with higher levels of education whereas male unemployment generally decreases with additional years of education.

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<sup>68</sup> Philippe Fargues; "Emerging Demographic Patterns across the Mediterranean and their Implications for Migration through 2030".

<sup>69</sup> The share of women ages 15-64 who are economically active, including both those employed and unemployed.

<sup>70</sup> World Bank Central Database (September 2008).

<sup>71</sup> The vulnerable employed are unpaid workers who contribute to a family business or are own-account workers, and therefore do not have safety net benefits, whether they work in the formal or informal sector.

<sup>72</sup> World Bank, MENA Development Report: Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004).

73. The share of women who are wage and salaried workers increased substantially in the past decade; an increase from 47 percent of female employment in 1996 to 56 percent in 2006<sup>73</sup>. The change is due mainly to heavy investments in education but also because many wage and salaried jobs are still found in the public sector where women find it easier to get jobs<sup>74</sup>.

74. Young males join the labour force at an early age as governmental laws allow them to be recruited in military and police colleges as officer cadets. Secondly, there are appropriate job opportunities for young males that allow them to enter the labour market, rather than to continue their university studies as females do. Thirdly, the proportion of male students who choose to pursue their studies abroad is high (Al-Hamadi, J. M., Al-Shehhi, A., Al-Marzouqi, N., Al-Thabahi, A. S. and Dowar, A.)<sup>75</sup>.

75. It is argued that with pressure on the job market due to the large numbers of new entrants, the impact may be negative on women's participation rates since men will be preferred when competing for the smaller number of jobs available. This may be particularly true in Arab societies which consider men as the main providers in the family. Young women continue to face barriers in many areas of employment. The participation of women in the labour force enhances social status and personal independence (Bloom, 2002).

76. The increased female economic activity is mainly due to higher levels of education and a rise in the average age for marriage. More women in the 30-plus age group remain in the labour market, hence, even after they are married and have children. This data suggests that one income no longer suffices for the changing needs of the family and that attitudes toward women's work outside the home are slowly changing.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> National report on responding to the World Programme of Action for Youth, the experience of the United Arab Emirates (in Arabic), Expert Group Meeting on Reinforcing Social Equity: Integrating Youth into the Development Process, op. cit.).

77. Women in MENA work predominantly in the public sector (mostly in the education and health sectors), as the private sector does not provide the same wage and nonwage benefits. Women work mainly in services – 49 percent of women’s employment (2006)<sup>76</sup>, compared to 39 percent in agriculture and 12 percent in industry<sup>77</sup>.

78. An issue that deserves more attention is “discouragement.” A person who is discouraged is inactive because he or she feels a job search would be a futile effort<sup>78</sup>. It is very likely that discouragement among women is higher than among men. MENA lacks data on discouragement.

79. Promoting women’s entrepreneurship is an effective way to address female unemployment and to help enhance women’s economic empowerment. A recent study shows that women account for only 13 percent of firm owners in MENA, compared 24 percent in Europe. Women-owned firms are more likely to hire women.

### ***Education***

80. MENA’s investment in female education in the past few decades has been impressive. Only a few countries in the region still have alarmingly low rates of female literacy. Most countries have closed or nearly closed the gender gap on youth literacy<sup>79</sup>. The gender gap in primary and secondary education has closed or is closing in most countries of the region<sup>80</sup>. Poverty, early marriage, lack of female teachers and girls’ schools and security are the major impediments.<sup>81</sup>

81. The OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), a standardized assessment administered to 15-year-olds, was conducted in three MENA countries in 2006 and showed that girls in MENA perform better than boys in MENA in the same age group on the different tests.

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<sup>76</sup> ILO, Global Employment Trends for Women (March 2007). ILO’s definition of MENA includes Sudan but excludes Djibouti.

<sup>77</sup> ILO, Global Employment Trends for Women (March 2007). ILO’s definition of MENA includes Sudan but excludes Djibouti.

<sup>78</sup> ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth (2006).

<sup>79</sup> World Bank Edstats (September 2008) and UNESCO Education for All Report (2003/4).

<sup>80</sup> World Bank Central Database (September 2008). The ratio of young literate females to males is 0.65 in Yemen and 0.75 in Morocco.

