

Regional Report

# THE ATTAINMENT OF SDGS IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

IN THE ARAB REGION



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



United Nations Trust Fund  
for Human Security

Regional Report

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A. Situational overview – setting the scene

The past decade has witnessed widespread conflicts across the Arab region. These conflicts have proven fluid, protracted and complex, damaging the region's rich cultural landscape, while undermining human security and prospects for sustainable development. Since the early 2000s, the cumulative impact of conflict has resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, destruction of property and infrastructure, and the displacement of millions. This has exacerbated vulnerabilities, heightened multidimensional fragility, and eroded State and individual capacities to prepare for and cope with stressors.

Echoing human security principles, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize a world free of poverty, hunger, disease, and want. However, with evolving conflict dynamics across the Arab region, conflict-affected countries face a range of unique, context-specific challenges that constrain both capacities and resources and prevent the accrual and sustainment of development gains. The situation is stark. If this trend continues it will be impossible to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda, even those related to basic needs. Against this backdrop, there is a growing awareness that many SDGs will remain out of reach without a comprehensive approach to address the unique humanitarian, development and peacebuilding challenges faced in conflict-affected contexts. Without enhanced efforts to understand and mitigate the impacts of conflict, there is a significant risk that the prospects offered by the 2030 Agenda may never materialize for conflict-affected populations and nations across the region.

Consistent with efforts by the League of Arab States to achieve peace and development for the region and concerned by the worsening trajectory of countries affected by conflict, the Arab Committee for Sustainable Development, at its third meeting in December 2017, requested the League of Arab States to prepare a regional report that examines the impact of conflict on the achievement of SDGs across the region.

As a regional initiative, the report covers Member States in conflict, post-conflict and affected by conflict. To better analyse the context-specific realities, including challenges and opportunities faced in conflict-settings across the region, the following eight Member States were selected: The Republic of Iraq, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, The Lebanese Republic, The State of Libya, The Federal Republic of Somalia, The Republic of the Sudan, The Syrian Arab Republic and The Republic of Yemen.

The report brings together a range of relevant stakeholders to advance the attainment of SDGs in conflict and conflict-affected settings. The report refrains from adding additional layers of work to what are usually overburdened and under-capacitated systems; rather, it builds on, and strengthens, existing frameworks by closing potential gaps and combining existing tools to accelerate delivery and improve the use of resources. It further adds value by offering an exhaustive repository of existing frameworks to develop and strengthen responses to current gaps. This approach aids stakeholders to better identify the compound and dynamic challenges faced in countries affected by conflict across the region.

The report recognizes that Governments, the United Nations, multilateral institutions, civil society, and affected populations bring unique and comparative perspectives and advantages to advancing the 2030 Agenda in conflict-affected settings. Adopting a whole-of-society approach that recognizes the different roles played by these groups was critical for establishing the holistic framework used in the report. This approach did not, however, overlook overarching and group-specific findings and recommendations that support the transition from conflict to early recovery and sustainable peace.

The primary audience for the report is national policymakers, the United Nations system, multilateral and regional institutions, and civil society operating across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus (HDPN).

The report uses a mixed-method approach, including background literature and desk review; more than 30 regional e-consultations with different stakeholders; a stocktaking survey with 32 appointed SDG focal points from Member States and members of a

Regional Task Force (RTF) and United Nations country teams; and statistical analyses using the most recent data available on SDG progress in countries affected by conflict.

## B. Key messages on achieving SDGs in countries affected by conflict

The report identifies several key findings to support efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in countries affected by conflict across the Arab region. These are as follows:

1. The links between conflict and development are not linear. Violent conflict is a complex phenomenon that manifests itself in different ways in diverse social, political and economic contexts. Accordingly, development responses to mitigate the impact of conflict must also be assessed at the local, subnational and national levels and be tailored to the prevailing socioeconomic context. The five pillars of the 2030 Agenda, namely, peace, people, planet, prosperity, and partnership, provide an integrated framework to understand how the different dimensions of development are intertwined and the extent to which improvements in one of the pillars balance and support progress in the others.
2. Without peace, all other goals will be impossible to achieve. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. Through SDG 16, the Agenda sets out targets to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Increasing investments in peace, dialogue and reconciliation as a foundation for achieving sustainable development is critical to catalyse transitions to more stable social and economic dynamics. These efforts should build on endeavours to develop inclusive and responsive governance models that put an end to discrimination and marginalization while reducing inequality. Subnational governance structures need to be empowered to ensure that national development responses are grounded in local realities and serve those at the highest risk of being left behind. This necessitates efforts to harness new mediums, such as integrated digital tools and 'peace-tech' for mediation and peacebuilding efforts. These can enhance inclusion regardless of location, social barriers and movement restrictions, offering opportunities to integrate civil society and community leaders, who already play key roles in local peacebuilding and de-escalation, in national-level processes. Furthermore, efforts should be enhanced, when possible and appropriate, to integrate peacebuilding architecture and activities into ongoing humanitarian and development
3. While humanitarian aid exemplifies the principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB), the provision of aid is a temporary relief that cannot substitute for long-term sustainable solutions. Simultaneous humanitarian, security and socioeconomic crises in many conflict-affected countries require a holistic and integrated model of humanitarian relief, development, peacebuilding and, increasingly, disaster risk reduction that addresses both the drivers and consequences of conflict and complex crises, while increasing preparedness to respond to evolving dynamics. Achieving the SDGs requires new working frameworks that recognize the strong relationship between development processes, humanitarian relief and peace efforts and that facilitate the identification of opportunities for progress by maximizing synergies where these three dimensions intersect. Efforts to break down operational and policy silos between humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and disaster risk reduction communities must be amplified to enhance coherence in policies and programmes, increase coordination and strengthen efforts to advance the SDGs.
4. The SDGs offer a coherent roadmap for harnessing synergies between different dimensions of development. They also provide an opportunity to identify common denominators for harmonizing interventions across development, peace and security, and humanitarian relief pillars. Accordingly, to be successfully implemented, a process of national ownership and localization needs to identify which areas lag furthest behind and which areas offer the greatest returns and synergies within the country's political, social and economic context. The process of prioritization must be harmonized with efforts to localize national development strategies, as needs and priorities often vary at the subnational level. The human security framework provides a valuable conceptual link between the peacebuilding,



humanitarian and development pillars, offering a point of convergence to move beyond the siloed approaches that have constrained efforts to advance sustainable development in conflict-affected environments. Human security is anchored around five fundamental principles that set the criteria for effective action toward enhancing human capabilities. It emphasizes action that is people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific, prevention-oriented, and focuses on protection and empowerment.

5. Adopting a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach will support stronger coordination. To bridge the gap between humanitarian, development and peace projects, establishing a multi-stakeholder platform will help coordinate efforts, funding channels and information, and will address duplication or gaps towards the most vulnerable communities. Such a platform includes all local actors concerned and coordinates the various efforts towards achieving the SDGs. It will also help in bridging coordination gaps between central and local entities. As such, a coordination platform involving humanitarian and development actors across governmental, United Nations and civil society entities will support Member States in harmonizing efforts, enforcing data collection and identifying national priorities. Strengthening coordination between national and subnational actors is also key.
6. Localizing SDG achievement efforts are critical for ensuring a whole-of-society approach, preventing vulnerable groups from being left behind and strengthening national and local-level coordination. Strengthening the connections between central and local efforts will support advancements towards sustainable peace and development. The involvement of local communities, particularly those affected by conflict, represents an opportunity to ensure that efforts at the national level yield results at the local level. Localization should focus on SDG policies and programming, building capacities to understand and use SDGs and their monitoring indicators. There is a need for an appropriate measure to monitor and implement SDGs by using relevant tools and involving local actors on the ground. Localizing the delivery of the goals also requires responses that are designed with a view to cross-cutting issues such as gender. Including people from both genders and different age groups, minority groups and people with various special needs will support LNOB efforts while contextualizing SDGs to local realities to ensure focus and impact. This can be done through localizing implementation to increase inclusivity at the local level and integrating local entities into the process.
7. Constraints relating to data continue to hamper monitoring SDG progress. Studies and e-consultations illustrate a significant gap in the collection, access and monitoring of the data needed to analyse the progress made in conflict-affected countries. While availability of updated data remains a challenge in several countries in the region, this can be compounded in countries affected by conflict with the lack of access to conflict areas and their populations, which affects census planning and limits data collection mechanisms. Moreover, in emergency situations, data is collected individually through various actors, which jeopardizes coordinated data collection and monitoring efforts and can sometimes undermine interoperability. With no centralized coordination body to consolidate data, it may also be lost. Strengthening partnerships through existing and new regional and international frameworks on data monitoring and evaluation would support national efforts within Member States as well as activities undertaken by United Nations agencies to monitor and produce data on SDGs. Promising steps forward were identified in several countries ensuring that respective national statistical bureaus are represented in national SDG frameworks and mandated to produce, monitor and analyse data on identified SDG indicators and targets.
8. Integrating internally displaced persons (IDPs) in development strategies and data collection efforts is critical to ensure that no one is left behind and to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable. A major shortcoming is that there is often limited integration of data on IDPs in SDG data. However, partnerships with international organizations can support relevant stakeholders in monitoring adequate data on IDPs, particularly regarding country-level performance conditions, and social and economic indicators. The 2019 SDG Index Dashboard also shows that data collection remains a key challenge in conflict-affected countries. A recent ESCWA report on SDG progress at the subnational level in countries affected by conflict also served to highlight the unique complexities of data collection in conflict settings.
9. While development interventions should ultimately be tailored to the national and subnational contexts, there are many areas where the regional dimension provides a cost-effective platform for progress. Furthermore, there are several areas of synergy in terms of principles and objectives between global and regional frameworks. For example, the 2030 Agenda shares key principles with the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) and national development plans (NDPs) from the angles of resilience and stabilization. Relevant actors should reflect on



ways to integrate these frameworks to best collect data and advance SDG efforts efficiently. Reversals in development gains in the Arab region are a sombre reminder of why it is important for the international community, regional actors and Member States to focus on upstream conflict prevention, conflict resolution and sustainable development. This warrants a new regional approach applying the human security paradigm based on a holistic and inclusive concept of conflict prevention.

**10.** The international community's 'in-country' efforts to advance and monitor SDGs can also be further integrated. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) is one of the key instruments for supporting the United Nations in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Although the UNSDCF is led by the United Nations, it is anchored in pre-existing frameworks, such as NDPs, and aims at national ownership. The UNSDCF adopts the SDG analytical tool, which calls for SDG ownership at the global, regional, national, subnational, rural, and urban levels. It also aims to support stakeholders in their LNOB commitment through enhancing data on SDGs, supporting transformative economic pathways and promoting multi-stakeholder engagement. The Common Country Assessment (CCA) as a reporting mechanism for UNSDCF, helps United Nations agencies to discuss national development challenges and common approaches in the beginning of the funding cycle with key national and international stakeholders.

**11.** Conflict-affected countries face substantial structural challenges that hinder progress towards the SDGs and impede coordination efforts. To achieve the SDGs, Governments, United Nations agencies, civil society, the private sector, academia, and communities at large need to collaborate across societal sectors towards common objectives, necessitating strong and coherent partnerships. Due to the interconnectedness of the 2030 Agenda, it requires joint efforts to achieve collective outcomes and ensure the principle of LNOB. Without comprehensive and inclusive partnerships at the global, regional, national, and subnational levels, efforts to address the complex challenges posed by conflict to progress towards the SDGs will be jeopardized. In line with this, SDG 17 recognizes that multi-stakeholder partnerships are critical in mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies and resources. With targets focused on capacity-building, finance, technology, governance and policy, SDG 17 highlights the need to align SDG policies with ongoing policy and programming initiatives and engender coordination to promote sustainable development across borders and traditional silos.

**12.** A key area in need of strong partnerships to enhance knowledge exchange and capacity-building is the prioritization process of SDGs. Through inputs received from Member States, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs) alike, special emphasis was placed on SDGs 16 and 17 as drivers towards achieving the other SDGs. The need for additional support for Member States from the international community was highlighted in identifying priorities that are catalytic and could support the transition from conflict to recovery and sustainable positive peace, and to follow a roadmap towards achieving such prioritization. The international community could support Member States in introducing a more comprehensive framework, linking a triple nexus approach that considers human development as an integral element to the 2030 Agenda.





## C. Challenges and constraints in advancing the new paradigm for achieving the 2030 Agenda in countries of concern

Despite efforts to advance SDGs in conflict-affected countries in the Arab region through coordination mechanisms and reformed NDPs that build upon lessons learned and good practices, several challenges remain.

### 1. Coordination and cooperation between actors

The United Nations reform and the new generation of UNSDCFs provide the driving force to address coordination and capacity gaps. However, there continue to be cases of disconnected and duplicative planning and implementation within the United Nations system in its different forms, and between the United Nations system and national and external stakeholders. Divides along the lines of institutions and approaches regarding both conceptual and working cultures have perpetuated the separation between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors. Associated with limited cohesive and joint interventions, related issues emerge in the lack of clarity in leadership, mandate and functions among different agencies. Therefore, a systematic review of lessons learned in the Arab region could be useful to capture possible areas where regional cooperation could provide added value to tackle these issues.

### 2. Planning, implementation and funding mechanisms

To date, the efforts identified in using the New Way of Working (NWOW) have been ad-hoc and differ from country to country. This yields open-ended questions on how such outcomes could look and be manifested in different contexts. Existing regional funding mechanisms do not have an instrument for humanitarian-development-peacebuilding initiatives. While funding is often related to a specific plan or programme, which may reinforce the nexus, funding schemes are not designed with the specific intention or capacity to facilitate collaboration across the pillars. As a result, the lack of multi-annual and cooperative funding makes the achievement of ambitious collective outcomes, such as the SDGs, unattainable. In addition, the use of annual rather than multi-year funding schemes and the fragmentation of funding also limits the synergies across the triple nexus.

### 3. Policy/governance environment

One of the key principles that underpins efforts towards increased integration across the HDPN is the idea of increasing the resources channelled through country systems and contributing to the development of national capacities. However, despite more integrated planning frameworks offered by the new strategic approach of the UNSDCF in the Arab region, efforts

to work with and through country systems are still far from being the course of action. It must be noted that factors of political economy such as power distribution, weak rule of law and respect for human rights, trust in institutions, and high levels of perceived, or actual, corruption often limit more ambitious humanitarian and development efforts to be channelled directly by country institutions. Conflict contexts are particularly impacted by this. In these situations, the volatility of the situation on the ground and the evolving urgent humanitarian needs create 'packs of actions' without clear transition strategies.

### 4. Volatility of contexts and multiple crises happening in parallel

Few of the current plans or projects implemented include contingencies associated with new or renewed sources of violence, or vulnerability to other crises that relate, among other things, to health, floods and food shocks. While anticipatory planning and financing have become the norm in handling natural disasters, they have yet to be applied to conflict-induced emergencies. This can be facilitated through increasing synergies between disaster risk reduction actors and those in the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding communities, and could enable the sharing of tools and approaches to better facilitate this.

### 5. Other operational challenges

A key challenge shared by all the countries of concern is a lack of data for effective monitoring and evaluation of SDGs progress and implementation. This common challenge reflects the difficulties of collecting complete and accurate data in contexts of conflict, which has now been compounded by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, making vulnerable populations even harder to reach. While the creation of multi-stakeholder networks is identified as a key element for success in the localization and advancement of the SDGs, it is not clear how the role of civil society can be articulated, especially in the context of reforms within the United Nations, the reinvigoration of the Resident Coordination (RC) system, the creation of the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) and the link to the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC).

## D. Ways forward

While realizing that the goals of the 2030 Agenda require coordinated efforts and close synergies between the various actors, it is clear that conflict-affected countries are facing systematic challenges with regard to advancing the SDGs in national frameworks. Addressing these necessitates a focus on the following:

1. Fostering strong partnerships at the national, regional and international levels will support Member States in enhancing peace and strengthening institutions in line with SDG 16.
2. SDGs can only be achieved by cooperating with, and supporting, Member States to ensure capacitated institutions, including in monitoring data on SDG progress. This is outlined clearly in the targets of SDG 17. Enhancing capacities and ownership of the 2030 Agenda at the national level requires close coordination within national entities and between such entities and regional, international and local bodies.
3. To advance SDGs and achieve collective outcomes, it has become evident that an inclusive approach is crucial both at the level of stakeholders and through outreach to local communities.
4. Engaging with relevant local actors including, but not limited to, academia, civil society and local communities will ensure that national efforts to advance SDGs engage the most vulnerable and those at risk of being left furthest behind in the process of working towards achieving 2030 Agenda.
5. As demonstrated by the inputs of Member States representatives, Governments of conflict-affected countries are keen to work in close coordination with regional and international entities to elaborate a sustainable approach towards peace and development. Regional and international entities therefore have a key role to play in supporting Member States along their trajectory towards long-term peace and development.





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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>3RP</b>	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
<b>5Ps</b>	People, planet, prosperity, partnerships, and peace
<b>AHDR</b>	Arab Human Development Report
<b>AWC</b>	Arab Water Council
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>DPPA</b>	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
<b>ESCWA</b>	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>GDI</b>	Gender Development Index
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GIS</b>	Global information system
<b>GNI</b>	Gross national income
<b>HDPN</b>	Humanitarian-development-peace nexus
<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>IAEG</b>	Inter-agency Expert Group
<b>IASC</b>	Inter-agency Standing Committee
<b>IDMC</b>	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced person
<b>IFF</b>	Illicit financial flow
<b>IISS</b>	International Institute for Strategic Studies
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IPI</b>	International Peace Institute
<b>IRC</b>	International Rescue Committee
<b>ISIL</b>	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
<b>JSC</b>	Joint Steering Committee
<b>LNOB</b>	Leaving no one behind
<b>LSE</b>	London School of Economics and Political Science
<b>MAPS</b>	Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>MPI</b>	Multidimensional Poverty Report
<b>MPTF</b>	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
<b>NCSD</b>	National Committee for Sustainable Development
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NEET</b>	Not in education, employment or training
<b>NFI</b>	Non-food item
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NHCSD</b>	National Higher Committee for Sustainable Development
<b>NWOW</b>	New way of working
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights



<b>PBF</b>	Peacebuilding Fund
<b>PPP</b>	Purchasing power parity
<b>PRIO</b>	Peace Research Institute, Oslo
<b>PSU</b>	PeaceStartup
<b>RC</b>	Resident Coordinator
<b>RCO</b>	Resident Coordinator's Office
<b>RTF</b>	Regional Task Force
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SDIC</b>	Sustainable Development and International Cooperation
<b>SERP</b>	Socioeconomic response plan
<b>UNCAC</b>	United Nations Convention against Corruption
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDRR</b>	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>UNTFHS</b>	United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security
<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary national review
<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



# 1

## SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW SETTING THE SCENE



## A. Introduction

Conflict has surged by two thirds over the last decade. A 2019 estimate indicates that 52 armed conflicts were recorded by the end of the previous year.<sup>1</sup> Currently, around two billion people live in countries affected by conflict,<sup>2</sup> and projections point out that, by 2030, up to two thirds of the world's extreme poor will be living in fragility, conflict and/or violence.<sup>3</sup> With the recent exacerbation in the global conflict landscape,<sup>4</sup> this trend is set to continue. In 2018 alone, the total number of fatalities in conflict-affected settings stood at around 53,000.<sup>5</sup> Although this marks a decrease from the 2017 peak of 67,000,<sup>6</sup> the impact of conflict remains deep and pervasive.

The Arab region is home to a rich cultural and social landscape rooted in a history of diverse beliefs, common values and multiple resources and assets. Over the past decade, however, the prevalence of conflicts has threatened this dynamic culture and wasted considerable resources with accumulated loss of life, destruction of property and infrastructure, displacement, and inequality. This includes gender inequality and the prevalence of gender-based violence as conflict and post-conflict situations are usually settings for intensified violence and discrimination against women.<sup>7</sup> Such factors undermine human security and sustainable development gains while intensifying multidimensional fragility.<sup>8</sup> Without better understanding and mitigation of conflict impacts, there is a very real risk that the prospects opened by the 2030 Agenda may never materialize.

Moreover, in 2020, the region has been affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the long-term impact of the pandemic has yet to be observed, the short-term impacts have been severe, particularly on vulnerable groups. In conflict-affected countries, the pandemic put often weak and/or overburdened health systems under tremendous stress, and resulted in several evolving socioeconomic challenges.<sup>9</sup> It is anticipated that the crisis posed by the pandemic will amplify pre-existing vulnerabilities, reduce available resources and limit mobility, engendering conditions that fuel tensions across conflict-affected settings. While this report does not focus on COVID-19, it should be read in light of the pandemic's consequences on societies and governments in conflict-affected countries in the Arab region.

**The 2030 Agenda:** The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 SDGs, is a call for action and a unique opportunity for countries to eradicate poverty and inequality in all its forms. Adopted by all United Nations Member States, the SDGs aim to catalyse inclusive growth, reduce inequalities and address climate change, among other global priorities. In a context of evolving geopolitical dynamics, the 2030 Agenda has come at a critical juncture for the Arab region, providing a framework to galvanize collective efforts to address issues of peace and development, and solidify positive achievements to date.

Echoing human security principles, the 2030 Agenda<sup>10</sup> emphasizes

*A world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want ... free of fear and violence ... with equitable and universal access to quality education, health care and social protection ... to safe drinking water and sanitation ... where food is sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious ... where habitats are safe, resilient and sustainable ... and where there is universal access to reliable and sustainable energy.*

**Context:** Global literature concerned with the achievement of the SDGs suggests that countries affected by conflict are far behind.<sup>11</sup> They confront a range of context-specific challenges that limit institutional capacities and available resources. To date, fragile States are the group of developing countries that are further behind to meet SDG targets related to basic needs (including poverty, undernourishment, access to education, electricity, healthcare and water and sanitation).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, conflict-affected countries are estimated to host around 85 per cent of those who live in extreme poverty around the globe, projected to reach 342 million people by 2030.<sup>13</sup> There is a growing awareness that many SDGs will remain out of reach unless the unique challenges faced by conflict-affected countries are addressed through a comprehensive HDPN approach.



**Rationale:** Consistent with efforts by the League of Arab States to achieve peace and development for the people of the Arab region and concerned by the worsening trajectory of countries affected by conflict, the Arab Committee for Sustainable Development, at its third meeting in December 2017, requested the League of Arab States to prepare a regional report that examines the impact of conflict on the achievement of SDGs across the Arab region.

Several key reports have been published analysing the progress of SDGs in the Arab region.<sup>14</sup> While they have focused on achieving selected SDGs in a few countries, including those covered in this report, none have viewed the issue from an integrated and regional angle. To date, there has been no comprehensive regional analysis of the efforts and progress in conflict-affected countries. Such an analysis, however, would provide these countries with the guidance and tools to prioritize, monitor and achieve SDG targets and indicators. This report represents the first regional assessment of the impact of conflict on the achievement of the SDGs, with a focus on regional opportunities and challenges in conflict-affected countries in the Arab region. In doing so, it adopts a human security lens.

**Objectives:** The report aims to support and bring together relevant stakeholders to work towards realizing the SDGs in situations of conflict while refraining from adding additional layers of work. Rather, it builds on and strengthens existing frameworks by closing potential gaps and combining available tools to accelerate delivery and improve the use of resources. It further adds value by offering an exhaustive repository of active frameworks to develop and strengthen responses to current gaps. To support advancing the 2030 Agenda through catalysts for peace and development, the report proposes that prioritization of critical SDG targets and indicators can result in the most impactful and sustainable gains for people and communities affected by conflict. It provides a set of policy recommendations to support the transition from conflict to recovery and sustainable positive peace through coordinated multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborative mechanisms. Through this approach, both the report and the reference guide illustrate the importance of a holistic yet context-specific approach to conflict-affected countries whose unique landscapes do not allow a one-size-fit-all method. The report instead acknowledges the importance of national priorities and localized challenges and opportunities to realize a transition from vulnerability to long-term development.

**Structure of the report:** The report opens with an introduction to provide an overview of the context, rationale, and methodology (including limitations and challenges), as well as the selection of conflict-affected countries in the Arab region. It highlights

the global and regional trends in conflict dynamics and explores how conflicts have significantly impacted the achievement of the SDGs in the region. In response to this, it proposes a framework and reference guide from which countries can choose, prioritize and sequence SDG adoption in their respective national and local development plans and policy architecture. Chapter 2 outlines the five pillars of people, planet, prosperity, partnerships and peace (5Ps) that are critical to the 2030 Agenda and the impact of conflict on SDG achievement at the global and regional levels. It uses the 5Ps to frame an in-depth analysis of the key dimensions of SDGs in the region and in respective countries. Chapter 3 draws from good practices and lessons learned to identify opportunities to advance the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region and transition towards sustainable peace and development. The report's final chapter is focused on partnerships, providing an exhaustive repository of existing frameworks relevant to SDG achievement at both the regional and national levels. The chapter highlights how conflict has impacted different types of coordination and partnerships in relation to SDGs, with an aim to strengthen potential gaps and identify key stakeholders. The chapter includes good practices and catalytic partnerships to support governments in advancing progress towards SDG achievement. The report concludes with key messages and recommendations to all stakeholders concerned including, and not limited to, Member States, United Nations agencies, civil society, academia, the private sector, and affected communities.

## B. Selection of countries and methodology

Through its Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, the League of Arab States led the research process of this report to enable a dialogue on the impact of conflict on the achievement of the SDGs in the Arab region. The report was drafted and supporting research was conducted in coordination with the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as the secretariat.

Beside these four core actors, the report engaged with a regional task force<sup>15</sup> that included international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies and civil society organizations in the Arab region. Additionally, it consulted closely with representatives of Member States and United Nations Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) in participating countries. This participatory and inclusive approach further underlines the uniqueness of this report, which covers the time frame between 2015 until 2020. The year 2015 was chosen as the starting point as it marked the launch of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

**Selection of conflict-affected countries in the region:** As a regional initiative, the report covers Member States both directly and indirectly affected by conflict or in early recovery post-conflict environments. To better analyse the context-specific realities, including challenges and opportunities faced in conflict-settings across the region, eight Member States have been selected, namely: the Republic of Iraq, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Lebanese Republic, the State of Libya, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Republic of the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic,<sup>16</sup> and the Republic of Yemen.<sup>17</sup>

These eight countries have been selected to account for the following: (a) variations in terms of location; (b) population size; (c) severity and stage of conflict; (d) direct and indirect involvement in conflict; (e) diversity of risks and conflict dynamics, including the human impact of conflict; and (f) the national framework on SDGs in each country to support monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

**Methodology:** The report adopts a mixture of data collection methods including primary and secondary research, combining quantitative and qualitative data as follows:

1. Desk review (September 2019 – September 2020): Relevant global, regional and national reports and documents on SDGs achievement in conflict-affected countries were reviewed. During the data collection phase of the research, further reports and documents at the national level were reviewed including, and not limited to, common country analyses, voluntary national reviews (VNRs) and reports produced by United Nations agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs), as available.
2. Preliminary consultations (November 2019): Three Member States were engaged in preliminary consultations at the Arab Sustainable Development Week hosted by the League of Arab States, namely, Libya, the Sudan and Yemen.
3. Statistical analysis (until 2019): Using the most recent data available on SDG progress and achievement in the countries affected by conflict, a statistical analysis was conducted covering the 5Ps.
4. Stocktaking survey (December 2019 – February 2020): A questionnaire was circulated and collected from 32 appointed SDG focal points from Member States as well as members of the RTF and RCOs to help in refining the research focus on opportunities and challenges in view of data collection and coordination mechanisms related to SDGs.<sup>18</sup>
5. E-consultations (May – August 2020): To collect in-depth data on SDG progress and coordination mechanisms, 33 e-consultations were conducted with representatives of appointed SDG focal points for Member States, relevant ministries and local councils, RCOs, United Nations agencies, CSOs, experts, and local actors. RCOs supported the research team in identifying different relevant actors in the countries covered in the report. The e-consultations delved into the opportunities and challenges of prioritizing SDGs and setting up, or maintaining, coordination mechanisms to ensure that the recommendations of the report fit the context. They additionally covered good practices and lessons learned from the region.<sup>19</sup>
6. Dissemination: The official launch of the report will be hosted by the League of Arab States. The report will be further disseminated in public fora concerned with supporting States in enhancing the HDPN.



**Impact of COVID-19 outbreak on methodology and timeline:** The process of data collection and report drafting coincided with the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Arab region. E-consultations planned for April 2020 were rescheduled to take place between June and August 2020. As the report is adopting a comprehensive humanitarian-development-peacebuilding approach to analyse SDG progress, COVID-19 was taken into account during e-consultations to understand the challenges and opportunities it presented for the prioritization of and partnerships towards the SDGs.

As highlighted during the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development,<sup>20</sup> the pandemic is expected to have an impact on national priorities. Notwithstanding this factor, it is worth emphasizing that the 17 SDGs are interlinked. Data collection processes, including through e-consultations, have maintained a holistic approach in the themes they have covered, particularly around challenges and opportunities to advance the 2030 Agenda in the conflict-affected countries and enhance partnerships on SDGs through a multi-stakeholder approach. The report emphasizes the 2030 Agenda as a vehicle towards achieving peace, prosperity and development. The outbreak of COVID-19 was not viewed in isolation, but rather as part of the overall analysis of SDG achievement in conflict-affected settings.

**Key limitations and challenges:** The report encountered the following challenges and limitations with regards to access to stakeholders and data:

**1. Data access:** During the data collection process, a key limitation was the lack of up-to-date

and accurate data on SDG progress in conflict-affected countries. It is important to note that this was a common challenge across all countries but in varying degrees. Additionally, a compendium of regional and national frameworks for cooperation was barely found in the literature on SDGs. During the e-consultations, these limitations were confirmed by various stakeholders as a key hindrance towards advancing the 2030 Agenda and measuring progress to ensure an adequate stocktaking of indicators and targets.

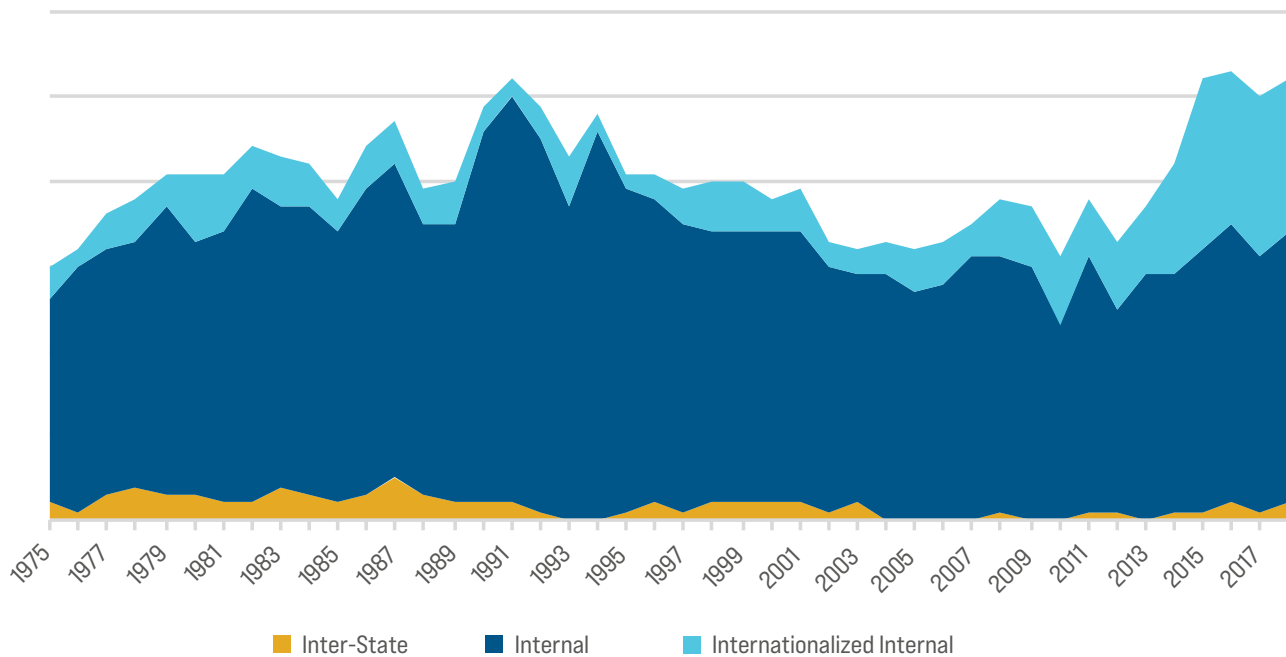
**2. Engagement with stakeholders:** Other limitations included coordination difficulties and competing priorities due to conflict situations. Apart from emergency responses being the focus of countries affected by conflict, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the responsiveness of stakeholders to requests for information and participation in e-consultations. This difficulty was addressed through extending the time frame for the e-consultations and maintaining flexibility in accessing information to ensure an adequate level of engagement with representatives of Member States, the United Nations country teams (UNCTs) and local actors across the countries covered in this report. Nevertheless, in some countries, the research team encountered challenges engaging with stakeholders for the purpose of e-consultations, which was compensated through the circulation of country summaries aimed at validating information received and analysed during the e-consultations.

## C. The global landscape of conflict

The global landscape of conflict has changed extensively in recent years. Despite a significant reduction in the number of inter-State conflicts since the end of World War II, intra-State or internal conflicts – including those with international dimensions where support is provided to conflict stakeholders through a third-party nation or actor – have proliferated.<sup>21</sup> Recent years saw notable spikes in internal conflicts, much of which occurred in the Arab region. Internal conflict typologies are generally characterized by their fluidity, protraction and complexity. Although internal conflicts are diverse in both drivers and impacts, they regularly exhibit the following four key features:

1. The involvement of multiple non-State groups as conflict actors.
2. The impacts of globalized and transboundary issues, such as climate change, often amplify the drivers of conflict and act as threat multipliers. In many cases, protracted internal conflict or fragility can undermine capacities to effectively respond to the impacts of these transboundary issues, increasing vulnerabilities within communities and thereby amplifying risks.
3. Regional actors with vested interest in the outcomes of the conflict are often involved.

**Figure 1.** Types of conflict on a global level, 1975-2017



Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, Version 19.1. UCDP Battle-related Deaths Dataset.

**4.** Internal conflicts, even those with regional elements, are drawn against a backdrop of substantial and often long-term domestic social, economic and/or political grievances.

These features can interact to create compound systems that drive increasingly prolonged and deadly conflicts, and complicate efforts to achieve sustainable solutions and positive peace.

**Plurality of actors:** The multiplicity of actors and interests complicates progress towards sustainable and inclusive resolutions. This dynamic is heightened by the intervention of outside actors, with these international dimensions making it increasingly difficult to find solutions through political settlement. Conflicts with more local and international actors are, on average, longer, more violent and more intractable than those with less actors involved. This is shown by the increased average length of conflicts globally. Conflicts that ended in 1970 lasted, on average, 9.6 years, whereas the average reached 14.5 years for conflicts that ended in 2015.<sup>22</sup> Conflicts with these characteristics, such as the those that occurred in countries in the Arab region including the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, but also those from other regions including Afghanistan, have the highest numbers of casualties. In a trend that seems set to continue, external State parties contribute troops in 28 per cent of all inter-State conflicts globally.

**Globalization:** In this globalized context, technological advances have amplified levels of interconnectivity among conflict actors. The same global net-

works that enable the flows of trade and information have been exploited to increase the reach and complexity of today's violent conflicts. Conflict actors can leverage global networks and supply chains to access additional resources and connect to a broader spread of supporters, including terrorist groups and organized crime factions. Against this transnational backdrop, the international system, which remains inherently State-centric, is sometimes unable to react with adequate responses, analyses or cross-border mandates and interventions.<sup>23</sup> Increasing globalization has also deepened links between conflicts and global challenges, creating more compound risks, as shown by the evolving impacts of climate change. In conflict-affected settings, the increasing severity and frequency of climate-related disasters impede capacities to respond to shocks and manage disaster risks. Thus, climate change has acted as a threat multiplier by generating extreme and unpredictable weather patterns in contexts where response systems are already damaged, weak or incapacitated by conflict. Moreover, conflicts have also increasingly attracted a range of international foreign fighters, which is clearly displayed at the regional level by the growth of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This development has generated substantial negative consequences for future global and regional stability. This relationship will be viewed in greater detail in chapter 2.

**Regionalization:** Regionalization refers to the engagement of other countries from within the region in intra-State conflicts. Across the world, regionalization of conflicts has increased, contributing to polit-



ical, economic, social, and military transborder linkages. This has complicated conflicts and increased their intractability.<sup>24</sup> Analysing conflict dynamics in the Arab region shows that linkages across borders are increasing. The conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Yemen are but a few examples of this development.<sup>25</sup> The spillover results of conflicts, such as waves of displacement and ruptures in economic supply chains, also have the potential to absorb critical resources and impact neighbouring countries. Displacement is a good example of this. Globally, as of 2019, an estimated 79.5 million people have been displaced from their area of origin including cross border displacement and those displaced in their countries of origin.<sup>26</sup> According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the average economic cost of providing housing, health care, education, and security, and the loss of income for the 50.8 million people living in internal displacement at the end of 2019 was \$390 per IDP, resulting in a total global economic burden of \$20 billion annually.<sup>27</sup> Sampling Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen from the Arab region shows the average cost per IDP stands higher than the global average, at \$522.50 in 2019.<sup>28</sup> Chapter 2 provides a deeper analysis of the interlinkages between conflict and displacement in the Arab region in relation to SDG achievement.

**Localized Tensions:** In many cases, conflicts have their source in unresolved localized tensions. Absent or weakened institutions, a breakdown in the rule

of law, marginalization and discrimination, the lack of economic opportunities, and weak governance exacerbate conflict drivers. Once a conflict unfolds, it often reinforces pre-existing ruptures in the social contract, perpetuating a negative cycle whereby the grievances that created a framework conducive to triggering conflict are exacerbated by the conflict itself. In the Arab region, this interface between conflict and weakened social contracts has been evidenced most recently in Libya, where, in 2019, the previously slow-burning conflict erupted into a high-intensity war following years of impunity for militias and general lawlessness.<sup>29</sup>

Against this backdrop, sustainable resolutions to conflicts have become increasingly elusive. Parallel to an increase in the absolute number of internal wars is the growing absence of negotiated political resolutions or decisive military victories. Peace, when achieved in the absence of these two outcomes, has proven fragile and difficult to maintain. Indeed, 60 per cent of conflicts in the early 2000s relapsed within five years of reaching a resolution, while 90 per cent of civil wars over the last decade occurred in countries which had experienced civil war in the preceding 30 years.<sup>30</sup> The complex interaction of the above characteristics has created a global conflict landscape where it is difficult to attain a positive and inclusive peace that serves the whole of society. If unaddressed, this will likely have dire consequences for global peace and security and development progress.

## D. The regional dimension: challenges and opportunities

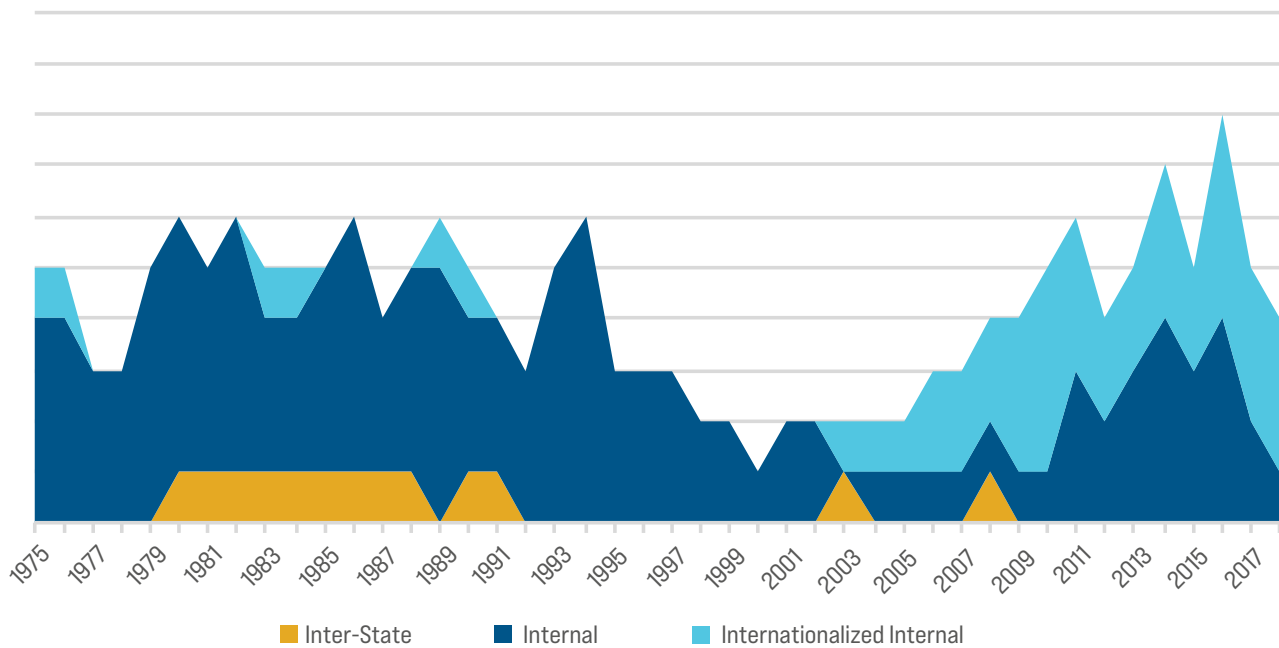
The Arab region is one of the most conflict-affected areas in the world. Despite a degree of variance across conflict-affected countries in terms of the actors involved, and the stage and intensity of conflict and violence, conflicts across the region have led to a tragic loss of life and physical destruction of infrastructure, worsened fiscal and financial positions, and damaged institutions. Figure 2 demonstrates that internal conflicts across the region have been increasing up until 2016.

Furthermore, these conflicts have been characterized by a high degree of regionalization, with impacts spreading across borders to neighbouring countries. This is captured most clearly through displacement patterns, with recent figures showing that more than half of the world's refugees originate from the Arab region, one third of them being hosted by neighbouring countries.<sup>31</sup> Conflicts in the Syrian

Arab Republic and Iraq have significantly increased cross-border displacement, with an influx of refugees, mostly to Jordan and Lebanon. As of June 2020, according to statistics by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the total number of refugees hosted in Jordan is estimated at 751,208, out of which 661,390 are from the Syrian Arab Republic, 66,804 from Iraq, 14,655 from Yemen, and 6,034 from the Sudan.<sup>32</sup> In Lebanon, the total number of refugees is estimated at 932,619, of which 879,529 are from the Syrian Arab Republic and the rest from Iraq and the Sudan.<sup>33</sup> In addition to this, the number of IDPs in several countries struggling with conflict such as Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen is striking.<sup>34</sup> By the close of 2019, it was estimated that conflicts led to 2.8 million new IDPs across the Arab region, around 30 per cent of the global total, while 886,000 displacements associated with natural disasters were recorded.<sup>35</sup>



**Figure 2.** Types of conflict, Arab region, 1975-2017



Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, Version 19.1. UCDP Battle-related Deaths Dataset.

These new displacements contributed to a total figure of 17.3 million IDPs across the Arab region as of 2019.<sup>36</sup> The Government of Yemen estimates the number of IDPs at about 3.6 million, concentrated mainly in Marib Governorate, which now hosts 30 per cent of the total displaced population in Yemen.<sup>37</sup>

The region also hosts 14 of the world's 20 most water-stressed countries and faces a youth unemployment rate exceeding 30 per cent,<sup>38</sup> compared to the global youth unemployment rate estimated at 13.6 per cent.<sup>39</sup> With limited social safety nets across most of the countries in the region, it is likely that local grievances and conflict stressors will amplify in the coming years unless they are addressed through an integrated approach focused on advancing human security.

**Achievement of SDGs in conflict-affected settings in the region – key challenges:** Conflicts and protracted humanitarian crises in the region have significantly impacted SDG gains. Not only have they stressed local institutions and governance structures, they have also made it difficult to identify SDG priorities that could catalyse peace and sustainable development during and after conflict. This challenge is amplified by the lack of a clear framework or reference point on SDG achievements specific to conflict-affected contexts, which leaves many countries overwhelmed with multiple urgent priorities and without systems in place to track and advance progress efficiently. Setting SDG priorities in national and local development plans has been extremely challenging, and is a key objective of this report. SDG achievement depends on the State's ability to

identify key priority areas that would catalyse development gains and create the relevant linkages between them.<sup>40</sup> Chapter 2 will delve into these gaps through an in-depth analysis of SDG achievement in conflict-affected countries in the region using the 5Ps of the 2030 Agenda, while chapters 3 and 4 will propose ways to advance the 2030 Agenda. They outline elements and lessons learned for transition from conflict, crisis and/or fragility towards peace and sustainable development. They also provide a review of relevant SDG initiatives led by the international community and explain how these are linked to initiatives and efforts led by Member States to achieve SDGs, including the overall effectiveness of the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) and their link (or the lack thereof) to NDPs.

Through e-consultations and a review of relevant literature on SDGs in conflict, further challenges have been identified with regards to SDG achievement. These are as follows:

- 1. Data gaps:** Studies conducted on SDG progress in the Arab region have illustrated significant variance in terms of country-level performance against socioeconomic indicators.<sup>41</sup> The 2019 SDG Index Dashboard also shows that data collection remains a key challenge in conflict-affected countries.<sup>42</sup> A recent ESCWA report on SDG progress at the subnational level in countries affected by conflict served to highlight the unique complexities of data collection in conflict settings.<sup>43</sup>



It is important to note that while monitoring SDGs through accurate data is considered a challenge for several countries in the region, this challenge is exacerbated in countries affected by conflict due to lack of geographical access to areas and populations in conflict, which affects census planning. This is often compounded by a lack of adequate data collection mechanisms. Moreover, in emergency situations, data is collected individually through various actors, which jeopardizes coordinated efforts towards data monitoring on SDGs.<sup>44</sup> Without effective coordination, this can also undermine the interoperability of data.

**2. Institutional challenges:** In addition to data limitations, conflict-affected countries face other challenges hindering progress towards SDGs. These include institutional challenges resulting from changes in governments; coordination issues between central and local provinces; competing priorities between HRPs and frameworks for sustainable development, with a lack of synergies between both; and challenges in prioritization of SDGs.

Chapters 3 and 4 of this report will explore the impact of conflict on advancing the 2030 Agenda and monitoring SDG progress in conflict-affected countries so as to identify ways forward that build upon national efforts and frameworks.

**Achievement of SDGs in the Arab region – progress:** Although countries in the region face many challenges, their commitment to the SDGs is also a great opportunity. The 2019 SDG Index Dashboard demonstrates SDG progress in Jordan on Goal 13 (Climate Change) and Goal 15 (Life on Land). The dashboard also showed achievements in Lebanon for Goal 1 (No Poverty) and in Iraq for Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Chapter 2 will provide an in-depth analysis of SDG gains in these countries, and more broadly in conflict-affected contexts across the region.

Additionally, countries in the region, including those affected by conflict, have embarked on various efforts to monitor their progress towards achieving SDGs, which are as follows:

- 1. National frameworks on SDGs:** Several conflict-affected countries such as Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, and the Sudan have put in place national frameworks on SDGs that aim to support using a whole-of-government approach and enhance the monitoring of data.
- 2. National development plans (NDPs):** Countries including Iraq, Jordan and Somalia have adopted

NDPs to highlight priority areas and pillars through a roadmap. Additionally, Yemen has prepared a Plan for National Priorities 2019-2020, which identifies a number of priorities and focus areas.

