16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

SDG 16

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

A. Introduction

Systemic governance challenges and the lack of right-based social contracts stymie the implementation of SDG 16 "Peace, justice and strong institutions" in the Arab region. Public spending deficits compound and are exacerbated by the low responsiveness, transparency, accountability and efficiency of national institutions. Such weaknesses curtail the ability of Governments to design and enforce robust policies for achieving sustainable development, directly impacting all SDGs.

The performance of audit institutions varies significantly within the region, while the role of parliaments in budgetary oversight is likewise quite diverse. Access to information by the public, press and researchers is typically constrained. The independence of the judiciary and the media is under question. Participation in decision-making remains limited and political representation is often far from inclusive. All these factors undercut human rights and hinder the reduction of inequality.

Seven countries are in conflict, impacting the potential for regional integration and cooperation. Conflicts give rise to forced migration and increase poverty, and lead to drastic reductions in living standards and reversals of socioeconomic progress. The collapse, fragmentation and weaknesses of State institutions in countries in conflict have a long-term negative impact on peace, security and development, undermining the potential for a vibrant civil society to facilitate reconciliation.[1] The destruction of infrastructure and regression in development gains have ripple effects across generations, further impeding progress on the SDGs.

The Arab region has the greatest democratic governance challenges worldwide, including high rates of corruption that erode trust in governments.

Restoring trust in institutions and the rule of law and strengthening their effectiveness in securing justice and sustainable development for all are critical for the region to reduce and prevent violence, involve citizens and civil society in decision-making, and build peaceful societies through inclusive, rights-based social contracts.

Source: ESCWA, 2022d.

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What the data say

The Arab region is the least peaceful in the world;[2] **38 per cent of the population (173 million people) lives in conflict-affected areas.[3] More than 65 million people need humanitarian assistance in seven countries in conflict.[4]**

Fatalities have notably fallen in the region over the past two years, from the 2014 peak of conflict to the levels of 2010, the baseline. **The number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 inhabitants** increased from 5.4 in 2010 to 7.0 in 2021, compared to 5.8 on average at global level. Yet 2022 saw a significant 65 per cent decrease in **deaths due to conflicts (battle-related deaths).** These fell to slightly over 10,000 from around 30,000 in 2021. The impacts of conflict and resulting deaths have been largely concentrated in **Iraq, Somalia,** the **Sudan,** the **Syrian Arab Republic** and **Yemen**. The war in Gaza, **State of Palestine**, has reversed the decline, however, with about 30,000 Palestinians killed after more than four months of the conflict that erupted on 7 October 2023. (as of 28 February 2024).

Representing only 5.8 per cent of the world's population, **the region is the origin of about 14.8 million refugees. It hosted 9.4 million refugees under the mandates of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in 2023.** These figures are about 40.5 per cent and 25.4 per cent of all refugees worldwide, respectively. More than 6.5 million refugees have come from the Syrian Arab Republic. The region has around **19.4 million internally displaced persons**.[5]

Of 163 countries ranked by the **2023 Global Peace Index**,[6] including 21 in the Arab region, only two and four Arab countries fell in the first and second quantiles, respectively, denoting relatively high levels of peace: **Qatar** with a rank of 21, **Kuwait** at 35, **Oman** at 48, **Jordan** at 62, the **United Arab Emirates** at 75 and **Tunisia** at 81.[7] Out of the 10 least peaceful places worldwide, 5 were Arab countries, namely, **Iraq, Somalia,** the **Sudan,** the **Syrian Arab Republic** and **Yemen.**

Measuring progress on SDG 16 based on the SDG data framework is not possible in the Arab region due to extensive data gaps. Given the enabling role that SDG 16 plays in all SDGs, the political commitment of Governments to producing and disseminating SDG 16 data will be critical for progress as a whole.

Limited data reflect institutional weaknesses. The production of quality and accessible data could advance in part through nurturing a culture of monitoring and evaluation across State institutions (see the chapter on SDG 17).

For an up-to-date view of SDG 16 data at the national and regional levels and an analysis of data availability, please visit the ESCWA Arab SDG Monitor.

On the road to 2030 – suggested policy approaches to accelerate progress on SDG 16

- Strengthen accountability mechanisms and the capacities of public servants to design and implement evidence-based policies and deliver public services for all.

- Uphold the rule of law to ensure equal rights for all, and guarantee the separation of powers so that judicial and legislative institutions function independently. This entails parliamentary oversight and mechanisms for transparency, accountability and responsiveness to the needs of citizens, and the implementation of anti-corruption measures and monitoring mechanisms.

- Expand civic space, encourage a vibrant civic culture and engage with civil society organizations so that citizens can freely express their opinions, participate in decision-making processes and form associations, fostering public participation and advocacy.

- Promote open government, strengthen information-sharing and open data, operationalize access to information laws through effective and monitored policies and mechanisms, and enhance legal and regulatory environments on digital technologies, contributing positively to governance and institutional effectiveness while addressing potential risks.

- Facilitate the work of national and regional human rights institutions and the promotion of human rights principles across educational systems and media institutions.

- Reduce and prevent violence through comprehensive strategies to stop all forms of violence, including gender-based violence. This process comprises legal reforms and enforcement, support services for victims and awareness campaigns.

- De-escalate conflict and boost peacebuilding through efforts to identify and address the root causes of conflict, and enhance regional dialogue and cooperation to achieve SDG 16. Peacebuilding initiatives should integrate humanitarian and development approaches, fostering dialogue, reconciliation and social cohesion.

- Ensure the full realization of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, promoting peace and stability in the region. This entails diplomatic efforts and international cooperation to address the longstanding occupation of the **State of Palestine** in full compliance with international law.
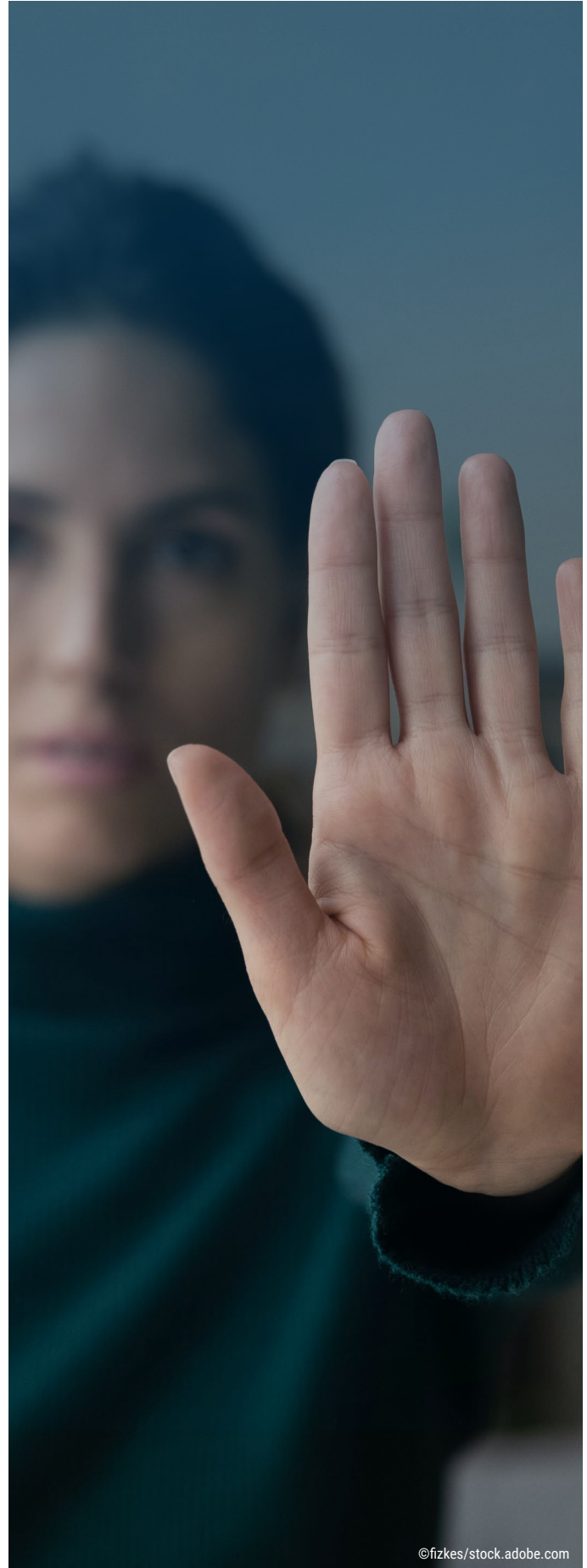
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B. The policy landscape for SDG 16

SDG 16 promotes peaceful and just societies with representative decision-making processes, the empowerment of all stakeholders, and respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights. Participatory decision-making is critical for leaving no one behind. Accountability and transparency ensure that sustainable development improves the lives of people at large.

The policy landscape for SDG 16 is marked by policy gaps. This chapter focuses on select policy areas with common trends and ways forward.