<sup>81</sup> World Bank Central Database and Edstats (September 2008).

82. Women's performance is impressive at the tertiary education level (2005). In Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and West Bank and Gaza, female students outnumber male students by a significant margin<sup>82</sup>. Some countries have recently taken steps to curb the growing female tertiary enrollment. It should be noted that women continue to enroll in fields that are traditionally considered to be "appropriate for women." These include education, humanities, and arts.

83. There are vast differences in access to education among women from different socioeconomic groups – with female-headed households being particularly vulnerable – and between urban and rural women<sup>83</sup>. There is a shortage of female teachers, especially in rural areas, which adversely affects girls' school attendance. Wide disparities in the number of female teachers exist across the MENA region.

### ***Health***

84. The progress in women's access to health care during the 1990s has continued after 2000. The region experienced declines in the fertility rate. Adolescent (women ages 15–19) fertility in MENA decreased as well. The drastic decline in the fertility rate was mainly the result of increased female education, higher average age of marriage, and availability of family planning policies.

85. The region has seen significant changes in marriage patterns. Women with less education marry earlier, have more children, and thus, reinforce the cycle of poverty. The contraceptive prevalence rate (percent of women ages 15-49 using contraceptives) has increased in all MENA countries.

86. The maternal mortality rate in MENA is higher than in other middle-income regions. Maternal and infant deaths are sometimes caused by conflict in the region. There is a wide urban-rural gap in women's access to health services. Female circumcision remains high in Djibouti, Egypt, and in Yemen, but not in the rest of MENA although the practice is illegal in both Djibouti and Egypt. Young women may also be more at risk for sexually transmitted infections. This may partly be due to the little information on sexuality and reproductive health<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> World Bank, *The Road Not Traveled: Education Reform in the Middle East and North Africa* (2008).

<sup>83</sup> 28 A recent World Bank assessment for the Djibouti PRSP 2004–6.

<sup>84</sup> Population Reference Bureau, *Young People's Sexual and Reproductive Health in the MENA* (2007).



87. Violence against women, including honor killings persists. Honor killings have not been considered homicide and therefore not punished as such. Significantly, in May 2008, Jordan's courts sentenced a man to 10 years in prison for killing his sister. This may suggest a stronger determination on the part of the authorities to reduce that crime. There is also a high prevalence of domestic violence and sexual harassment<sup>85</sup>.

### ***Public Participation and Representation***

88. The region has witnessed some encouraging developments in the area of women's public participation and representation. The regional average is still the lowest in the world. Some countries, mainly through the use of quotas and appointments, have been able to increase female representation in parliament.

89. Women candidates are generally more successful in local and municipal elections. The trend of appointing women as heads of only selected ministries (such as Education, Health, Women's Affairs, and Environment) has not changed. Female representation in the judiciary has grown dramatically.

90. Despite these overall positive developments, MENA still lags behind other regions in terms of women's public participation and representation. The progress in political representation will be slow if it is not accompanied by quotas and appointments. In MENA, as in most parts of the world, women political candidates face a steeper up-hill battle in national and local elections.

91. The feminization of poverty in the Arab region is reflected in the increasing number of poor households headed by women and a lack of adequate social welfare systems. Gender inequality contributes to making women vulnerable to poverty. Care work is neither valued as a contribution to development, nor distributed equally, and limits the opportunities available to women to pursue education and engage in income-generating employment. Women also face discrimination in property and inheritance rights.

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<sup>85</sup> Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights Website.

## Recommendations

92. The demographic transitions in the region, resulting from the low proportion of children (0-14 years) and the high proportion of people of working age (15-64 years) and the relative stability of the proportion of the elderly (65 years and above) may open a demographic window for countries to benefit from increased savings and investment, and in the long term, from improvement in the quality of life of the population. The growth in the number of young people suffering from unemployment and social exclusion within some segments of the population may lead young people to aspire to change, sometimes by non-peaceful methods, leading to instability.

93. ESCWA recommends that member countries implement policies and plans designed to accelerate the economic, social and political integration of youth.<sup>86</sup> The most important benefit of a national youth policy is that it provides a framework within which governmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector can work on youth issues. It is also recommended to ensure consistency between the national youth policy and sectoral policies (education, employment and health), and to integrate the national youth policy into the overall national development plans<sup>87</sup>.