- 3. Data monitoring:** In several countries, the national statistical bureau is represented in national SDG frameworks and is mandated to produce, monitor and analyse data on identified SDG indicators and targets.
- 4. Voluntary national reviews:**<sup>45</sup> Despite the structural challenges facing the Arab region, several countries including conflict-affected countries have issued their VNRs in recent years. Five of the countries covered in this report have issued their first VNRs to monitor and report on SDG progress. These are: Jordan (2017), Sudan and Lebanon (2018), Iraq (2019), and most recently Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic (2020).<sup>46</sup>

Key outcomes from the five VNRs included:

- Raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda, including goals, targets, indicators, and means of implementation.
- Introducing ownership and localization of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs and their mainstreaming within national and subnational plans.
- Prioritizing the human development angle.
- Strengthening institutional frameworks and improving SDG governance and structures.
- SDG monitoring, financing and costing, and capacity development.
- Gender mainstreaming in SDG plans.
- Integration of IDPs into NDPs.
- Using the SDG framework as a tool for identifying national development priorities and for accelerating change and transformation towards peace and development.
- Expanding and institutionalizing the base for participation in implementing development plans through facilitating stakeholder engagement.

The report will further examine how partnerships for the SDGs could support, and indeed catalyse, the transition to peace in conflict-affected countries based on in-depth e-consultations with the different stakeholders in the respective countries. It will provide an analysis of key coordination mechanisms at the regional and national levels, including already existing partnerships and mechanisms that could serve as good practices, enabling the report to provide a set of key recommendations to enhance coordination across conflict-affected countries. Chapters 3 and 4 will subsequently provide insight into a framework or reference point on the achievement

of SDGs specific to conflict-affected contexts from which countries can choose, prioritize and sequence SDG adoption in their respective national and local

development plans. This framework or reference point is rooted in the different existing mechanisms and processes that exist at the national level.

## E. Reasons for a human security approach

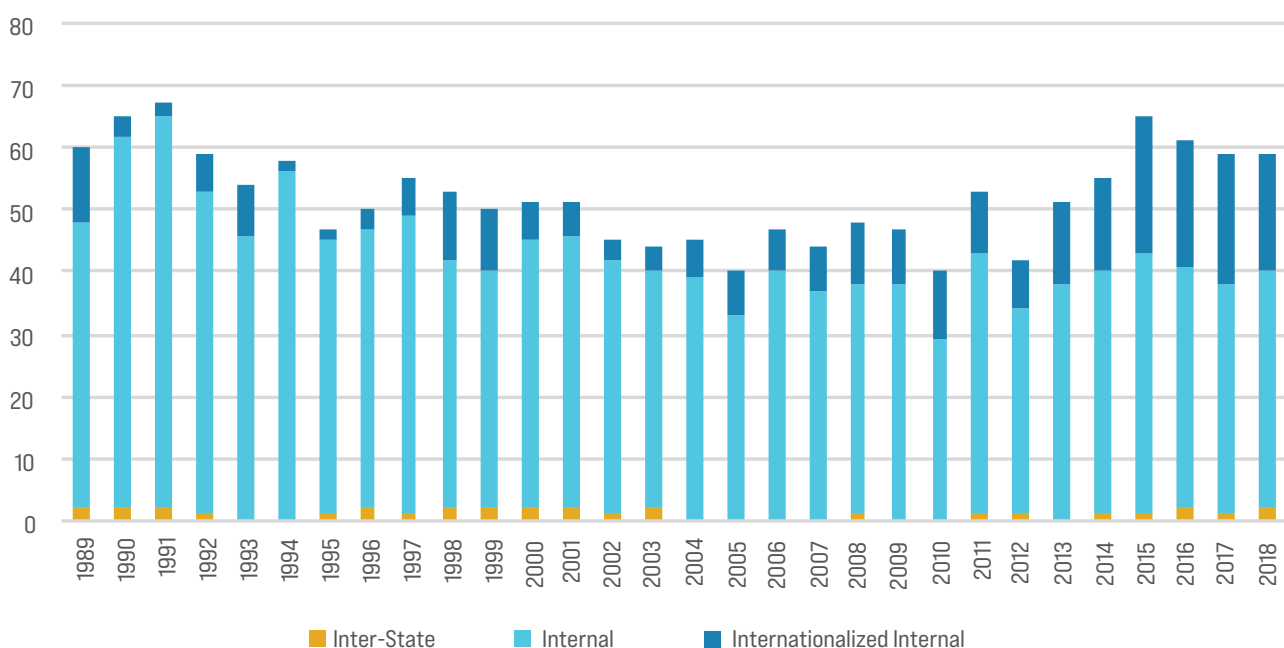
The human impacts of conflict are stark and manifold. Conflicts disrupt social, political and economic life, undermine access to basic services, damage key infrastructure, and increase exposure to natural and man-made hazards. They also damage human capital through deaths, injury and displacement, weaken economic institutions and undermine social cohesion, threatening sustainable development gains and heightening fragility.<sup>47</sup> If protracted, conflicts have the potential to fundamentally damage the social and cultural fabric of affected countries long after a negotiated ceasefire.

In 2012, the death toll from internationalized internal conflicts started increasing substantially as illustrated in figure 3. This surge in battle-related deaths is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of human impacts. The number of indirect fatalities caused by damaged infrastructure and service provision is drastically higher. These are caused by a complex interaction of interrelated factors including preventable diseases, hunger and malnutrition, lack

of access to basic health care, adequate food and shelter, clean water, and other necessities.<sup>48</sup> Against this backdrop, there continues to be reports of attacks targeting civilian facilities including housing, schools, hospitals, markets, places of worship, and critical basic infrastructure.<sup>49</sup> Chapter 2 of this report will further explore the impact of conflict on people, prosperity and planet, three pillars of the 5Ps.

The cost of conflict in terms of sustainable development is varied but often mutually reinforcing. For example, economic disruption caused by conflict can lead to a scarcity of resources alongside physical and human capital. This, in turn, results in rising prices of capital-intensive goods and services, along with falling wages and unemployment for unskilled labour. Compounding this dynamic, conflict also regularly reduces social spending at a time when populations are most in need. For a further discussion, chapter 2 provides an analysis of the costs of conflict in the Arab region using the people pillar of the 5Ps.

**Figure 3.** Fatalities by type of conflict, 1989-2017



Source: UCDP/PRIOD Armed Conflict Dataset, Version 19.1. UCDP Battle-related Deaths Dataset.



It is impossible to ignore the displacement dimensions when narrowing in on the human impacts of conflict. As outlined in the previous section, displacement continues to be a major consequence of conflict in the region, including refugees fleeing across borders and IDPs internally displaced in their country of origin. Displacement also increases multi-dimensional vulnerabilities, which, when intermixed with exposure to hazard, generate systemic risks for affected populations. The level of displacement globally is stark. In 2019, it was estimated that 70.8 million people were displaced, including 25.9 million refugees, 41.3 million IDPs and 3.5 million asylum seekers. Out of the refugee population, 73 per cent are hosted in neighbouring countries and 85 per cent are hosted in developing countries.<sup>50</sup> As illustrated in the section on the regional dynamics of conflict, the Arab region has some of the highest displacement in the world.

By signing the 2030 Agenda, Governments have pledged to ensure that no one is left behind,<sup>51</sup> articulating the need to integrate displaced persons and other vulnerable groups into efforts to achieve SDGs. Across the region, there is significant opportunity to integrate the needs of those displaced into broader efforts to advance the SDGs.<sup>52</sup> While none of the SDGs or indicators are on displaced populations per se, many of them are directly related to this population group.<sup>53</sup> Several SDGs are interlinked with improving prospects for IDPs such as SDG 2 (Zero Hunger),<sup>54</sup> SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Clean Energy), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships), providing a strategic opportunity to strengthen the integration of displaced populations into regional and national efforts. This necessitates the increased integration of displaced populations and other people caught in crisis into country SDG progress reports and VNRs, improving tracking of progress and tailoring of development interventions.<sup>55</sup> At present, although people caught in crisis share with other groups basic human needs such as safety, subsistence and dignity, they are often not included in national processes.<sup>56</sup> For instance, as evident in post-conflict settings, IDPs and returnees often experience substantial risk due to changes in security, property allocation, economic viability, governance, and services, as well as areas of origin remaining in partial conflict. E-consultations with countries that have internal displacement such as Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Sudan, and Yemen revealed that there is political will to integrate IDPs into NDPs rather than singling them out to address their specific needs. In some contexts, the Government aims to integrate IDPs into national data on SDGs to monitor progress on the inclusion of such groups. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the different

key stakeholders at national and regional levels that could support Member States with technical and financial assistance, including those working towards LNOB and the inclusion of IDPs.

The 1994 Human Development Report defined human security comprehensively as ‘freedom from fear and freedom from want’.<sup>57</sup> The Commission on Human Security subsequently elaborated human security as a process of intervention ‘to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment’.<sup>58</sup> Adopting a human security approach to analyse the intersection between conflict and SDG achievement presents a strategic opportunity to address the human consequence of conflict. The importance of using a human security lens stems from the fact that the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are not meant to meet immediate needs, but to reduce risk, vulnerability and long-term needs. The human security lens will assist Member States in “identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people.”<sup>59</sup> The human security approach and its principles enable stakeholders to critically assess vulnerabilities of the populations in conflict settings, identify common priorities required to overcome challenges, and achieve integration across sectors by identifying strategic entry points, bringing together United Nations agencies and non-United Nations partners. The human security approach enables a more robust assessment of the multiple and often interlinked factors previously alluded to by integrating safety from the threats of hunger, poverty, disease, and environmental degradation into the analysis presented in this report. This enhances understanding of the opportunities available, and challenges faced, in achieving SDGs in conflict-affected settings through a people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific, and prevention-oriented approach.

Beyond addressing structural challenges at the implementation level, using human security as an analytical framework helps actors monitor, promote and adopt comprehensive approaches in complex settings, entailing coordinated and multisectorial responses that include United Nations agencies, Member States and non-governmental entities. This will ensure an inclusive transition to sustainable development where the dividends of peace are shared by all and support broader efforts to breakdown silos across the HDPN. This inclusivity will also be reflected in localizing SDGs to include IDPs as well as other vulnerable groups, often overlooked in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

## F. Conclusion

Intra-State conflicts have come to define the 21st century and are markedly prevalent in the Arab region. This type of conflict is more complex, fluid and protracted. Growth in intra-State conflicts has heightened multidimensional fragility, eroded central institutions and the rule of law, and increased the potential for regional and global spill over. Given these trends, the drivers of conflict are amplified once violence flares, creating a negative and mutually reinforcing dynamic that can undermine the transition to sustainable and positive peace and undo SDG gains. Achieving the SDGs in the region is a key approach to support efforts that aim to end hostilities and achieve sustainable peace and development.

Furthermore, conflicts in the region have caused an unprecedented increase in the levels of displacement, which can also cause severe impacts on host communities, including in countries such as Lebanon and Jordan, which are hosting large numbers of registered refugees as a percentage of the population. A related growing concern is that displaced populations are often left behind when it comes to monitoring SDGs.

Despite the challenges, there has been strong commitment and concrete progress in the region, including setting up coordination mechanisms to monitor SDGs and integrate them, and their associated indicators, into NDPs, and working towards producing

VNRs. However, without a clear framework or reference point on SDG achievement specific to conflict-affected contexts, many countries are left overwhelmed with multiple urgent priorities and without systems in place to track and advance progress in an efficient way. Setting priorities of critical SDG targets and indicators that can result in the most impactful and sustainable gains for people and communities in conflict-affected countries requires stocktaking of the key challenges and gaps, alongside the coordination and partnership mechanisms currently available. Identifying strategic opportunities for SDG advancement in conflict-affected settings across the Arab region could be best achieved through a methodology centered on human security. Using a human security lens and looking at such challenges from a regional perspective represent an opportunity to deepen the understanding of the full array of insecurities that can both propel conflict and undercut prospects for sustainable development. This approach can aid stakeholders in complex environments to better identify the compound and dynamic challenges facing conflict-affected countries across the region. It enables a more robust assessment, which can support greater success towards the transformative change required to achieve the SDGs, including the LNOB goal.

## G. Key Messages

### 1. Understanding the interconnectedness of the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda calls for an integrated approach to implementation which recognizes that development, peace and human rights are linked and mutually reinforcing. It rests on the interconnected and indivisible nature of the 17 SDGs. It is crucial that all entities responsible for the implementation of SDGs treat them in their entirety instead of approaching them as a list of individual goals to pick and choose from. The transformative approach of human security contributes to providing a comprehensive plan of action, which countries can translate to national policies that bring tangible improvements in people's lives. It provides comprehensive guidance for policymaking by establishing means of implementation, follow-up and review mechanisms.

### 2. Addressing vulnerabilities and eliminating exclusion are key to achieve SDGs in conflict-affected countries

The 2030 Agenda is not concerned with just meeting immediate needs, but rather with reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing long-term prospects. A key strategic entry point to identifying common priorities in conflict-affected settings is through addressing vulnerabilities of populations and required remedies to overcome such challenges. This will ensure an inclusive transition to sustainable development where the dividends of peace are shared by all. Eliminating the systematic structural causes of exclusion is a key priority of the human security approach. Stakeholders should consider including vulnerable populations and integrating IDPs into SDG plans.



### **3. Achieving SDGs should consider a universal yet contextual approach in conflict-affected settings**

Since the challenges facing the realization of SDGs in conflict-affected countries are multifaceted, achieving the SDGs requires a comprehensive approach that takes into consideration regional, national and local priorities and structures. Recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to address challenges and risks, the human security lens emphasizes context-specific differences and challenges related to the engagement of actors and capacities of people and Governments concerned.

### **4. Adopting a common vision to achieve collective outcomes**

Engendering a multi-stakeholder approach is critical. The United Nations' NWOW calls for enhanced collaboration between humanitarian and development efforts. This requires relevant actors to join efforts towards collective outcomes. Its modality of work is based on the comparative advantage of actors. Achieving SDGs, in general, and in conflict-affected countries, in particular, requires a common vision that aims to eliminate silos and build a bridge between short-term assistance and long-term peace and development. The human security approach provides a coherent framework to facilitate multisectoral responses that together form a common vision capable of tackling complex and multidimensional challenges in a proactive and preventive manner, ensuring that no one is left behind.





# 2

## ACHIEVING SDGS IN ARAB COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE





# A. Introduction

Armed conflict is a major obstacle to achieving the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. Violence represents a negative shock that affects all aspects of development. Depending on its nature and intensity, the onset of violent conflict can have far-reaching repercussions on society. Beyond immediate deaths and injuries that damage the social and productive structures, conflict affects the implementation of programmes and policy interventions, diverts resources away from productive sectors, disrupts livelihoods, forces people to flee their homes, and erodes essential infrastructure that supports sustainable development. Thus, the incidence of conflict undermines development outcomes by increasing poverty, hunger and malnutrition, limiting access to education, health care and other basic services, and exacerbating social discrimination and exclusion. These immediate effects have severe long-term consequences for human development, generating poverty traps and increasing horizontal inequalities across populations. As a result, armed conflict and violence have halted or reversed the development progress made over decades in many countries of the Arab region.

Such systemic disruptions have far-reaching consequences for the security, development and well-being

of populations living in situations of ongoing conflict. Violent conflict is particularly detrimental for the LNOB call because it has disproportionate effects on the poor. Armed conflicts have been more frequent in the low- and middle-income countries of the region. For the countries and communities suffering the most, the effects of conflict are compounded by the fact that long-term sustainable development objectives must be addressed alongside urgent, short- and medium-term humanitarian priorities. Understanding the challenges to SDG implementation in these conflict-affected countries warrants a thorough examination of the links between conflict, human security and development.

This chapter provides a broad review of the areas in which the objectives of the 2030 Agenda are especially under threat due to conflict. Drawing on the findings of recent ESCWA reports and some of the most recurrent issues flagged during the different editions of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development,<sup>1</sup> the chapter articulates key messages on the shared obstacles and regional priorities for achieving the 2030 Agenda across the pillars of peace, people, planet, and prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

The United Nations 2030 Agenda offers a framework for strengthening and transforming preventative ac-

**Figure 4.** The five pillars of the 2030 Agenda and associated SDGs as articulated in this report



Source: Compiled by authors.



tion to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The 5Ps of the 2030 Agenda provide an integrated framework for understanding how the different dimensions of development are intertwined and the extent to which improvements in one of the pillars balance and support progress in the others. Following the 5Ps, the subsequent sections will look in the details of some of the most pressing challenges facing the countries of concern in this report, and the impacts of these challenges on the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Given the heterogeneity of the country group selected for this report, there are significant subnational disparities that warrant further disaggregation. The key messages identified by this regional review

will serve as points of departure for national workshops and multi-stakeholder consultations that will provide a more robust qualitative assessment of the particular socioeconomic dynamics and development challenges at the local, subnational and national levels. Throughout the chapter, it is important to keep in mind that the links between conflict and development are not linear. Violent conflict is a complex phenomenon that manifests itself in different ways in different social, political and economic contexts. Accordingly, development responses to mitigate the impact of conflict must also be assessed at the local, subnational and national levels and be tailored to the prevailing socioeconomic context.

## B. Peace

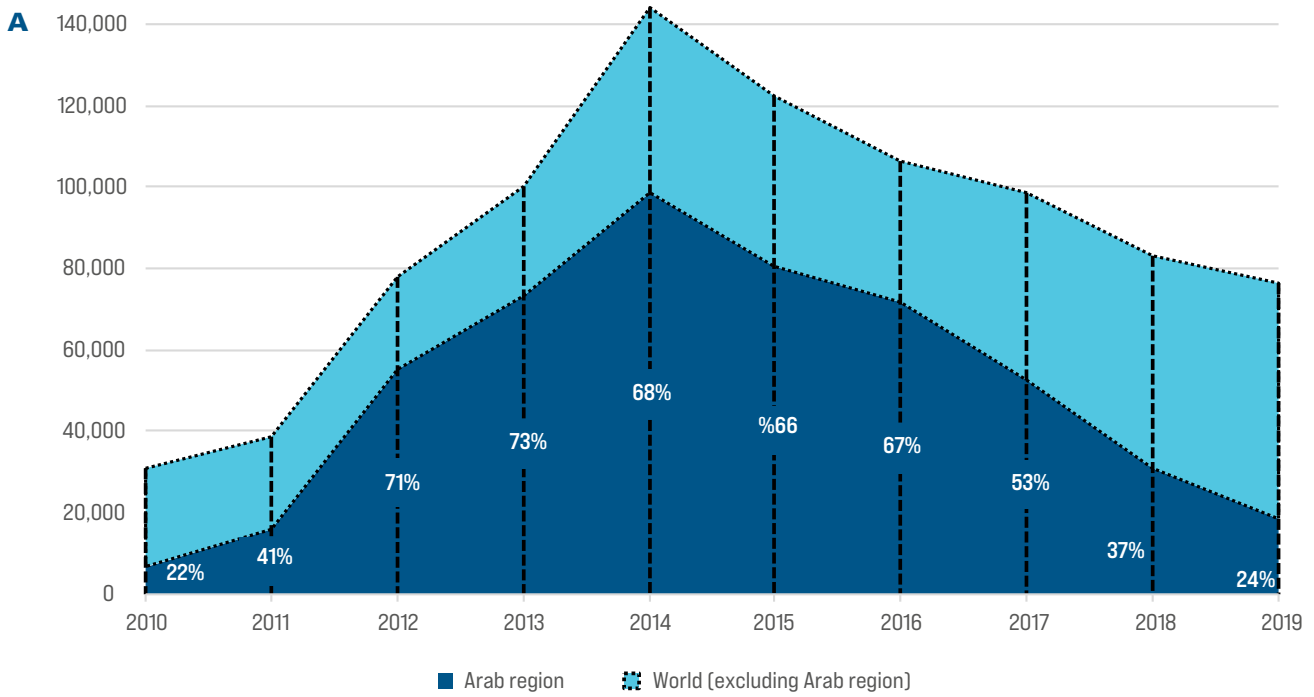
The 2030 Agenda emphasizes that “there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.” Through SDG 16, the Agenda sets out targets to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies. However, progress in this respect is uneven across Arab countries. The most alarming indicator of the underlying situation is the unacceptable level of violence, leading to massive waves of displacement that add to the vulnerability of millions of people. Disorder in many parts of the region over the last decade has left a power vacuum, and this in turn contributed to the increased presence of armed non-State actors and organized criminal networks, hampering the restoration of peaceful societies. Ensuring progress toward inclusive societies and sustainable development also requires tackling corruption and strengthening citizen-State relations through the rule of law and just institutions. The issue of the occupation of the State of Palestine is not directly addressed in this report, but it is important to note that it poses an impediment to the rights and aspirations of millions of Palestinians, and a chronic obstacle to achieving SDG 16 in the region.

### 1. Despite a decline since 2014, levels of violence in the region are intolerably high and heavily concentrated in a few countries

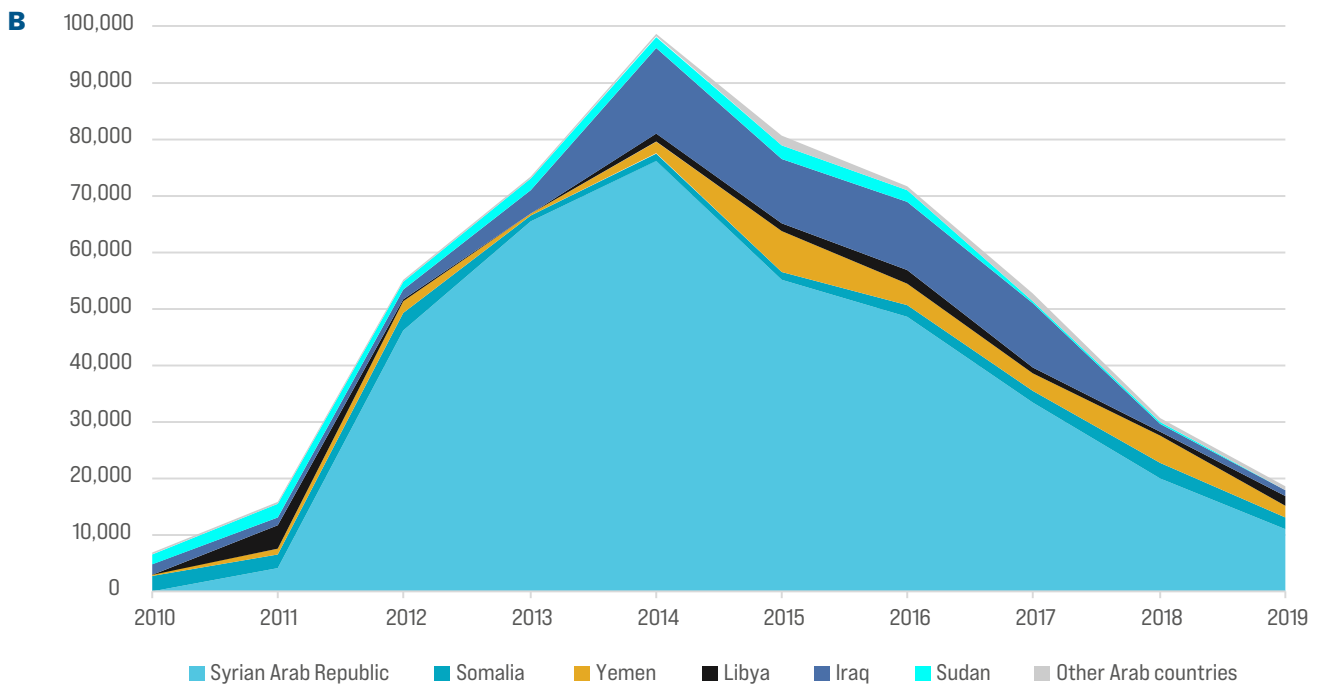
As noted in chapter 1, while conflict between States has been rare worldwide, the number of violent conflicts within States has been increasing since 2010, particularly in the Arab region. Accordingly, fatalities caused by conflicts worldwide have increased over the last decade, with the number of reported battle-related deaths rising sharply in 2014 (Figure 5). Conflicts in the Arab region explain a significant part of this surge.

Figure 5 shows how most battle deaths in the Arab region occurred in a small number of countries. For example, the three deadliest conflicts in 2019, namely, in the Syrian Arab Republic, Somalia and Yemen, represented more than 80 per cent of all fatalities. Even if battle deaths have dropped in recent years, conflicts in these countries are expected to be protracted and risks of new outbreaks remain high. Armed conflicts in the region also have a clear internationalized component. In 2019, all active conflicts in the Arab region were internationalized conflicts.<sup>3</sup> These internationalized dimensions often compound the complexity of conflict dynamics, entrenching violent trends and making peace more elusive.

**Figure 5.** Battle-related deaths, globally and in the Arab region (A) and battle-related deaths in the Arab region, by country (B), 2010-2019



Source: UCDP/PRIO Georeferenced Database 20.1.



Source: UCDP/PRIO Georeferenced Database 20.1.



Civilians are increasingly vulnerable to the impact of conflict. For example, the number of battle-related civilian deaths tripled globally in 2010-2017, and the Arab region was no exception to this trend.<sup>4</sup> The exacerbated vulnerability of civilians during armed conflict stems primarily from three factors: First, many battles in recent conflicts were fought in or around densely populated urban areas,<sup>5</sup> as in the cases of Aleppo, Idlib, Mosul, Tikrit, Tripoli, Misrata, Al Hudaydah, and Sanaa', among others in the Arab region. Second, although the targeting of civilians is forbidden by international law and constitutes a war crime, it has been employed as a tactic of war, often to overcome military inferiority or to obtain other strategic advantages. The increase in civilian deaths has occurred in parallel with the proliferation of non-State armed groups which often deliberately target civilians.<sup>6</sup> Third, beyond the direct casualties related to battles, studies indicate that many more civilian deaths result from the indirect effects of conflict, such as unmet medical needs, food insecurity, malnutrition, inadequate shelter, and the contamination of water.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the use of sexual and gender-based violence as a war tactic, which constitutes a serious war crime, has been documented in all conflicts within the countries of concern of this report, as well as in many conflicts elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> In areas directly affected by conflict, crimes such as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortions, forced marriages, and other forms of sexual violence tend to increase amid the breakdown of the rule of law and both formal and informal institutions.<sup>9</sup> These forms of conflict-related sexual violence inflict enormous harm on victims, with long-term repercussions on mental and physical

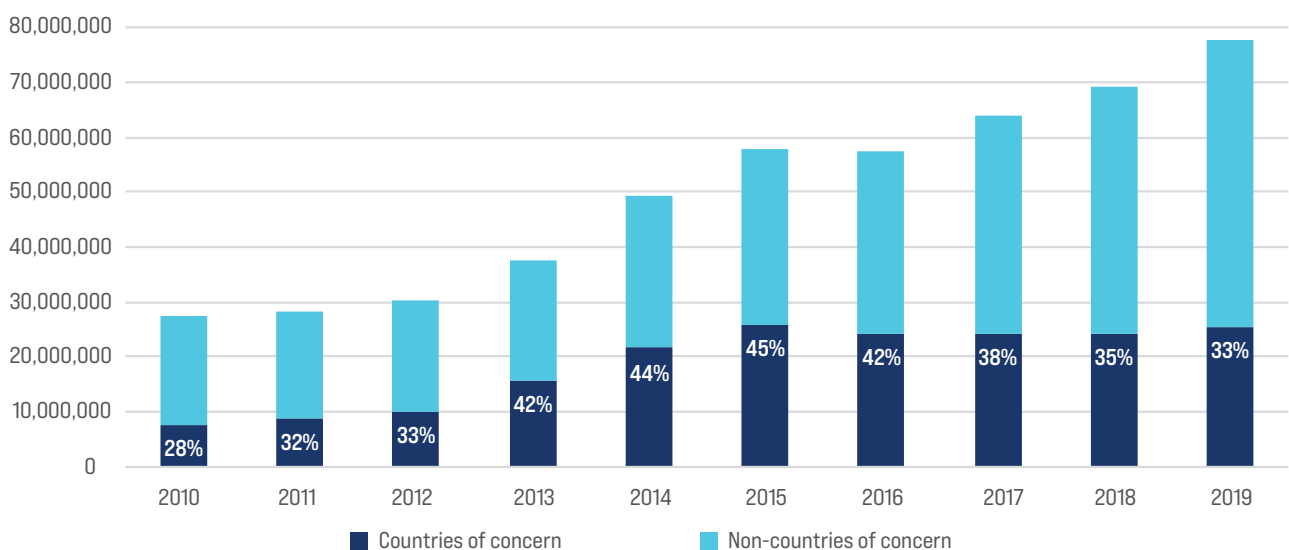
health, social capital and economic participation.<sup>10</sup> In addition to sexual violence, violence against women defenders of human rights and women politicians has increased in conflict-affected areas.<sup>11</sup>

Violence that is not conflict-related against women and girls persists in the region. Estimates indicate that 37 per cent of Arab women have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime,<sup>12</sup> and one in three ever-married women had experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner.<sup>13</sup> The actual figures are likely higher as social stigma surrounding sexual violence leads to underreporting such crimes. Notably, while there has been a fall in the number of child marriages, still 18 per cent of Arab girls marry under the age of 18, and 3 per cent are married before the age of 15.<sup>14</sup> Prevalence rates have increased in the regions affected by conflict as documented in the cases of the Sudan and Yemen and among Syrian refugees in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, female genital mutilation persists in Iraq, Somalia, the Sudan, and Yemen, in addition to other Arab States such as Djibouti, Egypt and Mauritania.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Forcible displacement is one of the most significant impacts of conflict and violence

The displacement of people in the Arab region, in the form of refugees and IDPs, has been one of the most dramatic results of armed conflict and violence. The total number of forcibly displaced people originating from the countries of concern grew from 7.7 million in 2010 to 25.3 million in 2019.<sup>17</sup> Figure 6 depicts the rising global trend in forcibly displaced persons and the proportion in countries of concern. The graph

**Figure 6. Forcibly displaced persons, in countries of concern and worldwide, 2010-2019**



Source: ESCWA calculations based on data from UNHCR database.

Note: Forcibly displaced includes refugees under the mandate of UNHCR, IDPs of concern to UNHCR, asylum seekers, Palestine refugees under the mandate of UNRWA, Venezuelans displaced abroad and others of concern.

shows a noticeable jump in refugee populations both worldwide and in countries of concern in conjunction with the escalation of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic between 2012 and 2015 and the concurrent exodus of Syrian refugees to neighbouring countries.

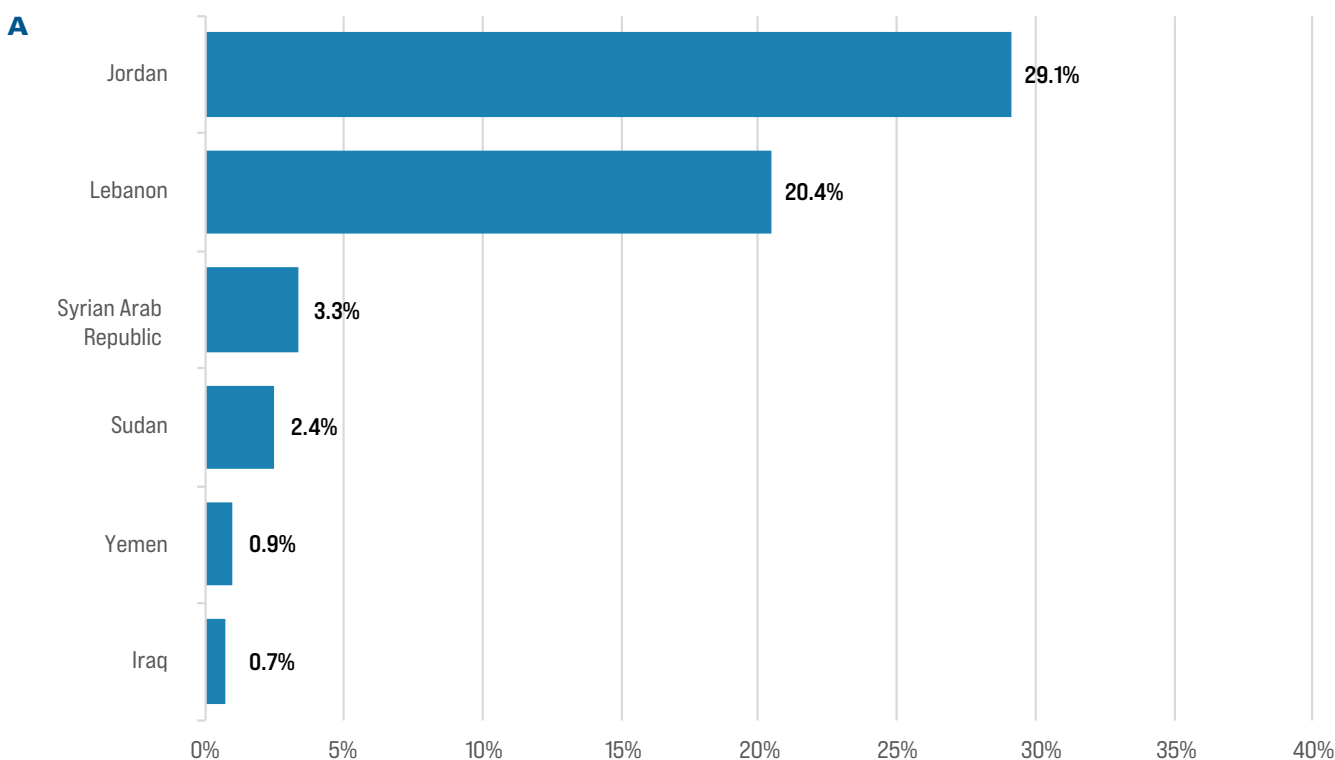
Refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic constitute the largest share of total global refugees, with 6.6 million registered Syrian refugees by the end of 2019. Most Syrian refugees reside in the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. As of March 2020, these five countries together hosted just over 5.5 million registered Syrian refugees.<sup>18</sup> Although the rate of displacement of Syrian people has slowed down since 2015, the persistence of violent conflict in the country is keeping them in a protracted state of insecurity in host countries where they struggle to access rights and meet basic needs. Also, it is worth highlighting that, while refugee numbers have stabilized, internal displacements had spiked in the fall of 2019 until the Russian-Turkish ceasefire in March 2020.

While all the countries of concern host large displaced populations, the dynamics and implications of displacement vary considerably among them. Jordan and Lebanon host the largest numbers of refugees in the region, while the Syrian Arab Republic, Somalia and Yemen have the largest number of IDPs. The eight countries of concern together comprise a mere two per cent of the global population and yet, in 2019,

hosted 28 per cent of the world's displaced people.<sup>19</sup> The cases of Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen are particularly striking, together representing just over one per cent of the global population and hosting 6.6 per cent of the global refugee population in 2019 (totaling over 1.3 million refugees) and 19 per cent of the global IDP population (8.1 million).

The number of IDPs, both in the countries of concern and globally, far surpasses the refugee population. Refugees are those forced to flee their countries of origin and enjoy specific rights and protections under international law. The term "IDP" however, is merely a descriptive designation and does not confer any legal recognition or protection as is the case with refugees. Yet, since IDPs are displaced within their own country or State of habitual residence, they are entitled to the rights, protection and assistance provided by national laws, as well as the international human rights law and humanitarian law obligations of their State. Under such binding frameworks, the State has, within its jurisdiction, the primary duty to respect, protect and fulfill IDP rights. Nevertheless, IDPs are generally in more vulnerable situations since they reside in greater proximity to violent conflicts, often live in camps, face multiple displacements, and do not enjoy internationally recognized legal protection.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it is difficult to obtain substantiated information about their circumstances, especially because there are considerable differences in how State actors understand the protection of IDPs.

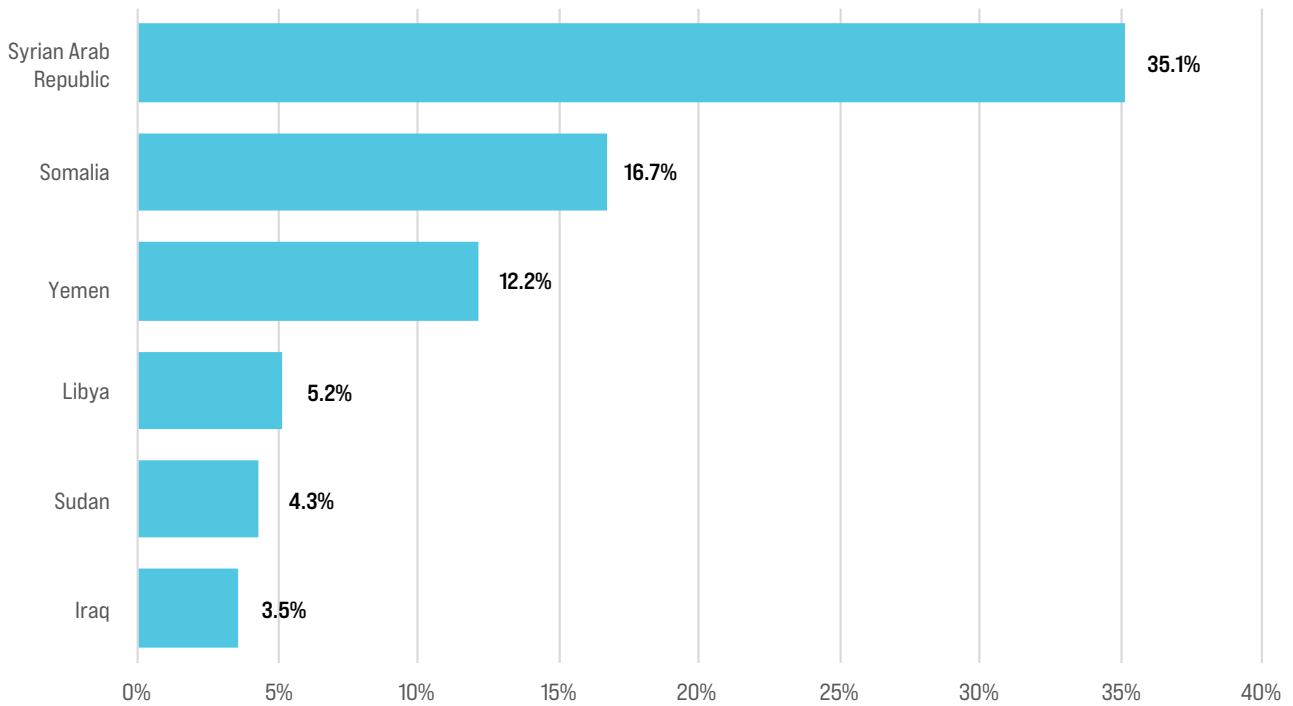
**Figure 7.** Number of refugees (A) and IDPs (B) as percentage of total population, by country 2019



Source: ESCWA calculations based on data from UNHCR database. Population UN DESA 2019.



B



**Source:** ESCWA calculations based on data from UNHCR database. Population UN DESA 2019.

**Note:** Refugees figures include Palestinian refugees under the mandate of UNRWA. Excluding Palestinian refugees, the proportion of refugees would be as follows: Lebanon 13.4 per cent, Jordan 6.8 per cent and the Syrian Arab Republic 0.1 per cent.

### 3. Displacement is highly concentrated within a few countries in the region

Displacement exacerbates the structural determinants of poverty and can significantly inhibit access to basic needs and services, including employment, health, education, and food security. The countries of concern are disproportionately shouldering the responsibility for hosting refugees despite already suffering from severe structural barriers to sustainable development and with the least available resources to address the needs of refugees and IDPs. Figure 7 shows the Arab countries where numbers of refugees and IDPs, as percentages of the total population, are at their highest.

The share of refugees to the total population of the host country, as illustrated in figure 7 A, indicates the impact of refugees on the host country. As the number of refugees increases in relation to the host country population, the strain on local economies and resources intensifies and adds challenges to achieving development objectives within host communities. Even excluding Palestinian refugees, Lebanon and Jordan host, respectively, the first- and second-largest population of refugees per capita in the world, with one in every 13 people in Lebanon and one in every 7 in Jordan being a registered refugee. While Lebanon hosts the largest share of UNHCR-registered refugees per capita in the world, Jordan surpasses it in total refugees per capita after accounting for the number of Palestinian refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA),

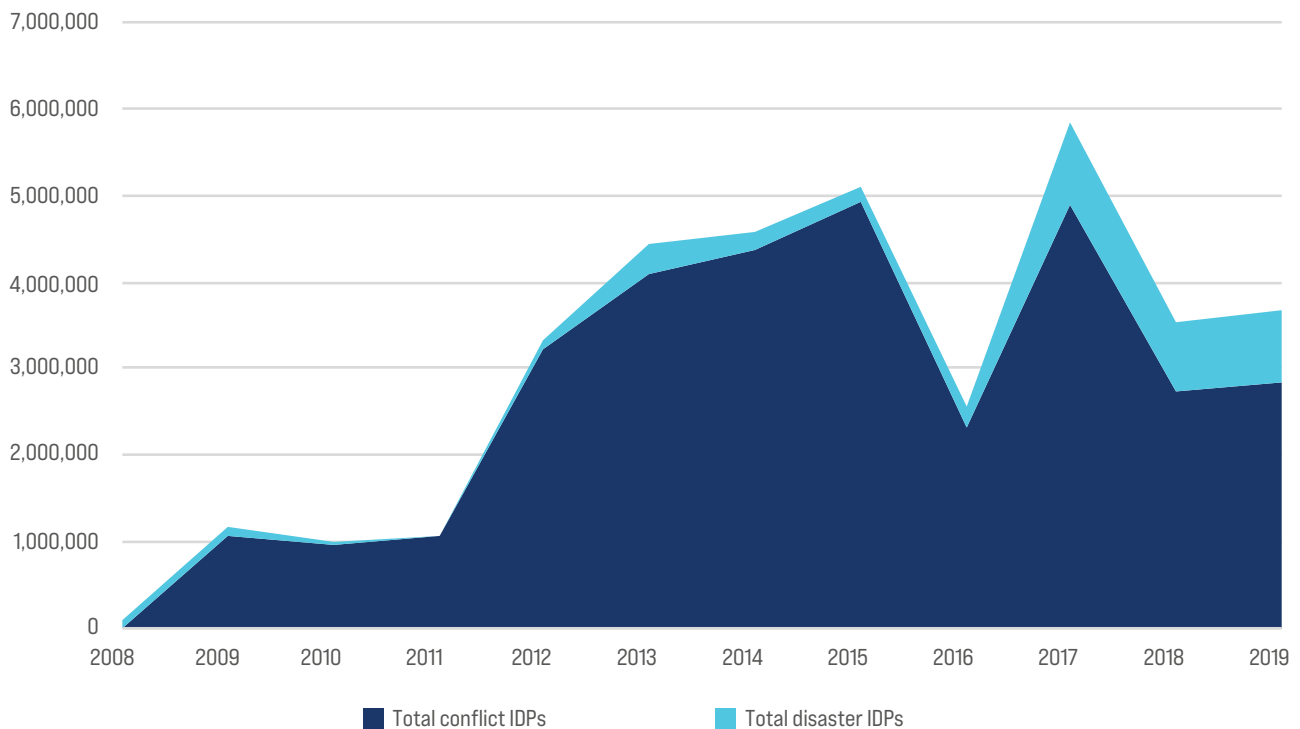
which totals 2.2 million in Jordan and almost 500,000 in Lebanon.<sup>21</sup>

The share of IDPs in relation to the overall population, indicated in figure 7 B, reflects the pervasiveness and protraction of conflict within a given country. As the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic enters its tenth year, more than one third of the population have become internally displaced. Somalia's longstanding conflict produced a lingering IDP presence comprising around 17 per cent of the total population, as ongoing violence and food insecurity continue to uproot people from their homes. Yemen has been in and out of conflicts for decades, and although its current war broke out in 2014, after the conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic and Somalia, its intensity created a huge wave of internal displacements, comprising roughly 12 per cent of the population. There had been a considerable drop the rate of new displacements in these two countries had far-reaching and lingering impacts that left considerable numbers of IDPs. Given that widespread internal displacement breeds human insecurity, exacerbates poverty and blocks access to essential services, advancing development objectives in countries with high IDP ratios remains very difficult.

### 4. Displacement in the region is driven mainly by conflict

In 2019, a total of 33.4 million new internal displacements occurred globally. Out of these, 74 per cent

**Figure 8. IDPs caused by conflict and disasters in countries of concern**



Source: ESCWA calculations based on data from IDMC, 2019.

(24.8 million) were due to natural disasters, while 26 per cent (8.5 million) were displaced by violent conflict. However, in the countries of concern, 2.8 million new displacements occurred as a result of conflict (33 per cent of the global total of new displacements caused conflict), in contrast to 845,000 new displacements driven by disasters (only 3 per cent of the global total).<sup>22</sup>

Figure 8 reveals the extent to which internal displacements in the countries of concern are driven primarily by armed conflict. Thus, the fact that displacements in the region are overwhelmingly caused by conflict means that the pervasive displacement occurring in the countries of concern is largely avoidable. The region’s alarming share of the global displacement stock caused by conflict reflects the pervasive scale of chronic human insecurity and lack of effective policies or legal mechanisms to address problems of displacement. Yet, the fact that the extensive displacement stems from avoidable human decisions indicates the tremendous opportunities to reverse these harmful trends by effectively using political and diplomatic platforms at the regional and global levels to address the root problems that lead to violent conflict.