1. Ending armed conflicts through violence reduction and prevention

◆ **Conflict-related risk in the region has risen in the past decade. As of 2021, it is more vulnerable and less resilient to conflict than in 2010.** The region also saw a marked deterioration in terms of economic risks, with countries more vulnerable to shocks than in the previous decade, as well as in climate risks amid worsening natural disasters. It improved only on social risks between 2010 and 2021, given expanding social safety nets and decreasing infant mortality rates.

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Table 16.1
Evolution of risk in the Arab region

Risk domain	Component	2010	2015	2021	2021 compared to 2010	
Conflict risk	Vulnerability	0.29	0.41	0.32	10%	Deteriorated
	Resilience	0.48	0.44	0.43	-11%	Deteriorated
Climate hazard risk	Vulnerability	0.11	0.16	0.18	59%	Deteriorated
	Resilience	0.30	0.35	0.47	56%	Improved
Natural resource risk	Vulnerability	0.47	0.49	0.49	5%	Deteriorated
	Resilience	0.39	0.39	0.38	-4%	Deteriorated
Economic risk	Vulnerability	0.39	0.40	0.43	9%	Deteriorated
	Resilience	0.65	0.59	0.55	-15%	Deteriorated
Social risk	Vulnerability	0.37	0.34	0.33	-9%	Improved
	Resilience	0.50	0.53	0.51	4%	Improved
Institutional risk	Vulnerability	0.66	0.69	0.70	7%	Deteriorated
	Resilience	0.43	0.41	0.40	-8%	Deteriorated

Source: ESCWA, Arab Risk Monitor: assessing vulnerability and resilience in the region, 2023. Data for a list of 43 indicators for 22 Arab countries were scaled between 0 and 1.

◆ **Action-oriented, technically-informed operationalization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in countries experiencing conflict or fragility is limited.** The nexus represents a critical framework to address complex crises. Linking humanitarian, development and peace efforts can reduce service delivery gaps and duplications while better tackling the root causes of critical situations.[8] Most work on the nexus has involved the multilateral system and international organizations. National institutions have made limited efforts to mainstream it. A complicating factor has been the tendency, over the last few years, to devote a much larger share of aid to crisis responses (humanitarian aid) as opposed to development assistance (development aid), limiting resources to tackle the roots of crises.

Figure 16.1
Key conflict trends in the Arab region

Battle-related deaths, thousands

Forcibly displaced, millions — Refugees — Internally displaced persons

People in need of humanitarian assistance, millions
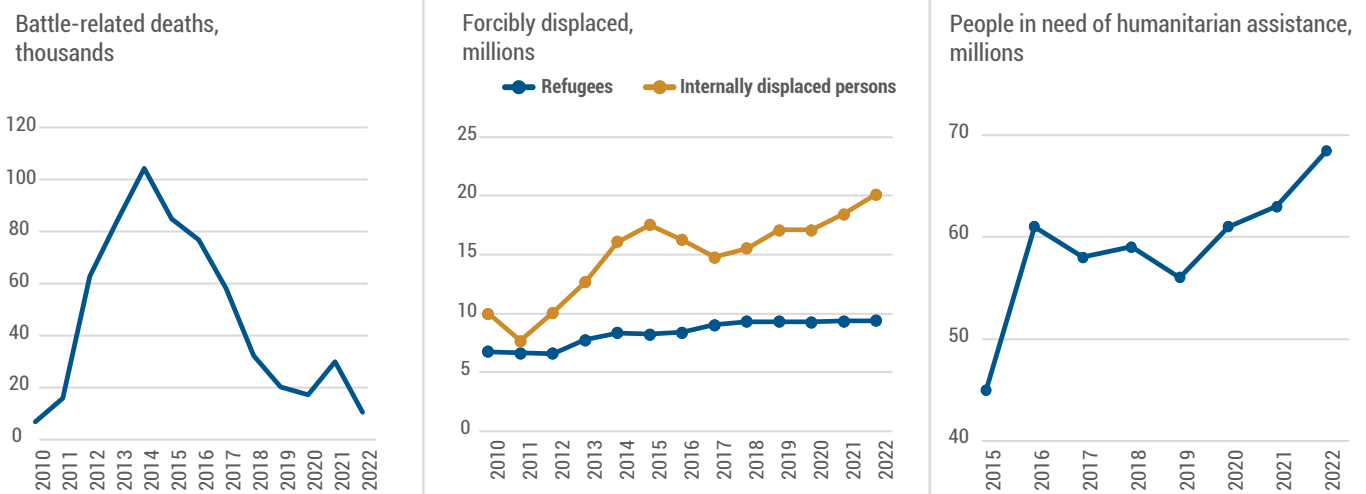
Source: Data retrieved from UCDP Georeferenced dataset (GED), version 23.1 (left); data retrieved from UNHCR Refugee Data Finder and data on internally displaced persons retrieved from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) (center); data retrieved from OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview (right). The figure on the right includes data for Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, the State of Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

Figure 16.2
Gross aid trends to countries classified as fragile by the OECD, broken down by humanitarian, development and peace functions (Millions of dollars)

— Humanitarian — Development — Peace
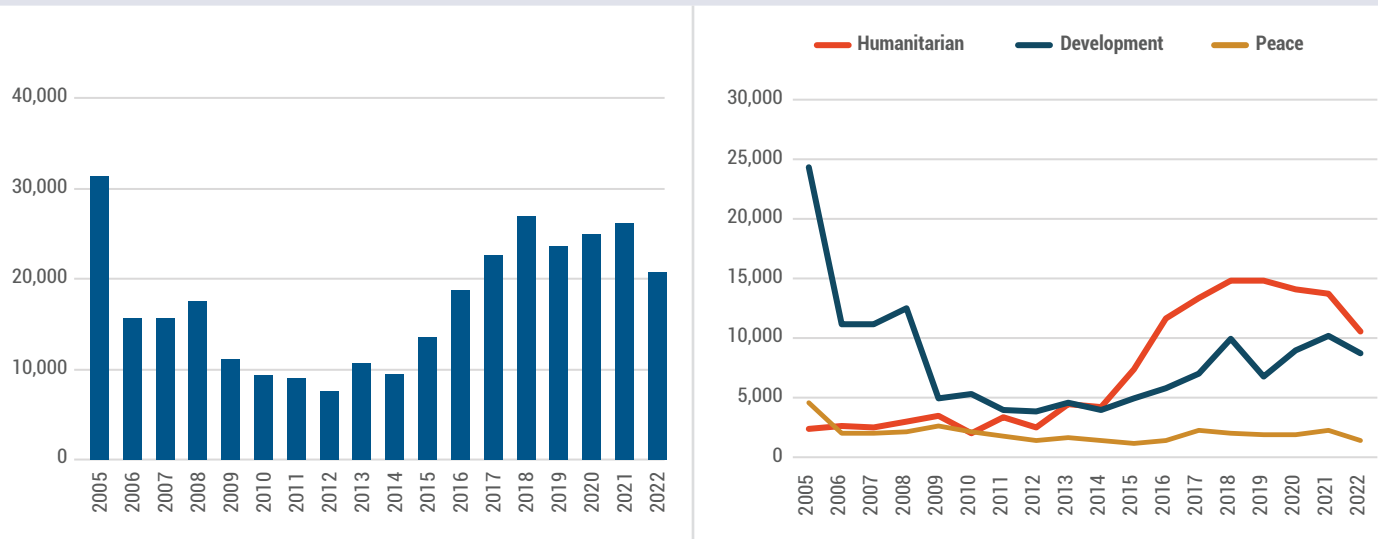
Source: OECD/DAC – Compare your country by OECD.
Note: Data available for the Comoros, Djibouti, Iraq, Libya, the State of Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

◆ **There are tentative signals of embedding long-term reconciliation in peacebuilding agendas in countries in conflict.** For instance:

◆ In **Iraq,** the Integrated Reconciliation Project (2017–2021) supported a national agenda for long-term reconciliation by creating infrastructure to promote peace, focusing on the most vulnerable communities and minorities. The initiative created and strengthened community social cohesion mechanisms, providing socioeconomic support services, reinforcing civil society capacities, and bolstering national systems to effectively coordinate and plan social cohesion and reconciliation efforts.[9]

◆ In **Libya,** the Presidential Council in February 2023 convened a national dialogue to achieve reconciliation.[10] In addition, a socioeconomic vision was developed in 2021 under the Libya Socioeconomic Dialogue Project.[11] It provided informed options for strategic policies to move from a logic of rent-seeking and exploitation to one of institutions based on the principles of justice and equity, dignity, and universal rights and fundamental freedoms. It suggested avenues for a shift from a rentier economy to a productive and diversified one for the sake of a peaceful and prosperous society.[12] Despite the continuing division of the country between two administrations, the announcement of measures to reunify the Central Bank of Libya offers scope for cautious optimism regarding the collective intent of Libyan actors to advance towards a unified nation.

◆ As a result of the Israeli occupation, the **State of Palestine** faces economic hardships, insecurity, violence and death. All facets of life and development are under siege. Seeking to realize the vision of an independent sovereign State, with sovereignty over the entire territory defined by the 1967 borders, including East Jerusalem as the capital, the State of Palestine has activated mechanisms for holding Israel to account before international structures and courts. This is in addition to its participation in the multilateral system and consolidation of bilateral relations.