94. In accordance with the methodology adopted for planning for youth, ESCWA member countries may be divided into countries having a national policy for youth (Jordan and Bahrain), countries working on formulating a national policy for youth (Syria) and countries still dealing with youth issues within sectoral plans and national development plans.

The formulation of a special youth policy entails the following:

- a) Formulation of a specific policy for youth: In particular, policies should target young people, following trends of youth unemployment in relation to general unemployment rates. Youth now have their own set of goals and targets.
- b) Establishment of a specific Government institution for young people: Preferably in the form of a higher council for young people that acts as a coordinator among various departments, sectoral ministries, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

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<sup>86</sup> ESCWA, op. cit

<sup>87</sup> United Nations, *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, op. cit., p. 31.

c) Preparation of specific surveys of youth issues: Surveys need to be conducted, with the data disaggregated, inter alia, by gender, age (adolescents 15-19 years, young adults 20-24 years, due to differences in abilities, needs, and challenges between the two subgroups), and by place of residence (rural or urban).

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**Box:** I was once told that the only way to predict the future is to have power to shape the future. Well, here in the Arab world, we have the power. The power is our youth. We have been blessed with the biggest youth population in the world; 60 percent of our region is under the age of thirty. If we could channel their energy... if we could harness their potential... we could change the fortunes of our region. With almost one quarter of our young people unemployed and losing hope every day, creating opportunity has never been so urgent. But right now, we are letting them down.

We are letting them down in ill-equipped classrooms with untrained teachers; we are letting them down with outmoded curriculums already obsolete in the modern marketplace; we are letting them down when they seek our advice and practical measures; and we are letting them down when we fail to expose them, at an early age, to the entrepreneurial spirit and potential of the private sector. From government to education providers to employers to civil society and to youth themselves, shaping our future is everyone's responsibility. If we can provide quality education that leads to lasting employment, we will have done our part in shaping the future of the Arab world. No one said it would be easy, but it is a regional imperative<sup>88</sup>.  
**(Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan)**

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<sup>88</sup> Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan.

## Conclusion

95. MENA countries have diverse economies and their populations are at different stages of the transition from high to low fertility. Thus, their governments may choose different approaches to improve educational and job opportunities for youth. However, none can succeed in strengthening human capacity among youth without fundamental reforms and greater engagement of civil society. While learning and benefiting from other countries' experiences, every MENA government needs to map its pathway to reform in ways that are tailored to its country-specific conditions and desired outcomes.

96. As the population is growing rapidly and economies are changing, the existing safety nets are increasingly becoming outdated and stretched beyond their capacity. Reforms are needed to balance the need for labour market flexibility and new job creation with social protection and income security for workers. MENA's labour market prospects largely depend on how successfully its governments can develop new social contracts for the 21st century. The extent to which this large group of young people will become healthy and productive members of their societies depends on how well governments and civil societies invest in social, economic, and political institutions that meet the current needs of young people.

97. Ages 15 to 24 represent a period in life when one makes the transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood—a period filled with enthusiasm, dreams, and ambitions. It is also a period during which a number of social, economic, biological, and demographic events occur that set the stage for adult life, such as education, marriage, and entrance into the job market. As the average years of education increases and marriage is delayed, the transition to adulthood extends over a longer period of time, making adolescence an increasingly important stage for policy attention.

98. Despite the successive democratization waves in the world, especially since the end of the Cold War, the Arab world did not fall into step. Instead, the region witnessed the rise of Islamism as a major actor, political violence and finally the perpetuation of existing regimes. Nevertheless, the sheer courage and willpower of the 2011 Arab uprisings will have far reaching effects for a long time to come, particularly on their countries' relations with the West<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup> Benantar, Abdennour (2011) "Arab Democratic Uprisings: Domestic, Regional and Global Implications," *New Global Studies*: Vol. 5: Iss. 1, Article 5.