**5. Demographics of displaced populations matter: women and children constitute the majority of displaced populations**

Refugees and displaced persons are vulnerable groups; yet, their intersectional identities, including gender, age and disability, among others, may increase their vulnerability and place them at greater risk of being denied access to the resources needed to thrive. This means that there will be added hindrances on the achievement of the SDGs regarding, among others, gender equality (SDG 5), quality education (SDG 4), and overall health and well-being (SDG 3). Although there is limited disaggregated data on the demographic characteristics of displaced populations (and particularly for IDP populations in emergency situations), estimates by UNHCR relating to the gender and age characteristics of the refugee populations indicate that they are equally divided across the lines of gender, with 25.4 million men and boys and 25.7 million women and girls worldwide. In the Arab region, estimates suggest that 49 per cent of the overall refugee population are female and 47 per cent are children.<sup>23</sup>

**6. Organized crime and illicit financial flows are increasingly global concerns that challenge the rule of law and hamper sustainable development in the region**

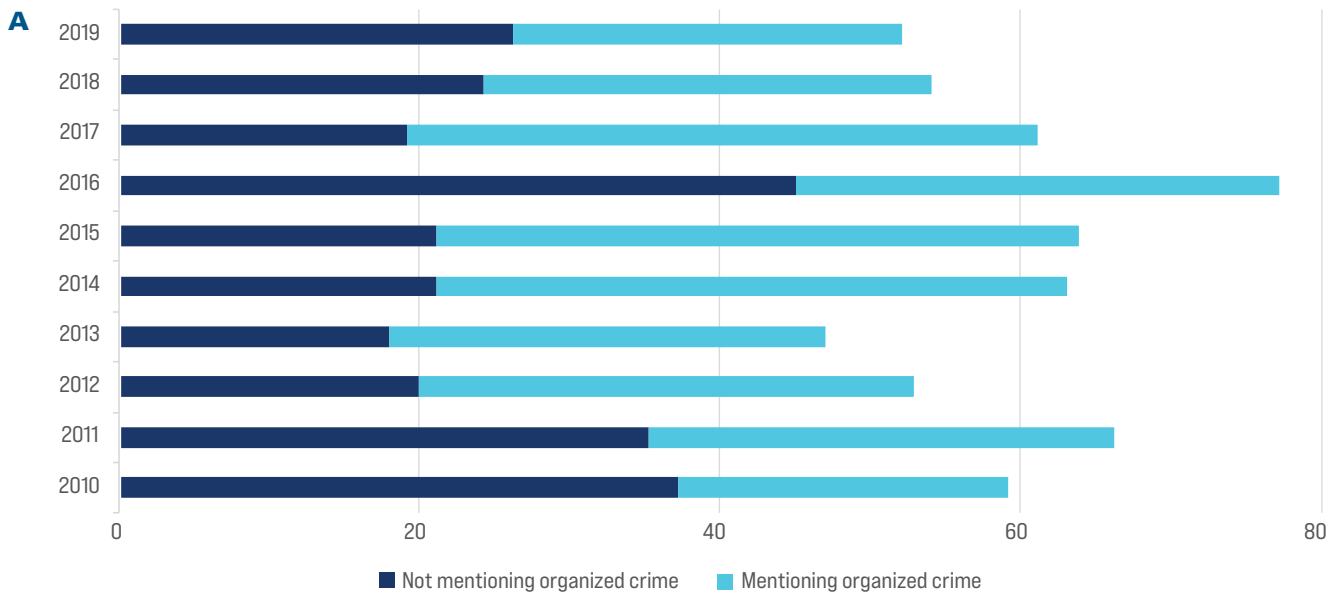
Though much the attention regarding governance issues in the Arab region has been focused on the threats of armed conflict and political violence, the growth of transnational criminal networks is also a concerning phenomenon that has eroded the rule



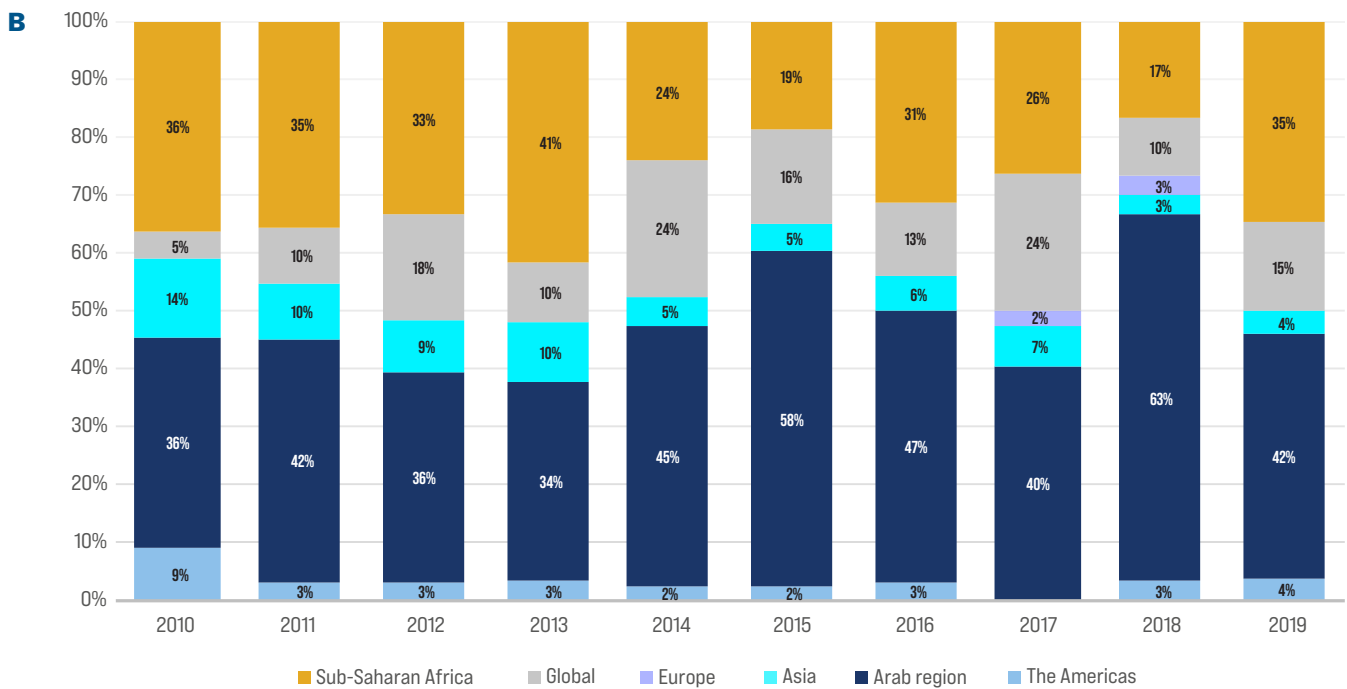
of law and undermined the conditions of security and economic stability necessary for sustainable development. The incentives for illicit activities are particularly acute in countries where conflict has led to the breakdown of economic organization

and State capacity. As the capacity of several Arab States to exert effective control over their borders has deteriorated, the lucrative incentives for illicit economic activities have created a fertile environment for criminal networks to prosper.

**Figure 9.** Number of Security Council resolutions (A) and percentage of resolutions on organized crime by geographic region (B), 2010-2019



**Source:** Compiled by authors, based on United Nations Security Council, 2019c. Highlights of the Security Council Practice 2019; and Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2018. Organized Crime and Illicit Flows at the Security Council.



**Source:** Compiled by authors, based on United Nations Security Council, 2019c. Highlights of the Security Council Practice 2019; and Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2018. Organized Crime and Illicit Flows at the Security Council.



Transnational criminal networks endanger sustainable development on multiple fronts by eroding the rule of law, depriving Governments of revenues, facilitating corruption and crowding out legitimate economic activity. These interlinkages between the prevalence of organized crime and the lack of both sustainable development and peace have been repeatedly acknowledged by the United Nations Security Council as a threat to global peace and stability. As a result, and beginning with 2010, more of the Security Council's resolutions became directed at addressing this phenomenon. Figure 9A shows how the number of resolutions addressing organized crime has increased in 2010-2019, peaking in 2017 when 69 per cent of all resolutions focused on organized crime and illicit trafficking. The regional breakdown of these resolutions (figure 9B) reveals that the Arab region is frequently addressed for concerns over organized crime, with the highest percentage of resolutions mentioning organized crime recorded in nine out of the last ten years.

The top two categories of transnational crimes most frequently addressed by Security Council resolutions in Arab countries during this period were arms trafficking and human trafficking and smuggling. They were followed by theft, armed robbery and piracy, kidnapping and abductions, then financial crimes, resource, wildlife and goods trafficking, and drug trafficking.<sup>24</sup>

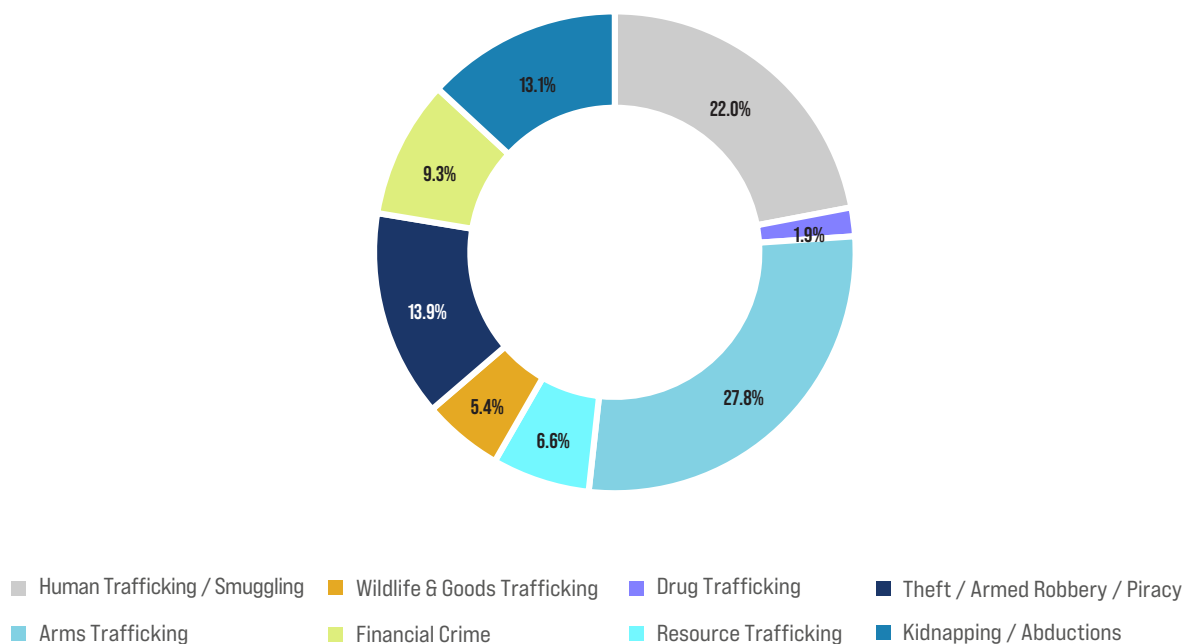
There are, however, variations across the countries of concern in terms of the criminal activities addressed.

Human trafficking and smuggling is the most recurrent Security Council's category of concern in the Sudan, Libya and Iraq, while kidnapping and abductions comprised the largest share of resolutions relating to the Syrian Arab Republic. Although the share of resolutions devoted to drug trafficking was relatively minor at the regional level, they comprised significant portions of the country-level resolutions on Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, Somalia and, to a lesser extent, Libya and the Sudan.

The Security Council resolutions indicate the extent to which illicit trafficking in resources, smuggling of migrants or drugs have been sources for financing insurgencies in conflict zones within the Arab region. The fact that the Security Council has addressed these illicit activities in resolutions (figure 11), covering not only regional but also global issues, reflects the transnational dimensions and repercussions of these criminal networks. .

Given its illicit nature, transnational organized criminal activities are difficult to quantify. Such activities are not always visible, and when they are, it is still hard to aggregate the cost and determine how they impact or interact with other elements of the legitimate economy. SDG Target 16.4 identifies the reduction of illicit financial flows (IFFs) as a crucial component of promoting peace, justice and strong institutions. As defined by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), IFFs are "financial flows that are illicitly generat-

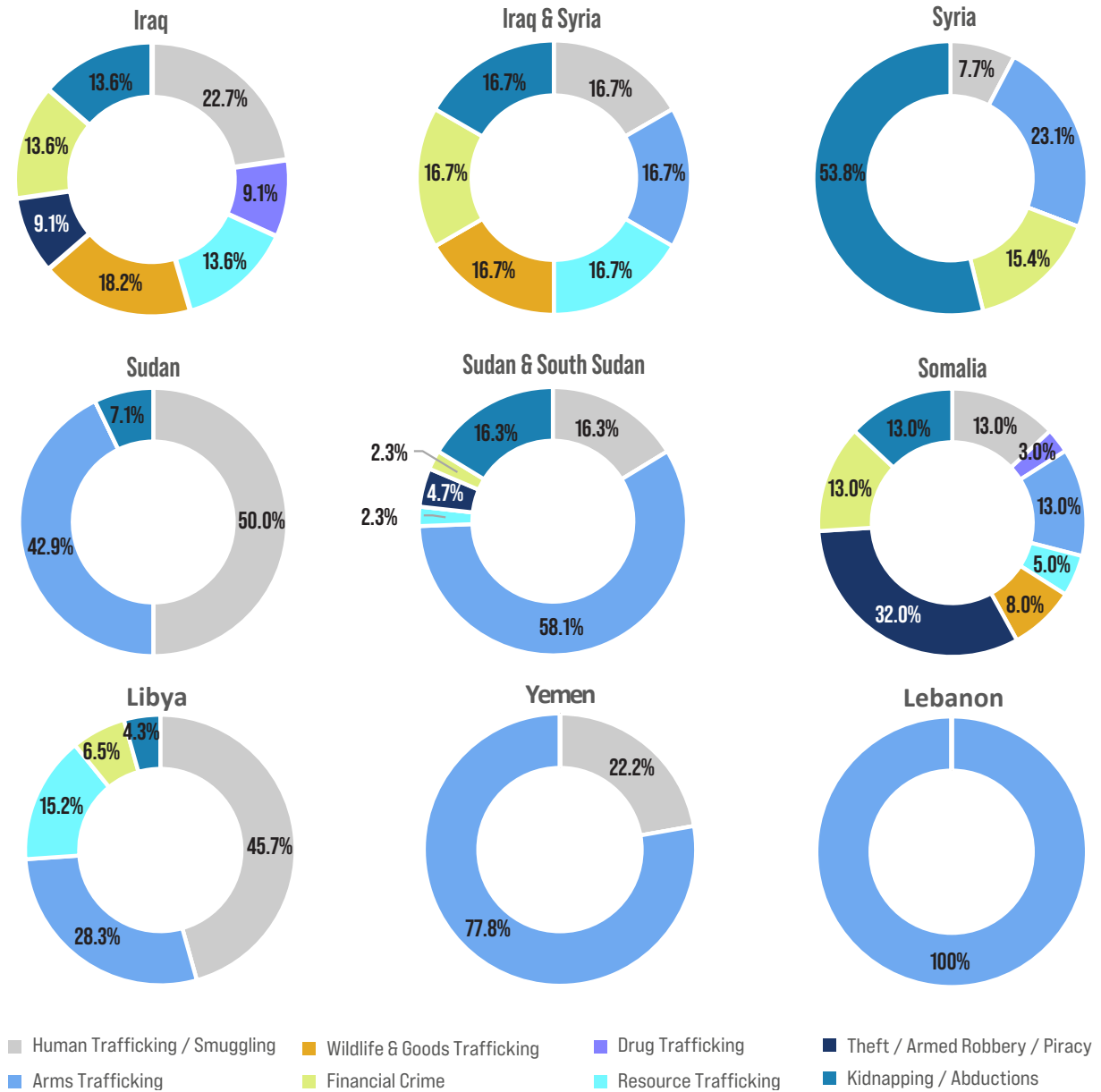
**Figure 10.** Security Council resolutions on organized crime in the Arab region, by type of crime, 2010-2019 (Percentage)



Source: Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2018.



**Figure 11. Security Council resolutions, by country and type of crime, 2010-2019 (Percentage)**



Sources: Compiled by authors, based on United Nations Security Council, 2019c; and Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2018.

ed (i.e. originate in criminal activities or tax evasion), illicitly transferred (i.e. violating currency controls) or illicitly used (i.e. for financing terrorism)<sup>25</sup> However, no internationally recognized instrument exists yet to quantify IFFs.

Three components of IFFs are generally identified in the literature measuring these flows: IFFs originating from transnational criminal activity, corruption-related IFFs and tax-related IFFs.<sup>26</sup> The most recent effort in the Arab region to quantify IFFs has been a 2019 ESCWA estimate that employed an approach targeting four different conduits of trade misinvoicing. The results showed that the Arab region suffers between \$60.3 billion and \$77.5 billion per year in lost resources due to IFFs. Based on this, the loss in public revenues during 2008-2015 would nearly

amount to half a trillion dollars (\$482.7 billion), the equivalent to one fifth of the region’s gross domestic product (GDP). The report also revealed several worrying outcomes, including that, for every dollar gained by the region from legitimate inflows such as remittances, official development assistance, net foreign direct investments, and humanitarian aid, among others, Arab countries lost half of this value in IFFs.<sup>27</sup>

**7. Tackling corruption is an essential component of effective policymaking and advancement of SDGs**

In its SDG 16, the 2030 Agenda positions combating corruption as an imperative to achieve other development goals. Corruption is a complex phenomenon

that hinders efficiency and development in societies. It also has a detrimental impact on the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development, thus undermining the 5Ps of the 2030 Agenda. Corruption has pervasive repercussions that weaken the efficacy of public policies and obstruct productive investments, thereby resulting in poor infrastructure quality and service delivery. Models of governance that are prone to corruption undermine the development of inclusive institutions and disproportionately affect disadvantaged groups by entrenching inequality and obstructing shared prosperity.<sup>28</sup> Table 1 shows the participation in international and regional instruments and selected SDGs indicators in the countries of concern.

The development and effective implementation of national strategies and specific action plans for targeting corruption that enlist the public are crucial steps toward more transparent and effective institutions. By creating stronger formal systems of checks and balances, and enhancing access to public information, anti-corruption efforts will enable more effective policymaking that can advance the SDGs in all the dimensions of sustainable development. However, the persistence of armed conflict and growth of transnational criminal networks fortify incentives for corruption and stymie efforts to build more inclusive and accountable institutions.

**Table 1.** Ratification status of international and regional anticorruption agreements and selected data on corruption from the 2030 Agenda Monitoring Framework in countries of concern

	United Nations Convention against Corruption	Arab Anti-Corruption Convention	Bribery incidence (percentage of firms experiencing at least one bribe payment request)	Have adopted and implemented constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information?
<b>Iraq</b>	State party	State party	37.2 (2011)	No
<b>Jordan</b>	State party	State party	12.6 (2013)	Yes (2007)
<b>Lebanon</b>	State party	Signatory	19.1 (2013)	Yes (2017)
<b>Libya</b>	State party	Signatory	---	No
<b>Somalia</b>	Neither signed nor ratified	Neither signed nor ratified	---	No
<b>Sudan</b>	State party	Yes	17.6 (2014)	No
<b>Syrian Arab Republic</b>	Signatory, not ratified	Signatory	---	No
<b>Yemen</b>	State party	Signatory	64.2 (2014)	Yes (2012)

Source: Compiled by ESCWA, based on the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), League of Arab States and Global SDG Indicators Database.

## C. People

As of 2020, nearly 171 million (39 per cent) of the 436 million people living in the Arab region are residing in the countries covered in this report. This figure is projected to grow to 215 million by 2030 and 296 million by 2050, representing 41 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively, of the total population in the Arab region. Given that the populations of the countries covered in this report are among those at a higher risk of being left behind, success in achieving the 2030 Agenda in the region will be

determined by the level of success in building a future of shared prosperity in this country group. In 2020, 50 per cent of the Arab region's population was below 24 years old, the percentage is even higher in the countries covered by this report, reaching to 57 per cent (97 million people). Given the prevalence of young populations in the region, immediate improvements for the prospects of this population group, at both the collective and the individual level, are urgently needed.<sup>29</sup>



## 1. Nearly 56 million people in the Arab region will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2020; 90 per cent of them are in the countries covered in this report

Humanitarian aid saves lives, alleviates suffering and, in many instances, is the first building block for longer-term development. While the values and principles behind this assistance are at the basis of humanity, this does not overshadow the fact that the need for humanitarian assistance is the result of a wider system failure at all levels. Therefore, it can serve as a macroindicator of well-being among the people in the Arab region. In the countries of concern of this report, 53.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, a figure that increases to 55.7 million when the State of Palestine is included (table 2). To understand the magnitude of the catastrophe, if people in need of humanitarian assistance were a country, it would be the second most populous nation in the Arab region.

The large numbers of people who need humanitarian assistance demonstrate the magnitude of the challenge in advancing the 2030 Agenda in the region. The destruction and weakening of basic infrastructure, combined with the economic impact of conflict, expose populations to greater vulnerabilities of exacerbated poverty, famine, disease and illiteracy. Improving lives begins with addressing these risk factors.

## 2. There is a reversal in poverty reduction and food security gains, largely due to conflict and violence

Poverty and food insecurity are two pervasive phenomena in the Arab region that indicate the wide-ranging impacts of conflict over the last decade. Ending extreme poverty and other expressions of deprivation in the Arab region will require addressing the underlying issues of fragility, injustice, exclusion, conflict, and displacement and the looming threat of climate change.

An examination of international poverty lines that measure extreme poverty at \$1.9 and \$3.2<sup>30</sup> a day reveals worrisome trends (figure 12). In 2018, the poverty headcount ratio was 9.4 per cent and 26.9 per cent at the \$1.9 and \$3.2 levels, respectively. In both cases, this was the third highest among developing regions, just after Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Both figures represent a significant increase from the levels estimated in 2008, when the headcount ratio at \$1.9 was 5 per cent and at \$3.2 24 per cent. While at a global level poverty reduction continues, albeit slowly, the Arab region is the only major region that has been experiencing an upward trajectory in poverty over the past decade. Given the young age structure of the countries of concern, this increase in poverty could contribute to substantial deficits in human capital accumulation, the consequences of which may be felt for generations.

**Table 2.** People in need of humanitarian assistance, by type of assistance, 2020 (Millions of people)

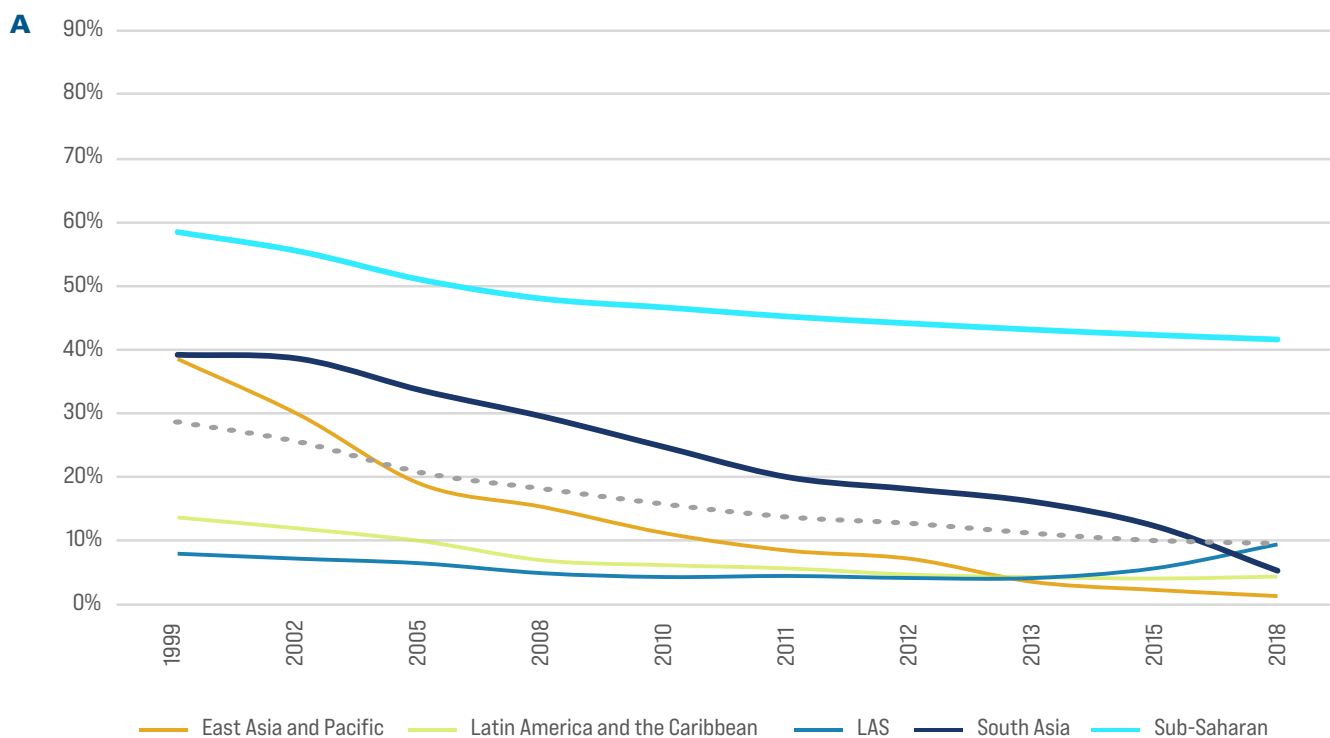
	Iraq	Libya	State of Palestine	Somalia	Sudan	Syrian Arab Republic	Yemen	Total
<b>People in need of human assistance</b>	4.1	0.9	2.4	5.2	9.3	11.1	24.3	57.3
<b>People in need of food and agricultural assistance</b>	0.9	0.3	1.7	4.7	6.1	9.0	20.1	42.9
<b>People in need of WASH<sup>a</sup> assistance</b>	1.9	0.2	1.9	2.7	7.6	15.5	20.5	50.3
<b>People in need of health assistance</b>	2.8	0.5	1.3	3.2	8.6	13.2	17.9	47.5
<b>People in need of shelter and NFIs<sup>b</sup></b>	2.4	0.3	0.3	2.2	1.2	9.1	7.3	22.8
<b>People in need of protection services</b>	2.9	0.5	1.9	3.2	1.8	13.2	14.2	37.7
<b>People in need of education services</b>	1.2	0.1	0.4	1.4	1.5	6.2	5.5	16.3

**Sources:** OCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Iraq (January 2020) [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/iraq\\_humanitarianresponseplan\\_2020.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/iraq_humanitarianresponseplan_2020.pdf), Libya (February 2020) [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/libya\\_hrp\\_2020\\_english\\_full\\_v1.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/libya_hrp_2020_english_full_v1.pdf), Palestine (January 2020) [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hrp\\_2020.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hrp_2020.pdf), Somalia (January 2020) <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-humanitarian-response-plan-2020-january-2020> and the Sudan (January 2020) [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan\\_2020\\_HRP\\_22Jan20.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan_2020_HRP_22Jan20.pdf); Extension HRP for Yemen (June 2020) [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Extension%20Yemen%20HRP%202020\\_Final%20%281%29.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Extension%20Yemen%20HRP%202020_Final%20%281%29.pdf); Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (December 2019) [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019\\_Syr\\_HNO\\_Full.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019_Syr_HNO_Full.pdf).

<sup>a</sup> WASH: water and sanitation hygiene.

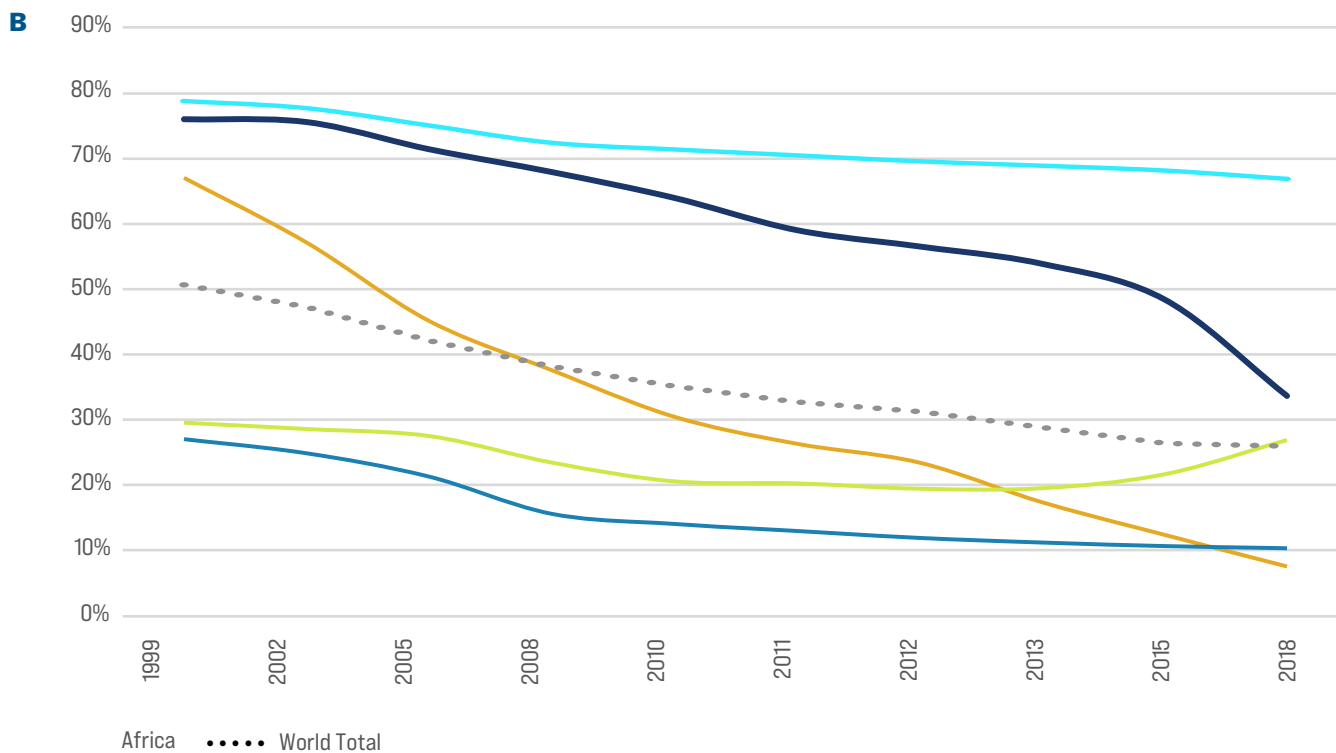
<sup>b</sup> NFIs: non-food items.

**Figure 12.** Global and regional headcount poverty ratios at \$1.9 (A) and \$3.2 (B) (2011 purchasing power parity), 1999-2018



Source: Calculated from World Bank PovcalNET Database.

Note: League of Arab States countries include Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, State of Palestine, and Yemen. Data for other countries are not available.

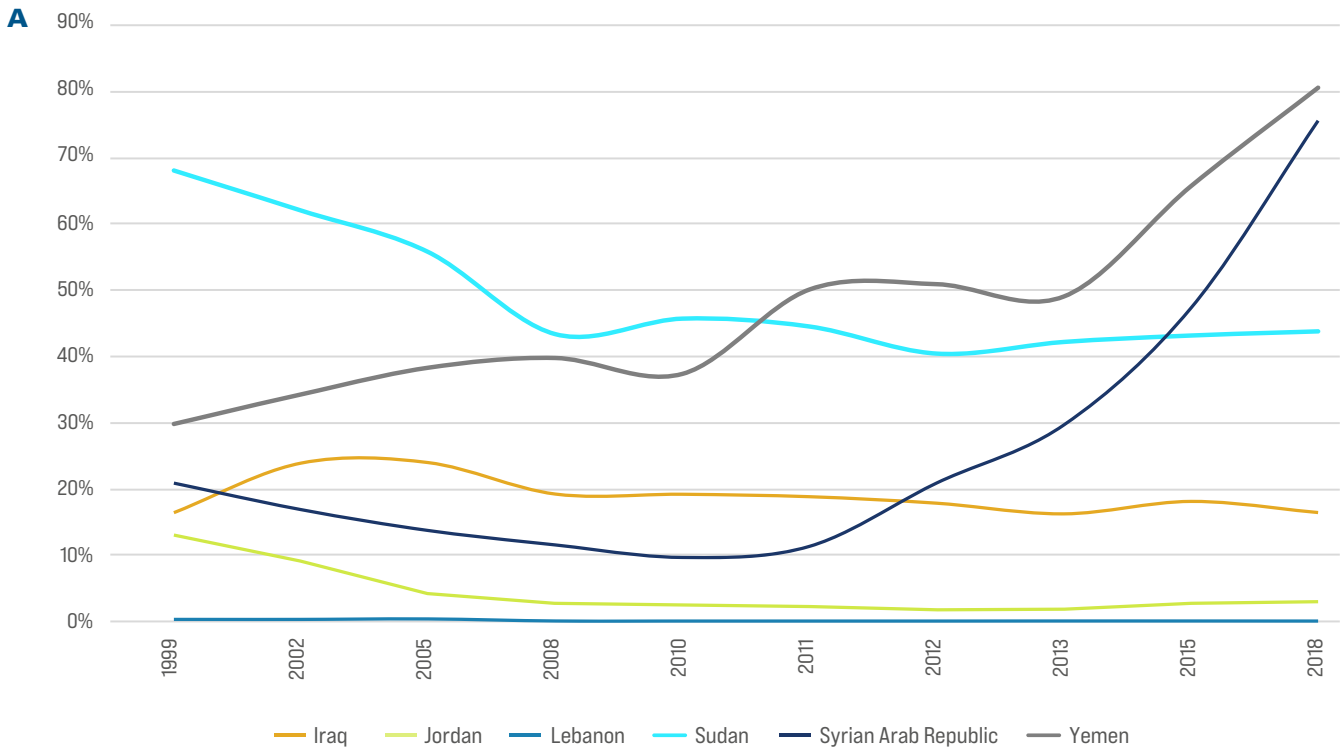


Source: Calculated from World Bank PovcalNET Database.

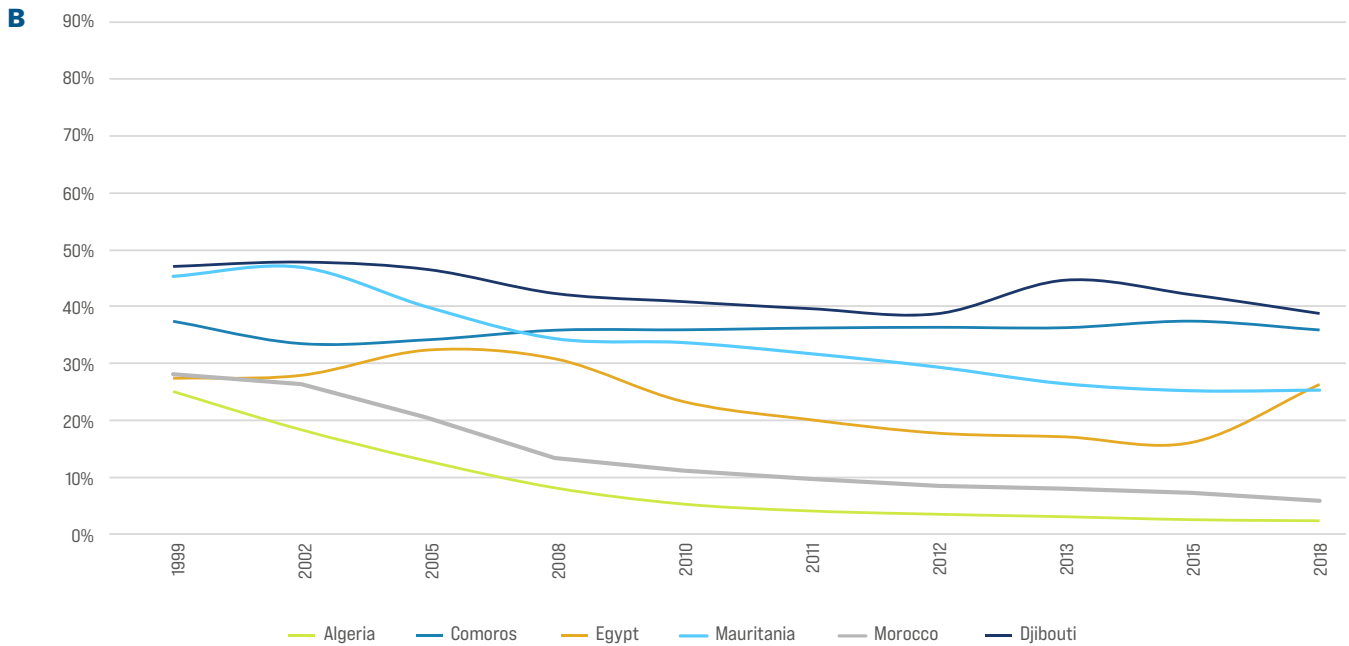
Note: League of Arab States countries include Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, State of Palestine, and Yemen. Data for other countries are not available.



**Figure 13. Headcount poverty ratios at \$3.2 in countries of concern (A) and other Arab countries (B) (2011 purchasing power parity), 1999-2018**



Source: Calculated from World Bank PovcalNET Database.



Source: Calculated from World Bank PovcalNET Database.

When looking at the individual countries for which data are available at the \$3.2 level (figure 13), the results show that the increasing levels of poverty are driven by the low-income countries and those affected by conflict and upheaval. There have been substantial increases in poverty rates in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen since 2010, a stall in the Sudan’s previously substantial progress in poverty reduction, and an absence of progress in Iraq. Egypt,

the only non-conflict Arab country for which data is available, also experienced an increase in poverty rates after 2015.

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that manifests itself in many ways beyond income. Poverty is also defined by the deprivations that people face in their daily lives in terms of health, education and other aspects affecting living standards. Mea-

sured in a multidimensional framework, the wider picture of poverty in the Arab region does not look better. The 2017 Multidimensional Arab Poverty Report (Arab MPI)<sup>31</sup> estimated that, in the Arab region,<sup>32</sup> 40.6 per cent of the population (116.1 million people) were multidimensionally poor, of which 13 per cent (38.2 million) lived in acute multidimensional poverty. The Arab MPI also showed that 60 per cent of the region's population are either poor or vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. Notably, female-headed households in the Sudan and Yemen were found to be more likely to be in poverty and even in acute poverty.

Other important findings of the Arab MPI included the spatial patterns of multidimensional poverty, both across and within countries. The 15 poorest governorates are concentrated in three countries, namely, the Sudan (9), Mauritania (5) and Yemen (1). It is important to note that the region's poorest, at a subnational level in the Sudan and Yemen, are zones historically and currently affected by conflict. Based on a traditional division along the lines of the rural and the urban, the Arab MPI showed that, whereas 48 per cent of the households analysed were in rural areas, rural households accounted for 83 per cent of the acutely poor population and 67 per cent of the poor population.

The results on multidimensional poverty, however, need to be interpreted with caution. The data sets employed were dated prior to 2015 for many countries. Hence, the full impact of conflict and poorer macroeconomic performance after this period is not

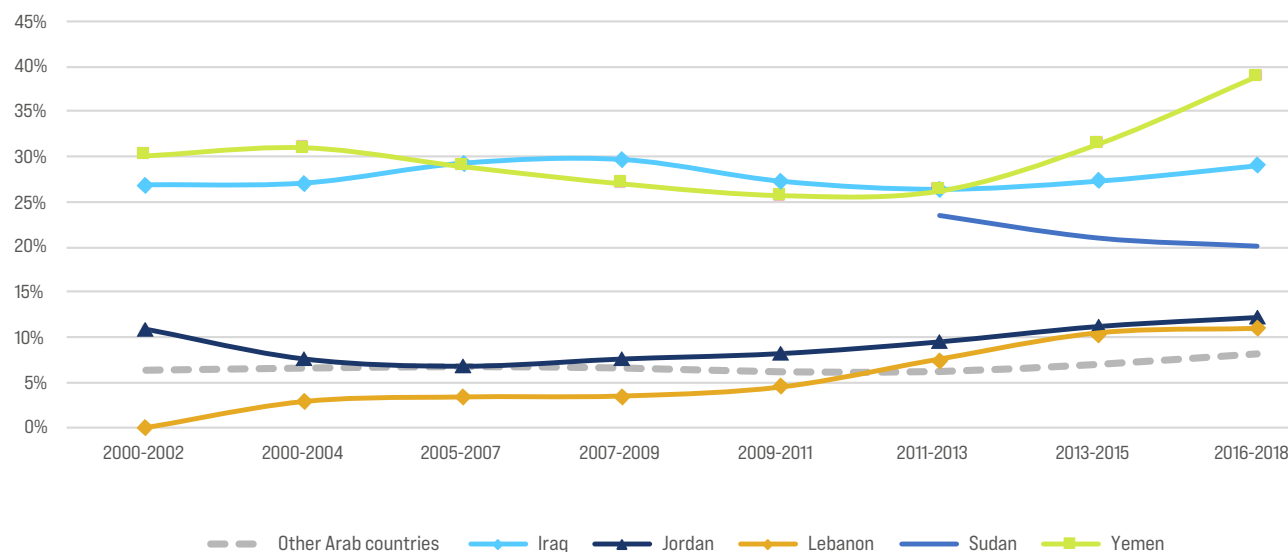
captured in the data, and the situation may have worsened in the countries covered in this report.<sup>33</sup>

### 3. Hunger and malnutrition are on the rise again in the Arab region

Hunger and malnutrition are on the rise again, affecting more than 40.2 million people across the region (figure 14). The situation is made worse by conflict, socioeconomic pressures and climatic shocks, which affect production of and access to key resources. This rolls back the improvements made before 2010, when food production was increasing, and undernourishment and its effects were trending downwards. The upward trend equally affects countries affected by conflict and other countries, but from different starting points, reflecting widespread deterioration in food security across the region.

Countries that are unable to meet basic nutritional needs through employment or assistance adopt a range of strategies to compensate for the lack of access to and ability to purchase food. Among Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, for example, food coping strategies included reducing the number of meals consumed per day, borrowing from friends or relatives, restricting food consumption of female household members, sending household members to eat elsewhere, and spending days without eating. The primary livelihood coping strategies among Syrian refugees were buying food on credit and reducing expenditure on food and essential services such as health and education.<sup>34</sup>

**Figure 14.** Hunger in the Arab region: undernourishment in selected countries of concern and other Arab countries, 2000-2018



Source: FAOSTAT.

Note: Data for the Sudan are not available prior to 2011. Data for Libya, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic are not available.



#### 4. Conflict and displacement have undermined health outcomes

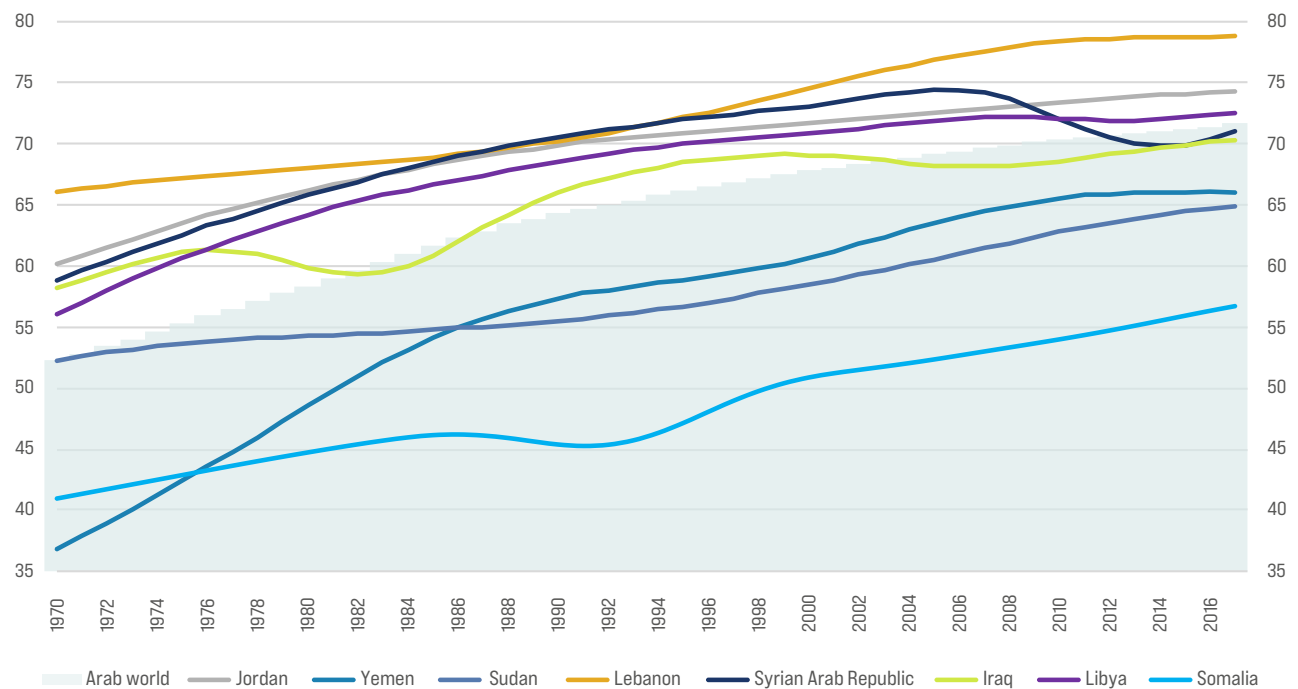
Life expectancy at birth in the Arab region has improved significantly in recent decades and is projected to continue improving to reach 76.4 years in 2050.<sup>35</sup> Among the countries of concern, life expectancy in Lebanon, Jordan and Libya is higher than the average for the Arab region. Notwithstanding the overall positive trend, conflict seems to have contributed to short-term declines in life expectancy in countries heavily affected by protracted armed conflict. For example, Iraq has experienced oscillations in the life expectancy trajectory corresponding to the various periods of intensified armed conflict experienced by the country. The rising life expectancy trajectory in the Syrian Arab Republic has been reversed in the last decade with the breakout of violent conflict. The least developed countries (LDCs) that are affected by conflict (Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen) all fall well below the Arab regional average, particularly Somalia, where life expectancy remains under 60 years (figure 15).

The decline in life expectancy associated with conflict indicates the significant deterioration of long-term health and well-being of populations living in situations of ongoing conflict. Significant public health challenges emerge in the context of conflict due to the degradation of health care systems and the barriers to access created by widespread displacement. Conflicts during the last decade in the

countries of concern have detrimentally affected the health status of the most-at-risk segments of the population, such as women, children, disabled and elderly. The most visible consequences of collapsing health care systems are seen in the outbreaks of diseases, such as polio in the Syrian Arab Republic and cholera in Yemen, as the destructive dynamics of conflict situations compound risk factors for the emergence and transmission of infectious diseases and disrupt the systemic capacity to manage outbreaks. This breakdown of health systems has also had negative impacts on the burden of non-communicable diseases.

Among the constraints that health actors encounter during conflict is the destruction of health-related infrastructure, which increases the burden on already strained health systems. Another frequent consequence of conflict is the loss of health care personnel due to mortality and displacement. According to the Surveillance System for Attacks on Health-Care of the World Health Organization (WHO), there has been a total of 526 attacks registered in the countries covered in this report during 2015-2020, resulting in 282 deaths and 506 injuries (table 3). However, actual numbers might be higher as underreporting is common in contexts of conflict and violence. The weaponization of health care facilities constitutes a war crime that destroys critical health infrastructure and incurs long-lasting repercussions for the development of national health systems.

**Figure 15.** Life expectancy in the Arab region and countries of concern, 1970-2017



Source: United Nations Population Division. World Population Prospects (WPP) 2019 Database.



**Table 3.** Attacks on health care facilities, 2015-2020

	Total attacks	Deaths	Injuries
Iraq	36	8	17
Libya	111	86	90
Sudan	7	0	5
Syrian Arab Republic	239	166	331
Yemen	133	22	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>506</b>

Source: WHO, n.d. Surveillance System for Attacks on Health-Care.

