



## ARAB HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2005

*"The Arab Human Development Reports have become a strategic blueprint for UNDP programming in the Arab States region, informing development projects that are rooted in the region's priorities, capacities, and objectives."*

*Amat Al Alim Alsoswa, Regional Director, UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States*

### The AHDR Series: Impact on the Ground

The first Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) 2002, *Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*, defined three deficits in knowledge, freedom, and women's empowerment impeding the human development of the Arab region. The AHDR series has become a milestone in the broader debate over the development reform agenda in the Arab region, with AHDR recommendations increasingly reflected in development programming at the national and regional levels.

To further encourage the development of AHDR-informed programming at the national-level, an AHDR Trust Fund was established in 2003 with contributions from Finland and the United Kingdom. At Present, national AHDR projects are carried out in Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain, Somalia, Syria and Morocco.

## I. KNOWLEDGE

*"Without a strong and growing contemporary knowledge base of their own, Arab countries will be absorbed into the international knowledge society as passive consumers of other countries' proprietary knowledge, technology and services."*

*Arab Human Development Report 2003*

### A. Regional initiatives to build knowledge societies

The AHDR series identified knowledge as a cornerstone of human development: a means of expanding people's capabilities and a tool for overcoming human poverty. Towards this goal, UNDP has launched a number of regional programmes to promote information and communication technology for development (ICTD), enhance educational quality assurance at the primary, secondary and higher education levels, and support longer-term capacity building in the region through the establishment of regional mechanisms.

**Information & Communication Technology for Development in the Arab Region (ICTDAR)**, is a regional programme based in Cairo that assists Arab States to harness information and communication technology in the fight against poverty and the improvement of their public administration performance and private sector expansion. Established in 2003, ICTDAR promotes advocacy and awareness-raising, assists its partners with campaign development and participation, and helps advance capacity development, pro-poor growth and employment generation. Specific projects include:

- ❖ **Ajialcom:** In partnership with Microsoft, ICTDAR has trained more than 10,000 youth in ICT, and established 60 Access Centres in Morocco, Egypt, Algeria and Yemen, while upgrading 500 additional Centers across the region.
- ❖ **MASHROATI:** Also in partnership with Microsoft, ICTDAR set up a Center of Excellence in Morocco, which provides technical training, consulting services, and knowledge sharing platforms to small and medium enterprises. The initiative will soon be replicated in Syria and Somalia.
- ❖ **WRACTI:** In partnership with Microsoft and the European Union, **WRCATI** is a women's empowerment initiative that promotes ICT as a tool to educate women on their rights, and the rights of their children. In Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia, 3000 CD ROMS containing legal information on women's rights and entitlements have been distributed, and more than 300 persons have been trained on the use of ICT and the content of the CD ROMS.
- ❖ **The Regional E-Government Institute in the Arab Region (REGI):** To be launched in Amman, Jordan in 2007, REGI will provide policy-relevant research and advice on the application of e-government and e-governance in the Arab States region.

**Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)** is a global methodology developed for comparative assessments of education performance in math and science at the primary and secondary levels. Upon completion of more than 50 individualized review reports, TIMSS surveys have led to extensive educational reforms in curriculum, evaluation, teaching and assessment standards in numerous Arab states. Yemen's participation for example, resulted in the standardization of scoring methodology, and a re-examination of the style and content of tests. Egypt similarly introduced TIMSS style testing formats, while adopting new teaching methodologies focusing on enhanced classroom interaction between students and teachers. To ensure sustainability, TIMSS has produced the first Arab cohort of experienced and qualified quality assurance reviewers training over 60 representatives in all stages of the review process.

**Enhancement of Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning in Arab Universities** is a UNDP regional programme that assists public and private Arab universities to adopt international instruments of quality assurance through the evaluation of programmes, the assessment of student performance, and the establishment of comparable statistical databases of participating universities. During the first cycle (2002-2003), computer science programmes were evaluated at 15 participating universities in 11 countries. During the second cycle (2003-2004), business administration programmes were evaluated at 16 universities in 11 countries. Twenty four universities from 13 Arab countries are now participating in the third cycle of the programme focused on the field of education. With combined Finnish and German partnership and co-sponsorship, UNDP established the first Arab Regional Quality Assurance Agency (ARQAA) to develop and implement common methods and standards of quality assurance.