◆ In **Somalia,** despite fragmentation between the federal Government and regional States, as well as tensions on issues related to governance, resource allocation and jurisdiction, the National Consultative Council reached an agreement on a model for fiscal federalism and amendments to the national security architecture. The model specifies the creation of two independent agencies: a national revenue authority and a planning and allocation agency.

◆ Worsening violence in the **Sudan** has fragmented and weakened national institutions, with the potential for a full-fledged civil war and humanitarian crisis. As part of efforts by international and regional actors to prevent escalation, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, supported by the United Nations, have adopted a conflict resolution road map. In addition, leaders of the armed movements that are signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement are officially committed to neutrality in the conflict and are making efforts to restore peace. Civil society is playing a key role in the peace process, advocating for ending the violence and working for peace locally through the Declaration of Principles of Civil Actors for Ending the War and Restoring Democracy. Agreements on several ceasefires to enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance are paralysed, however.

◆ In the **Syrian Arab Republic,** despite a continued deadlock in the political process and a significant economic crisis, recent years have seen a reduction in violence and armed conflict in most parts of the country. Reintegration into the League of Arab States happened 12 years after the country's suspension following the outbreak of the conflict in 2011. This is expected to enable delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need, in accordance with mechanisms adopted in relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

◆ In **Yemen,** coordination between the Central Bank offices in Aden and Sana'a is attempting to unify currency and monetary policies after years of different banknotes and exchange rates. Negotiations include resuming the payment of civil service salaries after a five-year period of irregular disbursements. These are steps towards unifying public institutions to revive the public sector and increase capacities to address basic needs in a population of 30 million, of which 21 million are in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

**The unprecedented and devastating impact of the war in Gaza**

Justice and peace for the Palestinian people require ending the Israeli occupation and associated discriminatory practices and violations of human rights and international law. The blockade imposed on Gaza since 2007 and a series of violent offensives have resulted in "de-development" and a humanitarian crisis, condemning the entire population to be left behind, with women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities in severely disadvantaged positions.

Living conditions in Gaza were already precarious before the war broke out in October 2023 in terms of poverty (61 per cent in 2020), unemployment (45 per cent in 2022) and food insecurity (63 per cent of households in 2022). The total siege of Gaza has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and plunged 2.3 million people into deprivation. Essential services have been disrupted by attacks on civilian infrastructure, including the targeting of hospitals and medical centres. The war is forcing the population to use unsafe water and sanitation facilities. Heavy bombardment, massive destruction of houses, the displacement of more than 1.5 million people, and a lack of critical medical, food, water and energy supplies have multidimensional impacts, compounding losses related to safety, health, education and income. Heightened insecurity, reduced trade and increased production costs will have long-term negative effects on the economy. The financial stability of the State of Palestine and the banking sector will be at much greater risk. The war could also compel neighbouring countries to redirect resources from development to security expenses.

Source: ESCWA, 2023b, 2023e, 2023f, 2023g.

Figure 16.3
Development versus humanitarian official development assistance to the occupied Palestinian territory (Millions of dollars)
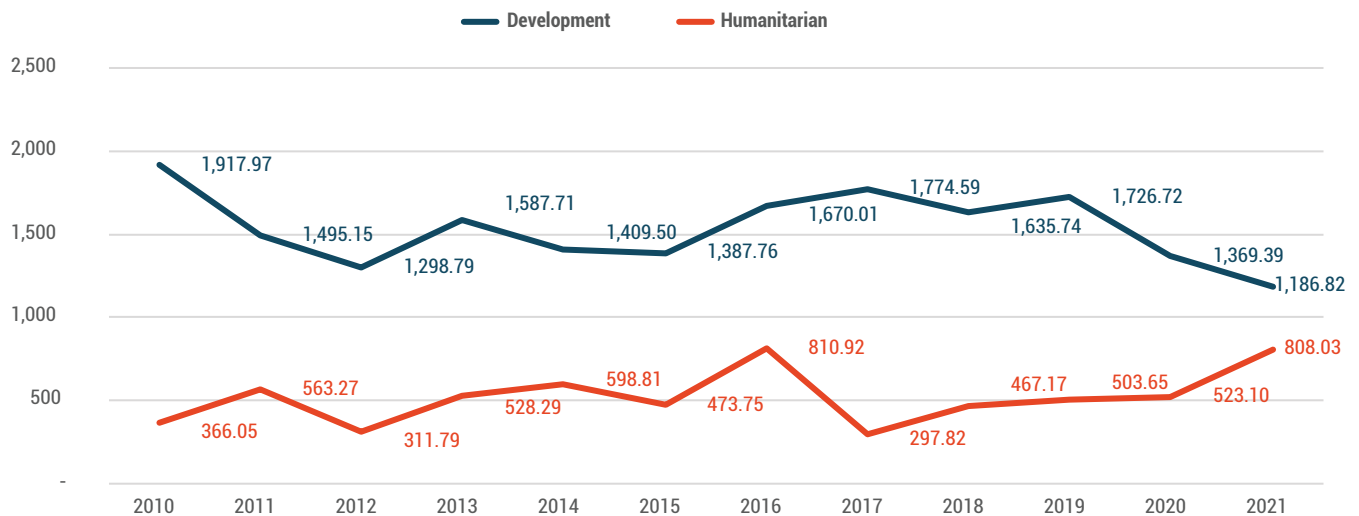
Source: OECD, Detailed aid statistics: ODA Official development assistance: disbursements, 2021; OECD International Development Statistics, accessed on 26 January 2021.

Failing to address the root causes of the conflict will render any recovery efforts unsuccessful. Ending the Israeli occupation, restoring sovereignty over resources, and re-establishing free movement between Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem are central to resolving territorial fragmentation and cultivating a lasting and just peace.

Even before the latest war in Gaza, the diversion of funds from development assistance to short-term humanitarian needs contributed to trapping Palestinians in a spiral of dependency and de-development.

Long-standing development issues should be addressed by integrating the humanitarian dimension into recovery plans, thus empowering the Palestinian people and their institutions as agents of change and leaders of the development process.

2. Strengthening institutional effectiveness and enforcing the rule of law to address shrinking civic space

◆ **Government effectiveness varies widely in the region,**[13] influenced by history, economics and geopolitics. Gulf Cooperation Council countries generally perform well on government effectiveness, given financial abundance and political stability. Countries experiencing conflict or fragility have highly compromised government effectiveness due to war and institutional fragility. Middle-income countries that are not in conflict fall in-between, showing some deterioration in government effectiveness.

The inability of weak institutions to address political or socioeconomic grievances remains a root cause of conflict in several Arab countries and a major obstacle to recovery from crises.

A compounding factor is the chronic insufficiency of civic space. Four countries have obstructed civic spaces (**Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco** and **Tunisia**), six countries have repressed them (**Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar** and the **State of Palestine**) and seven countries have closed them (**Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia,** the **Syrian Arab Republic,** the **United Arab Emirates** and **Yemen**).

Source: Civicus Monitor and Transparency International.