### Box 1. COVID 19: unprecedented threat calls for unprecedented solidarity

The global shock caused by the COVID-19 crisis has already left economic and social impacts that are even more profound than those caused by the financial collapse of 2008-2009. Until both the health and economic dimensions of the crisis are contained, the world will continue to face periods of heightened volatility and uncertainty. The pandemic has struck the Arab region at a time when economies were already struggling with challenging macroeconomic scenarios characterized by sluggish economic growth, low oil prices, mounting fiscal pressures, social unrest, armed conflicts, and occupation. In this difficult context, initial estimates of the impact of the pandemic on economic growth and unemployment indicate that the region may have lost around \$42 billion in income in 2020 alone, with losses in jobs projected to have reached 1.7 million jobs, an increase by 1.2 per cent in the unemployment rate.<sup>a</sup> Social distancing and mobility restrictions necessary to contain the pandemic have caused severe damages to employment across all sectors, especially the services sector. This economic slowdown will result in putting an estimated total of 8.3 million people at risk of falling into poverty, increasing the total numbers of poor and vulnerable to more than 100 million across the region.<sup>b</sup>

Nonetheless, the final socioeconomic losses will be determined by how the virus spreads through the major economies and the way Governments react to the new socioeconomic paradigm. While it might be early to assess how the pandemic will play out in specific countries, lessons learned from previous shocks in the region suggest that the most fragile States, where the social contract between citizens and the State is weakened or even severed, are likely to be the hardest hit; and within these countries, the groups already experiencing structural inequalities and exclusion will be more severely affected.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing gender inequalities in the region.<sup>c</sup> For instance, mobility restrictions and confinement protocols applied across the region have triggered increased tensions in households, resulting in increased rates of domestic violence and other forms of violence, including online harassment. Existing gender norms also determine the way care labour is divided. With schools closed and sick people needing care at home, this has had a significant impact on women's available free time and well-being.<sup>d</sup>

Especially worrying is the situation of refugees and other forcibly displaced populations as well as those living under occupation. Social distancing is virtually impossible in crowded conditions, and these population groups will continue to struggle with poor access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and limited access to health care, which will have critical repercussions during the pandemic.<sup>e</sup>

Facing this extremely challenging situation will require stronger multilateral coordinated actions that go beyond the traditional national interventions. Using the words of ESCWA's Executive Secretary,<sup>f</sup> "this unprecedented threat calls for unprecedented solidarity.... we call on Arab Governments to establish a regional social solidarity fund that supports Arab vulnerable and least developed countries. The fund will ensure a rapid response to their needs and provide relief during food shortages and health emergencies"

<sup>a</sup> ESCWA, 2020b. COVID 19 Economic cost to the Arab region. Policy Brief (E/ESCWA/CL3.SEP/2020/Policy Brief.1). Beirut.

<sup>b</sup> ESCWA, 2020c. Mitigating the impact of COVID-19: Poverty and food insecurity in the Arab region (E/ESCWA/CL3.SEP/2020/Policy Brief.2). Beirut.

<sup>c</sup> ESCWA, 2020d. The impact of COVID-19 on gender equality in the Arab region (E/ESCWA/2020/Policy Brief.4). Beirut.

<sup>d</sup> UN Women, 2020a. Rapid assessment: the effects of Covid-19 on violence against women and gendered social norms. A snapshot from nine countries in the Arab States; UN Women, 2020b. Impact of Covid-19 on violence against women and girls in the Arab states through the lens of women's civil society organizations; and UN Women, 2020c. Policy brief: Violence against Women and Girls and Covid-19 in the Arab Region.

<sup>e</sup> ESCWA, 2020e. The impact of COVID-19 on the water-scarce Arab region (E/ESCWA/2020/Policy Brief.5). Beirut.

<sup>f</sup> Statement by Rola Dashti, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA on the "Regional emergency response to mitigate the impact of COVID-19"; Beirut, 25 March 2020.



## 5. Disruptions in education systems caused by conflict will have negative impact on long-term human capital accumulation, with intergenerational consequences

Education is a key driver of long-term economic growth and poverty alleviation. Inability to access education not only hinders economic prospects, it also puts children at greater risk of physical and sexual violence and exploitation. Ensuring access to education requires a functioning public education system with sufficient resources. Yet, situations of conflict impede children's access to education by undermining education systems and creating barriers to access for conflict-affected populations.

These barriers include increased poverty and its associated coping mechanisms, destruction of infrastructure, displacement, and insufficient resources and personnel in schools.

In the countries of concern experiencing active conflict, the destruction of schools and limited availability of teachers have eroded education systems and disrupted capacities to provide access to education. By 2015, around 9,000 schools had fallen out of use in the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Iraq, and Libya after being either destroyed, damaged or repurposed to house displaced civilians or combatants.<sup>36</sup> In the Sudan, 37.5 per cent of schools in the conflict regions of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile have been completely or partially destroyed, while many others were forced to close amid deteriorating security conditions and increased displacement. Syrian refugee children in neighbouring countries are unable to meet their educational needs due to overcrowded schools, issues with residency requirements and cultural and language barriers in host community schools.<sup>37</sup> The vast number of people in need of education assistance in the countries of concern reveals the extensive repercussions of conflict on education systems.

These gaps in access to education are pronounced among internally displaced children, particularly those living in camps or informal settings with limited infrastructure to support learning. Internally displaced children living in camps face shortages or unavailability of learning materials, large class sizes, decrepit infrastructure, and informal or

makeshift classrooms. These factors compound to create an environment that is ill-suited for learning and have led to the deterioration of education outcomes. Without proper access to education, young generations affected by conflict are at risk of being left far behind. The deterioration of education infrastructure amid conflict and displacement in the countries of concern thus poses a considerable challenge to the prospects of long-term economic growth and development.

## 6. Conflict exacerbates existing gender inequalities

Women are especially vulnerable to the disruptive impact of conflict on development outcomes. According to the Gender Development Index (GDI),<sup>38</sup> gender disparities are already particularly acute in the Arab region. The GDI score measures gender inequality across three dimensions of development within the people pillar, namely health, education and living standards. To that effect, the GDI uses human development indicators for life expectancy, years of schooling (expected and mean), and gross national income (GNI) per capita. In 2018, women in Arab countries had 18 per cent fewer mean years of schooling than men (compared to 13 per cent less for the world), and 79 per cent lower GNI per capita compared to 45 per cent lower for women at the global level. All the countries of concern were ranked in the lowest performing quintile of 166 countries in the GDI except for Libya, which ranked in group three, and Somalia, for which there was no available data. The poor performances of countries of concern in the gender equality development targets reveal the extent to which women are left behind in terms of human development.

## 7. Women are underrepresented in political life and peacebuilding processes

Ensuring women's participation in political institutions and decision-making processes is crucial to addressing gender inequality and discrimination and improving protection against sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence and is necessary for peacebuilding and State stability. Though progress has been made over the last decade, the rate of women's representation in parliaments in the Arab region is at 19 per cent and

**Table 4.** People in need of education services, 2020 (Millions of people)

	Iraq	Libya	State of Palestine	Somalia	Sudan	Syrian Arab Republic	Yemen	Total
<b>Need of education services</b>	1.2	0.1	0.4	1.4	1.5	6.2	5.5	16.3

**Sources:** OCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Iraq (January 2020), Libya (February 2020), Palestine (January 2020), Somalia (January 2020) and the Sudan (January 2020); Extension HRP for Yemen (June 2020); Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (December 2019).

remains one of the lowest in the world.<sup>39</sup> Women are also poorly represented in peace making and peacebuilding mechanisms in conflict-affected States. The necessity to engage women in decision-making processes, including peace making and peacebuilding, is mandated by several international frameworks adopted by Arab States in addition to the SDGs, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Specific to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, the League of Arab States has in place an Executive Action Plan on United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Several Arab countries have developed national plans on women, peace and security (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the State of Palestine, the Sudan, Tunisia, and

Yemen) and several others have such plans under consideration. Engaging women in decision-making processes provides the opportunity for conflict-affected and post-conflict States to benefit from women's knowledge and experiences and enables them to participate actively in a country's rehabilitation and development.

Insufficient progress in structural issues such as legal discrimination, unfair social norms and attitudes, and low levels of political participation are at the root of gender inequality and discrimination and undermine the ability to advance towards more peaceful and inclusive societies. Achieving gender parity is an essential component of sustainable development. Thus, progress on development objectives cannot be made without addressing gender discrimination and eliminating the barriers women face in fulfilling their basic needs and accessing their basic rights.

## D. Planet

Countries in the Arab region are increasingly vulnerable to climate change, and the countries of concern of this report are no exception. As a region, Arab countries are naturally affected by difficult climate conditions, with high temperatures and scarce ground water and rainfall. Within this broad characterization, subregional variations exist due to geographic and orographic conditions. For instance, Iraq combines arid and semi-arid conditions with the alluvial ecosystem formed by the Euphrates and Tigris rivers and highland areas. Lebanon has Mediterranean climatic conditions that vary greatly between the mountain and coastal areas of the country. The Syrian Arab Republic combines Mediterranean conditions with arid and semi-arid areas and is also part of the ecoregion formed by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Libya and Jordan have mostly vast extensions of arid or semi-arid terrain. Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen combine arid and semi-arid areas with equatorial and tropical conditions. Despite the distinct features of environmental and climate conditions in the countries of concern, they share common challenges in terms of climate change and adaptation. The combination of demographic pressure, increasing water scarcity and climate change has put increasing strain on the ecosystems of all countries.

Natural resources and the environment play a variety of roles across conflict cycles and through development trajectories. Studies indicate that 40-60 per cent of civil wars over the past seventy years have been associated with natural resources, and that at least 18 violent conflicts since 1990 have been fuelled or financed by natural resource exploitation.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the role of healthy ecosystems in

sustaining peace is recognized in the 2030 Agenda as well as other United Nations instruments.<sup>41</sup> As conflicts are triggered, exacerbated or prolonged by competition over scarce resources, climate change will only make the situation worse.<sup>42</sup> Given that resources and ecological dynamics underpin human activities and capacities for achieving sustainable development, the planet dimension of the 2030 Agenda is critical for achieving the overarching goals of peace and sustainable development.

### **1. Climate change is the defining global issue for humanity, and the Arab region is no exception**

Over the next century, it is predicted that the climate of Arab countries will experience unprecedented extremes.<sup>43</sup> The temperature in the Arab region is increasing and is expected to continue to do so until the end of the century, when temperatures will reach historic highs. This increase in temperature will be accompanied by reduced rainfall and higher frequency of extreme weather events. Under the current status quo scenario of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, predictions for the region indicate that temperature will increase by between 1.7 °C and 2.6 °C by 2050 and between 3.2 °C and 4.8 °C by 2100. Under a more optimistic scenario where emissions are reduced, the Arab region is projected to observe a lower increase in the range of 1.2 °C and 1.9 °C by 2050 and between 1.5 °C and 2.3 °C by the end the century.<sup>44</sup>

This general predicted trend towards a hotter, drier and more unpredictable climate will vary in intensity across the region. Vulnerability to climate change will be lower in areas such as the Maghreb,

**Table 5.** Level of water stress and freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources

Country	Year	Percentage	Category
Libya	2010	822.9	Extremely high
Yemen	2005	168.3	Extremely high
Syrian Arab Republic	2005	126	Extremely high
Sudan	2010	118.7	Extremely high
Jordan	2015	100.1	Extremely high
Lebanon	2015	57.3	High
Iraq	2015	54.1	High
Somalia	2005	24.5	Medium-to-high

Source: Global SDG Indicators Database.

Levant and, to some extent, the highlands in the upper Tigris–Euphrates basin. Southern parts of the Arab region, including the south-western Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa, are predicted to have the highest vulnerability in the region, while the areas in between are predicted to exhibit moderate vulnerability.<sup>45</sup> Given the influence of climate change on population movements, livelihood opportunities and patterns of economic activity, ecological pressures associated with climate change could uproot existing social patterns and practices and exacerbate socioeconomic pressures that often act as drivers of conflict. Therefore, climate shocks expected in the region constitute a high priority risk factor that Governments must address.

## 2. Impact of climate change will compound existing conditions of water scarcity

The Arab region is currently the most water-scarce in the world and has the highest risk for more scarcity.<sup>46</sup> Estimates indicate that the region's water resources per capita are at just one sixth of the world average.<sup>47</sup> The countries of concern are experiencing alarming levels of ground-water stress (table 5). Water stress is measured as the amount of freshwater withdrawals as a share of internal water resources, including water withdrawn for agriculture, industry and domestic use. Five out of the eight countries of concern fall under the category of extremely high stress, two under high water stress and one under medium-to-high stress.

Water scarcity in the region results from naturally arid climate conditions, high population growth, dependence on shared water resources, non-revenue water losses due to aging infrastructure, and inefficient use. As increasing temperatures and receding precipitation levels are projected to continue to put stress on freshwater sources, countries in the region will become increasingly vulnerable to the destabilizing effects of climate events. Also, droughts are among the weather events that the region is expected to encounter more frequently. Water availability is a key determinant

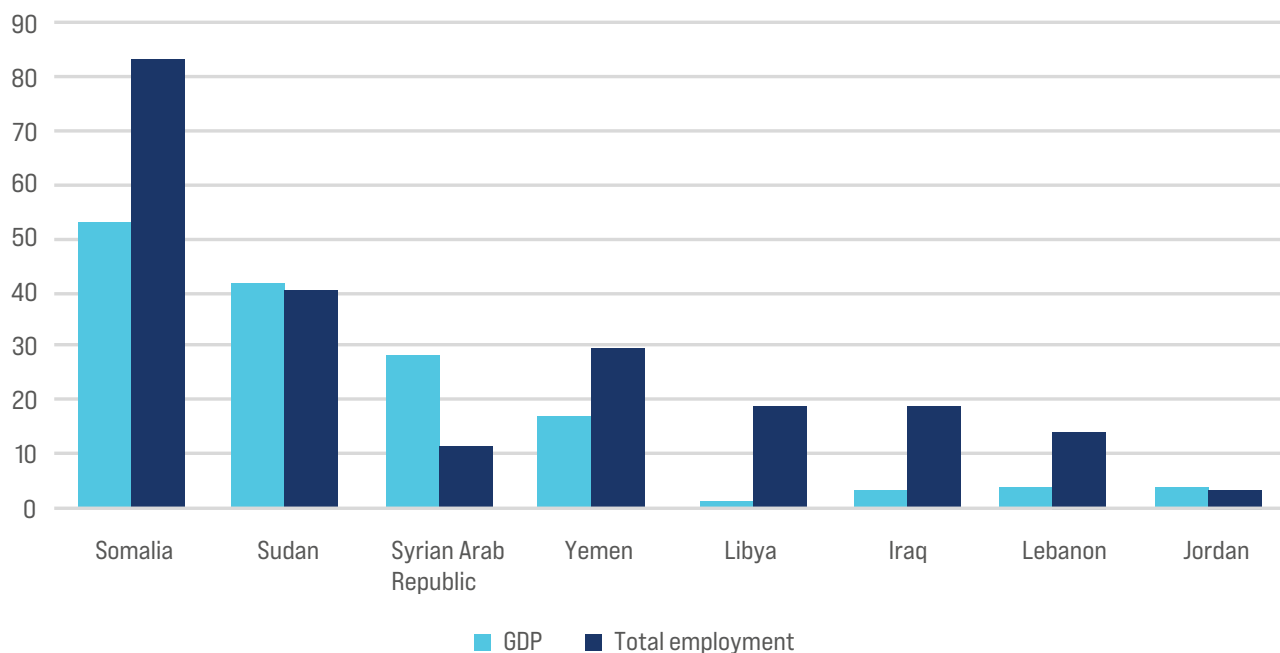
of agricultural productivity and sustainability, as agricultural sectors across the region utilize the large majority of available water resources.<sup>48</sup> In order to mitigate the risk posed by growing water scarcity, countries must improve the management of water resources and increase the efficiency of water systems. Yet, in conflict-affected countries, the dynamics and repercussions of armed violence are diverting resources and attention from water resource management, while accelerating the destruction of essential infrastructure

## 3. Climate change is a threat multiplier that affects many of the factors that drive social unrest

With climate change negatively affecting key aspects of food production such as water availability, loss of arable land, increase of temperature and changes in the acidity of the oceans, it will increasingly threaten human security in the Arab region. Given the associations between accelerating climate change and declining agricultural output, the destabilizing impacts of environmental changes are particularly concerning for national and rural economies that rely heavily on outputs of agriculture and fisheries to sustain livelihoods. Agriculture plays a strategic role for the economies of many of the countries of concern both in terms of importance of the national output and as a sector of employment providing economic opportunities and support for significant parts of the population.

The extent to which the economies in the countries of concern depend on the agricultural sector is demonstrated in figure 16. Somalia, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic are the countries where the agricultural sector has more weight in the national economy. It is noteworthy that, in Somalia, over 80 per cent of the population is employed by this sector, exceeding the weight that the activity has in the economy (approximately 55 per cent). In Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, and Yemen the proportion of the labour force employed in agriculture also exceeds the GDP weight of the sector. This implies

**Figure 16.** Share of agriculture (crops, forestry and fishing) in total employment and GDP, 2017



Source: ESCWA calculations from FAO and ILO data.

that the value contributed by agriculture to the economy is distributed over a larger segment of the population, thus diminishing per capita income and signalling higher levels of inequality and poverty in rural economies centred around agriculture. This feature of a labour-intensive sector that returns disproportionately less profit thus contributes to the problems of rural underdevelopment and economic exclusion that manifest themselves in widening rural-urban disparities and accelerated urbanization. Furthermore, these significant numbers of employment in the agriculture sector in all the countries except for Jordan indicate the extent to which populations and livelihoods are vulnerable to the risk of ecological pressures driven by climate change.

Reliance on the agricultural sector also has strategic consequences in terms of ensuring food security, making the prospects for stability and development in many of the countries of concern particularly vulnerable to environmental shocks.<sup>49</sup> Amid changing ecological conditions, countries have already experienced shocks in terms of declines in crop yields and agricultural production and volatility in food prices triggered by the incidence of droughts, floods and other climate events. This, combined with structural deficits in governance, irrigation, flood management, and transportation infrastructure, compound challenges facing the agriculture sector and lead to pronounced levels of food insecurity.<sup>50</sup> Thus, achieving SDG 2 (on food security and sustainable agriculture) requires making progress on SDG 13 (addressing climate change and developing appropriate governance

capabilities to mitigate the impact of climate events such as droughts and flooding).

#### 4. Climate change exacerbates trends of rural underdevelopment and outmigration

The increasing trend toward urbanization is particularly acute in the Arab region, where the urban population saw a four-fold increase between 1970 and 2019 and is projected to double again by 2050 (from 199 million to almost 400 million)<sup>51</sup> The accelerating trend of rural outmigration will likely continue as disparities between rural and urban areas widen and water shortages, declining economic opportunities linked to agriculture and general rural underdevelopment continue to constrain livelihoods for rural populations.<sup>52</sup>

Migration and mobility are well-documented strategies of adaptation to climate variability.<sup>53</sup> The Syrian Arab Republic provides a case of how the onset of drought during 2007-2010 had dramatic consequences for agricultural production and rural livelihoods, leading to food insecurity and rural outmigration. The strain placed on rural economies by the drought led to the internal displacement of an estimated 1.5 million people, as rural communities, primarily in the north-eastern region of the country, were forced to migrate toward urban centres. Schools in the north-eastern agricultural centre had an 80 per cent drop in enrolment during the drought, which provides an indication of the vast scale of rural displacement that coincided with the



drought. These waves of rural to urban migration put increasing pressures on urban peripheries, with increased unemployment, overcrowding and informal settlements, many of the factors cited for growing public unrest.<sup>54</sup>

Similar population movements have been documented in Somalia, where environmental pressures led to the internal displacement of 899,000 people in 2017, including 7,500 due to floods and fires and 892,000 from slow-onset disasters such as drought and general loss of livelihoods. By the end of 2018, Somalia had the fourth largest IDP population in the world after a 25 per cent increase in the IDP population over the course of the year. An estimated 80 per cent of the IDP population reside in and around urban areas, primarily in the southern-central part of the country, which has put added pressure on urban infrastructure and labour markets.<sup>55</sup>

### 5. Notwithstanding climate change, management of natural resources already plays an important role in the dynamics of armed conflicts in the region

While causes of conflict are multidimensional and complex, natural resources often play a role in facilitating or aggravating violent conflict. Natural resources can promote competition between rival factions or provide a source of revenue for violent non-State actors. In Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, the acquisition of large swaths of territory by ISIL allowed the group to use natural resources including oil, wheat and cotton to finance its operations by selling commodities through long-standing smuggling networks.<sup>56</sup> In Libya, access to and control over the country's vast hydrocarbon resources has become one of the primary spoils of conflict over which rival factions are fighting. Meanwhile, in Somalia, it was estimated in 2014 that Al-Shabaab militant group earned between \$38 million and \$68 million yearly from illegal sales and fees associated with the extraction and commercialization of charcoal.<sup>57</sup> An assessment by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimated that illicit funds raised through illegal logging and charcoal trade in Africa would increase threefold in the coming decades.<sup>58</sup> Without effective control over natural resources, Governments will not only lose important streams of revenue to underpin State capacity-building, but also

will continue to face persistent instability as violent actors are enabled to finance and sustain civil conflict through illegal sales and smuggling networks.

### 6. Conflict pollution is curtailing progress towards achieving SDGs in the Arab region

The incidence of conflict has been linked to significant increases in pollution and contamination of natural resources that accelerate environmental degradation and have detrimental consequences for the health of surrounding populations. In Iraq, the legacy of three wars combined with the recent fight against ISIL has left behind high concentrations of environmental pollution through the destruction of military and industrial targets, spreading toxic materials.<sup>59</sup> In the Syrian Arab Republic, a decade of persistent battles has resulted in extensive bombings of oil refineries and targeting of urban infrastructure, thereby exposing people, land and water resources to toxic residues and creating long-term health risks. Furthermore, in conflicts featuring violent non-State actors, vital natural resources can be weaponized or destroyed. These dynamics were observed in the fight against ISIL, as retreating militants set oil resources ablaze and targeted water infrastructure by deliberately releasing toxic materials into important water sources.<sup>60</sup> The environmental damage wrought by conflict poses severe developmental challenges that compound pre-existing vulnerability to climate change.

### 7. Conflict, violence and instability are curtailing progress on water and sanitation

Conflict, violence and instability can derail progress towards universal access to basic water and sanitation services. While the countries of concern had made progress regarding MDGs on water and sanitation between 1990 and 2011, some of those gains have now been reversed amid situations of conflict and instability. In 2013, Jordan, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen were lagging on the targets of providing increased access to improved drinking water and sanitation. In terms of drinking water, all countries displayed insufficient progress between 1990 and 2011, with Iraq, Jordan, the Sudan, and Yemen falling -45

**Table 6.** People in need of water and sanitation hygiene (WASH) assistance, 2020 (Millions of people)

	Iraq	Libya	State of Palestine	Somalia	Sudan	Syrian Arab Republic	Yemen	Total
<b>Need of WASH assistance</b>	1.9	0.2	1.9	2.7	7.6	15.5	20.5	50.3

**Sources:** OCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Iraq (January 2020), Libya (February 2020), Palestine (January 2020), Somalia (January 2020) and the Sudan (January 2020); Extension HRP for Yemen (June 2020); Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019 (December 2019).

per cent or lower below the target and Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic falling between -1 per cent and -43 per cent, respectively, below the target. While countries fared better in progress on sanitation, all but the Syrian Arab Republic (with 44 per cent) still fell below the MDG 6 target (the predecessor of SDG 6), with Somalia and the Sudan lagging the furthest behind (-59 per cent and -69 per cent, respectively), followed by Iraq (-35 per cent) and Yemen (-3 per cent).

Particularly in the case of Iraq, Somalia and the Sudan, which have suffered from long-standing conflicts since 1990, pre-existing challenges to water and sanitation systems have been further exacerbated by the destructive effects of conflict on water and sanitation services.<sup>61</sup> The considerable gaps in progress made on water and sanitation development are made evident by the vast number of people in the region in need of WASH assistance, illustrated in table 6.

Furthermore, the pervasive displacement associated with conflict and instability presents significant barriers to making progress on water and sanitation access. As displacement puts increased pressure on basic water and sanitation services, the areas and communities hosting large concentrations of refugees and IDPs face increased disruptions and deteriorations in such services. Inadequate sanitation facilities in IDP camps and informal settlements, in combination with limited safe water resources, negatively impact public health and present the risk of water-borne diseases among displaced and vulnerable populations. For the countries of concern, which are hosting large numbers of IDPs and refugees, displacement places acute pressure on already deteriorating resources and services, thereby heightening vulnerability.

## **8. Displacement intensifies questions of land tenure and access to natural resources, creating prospects for further conflict**

Land ownership and the access and management of natural resources are significant sources of conflict that have been exacerbated by climate change. The increased movement of populations due to conflict (displacements and returns) intensifies questions of land ownership and access to natural resources and puts increased pressure on basic water and sanitation services. These compounding effects can produce a vicious cycle whereby degrading ecosystems lead to further conflict, displacement and migration.

Furthermore, areas hosting large concentrations of displaced populations are at higher risk of renewed conflict because of local tensions over rights and access

to land and natural resources, as well as heightened deterioration of water and sanitation services. Thus, efforts to address social cohesion and improve basic infrastructure should prioritize the regions that host the largest concentrations of displaced people. In countries with protracted and/or iterative periods of violent conflict, such as the Sudan and Somalia, failure to adequately address development issues and the root causes of conflict contribute to the fragility of peace and the likelihood of renewed conflict. Challenges to post-conflict situations and the achievement of sustainable peace include matters relating to reconstruction, resource allocation and livelihood opportunities. Increased competition over natural resources is cited as one of the factors that heightens the prospect of renewed conflict.<sup>62</sup> These potentially divisive issues must be addressed correctly to prevent the resurgence of conflict.

Considering the large numbers of IDPs and refugees in the countries of concern, securing access to land can become a source of tension, whether it is temporary access to land, permanent relocation or access to land in areas of origin after protracted displacement. Past experiences in countries such as the Sudan and Somalia highlight the importance of land rights in post-conflict resettlement as a major issue of concern to both IDPs and host communities. Lessons can be learned from the Sub-Saharan region. In Liberia, humanitarian actors observed increased local conflicts when the Government allocated portions of rural land for IDP settlement without properly considering or consulting pre-existing rural communities. They also observed similar flare-ups in post-conflict settings in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, providing a set of precedents of the sensitivity associated to the resettlement of IDPs.<sup>63</sup> Without proper management and negotiation of land rights, IDP returns and resettlements could rekindle or produce new localized tensions amid the strain on already scarce resources (natural resource conflicts driven by scarcity).<sup>64</sup> Thus, issues of land tenure are particularly important in the management of displaced populations in rural settings where local populations depend on natural resources (agricultural land, fisheries, forests, and others) for their livelihoods.



## E. Prosperity

Improving the lives of people in harmony with the planet can only be achieved through an economic paradigm that substitutes purely quantitative economic growth with strong, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient economic progress. The 2010-2020 decade started with a global economic panorama heavily impacted by the 2008 financial crisis. Since then, the countries of concern have been coping with different structural imbalances in the form of low growth, high levels of youth unemployment and volatile oil prices (particularly important for Iraq, Libya and Yemen) that have been exacerbated by the combination of conflict and challenging global financial conditions. To catalyse sustainable development, economic models must go beyond job creation and economic growth. They should be assessed by how they assist societies in addressing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development in a holistic manner.

### 1. Violence incurs significant costs for all the economies in the region

Violent conflict inflicts devastating long-term costs on a country's economy in terms of infrastructure, human capital and public expenditure. The disruption of economic activity caused by conflict can lead to the deterioration of physical and human capital, as prices of capital-intensive goods rise, while wages, employment and social spending declines. Amid the breakdown in economic organization, Governments lose access to sources of revenue and have diminished capacity to collect taxes, thereby constraining public expenditure on important public services.

For countries directly affected by conflict, costs from violence are incurred primarily in the form of conflict deaths and injuries, damage to infrastructure, terrorism, losses from displacement (IDPs and refugees), and GDP losses from disruptions to economic activity. Yet, the economic costs are not confined to countries directly affected by conflict. Figure 17 illustrates the extensive cost of violence for all Arab countries, defined as direct expenditure and economic effects associated with "containing, preventing and dealing with the consequences of violence".<sup>65</sup>

### 2. Access to energy is a key accelerator of recovery for communities affected by conflict and displacement

Sustainable energy is a critical element for achieving goals of immediate recovery and longer-term resilience in contexts of fragility and conflict. The ability of communities to cope with and rapidly recover from conflict hinges in many ways on their ability to regain sustainable access to energy.

Energy powers community access to water, social services such as health and education, transport, and communication needs, and is critical for regenerating livelihoods and local economies. But too often, countries of the Arab region affected by conflict are unable to ensure the energy capacities needed for an effective recovery. In such contexts, decentralized energy solutions are now receiving greater attention, as a way of meeting the needs of affected communities and setting the foundations to build back better.<sup>66</sup>

As countries seek new bridges between humanitarian and development interventions, the role of solutions under SDG 7 on energy has come into greater focus, calling on countries to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. Among the communities facing the largest energy access gaps are the record numbers of individuals in the Arab region affected and displaced by conflict. Many countries suffering the impacts of conflict are also energy poor, relying heavily on energy imports for economic and social needs. In these contexts, expanding sustainable energy solutions is seen not as an end, but as an enabler on the road from fragility to resilience.

This is particularly important in the protracted situations of conflict and displacement faced in the Arab region. Constraints often exist to extend energy access to displaced communities, owing to either ongoing conflicts and destruction of power grid infrastructure or the lack of fiscal space and limited ability to expand already-stretched energy supplies. In such communities, expanding the use of decentralized energy solutions is important not only for short-term needs, but from a longer-term development perspective as it helps reduce pressures on host communities and fiscal pressures on the State.

### 3. Economic performance in the countries of concern has been characterized by subdued growth, volatile prices and worsening fiscal challenges alongside the costs of conflict

The Arab region has witnessed significant economic and political shocks and volatile oil prices that have had a continuous dampening effect on economic growth since the global economic recession in 2008. While the magnitude of the reconstruction costs for Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen has yet to be assessed, 2010-2020 is a decade marked by huge losses for the region, albeit with critical differences across the countries covered in this report. For countries with more intense violence and armed conflicts, the setbacks in economic progress have been more severe (figure 18).



In the Syrian Arab Republic, GDP in 2017 was less than half of pre-conflict levels. In 2015 alone, Yemen lost an estimated 30 per cent of its GDP, and the cumulative loss in real output for the period 2014-2019 was about \$88.8 billion,<sup>67</sup> while Libya has experienced an extremely volatile period with GDP levels below those registered at the beginning of the decade. Iraq's economy has been affected negatively by the double shock of fighting ISIL and volatility in oil prices. The Sudanese economy was severely affected in 2011, when the country lost most of its oil production following the secession of South Sudan. Somalia has experienced moderate growth that is insufficient to accelerate poverty reduction while vulnerabilities to shocks such as food prices remain. Jordan and Lebanon have experienced a subdued rate of growth that has contributed to stress in their public accounts and put barriers in the way of addressing structural problems and increasing shared prosperity.

The disruptions due to conflicts have also led to high inflation and exchange rate pressures. For example, in Libya and Yemen, inflation soared to more than 15 per cent in 2011, 2015 and 2016. The Syrian Arab Republic is an even more extreme case, with an accumulative increase in prices by more than 300 per cent between 2011 and 2016. Such inflation dynamics

also create strong depreciation pressures on local currencies, which translate into accelerated loss of purchasing power, sending thousands into poverty. Overall, the countries covered in this report have been overwhelmed with severe macroeconomic imbalances (of different intensity) such as high inflation and loss of economic growth..

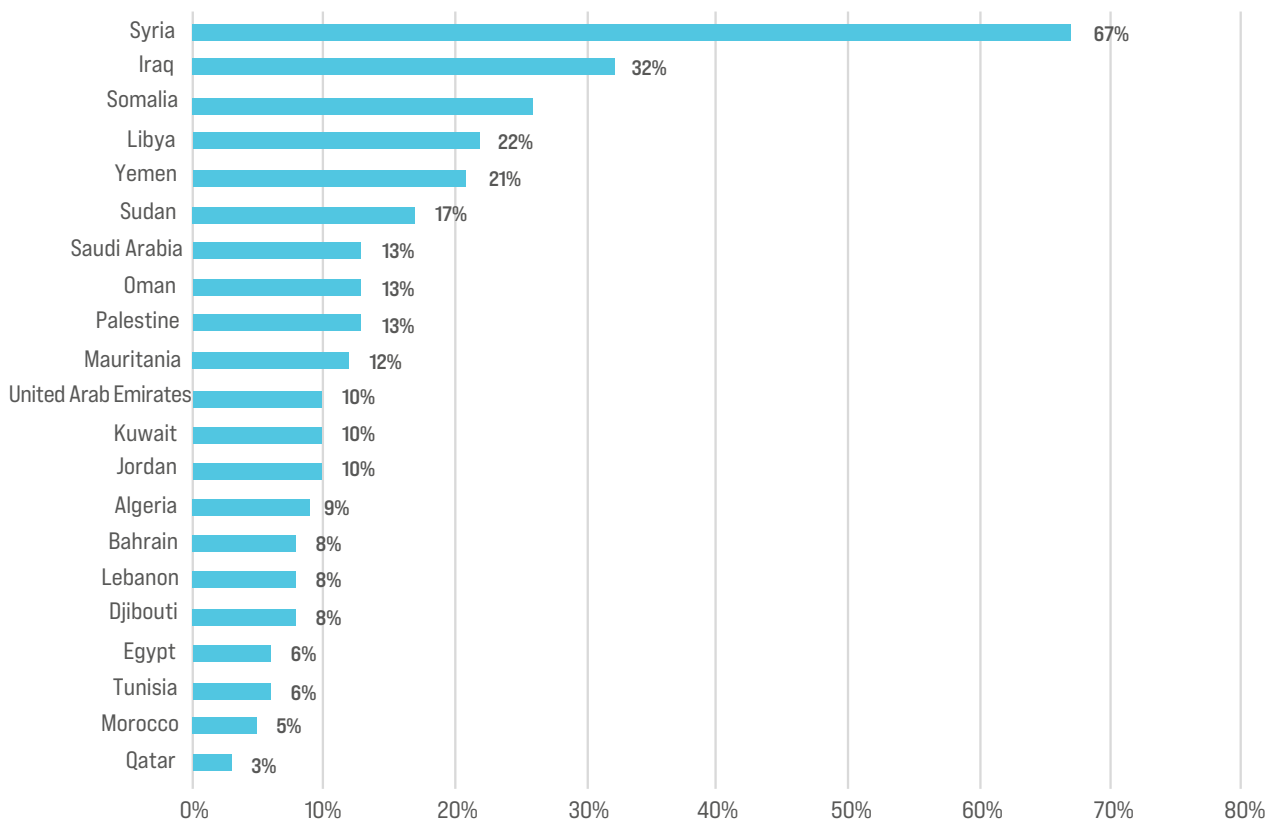
#### 4. Pressure on public budgets is reducing fiscal space to support economic and social investments needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda

On average, during the period 2000-2015, the countries of concern ran a deficit in their fiscal balances. The situation has deteriorated particularly since 2012, when the countries of concern started running higher deficits as revenues fell short of expenditures (table 7).

With low growth and revenues, the gap between expenditure and revenues as a share of GDP has increased over time. Figure 19 illustrates this gap between expenditure and revenues across the countries of concern.

These trends, in combination with depressed inflows of foreign direct investments stemming from regional instability, have created vulnerabilities in internal and

**Figure 17. Economic cost of violence as percentage of GDP in the Arab region, 2018**

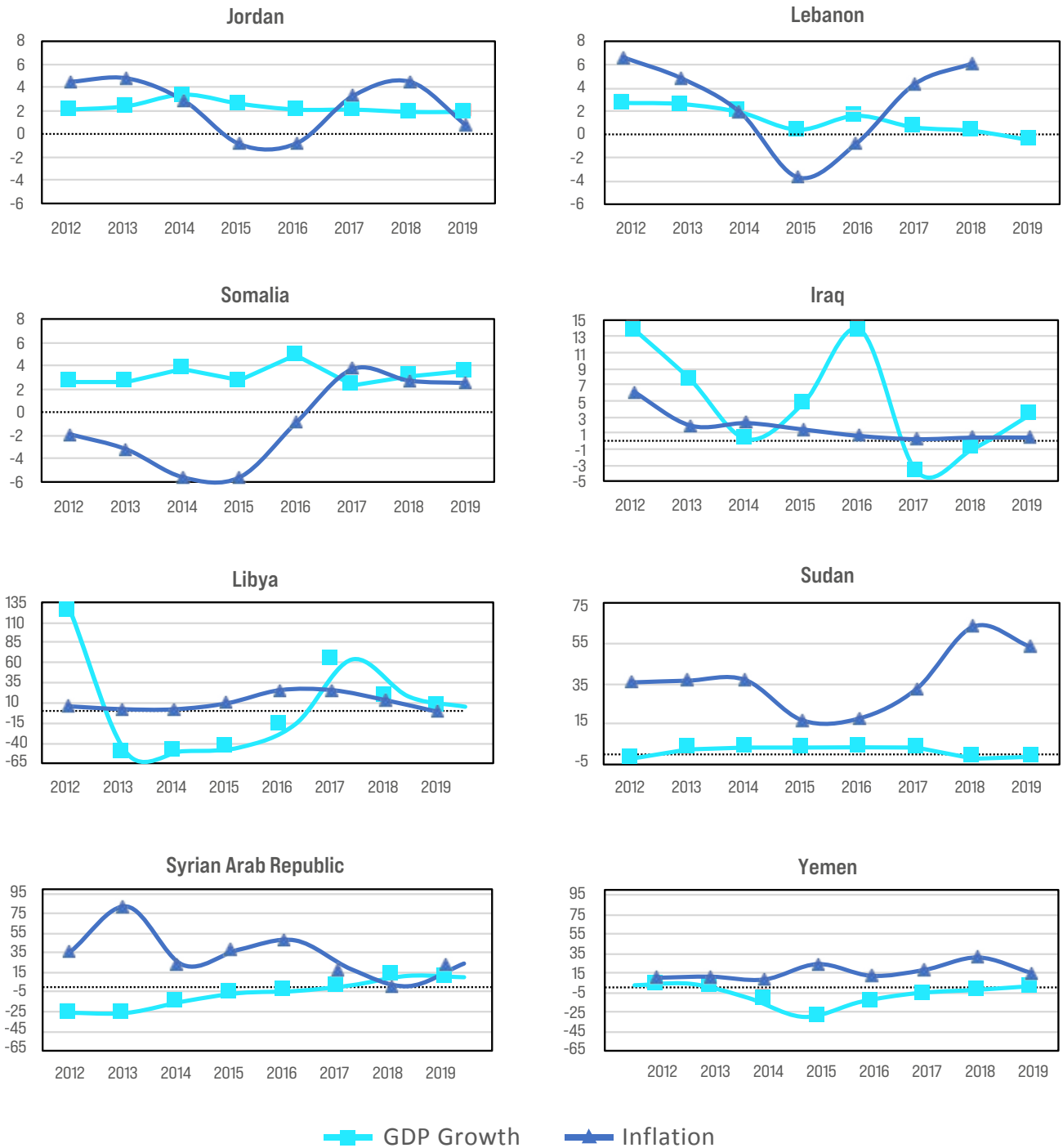


Source: IEP, 2019.

Notes: The economic cost of violence includes the direct and indirect costs of violence. Direct costs are the cost of violence to the victim, the perpetrator and the Government. These include direct expenditures, such as the cost of policing, military and medical expenses. Indirect costs accrue after the violent event and include indirect economic losses, physical and physiological trauma to the victim and lost productivity. Data for Comoros are not available.



**Figure 18. Real GDP growth and inflation, 2012-2020**



Source: United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects, 2020.  
 Note: Results for 2019 are partly estimated.

external debts and left countries facing a difficult trade-off between debt stabilization and fiscal sustainability. This lack of fiscal space makes the required investments to achieve the SDGs more complex.

**5. Chronically high youth unemployment in Arab countries compounds the vulnerability of populations and risk of social instability and conflict**

The talents and energies of one third of the Arab region’s youth are not being effectively harnessed. In 2019, three out of ten young people in the Arab region were not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET).<sup>68</sup> In other words, they were neither gaining professional experience nor acquiring skills through educational or vocational programmes that could move them towards employment. Gender differences in this regard are pervasive. Young Arab women were three times more likely than young men

to be unemployed, out of the labour force, and not in school or in a training programme (young women had a NEET rate of 51 per cent compared to 17 per cent for young men). These high rates of youth inactivity are not only economically inefficient and socially unfair, but also provide fertile ground for social unrest and impede progress on sustainable development.

Pervasive unemployment, particularly among youth, is a common structural problem across the countries of concern and other parts of the Arab region. Figure 20 depicts the high levels of youth unemployment in the countries of concern compared to the global average. In the countries of concern, the combined average youth unemployment rate reached 27.7 per cent (34.5 per cent urban and 23 per cent rural) in 2020, compared to the global youth unemployment rate of 13.6 per cent. Youth unemployment rates in the countries of concern have remained persistently high over the past decade and a half. The average youth unemployment rates among the countries of concern have shown a moderate, steady increase from 25.4 per cent in 2005 to 27.8 per cent at the start of 2020. The persistence of this phenomenon indicates the extent to which youth unemployment is a structural problem which results from imbalances and inefficiencies in the economies and labour markets within the countries of concern.

Youth unemployment rates also exhibit wide disparities in terms of gender, as women fare much worse than men in youth unemployment rates in all the countries of concern except for Somalia. The average rate of youth unemployment for women in the countries of concern is almost double that of their male counterparts (25 per cent) and three times the rate for young women at the global level (13 per cent). The alarming trend of chronic youth unemployment and its corresponding gender disparities present an enormous challenge to achieving SDG 8 (ensuring decent work and economic growth for all). Given the young profile of the population in the countries of concern, this factor is also a continuous driver for social unrest and discontent.

## 6. Conflict exacerbates informality and imbalances in labour market

Unemployment rates do not provide an exhaustive picture of economic vulnerability, particularly in developing countries where a considerable share of the population is employed in the informal sector earning minimal wages with little to no protection or regulation of working conditions. As of 2019, informal employment accounted for 25 per cent of the Arab region's total employment. Informality contributes to vulnerability, as workers are precluded from formal labour protections or entitlements such as social security. As a result, workers in the informal sector are more likely to face exploitation, insecurity and abuse. Thus, high rates of informality indicate high levels of vulnerability among the working population. In 2019, vulnerable employment constituted an estimated 25 per cent of total employment in Arab countries. This high incidence of informality in all its forms has multiple adverse consequences for workers, enterprises and societies being a major challenge for the realization of decent work for all.

The informal economy tends to grow during periods of crisis and conflict amid the breakdown in formal institutions and governance.<sup>69</sup> The onset of conflict has a detrimental impact on formal economic activities, as private firms or public enterprises that offer formal and secure sources of employment are often disrupted or downsized, and workers are relegated to the informal sector in order to sustain a livelihood. Further, increasing inflation and cuts to public services and expenditure associated with conflict often force even those with formal employment to supplement their income with informal economic activity.<sup>70</sup> Economic security is one of the primary dimensions of human security and underscores the importance of access to decent, adequately remunerated work opportunities for promoting both security and development.

**Table 7. Fiscal balance as percentage of GDP**

	Average 2000-2015	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Iraq	-3.9	-9.1	4.9	4.1	-5.8	-5.4	-12.8	-14.3	-1.6	6.2	-4.9	-4.0
Jordan	-6.3	-5.4	-5.7	-8.9	-11.1	-10.3	-11.4	-3.6	-3.3	-4.6	-4.0	-3.7
Lebanon	...	-7.3	-6.1	-8.4	-8.7	-6.3	-5.3	-9.4	-8.6	-11.0	-11.7	-11.0
Libya	-2.5	8.7	-9.0	27.8	-4.0	-73.8	-131.0	-113.3	-43.0	-7.4	-10.9	-14.9
Sudan	-1.2	-4.8	0.2	-3.3	-2.3	-1.4	-1.8	-1.7	-1.5	-3.1	-2.9	-2.5
Yemen	-3.5	-4.0	-4.4	-6.3	-6.9	-4.1	-8.7	-8.4	-4.9	-4.4	-5.1	-5.5

Source: IMF MENAP Regional Outlook Database: <https://data.imf.org/?sk=4CC54C86-F659-4B16-ABF5-FAB77D52D2E6>.

Note: Data for 2020 are projected.

**Table 8.** Total Government gross debt (Percentage)

	Average 2000-2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Iraq	100.7	58.9	49.3	44.3	82.2	87.9
Lebanon	77.1	77.3	76.3	79.3	87.2	86.6
Sudan	94.5	159.6	185.6	200.3	295.2	304.6
Yemen	51.6	84.3	63.5	56.8	68.8	64.0

Source: IMF MENAP Regional Outlook Database: <https://data.imf.org/?sk=4CC54C86-F659-4B16-ABF5-FAB77D52D2E6>.

Note: Data for 2020 and 2021 are projected.

## Box 2. Economic cost of the Libyan conflict

### MACROECONOMIC EFFECT

The conflict in Libya has shrunk the economy, particularly the gross domestic product (GDP), resulting in a decline in investment and consumption. A comparison between International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts and performance trends of the Libyan economy shows that the loss of GDP between 2011 and 2015, as a result of conflict, is estimated at 292.2 billion Libyan dinars (equivalent to \$216 billion).<sup>a</sup>

Compared with previous attempts to cost the economic impact of the Libyan conflict, this assessment is more practical as it is the first attempt to estimate the impact of the conflict using recent data, integrating observed economic changes caused by the crisis. A tailored national model is used in the analysis, unlike previous studies that measured long-term effects without considering the various channels of transmission of the conflict into the economy. Furthermore, statistical data were gathered with a perspective for new features in modelling the Libyan economy in terms of trade, consumption, production and investment.

When comparing the model projections to those made by IMF in 2009, the cost of the war in Libya from 2016 to 2020 could reach 491.2 billion Libyan dinars (equivalent to \$364 billion). We estimate the total cost of the conflict, from its outbreak in 2011 to the present day, at 783.4 billion Libyan dinars (equivalent to \$580 billion).

Without a peace agreement, the cost of the conflict will rise sharply in the coming years. According to our estimates, the cost of the conflict between 2021 and 2025 will be 628.2 billion Libyan dinars (equivalent to \$465 billion), taking the total cost of the conflict to 1,411.6 billion Libyan dinars over the period 2011-2025 (equivalent to \$1,046 billion). Three major factors have increased economic losses in Libya, namely: the destruction of capital, the loss of productivity and the decline in oil prices. Our estimates show that the vast majority of losses is related to destruction caused by the conflict.

The conflict in Libya has greatly disrupted foreign trade and paralyzed the economy. There has been a sudden and significant reduction of exports in some key products, mainly those related to the oil-production sector. However, the impact of the conflict has been much higher on imports, mainly owing to a contraction in the construction and building sectors, and declining expenditures of both expatriate workers and nationals. The massive return of foreign workers to their home countries and the declining incomes of Libyan citizens are major contributors to the drop in final consumption. In addition, the unprecedented decline in public investment has intensified domestic demand for imported products. The conflict has also devastated several other sectors of the Libyan economy, including hydrocarbons, construction, agriculture, and manufacturing.