## **B. Country level initiatives**

### **Bahrain: *Building a knowledge society***

Building on national economic, labor and education reforms, UNDP has provided the Government with policy recommendations and alternative models for economic growth and productivity in the Kingdom. A UNDP study surveyed relevant stakeholders, including representatives of the private and public sector, policy makers, research centers, and civil society, as well as experts on knowledge-based societies.

### **Egypt: *Aligning national and regional higher education strategies***

Utilizing research methodologies and technical from the UNDP Higher Education Project, UNDP's Country Office in Egypt has begun assisting the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education with the establishment of a

research management unit at the national level, and conduct socio-economic surveys of various governorates to ensure alignment between higher education strategies and sub-regional needs.

**Jordan: *Assessment of gaps between knowledge skills and labour market demands***

UNDP provided the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research with recommendations on bridging the gaps between knowledge skills acquired through higher education training and labour market demands. Recommendations called for improving the current accreditation system for universities, and strengthening on-the-job training mechanisms and Information Technology and Business Administration degrees.

**Saudi Arabia: *Modernizing the public sector***

In partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNDP has established an e-Visa programme to improve Foreign Ministry's ability to process visas and coordinate issuance procedures for the five to six million pilgrims traveling annually to Saudi Arabia to participate in the Hajj ceremony. UNDP and Hewlett-Packard (HP) have documented the implementation of e-Visa programmes in Armenia and Saudi Arabia in a new publication, "Virtual Consulate Primer: How to design and implement an e-Visa programme."

**Syria: *Upgrading Business Administration Programs in Syrian universities***

In response to the outcomes of the evaluation of the quality of Business Administration programs at Aleppo University, as identified by UNDP/RBAS's regional project "Enhancement of Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning at Arab Universities," UNDP Syria in partnership with the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education, is addressing some of the problems and weaknesses outlined in the Report. A pilot project seeks, with the technical assistance and support of the regional Higher Education project, to develop a detailed model for upgrading Business Administration Programs in Syrian universities.

**Yemen: *Strengthening Human Rights Knowledge***

UNDP conducted a baseline survey to provide an over-all assessment of the status of Human Rights education in seven public universities and three private universities. A follow-up committee, chaired by UNESCO, has been delegated the task of rolling out the survey's recommendations for the inclusion of human rights in the curricula of learning institutions. The country's first Human Rights Information Centre was inaugurated in Sana'a in January 2006, followed by the opening of a second Centre in Aden in April 2006. The first issue of the Yemen Journal of Human Rights was published in March 2006, alongside the launch of a virtual human rights library in an effort to enhance skills in HR research and communication.

## II. GOVERNANCE

*"Governance in Arab countries is undergoing a process of reform. We hope that these Reports will help to plant the seeds of good governance in the region by inspiring a society-wide process of creative thinking, innovation and collective work in which all dynamic societal forces in Arab countries will take part."*  
*Arab Human Development Report 2004*

### A. Regional initiatives to promote Good Governance

**The Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR)** works to advance four pillars of good governance practice: (1) Rule of Law; (2) Transparency and Accountability; (3) Participation; and (4) Human Rights. POGAR's activities range from capacity building and knowledge generation to policy advice and dialogue, creating strategic partnerships among government officials, civil society organizations, academics and donor agencies. In response to AHDR 2002, POGAR constructed comprehensive legal databases in Arabic (Egypt, Iraq, Arab banking laws); translated, commissioned and published several studies on governance-

related issues; and launched its own website ([www.undp-pogar.org](http://www.undp-pogar.org)), which provides resources on governance reform in Arab countries.

Other POGAR activities include:

- **Project on the Modernization of the Public Prosecution Offices:** Modernized public prosecution offices in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Yemen.
- **Elections and Electoral Processes:** Assessed latest electoral experiences in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine.
- **Gender and Citizenship Initiative:** Worked in partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to build knowledge on women's citizenship rights in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen and the occupied Palestinian territory.
- **Good Governance for Development:** Worked in partnership with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to strengthen public governance reform.

## **B. Country level initiatives to promote good governance**

### **Lebanon: Towards a National Dialogue on Corruption**

UNDP produced a survey of anti-corruption initiatives in Lebanon mapping out efforts over the past decade to combat corruption. A subsequent Advisory Group was formed representing various stakeholders including public and private sectors, NGOs, parliamentarians and judges, media, and academics in order to assist in developing an action plan. The project is implemented in partnership with Transparency International's local chapter, La Fassad.