◆ **Ineffective institutions, with limited accountability, can create a breeding ground for social and political instability and conflict.** Such institutions also hinder the capacity to deal with shocks or disasters, including natural ones. Several human and climate-related disasters have resulted in massive losses of lives that could have been avoided with the effective mitigation of risks. The collapse of the two dams in Derna, **Libya,** in September 2023, is one example, where conflict and extreme weather collided, yielding disastrous outcomes. The dams collapsed due to poor maintenance and inadequate operation, which in turn stemmed from fragmented, divided and weak institutions and supervision. Libya also lacks effective institutional systems for disaster prevention and management. Prior to this disaster, a decade of turmoil had left 300,000 people in need of humanitarian aid, an already high number that increased to more than 850,000 after Storm Daniel. In **Lebanon,** the Beirut port explosion on 4 August 2020 was another example of the failure of institutions. In this case, they did not take decisive action to remove dangerous material from a heavily populated urban area.
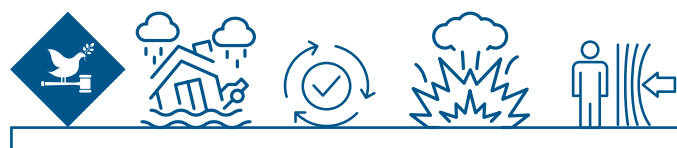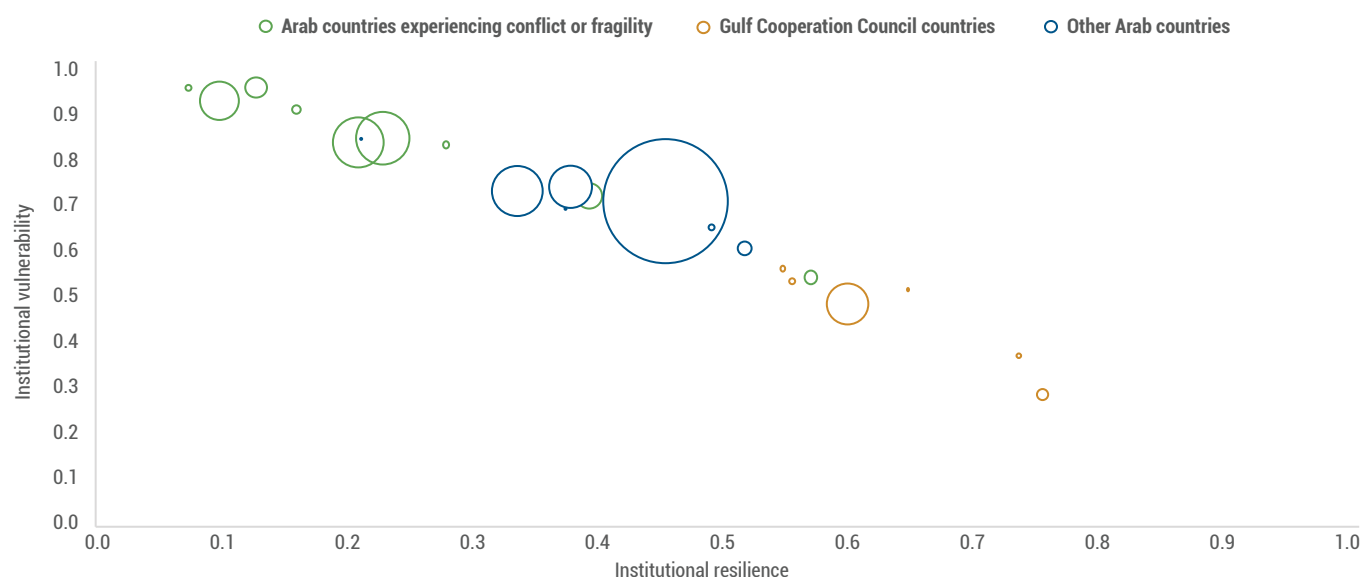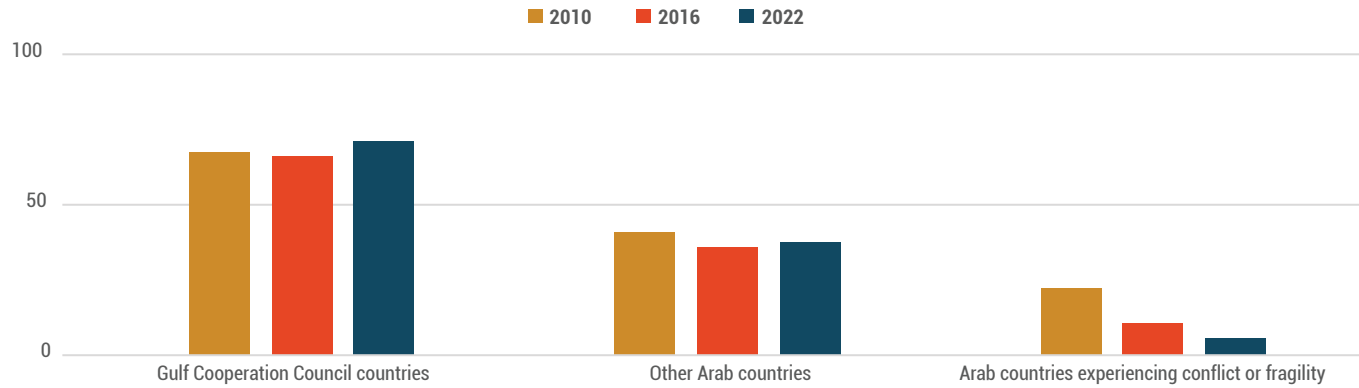

Figure 16.4
Institutional effectiveness in the region

Source: ESCWA elaboration based on data for 2022 and the Arab Risk Monitor: assessing vulnerability and resilience in the region, 2023.

Figure 16.5
Government effectiveness: percentile rank

■ 2010 ■ 2016 ■ 2022

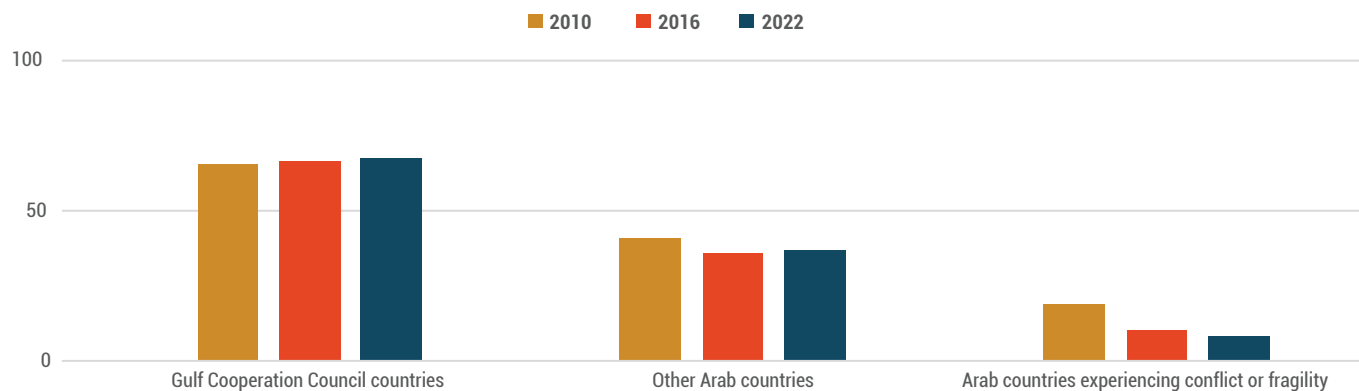

Source: World Bank, World Governance Indicators.
Note: Average percentile rank. The scale goes from 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest). "Arab countries experiencing conflict or fragility" are those classified as such by the World Bank FY24 list, namely: the Comoros, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, the State of Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Countries indicated as "Other Arab countries" are Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

a. Little progress in promoting the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice for all

◆ **Unconstitutional transitions of power are undermining the rule of law and human rights and weakening governance systems.** In the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, substantial financial resources have facilitated investments in legal and institutional frameworks. These nations often have modern legal systems, better law enforcement capabilities and more stable governance structures, but limited political freedoms and human rights concerns persist. In contrast, countries in conflict face severe challenges in upholding the rule of law. Ongoing conflicts have led to the collapse of institutions and lawlessness, contributing to human rights abuses and war crimes. Judicial systems are either dysfunctional or under the control of conflicting parties. Middle-income countries that are not in conflict have made modest progress but face substantial challenges from corruption, a lack of judicial independence and limited political freedoms.

Figure 16.6
Rule of law: percentile rank

■ 2010 ■ 2016 ■ 2022

Source: World Bank, World Governance Indicators.
Note: Average percentile rank. The scale goes from 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest). "Arab countries experiencing conflict or fragility" are those classified as such by the World Bank FY24 list, namely: the Comoros, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, the State of Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Countries indicated as "Other Arab countries" are Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

b. Lack of transparency and accountability

◆ **Curtailments of freedom of speech and assembly are routine, and the prosecution and jailing of writers, journalists and activists is common across the region.** Yet all national constitutions – except in **Qatar** and **Saudi Arabia** – include guarantees of freedom of expression or opinion.[14] Freedom of assembly, freedom of association and freedom of the press are also enshrined in most constitutions, except **Djibouti, Saudi Arabia** and **Yemen** for freedom of assembly; **Saudi Arabia** for freedom of association; and **Djibouti, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia,** the **United Arab Emirates** and **Yemen** for freedom of the press.[15] Overall, enforcement remains inconsistent.

Laws penalize criticism of ruling authorities and religious figures, leading to the imprisonment of activists and journalists.

Censorship, website and social media blocks, arbitrary arrests and abusive detentions persist. Independent media encounter obstacles, limiting pluralism.

◆ In **Kuwait,** the Government amended its freedom of speech laws to prohibit pretrial detention for defendants in freedom of expression cases. A new law on the public's right to access information came into effect in 2021, allowing Kuwaiti nationals to request information, decisions and documents from government entities.[16]

◆ The law of **Morocco** 76–15 (2018) expanded the mission of the National Human Rights Council, an independent institution promoting civic space by monitoring government adherence to human rights standards, investigating complaints and making recommendations for policy improvements.[17]

◆ The 2019 law governing NGOs in **Egypt** removed jail penalties from a former law controlling NGOs' operations and eliminated formal oversight roles for security and intelligence authorities. Executive regulations clarifying the law in 2021 stated that NGOs would have exclusive access to and control of their funds as well as procedural protections, such as impartial administrative and judicial appeal mechanisms.[18] However, international NGOs stated that the new regulations maintained many restrictions on NGOs' work in Egypt.

◆ In **Libya,** the Presidential Council announced on 6 August 2023 that a High Financial Management Committee would supervise public finances and promote principles of fairness, accountability and transparency in public spending. This is a milestone as a Libyan-owned mechanism for transparent management of public funds.

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c. Curbing corruption

◆ **All Arab countries are parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, except the Syrian Arab Republic, which has signed but not ratified it.** The convention is the only legally binding, universal anti-corruption instrument, superseding national laws when ratified. Anti-corruption legislation in the region has advanced in recent years, primarily fuelled by the adoption of pivotal laws and expanded assessments based on a broader set of indicators. This progress reflects a more in-depth legislative approach to combating corruption and enhancing integrity across the public sector. It signifies an intensified commitment to bolstering transparency and accountability as well as regulatory mechanisms.