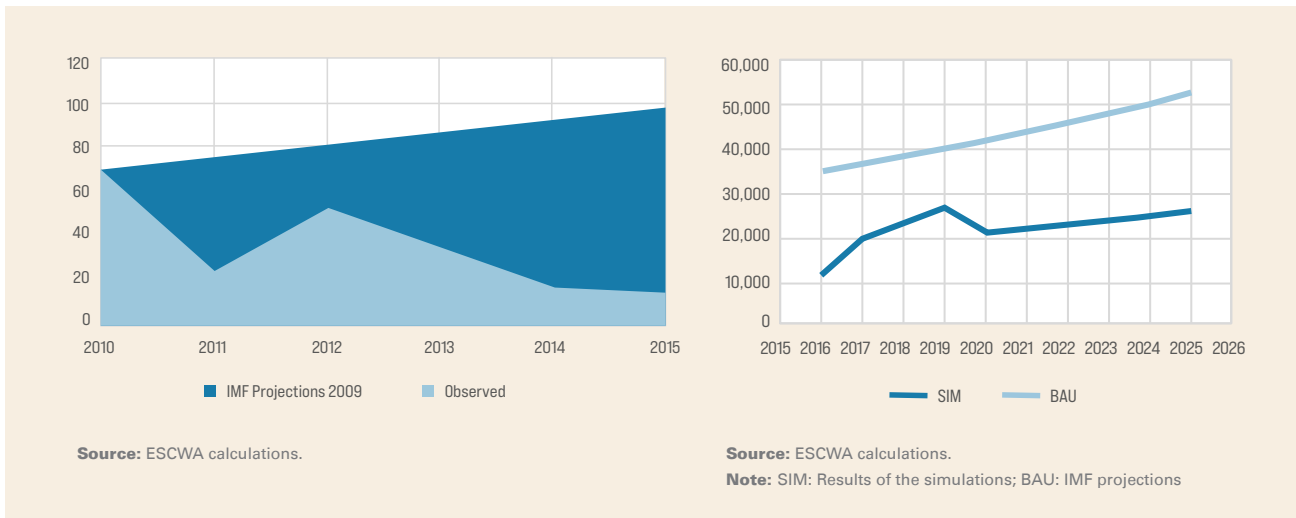
### FISCAL EFFECT

Like other Arab oil-exporting countries, the structure of Government revenues and expenditures in Libya reflects its heavy dependence on oil revenues. In Libya, oil revenues comprise the financial surplus from exports of crude and refined products; domestic refining and distribution; and revenues from foreign oil companies operating in Libya, which pay income taxes and royalties to the Government. During 2000-2010, prior to the crisis, oil revenues contributed about two thirds of total Government revenues. The conflict has, therefore, significantly affected Government revenues and spending because of the decline in economic activity, and in the State's capacity to extract and refine oil.

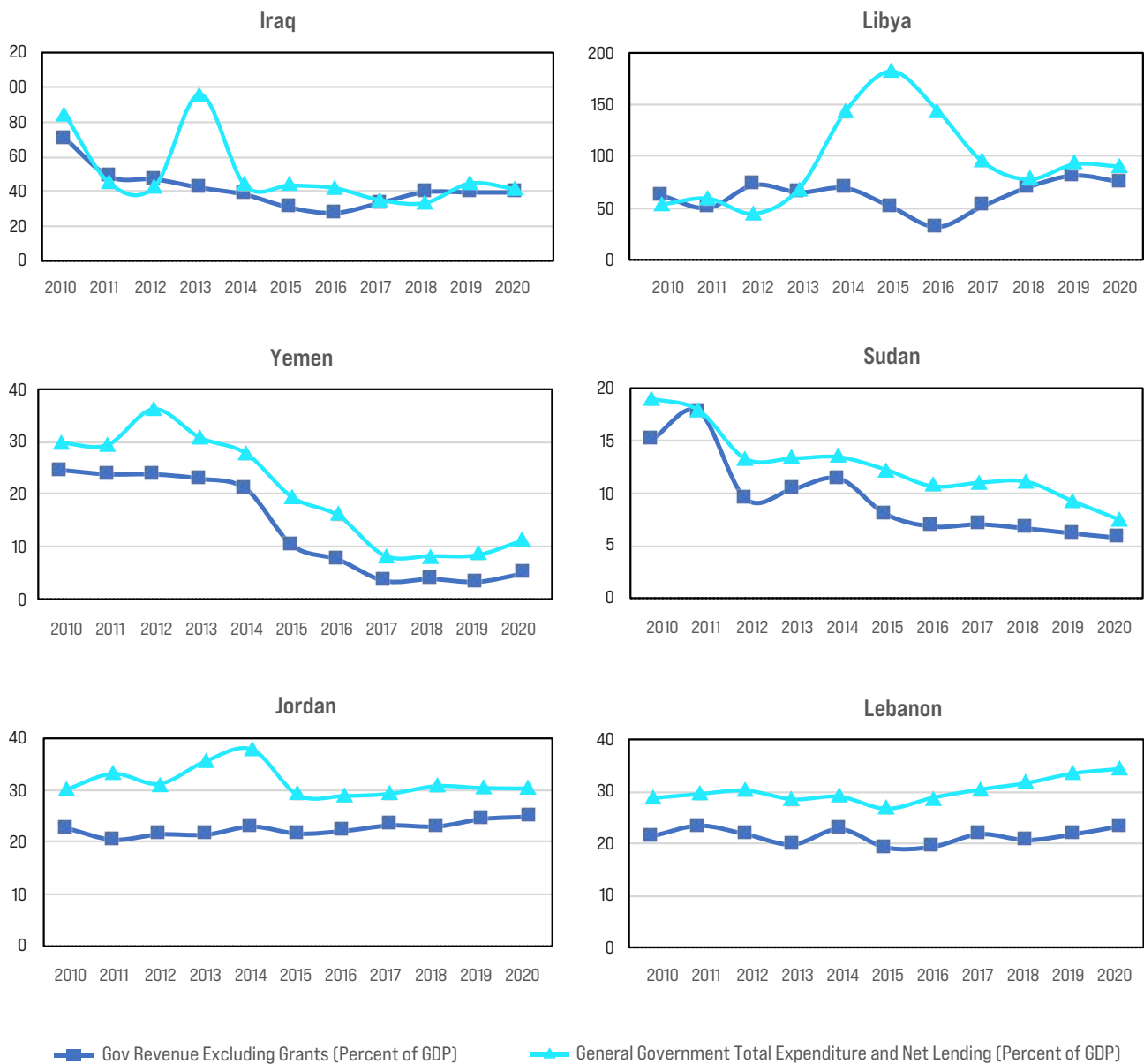
Source: Adapted from ESCWA, 2020f. Economic cost of the Libyan conflict (E/ESCWA/CL6.GCP/2020/TP.5).

<sup>a</sup>Taking into consideration that a multiple exchange rates system exists in Libya, the exchange rate employed is the official rate as at 02/12/2020: 1.35 Libyan dinars to US dollar.





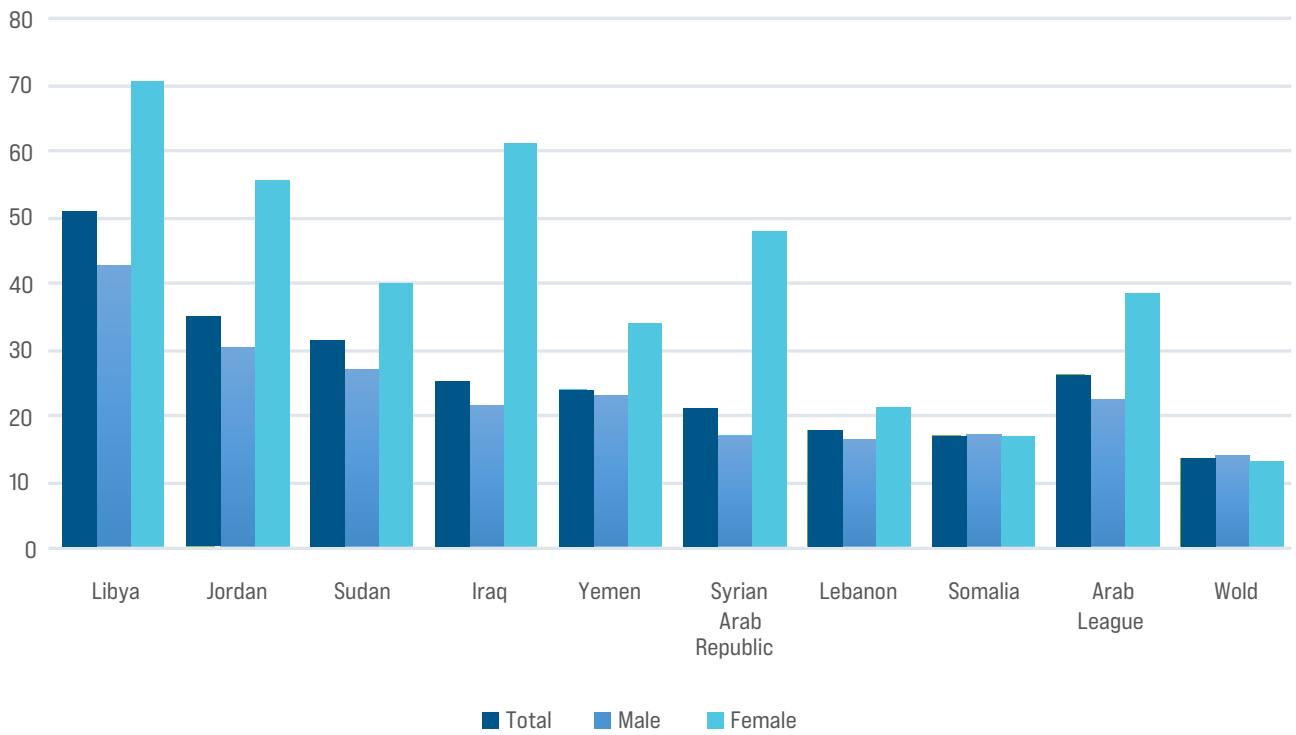
**Figure 19.** Revenue and expenditure as percentage of GDP, 2010-2020



**Source:** IMF MENAP Regional Outlook Database: <https://data.imf.org/?sk=4CC54C86-F659-4B16-ABF5-FAB77D52D2E6>.  
**Note:** Data for 2020 are projected.

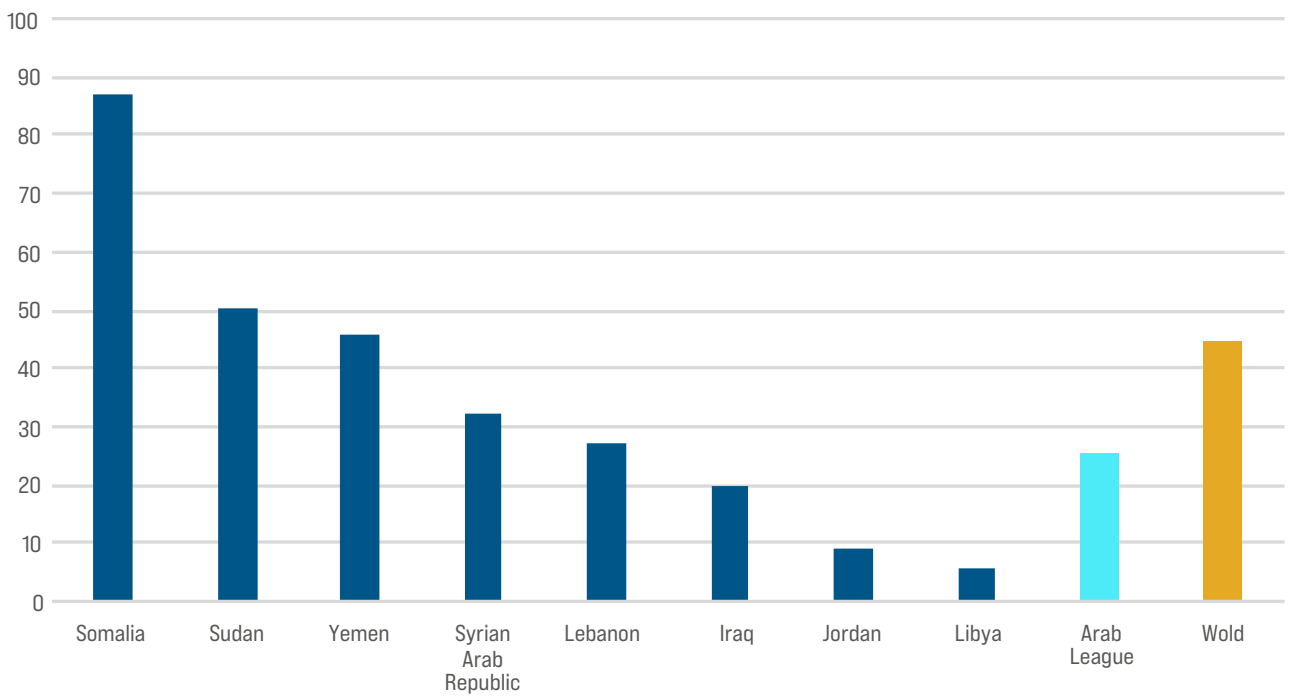


**Figure 20.** Youth unemployment in countries of concern and the world, by gender, 2020 (Percentage)



Source: ILO, 2020.

**Figure 21.** Vulnerable employment, 2019 (Percentage)



Source: ILO, 2020.

Note: Vulnerable employment is defined as the sum of the employment status groups of own account workers and contributing family workers.

## F. Conclusion

The Arab region is marked by modest progress combined with unacceptable and unsustainable levels of unmet needs, fear, discrimination, exploitation, injustice, and environmental degradation. The 2020-2030 decade demands urgency and ambition to deliver the goals stated in the 2030 Agenda. The conflicts in the region are reversing many of the developmental gains acquired in the past decades. Setbacks may become more severe if long-term goals are compromised by these circumstances of crisis. The countries of concern are facing an unprecedented challenge which, nonetheless, opens an opportunity to reconstruct countries and societies in a more inclusive and sustainable manner. To capitalize on this opportunity, reconstruction must be rooted in the principles of peace, social justice and development and undertake the transition towards environmental sustainability. The 2030 Agenda provides this framework.

Without peace, other goals – such as focusing on youth and women’s needs, addressing inequality, exclusion, climate change, or food security – will be impossible to achieve. While humanitarian aid exemplifies the LNOB principle that underpins the 2030 Agenda, the provision of aid is temporary relief that cannot substitute for long-term sustainable solutions. The interlinkages between the different dimensions of development underscore the need for an integrated approach to mitigate the destructive impact of conflict on the structural determinants of social progress and address the systemic issues threatening peace and prosperity, two key pillars of human security.

Reversals in development gains in the Arab region are a sombre reminder of why it is important for the international community, regional actors and Governments to focus on conflict prevention, resolution and sustainable development. This warrants a new regional approach for a human security paradigm based on a holistic concept of conflict prevention. The best way to build resilience and prevent societies in the region from descending into crisis and armed conflict is to build accountable and effective institutions, ensure good governance and invest in inclusive and sustainable development. The human and economic cost of conflicts in the Arab region requires all of those concerned to work more collaboratively, both at the regional and the international levels. The SDGs should be at the core of this approach, as prevention is cost-effective, saves lives and safeguards development gains.

While development interventions must ultimately be tailored to the national and subnational contexts, there are many areas where the regional dimension provides the most cost-effective platform for advancement. This chapter has pointed out areas that require urgent attention. While there is considerable heterogeneity at the national and subnational levels, national and regional actors can benefit by looking at the common threads that run across each issue to consider holistic, integrated solutions to address systemic issues threatening the lives and aspirations of people across the region.



# 3

## **BUILDING PEACE AND ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: OPERATIONALIZING THE HUMANITARIAN- DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS IN CONFLICT- AFFECTED COUNTRIES IN THE ARAB REGION**





## A. Introduction

With increasingly protracted conflicts over the past decade, humanitarian assistance is becoming more costly, and requires greater resources over longer durations. This alarming trend adds to the development deficits in the Arab region and highlights the extent to which crisis and violent conflict can undermine efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Conflict outcomes – such as forced displacement, malnutrition, lack of schooling, pervasive loss of life, large-scale physical destruction leading to intergenerational poverty traps, long-term instability and widespread erosion of human capital – all add to the challenge of achieving sustainable development. The instability created by such outcomes is also at the core of the extensive debate on how to support Arab countries facing vulnerable situations in achieving the SDGs by 2030. However, the difficult context in the countries of concern is also a window of opportunity to understand and address long-standing structural challenges in terms of inclusiveness, participation, governance deficits, and other socioeconomic rights in the region.

Seizing this opportunity will require a new paradigm to propel sustainable development in conflict-affected countries. The interlinkages between different dimensions of development, as identified in the 2030 Agenda, underscore the need for an equally integrated approach to peacebuilding to mitigate

the destructive impact of conflict on the structural determinants of social progress, and to address the systemic issues threatening peace and prosperity. Addressing these dimensions in the countries of concern requires a holistic and integrated model for peacebuilding, development and humanitarian relief that addresses both the drivers and consequences of conflict.

This chapter will discuss how the 2030 Agenda can be set in motion in the countries of concern to achieve sustainable development and enhance conflict prevention. The chapter first reviews the new paradigm triggered by global processes led by the United Nations, such as the 2030 Agenda, the Agenda for Humanity and the New Way of Working. After elaborating on the importance of advancing a triple-nexus approach, the chapter draws on findings of the e-consultation process concerning challenges in operationalizing the nexus approach and suggests entry points for addressing these challenges. Further, the chapter highlights promising developments in the region that offer encouraging precedents in reversing the sombre consequences incurred by years of violence, conflict and despair. The chapter concludes by compiling the main opportunities and challenges of the triple nexus and offers some recommendations to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region.

## B. Lessons from the humanitarian-development-peace nexus: towards an integrated model of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and advancing sustainable development

The HDPN or triple nexus refers to the convergence between humanitarian, peace and development actors to address, holistically, human vulnerabilities in contexts of protracted conflict and crisis. The HDPN approach seeks to generate a structural shift that transforms the way in which development, humanitarian and peace interventions are planned, implemented and financed, to address humanitarian needs, reduce vulnerability, build resilience, and promote peace more effectively and coherently. The approach builds on earlier efforts to streamline interventions in the development and humanitarian fields, including linking relief with development and disaster risk reduction.

At the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, stakeholders, including donors, NGOs, and crisis-affected countries, identified the need to strengthen coordination between humanitarian and development actors as a top priority. Accordingly, the Secretary-General, in his report on the Summit, laid out the NWOW, which called on development and humanitarian actors to work together toward collective outcomes that simultaneously reduce risk, needs and vulnerability, and increase resilience in line with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Although the HDPN concept has been embraced by policymakers and stakeholders in the international



community, there are still significant challenges in terms of how to operationalize it. Specifically, breaking silos require going beyond issues of coordination. It necessitates new modalities of work that can cope with singularities of mandates and the operational principles of each pillar. For instance, the delivery of humanitarian aid is guided by different principles from those employed by development or security pillars. As a result, in conflict contexts, maintaining access to territories controlled by different parties of the conflict is one of the most significant challenges that humanitarian actors face. Such access implies working with non-state actors and is possible only if principles such as neutrality and impartiality are fully respected. Development assistance, on the other hand, requires close alignment with government authorities, making it hard to collaborate with non-state actors even if they effectively control areas with a significant portion of the population. This often raises real concerns for

principled humanitarian and development actions. Similar dilemmas emerge pertaining to the more political peace processes as interventions can be considered biased by some parties of the conflict.

To promote an integrated response framework, different pillars should maximize synergies where interventions intersect; in other words, the barriers that divide these pillars should be replaced with a support system that can operate over several years with an adaptive capacity that allows a diverse range of actors to play leading roles based on their comparative advantages. As a result, each pillar can maintain its own principles of engagement and greater collaboration between humanitarian, development, peace and security actors can provide valuable lessons on how peacebuilding frameworks can be localized and how SDGs can catalyse a shift away from conflict by creating greater incentives for peace.

## C. The 2030 Agenda as a roadmap for achieving collective outcomes and enhancing human security in line with the new way of working and humanitarian-development-peace-nexus approaches

With its emphasis on inclusive sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda offers a coherent roadmap for harnessing synergies between different dimensions of development and identifying common denominators for harmonizing interventions across humanitarian, development, peace and security pillars. The SDGs comprise an expansive and ambitious agenda that outlines a comprehensive and multifaceted set of targets tailored to meet global needs. Therefore, implementation of the Agenda must ultimately be rooted in the prevailing socioeconomic context and tailored to match the gaps at the national and subnational levels, following a country-led prioritization process that identifies the areas that are lagging furthest behind and those that offer the greatest returns across other dimensions of the Agenda.

The process of prioritization must be harmonized with efforts to localize national development strategies, as needs and priorities often vary at the subnational level. Yet, in contexts of conflict and instability, the approach to country systems needs further nuancing. Employing this country-led and people-centred approach in complex contexts of conflict and crisis, therefore, requires a coherent

conceptual framework, shared among a diverse network of stakeholders across the HDPN, to better address the multidimensional causes and consequences of conflict.

Accordingly, the human security framework provides a useful conceptual link between the peacebuilding, humanitarian and development pillars, and offers a point of convergence to move beyond the siloed approaches that have constrained efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda in conflict-affected environments. The approach is anchored around five fundamental principles that set the criteria for effective action toward enhancing human capabilities. It emphasizes action that is people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific, prevention-oriented, focusing on protection and empowerment. The human security paradigm acknowledges the complexity of the challenges that constrain human capabilities and, thus, provides a coherent platform for facilitating integrated action and complementarity among HDPN actors in a holistic manner.

The primary challenges to operationalizing the NWO and HDPN approaches include the diver-

gence of priorities and lack of a common discourse among actors working in silos at the intra- and inter-agency levels. The human security paradigm creates shared objectives and principles so as to align the actions of HDPN actors and combine their comparative advantages to create synergies to tackle the complex and multidimensional challenges faced by conflict-affected countries. By redefining the notion and parameters of security to include the security of people and their well-being, the objective of sustainable development thus becomes the shared prerog-

ative of humanitarian, peacebuilding and development actors.

The human and economic costs of conflicts in the Arab region require all stakeholders to work more collaboratively, both at the regional and the international levels. The human security approach can open a platform for Governments, United Nations actors and relevant stakeholders across the HDPN to agree on a common and coherent framework to achieve collective outcomes.

### **Box 3. Human security: Connecting immediate response to long-term solutions**

Human security complements immediate humanitarian efforts, while helping to shape long-term solutions that put people on the path to sustainable development and peace. It highlights structural, institutional and geopolitical factors that can reduce insecurities, while encouraging a process that builds trust, restores vital services and infrastructure, and strengthens communities as fundamentals for stability and development.

Centred on people and the most pressing concerns they face in everyday life, the human security approach encourages better alignment of regional and international responses to national and local needs and vulnerabilities. Close engagement of all key stakeholders begins with those most affected by a crisis, while systematically involving those responsible for relief, rehabilitation, development and peace.

As a guiding framework linking humanitarian, development and peacebuilding, human security promotes collaborative and cross-sectoral planning, implementation and monitoring. This is critical to avoiding loosely coordinated but essentially individually focused solutions that are compartmentalized around different sectors and categories of people. By taking a comprehensive, prevention-oriented focus and by examining the overall needs of affected communities, the human security approach helps clarify and strengthen the continuum between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions, and bolsters close connections between regional and international support and national and local priorities, both short and long term.

### **Box 4. Key points to reform current structures for advancing the HDPN approach in conflict affected countries**

While strengthening national and local capacities to achieve conflict prevention and sustainable development is key, international partners should also adopt an anticipatory approach. Prevention is essential to achieve and guarantee sustainable development. It should be inclusive, targeting the most vulnerable. Conflict sensitivity and a 'do no harm' approach should guide all humanitarian and development interventions and, even in situations of ongoing conflict, pockets of stability can be leveraged to advance development progress, potentially providing a stabilization effect beyond the specific locality.

Moreover, silos between actors and within agencies should be broken and replaced by collaborative decision-making, coordination, implementation, monitoring, and funding frameworks. Going beyond short-term interventions, greater focus should be directed at joint strategic priorities and objectives that guide the long-term operationalization of the HDPN.

Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires prioritizing and localizing the SDGs. Thus, Governments and their international partners need to enhance their engagement with non-State actors and community-based groups who are increasingly becoming key stakeholders across the HDPN in conflict-affected countries.



## D. Challenges and constraints in advancing the new paradigm for achieving the 2030 Agenda in the countries of concern

The Arab region continues to face a critical dilemma over the proper role of development and humanitarian action in a context that recurrently needs to deal with protracted and, in many cases, concurrent emergencies. The idea of advancing the triple nexus that combines actions across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding pillars seems to yield the most promising results towards realizing sustainable development in such contexts. This new paradigm falls in line with the central processes of the United Nations reform, the 2030 Agenda, the Agenda for Humanity, NWOW and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. This paradigm shift is also illustrated by the growing involvement of traditional development and financial entities, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and informal groups such as the G20, in advancing the triple nexus. In the Arab region, finding synergies between the humanitarian, development and peace sectors is an imperative for the regional network of institutions led by the League of Arab States.

As identified by participants in the e-consultation process, the Arab region faces a set of challenges and concerns linked to the implementation of the holistic set of policies required to escape conflict and achieve the 2030 Agenda. These include: the lack of coordination and cooperation between actors, particularly in terms of terminology, data collection, programme management and monitoring systems; issues with planning, implementation and funding mechanisms, including multiple, overlapping plans with divergent objectives and fragmented funding; unsupportive institutional environments; volatility of contexts and a myriad of crises happening at the same time; and the lack of practical guidance and cooperation.

Operationalizing the HDPN in earnest requires a breakdown of silos between humanitarian relief, development assistance and peacebuilding efforts. This not only requires stronger coordination among development, peacebuilding and humanitarian actors, but also greater efforts to localize and prioritize interventions to ensure that they align with country-specific peace and development trajectories and have buy-in from subnational authorities and local actors. The top-down approach followed thus far has been vital to create conceptual frameworks that articulate the alignment of organizations. Building on this momentum and the years of discussion, now is the moment to start exploring a bottom-up approach

that tests the triple-nexus concepts at the project or intervention level as a way to create lessons learned and practices that can reinforce the broader framework of the NWOW.

### 1. Coordination and cooperation between actors

The United Nations reform and the new generation of UNSDCF are the driving force to address coordination and capacity gaps. However, despite emerging and increasing commitments to cooperative working modalities, the existing frameworks to facilitate combined interventions have not yet yielded their full potential. Cases of disconnected and duplicate planning are still common in the United Nations system. It seems that institutional divides on conceptual and working cultures have also facilitated continued separation between humanitarian and development actors within the sectors of intervention. This disconnection filters down to implementing partners and applies to bilateral donors, further undermining the international community's capacity to respond to crises effectively and cohesively. A clear illustration of this challenge is evident in the historic fragmentation between humanitarian teams and key international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Associated with this apparent lack of coordinated interventions, a closely related issue emerges in the lack of clarity in leadership mandate and functions among different agencies. Beyond traditional distinctions between humanitarian work led by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and development efforts led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the mandates of specialized agencies such as UNHCR, IOM or the World Food Programme (WFP) as well as the United Nations political missions leading on peace talks, are becoming increasingly complex and overlapping across time and space. While the reinforced role of Resident Coordinators will be vital in implementing the new way of working, their effectiveness is determined by their capacity to rationalize current overlaps. Meanwhile, a systematic review of lessons learned in the Arab region could be useful to capture possible areas where regional cooperation could provide added value to tackle these issues.

## 2. Planning, implementation and funding mechanisms

Since plans and programmatic frameworks have not been aligned systematically in the countries of concern, there is little or no relationship between interventions. As a result, the distinction and disconnect between humanitarian, peacebuilding and development is reinforced due to separate analytical tools, planning exercises and funding schemes. So far, identified NWOW efforts have been ad hoc and differ from country to country, which yields open-ended questions on what such outcomes could look like in different contexts.

Similarly, securing funding is a recurrent challenge within all pillars of the triple nexus. While the 2030 Agenda and its implementation framework emphasize multi-year programming, most donors plan their budgets and disbursements on an annual basis. Likewise, existing regional funding mechanisms do not have an instrument to support humanitarian-development initiatives. While funding is often related to a specific plan or programme which may reinforce the nexus, funding schemes are not designed with the specific intent or capacity to facilitate collaboration across the pillars. As a result, the lack of multi-year and cooperative funding makes the achievement of ambitious collective outcomes, such as the SDGs, hardly attainable.

### Box 5. Challenges in coordination and cooperation between actors in selected countries of concern

#### LIBYA

Libya is working toward the decentralization of the government but continues to face the challenge of dealing with two separate authorities. This further complicates coordination and partnership for SDG implementation, especially since governance structures, mostly inherited from the older regime, are not conducive to achieving the SDGs. At the same time, consultations with Libyan actors suggest that there is political will for stronger coordination between different entities administering SDG implementation within agencies. Such efforts can take the form of dedicated workshops and capacity-building activities to foster regional and international cooperation.

#### SOMALIA

Somalia relies heavily on international aid and assistance, and this has given space to the emergence of many humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors. These actors, however, have worked mostly in silos, with little integration between peacebuilding and development interventions during the last 20 years. While interventions in Somalia have focused mainly on the short-term and lacked a systematic longer-term vision, overcoming structural issues such as chronic poverty and environmental problems will require the integration of long-term solutions and planning into activities that respond to immediate needs.

#### THE SUDAN

As the governance structure in the Sudan shifts from a transitional government to a democratic one, the country faces coordination challenges between various actors and their counterparts at the central State level and in other countries. With the creation of transitional institutions, the Sudan launched national committees that are more focused on longer-term planning to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. These committees include: the high national committee, which is headed by the Ministry of Planning and Finance and reports to the Prime Minister; the national committee, which consists of the technical committee, led by the Deputy Minister of Planning and other ministries, who also appoints planning governors in each State; and the technical committee covering 18 states, which is supported by junior staff who ensure coordination, while the technical committee hosts a platform with an executive board of six members representing 70 CSOs, youth, women, and the Sudanese Business Association. For more effective progress towards the SDGs, the Sudan needs better data collection and coordination.

#### YEMEN

Due to the continuous shift between humanitarian and development priorities in Yemen, each active local party has been working on their own priorities with regard to the SDGs. The coordination role of the central government has been challenged at both the central and local levels. Additionally, civil society organizations remain largely underfunded despite their local expertise. Coordination challenges have been exacerbated by depleting funding opportunities and restrictions by some funding agencies on certain geographic areas or sectors.



In addition to the use of annual rather than multi-year funding schemes, the fragmentation of the funding also limits the synergies of the triple nexus. The current funding frameworks employed by many donors, including regional funds, do not facilitate the pooling of humanitarian and development funding under shared strategic objectives. This fragmented approach is more evident in contexts where the geographic locations of the humanitarian and development needs are distinct, which prevent populations affected by humanitarian crisis to access development funds. The high and increasing levels of public debt in the economies of the countries of concern present an emerging risk and demonstrate the exigency of creating country systems that are more resilient and better able to drive the synergies of the triple nexus.

### National development plans: an overview

Before providing an overview of the national SDG coordination mechanisms, it is worth looking at national efforts from a policy perspective. To this effect, an overview of national efforts and policies is provided, including National Development Plans (NDPs) by countries covered in this report, capturing transformations and lessons learned in crafting NDPs.

Table 9 provides an evaluation of national plans particularly from the perspective of sustainable development and efforts to produce VNRs. As highlighted in chapter 1, several countries have managed to produce their first VNRs, some quite recently. During e-consultations, it was highlighted that some countries have requested to postpone their second VNR to 2021 to ensure that they have adequately monitored significant progress in the SDGs. In most countries, SDGs have been well integrated into national strategy documents.

**Table 9.** Overview of current key national development plans and strategies

Country	National development plan	Other national strategies	Voluntary national review: year of publication
Iraq	<p>The National Development Plan 2018-2022 has been aligned with the SDG targets and indicators using a rapid integrated assessment tool.</p> <p>The Iraq Vision 2030 Goal, aiming at an “empowered people in a safe country, a unified society with diversified economy, sustainable environment, justice, and good governance” is based on sustainable development dimensions, with the objective to achieve sustainable improvements in a number of key areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and the Reconstruction and Development Framework (2018-2027), targeting the most vulnerable groups, especially in most deprived and peripheral areas.</li> <li>Iraq National Action Plan for the Implementation of the United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2014-2018) and the Emergency National Action Plan to implement Resolution 1325 (2015), which focuses on the conflict with ISIS, including women in all peacebuilding efforts and providing legal, psychological and health support for affected women and girls. It consists of three pillars: prevention, participation and protection.</li> </ul>	2019

<b>Jordan</b>	The ten-year strategy, Jordan 2025: A National Vision and Strategy, puts great emphasis on the well-being of Jordanian citizens based on four key pillars: citizen, society, business and government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive National Plan for Human Rights (2016-2025).</li> <li>• National Strategy for Women.</li> <li>• National Strategy for People with Disabilities.</li> <li>• National Strategy for Human Resource Development (2016-2025).</li> <li>• National Strategy for Reproductive Health/Family Planning (2013-2018).</li> <li>• Jordanian National Action Plan to Implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.</li> <li>• National Strategy for Youth (under development).</li> <li>• National Climate Change Policy (2013-2020).</li> <li>• National Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production (2016-2025).</li> <li>• National Policy and Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (2013-2017).</li> <li>• National Plan for Green Growth.</li> <li>• National Health Sector Strategy (2016-2020).</li> <li>• Jordan Digital Transformation Strategy (2020).</li> </ul>	2015
<b>Lebanon</b>	N/A	Lebanon National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2019-2022).	2018
<b>Libya</b>	N/A	Libya Vision 2030.	2020
<b>Somalia</b>	National Development Plan NDP-9 (2020-2024) replacing NDP-8.	N/A	N/A
<b>The Sudan</b>	In process	National Action Plan for the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2020-2022).	2017
<b>Yemen</b>	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National plan to implement Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2020-2022).</li> <li>• Reconstruction and Economic Recovery Priorities Plan (2019-2020) (key priorities).</li> </ul>	N/A



### 3. Policy and governance environment

One of the key principles that underpins HDPN integration efforts is the idea of increasing the resources channelled through country systems and contributing to the development of national capacities. However, despite more integrated planning frameworks offered by the new strategic approach of the UNSDCFs in the Arab region, efforts to work with and through country systems are still far from being the main course of action. This is the case even in situations in which national or local actors have sufficient capacity and accountability, and humanitarian principles are not at risk. Reasons vary for this lack of integrated policymaking,

but are predominantly due to factors of political economy such as power distribution, weak rule of law, low levels of trust in institutions, and high levels of perceived corruption that limit more ambitious humanitarian and developmental efforts to be channelled directly by country institutions. Particularly complex are the contexts with high levels of violence or armed conflict. In these situations, the volatility of developments on the ground and the urgent humanitarian needs to be met create packs of actions without clear transitional strategies. Most programmes lack clear benchmarks for transitioning away from parallel services to strengthening the capacities of State and society over time.

#### Box 6. Planning, implementation and funding mechanisms: challenges facing countries of concern

##### JORDAN

“Jordan is hosting a large number of refugees who have fled the war, in addition to those who were already residing in the country. This has, of course, impacted Jordan’s economy; however, international organizations, CSOs, and United Nations agencies have provided considerable support regarding this issue. Yet, this support was not reflected on achieving the SDGs.” (Civil society representative in Jordan)

In Jordan, humanitarian relief adds to the complexity of the efforts to integrate SDGs into national policies. The pressing nature of humanitarian and security responses in Jordan has slowed down progress in some areas of the 2030 Agenda. As a result, a coordination platform, involving relevant development and humanitarian stakeholders from the Government, United Nations and civil society, was established to address coordination issues on the HDPN with the aim of supporting the Government in coordinating efforts, enforcing data collection and identifying accelerators towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. As a result, there is now an HDPN Network that brings together 25-30 actors from the United Nations, civil society organizations and donor agencies to discuss key issues affecting HDPN coordination and ways to integrate the SDGs into national policies.

##### LIBYA

Libya is a country that is both a migration transit and destination, with complex mixed migration flows, in addition to having a considerable number of IDPs. For this reason, most external funding is directed to addressing the humanitarian needs of migrants, making many SDGs secondary, especially in relation to the inclusion of IDPs. According to representatives of the Ministry of State for Displacement Affairs, “IDPs should not be discriminated against and should be included in all development projects. They should enjoy all the services provided by the government. It is better to include them in the national framework rather than consider them a specific group. In some cases, host communities where IDPs reside turn into vulnerable groups themselves. The approach has to be one that considers the whole-of-society, which ensures no discrimination against IDPs, especially in countries where conflict exists”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> E-con Libya 6-MS- IDPs 26.07.2020.

#### Box 7. Challenges for the policy/governance environment in selected countries of concern

##### IRAQ

“Our priority is to move from the current phase of recovery towards sustainable development.” (Representative of the Ministry of Planning, Iraq)

Iraq employs an effective framework to integrate SDGs through the country’s 2018-2022 NDP. The NDP was crafted through a broad consultation with various stakeholders, including multisectoral experts and technical teams. According to the 2019 Voluntary National Review, 77 per cent of the SDGs were incorporated in the NDP.<sup>a</sup>

...>



The plan includes 11 goals and aligns with the SDGs targets and indicators using UNDP's Rapid Integrated Assessment Tool. This holistic approach employs set goals for diverse areas including governance and economic reforms. The recovery of the most affected communities is explicitly acknowledged and pursued through ambitious goals that target raising the current levels of income per capita and reducing unemployment rates. The reforms envisaged are framed in the context of mobilizing private investment towards the enhancement of sectors that contribute to sustainable development. The role of decentralization and the significance of local development are also key in implementing the NDP. These goals reveal the strategic interest of Iraq to integrate the SDGs in its NDPs and are expected to provide the overall framework to effectively work towards medium-term progress on the SDGs.<sup>b</sup>

Iraq uses a second framework, the Iraq Vision 2030 Goal, which compliments NDP 2018-2022. Based on sustainable development dimensions, the vision aims to "empower people in a safe country, a unified society with diversified economy, sustainable environment, justice, and good governance".<sup>c</sup>

## **LEBANON**

Lebanon's political system is facing tremendous pressures with a combination of political and economic crises. There are strong calls for a set of reforms to restore trust in institutions, increase transparency and develop more effective mechanisms. The Government of Lebanon is currently working with UNDP to establish an institutional framework that would integrate the SDGs. In accordance with the Council of Ministers decision No. 69/2017, June 2017, a national committee was formed to supervise progress towards the SDGs. The committee is to be headed by the Prime Minister, and includes deputy ministers of public administrations, and representatives of civil society and the private sector. However, the lack of political stability caused further predicaments concerning how SDGs are to be addressed. Enhancing a multi-stakeholder approach is a key driver in this report's discussion concerning Lebanon. Due to the frequent changes in Government, the goal is to ensure continuity and sustainability of work and decision-making mechanisms. The difficult and exacerbating circumstances in Lebanon have limited implementation efforts and have redirected funding toward relief efforts.

## **LIBYA**

Libya currently operates under two authorities, making cooperation between the two of them, or between either of them and the United Nations challenging. While one authority is internationally recognized, the other in the east operates as the de facto power administration in some municipalities. These multiple authorities are a source of tension regarding the prioritization of SDGs, the response to COVID-19 and the implementation of policies and goals.

"The country is just in need of an enabling environment, a unified government and peace to catch up and accelerate progress towards the SDGs. If peace and unity are retrieved within two years in Libya, then what other countries may need eight years to achieve by 2030, may be accomplished by Libya within three or four years."<sup>d</sup> (United Nations representative in Libya)

The current government structure does not seem to be aligned with achieving the 10 prioritized SDGs. In its post-conflict setting, Libya did not reassess human capacities in the governmental and organizational structures to identify gaps to pursue SDG implementation.<sup>e</sup> The main entities in charge of SDGs are still aligned with the framework of the previous government, which is likely to hinder the achievement of the intended goals.

## **SOMALIA**

The consultative and participatory process of consensus building employed under the ninth National Development Programme (NDP-9) offers a good example of an effective methodology to identify priorities for advancing development within a complex and conflict-affected context. The focus of NDP-9 was identified through three rounds of consultation, which occurred over 77 days in all seven regions of Somalia, with a broad range of government and sectoral stakeholders led by the National Development Committee.

This process was a good practice in complex conflict settings where multiple competing priorities can confound coordination and stall progress on development. In the first round of the stakeholder consultations, key themes included the need for improved security and economic growth and the need for political stability, with the recognition that inclusive political processes are prerequisites for progress on other priorities. During the second consultation, the findings and themes of the first draft were presented and prioritized using the SDG Accelerator and Bottleneck Assessment Guide, a tool developed by UNDP in order to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda. The application of this tool helped to integrate SDGs into the plan prioritization process, which formed the outline of interventions constituted by the NDP.

...>



## THE SUDAN

“We are transitioning towards a democratic society; in these transitions, stronger frameworks are needed.... We need coordination between the central Government and the governorate level to ensure full implementation of the SDGs.”<sup>f</sup>

Peace is often compromised by forced displacement, disrupting the social cohesion needed for its implementation. “Throughout e-consultations, it was highlighted that the government needs support in strengthening institutional frameworks for SDGs to support in achieving good governance, stronger institutions and partnerships. By doing so, SDG 16 and 17 are key priority goals to support this process.”<sup>g</sup> Conflict resolution remains a priority for the Sudan as peace is needed to implement projects and development plans at the political and local levels. The Sudan will continue to work with the help of its good partnerships with CSOs and the private sector, holding regular discussion forums with labour unions and CSOs to implement the SDGs. Local partnerships will remain a key element for educating locals on their rights and obligations during this government transition. Stronger coordination between the central and governorate levels is also needed for proper implementation.

<sup>a</sup> E-cons Iraq MS 1.09.2020.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid

<sup>d</sup> E-con Libya -1-UN-08.07.2020.

<sup>e</sup> E-con Libya-7-MS 26.07.2020.

<sup>f</sup> E-cons Sudan MS 13.08.2020.

<sup>g</sup> Ibid.

### Box 8. Volatility of contexts and a myriad of concurrent crises: challenges for selected countries of concern

#### IRAQ

In Iraq, the diversion of resources toward war and militarization has led to deteriorating infrastructure and hindered efforts to make progress on SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure). In areas heavily affected by conflict, critical infrastructure to support basic services was destroyed. This, in turn, constrained Iraq’s capacity to attract foreign investment and diversify its economy away from oil dependency. The urgency of short-term needs in response to conflict has thus caused continued reliance on traditional sectors of the economy, such as oil, to maintain stability and address immediate needs, thereby hampering efforts to make progress on a longer-term vision for economic diversification and sustainable development.

The recent collapse in global oil prices amid the COVID-19 pandemic has further constrained the financial capacity of the Government to support reform and make progress in development. Amid such overlapping crises and volatility, the constraints posed by short-term emergent situations are consuming resources and attention needed to carry out required structural reforms needed for sustainable development and for the implementation of preventative measures that mitigate vulnerability to crises. These constraints highlight the importance of crafting strategies to support and finance long-term development alongside peacebuilding and humanitarian relief.

#### LEBANON

The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and its spill over effects have shifted priorities in Lebanon to security, stability and the refugee crisis. “Rather than focusing on long-term frameworks to advance the 2030 Agenda, actors have been driven by the humanitarian response in Lebanon.”<sup>a</sup> Currently, Lebanon is facing a crisis with several dimensions, including the continued Syrian refugee crisis, a long-lasting overload of Palestinian refugees, topped by unprecedented financial and economic stress that started in November 2019, and was compounded by the rapidly intensifying strains of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the Beirut port blast on August 4, 2020, beyond its devastating immediate consequences, has exacerbated pressures on political instability and social unrest, increasing vulnerability of the affected population.

#### LIBYA

In Libya, institutional fragmentation has been exacerbated by protracted conflict and has confounded meaningful efforts to plan and implement the SDGs. Furthermore, because of the accumulated debts and the negative impact of conflict on Libya’s primary source of revenue, which is oil, the fragmented Government structure lacks the capacity to dedicate adequate financing towards SDG implementation. The conflict and post-conflict situations, including security and food needs, consume most of the Government’s priorities and funding. These institutional obstacles demonstrate the centrality of the peace pillar, expressed in SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), for anchoring progress on other SDGs.

...>

## THE SUDAN

While the Sudan also faces a massive number of IDPs due of conflict and flooding, lessons can be learned from its approach to integrating displaced populations into the 2030 Agenda. Through the Humanitarian Aid Commission, the Government is working to integrate IDPs through a governmental body and local partnerships. The Commission is currently preparing a new policy for IDPs and refugees in line with the national SDG strategy, using an approach of inclusivity for all population groups.<sup>b</sup>

## YEMEN

The integration of IDPs is also a considerable issue in Yemen. To do so, more coordination is needed between international organizations and the Government. This, however, implies enabling the Government as a driving actor with the capacity to lead. Yemen plans to develop a consolidated database on IDPs that is to be shared across agencies, involving the Government and the private sector, with the aim to push for SDG implementation and ultimately support the return of IDPs to their areas of origin, when possible, or their integration into host areas, when their return is impossible.

While Yemen has some pockets of stability, it largely remains a war zone. One of the key challenges is distributing funding and aid, as most of it goes towards relief efforts rather than developmental goals. This creates competition over the dwindling sources. Yemen's international and regional partners can play a key role in supporting transition from humanitarian aid response toward sustainable development. Yemen also faces the spectre of food insecurity, which shifts priorities to a short-term focus on humanitarian response rather than addressing issues of health, hunger, education, and poverty alleviation.

"It is known that in war conditions priorities frequently change to restoring basic services. Economic recovery and reconstruction become basic priorities. We in the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation have tried to incorporate some of these goals in order to achieve, or stop the deterioration on indicators covering health, education, poverty, and hunger; but in my assessment, this would not be possible in a situation like the one in Yemen. In the short-term, Yemen would not be able to achieve SDGs"<sup>c</sup> (representative of Government of Yemen)

<sup>a</sup> E-cons Lebanon MS 23.06.2020.

<sup>b</sup> E-cons Sudan MS 13.08.2020.

<sup>c</sup> E-cons Yemen MS 08.07.2020.

### Box 9. Other operational challenges facing selected countries of concern

## THE SUDAN

In the Sudan, the lack of accurate and aggregated data, particularly at the local level and in areas affected by conflict and displacement, has posed a significant barrier to the effective monitoring of the SDGs. This lack of data results from insufficient capacities of statistical units and a lack of access to areas of conflict hampering the Government's ability to identify the areas of the 2030 Agenda where the country is lagging behind and to understand the needs of vulnerable groups. Therefore, efforts to accelerate progress on the SDGs must include the design and implementation of effective procedures for collecting robust data, particularly in the harder-to-access areas affected by conflict and among vulnerable groups within the population.

## YEMEN

Operational challenges facing the implementation of the SDGs in Yemen include:

- **Lack of national capacities:** Already fragile institutional structures, including in the interim capital, have been further weakened by the conflict. As a result, often changing focal points and structures in the governmental bodies have jeopardized institutional continuity and partnerships.
- **Coordination between central and local authorities:** The conflict exacerbates the division between internationally recognized authorities and the de facto ones in various parts of Yemen, restricting collaboration and coordination. Furthermore, several governorates are not easily accessible, which makes coordination at the local level challenging.
- **Fragmented cooperation across sectors:** Due to the division among the different authorities, the lack of adequate coordination between the internationally recognized Government and international organizations is a key challenge that hinders the engagement of the Government in the planning and implementation process of SDGs. Therefore, international organizations could work toward including the Government in the implementation process.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> E-cons Yemen MS 08.07.2020.



#### 4. Volatility of contexts and a myriad of concurrent crises

Few of the current plans or projects implemented include contingencies associated with new or renewed sources of violence, or vulnerability to other crises related to health, floods, food insecurity, among others. While anticipatory planning and financing has become the rule in the field of natural disasters, it has yet to be applied to conflict-induced emergencies.

#### 5. Other operational challenges

One operational challenge shared by all the countries of concern is the lack of data for effective monitoring and evaluation of SDG progress and implementation. This shared challenge reflects the difficulties of collecting complete and accurate data in contexts of conflict, which has now been compounded by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, making vulnerable populations even harder to reach.