### **Occupied Palestinian territory (OPT): Supporting free and fair elections**

UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP) played a leading role in the establishment of the Central Elections Commission, an independent electoral entity responsible for the administration and supervision of Palestinian municipal, legislative and presidential elections. PAPP has since provided extensive technical support and guidance, including selecting, funding and facilitating the work of election monitors.

### **Sudan: Security Sector Reform and the Rule of Law**

In partnership with the International Rescue Committee and the People's Legal Aid Centre (PLACE), UNDP has trained over 1500 law-enforcement, judiciary and security officials on basic human rights and their obligations to protect affected populations with the objective of building confidence between IDP (internationally displaced) communities and local authorities.

## **III. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**

*"This Report... calls for the temporary adoption of the principle of affirmative action or positive discrimination in expanding the participation of women to all fields of human activity in every Arab society according to the particular circumstances of each."*

*Arab Human Development Report (2005)*

### **A. Regional initiatives to advance women's empowerment**

**Center for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR)** - Based in Tunis, CAWTAR is an independent regional institution that promotes gender equality in the Arab World through research, training, networking and advocacy. Originally supported as a joint project of UNDP, AGFUND, and later the World Bank, CAWTAR has produced *Arab Women Development Reports* since 2001. The AWDRs are a series of thematic periodical reports whose primary objective is to address the knowledge gap in gender-related research in the Arab region.

**HIV/AIDS Regional Programme in the Arab States (HARPAS)** – Based in Cairo, HARPAS works to heighten awareness and to build commitment and leadership in the regional response to HIV/AIDS. In May 2006, HARPAS launched a Regional Women Religious Leaders Forum in Cairo, Egypt that culminated in the Tripoli Declaration. The Declaration commits religious communities to advocate for an end to discrimination, and to protect women and children infected, and affected, by the HIV virus.

## **B. Country level initiatives to advance women's empowerment**

### ***Algeria: Strengthening women's political participation***

An International Forum of Women Parliamentarians, organized jointly by the Algerian Parliament, UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union was held in June 2006. The Forum brought together women MPs from Algeria, Belgium, Egypt, France, Jordan, Morocco, Spain and Tunisia, to discuss the role of women in politics and ways and means of strengthening women's involvement in political life.

### ***Bahrain: Supporting the electoral campaigns of woman candidates***

UNDP Bahrain is technically and financially supporting the electoral campaigns of 23 female candidates in the November 2006 parliamentary and municipal elections. In accordance with article four of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), UNDP has conducted a series of training and capacity building workshops.

### ***Djibouti: Gender as a key to the Millennium Development Goals***

In preparation for Djibouti's first national 2005 human development report (NHDRS) exclusively dedicated to Gender as a key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, UNDP launched a "Caravan on Human Development," which traveled to rural villages to introduce the theme of the forthcoming NHDR. Feedback from communities enabled the report to reflect local concerns, while students were encouraged to enter a drawing competition for the Report's cover illustration.

### ***Iraq: Advancing the National Strategy for the Advancement of Iraqi Women***

UNDP plays an instrumental role in the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Iraqi Women, for which an initial assessment of the situation of Iraqi women was conducted in 2003. The first national symposium of Iraqi women, organized by Iraq's Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) in close collaboration with UNIFEM, was convened in 2004. More than 500 participants took part in discussions over the draft National Strategy, currently in development.

### ***Kuwait: Public Awareness of women's and youth's political participation***

In cooperation with civil society organizations, UNDP launched public awareness and media campaigns in support of women's political participation in their first parliamentary elections. UNDP also collaborated with the Kuwait Transparency Society and the Kuwait Youth Forum to publish and distribute a Youth Guide to the elections, to encourage the latter's political participation.

### ***Morocco: Promotion of women's entrepreneurial activities in Morocco***

In close partnership with UNIFEM, UNDP established regional investment centres to promote women's economic empowerment and address the needs of women.

### ***Somalia: Enhancing Women's Leadership and Governance***

In collaboration with UNIFEM, "Enhancing Women's Leadership and Governance" supports local women's organizations and women's ministries to mainstream gender and lobby for equal representation in governance

institutions. UNDP also works with three political parties in Somaliland to advocate for a quota system in preparation for the next elections.

***Yemen: Support to the National Committee for the Advancement of Women***

In close consultation with the Ministry of Human Rights and local NGOs, UNDP has produced user-friendly legal information in textual and audio-visual formats, in Arabic, to raise women's awareness of their basic rights and entitlements. Legal information has been made available on the worldwide web as well distributed through CD-ROMs, telephone hot lines, and accessible at women support centers in rural and urban areas.