The percentage of firms that experienced at least one bribery payment request was 21.7 per cent in the region in 2022, compared to a world average of 14.8 per cent.

Corruption diminishes trust in institutions and undermines the legitimacy of the State, fomenting social tensions and conflict. It tends to thrive when the social contract between States and citizens is broken, and when political participation and peaceful dissent can be risky endeavours.

Source: ESCWA, 2021a.

◆ **The region still faces considerable challenges, however, in ensuring the effective implementation of anti-corruption laws.** All countries have legislation criminalizing bribery in the public sector, for example, but enforcement lags. A significant stumbling block arises from major exemptions and immunities in some countries, which effectively undermine the potency of anti-corruption legislation. These exemptions frequently benefit individuals or entities with political or commercial advantages, thereby perpetuating the cycle of corruption.

- **Gulf Cooperation Council countries** score highest in terms of anti-corruption legislation. They have established public procurement standards and promote open government and transparency.
- **Kuwait** and **Qatar** have incorporated international agreements and commitments against corruption into legislative frameworks. Beyond the adoption of its Integrity and Anti-Corruption Strategy 2019–2024, **Kuwait** passed a law that establishes the Public Anti-Corruption Authority, and an anti-corruption and wealth disclosure decree criminalizes corruption. **Jordan**, **Morocco** and **Tunisia** also match some international standards for anti-corruption measures.
- **Libya** and the **Syrian Arab Republic** rank lowest on anti-corruption efforts in the Maghreb and Mashreq subregions, respectively.
- There are gaps in the enforcement of anti-corruption legislation in **Lebanon, Mauritania, Somalia, Palestine** and the **United Arab Emirates.**


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The 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index released by Transparency International showed the pervasiveness of corruption in the Arab region.[a] Even Arab States that scored above 50 on the index – such as the **United Arab Emirates** at 67, **Qatar** at 58 and **Saudi Arabia** at 51 – showed signs of decline compared to previous years. The Middle East and North Africa regional average dropped to 38 in 2022, with most countries ranked below 50. War-torn **Libya** at 17, **Yemen** at 16 and the **Syrian Arab Republic** at 13 scored the worst. **Qatar** at 58 and **Egypt** at 30 have seen their lowest scores since the Corruption Perceptions Index began offering comparative rankings in 2012.

[a] The Corruption Perceptions Index ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption on a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). For each country's individual score and changes over time, as well as analysis for each region, see the webpage on the Arab region. See also Transparency International, 2023.

Figure 16.7
Control of corruption: percentile rank
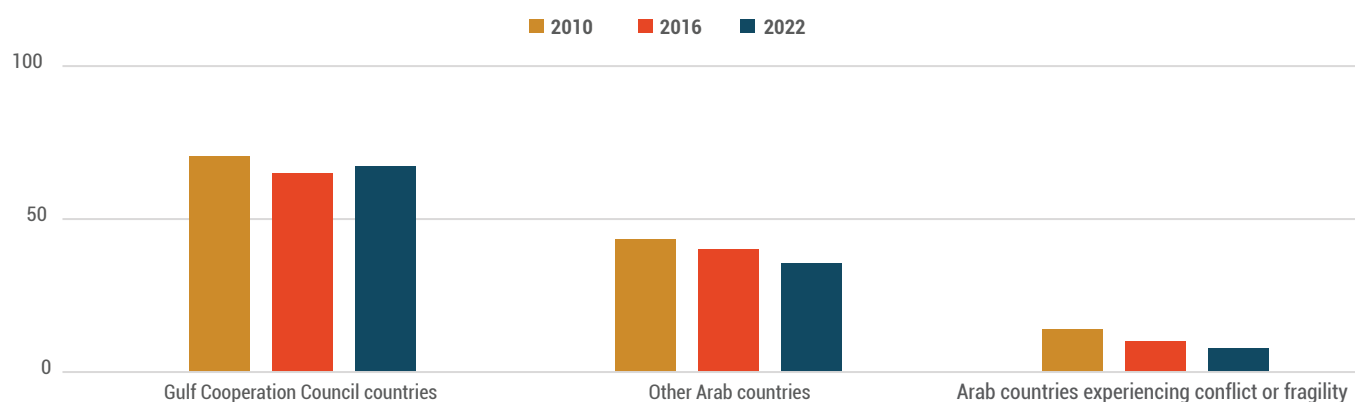
■ 2010   ■ 2016   ■ 2022

Source: World Bank, World Governance Indicators.
Note: Average percentile rank. The scale goes from 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest). "Arab countries experiencing conflict or fragility" are those classified as such by the World Bank FY24 list, namely: the Comoros, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, the State of Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Countries indicated as "Other Arab countries" are Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

Table 16.2
Recently introduced anti-corruption legislation 2020–2023

Country	Title of the law	Year of adoption
Morocco	Anti-Corruption Law No. 46.19	2021
Qatar	Penal Code 2004, Arts. 140–158	2020
	Code of Conduct (Law No. 18/2020)	2020
Sudan	Anti-Corruption National Commission Law	2021
Lebanon	Law on Anti-Corruption in the Public Sector, Establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Authority (Law No. 175/2020)	2020
	Law on Financial Disclosure, Conflicts of Interest and Illicit Enrichment	2020
	New Public Procurement Law (No. 244/2021)	2021
Saudi Arabia	Public Procurement Law M/128	2020
	Digital Government Authority Law (No. 418/2021)	2021

Source: Authors.

Examples of anti-corruption policies include the following.

- **Egypt** launched the National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2019–2022. The National Anti-Corruption Committee includes government entities and partners from civil society.

- The National Strategy on Integrity and Countering Corruption 2017–2025 of **Jordan** includes an online platform for tracking corruption cases.

- In **Mauritania,** a participatory process led to the adoption of a new national strategy to combat corruption in April 2023. The strategy seeks to strengthen the power and effectiveness of the regulatory authorities and the judiciary. It aims to enhance the key role of the parliament as the entity responsible for overseeing government actions.

- In **Morocco,** the National Anti-Corruption Commission is responsible for the national integrated strategy to

fight corruption. In addition to central and decentralized inspection and audit units, a toll-free number for denouncing corruption cases and a national complaints portal have been set up. Morocco also adopted a law establishing the National Authority for Probity, Prevention and the Fight against Corruption.

■ The Administrative Control and Transparency Authority of **Qatar** adopted a strategy to promote integrity and transparency. The agency is equipped with communications channels to receive complaints and provide training to public servants. Legislation includes provisions to report the corruption of public officials through a specific hotline.

■ In **Saudi Arabia,** Vision 2030 aims at creating a high-performing Government that is effective, transparent and accountable.[19]

■ In **Somalia,** following its recent accession to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, anti-corruption commissions were created under the framework of a new Anti-Corruption Law.

■ In **Tunisia,** the National Anti-Corruption Authority launched a consultation to develop a national strategy for good governance and the fight against corruption from 2022 to 2026.

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3. Advancing inclusive governance and public participation

a. Women's participation in decision-making

◆ **Women's participation in political life and peace and security processes is a prevalent issue in national action plans on women, peace and security.** These focus on three priorities:

◆ **Increasing women's participation in political leadership and decision-making positions,** especially senior civil service and elected positions. The national action plans of the **State of Palestine, Tunisia** and **Yemen** refer to judicial positions as well.

◆ **Increasing the participation of women in public life,** including as voters, entrants to the civil service, the security forces and other spheres.

◆ **Increasing the participation of women in conflict prevention and mitigation, peace mediation, and humanitarian and post-conflict support.** Notable differences exist among approaches to this issue. For example, while **Iraq** cites measures to support women's roles as civilian monitors and military observers, **Tunisia** focuses on their parts in preventing and countering violent extremism, among other priorities.[20]

The institutional mechanisms for engaging women's groups in conflict prevention and peacebuilding remain limited. The same applies to the engagement of civil society organizations, which are seldom included in formal conflict resolution, peacebuilding or political dialogues, although they play key roles in implementing the women, peace and security agenda.

Enhancing the political participation of women requires the political will to implement related national action plans, backed by adequate budgets, clear implementation timelines, effective coordination and collaboration across sectors.

b. Youth participation in decision-making

◆ **The region lacks adequate structures for the civic and political engagement of young people.** This intensifies their sense of exclusion, dissatisfaction and distrust of political leaders and systems. Although laws governing political parties often do not support youth political engagement and leadership, countries have formulated youth policies or strategies[21] that address issues of concern to young women and men. Most emphasize youth participation in decision-making. Some countries have also addressed youth participation in peace and resilience-building. Several countries are considering volunteerism and youth engagement in legislation related to young people, recognizing the role they can play in civic spaces, violence prevention and peacebuilding.

> **Young people below age 25 cannot run for parliamentary elections in most Arab countries.**
>
> Political upheaval and instability and cultural and social biases against young people, especially young women and persons with disabilities, inhibit engagement in political processes.