## E. Promising developments to materialize the 2030 Agenda in countries of concern

To implement the SDGs, promising developments worth highlighting have been made in the Arab region. Amidst the multiple challenges in the countries of concern, NDPs and national development strategies aim to leverage local partnerships to implement lasting solutions. The promising developments are categorized within five pillars including pathways to peace, people, planet, prosperity, and partnership (5Ps). The first four pillars are highlighted in this chapter to discuss their entry points, whereas the fifth pillar on partnerships is discussed in more detail in chapter four.

Promising developments include efforts to address refugee and IDP issues, strengthen actions towards localization, expand data coverage and reporting, improve water management, and implement sustainable economic models, to name a few. Key lessons learned include the importance of developing national strategies and response plans, leveraging HDPN operationalization and integrating key stakeholders throughout the processes.

#### Box 10. Promising developments for peace

##### SOMALIA: IMPLEMENTING DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Given the high levels of internal displacement in Somalia after decades of protracted crisis and conflict, implementing durable solutions to address the vulnerabilities and livelihoods of IDPs is an essential step toward enhancing sustainable development and making progress on SDGs. Accordingly, the country has developed a durable solution strategy to address the particular needs of IDPs and devise longer-term strategies for improving livelihoods as well as enhancing access to and justice, civic participation, housing, and infrastructure. Yet, to be truly effective, the strategy requires not only commitment from Government stakeholders but also high levels of funding to support longer-term development progress.

Establishing robust data on displaced populations is also an essential component of implementing durable solutions. Current Government data on SDG targets do not include data on IDPs, and thus the only data available on IDPs in Somalia are linked to specific programmes and projects from international organizations. While the National Commission for Refugees and IDPs has records for refugees and returnees, there is still a need to establish national statistics on IDPs. Accordingly, the country has established the National Statistics Bureau with the task of facilitating and guiding processes for attaining reliable and robust data on IDPs.

Stakeholders developing the national strategy have recognized the principles of inclusivity and involving the participation of target populations in implementing development plans, in addition to the importance of effective coordination and collaboration with all relevant partners across the fields related to the HDPN in order to ensure that the development plans are realistic and actionable.



## **IRAQ**

Iraq's 2020 HRP is a clear call for more integrated planning and preparedness between country systems and international partners. Noting the multiple challenges that the country faces, the plan prioritizes Government-led prevention, preparedness and immediate responses to humanitarian situations while development frameworks such as UNSDCF should address longer-term risk reduction. It further underscores that humanitarian preparedness comprehends a set of threats such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks and new conflict-induced displacement. Given that previous frameworks tended to focus mainly on each phenomenon individually, this more interlinked framework is a promising development.

### **THE REGIONAL REFUGEE AND RESILIENCE PLAN FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES**

The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for the Syrian refugee crisis is a good example of how international actors are adopting more localized approaches at the programmatic level in the Arab region. In 2020, United Nations agencies and NGO partners released this comprehensive plan designed to support the national efforts of five refugee-hosting countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey) to manage the impact of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. 3RP needs a total funding of \$6 billion to support over 5.5 million registered Syrian refugees in addition to 4.5 million host community members in these five countries. The majority of refugees and vulnerable host communities lived on, or even beneath, national poverty levels even before COVID-19. The outbreak of the pandemic has exacerbated these pre-existing protection risks and socioeconomic challenges, especially for Syrian girls and women who are the most affected by COVID-19. 3RP put forth a COVID-19 call, followed by revisions and updates of the entire plan to ensure that the additional needs generated by COVID-19 will be met, while also ensuring that originally planned critical programmes are not forced to close or reduce their interventions, which would have a devastating impact on an already fragile situation.

### **SOMALIA'S SOLUTION TO ADDRESS SILOS**

Somalia's latest development strategy, the ninth National Development Plan (NDP-9), has adopted an HDPN approach and seeks to build a common space and coordination procedures for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors. NDP-9 has a multi-pillar framework to enable greater coordination among different actors and outlines a roadmap to transition from dependence on external humanitarian and peacekeeping services to a point where the Government and communities are self-sufficient.

Through greater integration of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding assistance, the plan recognizes that this transition necessitates more coordination and closer partnerships with international donors, aid organization and other partners. The SDGs are, therefore, integrated through a mapping and mainstreaming exercise to provide a framework for this interface and partnership, and, thus, play a central role in the progression of the plan.

The NDP-9 framework increases the space for collaboration among different actors. For example, while the National Roadmap is a federal-level initiative that is implemented mainly through the Ministry of Planning, the operationalization of the framework requires a pathway to localization that has yet to be identified by the federal states. Thus, Somalia's federal states will need to develop their own localized and state-specific action plans that align with NDP-9 for its successful implementation.

### **THE SUDAN: HDPN OPERATIONALIZATION THROUGH THE HUMAN SECURITY LENS**

To take into consideration circumstances facing populations in multiple localities in the Sudan, the UNTFHS has put forth a programme which operationalizes HDPN and advances the localization of the SDGs. The programme aims to address the various threats, vulnerabilities and capacities of local communities through partnerships which include national and state-level authorities as well as local participation, particularly among civil society organizations.

In line with the human security approach, the most urgent security needs must be addressed in a comprehensive manner, transcending the traditional boundaries between the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts. Focusing on recovery, stabilization and empowerment of conflict-affected populations, the activities of the UNTFHS are planned in a certain sequence. "For instance, clearance of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) by UNMAS will forge safe spaces and routes for UNTFHS partners to implement programme activities as well as for daily use by local communities; UNOPS will intervene immediately after to rehabilitate key roads/routes to enable enhanced access for the participating communities; parallel and immediate interventions for the provision of basic services with the particular focus on IDPs and communities will be followed by IOM; WHO will provide health services and rehabilitation of health facilities; FAO will conduct livelihood support activities for farmers and pastoralists; and UNICEF will undertake conflict prevention through provision of education and support to local schools. The programme will target vulnerable groups identified through consultative processes conducted at the beginning stage of the project"<sup>a</sup>

...>



The overall goal of the programme is to stabilize and empower conflict-affected communities of the Sudan by providing a multisectoral, integrated response package, thus preventing the relapse of conflict and, instead, securing the preconditions for development.

### **YEMEN: HDPN PLAN TO ADDRESS CHROMING ISSUES OF SILOED IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS**

In Yemen, often-siloed operations of humanitarian and development actors, which in many cases hindered the efficacy of interventions, have provided agencies with valuable lessons that led to the adoption of a specific HDPN strategy to streamline humanitarian relief and development efforts and enhance coordination between different United Nations agencies and among civil society, central governments and local actors.

<sup>a</sup> UNTFHS, "Recovering from conflict: Integrated support for the most vulnerable communities in South Kordofan". Available at <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/country/sudan>.

## **Box 11. Promising developments for people**

### **IRAQ: ADVANCING INCLUSIVITY**

During e-consultations with Government representatives, emphasis was given to the Government's willingness to advance the 2030 Agenda and adopt an inclusive approach by ensuring that IDPs are adequately included. Human development received special attention during discussions with representatives of the Government regarding poverty reduction, IDPs, social cohesion, and access to basic services. This was reflected in the inclusion of IDPs in the Poverty Reduction Plan through a fund that initially covered three governorates and then was extended to eight other governorates including the region of Kurdistan. Iraq's poverty strategy takes into account the 20 per cent of the population living under the poverty line as well as those who are close to the poverty line who form a critical zone that could heavily affect poverty rates.

Stakeholders in Iraq have recognized the importance of strengthening the localization of the SDGs and ensuring adequate outreach to those who are at risk of being left behind in areas that are inaccessible to central authorities, while also strengthening linkages between local-level activities and the Government, and between key actors such as the Government, the United Nations and civil society. There have been promising examples in the use of electronic consultations, which expanded the prospects for community dialogue on the SDGs and facilitated discussion of issues concerning the development process. These consultations enabled dozens of people from different governorates of Iraq to participate, especially young people, which allowed for the recognition of their various aspirations and concerns and their expectations from the country's process of development.

The ongoing efforts to implement the SDGs on a local decentralized level across Iraq and to strengthen linkages between central and local stakeholders presents a positive opportunity to improve data collection.

This would build on the efforts already made to collect informal data on SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and further integrate non-traditional but critical actors such as youth activists. The Government of Iraq has a team within the Central Statistics Organization specialized on data collection and monitoring that works in coordination with the working groups under the National Committee for SDGs. Each SDG working group includes a representative from this statistical body and works in a continuous and collaborative manner to expand data and localize indicators. The eventual goal is to include all stakeholders from Government, academia, civil society, and the private sector to participate in data collection in alignment with SDG indicators. While Iraq has planned to conduct a census to enhance data availability, the exercise is on hold due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **THE SUDAN: ENHANCING INCLUSIVITY**

"Adopting an inclusive approach by integrating displaced populations into the 2030 Agenda is another key lesson learned from the experience in Sudan. Through the Humanitarian Aid Commission, a governmental body concerned with displacement affairs, the government is working towards integrating displaced populations into the 2030 Agenda. The Commission is currently preparing a new policy covering IDPs and refugees for 2020-2030 in line with the timeframe of the national strategy on SDGs also currently being drafted. The government adopts the approach of inclusivity of all population groups including IDPs"<sup>a</sup>

...>

In addition to coordination challenges, the lack of accurate and disaggregated data presents an enormous challenge to monitoring and assessment of development needs and progress by local and State bodies. This highlights the need to enhance capacity to collect individual household data that are disaggregated by sex, age, place of residence, (rural/urban) and states in order to conduct more rigorous, evidence-based analysis of service delivery and needs that can inform policy development and implementation.

### **IRAQ: EXPANDING DATA COVERAGE**

In 2019, FAO cooperated with Iraq's Central Statistics Organization in estimating the food price differential index. The exercise monitored the price differences for six main food commodities that were chosen according to their relative importance identified through household surveys regularly conducted by the Central Statistics Organization. The collection of data for these types of indicators is an essential component of effective monitoring and evaluation of SDGs, they are a necessary step toward accelerating progress in areas that are facing acute vulnerabilities. Chapter 4 will overview some promising developments in integrating IDPs into data on SDGs using IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix.

### **JORDAN: FACILITATING EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN TO ENSURE THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

Education is often taken as an example of how the new way of working is being advanced to address a pressing challenge associated with the refugee crisis in Jordan. The Government, through the 2018-2022 education strategic plan made its schools and learning facilities available to children regardless of their status or nationality. With this plan, the Government reaffirms its vision regarding quality education for all, including vulnerable Jordanians and refugees. It also reflects a recognition of the tremendous challenges encountered by the public system to deal with the increasing demand of services as well as the need to articulate educational programmes that provide students with the proper tools for professional and personal development and their particular needs.

The strategic plan lays out concrete actions and investment, such as the establishment of 60 new schools per year to accommodate both Jordanians and refugees. Thus, the Government, with the funding of its international partners, seeks to address educational needs in a more proactive, comprehensive manner. School closures due to COVID-19 have disproportionately affected refugees and vulnerable populations due to limited access to online learning. Therefore, ensuring that the goals of the programme adapt to the new reality ushered by the pandemic is a priority for actors involved in the strategic plan.

### **LEBANON: IMPROVING RESILIENCE OF VULNERABLE REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES IN TRIPOLI**

For long-term sustainable development to materialize, progress needs to be inclusive and supported by local and national governance structures as well as the engagement of civil society and other partners. With this basic premise in mind, the UNTFHS provided resources to coordinate the actions of three United Nations agencies, namely, UN-Habitat, UNICEF and UN-Women, together with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Municipality of Tripoli, local NGOs and community-based organizations representing refugees and host communities.

The overall goal of this one-year programme (2017-2018) was to improve the resilience of vulnerable refugee and host communities in crisis-affected neighbourhoods of Tripoli through economic empowerment, better access to and quality of basic services, and the active involvement of the affected communities in data collection, field assessments and the design of relevant response strategies. The impact of this programme has been significant. In terms of results, the application of human security has considerably enhanced the safety of the communities, improved access to basic needs such as water, sanitation and health care, and strengthened the socioeconomic situation of the communities by creating job opportunities, directing youth away from violence, decreasing tensions between neighbourhoods and empowering vulnerable families. Beyond the immediate results of the programme, the lessons learned and dynamics generated by the concerted collaboration of United Nations agencies, national and municipal government partners and civil society actors is an added value that has scaled up initiatives in other parts of Tripoli by the municipal authorities, while United Nations agencies replicate the programme in other parts of the country.

<sup>a</sup> E-consultation Sudan 2 MS-27.08.2020.



## Box 12. Promising developments for the planet

### IRAQ: ADVANCING INTEGRATED WATER MANAGEMENT<sup>a</sup>

In Iraq, water scarcity poses an enormous threat to agricultural communities and is a significant driver of displacement. Iraq's primary sources of water have been deteriorating as intake from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers declines and climate change causes decreased annual rainfall and higher average temperatures. With reduced quantity and quality of available water, the risk of displacement driven by water shortages is high, reflecting the need for more integrated water management and risk assessment. In July 2019, IOM identified 21,314 IDPs from southern and central Iraq because of water shortages caused by waterborne disease outbreaks or high salinity.

A persistent and complex water crisis will affect population movements and pose a significant humanitarian, socioeconomic and security threat. Therefore, humanitarian and development actors in Iraq have been working together on mitigating potential water crises that threaten vulnerable communities. Deltares, a Dutch-based research institute, and IOM have published an unprecedented report on the variations in water quality and quantity in the southern and central governorates over the past 20 years in order to better understand the water crisis and develop informed methods for prevention and response. They have also launched an Iraq Water Risk Webtool to visualize and explore scenarios of water management, climate change and the effects of interventions applied to address water scarcity problems. This collaboration across humanitarian and technical development actors has led to improved decision-making about water management and the prevention of and response to water-induced displacement.

Among the adverse effects of climate change, the quality of livelihoods and food security are also at risk given increasing temperatures and desertification. These trends will undermine the resilience of communities and prospects for shared prosperity. Furthermore, as protracted displacement continues to put pressure on access to land and natural resources, Governments must address questions of land tenure and ensure effective resource management to prevent local tension and competition over resources.

<sup>a</sup> NL Netherlands, 2020. How Iraq's water crisis relates to internal displacements. Integrated Water Management (18 July).

## Box 13. Promising developments for prosperity

### LIBYA: TRANSITIONING TO A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC MODEL

"Challenges in Libya could become an opportunity to understand the post-conflict situation and to benefit from the best practices in Libya" (a representative of the Government of Libya)

Libya is now undertaking a general study on the nature of the public sector and the challenges it faces to work towards decentralization of the government. In addition, the study will investigate the tasks conducted at the central and local level and coordination between them. The study, which now includes several ministries, will illustrate the challenges facing Libya and the required changes to move towards better development.

From an economic angle, the Government has fixed the exchange rate through implementing taxes on hard currency. This measure has decreased the pressure on the country's budget. In addition, the Government has made efforts to engage the private sector to mobilize resources through partnerships and discussions on the current challenges and future vision for the country.

One of the main national and international collaboration tools in Libya is the Reconstruction Fund. Funding is expected to be provided by the Libyan Government and some international financial institutions such as the World Bank. This shall enable the Government to address the financial challenges it faces.

Moreover, Libya, alongside UNESCO, has initiated a group discussion to consider the opinions of the Libyan people and their expectations for the future. This initiative will be in line with the 2030 Agenda and will set short-, medium- and long-term outputs feeding into the SDGs.

The private sector needs to be actively engaged as a partner. Past experience in Libya shows that private-sector actors are not well aware of SDGs but are open to cooperation once approached and educated on the subject.





## YEMEN: TRANSITIONING TO A BETTER SUSTAINABLE MODEL

There are promising developments related to strengthening the role of the private sector and civil society organizations in reconstruction and recovery efforts and achieving the SDGs.

The private sector is an active partner in development and reconstruction and efforts to achieve the SDGs. It has productive capacities and financial and human resources that enable it to contribute effectively to achieving sustainable development goals by creating jobs, reducing poverty and hunger, and developing human resources, especially in education, health and other sectors.

Several civil society organizations also contribute to achieving the SDGs, such as the Yemeni Network for Sustainable Development, an independent youth network operating throughout the Republic of Yemen, interested in sustainable development issues from a practical point of view in various fields. The Network contributes to the capabilities of civil society institutions, organizations and people in Yemen, carrying out a number of awareness workshops around the SDGs.

## F. Conclusion and entry points for advancing the 2030 Agenda in countries of concern

The human and economic cost of conflicts in the Arab region requires more collaborative efforts across the humanitarian, development, and peace and security actors at both the regional and the international levels. It also requires a better understanding of the complexities of operating in conflict settings and, thus, the need for preservation of humanitarian space. The SDGs should be at the core of this approach, as prevention is cost-effective, saves lives and safeguards development gains. This integrated approach calls for coordinated actions among a diverse network of stakeholders to better address the multidimensional causes and consequences of conflict and underdevelopment and ensure sustainable, appropriate and effective interventions. Within the challenging contexts experienced in the Arab region, one of the most promising developments identified is the growing consensus among Governments and stakeholders that humanitarian issues are intimately connected with development and peacebuilding challenges, and humanitarian needs are now being incorporated into their development-planning processes.

The Decade of Action for the period 2020-2030<sup>1</sup> provides a powerful incentive to all stakeholders to redouble efforts and mobilize national, regional and international resources to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Thus, multi-stakeholder partnerships are essential to effectively coordinate and integrate the different dimensions of the Agenda in a coherent manner. For countries in the Arab region, a crucial challenge in SDG implementation is to identify synergies and trade-offs across possible interventions and to find bottlenecks that, if eliminated, could accelerate progress across multiple SDGs

at the same time. To this effect, the regional dimension offers cost-effective opportunities.

Drawing on the challenges to advance sustainable development, the operationalization of HDPN and the promising developments identified, this section highlights entry points and opportunities for leveraging progress for the benefit of peacebuilding, sustainable development and conflict prevention. Based on the findings from e-consultations, these entry points and promising developments use the 2030 Agenda as a vantage point and are categorized within each of the 5Ps enumerated in chapter 2. They will be addressed in the next chapter.

Realizing the goal of peaceful, just and inclusive societies is still a long way off in many of the countries of concern. Millions of people have been deprived of their security, rights and opportunities. Conflict-affected populations are particularly vulnerable to various forms of abuse, including violence, trafficking or sexual violence. The detrimental long-term impact of conflict highlights the importance of incorporating sustainable development frameworks into conflict prevention and resolution approaches. Refugees, IDPs and returnees will play a key role in the reconstruction and peacebuilding processes in conflict-affected countries. Establishing effective, just, participatory, and transparent legal and governance frameworks for the registration and reintegration of displaced populations will help attenuate fragility and bolster the resilience of peace in post-conflict States. Given that displacement flows often cross borders, addressing the needs of refugees and returnees will require strong partnerships, cooperation and solidarity across countries (SDG 17). To



## PATHWAYS TO PEACE: NO PEACE, NO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



### Entry points to enable regional actions that advance peace:

1. Increase investments in peace, dialogue and reconciliation as a foundation for achieving sustainable development.
2. Provide a framework for strengthening regional governance and cooperation in a manner consistent with the 2030 Agenda.
3. Increase efforts to develop inclusive and responsive governance models that end discrimination and empower local governance structures to ensure that national development responses are grounded in local realities and serve those that are at the highest risk of being left behind.
4. Discuss durable solutions to address displacement, providing refugees and IDPs with stable livelihood opportunities and integration into local host communities until return to place of origin is an option.

streamline the objectives of relief and recovery, immediate humanitarian assistance should be harmonized with the longer-term objectives of sustainable development wherever possible.

Beyond the impact of physical violence and displacement, the breakdown of rule of law and formal economic organization amid persistent conflict incentivizes illicit activities and allows criminal networks to thrive. In the countries of concern, growing concerns over organized crime and IFFs constitute a significant threat to the rule of law and institutional order. These types of illicit activities facilitate and entrench institutional incentives for corruption and graft and hamper efforts to advance sustainable development. Inclusive, effective and accountable institutions are a necessary precondition for effective policymaking and sustainable development. Thus, tackling corruption and illicit activities are imperative steps toward advancing progress on the SDGs. The breakdown of institutional order and rule of law erodes the essential infrastructure to support sustainable development and provide critical services to populations. Therefore, realizing the goal of peaceful societies goes beyond ending war, with a focus on other dimensions of structural violence and human insecurity.

Given that it is the behaviour and decisions of actors which ultimately shapes the conflict pathway, human-centred approaches to security and conflict provide the most effective lens for stabilization and peacebuilding. With increasingly complex and protracted forms of conflict and crisis plaguing the region, multiple forms of human insecurity are creating cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of populations. Addressing these widespread challenges, thus, requires people-

centred and prevention-oriented interventions that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people. Ensuring access to basic services is an essential first step to rooting out human insecurity and empowering individuals to participate in and contribute to sustainable development.

Despite previous gains in poverty reduction and food security, poverty, hunger, and malnutrition are on the rise again as countries deal with the disruptive influence of persistent conflict. The dire need for humanitarian assistance among conflict-affected populations in the countries of concern reflects the conditions affecting access to food, health care, education, adequate shelter, and protection. To streamline the objectives of relief and recovery, immediate humanitarian assistance, when possible, should be harmonized with longer-term objectives of sustainable development.

Before human capital can flourish, the society must ensure that basic needs for survival are met. Yet, conflict is undermining the structural determinants of development by eroding critical infrastructure for the provision of basic services and creating barriers to accessing development needs, particularly food, health and education. Significant public health and education challenges emerge in the context of conflict due to the degradation of public systems and the barriers to access created by widespread displacement. Ensuring access to these essential services requires a functioning, accessible and well-funded public system. However, the disruptions in critical health and education infrastructure caused by conflict will have a long-term negative impact on human capital accumulation that will have intergenerational consequences.

## PATHWAYS TO THE PEOPLE: LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND, REACHING FOR THE FURTHEST BEHIND FIRST



### Entry points to create a regional agenda that advances people's progress:

1. Enhance the ambitions and incentives to adopt the transformational vision called for in the 2030 Agenda and the principles of inclusiveness, empowerment and equality.
2. Engage in eradication of poverty and increase social protection by improving infrastructure to support the basic needs of health, education and food security.
3. Bridge the gap between communities and policy interventions by localizing delivery of SDGs and make human security central to programming of development interventions. Localizing the delivery of SDGs also requires responses that are designed with the cross-cutting issue of gender equality.
4. Empower and integrate local governance structures that are better positioned to reach populations that are at the greatest risk of being left behind and account for their needs. Policy interventions should consider the variety of factors undermining people's progress, such as inequalities predicated on age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Women, children and other vulnerable groups are especially affected by the disruptive impact of conflict on development outcomes. Achieving gender parity is an essential component of sustainable development, and, thus, progress on the SDGs, particularly SDG 5, cannot be made without addressing gender discrimination and removing the barriers women face in accessing their basic needs and rights. The process of reconstruction in the post-conflict phase offers an opportunity for countries to enhance the participation of women in decision-making and build more gender-inclusive societies. Building more inclusive societies also requires recognizing and addressing the needs and aspirations of other marginalized population groups such as the elderly and people with disabilities.

In line with the 2030 Agenda's LNOB imperative, countries must enhance the capacity of institutions to better capture the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations. The objective to create more inclusive institutions requires increasing integration of local governance structures that are better positioned to reach and account for the needs of marginalized populations. This requires engaging administrative bodies at the local and governorate levels in monitoring and reporting processes and integrating their input into national development planning and strategies. Decentralization of SDG delivery efforts has proven to enhance the inclusiveness and effectiveness of development interventions. Given that local communities constitute the primary site of development delivery, this aspect of decentralization is fundamental to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensuring that development interventions are inclusive and accountable. Yet, given current coordina-

tion challenges faced among development actors in the region, efforts to decentralize and localize SDG delivery must coincide with better coordination of policies and actions among central and local levels to ensure independence of local bodies and prevent overlapping interventions. The benefits of localization and community engagement are also applicable for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Climate change is an urgent priority that demands effective governance and coordinated response and persistent conflict and instability are diverting attention and resources away from it. Ecosystems across the countries of concern are already under significant pressure due to population growth, increasing urbanization and migration and displacement. Along with climate change, these population dynamics are putting pressure on the region's already fragile ecosystems and natural resources. At the same time, the ecological impact of armed conflict is exacerbating the risk posed by climate events and the capacity of Governments to respond. For example, the flooding in the Sudan has posed threats of reversing efforts toward the implementation of SDGs and has created additional challenges in containing the pandemic and preventing further disease outbreaks. At a time when drought is causing uncertainty in rain-fed agriculture and rangelands, farming areas increase tension between grazers and farmers.

Given the region's fragile ecological context (water scarcity, hot and dry climate) compounded by the adverse effects of conflict on the environment, humanitarian (where possible) and development interventions must incorporate ecological resto-



ration, basin management and sustainability as key dimensions of their interventions to ensure sustainable reconstruction and development. While political and socioeconomic factors are the primary sources of conflict, climate change acts as a risk multiplier. The dynamic interaction between environmental pressure and persistent conflict stymies progress on development objectives and undermines prospects for resilient peace. These interlinkages reveal the ways in which changes in the natural environment impact human security and underscore the importance of effective environmental governance and climate-smart policies that ensure the sustainable use and management of land and resources.

As the region's population continues to increase, Governments must take decisive action to deal with the challenge of increasing water scarcity to ensure the future sustainability of water resources and prevent potential water-related conflicts and disputes. In addition, water and sanitation infrastructure must be improved, particularly in less developed areas hosting significant levels of displaced persons. Water and sanitation systems are crucial components of public health, and the slow progress on improving water and sanitation access in the countries of concern is putting populations at risk for disease outbreaks and other serious health challenges.

Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth and full and productive employment with decent working conditions for all is jeopardized by armed conflict. Economic performance in the countries of concern has been characterized by subdued growth, volatile prices and growing fiscal challenges. Considerable constraints on public budgets have created obstacles toward the realization of economic and social investments required to advance the 2030

Agenda. For example, Libya's Government is not able to provide enough funding to implement the SDGs due to its cumulative international debt. Similarly, Lebanon's ministries struggle to fund SDG implementation as its economic crisis worsens and currency continues to devalue. The compelling need for an integrated growth development paradigm warrants reevaluation of the status quo in regional economies. The challenge facing the countries of concern is not limited to public-private imbalances but also extends to the need for economic structural transformation.

Furthermore, social stability and development depends on the population's access to decent employment opportunities with fair wages and adequate working conditions. Currently, data indicate that labour markets in the countries of concern are unable to provide sufficient quantity or quality of jobs or ensure their economies have the necessary human capital or resources to harness productive economic growth. High rates of unemployment, particularly among youth and women, compound the vulnerability of populations and heighten the risk of social instability and conflict. This structural imbalance of labour markets in the countries of concern also explains high levels of informality and vulnerable employment that leave a large portion of workers employed in the informal sector without any form of protection and social security. These chronic inefficiencies in labour markets are rendering populations more vulnerable to economic insecurity and undermining prospects for inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

Prosperity in the countries of concern depends on promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth, with full and productive employment with decent working conditions for all. Economic

## PATHWAYS TO THE PLANET: ACCOUNTING FOR INCREASING ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES



### Entry points to create a regional agenda that ensures harmony with the planet:

1. Support better climate change adaptation and finance by promoting peer learning and evidence-based analysis of projects and programmes delivering results.
2. Engage local communities and enable their involvement as custodians of the local environment in participatory planning.
3. Support the promotion of effective policies and management of ecosystems to achieve targets on terrestrial ecosystems, biodiversity and climate change, and to ensure that ecosystem service values are reflected in national and sectoral development strategies and policies.

security is one of the primary dimensions of human security and underscores the importance of access to decent, adequately remunerated work opportunities for promoting both security and

development. Accordingly, countries must address current imbalances in the labour markets and work to ensure adequate employment opportunities, particularly for women and youth.

## **PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY: TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC RECIPES ARE NOT SUFFICIENT TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS BY 2030**



### **Entry points to create a regional agenda that advances prosperity:**

1. Focus on addressing inequalities and lack of economic opportunities. Existing disparities at multiple levels require rethinking social and economic policy choices.
2. Invest in sustainable infrastructure across a wide range of sectors during reconstruction. In line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, such investments will positively impact efforts on economic growth, poverty eradication and combating climate change and its impacts.
3. Promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth and full and productive employment with decent working conditions for all.
4. Achieve real State-led transformation envisaged in the 2030 Agenda by taking on a range of challenges. Thematic focus areas include natural resource management, employment opportunities for youth, markets, infrastructure, and water availability, as well as support for agricultural production. Projects are designed in a participatory and inclusive manner, giving local communities a voice in shaping their own development.



# 4

## PARTNERSHIPS FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT



# A. Introduction

Countries in or affected by conflict face substantial structural challenges that hinder progress towards the SDGs and impede coordination efforts. To achieve the SDGs, Governments, United Nations agencies, civil society, the private sector, academia, and communities at large need to collaborate across societal sectors towards common objectives, necessitating strong and coherent partnerships. Due to the interconnected nature of the 2030 Agenda, joint efforts are needed to achieve collective outcomes and ensure that no one is left behind. Without an inclusive approach that engenders partnerships at the global, regional, national, and subnational levels, efforts to address the complex challenges posed by conflict and advance sustainable development will be jeopardized.

SDG 17 recognizes that multi-stakeholder partnerships are critical for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies, and resources. With targets focused on capacity-building, finance, technology, governance, and policy, SDG 17 highlights the need to align SDG efforts with ongoing policy and programming initiatives and enforce coordination to promote sustainable development across borders and traditional silos.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter delves into the impact of conflict on partnerships, overviewing both lessons learned and promising developments to aid Member States in advancing the 2030 Agenda. It also supports the identification of constructive partnerships to

strengthen means of implementation for the SDGs, particularly related to policy, localization and data.

The chapter is structured into three sections. First, it provides an overview of the different SDG-related partnership frameworks, including key stakeholders engaged at the regional and national levels with an emphasis on the latter in the countries of concern. Second, it examines the impact of conflict on partnerships based on three different conflict settings,<sup>2</sup> namely, countries in early-onset conflict or conflict situations, conflict-affected countries (notably by neighbouring countries in early-onset conflict or conflict situations) and post-conflict countries. These categories have been adopted as the analysis of data indicates key trends specific to certain conflict settings in relation to partnerships around SDG monitoring, implementation and achievement. They, thereby, serve to deepen the analysis so as to reflect a diverse range of conflict-affected settings in the Arab region. Third, the chapter identifies possibilities to enhance partnerships between the international community and initiatives led by Member States. The chapter concludes with a set of key recommendations as identified by stakeholders during e-consultations. Throughout the sub-sections, the chapter sheds light on lessons learned, promising developments and catalytic partnerships identified through both e-consultations and the desk review to support Member States from the region in advancing the SDG agenda.

# B. Overview of regional and national SDG frameworks

## 1. Regional SDG frameworks

Regional coordination mechanisms on SDGs have been leveraged in the Arab region to enhance policy and programming coherence, partnerships and synergies. These coordination mechanisms are primarily led by the League of Arab States through the Arab High-level Committee for Sustainable Development and the Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation (SDIC), or entities within the United Nations system and cover a range of thematic focus areas. Actors continue to work within a broad range of regional initiatives,

with some adopting an integrated approach that cuts across multiple SDGs, while others concentrate efforts on specific SDGs to advance focused objectives. Channelling coordination through the SDIC enables the cross-fertilization of ideas and good practices across multiple mechanisms led by the League of Arab States while also ensuring the close alignment and integration of relevant initiatives. Table 10 lists the regional coordination mechanisms specifically focusing on conflict-affected countries to promote a human security approach to SDG achievement and support operationalization across the HDPN.


**Table 10.** Regional SDG coordination mechanisms in the Arab region

Framework	Scope of work and mandate	Leading actors	SDGs
<b>Arab High-level Committee for Sustainable Development</b>	Aims at following up on the implementation of SDGs in the Arab region, enhancing multi-stakeholder coordination at the regional level and encouraging the exchange of experiences and best practices.	<b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States, SDIC	
<b>Arab Guiding Framework for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda</b>	Focuses on moving from global policies to enabling bottom-up actions, considering the region's unique context, emphasizing on comprehensive policies. Simultaneously, it meets the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations, women, children, people with unique abilities, and youth.	<b>Leading entities:</b> Arab High-level Committee for Sustainable Development and SDIC	
<b>Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group</b>	Provides strategic guidance and support to United Nations Resident Coordinators (RCs) and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs). It focuses on providing support to offices in crisis-affected countries.	<b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> Regional UNDG	
<b>Advancing the SDGs in conflict-affected countries in the Arab Region</b>	Aims at promoting the human security approach to peacebuilding and sustainable development.	<b>Leading entity:</b> SDIC <b>Core Group:</b> ESCWA, IOM and UNTFHS Partners and Task Force UNDP, WHO, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), WFP, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), FAO, RCOs, the Arab Water Council (AWC), the Arab Women's Organization, Maat for Peace and Save the Children	Cross-cutting 17 Goals



<p><b>Annual Dialogue Platform – Arab Sustainable Development Week</b></p>	<p>Considered one of the most significant and crucial sustainable development platforms at the regional level to strengthen dialogue on the SDGs in the Arab region.</p>	<p><b>Leading entities:</b> SDIC, Ministry in charge of sustainable development in the host country, United Nations system, World Bank, and European Union</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Multi-stakeholder partners including Member States’ representatives, regional and international organizations, NGOs, private sector, youth, academia, and media</p>	
<p><b>Mechanism for Sustainable Financing in the Arab Region</b></p>	<p>Aims to enhance the role of sustainable finance in the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the SDGs through establishing a mechanism to align current trends and policies regarding sustainable financing in the region (Regional Centre for Sustainable Finance).</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> SDIC</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), Ford Foundation, International Finance Corporation, Islamic Bank, and UNDP</p>	
<p><b>Arab Network for Science and Technology for Sustainable Development.</b></p>	<p>Aims at maximizing the role of science, technology and knowledge in the implementation of the SDGs in the Arab region.</p>	<p><b>Leading entities:</b> SDIC and Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Arab, regional and international organizations; civil society; Arab Universities Union and Union of Arab Scientific Research Councils</p>	SDG 17
<p><b>Arab Network for National Forums for Sustainable Development</b></p>	<p>Aims to integrate the efforts of CSOs and to provide the necessary support for implementing SDGs.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> Egyptian Forum for Sustainable Development</p>	
<p><b>Network of Philanthropy Institutions</b></p>	<p>Aims to integrate efforts and provide the necessary support for investment in implementing SDGs.</p>	<p><b>Leading entities:</b> SDIC and Ford Foundation</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Philanthropy institutions</p>	
<p><b>Arab Strategic Framework for the Eradication of Multidimensional Poverty</b></p>	<p>Aims to raise awareness on necessary poverty eradication efforts by exposing policymakers to the conceptual and practical approaches for adopting and adapting national Multidimensional Poverty Indexes (MPIs), sharing best practices of mainstreaming multidimensional poverty within policy frameworks and advising countries on developing action plans to address gaps in evidence and the steps to develop measurement and policy tools.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> ESCWA and UNICEF</p>	SDG 1



<p><b>Subcommittee on Ending Hunger in the Arab Region</b></p>	<p>Aims at promoting the end-of-hunger nexus approach through strategic frameworks and action plans in the Arab region.</p>	<p><b>Leading entities:</b> SDIC and Minister for Agriculture and Natural Resources of the Sudan as Head of the Subcommittee</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Member States, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, FAO, ESCWA, and WFP, and multi-stakeholder partners including officials from Arab Member States, regional and international organizations, civil society, and private sector</p>	<p>SDG 2</p>
<p><b>SDG Climate Nexus Facility</b></p>	<p>Aims at promoting the SDG climate-nexus approach through climate security for building pathways towards resilience.</p>	<p><b>Leading entities:</b> The secretariat: League of Arab States, SDIC, UNDP, AWC, WFP, UNEP FI, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and UN Habitat</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> Multi-stakeholder partners including Member States' representatives, regional and international organizations, civil society, and private sector</p>	<p>SDG 13</p>
<p><b>Arab Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (social dimension)</b></p>	<p>Aims to strengthen efforts by States to implement all SDGs and targets with a social dimension of the 2030 Agenda that affect Arab people in their daily lives through its key frameworks.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> ESCWA, UNDP and United Nations Sustainable Development Group</p>	<p>Goals and targets related to the social dimension</p>
<p><b>Guiding Arab Law for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</b></p>	<p>Aims to guide Member States to develop legislation and laws or update existing ones to strengthen efforts by Member States to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and related targets in the 2030 Agenda.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> ESCWA and UNFPA</p>	<p>Goals and targets related to persons with disabilities</p>
<p><b>Arab Strategy for the Elderly (prepared by the Arab Council of Ministers of Social Affairs and Health)</b></p>	<p>Aims to improve the lives of older people, ensure their rights and enhance efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> UNFPA and other relevant United Nations agencies</p>	<p>Targets related to older people</p>
<p><b>Strategy for Volunteering</b></p>	<p>Aims to build the necessary legislative and institutional infrastructure that enables entities and people doing volunteer work to do their part fully, thereby enhancing the implementation of the social dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, especially for vulnerable groups in society.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> UNFPA and United Nations Volunteers</p>	<p>SDGs and targets related to social and environment dimensions</p>
<p><b>Arab Strategic Framework for HIV Response (2014-2020)</b></p>	<p>Aims to support efforts by Arab countries to eradicate HIV/AIDS.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> WHO and UNEP</p>	<p>SDGs 3 and 10</p>
<p><b>Arab Strategy for Health and the Environment (2017-2030)</b></p>	<p>Aims to support efforts by Arab countries to implement the cross-cutting SDGs between health and the environment.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States</p> <p><b>Partners:</b> WHO and UNEP</p>	<p>SDGs 3, 13, 14, and 15</p>

<p><b>The Arab Multisector Strategic Plan on the Health of Mothers, Children and Adolescents with Specific Goals (2017-2030)</b></p>	<p>Aims to continue Arab efforts to improve the health of mothers, children and adolescents, and to support the implementation of the relevant targets in Goals 3, 1 and 5.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> UNFPA, WHO and UN Women</p>	<p>SDG 3, with SDGs 1 and 5</p>
<p><b>Arab Strategy on Making Public Health Services Available to Refugees in the Context of Asylum and Displacement</b></p>	<p>Aims to provide public health services to refugees and displaced persons.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> UNHCR and other relevant United Nations specialized agencies</p>	<p>SDG 10 and related targets in other Goals</p>
<p><b>Strategy and Action Plan for Protecting Arab Women: Security and Peace</b></p>	<p>Aims to strengthen efforts to protect the rights of Arab women.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> UN Women, UNHCR and other relevant United Nations specialized agencies</p>	<p>SDG 5</p>
<p><b>Cairo Declaration for Arab Women and the Strategic Plan for Women Empowerment in the Arab Region – 2030 Development Agenda</b></p>	<p>Aims to strengthen the efforts of countries in the Arab region to implement goals and objectives related to the development of women within the 2030 Agenda.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> UN Women and other relevant United Nations specialized agencies</p>	<p>SDG 5 and related targets in other Goals</p>
<p><b>Action Plan for Combating Illiteracy among Women in the Arab Region: A Development Approach</b></p>	<p>Aims to strengthen efforts by Arab countries to combat illiteracy among women in the Arab region.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> UN Women and other relevant United Nations specialized agencies</p>	<p>SDG 5 and related targets in other Goals</p>
<p><b>Strategy and Action Plan for the Arab Women Mediators Network</b></p>	<p>Aims to prepare women diplomatic cadres in mediation for peace.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> UN Women and other relevant United Nations specialized agencies</p>	<p>SDG 5 and related targets in other Goals</p>
<p><b>Strategy for Prevention and Response against All Forms of Violence in Asylum Situation, Especially Sexual Violence against Women and Girls</b></p>	<p>Aims to strengthen efforts by Member States to combat all forms of violence in asylum situations, particularly sexual violence against women and girls.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> UN Women, UNHCR and other relevant United Nations specialized agencies</p>	<p>SDG 5 and related targets in other Goals</p>
<p><b>Action Plan for the Arab Family – 2030 Development Agenda</b></p>	<p>Aims to improve the life of Arab families, ensure that they have access to their rights and enable the implementation of the relevant Goals and objectives in the 2030 Agenda.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> Relevant United Nations specialized agencies</p>	<p>SDG 5 and related targets in other Goals</p>
<p><b>Strategy and Action Plan for the Platform for Action for the Family in the Arab Region in the Implementation Framework of the 2030 Agenda</b></p>	<p>Aims to improve the life of Arab families, ensure that they have access to their rights and enable the implementation of the relevant goals and objectives in the 2030 Agenda.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> Relevant United Nations specialized agencies</p>	<p>SDG 5 and related targets in other Goals</p>



<b>Strategy on Domestic Violence</b>	Aims to strengthen efforts by Member States to reduce domestic violence.	<b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> Relevant United Nations specialized agencies	Goals related to social dimension
<b>Arab Strategy on Protecting Children in Asylum and Displacement</b>	Aims to strengthen the efforts by Member States hosting refugees/displaced persons, especially children.	<b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> UNICEF and other relevant United Nations specialized agencies	Goals related to social dimension
<b>Recommendations on the Analytical Study of Children Living and Working on the Streets</b>	Aims to strengthen efforts by Member States to reduce the phenomenon of children taking refuge on the streets.	<b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> UNICEF and other relevant United Nations specialized agencies	Goals related to social dimension
<b>Executive Plan for the Arab Guide to Child-friendly Justice</b>	Aims to promote child-friendly justice.	<b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> UNICEF and other relevant United Nations specialized agencies	Goals related to social dimension
<b>Human Rights Strategy</b>	Aims to strengthen efforts by Member States to promote human rights.	<b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> Relevant United Nations specialized agencies	Goals related to social dimension
<b>Arab Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Civil Society Organizations to Promote and Protect Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms</b>	Aims to strengthen the role of civil society organizations in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.	<b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> Relevant United Nations specialized agencies	Goals related to social dimension
<b>Arab Plan to Promote a Human-Rights Culture</b>	Aims to strengthen efforts by Member States to promote a human rights culture.	<b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> Relevant United Nations specialized agencies	Goals related to social dimension
<b>Decade of Literacy and Adult Education (2015-2024)</b>	Aims to strengthen efforts by Member States to promote literacy and adult education.	<b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> Relevant United Nations specialized agencies	SDG 4
<b>Strategy for the Advancement of the Arabic Language</b>	Aims to strengthen efforts by Member States to promote the Arabic language.	<b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> Relevant United Nations specialized agencies	SDG 4

<p><b>Arab Decade of Civil Society Organizations (2016-2026)</b></p>	<p>Aims to strengthen the efforts of civil society organizations towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partners:</b> Relevant United Nations specialized agencies</p>	<p>Goals related to social dimension</p>
<p><b>Action Plan for the Arab-African Technical Coordination Committee on Migration (2020-2023)</b></p>	<p>Aims to help the African Union and the League of Arab States strengthen cooperation on migration management, promote and protect the rights of migrants, and provide sound advice to Member States on migration issues in accordance with regional and international treaties.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partner:</b> African Union</p>	<p>Goals related to social dimension</p>
<p><b>Action Plan for the Arab Regional Consultation Process</b></p>	<p>Aims to create an Arab space to discuss international migration issues and help Governments participate in unified visions of global migration-related events.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States</p>	<p>Goals related to social dimension</p>
<p><b>UNHCR Secretariat-General Plan for the League of Arab States (2020-2021)</b></p>	<p>Part of the activation of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the League of Arab States Secretariat and UNHCR on the margins of the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partner:</b> UNHCR</p>	<p>Goals related to social dimension</p>
<p><b>Working Group on the International Migration Action Plan between the European Commission and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States (2021)</b></p>	<p>The Action Plan is part of the strategic dialogue between the League of Arab States and the European Union and of the implementation of the activities of the Dialogue 2 programme, which aims to promote cooperation and dialogue between the League of Arab States and the European Union.</p>	<p><b>Leading entity:</b> League of Arab States <b>Partner:</b> European Commission</p>	<p>Goals related to social dimension</p>
<p><b>Coalition Action Plan for Migration Issues in the Arab Region (2021)</b></p>	<p>Aims to coordinate cooperation, unite efforts and ensure that migration work is not duplicated among stakeholders in the Arab region.</p>	<p><b>Leading entities:</b> League of Arab States, ESCWA, IOM, and ILO <b>Partners:</b> 17 relevant United Nations agencies</p>	<p>Goals related to social dimension</p>

**Source:** Compiled by the League of Arab States.

**Note:** The implementation of SDGs in conflict-affected countries (row 4) is the cooperation framework for this report.



Through collaboration with UNCTs, these regional frameworks and mechanisms have been mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda in national contexts. This has mainly been achieved through a mixture of public-awareness campaigns, multi-stakeholder engagement and consultations, SDG mapping and analysis exercises, and the integration of SDGs and their associated indicators and targets in national and/or sub-national plans. According to inputs received through the stocktaking survey in early 2020, 81 per cent of UNCTs have focused efforts on SDG acceleration, either one or a combination of SDG prioritization, budgeting and localization, while 56 per cent of UNCTs have requested further SDG acceleration support under the SDG policy support pillar.<sup>3</sup> About 88 per cent of UNCTs have begun to utilize data, monitoring and reporting to support the implementation of SDG Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS), with 65 per cent requesting support.<sup>4</sup> Overall, UNCTs have used MAPS to provide collaborative responses by pulling together the data, resources, tools, partnerships, and capacities across the United Nations system to frame policy products and services to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a country-specific context. Adopted in 2015 by the United Nations Development Group, MAPS aims to: (a) support a common approach towards mainstreaming efforts for SDG awareness-raising; (b) enhance analysis to inform policies on the SDG drivers and bottlenecks at the country level; and (c) support policy reforms by providing technical expertise to Member States.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. National partnerships for SDGs

The key national coordination frameworks in the countries covered in this report are led by Member States. Beyond these mechanisms, there are other partnership frameworks that focus on supporting enhanced humanitarian responses or socioeconomic development.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, several cooperation frameworks exist in all countries of concern with relevant United Nations agencies, co-led by ministries of planning. In Iraq, for example, a virtual and physical platform on SDGs is being initiated to support the monitoring of progress and implementation of the SDGs.<sup>7</sup> In Somalia, the humanitarian assistance architecture was updated in 2020 to strengthen the Somalia Partnership Forum. This effort is the driving force for improved coordination of humanitarian assistance and provides a forum for high-level coordination and policy dialogue around reform.<sup>8</sup>

### A. National coordination frameworks on SDGs: structure and coordination

To date, most countries affected by conflict in the region have adapted existing institutional and coordination mechanisms or have established new ones to support the implementation of the SDGs. These are primarily executed through an

institutional framework for SDG implementation, supported by a coordination structure in the form of a high-level committee. The structure of these committees is quite similar across all countries, whereby the committee is led either by the ministry of planning or the cabinet of ministers and is represented by all ministries concerned. The high-level committee, which is usually mandated with overseeing the work of sectoral or thematic technical committees, guides decision-making on the prioritization of SDGs, data monitoring and implementation. Technical committees are either shaped around specific SDGs that are considered priorities for the countries of concern or around the 5Ps or key thematic areas as identified by the country. All countries covered in the report have worked towards implementing a whole-of-government approach to strengthen coordination on the SDGs and ensure the inclusion of cross-cutting themes and issues engaging relevant government stakeholders.

In countries in conflict, preliminary consultations took place with non-governmental entities; however, consultations and engagement of non-governmental entities on a broader scale remained limited. In countries affected by conflict, CSOs and the private sector were formally represented in the high-level committees. In Jordan, for example, a consortium of CSOs took the initiative to request representation in the national committees for sustainable development (NCSDs). The Government of Lebanon also included the representation of CSOs and the private sector in the NCSD.

Table 11 reflects the main national coordination mechanisms led by Member States for the monitoring, implementation and achievement of SDGs in seven of the eight countries.

### B. Snapshots of national coordination mechanisms

#### i. Iraq

Since the launch of the 2030 Agenda, the Government of Iraq has implemented a series of partnership coordination mechanisms to catalyse progress towards the SDGs. The Ministry of Planning has been instrumental in coordinating, monitoring and reporting on SDGs<sup>9</sup>. Concurrently, the NCSD, chaired by the Ministry and representing all 21 relevant ministries, was formed to strengthen coordination towards SDG implementation. The NCSD monitors the implementation of SDGs and prepares a national report on SDG-related achievements through the specialized technical committees, each being concerned with a specific set of goals (figure 22). The NCSD reports are forwarded to the monitoring committee, which is headed by the Minister of Planning and includes representatives of ministries, CSOs and the private sector, in addition to experts from academia. The role

of the NCS D is to direct programmes and policies towards SDG achievement.

The specialized technical committees are mandated with monitoring SDG achievement and related indicators at the governorate level and report updates from the local level to the NCS D. This arrangement has strengthened coordination with various governorates in Iraq while supporting efforts to decentralize and localize SDG achievement efforts and monitoring.

Linked to the NCS D are sustainable development committees in each governorate. They are chaired by the governor and the technical assistant governor as deputy chair. Membership in governorate-level committees is as follows:

- Director of the environment in the governorate
- Representative of agriculture
- Representative of water resources
- Representative of municipalities and works
- Planning Directorate of the Ministry of Planning
- President of the primary university in the governorate
- Representatives of the private sector
- Representatives of civil society
- Committee rapporteur and secretary

Under the umbrella of the NCS D, there are eight thematically focused technical committees concerned with a specific SDG or cross-cutting goals. Technical committees are clustered according to thematic areas and SDGs and report to the NCS D.

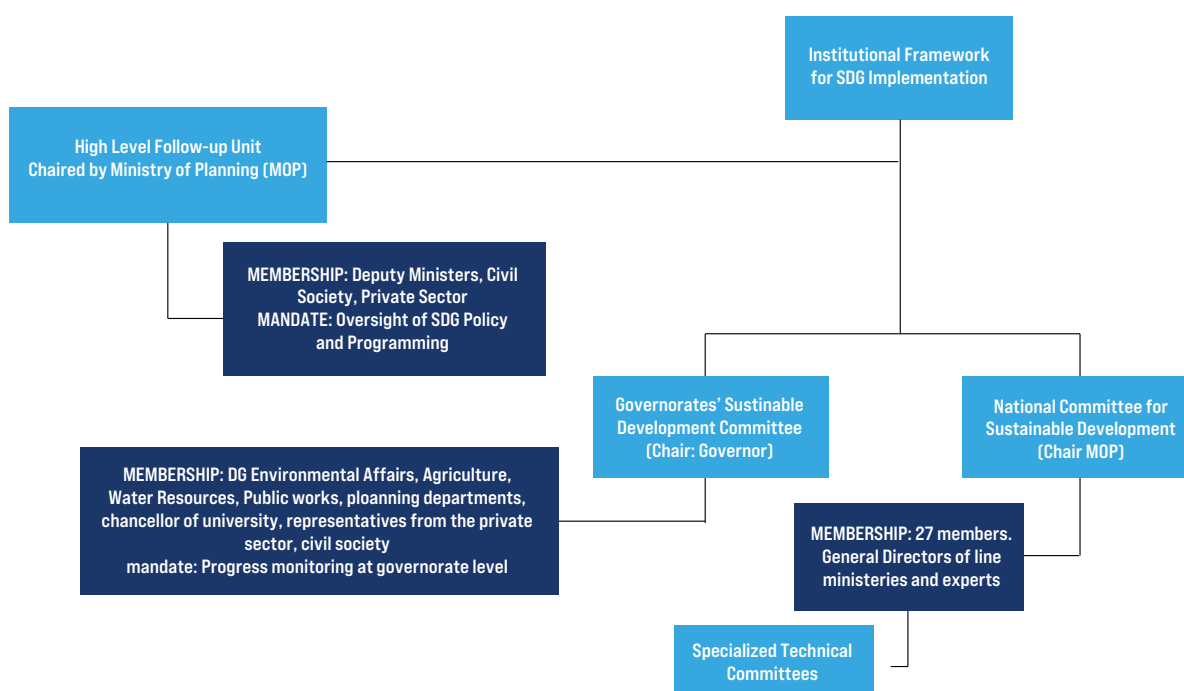
**Key observations:** Despite the representation of the Kurdistan region of Iraq in the NCS D, the region is not sufficiently integrated in comprehensive structures and plans. In addition, data on IDPs and access to affected populations in conflict areas are lacking, which explains their low integration in the coordination framework around SDGs.

## ii. Jordan

In Jordan,<sup>10</sup> SDG coordination efforts are led by the National Higher Committee for Sustainable Development (NHCS D), working under the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. The Committee was first established in 2002, following the announcement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It was later reformed in 2005 and 2012 with the aim of coordinating efforts towards SDG achievement.<sup>11</sup>

The NHCS D membership was expanded to 30 in March 2017, following the launch of the 2030 Agenda. It now includes civil society, with 25 representatives from all ministries and five representatives from civil society. The expanded membership aided in aligning the structure of the Committee with the broader range of goals under the 2030 Agenda, underscoring the role of civil society in policymaking and programming, and ensuring that policymakers at the central level were brought closer to key vulnerable populations. According to a national roadmap adopted in Jordan to achieve SDGs, the Government aims to pilot the inclusion of SDGs into an action plan targeting two cities, to be extended to other areas and cities.

**Figure 22.** Institutional framework for SDG implementation, Iraq



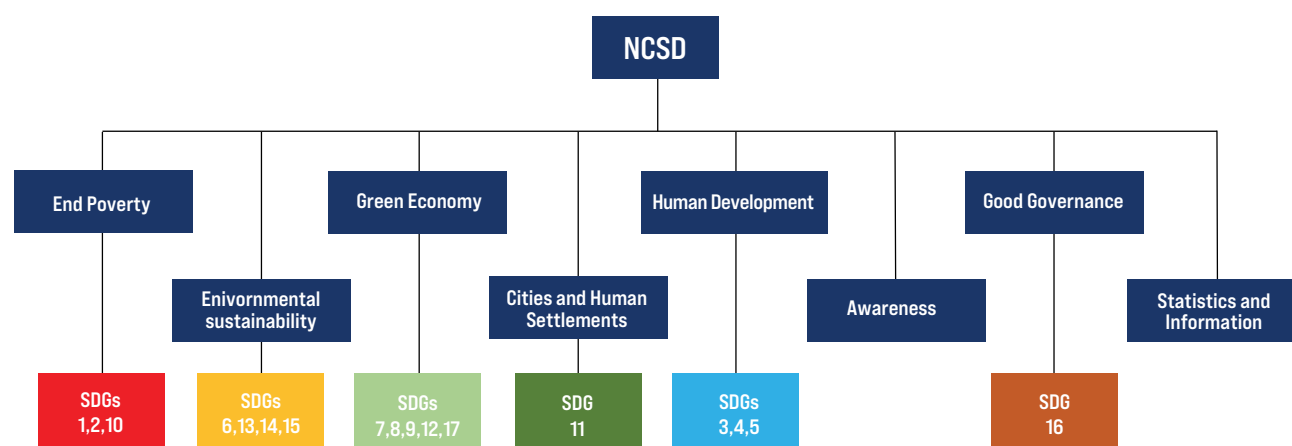
Source: UNDP Iraq.


**Table 11.** Overview of the national coordination mechanisms on SDGs

Country	National committee for sustainable development	Status	Leading entities
Iraq	x	Active	Ministry of Planning
Jordan	x	Active	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
Lebanon	x	Active	Cabinet of Ministers and Ministry of Planning
Libya	x	Active	Ministry of Planning
Somalia	x	To be enacted	Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Foreign Affairs
The Sudan	x	To be enacted	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
Yemen	x	To be enacted	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

**Source:** E-consultations with national stakeholders.

**Note:** Inputs received from member State representatives during 33 E-consultations held between June 2020 and August 2020 have highlighted that several committees have been affected by conflict situations and the COVID-19 outbreak. An in-depth discussion on the impact of conflict on coordination mechanisms will be presented in section 3.

**Figure 23.** Technical committees and relevant SDGs, Iraq


**Source:** Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Iraq.

A coordination structure has been created in support of SDG achievement and to oversee the activities of the institutional frameworks developed. A Higher Steering Committee also supervises the work of the NHCS. The activities of the NHCS are implemented by technical working groups covering key areas and working closely with the Coordination Committee, which acts as a liaison with the Higher National Committee.

**Key observations:** Following notable progress before 2017, several factors hampered and delayed NHCS-led efforts to adequately integrate SDGs into national plans and enhance their ownership. Jordan has been impacted by the war in the Syrian Arab Republic and is hosting high numbers of refugees who have fled the conflict. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis is yet to be determined, but it may well affect efforts to progress the

social commitments made by the Government of Jordan. As reflected earlier, the emergency and development frameworks remain less interlinked in terms of actors, programmes and plans. Jordan has not fully utilized the 2030 Agenda as a vehicle to address socioeconomic disparities in its response to the needs of vulnerable groups in the country.<sup>12</sup>

### iii. Lebanon

The Government of Lebanon<sup>13</sup> advanced efforts to coordinate SDG activities in June 2017, with the Council of Ministers Decision No. 69/2017, which authorized the formation of the NCSD.<sup>14</sup> Headed by the Prime Minister, the Committee was established with the following aims:

- Coordinate national efforts to implement the SDGs.
- Integrate the SDGs into national sustainable development programmes and plans.



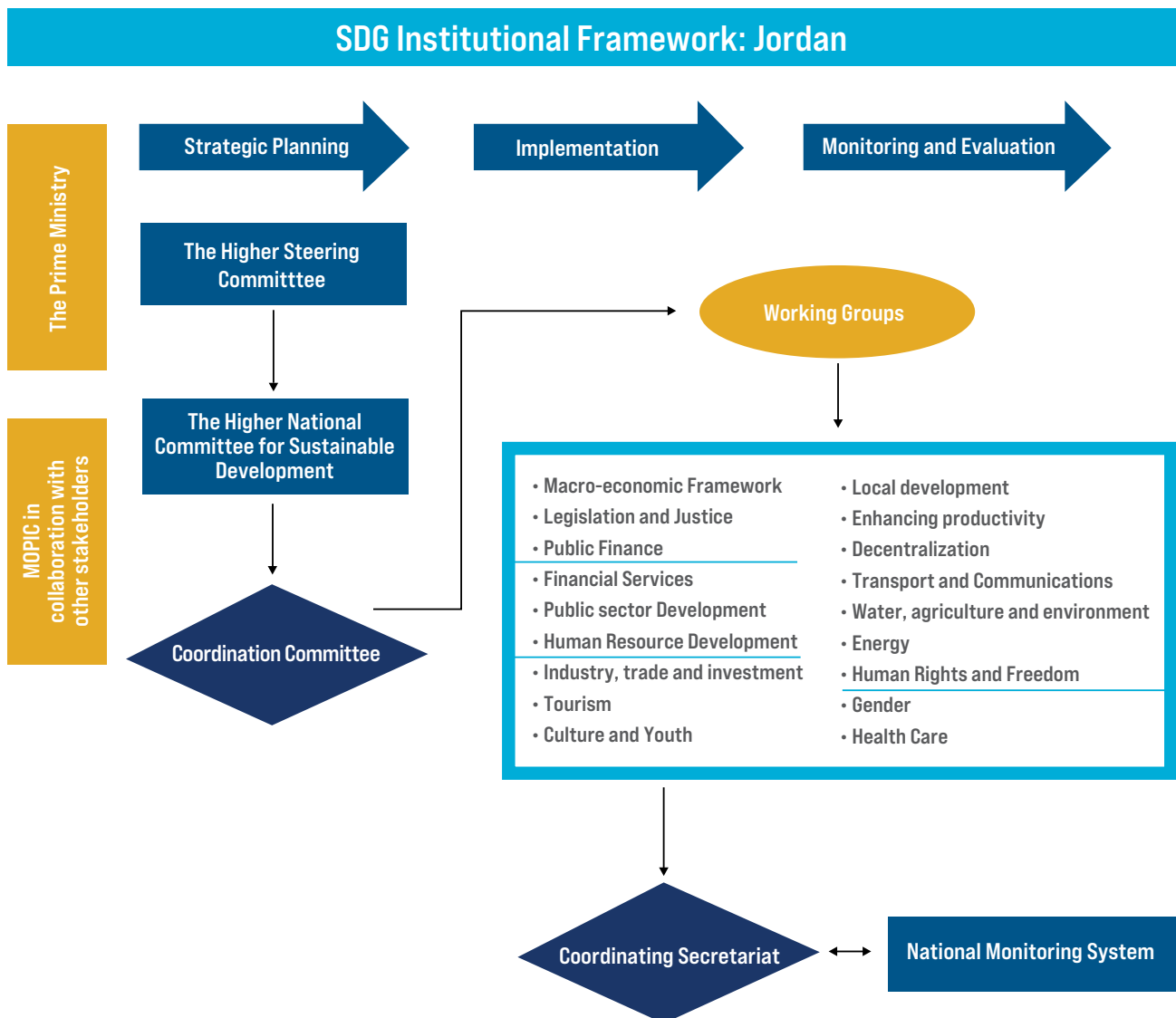
- Contribute to spreading awareness on SDGs.
- Develop a national database of SDG indicators.
- Contribute to the preparation of the voluntary national report on SDG progress.

The NCSD leads the SDG coordination mechanism in Lebanon and identifies relevant policies towards SDG achievement. It is divided into four working groups/committees (the fifth pillar of cooperation is considered cross cutting) following the 5Ps in the 2030 Agenda to coordinate the integration of SDGs into ministerial and department level work plans. The Committee is chaired by the Prime Minister and has 54 members, including deputy ministers and under-secretaries representing all ministries in Lebanon. It also includes delegates from civil society and the private sector (Federation of the Chambers of Commerce). A Parliamentary Commission on SDGs was established to monitor and promote SDGs in Parliament and to map existing legislation.

Moreover, an official SDG webpage, LEBANON,<sup>15</sup> was created, several workshops were held to promote awareness on SDGs and activities were launched with CSOs and the private sector.

**Key observations:** Changes in the Government's cabinets due to the protests in 2019-2020 and subsequent crises that have unfolded have affected the work of the NCSD. Despite being active, the Committee's meetings and national plans have been delayed. The fragmentation of data has been a key limitation facing the NCSD. To address this, the Committee has formed the Working Group on Sustainable Development Statistics. The outbreak of COVID-19 has delayed cooperation efforts. Similar to Jordan, Lebanon also hosts a large number of refugees from the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, and has experienced fragmentation in responding to the needs of both citizens and refugees. These and other challenges have shifted attention from reforming SDG governance structures to addressing immediate needs.

**Figure 24.** Institutional framework for SDG implementation, Jordan



Source: Jordan Voluntary National Review, 2017, p. 28.



**iv. Libya**

In Libya<sup>16</sup> the Ministry of Planning is mandated with monitoring SDG progress and implementing an institutional framework to coordinate policies and actions between relevant stakeholders concerned with achieving the SDGs. For this purpose, the NCSO was created, consisting of representatives of all ministries, alongside representatives of the Bureau of Statistics and Census. The Committee is tasked with anchoring SDGs in national strategies and development plans in coordination with involved sectors and ensuring effective monitoring of SDGs once integrated.<sup>37</sup> The Government of Libya aims to enhance the role of the Committee by transferring its leadership to the Prime Minister’s Office. The Committee launched the National Libyan Forum on Sustainable Development, which includes a consultative team of coordinators covering persons with disabilities, children and youth, women, academia, civil society, the private sector, local municipalities, and the public sector. Figure 26 illustrates the key institutional framework for SDG monitoring in Libya.<sup>18</sup>

**Key observations:** The Government of Libya has worked towards SDG monitoring and implementation and published its first VNR in 2020. Yet, during e-consultations, it was highlighted that the Committee faces significant deficits resulting from years of conflict, which have affected capacities, funding, structures, and national plans.<sup>19</sup>

**v. Somalia**

As outlined in chapter 3, the NDP-9 (2020-2024) is the key national framework on SDGs in Somalia. The NCSO was established in early 2020 with the objective to coordinate efforts towards SDG achievement between relevant ministries and international organizations. However, according to e-consultations

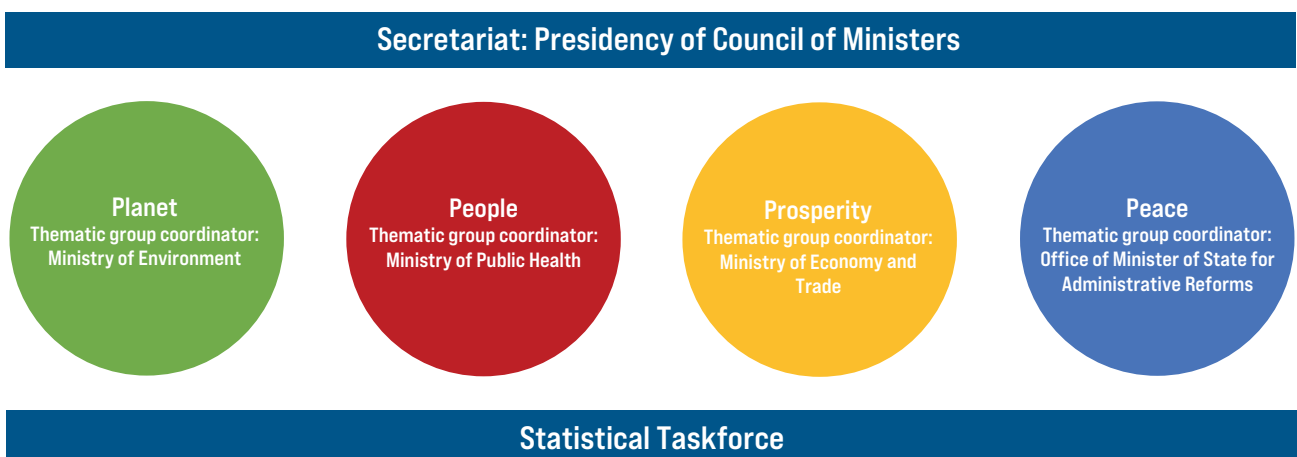
with national representatives, the NCSO had not been operational at the time of drafting this report.

**Key observations:** The Committee’s operations have been halted due to the outbreak of COVID-19. The NDP-9 includes five pillars of focus such as inclusive politics, security, the rule of law, and economic and social development, and each thematic area is handled by a technical working group. Section three below provides an in-depth analysis on the impact of conflict on maintaining coordination mechanisms.

**vi. The Sudan<sup>20</sup>**

An institutional structure was put in place in 2016 and reflected in the National Program for Sustainable Development (NPSD) 2016-2030 to oversee the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The previous Government of the Sudan had set up an Inter-ministerial Committee for SDGs in 2017, with the aim of coordinating efforts to prioritize and localize SDGs and identify indicators and monitoring mechanisms.<sup>21</sup> In 2019, and following the establishment of the new Cabinet, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning was mandated with overseeing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Coordination related to SDGs was merged into one body under the NCSO with the following structure: The NCSO is headed by the Ministry of Planning and Finance and reports to the Prime Minister, it oversees a technical committee headed by the Deputy Minister of Planning, whose membership includes deputy ministers of all relevant ministries and the governors of the 18 governorates, supported by junior staff who ensure coordination. It hosts a platform with a six-member executive board representing 70 CSOs, youth, women, and the Sudanese Business Association. The technical committee meets every three months and is now at the planning phase.<sup>22</sup> The new Cabinet is currently working towards a national development strategy to integrate SDGs into national policies.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 25.** Technical committees on SDGs, Lebanon



Source: Lebanon Voluntary National Review, 2018, p. 15.

**Key observations:** Changes in the Cabinet resulted in new mandates which included the assignment of the 2030 Agenda to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. NCSD has yet to be fully activated. E-consultations with State representatives reflected the need for capacity-building on SDG monitoring and implementation.

**vii. Yemen<sup>24</sup>**

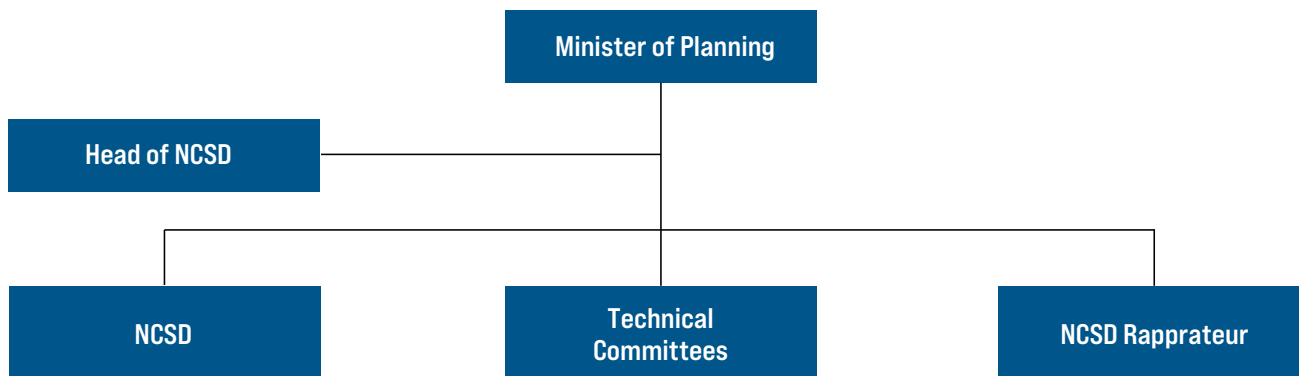
In February 2018, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation submitted to the Council of Ministers a proposal for the integration of the 2030 Agenda into key national plans and strategies and to ensure follow up on the progress made towards achieving SDGs.

The proposal included assigning the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation to (a) oversee the National Working Group for Sustainable Development 2030; (b) coordinate national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda; and (c) adapt them to achieve national priorities. Under this Working Group, the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation aims to form a national team for sustainable development, representing the relevant authorities and actors from the private sector and civil society to carry out the following tasks:

- Coordinate national efforts to implement the SDGs.
- Integrate SDGs into national sustainable development programmes and plans.
- Coordinate efforts to build national capacities in the areas of defining indicators, monitoring and implementation under the local context towards improving policy formulation capabilities.
- Provide technical support to build a monitoring and evaluation system and prepare periodic reports to monitor progress on sustainable development indicators.
- Follow up on the development of a statistical database to ensure the flow of data on SDG indicators. The Government, represented by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, has worked to identify SDG-related priority areas, especially those related to human development.

**Key observations:** As outlined in chapter 3, structural factors have affected the advancement of the 2030 Agenda in Yemen reflected in capacity, access and coordination. The dire humanitarian situation in the country has shifted attention from advancing the 2030 Agenda to addressing immediate humanitarian needs.

**Figure 26.** Institutional framework for SDG monitoring, Libya



Source: Translated from the Libya Voluntary National Review, 2020, p. 12.



## C. Impact of conflict on national SDG coordination and partnerships

In all countries where e-consultations were conducted, conflict has detrimentally impacted both coordination and the partnership mechanisms needed to advance and monitor efforts to achieve the SDGs. In some contexts, conflict has led to the total lack of national frameworks for SDGs or capacities to activate available frameworks. Coordination and partnership-related challenges as identified during e-consultations could be categorized as follows:

- Challenges pertaining to the expansion of coordination efforts between central and local levels.
- Impediments concerning institutional cooperation.
- Competing priorities shifting attention away from the 2030 Agenda, including the evolving impacts of COVID-19.
- Lack of adequate data coordination.
- Limitations in enhancing multi-stakeholder engagement.

### 1. Challenges pertaining to the expansion of coordination efforts between central and local levels

*SDG discussions have not covered local regions beyond the central level. For example, seminars, dialogues and workshops introducing the 17 Goals and the 2030 Agenda have only been held at the central level...In reality, there is no clear agenda concerning the 17 Goals.” (Expert consulted in a round-table discussion in one of the countries in conflict)*

**Countries in conflict:** Fragmentation between central and local levels continues to be a major impediment to the understanding and monitoring of SDGs and implementing related frameworks in countries in conflict. E-consultations with stakeholders in countries in conflict illustrate considerable differences in the level of awareness between institutions at the central level and other regions in the same country regarding the SDGs. At the local level, the lack of awareness of SDGs, even of national policies, and the lack of local level engagement in SDG monitoring and data collection have made the SDGs largely theoretical and without local relevance, implementation mechanisms or impact. This is apparent in subnational government institutions as well as other local actors such as, civil society, academia and the private sector.

Challenges concerning localization present themselves more acutely in federal governance systems where the relationship between local and national governments can be strained or unclear following or during periods of conflict. In federal systems or countries with a high level of subnational autonomy, years of conflict can significantly damage relationships, coordination and communication mechanisms between local government actors and the federal/central government. In one case, provincial entities had developed a policy architecture largely independent of the national government’s agenda and frameworks. Several geographic and policy factors contribute to this phenomenon. Geographically, a key limitation was the access of the internationally recognized governments in countries in conflict to specific areas and cooperation with provinces beyond the central level. This can be due to insecurity or weak communication platforms between national and local government actors. In terms of policy development, the lack of early consultations prior to the development of frameworks with local entities resulted in disagreements between local and national authorities.

The lack of physical access also limits the capacity of central government institutions to establish a constant presence at the local level. This can impede the development of effective partnerships. For example, United Nations agencies are sometimes faced by the lack of recognized government representation in some local areas, which hinders prospects for collaboration on localization and implementation of the SDGs. The operationalization of SDG frameworks requires the establishment of effective pathways to localization with partnerships between both actors on the ground and national counterparts, when possible.

**Countries in post-conflict settings:** The central-local disparity in understanding and advancing the 2030 Agenda was also clear in post-conflict settings, where the relationship between local governance structures and the central government is often still being re-established. New roles and mandates can negatively impact the development of a whole-of-government approach and undermine the localization of SDG efforts. In post-conflict settings, the establishment of peace is often nascent and fragile. In several countries, peace is not universal but regionalized, with some parts still experiencing ongoing conflict, while others have peace which is often characterized by the absence of conflict rather than a positive one based on the principle of justice for all. During the e-consultations, it was highlighted that, unless the conflict resolution process is fully

realized, grievances will continue to exist at the national and local levels. Often, this impedes adequate and constructive cooperation. Additionally, as with countries in conflict, certain geographical areas sometimes remain difficult to access, and this can hinder their inclusion in development plans, undermining the implementation of comprehensive cooperation to work towards the 2030 Agenda.<sup>25</sup>

**Countries affected by conflict:** The challenges facing countries in this category were not necessarily related to the lack of access to local communities, but rather due to limited operationalization of NDPs and inadequate cooperation to strengthen outreach to the furthest behind. NDPs and discussions around SDGs have remained narrow at the highest level with less outreach to local communities.<sup>26</sup> In one context, it was highlighted that discussions around SDGs had become quite limited to an academic angle, with less success in advocating for the improved integration of SDGs into national policies.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. Impediments to institutional cooperation

*The governmental structure is not aligned with the planned development goals. The structures were from previous regimes and do not apply to the current context... The governmental and organizational structures as well as the human capacities were not reassessed based on the conflict." (Government representative of a country in conflict)*

Several institutional and capacity-related challenges were noted as factors that hinder SDG coordination for countries across the three stages of conflict. The type of institutional challenges, however, differed significantly between countries in each of the categories.

**Countries in conflict:** Limited or impeded institutional cooperation was common at both the national and local levels due to changes in governments following executive and parliamentary elections. In some contexts, countries experienced chronic delays in elections, which affected the operations of national coordination mechanisms.<sup>28</sup> Recurrent changes in focal points made institutional continuity difficult to maintain and sometimes jeopardized the possibility for consistent and coordinated efforts for the SDGs. Beyond the challenges related to changes and turnover in focal points, a bigger limitation has been highlighted in chapter 3, in relation to governance mechanisms in some countries. These were perceived by some stakeholders as not entirely matching commitments made towards advancing the 2030 Agenda and, thus, hindering adequate partnerships on SDGs. Several gaps resulting from conflict have additionally affected institu-

tional partnerships. This is particularly linked to limited capacities, which were not reassessed in view of the conflict to identify capacity-building needs. In countries in conflict, there is also a need to address disparities between planning and implementation to identify capacity limitations that could impede the overall implementation process. International partnerships, and actors in the international community specifically, could play a key role in redressing this issue.<sup>29</sup> For example, the Government of Yemen has collaborated with UNDP on a study addressing the impact of conflict on realizing SDGs.<sup>30</sup>

**Countries in post-conflict settings:** These countries face the issue of overlapping mandates or merging ministries, departments and directorates, which has affected the continuity of cooperation towards advancing the 2030 Agenda. A focus on institution-building in post-conflict settings can often cause a proliferation of institutions at both the national and local levels. Against a backdrop of limited coordination and weak partnerships, these institutions can have confusing, overlapping or even conflicting mandates. When combined with inadequate coordination platforms, this can compound national-local divides. Efforts to manage this sudden growth in institutions can result in the establishment of multiple coordination mechanisms, which can overburden those involved and absorb unnecessary resources. Moreover, countries in post-conflict have had new roles and entities mandated to work on the 2030 Agenda with a need for enhanced capacities. It was highlighted that several entities require capacitation to work towards monitoring and implementing SDG-related policies and programming.<sup>31</sup>

**Countries affected by conflict:** Institutional challenges for countries affected by neighbouring conflicts were in relation to changes in governments<sup>32</sup> and maintaining coordination.<sup>33</sup> In one case, a country was affected by constant changes in Government, which resulted in the discontinuation of some ministries and/or the merging of others. Across all countries in this category, regional events and competing priorities affected the sustainability of SDG coordination. This issue will be tackled further in the subsequent sections

## 3. Competing priorities, including COVID-19, shifting attention away from the 2030 Agenda

*A national committee was formed in early 2020; however, it has been inactive due to the COVID situation exacerbated by the existing conflict." (Representative of a country in conflict)*

Across the three different conflict settings, coordination on SDGs was disrupted by a mixture of competing priorities and limited resources. A common



observation across the three categories was that humanitarian needs and the unfolding of multiple, often concurrent, crises took precedence over the advancement of the SDG agenda in terms of both resources and focus. This often inhibited the use of SDGs as a tool to address vulnerabilities and accelerate efforts to recover and build back better. In such contexts, emergency response actors often work in isolation from development and peacebuilding actors, impeding strong partnerships in support of the 2030 Agenda and undermining the integration of SDGs and longer-term planning into humanitarian assistance. This has exacerbated fragmentation between actors working on development priorities and the ones focusing on humanitarian assistance, widening the gap between humanitarian, development and peace actors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded issues around competing priorities. In countries in conflict, the pandemic has affected the activities of national coordination mechanisms on SDGs, particularly coordination mechanisms including national committees which were recently established or expected to be enacted and reforming their mandates. The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated already existing fragility and vulnerability and can act as a threat multiplier in many ways. Resources have been taken away from ongoing programmes and priorities, which has undermined efforts to integrate SDGs across the HDPN. Many countries have developed specific COVID-19 response frameworks which often overlap with existing frameworks and complicate coordination mechanisms and the establishment of partnership and funding channels.

#### 4. Lack of adequate data coordination

*“The key challenge is coordination. Without coordination of data management and production, it is very difficult to achieve SDGs as every institution has its own data sets. To solve this issue, I would recommend establishing SDG working groups for each sector for better coordination” (Government representative from a national statistical bureau in a country in conflict)*

In conflict settings, a national entity or a bureau of national statistics was mandated with collecting and monitoring data, including data on SDGs. In countries that established national committees concerned with SDGs, a statistical entity was part of the committee. In all countries covered, the Government was leading the process of data monitoring and production with the support of United Nations agencies. There were varying levels of engagement of non-United

Nations and non-governmental stakeholders, such as CSOs and other experts. In all three categories, the Government only recognizes statistics issued by its Central Statistical Bureau. Therefore, national data and statistics are relied upon, which hinders the comprehensiveness of SDG monitoring due to access limitations for some Governments to certain areas or communities affected by conflict.

In **countries in conflict and post-conflict**, issues related to data coordination can be grouped in three categories.

- a. Coordination hampered by conflict situations:** The key challenge to accessing microdata is that it requires field assessments and studies beyond macro indicators. Such studies need free and unfettered data collection on the ground, which is systematically hindered in certain areas in countries experiencing conflict.<sup>34</sup> Logistically, there are access limitations due to high levels of insecurity or the lack of Government control over certain territories. Recent statistics produced by United Nations agencies could help address this challenge; however, certain data is not deemed official by State entities, an issue requiring close coordination between national entities and United Nations agencies.<sup>35</sup>
- b. Capacity and lack of partnerships with international organizations:** Data collection methodologies for identified priorities also face the challenge of the lack of formal collection methodologies at the global level. This has been a key factor resulting in the lack of accurate data. During e-consultations, in some countries, the decision to conduct upcoming VNRs was unclear due to capacity issues. It was apparent during several e-consultations that capacity-building was a priority for new entities mandated with producing and monitoring data, including on SDGs. Some countries have attempted to address this through informal data-collection processes, which have been supported by a partnership between ministries, the central statistics bureau, academia, and civil society.
- c. Knowledge exchange:** This has been regarded as a key cross-cutting challenge. In addition to data gaps resulting from security and capacity, there is a huge gap in coordination within, and between, Government and United Nations entities.<sup>36</sup> This has resulted in contradictions and comparability challenges facing stakeholders concerned with data monitoring. In some countries, protocols for data reporting are not well developed between Government agencies. The limitations relating to shared information and data was highlighted in several e-consultations. Synergies need to be created to produce data by entities representing the State, the United Nations and civil society.

The lack of coordination has hampered effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms, which has impeded efforts to understand progress towards SDG achievement.

While data challenges were quite frequent in countries facing the onset of conflict and post-conflict settings, it is worth mentioning that countries affected by conflict also faced challenges related to data monitoring and production but for different reasons.

In addition to the challenges also facing the countries in the other two categories, **countries affected by conflict** faced two main additional data challenges, namely, lack of recent and accurate data and coordination limitations. In one country, the Department of Statistics has only succeeded in monitoring 71 out of the 231 performance indicators in the 2030 Agenda. It has been highlighted in the two countries affected by conflict that Government entities may have had different databases for areas of operation.<sup>37</sup> The lack of unified and accurate data on SDG indicators challenges monitoring the progress towards SDGs.

## 5. Limitations in enhancing multi-stakeholder engagement

*Our NGO consortium is not a member of the NCSD... Limited attention has been given by including a very small number of local organizations in the 2030 Agenda... Many government entities do not perceive civil society organizations as partners .... It [the 2030 Agenda] is a participatory process and civil society organizations should be included and the Government needs to cooperate with CSOs and private sector and all parties to work in a participatory manner to achieve SDGs at the national level." (Expert in a country in conflict)*

Conflict continues to have a negative impact on multi-stakeholder partnerships for the 2030 Agenda. Two levels of fragmentation were mainly cited during the e-consultations: the first concerned the engagement of CSOs, academia and the private sector in monitoring and implementing SDG activities; and the second related to synergies between humanitarian, development and peace actors.

In several cases, the cabinet of ministers or the ministry of foreign affairs led the coordination and implementation process of SDGs. This was reflected in the membership of national coordinating committees covered in previous sections of this report. National bodies representing Member States collaborated closely with UNDP and other United Nations agencies covering relevant mandates. While in some

contexts, all ministries concerned are represented in NCSDs, there is more room to strengthen coordination between ministries.

**Countries in conflict and post-conflict:** In all countries affected by conflict and post-conflict settings, data reflected limited engagement with local CSOs and experts in discussions around drafting national plans, including identifying priority areas and gaps in realizing the 2030 Agenda. In general, the role of local CSOs, academia and experts was perceived to be mainly consultative. The section below outlines findings from e-consultations related to multi-partner engagement in conflict and post-conflict settings.

**a. Private sector:** Cooperation with the private sector was perceived to be limited and ineffective and, in some instances, completely absent. This was the case for micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises based in the country of concern and multinational enterprises headquartered in third-party countries. The lack of involvement of the private sector was attributed to the impact conflicts had on the sector, which often resulted in damaged value chains, closures of businesses and operations and the exit of major international businesses due to the lack of prospects or low risk appetite. In this case, it was a question of survival of the private sector in conflict situations rather than an exclusion from partnership. It was generally observed that mainly national private sector companies are not strong contributors to the SDG development or monitoring process, which is compounded by the security situation. Most private sector companies continue to operate in survival mode, struggling to function and ensure profit. This issue straddles both the local and central levels yet is more acute in local level businesses, which are generally further removed from discussions on SDGs and are often smaller enterprises.<sup>38</sup>

**b. Civil society:** Civil society plays a limited role in national SDG frameworks in countries in conflict. Reflections from United Nations agencies showed that CSOs have the potential to play a strong role in crisis situations, due to their outreach to, and footprint in, local communities.<sup>39</sup> E-consultations highlighted that CSOs require further capacity-building to understand, implement and report on SDGs. However, it is important to note that activities have emerged to remedy this issue, such as the formation of sustainable development networks whose members are trained on SDGs, indicators and related areas. Bolstering capacity-building efforts for civil society could support the implementation and monitoring of SDGs. CSOs in countries experiencing the onset of conflict were still considered a key actor at



the local level. In two countries, partnerships were initiated with CSOs during the outbreak of COVID-19 to ensure better outreach to vulnerable groups. Social media and other new mediums of communication have acted as informal platforms of communication and have enabled more formal actors in the field of SDGs to better understand demands. So, it can be said CSOs are consulted, but not fully included and integrated into SDG processes.

- c. Academia:** The role of academia varies across countries in conflict. In one country, academics played a key role in the development of research and studies that supported the implementation and localization of the SDGs. At the subnational level, for example, academia was effectively involved in the work of local committees to find solutions for SDG advancement at both the national and subnational levels. Other contexts, however, showed less involvement of academia and experts. In these contexts, coordination with academia could be described as ad hoc. Like CSOs, experts have also been consulted during the drafting of NDPs. E-consultations did not clarify, however, any additional roles for academia, particularly concerning the identification of catalytic pathways and the integration of global academic discussion into localized realities.
- d. Humanitarian, development and peace actors:** Despite efforts to advance coherence across the HDPN, synergies and partnerships between humanitarian, development and peace actors are still limited, if not completely absent, across all countries. In countries experiencing ongoing or latent conflict, SDGs continue to be perceived as a luxury rather than a tool to catalyse the transition towards peace and sustainable development. This perception, alongside persistent and unpredictable humanitarian needs, has led many entities across the nexus to continue working in silos. In countries in conflict and countries in post-conflict, the repercussions of conflict and weakened resilience among affected populations resulted in ad hoc and reactive responses without the integration of a systematic longer-term vision. In these settings, peace actors continue to operate in a largely independent modality, with limited mandate overlap impeding more cohesive interaction. The e-consultations also highlighted that, due to a continuum of crisis where countries often oscillate between crisis and early recovery, there is often a constant shift between humanitarian and development priorities with less emphasis on the latter in terms of funding, discussions and coordination platforms. This shift in priorities can result in limited efforts to integrate development initiatives into humanitarian assistance and emergency programming.

Coordination between agencies was perceived to be weakened by the depleting and often siloed funding, the competition over available funding opportunities, restrictions imposed by some funding agencies towards certain geographical or thematic areas and the prioritization of humanitarian funding.

### Countries affected by conflict

- a. Private sector:** E-consultations with stakeholders in countries affected by conflict reflected a lack of engagement with the private sector, despite clear plans to pursue such engagement in areas related to human development.
- b. Civil society:** Despite some issues in advancing the 2030 Agenda in countries affected by conflict and in neighbouring countries, CSOs were represented in the national committees on SDGs. The representation entailed supporting countries in the VNR process and producing shadow reports; and it included participating in discussions concerning national development priorities.
- c. Academia:** In the NCSN in countries affected by conflict, academia played a consultative role as needed by national stakeholders. While academics were not fully represented in national frameworks, they contributed to the NDPs.
- d. Humanitarian, development and peace actors:** Silos were created due to the competing priorities around addressing the often different needs of displaced populations hosted in the countries. This has shifted the focus from long-term planning for sustainable development to channelling funds towards enhancing public infrastructure to absorb the new influxes of displaced populations.



#### **Box 14. Promising developments: engagement of multi-stakeholders in the 2030 Agenda in Iraq**

##### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT NETWORK 2030**

Iraq's Sustainable Development Network 2030 was established at the end of 2018 after two awareness-raising workshops on the achievement of the SDGs. The Network includes more than thirty organizations covering all governorates of Iraq, including the governorates within the Kurdistan Region. The Network focuses on SDGs 5, 16 and 17 and participated in the drafting of the first Voluntary National Review, advocating Goal 16 by circulating a questionnaire to activists via social media.

The Network produced a training manual and issued a report that measures Government performance entitled, "Towards a More Responsive and Sustainable Future: Iraq in Light of the Coronavirus Pandemic." Currently, the Network is drafting a document on the role of Iraqi women in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda with the participation of many activists and Government agencies.

#### **Box 15. Promising developments: engagement of multi-stakeholders in national coordination mechanisms, Jordan and Lebanon**

##### **JORDAN**

Based on the request of CSO networks, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation in Jordan expanded its NHCS to include Jordan's two major civil society alliances, namely, the Jordanian National Coalition for Sustainable Development and the Coordination Commission of Civil Society Organizations. This has supported further engagement with different actors on SDGs. The NHCS also includes members of the private sector.

The two CSO networks have supported the preparation of the VNR by the Government, which resulted from a roadmap including consultations with 100 representatives covering various sectors, including government, CSOs, workers' unions, the private sector, local councils and committees, academia, and the scientific community.

The VNR reflected discussions with various sectors and contributions by CSOs. In addition to supporting the Government of Jordan in drafting the VNR, CSOs were invited to participate in the national delegation representing Jordan at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York.

##### **LEBANON**

Two CSOs are represented in the National Committee on SDGs in Lebanon, namely, the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development and Caritas Lebanon. Through several consultations, the Government has engaged with CSOs to identify priorities, challenges and inclusion in development plans. The Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development and Caritas Lebanon consulted with over 300 representative CSOs across Lebanon on the VNR. The purpose of the consultations was to raise awareness concerning the VNR, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the United Nations level, the 2030 Agenda, and the SDGs. The main CSOs working towards SDGs in each region were identified through desk reviews and existing links with CSOs, local authorities and partners. Over 1,000 CSOs were identified and invited to participate in the national consultation. Face-to-face consultation took place through workshops with 300 CSOs in several regions across Lebanon. These 300 selected CSOs were a representative sample of regions, sectors, working areas, and size. The consultation helped identify CSO priorities, challenges and recommendations on the five SDG pillars, namely, planet, people, prosperity, peace, and partnership.

CSOs have contributed to the drafting of the VNR. Moreover, the Chamber of Commerce participates in the NCS, covering the private sector perspective in the committee.



## D. Role of international and regional actors

*Ending conflict is a priority and international organizations should play a role. Subsequently, Yemen needs a proper exit plan towards sustainable development after humanitarian aid discontinues.... A revival of coordination between the Government and international organizations is needed to ensure that the Government is part of the strategic development planning process and implementation". (Representative of Government of Yemen)*

While States retain the primary responsibility for protecting their populations and enhancing sustainable peace and development, the international and regional communities have a key responsibility to assist and support efforts towards realizing the SDGs. As highlighted in chapter 3, the UNSCDF is one of the key instruments to support the United Nations in implementing the 2030 Agenda.<sup>40</sup> Although the UNSCDFs are United Nations-led, they aim to be nationally owned and anchored in pre-existing frameworks, such as the NDPs.<sup>41</sup> The UNSCDF adopts the SDG Analysis Tool, which calls for SDG ownership at the global, regional, national, subnational, rural, and urban levels. It also aims to support stakeholders in their commitment to leave no one behind through enhancing data on SDGs, supporting transformative economic pathways and promoting multi-stakeholder engagement.<sup>42</sup> The common country assessment as a key reporting mechanism for UNSCDF helps stakeholders discuss national development challenges and common approaches in the beginning of the funding cycle with key national and international stakeholders.<sup>43</sup>

During e-consultations, it became clear that there are only a few linkages between UNSCDF, NDPs and HRPs. Focused on the key clusters for emergency response, there are limited linkages with NDPs in countries in conflict or affected by conflict. Moreover, with the outbreak of COVID-19, new frameworks emerged, including the United Nations Framework on the Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19 and Socioeconomic Response Plans (SERPs) that were all specific to COVID-19. While the SERP framework recognizes the importance of the 2030 Agenda as a foundation for its response,<sup>44</sup> clear interlinkages between SERPs and other frameworks are missing.

Survey findings of this report have reflected several challenges pertaining to regional cooperation frameworks. The first was related to limited information sharing channels on the role played by each agency within the United Nations system. It is

also notable that there is a lack of synergies between emergency response frameworks and sustainable development frameworks. As discussed in chapter 3, stakeholders in regional and national frameworks have been working in silos with minimal interlinkages between the various frameworks due to separate and different objectives, data monitoring, funding schemes, and implementation processes. This is also attributed to the fact that humanitarian responses are different in each context and, thus, not directly linked to early recovery and/or sustainable development. In complex security settings, access has not only been impeded for development and peace actors but has also sometimes jeopardized the implementation of humanitarian responses and the safety of humanitarian workers alike.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the current lack of linkages across the HDPN, as outlined by a regional UNDP report,<sup>46</sup> overlapping areas in terms of principles and objectives exist between the 2030 Agenda and other regional frameworks. For example, the 2030 Agenda shares key principles of resilience and stabilization with 3RPs and NDPs. Such principles include national ownership, interconnectedness and indivisibility, inclusion, fulfilment of human rights, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and innovation, and are strengthened by accountability frameworks and disaggregated data frameworks. Encouraging partnerships is an important way forward to bridge the gap between humanitarian, development and peace actors and address the current working silos within and between stakeholders.

Besides some nascent but promising developments to include multiple actors in advancing the 2030 Agenda, coordinated efforts are still needed to enhance the role of local actors in the 2030 Agenda, especially civil society, academia and the private sector, particularly in countries in conflict.

The following key areas and entry points have been identified during e-consultations with Member States, the United Nations, civil society, and academia. Building partnerships with the international and regional community will increase support in the following areas:

- **Prioritization:** Exchanging promising developments on the SDG monitoring and prioritization approach.
- **Localiazation:** Localizing SDGs to ensure the LNOB approach.
- **Data:** Integrating IDPs in SDGs monitoring.
- **Cross-cutting:** Supporting the establishment of

a multi-stakeholder approach to enhance data on SDGs and advance the 2030 Agenda through coordinated efforts.