99. The social and political turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa has given renewed urgency to the need to counter chronic joblessness, particularly among young people. Governments can implement a number of immediate measures to step up job creation and enhance the employability of their young populations<sup>90</sup>. Policymakers can provide tax incentives or credit guarantees to viable labour-intensive small- and medium-sized enterprises. Another option is to introduce well-designed youth-oriented training programs and to work with Industries to assess demand for skills and to provide corresponding tailored training programs for young people. In this context, reforming university admissions policies to test a broad range of skills – writing, critical thinking, and problem solving – would give incentives for students at the primary and secondary levels to acquire such skills.

100. The region also suffers from overly rigid labour market regulations. Policy should therefore aim at relaxing rigid labour market regulations, while at the same time preserving the right to collective bargaining and providing effective social protection, including unemployment insurance, for workers.

101. The following are some suggestions of what MENA region need to consider for managing the key challenges to speed up the process of strengthening competitiveness in the areas, which would contribute significantly in reducing unemployment, and secure long term stability and prosperity. The main challenge is to close the gap between education and labour market needs:

- People: They are often ahead of governments. Governments can therefore help, but must listen to their people.
- Making schools and universities curricula more relevant to the needs of the local and regional labour market in the coming decade.
- Engage more closely with educational institutions to ensure a strengthening of skills in the region, particularly for youths and for women, and better matching of those skills to enable governments, business, and other stakeholders to effectively foster sustainable economic development in the MENA region.
- Employment for the youth is a real problem already for the immediate future, as not keeping those youngsters busy will lead to radicalizations and social un-rest.

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<sup>90</sup> Ahmed, Masood; “Creating Jobs in the Middle East and North Africa”; IMF, Published in *Asharq Al Awsat*, May 20, 2011.

- Develop the technologies and the energy supply for the growing population. This needs radical changes in economic thinking and managing the resources on our earth<sup>91</sup>.
- Recognize the importance of enhancing the competitiveness and adaptability of the labour market through labour policies to improve entry and re-entry into the labour market for men and women, thus reducing unemployment.
- Improving healthcare and education and training services, as well as facilitating the movement of labour.
- Children need to have adequate support for their health needs in order to ensure they maximize their opportunities. Ensure that infants receive effective medical care. As the baby-boom generation enters the workforce, a proportion of the prosperity they generate will have to be channeled back into policies that improve their health.
- The health of women is critical for two main reasons. Women's access to reproductive health services is important for achieving desired family sizes. Women are also essential conduits of knowledge about health: A healthier woman will likely improve the health of her family.
- Educating & empowering women: This has the largest influence and is a phenomenon seen in all societies all over the world. Encourage women to join the labour force, and promote women entrepreneurship.
- Remove gender-related obstacles, and facilitate women's access to management and technical training and access to finance.
- Ageing populations: Sooner or later this will become another challenge in the region. The unsolved but critical issue in this respect is: „Will we get rich before we get old?“ and the answer for many countries is most likely „No“, though nobody wanted to admit this.
- Empower private business to become the engine of growth and job creation by effective reforms.

102. Policies to improve health and social protection can prove a powerful weapon against social exclusion, which lessens or eliminates the contribution that certain groups make to the development of a society and to its positive demographic transition. Reforms should improve business performance and need to be rooted in both political and economic ground to transform MENA's unemployment challenges into opportunities for the young generations.

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<sup>91</sup> Proceedings Conference Zurich November 2010 “Upcoming demographic changes in Islamic countries”.

103. Nations undergoing the demographic transition have an opportunity to capitalize on the demographic dividend offered by the maturing of formerly young populations. The demographic dividend is not, however, automatic. Given the right kind of policy environment, this demographic dividend can help to produce a sustained period of economic growth. The critical policy areas include public health, family planning, education and economic policies that promote labour-market flexibility, openness to trade, and savings<sup>92</sup>.

*“Perhaps the greatest single issue facing the economies of the MENA region is the challenge of equipping its people with good jobs”*  
*(Jennifer Keller and Mustafa Nabli (World Bank))*

*“Youth are the tools of change and we must reap the benefits of their contributions.”*  
*(Queen Rania of Jordan)*

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<sup>92</sup> Bloom, David, Canning, David and Sevilla, Jaypee; “The Demographic Dividend: A New Perspective on the Economic Consequences of Population Change”; Population matters: A RAND Program of Policy-Relevant Research Communication, 2003.

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