◆ Developed by **Iraq** in 2021, the Youth Vision for 2030 focuses on peace, security and dialogue as well as citizenship and participation, among other issues. One proposed intervention to promote citizenship and participation involves establishing consultation meetings between young people and local authorities at the governorate level.[22] Iraq in 2020 launched the National Coalition on Youth Peace and Security to engage in dialogues with decision-makers, supporting the participation of young peace activists in peacebuilding and fostering exchanges of experiences and knowledge. The coalition also advocates for the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.[23]

◆ Adopted in 2019, the Jordanian National Youth Strategy 2019–2025 calls for strengthening the resilience of young people to deal with emerging challenges and promote sustainable development.[24] **Jordan** also formed a Youth, Peace and Security 2250 National Coalition, in reference to a United Nations Security Council resolution on the issue; it operates under the Ministry of Youth.[25]

◆ **Lebanon** launched the National Youth Policy Action Plan in 2022. It is aligned with the 2012 National Youth Policy's five priority areas, including social integration and political participation, and aims to support young people in volunteering and participating in decision-making. The establishment of a National Youth Council enables consultations with the Government. It serves as a platform to communicate concerns and viewpoints, and was instrumental in lowering the voting age to 18 for parliamentary and municipal elections.[26]

◆ **Mauritania,** in 2022, drafted legislation to institutionalize a national programme on voluntary engagement in sustainable development. The legislation creates a legal environment supporting young volunteers working on development projects throughout the country. It will operationalize an inclusive national mechanism for managing young people mobilized for volunteering. The goal is to deploy more than 10,000 young people, half of whom are women, as part of community development activities, especially in education, health, legal assistance, social cohesion, environmental preservation, civil protection and sustainable development.

◆ In **Palestine,** volunteering is regulated through legislation on civil society organizations. In the Jenin Creative Cultural Centre, volunteers have used art and cultural projects to foster peace and justice in the West Bank.

◆ The National Youth Policy of the Federal Government of **Somalia**[27] incorporates 10 priority pillars for supporting young people, among which are peace and security, and participation and citizenship. The policy encourages young men and women to engage in decision-making processes. It is designed to increase their awareness of active and responsible citizenship and to create opportunities for participation, including through forming youth advisory councils and promoting volunteering.[28]

◆ In **Tunisia,** an open data hackathon has been organized annually since 2020. In May 2023, 33 teams comprising students, start-up founders and young professionals used open government data to create solutions that could improve government service delivery.

◆ In the **United Arab Emirates,** a federal law regulates volunteer work. In addition, subnational laws in individual emirates regulate voluntarism, such as in Dubai. In line with its federal counterpart, it sets out minimum protection standards for volunteers and recognizes voluntarism's contribution overall.[29]

## c. Access to information, public participation and e-governance

◆ **Public participation is weak in the region, with most countries lacking a specific open government strategy or action plan.** Some have initiated national plans that include some dimensions of open government, especially open data. Only eight countries[30] have laws or guarantees of public access to information. Eleven countries[31] have launched their own open data platforms, and an additional six[32] make open data available through the portal of the African Development Bank.

The enforcement of access to information laws remains constrained. Low awareness among institutions and citizens, limited financial resources and vague language in laws are some roadblocks requiring attention to ensure effective implementation.

◆ **Digital government (or e-government) has progressed in the region, transforming the operations and services of public institutions.** Countries have developed digital policies to modernize public entities[33] and advance digital transformation.[34] The use of digital technologies by governments, in partnership with the private sector, accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain essential public services in health, education and social protection (see the chapter on SDG 9). Nevertheless, wide regional differences are evident in e-government effectiveness in delivering public services.[35] The Gulf Cooperation Council countries outperform other States. **Saudi Arabia** and the **United Arab Emirates** perform the best in e-government and open data and have won United Nations public service awards for digital solutions.[36]

Tunisia passed the Right to Access Information Law[37] in March 2016, joining the few Arab countries with such laws. It is the first country in the region to create a National Authority for Access to Information, which manages compliance. The law of Tunisia obliges public bodies to furnish a more extensive range of information than is the case under legislation in **Jordan** (adopted in 2007), **Lebanon** (2017), **Morocco** (2017) or **Yemen** (2012). The law of Tunisia also limits which information can be denied. The Kurdistan Regional Government of **Iraq** has had a similar law on the books since 2013.[38]

Figure 16.8
Average e-government index score, 2022
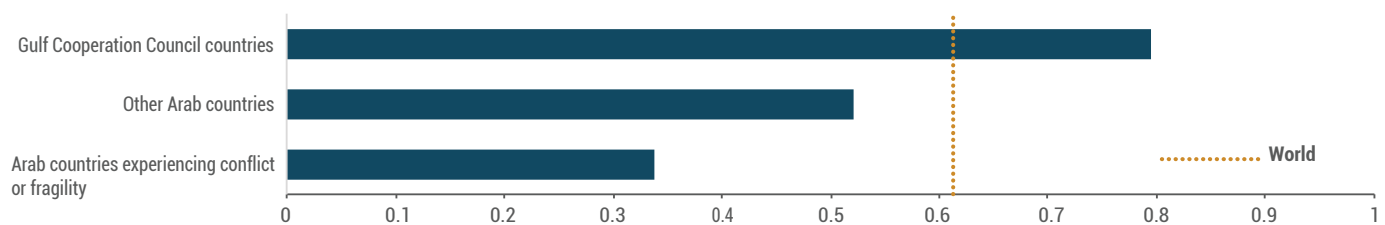
Source: UN DESA, United Nations E-Government Knowledgebase.
Note: The dotted line represents the world average. "Gulf Cooperation Council countries" and "Arab countries experiencing conflict or fragility" are those classified as such by the World Bank for 2023 (The Comoros, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, the State of Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen). Countries indicated as "others" are Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

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- **Jordan, Morocco** and **Tunisia** are members of the Open Government Partnership, with national action plans for citizen participation and public engagement in decision-making. These countries have enshrined access to information in their constitutions.
- **Egypt** launched Sharek 2030, an application that informs the public about governmental initiatives, laws and policies, and collects citizens' views, proposals and suggestions to improve public services.
- In 2020, **Jordan** adopted three protocols on classifying, enforcing and managing information, providing clearer procedures and standards to strengthen the law on access to information and its implementation by public institutions.[39]
- **Kuwait** adopted Law No (12) on the right to access to information (2020–2021).
- In **Morocco,** the Commission on the Right to Information launched its digital platform in 2020, where requests for information can be submitted and tracked.[40]
- The **State of Palestine** launched its open data initiative in 2018 to promote innovation, increase transparency, strengthen government performance, and build trust between the Government and citizens. Data sets have been published, and laws on access to information and personal data protection are undergoing review. Training courses are continuously organized for technical teams to build skills, and an open data policy was approved.[41]
- **Saudi Arabia** adopted a digital transformation strategy, the Smart Government Strategy 2020–2024. Its purpose is to create a responsive and effective citizen-centric Government through the use and deployment of technologies. In 2023, the Digital Government Authority released a report on the readiness of government institutions to adopt emerging technologies so that agencies can identify gaps as well as training and strategic needs.
- The **United Arab Emirates** is among the 15 leading countries worldwide on e-government services. The Government launched the Unified Digital Channel in 2023, a citizen-centric digital Government portal that provides access to more than 3,000 services.

4. Increased vulnerabilities in the context of SDG 16

◆ **Discriminatory laws and practices against minorities persist in many Arab countries, posing significant challenges to human rights, social cohesion and inclusive governance.** Discrimination manifests in unequal access to education (for example, limited access to quality education for marginalized groups such as refugees and rural residents as well as gender-based discrimination that restricts girls' education in some areas; see the chapter on SDG 4), employment (gender-, nationality- and religion-based discrimination; see the chapter on SDG 8) and political representation (the exclusion of groups of people or ethnic or religious minorities from the political process, and weak representation of women in institutions). Individuals and groups subject to discrimination based on identity or status, including the poor, people with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, refugees and migrant workers, among others, are often subject to multiple, intersecting constraints on political, economic and social participation.

a. Addressing violence against women in conflict settings

The prevention, protection and prosecution of sexual violence are essential to peace and security. As of 2023, 11 Arab States[42] have national action plans to advance the Women, Peace and Security Agenda,[43] including components on addressing conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence. Priorities include legal and policy frameworks to prevent and prosecute sexual and gender-based violence, service provision for violence survivors, and the extension of protection to internally displaced and refugee women.[44] In 2018, United Nations organizations and Member States engaged in dialogue on accountability for sexual violence in conflict. The consultation shared best practices and lessons on the prosecution of sexual violence crimes under national jurisdictions, with a focus on **Iraq,** as well as discussions concerning **Libya,** the **Sudan,** the **Syrian Arab Republic** and **Yemen.** In 2022, the League of Arab States and UNHCR launched the Arab Strategy for the Prevention of and Response to Combat All Forms of Violence in the Asylum Context, Especially Sexual Violence against Women and Girls. The strategy outlines key strategic priorities for countries to protect refugees against sexual and gender-based violence.

Conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence have yet to abate as tactics and weapons of war.

The United Nations Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence profiles 14 conflict-affected contexts where sexual violence has been documented, six of which are in the Arab region: **Iraq, Libya, Somalia,** the **Sudan,** the **Syrian Arab Republic** and **Yemen.**

Protective services for women survivors are often scattered among different institutions with relatively limited geographic coverage.

Source: United Nations, 2022.

◆ **A few national accountability mechanisms or regulatory frameworks prosecute offenders for violence against women committed in conflict settings and provide reparations for victims.** But there has been little progress in implementing these frameworks. While some countries have legal frameworks to indict perpetrators of acts of sexual violence against women, they apply a narrow definition that does not account for all forms of violence inflicted in conflict, including forced marriage and sexual slavery and exploitation (see the chapter on SDG 5). Generally, issues related to advancing gender equality and eliminating discrimination against women and girls become less of a priority in conflict-affected countries. Even in post-conflict settings, gender concerns are seldom prominently included in reconstruction agendas.

Only Djibouti, Jordan, the State of Palestine, and Tunisia are States Parties to the Rome Statute. It codifies widespread and organized sexual violence against civilians as a crime against humanity and as a war crime when inflicted as part of armed conflict.

Examples of existing frameworks include:

◆ In **Iraq,** the Yazidi Female Survivors Law of 2021 recognizes the crimes against Yazidi, Turkmen, Christian and Shabak communities as crimes against humanity, and provides for reparations to survivors and rehabilitation. The law makes Iraq one of the first countries in the region to recognize female survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. The law does not cover women and girls who are victims of sexual violence through forced marriage to members of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and children born of wartime rape.[45]

◆ The Ministerial Decree 119 of 2014 of **Libya** recognized survivors of sexual violence during its uprising as war victims and gave them a right to reparation.

◆ In **Somalia,** the Sexual Offences Bill, endorsed by the Council of Ministers in 2018, deals with crimes of sexual exploitation, slavery, trafficking, abduction and kidnapping as well as forced marriage. It is still pending review and approval by the Parliament,[46] and continues to trigger negative reactions from religious leaders and clan elders.[47]

◆ The **Sudan** amended the 1991 Criminal Act in 2009 to include conflict-related sexual violence as a war crime.

b. End trafficking, abuse and exploitation

◆ **Arab States are making efforts to end human trafficking, abuse and exploitation,** building on the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol). Policy responses to trafficking in persons, including forced labour, have encompassed drafting and revising laws and action plans, establishing specialized committees and organizing awareness campaigns. Fewer efforts have been pursued to address migrant smuggling. Some countries guarantee freedom of movement for migrants (**Bahrain**), do not penalize smuggled migrants (**Egypt**) or prohibit arbitrary arrest (**Lebanon**). **Kuwait** has created alternatives to detention facilities. Governments of countries[48] that give national employers sponsorship permits to bring in foreign workers – binding the latter to their employers, with risks of exploitation, and posing issues related to labour rights and working conditions, especially for domestic workers – have moved to regularize the stays of migrants or facilitate their departure without penalties, including through reforms of the *kafala* system (see the chapter on SDG 10).

To date, no Arab country has ratified the Domestic Workers Convention (2011) of the International Labour Organization.

◆ In **Egypt,** the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking launched a campaign, "Together Against Human Trafficking", urging citizens to report cases through hotlines.

◆ **Iraq** issued its national anti-trafficking action plan in March 2019.

◆ In **Jordan,** in addition to a law on countering human trafficking, the National Strategy for Human Trafficking

2019–2022 seeks to address human trafficking through complementary efforts among relevant entities.

◆ **Kuwait** adopted a national referral system to prevent human trafficking.

◆ In **Lebanon,** civil society organizations support the protection of victims, and several laws address trafficking in persons, including migrant domestic workers.

◆ In **Morocco,** Law No. 14–27 includes provisions for protecting victims of exploitation (forced labour and servitude), and Law No. 12–19 clarifies labour and employment conditions for domestic workers. Morocco also established a national commission to combat trafficking in persons (2019).

◆ The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking of **Qatar** monitors cases and refers them to competent authorities. A unit to track data has been established within the Public Prosecution Office, and the Qatar Red Crescent Department opened the Humanitarian Care Home for victims.

◆ The **Sudan** amended its Combating of Human Trafficking Act with stringent penalties for violators. It created the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking and launched the National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking 2021–2023. In addition, the Better Migration Management programme, funded by the European Union and Germany, has supported the Government in countering human trafficking and improving the protection of victims and vulnerable migrants.

◆ **Tunisia** established a national mechanism to guide and support victims of trafficking, providing them with free medical care.

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c. End sexual, physical and psychological violence against children

◆ **Some countries have legislative reforms and strategic action-oriented instruments to prevent sexual, physical and psychological violence against children.**

The share of children under age 5 whose births have been registered with a civil authority increased in the region from 82.6 per cent in 2021 to 86.2 per cent in 2022, compared to a world average of 77.2 per cent. The Arab least developed countries still have low levels of birth registration, however, at 52.3 per cent on average in 2022. In **Yemen,** the share was only 29 per cent.

The region must reckon with the reality of children born under ISIS rule. They have been exposed to levels of violence and may require special and long-term care.

◆ Based on an exemplary institutional and legislative framework in the Kurdistan Region of **Iraq,** the federal Government committed to a Child Protection Directorate, with a draft Child Protection Law under review by Parliament.

◆ **Jordan,** which recently enacted a Child Rights Law, and the **United Arab Emirates,** where a new draft motherhood and childhood strategy is being developed, are among the pathfinding countries under the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.[49] They are expected to develop national action plans to address violence against children.

◆ In **Morocco,** the integrated public policy for child protection 2015–2025 aims to strengthen the legal framework, promote protective standards and practices, and set up information and monitoring systems. In addition, the National Action Plan to End Child Marriage promotes social protection and social services for the empowerment and education of girls, strengthens judicial practices and supports new amendments to the family code.

◆ The **State of Palestine** launched a national intersectoral violence against children strategy in the context of COVID-19 (2021–2023).[50]

◆ **Qatar** developed a draft Child Protection Law, including provisions for protection from exploitation. It prohibits all forms of corporal punishment against children, and strengthens capacities to monitor cases of violence. Institutional support for victims of violence is provided in social rehabilitation centres.

◆ In **Saudi Arabia,** a national child online safety framework, a national policy on anti-bullying, and

a national schools well-being framework are under development. The National Strategic Plan for the Prevention of and Action on Family Violence are intended to address the needs of victims of violence and battered people through family visitations and the fostering of children subjected to violence.

- In the **Sudan,** the endorsement of the Child Act 2021 was delayed due to the political situation.
- In the **Syrian Arab Republic,** a law on protection from domestic violence is being drafted and a five-year national strategic plan for child protection is under development.

The Syrian Arab Republic and host countries have taken steps to improve the civil registration of displaced persons. The Civil Status Law (2021) of the **Syrian Arab Republic** introduced provisions to enhance registration access. In **Jordan,** the Urban Verification Exercise facilitated the regularization of Syrian nationals. In the Kurdistan Region of **Iraq,** a flexible approach was taken to residency and registration processes. **Lebanon** adopted measures to increase birth registration for Syrian refugee children born in the country. Regionally, the Arab Charter on Human Rights and the Sharjah Principles on Protecting Refugee Children in the Middle East and North Africa advocate for legal identity and birth documentation for refugees.

Many Syrian refugees still struggle to obtain or update documentation, however, leaving them undocumented or underdocumented. A lack of civil documentation severely limits opportunities to recover from crises and undermines housing, land and property rights. Over 35 laws and regulations related to these rights have been adopted in the **Syrian Arab Republic,** weakening the security of tenure for displaced individuals and exacerbating their challenges.

Source: UNHCR and Norwegian Refugee Council, 2021.

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◆ **The region has notable measures to assist children from conflict-affected areas who are at risk of being left out of school** (see also the chapter on SDG 4):

- In **Jordan** and **Lebanon,** education measures for Syrian refugee children are coordinated among national institutions, United Nations organizations and donors as part of the response to the Syrian crisis. Both countries have developed educational strategies to include refugee children in the public educational system, for instance, through the "second shift" programme (afternoon classes after morning sessions for nationals).

- The Government of **Jordan,** through the 2018–2022 education strategic plan, made schools and learning facilities available to children regardless of their status or nationality. The plan laid out concrete actions and investments, such as the establishment of 60 new schools per year to accommodate both Jordanians and refugees. Jordan also encourages Syrian children to return to schooling with campaigns to counter dropping out, bullying and violence among students. Some measures facilitate the registration of Syrian students in higher education, and extend work permits to support their entry into the labour market.

d. Migrant and migrant children in vulnerable situations, refugees and forcibly displaced persons

◆ **Migrants and migrant children in vulnerable situations, refugees and forcibly displaced persons often struggle to obtain education, employment and justice.** They are at risk of falling into the hands of criminal networks and being subjected to violence and exploitation. The primary form of trafficking within the region is forced labour, including domestic servitude and debt bondage, followed by forced and early marriage and sexual exploitation. Regarding child labour, notably in conflict-affected countries where law enforcement is lax and dire economic conditions leave children with no other options, many young workers come from groups already facing discrimination, including refugees and migrants.