Using the human security approach would support the efforts of Member States towards realizing

the SDGs while maximizing the direct impact on people, ensuring that no one is left behind. The final section of this chapter will provide key entry points to support the recommendations and shed light on promising developments towards the implementation of such recommendations.

## E. Ways forward

### 1. Prioritizing SDG: learning from promising developments

A key area in need of strong partnerships to enhance knowledge exchange and capacity-building is the prioritization process of SDGs. For countries that aspired for prioritization, a common feature across countries in the three categories was using a people-centred or participatory approach to ensure that the realization of SDGs has a strong positive impact on the well-being of people. However, the means and tools to apply such a framework are often not identified. E-consultations conducted in countries in conflict depicted a clear fragmentation in the prioritization process, particularly within the United Nations system, in which each agency prioritizes goals in accordance with its mandate with less linkages to national prioritization processes, in the cases where they exist. Throughout inputs received from Member States, United Nations agencies and CSOs alike, special emphasis was placed on SDGs 16 and 17 as drivers to achieve the remaining SDGs. The need for support by the international community was highlighted to assist Member States in identifying priorities that are catalytic and can support the transition from conflict to recovery and sustainable peace following a roadmap towards achieving such prioritization. The international community could support the countries of concern in adopting a triple nexus and comprehensive approach that considers human development as an integral element to the 2030 Agenda.

### 2. Localizing SDGs to ensure that no one is left behind

*Inclusivity is very important in the 2030 Agenda, which is a key lesson learned, involving local communities and ensuring their participation." (Representative of the Government of Somalia)*

Discussions with multiple actors emphasized the need to avoid adopting models that may not fit the local context. Based on discussions around inequality and the lack of or limited access to resources in various sub-regions across affected countries, it was highlighted that achieving the SDGs will not be comprehensive in countries in conflict without giving attention to local community needs. At the local level, there is a need for appropriate measures to monitor and implement SDGs by using relevant tools and involving local actors on the ground. As this report is concerned with a universal yet regional and contextual approach, strengthening the connections between central and local efforts is critical to ensuring advancements in the SDG agenda. Moreover, the involvement of local communities, particularly those affected by conflict, is key to ensuring that efforts at the national level yield the impact aimed for at the local level, including people from various gender, age and minority groups and with special needs. Localizing the SDG agenda can increase inclusivity at the local level and integrate local entities into the process.



## Box 16. Promising developments: adopting human security through inclusive socioeconomic development in Egypt

### REGION: MINYA GOVERNORATE, UPPER EGYPT

**Involved agencies:** United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) (lead), UN Women, International Labour Organization (ILO), UN-Habitat, and IOM, in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Development, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Governorate of Minya

**Donors:** UNTFHS, Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and the Government of Japan

**Duration:** Four years (2013-2017)

**Target groups:** National and subnational levels of government; CSOs; and local communities including women, children, youth, and returnees. The programme benefitted approximately 170,000 men, women and children and indirectly enhanced the security of the wider community including local businesses and governmental institutions. The programmes resulted in the revitalization of selected components of the local economy, infrastructure, housing, and service provision, in addition to socioeconomic empowerment.

**Key results:** The human security approach encouraged an innovative framework to tackle the compounding threats faced by the population of Minya in Upper Egypt, achieving the following results:

#### A. SDGS ACHIEVED

- **SDG 1.** By targeting the rural poor and addressing the root causes of persistent poverty, the programme was able to put in place a social protection system to assist the most vulnerable.
- **SDG 2.** The programme addressed the rising malnutrition rates by improving agricultural practices, especially animal rearing.
- **SDG 3.** Awareness was increased of Hepatitis C and other health conditions especially those affecting children.
- **SDG 5.** Gender equality was advanced through the empowerment of women who were mobilized through the Village Saving and Loan Association and other action networks.
- **SDG 6.** Clean water and sanitation were improved through technical assistance such as filtration systems, raising awareness of improved sanitation at home and reproductive health management to enhance women's empowerment.
- **SDG 7.** The use of biogas units was enforced, which contributes to greater affordability of renewable energy.
- **SDG 8.** By improving the employability and capacity of beneficiaries, especially of returnees, and their access to financial services, the programme was able to promote decent work and economic growth.
- **SDG 17.** The success of the programme was due, in large part, to the partnerships between public and private entities which allowed for the replication, scale-up and sustainability of the interventions.

#### B. FORMING SYNERGIES AND BREAKING SILOS

- The programme considered the myriad of threats holistically and comprehensively, linking interventions beyond the traditional approach with the aim of breaking silos through encouraging the establishment of a field office where agencies worked together and reported their activities and findings to their colleagues within their respective and other organizations. Thus, this wider or horizontal approach allowed for better coordination within and across partners.
- The programme enabled the implementing agencies to jointly address issues pertaining to diverse sectors, capitalizing on synergies between development goals (for instance, employment and entrepreneurship, improved mother and child nutrition and health, and clean drinking water) and minimizing trade-offs (for instance, improving agricultural productivity together with proper resource and water management).

...>

### **C. ENSURING THAT NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND**

- Through the human-security approach, the programme has altered the role of women and youth from being passive victims of insecurities to active participants in addressing the challenges facing their communities through their empowerment and access to the means and mechanisms to uplift their situation. This transformative approach not only demonstrates the value of empowering agents of change but also contributes to the sustainability of the programme. Examples include the establishment of human security forums for the whole of Minya, where a broad range of community representatives met to address the challenges facing their community and suggest possible actions based on evidence and agreed priorities. In addition, participants discussed savings and loans schemes for women, such as the seed funding provided for women to start their own businesses.
- Through the programme's youth volunteering services, youth groups were supported in the creation of social enterprises through hands-on planning and implementation exercises. These included workshops on agribusiness and professional development. Community service was also encouraged through the youth groups including activities to eradicate illiteracy, a blood donation campaign and a neighbourhood greening project.

### **D. INVESTING IN HUMAN CAPITAL**

The programme, with its people-centred approach, invested in the human capital of Minya by improving the employability of the rural population and equipping them with the necessary skills to improve their livelihoods.

### **E. COMMUNITY-OWNED AND CONTEXT-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS**

The programme first and foremost, established participatory human security forums to promote community engagement in planning, implementation and training, to act as the focal points with Government entities and to raise awareness, all of which assured the bottom-up identification and planning of community needs. The resulting success of the programme was partly due to its positive rapport within the community.

### **F. ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS**

- With the Government of Egypt: The interventions of this programme were built on previous assessments and initiatives of the Egyptian Government and partner agencies. The programme is aligned with the country's plan for a UNSDCF which was kept central in the planning stage. The institutionalization of programme interventions and the mainstreaming of the human security approach by the Government ensured the continuity of the activities, especially those requiring ongoing technical guidance.
- With the private sector: In line with involving all relevant stakeholders, ensuring sustainability and upscaling the activities of the programme were made possible by partnering with the private sector. For example, the microfinancing and village savings and loans initiatives attracted the interest of a local bank, which supported the initiative beyond the lifetime of the programme. Moreover, capacity-building measures were an opportunity for businesses along the supply chain (for instance, marketing and packaging for date farms, or supplying raw materials and equipment for the furniture industry). Such developments highlight the interlinkages that exist within societies and the ripple-effect of targeted and community-based interventions.



### 3. Enhancing data on SDGs, particularly on IDPs

*Due to the complexity covering conflict and fragility, we would like to see clear indicators to measure progress, especially in terms of displacement, which can be included into local strategies." (Representative of the Government of Somalia)*

As outlined before, limitations pertaining to data pose a key constraint to monitoring progress on

SDGs. Enforcing partnerships through existing and new regional and international frameworks on data monitoring and evaluation would support national efforts and the activities undertaken by United Nations agencies to monitor and produce data on SDGs. Integrating IDPs into development strategies has been one of the concerns of representatives of Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Sudan, and Yemen. A key limitation is that data on SDGs do not include data on IDPs. Partnerships with international organizations could support Member States in monitoring adequate data on IDPs.

#### Box 17. Promising developments: Inter-agency Standing Committee on Sustainable Development Goals and a longitudinal study by the International Organization for Migration in Iraq<sup>a</sup>

The global indicator framework developed in 2015 by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) seeks to track progress toward the 2030 Agenda and achievement of the SDGs. Such indicators are applicable to different populations, including IDPs; in particular, twelve indicators were submitted to the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2019 by IAEG-SDGs as priorities on forced displacement, and they provide both a strong starting point for engaging in this area of work and enhanced engagement in IDP policy and response. The rationale behind it highlights that IDP-related progress should be measured using at least, if not only, the same standards and criteria of other population groups. Despite the limitations of these data, which are often not harmonized, complete and of varying quality standards, and given the challenging reality in which data on internal displacement are often collected, the use of these data is fundamental and can help develop sound policies and large-scale development interventions.

Since 2016, the International Organization for Migration and Georgetown University have jointly collected data on IDPs in Iraq as part of the Longitudinal Study on Access to Durable Solutions among IDPs in Iraq. Data collected under this study aim to measure progress towards durable solutions as outlined in the IASC. The Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons is based on eight criteria as measures to determine to which extent durable solutions have been achieved and include the following: safety and security; standard of living; livelihood and employment; housing, land and property; personal and other documentation; family separation and reunification; participation in public affairs; and access to justice.

The study has tracked and repeatedly interviewed 4,000 Iraqi households displaced between January 2014 and December 2015 by ISIL. The findings of the study can be extrapolated to a specific group of Iraqis, namely, non-camp IDP households originating from the governorates of Anbar, Babylon, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Nine-wa, and Salah al-Din, who were displaced to one out of the four governorates covered by the study, namely, Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk, and Sulaymaniyah. The study began in January 2016 and has so far carried out five rounds of data collection. Using mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative), the study follows the families as they return to their homes, relocate elsewhere inside Iraq or beyond, or integrate into the places where they found safety initially. The study offers insight into the challenges and survival strategies of Iraqi internally displaced families and how they navigate their displacement and take steps to progress towards durable or quasi-durable solutions.

As the only panel study on IDPs, it offers a wealth of data and information on the criteria for measuring durable solutions, based on the IASC Framework, that can be used to measure different indicator and the situation of the population of reference.

The table below matches the questions in the study against SDG and IASC indicators. The study covers a large spectrum of data and variables following the eight aspects mentioned above and includes additional documentation that can measure SDGs on poverty, hunger, health, inequality, gender, and just, peace and inclusive institutions.

**Matching questions of the Longitudinal Study on Access to Durable Solutions among IDPs in Iraq with selected SDG indicators and related IASC indicators**

SDG indicators	IASC indicator	Question in the Longitudinal Study on Access to Durable Solutions among IDPs in Iraq
<b>Indicators classified as priority SDG indicators</b>		
<b>1.4.2</b>	2.3.3	Before January 2014, how were you farming/herding? And now?
<b>1.4.2 and 5.a.1 (a and b)</b>	2.3.3 and 3.3.1	Before January 2014, did you own any agricultural land?
<b>3.8.1 and 16.9.1</b>	2.1.6 and 5.3.2	Did you or any member of your family ever face exclusion from services or limitation in accessing [services listed below] ... since you were displaced? (option Service 3- access to health services)
<b>8.3.1 and 8.5.2</b>	3.1.3 and 3.1.11	What is your family's most important source of money?
<b>10.3.1, 16.b.1 and 16.1.4</b>	A.3.1 and 1.1.4	Do you and your family feel safe in this community?
<b>11.1.1</b>	2.3.9	Did you own property in the place where you were living when you were forced to flee?
<b>16.1.4</b>	1.1.4	What is the main factor that makes you feel safe in this community?
<b>16.1.4</b>	1.1.4	Can your family move freely in this community?
<b>16.1.4 and 16.1.3</b>	1.1.4 and 1.2.1	If not, who or what restricts your freedom of movement?
<b>Indicators that are not classified as Priority SDGs Indicators</b>		
<b>1.4.1 and 2.1.2</b>	2.1.1 and 2.2.1	Has your family been able to provide for your basic needs in the past three months (understood as housing, health care, education, food and water)?
<b>3.8.1</b>	2.1.6	In the past 12 months, has any member of the household required health care?
<b>3.8.1</b>	2.1.6	In the past 12 months, have you had problems in accessing needed health care, rent, utilities, food, transportation, schooling or schooling related expenses?
<b>16.7.2</b>	7.14	In the past 12 months, have you volunteered in any activity organized by any civic group, cultural club, or social or professional association?
<b>16.7.2</b>	7.14	In the past 12 months, have you attended meetings of any civic group, cultural club, or social or professional association?

<sup>a</sup>Extracted from Findings of IOM DTM and Georgetown Longitudinal Study.



#### 4. Supporting the establishment of a multi-stakeholder approach to enhance data on SDGs and advance towards the 2030 Agenda through coordinated efforts

*“To ensure a more inclusive implementation of the SDGs using a people-centered participatory approach, there needs to be active participation of CSOs, academia, experts, and research institutions to raise awareness and disseminate more information on SDGs.” (United Nations representative in Libya)*

*“We cannot see a clear lead on SDGs... Each agency is conducting assessments separately. There is a need for a fully functional and resourced central body that collects data and feeds it into an overall indicators framework.” (United Nations representative in Yemen)*

Adopting a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach will support coordinated efforts on SDGs. To bridge the gap between humanitarian, development and peace projects, enforcing a multi-stakeholder platform will support in coordinating efforts, funding channels and sharing information and will address duplication or gaps towards the most vulnerable communities. As highlighted in chapter 3, the 3RP represents a platform that includes all local actors concerned, coordinates the various efforts towards achieving SDGs and, as such, provides a positive example of working towards enhancing resilience. The platform could also help bridge coordination gaps between central and local entities. Such a coordination platform involving humanitarian and development actors across the spectrum of governmental, United Nations and civil society entities could support Member States to coordinate efforts, enforce data collection and identify SDG priorities. Civil society and academia have often been consulted during the process of VNRs and national plans; yet, it is imperative to engage with local actors in monitoring and implementation of SDGs.

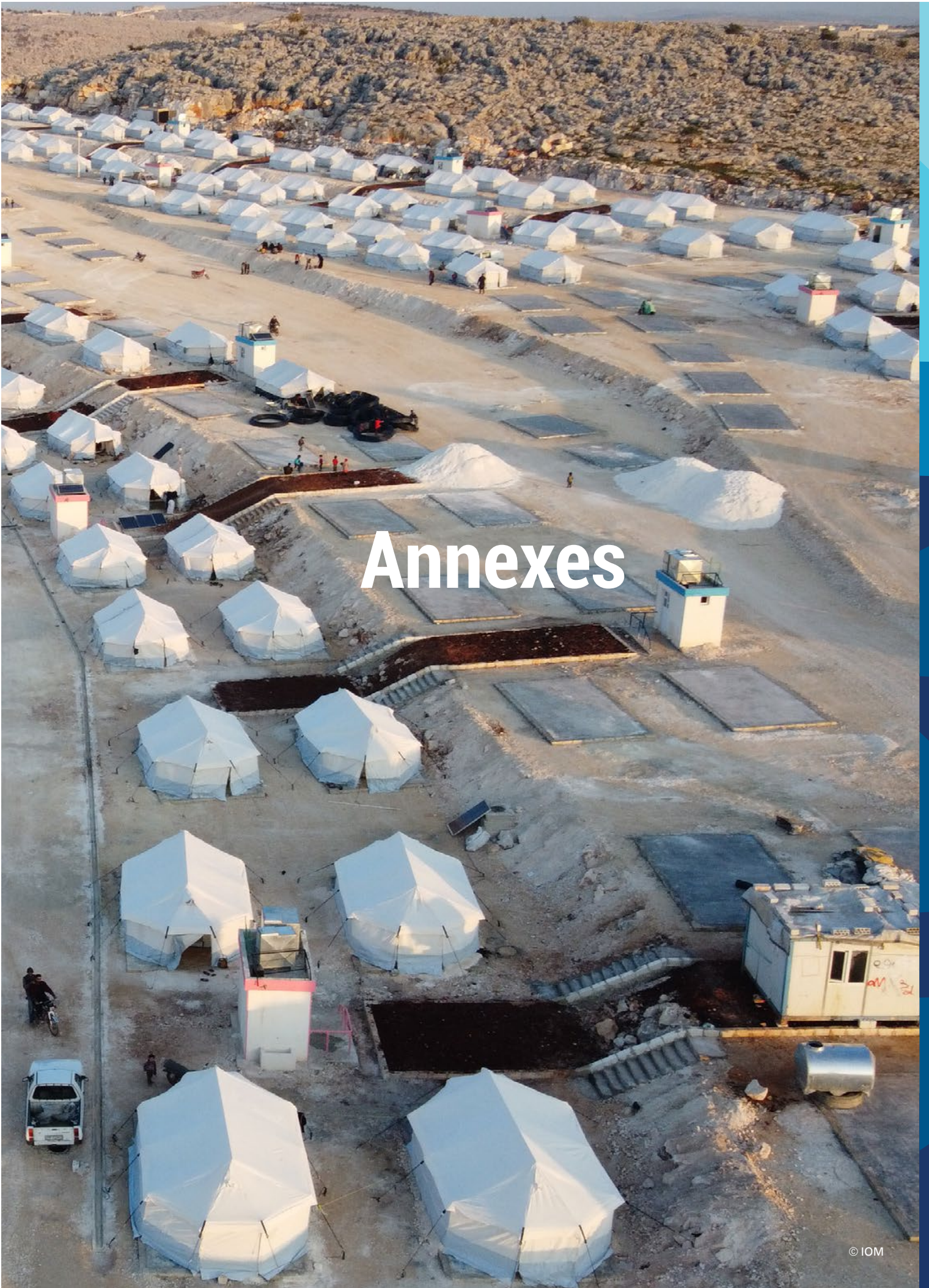
## F. Conclusion

While achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda requires coordinated efforts and close synergies between the various actors to enhance coherence across the triple nexus, it has been evident throughout this report that conflict-affected countries face systematic challenges regarding the advancement of SDGs in national frameworks. Fostering strong partnerships at the national, regional and international levels will support countries of concern in enhancing peace and strengthening institutions in line with SDG 16. The 2030 Agenda and its SDGs can only be achieved by supporting and capacitating countries of concern to strengthen institutions and actors in monitoring data on SDG indicators, as outlined in the targets of SDG 17. Enhancing ownership of the 2030 Agenda and building capacities to implement effective policies and programs at the national level requires close coordination within national entities, and between

those entities and the international, regional and local communities. To work towards progress on SDGs and achieve collective outcomes, it is evident that an inclusive, participatory approach is crucial both at the level of stakeholders and local communities. Engaging with relevant local actors including, but not limited to, academia, civil society and the local communities will ensure that national efforts to advance progress on SDGs reach those most vulnerable and at risk of being left behind. As inputs by country representatives made evident, Governments in, or affected by, conflict are keen to work in close coordination with regional and international communities on the creation of sustainable approaches towards peace and development. Therefore, regional and international communities have a key role to play in supporting countries of concern in their trajectories towards long-term peace and development.







# Annexes

## ANNEX A

### Core Group and Regional Task Force Members

#### A. Core Group

1. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Middle East and North Africa Regional Office
2. League of Arab States, Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation (DSDIC)
3. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)
4. United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS)

#### B. Regional Task Force

##### UN Agencies:

1. Food and Agriculture Program (FAO)
2. United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
3. United Nations Department of Political Affairs (UNDPPA)
4. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
5. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
6. UN Habitat
7. UNWOMEN
8. World Health Organization (WHO)
9. World Food Program (WFP)

##### Civil Society/Non-Profit Organizations:

1. Arab Water Council
2. Arab Women's Organization
3. Maat Foundation for Peace, Development and Human Rights

## ANNEX B

### Research Tools

#### A. Questionnaire Guidance Note

- The survey is part of data collection used for the regional report. The report aims to adopt mixed research methods. This survey serves as a tool for a stocktaking exercise intending to form the base of the regional report. It will be followed by in-depth e-consultations with member states of the League of Arab States (LAS), UN Resident Coordination Offices (RCOs) and Members of the RTF of the regional report.
- Questions in this survey are targeted to LAS appointed government focal point of SDGs, UN RCOs, and RTF members. According to the guiding notes for each section, some questions are targeting certain group. Questions covering statistics are targeting national statistical focal points in the respective countries. Please read the guidance note for each section to determine the relevant group.

#### KEY INFORMATION

NAME of your organization / department

ENTITY (Government / UN agencies / NGOs)

CONTACT INFORMATION (email)

Coordination Mechanisms and Partnerships



**Note:** These questions are for representatives of Member States, Resident Coordination Offices and the Regional Task Force.

1. Are there any active Coordination Mechanism/s regarding the overall SDG attainment in your respective country?
  - If Yes, please proceed to the next question.
  - If No, please proceed to question 5.
2. Please provide details of the coordination mechanism/s (if more than one, kindly fill the below details for each mechanism):

<b>Name of coordination mechanism:</b>	
<b>Level (national, regional)</b>	
<b>Date of establishment:</b>	
<b>Main objective:</b>	
<b>Target group/s (e.g. IDPs, women, or all):</b>	
<b>Leading entity/entities:</b>	

3. Are there Terms of Reference for the coordination mechanism/s outline above (if yes, can you please share/attach a copy)?
4. Is data collected to monitor progress on SDGs attainment through this coordination mechanism?
  - If yes, please proceed to questions 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3
  - If No, please identify up to 3 key reasons why data is not being collected and proceed to question 5
    - 4.1 Which entity is leading data collection?
    - 4.2 What methods are used to collect data?
    - 4.3 How often is data collected (e.g. Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Yearly, Other)
5. What are the 3 key challenges in establishing a coordination mechanism for the overall attainment of SDGs in your country?
6. How have planned or identified coordination mechanisms been affected by regional or national conflict situation in your respective country (or neighboring country)?
7. Which types of partnership have been most affected by conflict situation?
8. Can you identify key stakeholders working towards the objectives of inclusion and Leaving No One Behind?
9. Did any of your coordination mechanisms or stakeholder networks include the private sector and/or academia? If Yes, please provide more details. If no, please explain why not?

#### SDG attainment an Arab region affected by fragility, conflict, and crisis

**Note:** These questions are only for representatives of Member States, particularly national officers concerned with national statistics and data management.

Preferably, the data must be as disaggregated as possible by gender, socio-economic status, legal status and or geography. Particularly important is the data that covers socio-economic conditions of refugees and IDPs. In addition to the data detailed in the table, any access to information contained in datasets on the latest household surveys, labor panels or similar census data could be very valuable.

## DATA REQUIRED

SDG	INDICATOR	Additional and /alternative data Proxies
	<p>1.a.1 Proportion of domestically generated resources allocated by the government directly to poverty reduction programs.</p> <p>1.a.2 Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection)</p> <p>1.1.1 Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)</p> <p>1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age</p> <p>1.2.2 Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions</p> <p>1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable</p> <p>1.4.1 Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services</p> <p>1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognized documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure</p>	<p>Any other data related to poverty and income disaggregated by gender, age group, geography or legal status, if possible.</p> <p>Data on people in need of humanitarian aid by kind of aid needed can also be helpful</p>
<b>Objective 2</b>	<p>2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment</p> <p>2.1.2 Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)</p> <p>2.2.1 Prevalence of stunting (height for age &lt;-2 standard deviation from the median of the World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age</p>	<p>Any other data related to hunger and undernourishment disaggregated by gender, age group, geography or legal status, if possible.</p>
<b>Objective 3</b>	<p>3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio</p> <p>3.1.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel</p> <p>3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate</p> <p>3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate</p> <p>3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group</p> <p>3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services (defined as the average coverage of essential services based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and service capacity and access, among the general and the most disadvantaged population)</p> <p>3.8.2 Proportion of population with large household expenditures on health as a share of total household expenditure or income</p> <p>3.9.2 Mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene (exposure to unsafe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) services)</p>	<p>Any other data related to health and well-being disaggregated by gender, age group, geography or legal status, if possible.</p>
<b>Objective 4</b>	<p>4.2.1 Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex</p> <p>4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex</p> <p>4.6.1 Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex</p>	<p>Any other data related to access to education disaggregated by gender, age group, geography or legal status, if possible</p>
<b>Objective 5</b>	<p>5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age</p> <p>5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence</p> <p>5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18</p> <p>5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age</p>	<p>Any other data related to gender violence disaggregated by age group, geography or legal status, if possible</p>
<b>Objective 6</b>	<p>6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services</p> <p>6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water</p>	<p>Any other data related to access to water and sanitation disaggregated by gender, age group, geography or legal status, if possible</p>



<p><b>Objective 8</b></p>	<p>8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita                  8.3.1 Proportion of informal employment in nonagriculture employment, by sex                  8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities                  8.8.1 Frequency rates of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries, by sex and migrant status</p>	<p>Any other data related to economic growth and the labor market disaggregated by gender, age group, geography or legal status, if possible</p>
<p><b>Objective 10</b></p>	<p>10.1.1 Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population                  10.2.1 Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by sex, age and persons with disabilities</p>	<p>Any other data related to inequality disaggregated by gender, age group, geography or legal status, if possible. Also, data on the socio-economic structure of displaced population (refugees and IDPs)</p>
<p><b>Objective 11</b></p>	<p>11.1.1 Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing                  11.7.2 Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months</p>	<p>Any other data related to housing and human settlements disaggregated by gender, age group, geography or legal status, if possible</p>
<p><b>Objective 16</b></p>	<p>16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age                  16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause                  16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months                  16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live                  16.2.1 Proportion of children aged 1–17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month                  16.2.2 Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation                  16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18                  16.3.1 Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms                  16.3.2 Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population                  16.4.1 Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows (in current United States dollars)                  16.4.2 Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments                  16.5.1 Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months                  16.5.2 Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months                  16.6.1 Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget, by sector (or by budget codes or similar)                  16.6.2 Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services                  16.7.1 Proportions of positions in national and local institutions, including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups                  16.7.2 Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group                  16.8.1 Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations                  16.9.1 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age</p>	<p>Any other data that serves to analyse actual levels and patterns of specific types of crime, human rights violations/abuses and perceptions of safety; Quality of law enforcement and criminal justice institutions                  Institutional effectiveness for development, prevention and managing risks.</p>

**Note:** These questions are for representatives of Member States, Resident Coordination Offices and the Regional Task Force.

## ASSESSING CONFLICT

1. Has the country conducted a risk or fragility assessment? What are the results in terms of: Economic, Environmental, Political, Security and Safety and Societal dimensions?
2. How does the country ensure that its national development strategies take into consideration the risks of conflict, crisis, or fragility?
3. How has the country tailored its development strategies to mitigate/address such risks?

## 2030 AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

1. Which SDGs are considered priorities to enhance stability and sustainable peace in your respective country? How were they prioritized?
2. Has the country conducted a gap analysis of the SDGs and its national frameworks?
  - If yes, what are the tools adopted?
  - If no, what were the reasons?
3. What actions have been undertaken by sub-national and local government to implement the SDGs and integrate them into legislation, policies, plans and programs?
4. Are there any specific efforts underway to build and sustain peace through sustainable development and through the SDG lens? If yes, please elaborate.
5. What are the main challenges and difficulties that the country faces in implementing the SDGs?
6. To what extent can the implementation of the SDGs be advanced through existing plans and strategies? What should be done to ensure collective outcomes?

## CONCLUDING REMARKS/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please identify what key/additional points the Regional Report on the Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Conflict-affected Countries in the Arab Region should highlight or take into consideration.



## B. E-consultations Questionnaire: May 2020

### Introduction and objective:

The Regional Report is about providing an evidence-based, inclusive and operational Report on the impact of conflicts in the region. Through its four chapters, the Report aims at the following: a). Providing a comprehensive analysis to identify the systematic challenges faced by member states and their impact on SDGs attainment; b). Identifying the existing coordination mechanisms and partnerships aiming at SDGs attainment and Leaving No One Behind<sup>1</sup>, especially in the context of displaced populations; c). Offering an exhaustive repository of existing frameworks to develop and strengthen potential gaps; d). Proposing prioritization of critical SDG targets and indicators that can result in the most impactful and sustainable gains for people and communities and in accordance with national commitments and priorities; and e). Providing a set of policy recommendations within the context and transformation from conflict to recovery and peace through coordinated multi-stakeholder partnerships and coordination mechanisms.

In order to achieve this, the Report is concerned with an inclusive approach in terms of stakeholders involved (including member states, UN agencies, private sector and civil society). The Report adopts a mixture of data collection methods including secondary and primary research combining quantitative and qualitative data as follows: **Desk Review** covering relevant reports and documents on SDGs attainment and conflict-affected countries with a focus on the regional dimension; **Stocktaking exercise and survey** to map existing relevant global, regional and national stakeholders and coordination mechanisms to complement earlier and existing coordination mechanisms (completed in February); and **E-consultations** collecting in-depth data on SDGs attainment and to delve into challenges of setting up multi-stakeholder network and coordination mechanisms to ensure the recommendations of the Report are fit to context. **The E-Consultation** will look mostly into the questions related to Chapter 2, 3 and 4 of the Regional Report.

#### Participating Entities:

- E-consultations will be conducted by representatives of League of Arab States (LAS), UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) MENA Regional Office.
- E-consultations will be conducted with LAS SDG Focal Points of member states and UN Resident Coordination Offices as well as UN agencies and NGOs at national and regional levels.

#### E-consultations procedures:

- Each e-consultation is expected to take an hour through skype or blue jeans, details to be provided in advance.
- Recording or note-taking will take place during e-consultations based on the consent and preference of participating representatives. Notes will be shared with participating representatives after the consultation for review and final inputs.
- Information collected through e-consultations will serve in the aggregate analytical review on the regional level and concerning countries affected by conflict. The degree of anonymity and confidentiality of participating representatives will be discussed during the consultation based on the preference of the responding representative.

### E-Consultations Guide

Theme	Questions
<b>SDGs Attainment and Monitoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have SDG goals been prioritized? Which SDGs are off-track (or more negatively affected by conflict)? Why?</li> </ul>
<b>Country Specific Questions Coordination Mechanisms and Partnerships on SDGs Iraq</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the mandate and role of the <b>National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCS)</b>? Which entities represent the committee?</li> <li>• How does coordination take place between <b>local SDG committees</b> across each Governorate? What are the key challenges in maintaining coordination across governorates?</li> <li>• What tools have been used to monitor data for the first Voluntary National Review (VNR) issued by the Government of Iraq in 2019? What are the current national efforts concerning an upcoming VNR?</li> <li>• How have SDGs been included in national strategies?</li> <li>• How has the National Development Plan (NDP 2018-2022) been crafted? Which groups does the plan target? What are the challenges or off-track areas (if any) in achieving the NDP?</li> <li>• What other strategies have been developed (Note: Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) Reconstruction and Development Framework (2018-2027))?</li> </ul>
<b>Jordan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the mandate and role of the <b>National High Committee for SDGs</b> attainment? Which entities represent the committee?</li> <li>• What tools have been used by the <b>statistical department</b> of the committee to monitor data on SDGs for previous and upcoming Voluntary National Review (VNR)? What are the current efforts for the upcoming VNR? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How have SDGs been included in national strategies?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Leave no one behind (LNOB) is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It represents the unequivocal commitment of all UN Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole. Source: United Nations Sustainable Working Group.



<p><b>Lebanon</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the mandate and role of the <b>National Higher Committee on Sustainable Development</b>? Which entities represent the committee?</li> <li>• What tools have been used by the <b>statistical taskforce</b> of the committee to monitor data on SDGs for previous Voluntary National Review (VNR)? What are the current national efforts concerning an upcoming VNR?</li> <li>• How have SDGs been included in national plans?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Libya</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the mandate and role of each of: <b>National Committee for SDGs</b> and the Joint Technical Committee? Which entities represent each committee?</li> <li>• What tools have been used to monitor data on SDGs? Which entity is mandated to collect and monitor data?</li> <li>• What are the current national efforts for the upcoming <b>first Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2020</b>? What are the challenges (if any)?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Somalia</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the mandate and role of <b>UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework</b>? Which entities are part of this framework?</li> <li>• What tools have been used to monitor data on SDGs?</li> <li>• What are the current national efforts concerning a <b>Voluntary National Review (VNR)</b>?</li> <li>• What are the current efforts by the government to include SDGs into national development plans? Which areas does the <b>National Development Plan (NDP) for 2020-2024</b> prioritize?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sudan</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the mandate and role of National Program for Sustainable Development (NPSD) 2016 -2030 and the inter-ministerial committee for SDGs in 2017? Which entities represent each committee?</li> <li>• What tools have been used by Central Bureau of Statistics (under the Council of Ministers) for previous Voluntary National Review (VNR)? How has Data gap analysis been conducted in 2017 to inform baselines and targets for key sectors' indicators?</li> <li>• What are the current national efforts concerning an upcoming VNR? What are the challenges?</li> <li>• 5. What are the current efforts by the government to include SDGs into national development plans?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Yemen</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which entity/ies are mandated to monitor SDG attainment?</li> <li>• What tools have been used to monitor data on SDGs?</li> <li>• What are the current national efforts concerning a Voluntary National Review (VNR)? What are the challenges (if any)?</li> <li>• What are the current efforts by the government to include SDGs into national development plans? Following the Transitional Plan for Stabilization and Development (2012-2014)?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coordination Mechanisms and Partnerships on SDGs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the existing coordination mechanisms on SDGs (Note: including on <b>displaced populations and returnees</b>)?</li> <li>• What do you see as the main challenges (if any) in setting or maintaining coordination mechanisms on SDGs? Have mechanisms (between entities and within departments) been affected by conflict situations?</li> <li>• Who are the key stakeholders involved in data monitoring and implementation towards SDGs (note: <b>Iraqi Tripartite Vision 2030</b> key example of partnerships with UN, Civil Society, academia, private sector)?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Building Peace and Achieving SDGs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How could efforts towards SDGs attainment be more inclusive using a people-centered approach?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Addressing gaps and enhancing Opportunities and good practices</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How could coordination on SDGs between entities and within agencies be enhanced?</li> <li>• How could global initiatives be (better) linked to national efforts to support development plans and reforms, considering the specific context?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Building Peace and Achieving SDGs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What elements and lessons learnt have been / should be taken into consideration to craft strategies in your respective country?</li> <li>• What good practices and lessons learnt concerning SDG partnerships in your respective country?</li> </ul>



## ANNEX C

### Participating Entities in Data Collection

#### A. List of categories of participating entities in the stocktaking survey:

Country/Regional level	Representative of member state	RCO	RTF		Total
			UN Agencies	CSOs	
Regional	NA	NA	1	1	2
Iraq	1	1	3		5
Jordan	1	1	4		6
Lebanon	1	1	3		5
Libya	1		1		2
Somalia			2	1	3
Sudan			3	1	4
Syria			1		1
Yemen	1		3		4
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>32</b>

#### B. List of categories of participating entities in the E-consultations:

Country/Regional level	Representative of member state	RCO	UN Agencies	Other	Total
				CSOs Experts/Academia	
Iraq	1	1	2	3	7
Jordan	-	1			2
Lebanon	1	1			2
Libya	3	1	3	1	7
Somalia	3	1	4		8
Sudan	2	1			3
Syria	-	-	-	-	-
Yemen	2	-	1		3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>33</b>

#### C. List of E-consultations

Number	Org Consulted	Country
1	Ministry of Planning/LAS Focal Point at the Sustainable Development Committee	The Republic of Iraq
2	Resident Coordination Office (RCO)	
3	United Nations Development Program	
4	NGOs Sustainable Development Network	
5	Um El Yateem for Development Foundation	
6	Food and Agriculture Foundation	
7	Expert from Bahgdad University and representative of the National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCSD)	
8	Phenix Center for Economics & Informatics Studies	The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
9	RCO	
10	The Prime Minister's Office, Presidency of the Council of Ministers/ LAS Focal Point at the Sustainable Development Committee	The Lebanese Republic
11	Resident Coordination Office RCO	

12	The Commission on Sustainable Development, Ministry of Planning/ LAS Focal Point at the Sustainable Development Committee	The State of Libya
13	International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Planning	
14	Ministry of State for Displacement Affairs	
15	RCO	
16	UNDP	
17	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	
18	International Organization for Migration (IOM)	
19	Focus Group Discussion with local actors and experts in Fezzan	The Federal Republic of Somalia
20	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation/Representative of LAS Focal Point at the Sustainable Development Committee	
21	Durable Solutions Unit, Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development	
22	National Statistical Bureau	
23	RCO	
24	UNDP	
25	United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	
26	UN Women	The Republic of Sudan
27	IOM	
28	Sustainable Development Unit, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning	
29	Humanitarian Aid Commission	
30	RCO	
31	Ministry of Planning/LAS focal point in the Sustainable Development Committee	
32	Camp Management Unit, Ministry of Planning	
33	IOM	

## ANNEX D

### Definitions of Key Terms

The Core Group developed the following definitions of key terms and concepts used throughout the research project.

a. **Conflict-Affected Countries**

Including countries affected by conflict, countries neighbouring conflict affected countries and countries post-conflict.

b. **Leave No One Behind**

The term is defined by the United Nations Sustainable Working Group as:

[T]he central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It represents the unequivocal commitment of all UN Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

c. **Human Security**

In the human security handbook, the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) defines it as:

[A] multidimensional analytical framework that can assist the United Nations system to assess, develop and implement integrated responses to a broad range of issues that are complex and require the combined inputs of the United Nations system, in partnership with Governments, non-governmental entities and communities.

The Human Security approach is based on a common framework endorsed by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/66/290) on 10 September 2012. It includes the following principles:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Sustainable Working Group, URL <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2016), HUMAN SECURITY HANDBOOK, An integrated approach for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the priority areas of the international community and the United Nations system. URL <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/h2.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



- People-centred: Focusing on the broad range of situations that threaten the survival, livelihood and dignity of people. Based on in-depth, localized, and disaggregated analyses, a focus on human security enables the upstreaming of local perspectives and priorities into national, regional and global policies and plans.
  - Comprehensive: Addressing the root causes of threats that are often complex and interconnected and their impact on people. As a result, the human security lens puts great emphasis on multisectoral/ multi-stakeholder responses to advance integrated and prioritized solutions over the short, medium and long run.
  - Context-specific: Recognizing there is no “one size fits all” in addressing challenges and risks to human conditions, the human security approach emphasizes context-specific variances, including the differing capacities of people including civil society and Governments.
  - Prevention-oriented: Human security goes beyond short-term remedies by enhancing long-term solutions aimed at sustainability and resilience.
  - Protection and empowerment: The application of human security combines efforts to provide public safety, strengthen the rule of law, revitalize the economy, and ensure the delivery of essential services with measures to nurture reconciliation, build resilience and empower people to participate in promoting peace and prosperity for themselves and their communities.
  - These five principles are mutually reinforcing and cannot be implemented as separate objectives. Indeed, it is essential to emphasize that working together in the context of human security involves recognizing the strengths that accrue from true partnerships where different entities combine their strengths to create synergies that can achieve far greater impact in addressing today’s complex and multidimensional challenges.
- d. **The New Way of Working (NWOW), Collective Outcomes and Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus (HDPN)**
- The New Way of Working (NWOW): Calls for collaboration between humanitarian and development actors towards collective outcomes. It is described as an approach of working based on the comparative advantage of various actors within and outside the UN system and towards achieving collective outcomes.<sup>5</sup>
  - Collective Outcomes: As one of the core commitments of the New Way of Working (NWOW), it is defined as:
 

[A] concrete and measurable result that humanitarian, development and other relevant actors want to achieve jointly over a period of 3-5 years to reduce people’s needs, risks and vulnerabilities and increase their resilience.<sup>6</sup>
  - The Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus (HDPN): is based on consensus at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016. It emphasizes the need for the humanitarian, development and peace actors to collaborate effectively and work jointly on analysis and data collection and multi-year planning frameworks. It is concerned with achieving collective outcomes.<sup>7</sup>
- e. **Displacement**
- Internally displaced persons (IDPs): Is defined through Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998 as follows:
 

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.<sup>8</sup>
  - Displacement: IOM defines displacement in terms of both internal and cross-border movement as follows:
 

The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes, or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters.<sup>9</sup>
  - Refugee: is defined by the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol as applying to a person who:
 

[O]wing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> OCHA (2017), The New Way of Working Catalogue, URL [https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/NWOW%20Booklet%20low%20res.002\\_0.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/NWOW%20Booklet%20low%20res.002_0.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> OCHA (2018), Collective Outcomes, Operationalizing the New Way of Working, URL <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2018/Apr/OCHA%20Collective%20Outcomes%20April%202018.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> UNDP, Geneva, Partnerships. URL <https://www.europe.undp.org/content/geneva/en/home/partnerships/humanitarian-and-development-nexus-in-protracted-emergencies.html>

<sup>8</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, URL <https://www.internal-displacement.org/internal-displacement>

<sup>9</sup> IOM Glossary on Migration (2018), URL [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml\\_34\\_glossary.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR Co-vention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, URL <https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>

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## Endnotes

### CHAPTER 1

1. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), 2019. Trends in armed conflict, 1946-2018. Conflict Trends Policy Brief, No. 3. Oslo: Peace Research Institute.
2. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2018. Global Humanitarian Overview 2019.
3. World Bank, 2020. Fragility, Conflict and Violence.
4. Ibid.
5. PRIO, 2019.
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7. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (n.d.). Women's Human Rights and Gender-related Concerns in Situations of Conflict and Instability.
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11. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2016. UNDP Offer on SDG Implementation in Fragile States. New York; SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2016; Samman, Emma and others 2018. SDG Progress: Fragility, Crisis and Leaving No One Behind. London: Overseas Development Institute; and International Rescue Committee (IRC), 2019. Sustainable Development Goals, in Crisis.
12. Ibid.
13. IRC, 2019.
14. These include, for example, the 2015 Arab Sustainable Development Report (ESCWA); the Report of the 2018 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development on Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality in the Arab Region; The Economic Impact of Conflicts and the Refugee Crisis in MENA (IMF); Refugee Crisis in MENA – Meeting the Development Challenges (World Bank); SDG Achievement in Crisis Contexts: Climate Change, Energy and Nature Based Solutions for Conflict Affected Communities in the Arab Region (UNDP); Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies: Ecosystem Resilience for SDG Achievement and Human Security in the Arab Region (UNDP); Energy for Crisis Recovery: Solar Solutions for Crisis-Affected Communities in the Arab Region (UNDP); and Monitoring food security in countries with conflict situations: A Joint FAO/WFP update for the United Nations Security Council.
15. See Annex A for the list of RTF members.
16. No e-consultations were conducted with the Syrian Arab Republic.

Therefore, the State is not included in the analysis of partnership and coordination mechanisms in chapter 4, as this information was gathered primarily through the e-consultation process. In general, the report covers displacement in the Syrian Arab Republic in terms of its impacts on neighbouring countries, including Jordan and Lebanon.

17. The nature of the conflict and the occupation makes the case of the State of Palestine distinct from the countries covered in this report. Since comparisons with other ongoing conflicts in the region are therefore difficult to make, the task force leading the report decided not to include the State of Palestine under its scope. Nonetheless, the report has some references to the humanitarian needs situation of Palestine refugees as part of a wider picture to understand the magnitude of such needs in the Arab region.
18. See Annex B for a list of entities and a copy of the questionnaire.
19. See Annex B for a list of entities and a copy of E-consultations guide.
20. United Nations (n.d.a). High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council at its 2020 session.
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31. UNHCR, 2020a.
32. UNHCR, 2020b. Jordan: UNHCR Operational Update.
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35. IDMC, 2020a.
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  37. According to estimates by the Government of Yemen provided during consultations.
  38. United Nations Development Programme 2019.
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  41. Emirates Diplomatic Academy and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2019. SDG Index and Dashboards 2019: Arab Region; Goll, E., A. Uhl and J. Zwiers, 2019. Sustainable Development in the MENA Region. MENARA Future Notes, No. 20 (March). European Union; ESCWA, 2018a. The Sustainable Development Goals in an Arab Region Affected by Conflict: Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals with Household Survey Microdata (E/ESCWA/ECRI/2017/3). Beirut.
  42. For example, Yemen and Libya had no data for Goal 1 (No Poverty), while Somalia had no data for Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Significantly, the remaining goals for the eight countries noted that challenges, including significant and major challenges, remain.
  43. ESCWA, 2018a.
  44. Findings from e-consultations conducted during June-August 2020 with various stakeholders in seven countries.
  45. VNRs are part of the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As stated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, regular reviews in the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development are to be voluntary, State-led and undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders. VNRs enable the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Source: Handbook for the preparation of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).
  46. United Nations (n.d.b). Voluntary National Reviews.
  47. Imus, P. de, G. Pierre and B. Rother (2017). The Cost of Conflict: Middle East Strife is Exacting a Heavy Toll on Regional economies. Finance and Development.
  48. Ratnayake R. and others, 2008 The Many Victims of War: Indirect Conflict Deaths. In Global Burden of Armed Violence, Geneva Declaration Secretariat, Geneva, pp. 31-48.
  49. United Nations Security Council, 2019a. Protection of civilians in armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/373), 7 May.
  50. UNHCR, 2020a.
  51. LNOB is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. This Operational Guide has been developed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to strengthen the United Nations Development System's support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda's commitment to LNOB at the national level. The Guide provides a step-by-step approach to operationalizing the pledge of member States to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first. See Annex A for a detailed definition.
  52. For example, this was shown in November 2018, when the International Peace Institute (IPI) released an issue brief specific to IDPs to mark the 20-year anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The brief recommended that States with high levels of internal displacement address the needs of IDPs through the inclusion of information on IDPs in their VNRs.
  53. Zeender, G. 2018. The Sustainable Development Goals and IDPs. Forced Migration Review, Issue No. 59 (October).
  54. For example, according to WFP Yemen VAM Bulletin no. 52 (Mar-Apr 2020), the level of poor and borderline food consumption among displaced people is much higher than that of non-displaced people.
  55. IRC, 2019.
  56. Hickel, M. C., 2001. Protection of internally displaced persons affected by armed conflict: concept and challenges. International Review of the Red Cross, vol. 83, No. 843 (September).
  57. UNDP, 1994. Human Development Report.
  58. Commission on Human Security, 2003. Human Security Now 4. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/91BAEEDBA50C6907C1256D19006A9353-chs-security-may03.pdf>.
  59. United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, n.d.a. 2030 Agenda; (n.d.b); and United Nations General Assembly, 2012. Follow-up to paragraph 143 on human security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome. Resolution A/RES/66/290, adopted by the General Assembly on October 25, 2012, 66th Session.

## CHAPTER 2

1. The following links are sample inputs from the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: E/HLPF/2019/3/Add.3, E/ESCWA/RFS/2018/6/Report, E/HLPF/2017/1/Add.5, and E/HLPF/2016/3/Add.5.
2. The pillar of partnerships will be discussed in later chapters.
3. Internationalized armed conflict by the UCDP/PRIO Dataset is defined as an armed conflict between a Government and a non-government party where the Government side, the opposing side, or both sides, receive troop support from other Governments that actively participate in the conflict.
4. Ibid.
5. United Nations Security Council, 2019a.
6. Ibid.
7. ESCWA, 2018b. The Impact of Conflict on Human Development from Childhood to Adulthood Evidence for the Arab Region. Trends and Impacts, Issue No. 5 (E/ESCWA/ECRI/2017/2). Beirut.
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14. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), 2017. Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa. Amman: UNICEF Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa.
15. Ibid.
16. UNICEF, 2013. Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Statistical Overview and Exploration of the Dynamics of Change. New York.
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## CHAPTER 3

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## CHAPTER 4

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