- Syrian refugees have been allowed to work in several sectors of the economy in **Jordan** since 2016. In 2021, a record 62,000 work permits were issued to Syrians, including 31,000 flexible ones; refugees holding these can move between similar jobs in the same sector as well as among employers and governorates. Previously, Syrian refugees were mostly allowed to work only in agriculture,

construction and manufacturing. In 2020, some exemptions were given to work in other sectors, including as health-care professionals to help fight COVID-19. Since 2021, Syrian refugees have been able to obtain work permits in all sectors open to non-Jordanians.

◆ **Qatar** passed the Council of Ministers decision No. 13 of 2019 defining the rights, advantages and benefits of political refugees, with provisions on freedom of movement, the right to work, housing, health care and education.

C. The financing landscape

The mobilization of domestic resources for financing sustainable development remains low in the region, in part due to the absence of in-depth tax reforms.[51] Through structural fiscal and financial reforms, including to fight corruption and staunch tax leakages, as well as significant cuts in military spending, States could mobilize domestic resources to establish long-term social development programmes, reduce inequalities, improve socioeconomic welfare and promote the rule of law.

1. Tax leakages

Domestic resource mobilization is affected by tax leakages, including illicit financial flows, trade mis-invoicing and tax abuse (see also the chapter on SDG 17). Illicit financial flows have outstripped the combined aggregate of total official development assistance and foreign direct investment inflows,[52] hampering the effectiveness of tax administration, distorting trade and investment figures, and worsening macroeconomic conditions. Illicit financial flows inhibit sustainable development efforts by negatively affecting abilities to raise domestic resources, undermining the rule of law and trust in governments, and weakening the social contract. Enhanced capacities to collect revenue and finance the SDGs should include ending illicit and harmful financial leakages that undermine good governance and anti-corruption efforts.[53]

The region misses out on $8.9 billion annually due to corporate tax abuse.[54] Trade mis-invoicing amounts to $77.5 billion in losses each year. The top six countries adversely affected by illicit financial flows are **Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia** and the **United Arab Emirates.** They account for 80 per cent of regional illicit financial flows associated with mis-invoicing.[55] Eliminating trade mis-invoicing by 2030, as called for by SDG 16, would close approximately 13.5 per cent of the SDG financing gap in the region,[56] enough to reduce poverty rates by up to 70 per cent.

2. Military spending

Excessive military spending is diverting funds from socioeconomic development, regional integration and peacebuilding, and increasing instability due to mutual suspicion among neighbouring countries. Regional military expenditure was nearly $112 billion in 2021; half of this was spent by **Saudi Arabia.**[57] This sum represents 4.6 per cent of regional GDP[58] and 16.4 per cent of regional general government expenditure,[59] against the world averages of 2.2 and 5.8 per cent, respectively. At the global level, four Gulf Cooperation Council countries (**Kuwait, Oman, Qatar** and **Saudi Arabia**) topped the ranking of high-income countries against military spending as a percentage of GDP in 2022. **Bahrain** was in the eighth position.[60] While the average based on 48 high-income countries was 2.1 per cent, the highest value was in **Saudi Arabia** at 7.42 per cent. If military expenditure in the region did not exceed the world average of 2.2 per cent of GDP, it would have an additional $63 billion annually for SDG financing, enough to eradicate poverty in two years or to close the financing gap in education.

D. Regional dimensions

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- The percentage of Arab countries with **national human rights institutions that comply with the Paris Principles** increased from 27.3 per cent in 2020 to 31.6 per cent in 2022, compared to the world average of 42.8 per cent.

- As of 29 November 2023, 12 out of the 120 national human rights institutions accredited by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institution were from the Arab region. **Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar** and the **State of Palestine** were in full compliance with the Paris Principles (A status), while **Algeria, Bahrain, Oman, Libya** and **Tunisia** were not fully compliant (B status).[61]

- **The Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions is a regional alliance formed by national institutions to advance human rights in line with the Paris Principles.** It aims to empower national human rights institutions to protect human rights domestically and foster a human rights culture among citizens and stakeholders. The network advises on aligning national legislation with international conventions, enhances the capacities of member institutions for international accreditation, promotes the creation of national human rights bodies, and fosters cooperation between national institutions and international organizations.[62]

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Endnotes

◇◇

1. Abu-Ismail, Chaitani and Nehme, 2021.
2. See the Global Peace Index, 2022.
3. ESCWA, 2023d. See also UNDP, 2022.
4. Data on humanitarian assistance from the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for Iraq, Libya, the State of Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.
5. See the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, accessed on 1 February 2024.
6. A composite index measuring the peacefulness of countries made up of 23 quantitative and qualitative indicators.
7. They are performing better than the 15 Arab countries on the second half of the index, including six and nine in the third and last quantiles, respectively: Morocco at 84, Algeria at 96, Bahrain at 108, Djibouti at 112, Mauritania at 114, Saudi Arabia at 119, Egypt at 121, the State of Palestine at 134, Lebanon at 135, Libya at 137, Iraq at 154, the Sudan at 155, Somalia at 156, the Syrian Arab Republic at 161 and Yemen at 162. See 2023 Global Peace Index.
8. For instance, the United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund links recovery, stabilization, local governance and peacebuilding, investing in programmes that support local authorities in rebuilding trust around service delivery, local conflict resolution and employment. See more on the Peacebuilding Fund.
9. See the Integrated Reconciliation Project.
10. Bchir, 2023.
11. The project was carried out in partnership with ESCWA and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit with the support of a Libyan consulting group.
12. ESCWA, 2021b.
13. Government effectiveness is a critical factor that determines the quality of governance, the functionality of institutions and the overall well-being of citizens.
14. Algeria (2020), Bahrain (2017 revision), the Comoros (2018), Djibouti (2010 revision), Egypt (2019 revision), Iraq (2005), Jordan (2016), Kuwait (1992), Lebanon (2004 revision), Libya (2012 revision), Mauritania (2012 revision), Morocco (2011), Oman (2011 revision), State of Palestine (2005 revision), Somalia (2012), the Sudan (2019), Syrian Arab Republic (2012), Tunisia (2014), United Arab Emirates (2009 revision) and Yemen (2015 revision). Source: Constitute.
15. See Constitute.
16. United States Department of State, 2022b.
17. See the CNDH Mandate for the Protection of Human Rights.
18. United States Department of State, 2022a.
19. See more on Vision 2030.
20. ESCWA, 2023c.
21. Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the State of Palestine, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. See AUB and UNFPA, 2021. Some policies or strategies have expired and have not been replaced.
22. See Iraq's Youth Vision for 2030.
23. Arab Reform Initiative, 2022.
24. See Jordan's National Youth Strategy 2019–2025.
25. UNFPA, 2020.
26. See Lebanon's National Youth Policy Action Plan.
27. Somali Youth Hub, 2023.
28. See the the National Youth Policy of the Federal Government of Somalia.
29. See Federal Law No. 13 and Law No. (5) of 2018.
30. Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen. UNESCO, 2021. See also the Global Right to Information Rating by Country.
31. Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the State of Palestine, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.
32. Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Somalia and the Sudan.
33. Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar and the Syrian Arab Republic.
34. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
35. UNDESA, 2022.
36. Saudi Arabia was one of the 2022 winners for the COVID-19 Tawakkalna application, while the United Arab Emirates was one of the 2015 winners based on the National Validation Gateway initiative. See more on the Public Service Innovation Hub.
37. See Law No. 2016–22.
38. Human Rights Watch, 2019.
39. OECD and ESCWA, 2022.
40. See the Chafafiya platform.
41. See more on the Open Government Data Initiative.
42. Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the State of Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
43. The women, peace and security agenda seeks to support the participation of women in advancing peace and security, and ensure their protection from sexual and gender-based violence in situations of conflict. It comprises four main pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery.
44. ESCWA, 2023c.
45. United Nations, 2022.

46. ESCWA, UNFPA, UN Women and others, 2019.

47. United Nations, 2023.

48. All Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Jordan and Lebanon.

49. Since its launch in July 2016, the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children has promoted the concept of pathfinding, which aims to raise awareness, stimulate leadership commitment, galvanize action and establish a standard of national violence prevention throughout the world.

50. See more on the State of Palestine's strategy.

51. ESCWA, 2023a, 2022c, 2017b.

52. ESCWA, 2018b, 2017a.

53. ESCWA, 2018a.

54. ESCWA, 2023a, 2022c.

55. ESCWA, 2018a.

56. Costing estimates include information for Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

57. The World Bank data, https://data.worldbank.org/.

58. 15.5 per cent in Libya, 7.3 per cent in Oman, 6.7 per cent in Kuwait, 6.6 per cent in Saudi Arabia, and 5.6 per cent each in Algeria and the United Arab Emirates.

59. More than 20 per cent in Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

60. See the GlobalEconomy.com, Military spending, percent of GDP – Country rankings.

61. See more on the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

62. See more on the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions.