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**SOCIAL AND EDUCATION INDICATORS:
STATUS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL**

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**Social and Education Indicators:
Status at the regional level**

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Social and Education Indicators: Status at the regional level

One of the first steps in assessing the conditions and capabilities of a country for embarking on science, technology and innovation activities - that eventually will catapult them into the information age - is to have a clear understanding of the base of resources and skills it has available. By reviewing the social and educational indicators, governments and policy makers may determine their strengths and weaknesses, priority areas, and from there, dictate the required policy measures for becoming competitive. Furthermore, these indicators may also be used for comparing against neighboring countries and more developed ones, and draw conclusions on the path to follow.

The subset of indicators selected in this report is intended to serve as an example of the possible analysis that may be conducted for various statistics, and in delineating potential policy measures.

Social and Education Indicators

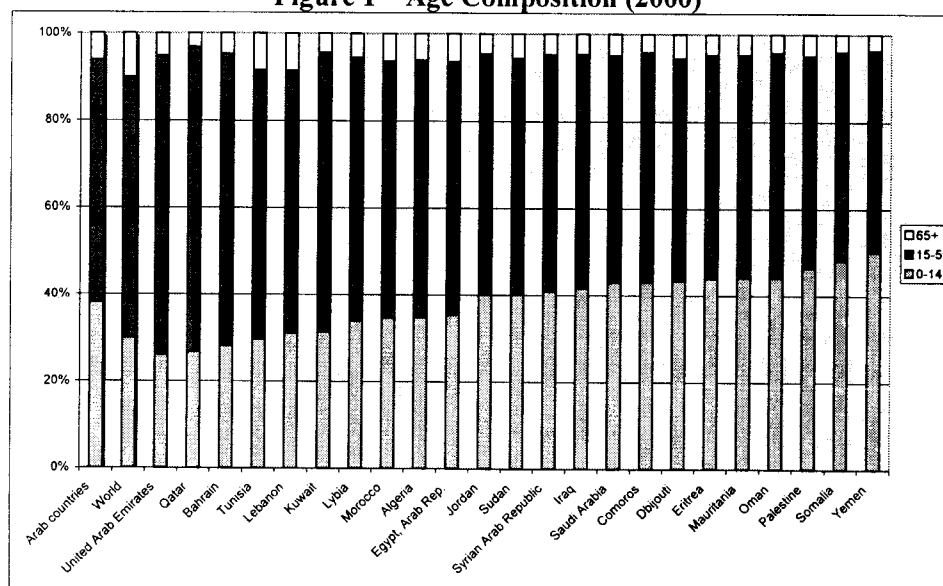
In order to have a clear understanding of the conditions and the degree of preparedness of the Arab region for undertaking innovative activities, it is essential to review the social and educational indicators at the regional and sub regional levels and how they compare.

Population

The population of the Arab countries reached 293.70 million people in 2001, representing 4.78% of the world population. ESCWA countries comprise 171.7 million inhabitants or 58.46% of the Arab population. Almost sixty percent of the region's population – 59.75% – is concentrated in five countries, specifically Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Iraq and Saudi Arabia¹.

The overall population of the Arab region is predominantly young, with around 38 percent located within the age group of 0-14 years of age (larger than the world's average of roughly 30 percent), and only a small percentage (6 percent) in the age group of 60+ years of age². As depicted in Figure 1, the distribution of the population by age group varies between each of the Arab countries. The lower age group (0-14) varies from a low of 26 percent in the United Arab Emirates to a high of 50.1 percent in Yemen; while the bulk of the population is concentrated in the intermediate age group (15-59), ranging from 46.3 percent in Yemen to 70.2 percent in Qatar. The age group of 60+ years shows a more homogeneous situation across the Arab countries, with variation between a low of 3.1 percent of the population in Qatar to a high of 8.5 percent in Lebanon. The condition of the region calls for the attention of policy makers in setting forth the required conditions for channelling more educational efforts towards science, technology and innovation activities for the overwhelmingly young population. This will ultimately place the region in general and the countries in particular in a better position to enter the information age.

Figure 1 – Age Composition (2000)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2001.
 "World Population Prospects: The 2000 Revision", February 2001.

Population growth rates for the Arab countries vary from a low of 1.0 percent for Djibouti to a high of 4.2 percent for Somalia. The general trend in the region is a decrease in the estimated growth rate, as can be seen in Figure 2a. The need to develop a skilled workforce according to a planned strategy for the future becomes

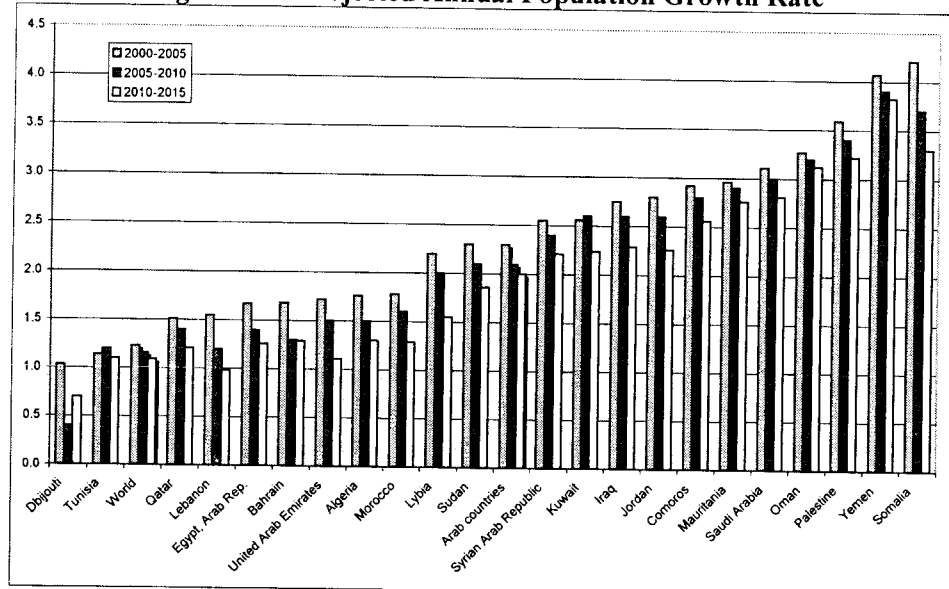
¹ Source: UN data

² Source: Arab Human Development Report 2002

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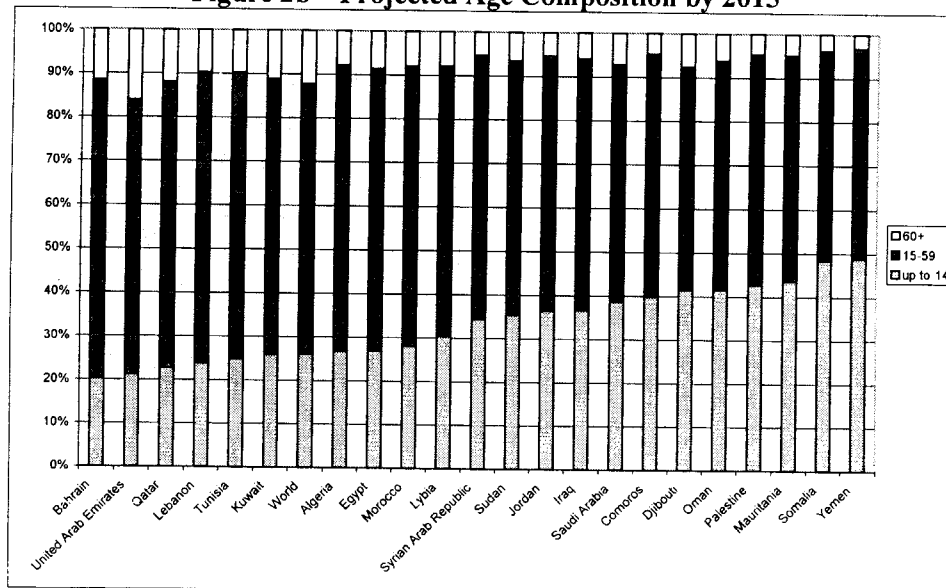
obvious by looking at the estimated age composition by the year 2015, in Figure 2b, which reveals that the majority of the population at that time will be concentrated in the 15-59 age group.

Figure 2a – Projected Annual Population Growth Rate*



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2001.
"World Population Prospects: The 2000 Revision", February 2001.

Figure 2b – Projected Age Composition by 2015*



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2001.
"World Population Prospects: The 2000 Revision", February 2001.

Adult Illiteracy Rates

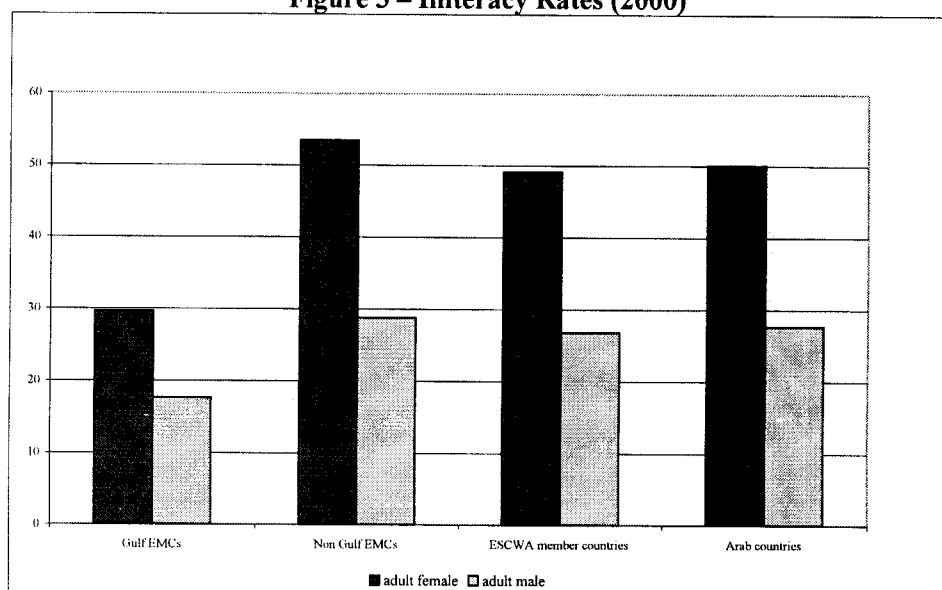
Adult illiteracy rates represent the percentage of people ages 15 and above who cannot, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life. Illiteracy rates have been declining gradually over the recent years in all of the Arab countries. Nevertheless, they have one of the highest adult illiteracy rates of the world. The average illiteracy rate of the adult Arab male stands at 27.68 percent, while the adult

* Medium projections

Arab female rate is 50.06 percent of the population. As can be clearly seen, there is a huge gap between male and female illiteracy rates.

The lowest illiteracy rates are found in Jordan, Lebanon, Bahrain and Libya, with numbers below 10 percent for men, and Jordan, Qatar, and Bahrain with numbers ranging between 16 and 17 percent for women. Rates are as high as 49.25 percent for men in Mauritania and 74.82 percent for women in Yemen. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are the only two countries in the region where the illiteracy rate for women is lower than that of men, contrary to the worldwide trend of higher illiteracy rates for women. Figure 3 shows that illiteracy rates in the ESCWA countries and in Arab countries as whole are very similar, with GCC countries having significantly lower rates. When taking this information into consideration with the estimated age composition for the next 10 to 15 years, it is evident that drastic and urgent measures need to be taken in order to enable the young population participate in, and gain from, the information society.

Figure 3 – Illiteracy Rates (2000)



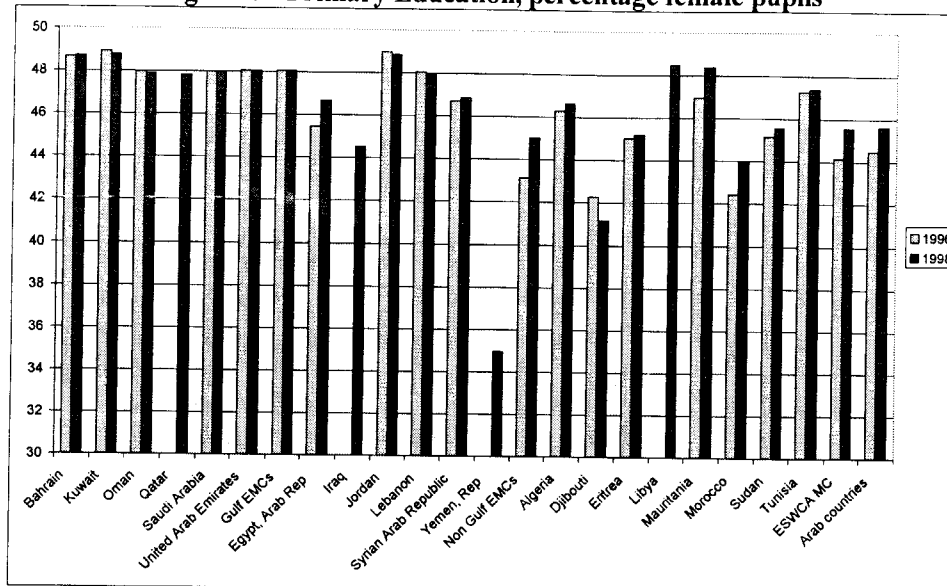
Source: World Development Indicators Database (April 2002), World Bank

Female participation in primary education

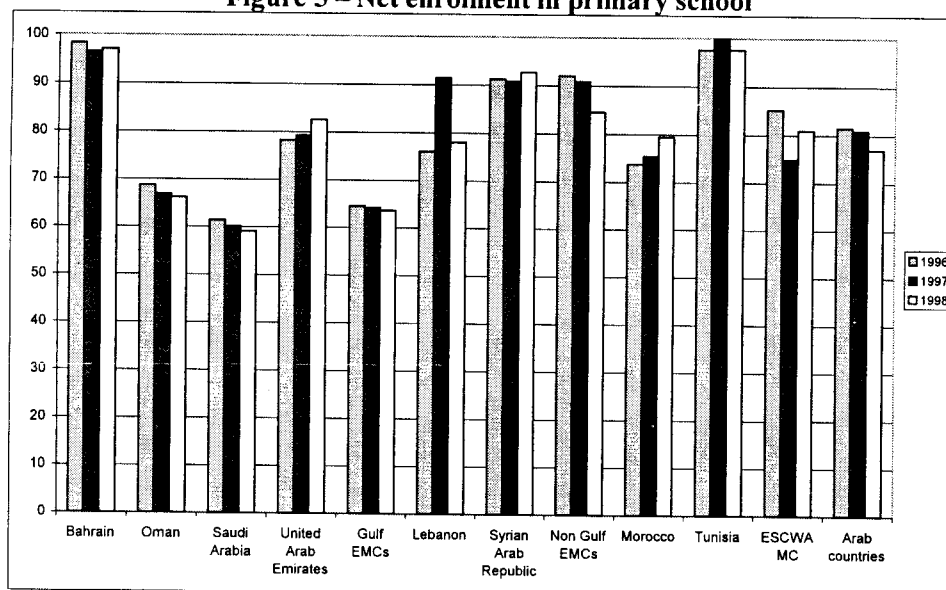
This data represents female pupils as a percentage of total pupils at primary level. Not all countries report data consistently, the latest figures being from 1998. The general trend in the Arab region shows an increase in female participation in primary school enrolment, though these numbers still represent a small percentage of the overall school-age female population. Paradoxically, some of the countries with the highest ratio of female participation in primary education in the Arab region have shown a minor decrease in this enrollment ratio over the years 1995-1998, as is the case in Jordan and Kuwait, whose figures stood at 48.84 and 48.77 percent respectively for the year 1998, though they still ranked in the top two positions in the region. See Figure 4.

Net enrolment in primary school

The net enrollment is the ratio of the number of children of official school age (as defined by the national education system) who are enrolled in school to the population of the corresponding official school age. Data on primary school enrolment in the Arab region shows a very diverse pattern, with countries having a net increase, others having a net decrease, and others that have fluctuated erratically without a definite sense of direction. Tunisia, Bahrain, Algeria and Egypt have consistently shown the highest enrolment ratios of the Arab world, ranging from 92 to 97 percent. See Figure 5.

Figure 4 – Primary Education, percentage female pupils

Source: World Development Indicators Database (April 2002), World Bank

Figure 5 – Net enrolment in primary school

Source: World Development Indicators Database (April 2002), World Bank

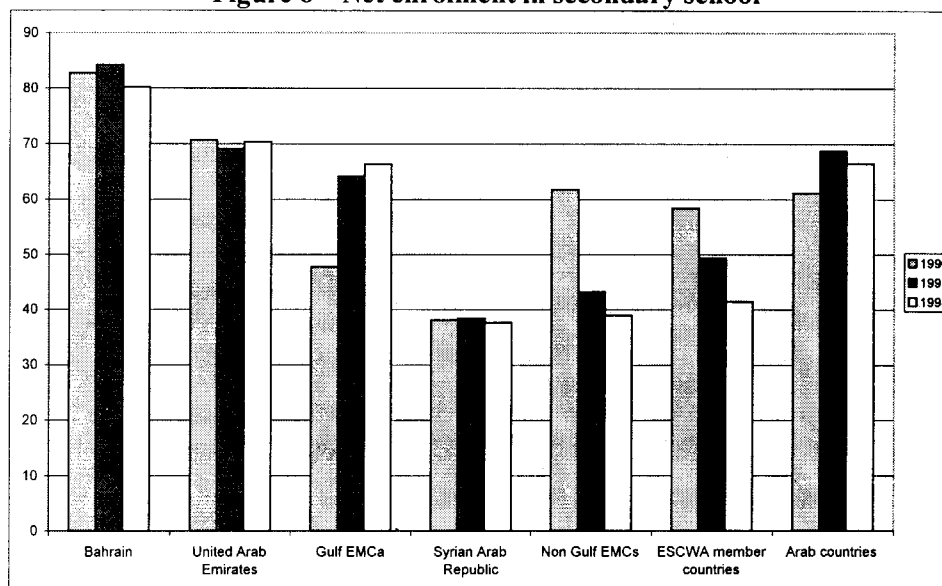
Net enrolment in secondary school

There is a clear downward trend in secondary school enrolment when compared to the primary school enrolment. Bahrain has the highest ratio with 80 percent, whereas Lebanon comes in second with 75.6 percent, and reveals the smallest difference between primary and secondary enrollment rates (down from 77.9 percent). See Figure 6.

Female participation in secondary education

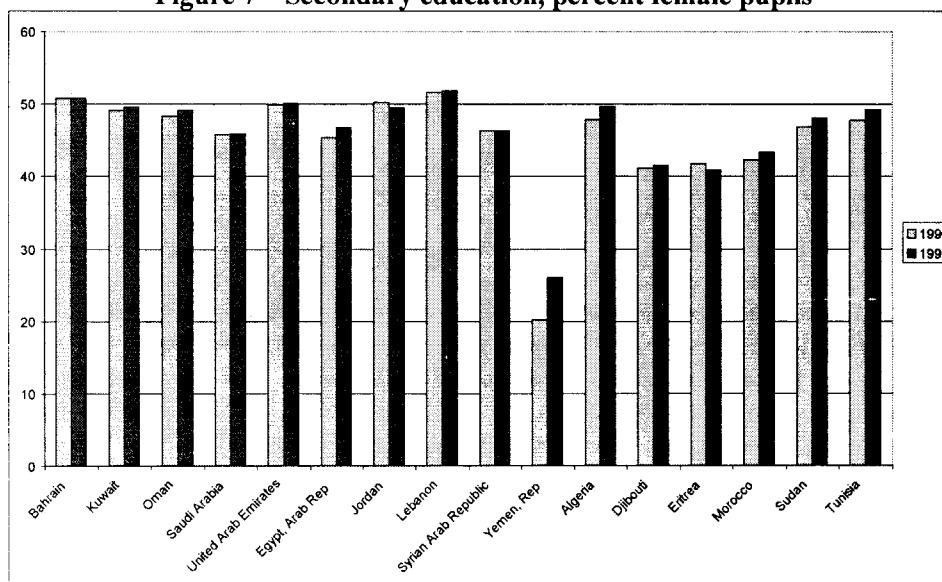
In contrast to the drop in net enrolment in secondary education, female participation in this area has increased in the majority of the region's countries, and in some cases surpassed male participation rates, as is the case in Qatar and Lebanon with 56.44 and 51.86 percent female enrollment respectively. This may indicate that decreasing male participation rates constitute the main cause of the decline in secondary education enrolment. The general trend in the region shows a decline in female participation in secondary education, similar to the world trend. However, the ESCWA countries present a contradicting situation, with 8 out of the 11 data reporting countries revealing an upward trend in female enrolment, with rates in Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen on the decline. See Figure 7.

Figure 6 – Net enrolment in secondary school



Source: World Development Indicators Database (April 2002), World Bank

Figure 7 – Secondary education, percent female pupils

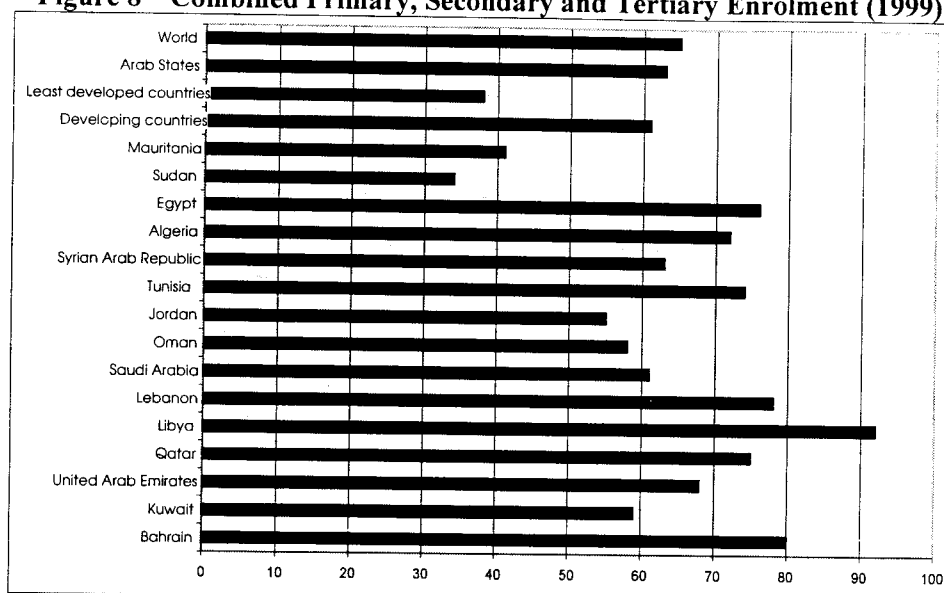


Source: World Development Indicators Database (April 2002), World Bank

Combined Primary, Secondary, Tertiary Education Enrolment Ratio (%)

The Arab states' enrolment ratio in the three levels of education stands at 63 percent, slightly lower than the 65 percent world's enrolment ratio. Libya's case is worthy of note, leading the Arab countries with an outstanding 92 percent enrolment ratio, followed by four ESCWA countries (two of which are GCC) occupying the next four places. See Figure 8.

Figure 8 – Combined Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Enrolment (1999)



Source: HDR 2001

Public education expenditure, as percentage of GDP

Data on public education expenditure is not consistently available in all of the Arab countries, nor is it calculated in a standardized manner. Nevertheless, expenditure as a percentage of GDP varies between a low of 1.4 percent for Sudan and a high of 7.9 and 7.7 for Jordan and Tunisia respectively. There is a high variation among GCC countries, with the United Arab Emirates spending 1.7 percent and Saudi Arabia 7.5 percent. Average public expenditure on education in the Arab countries is 5.2 percent, which is similar to that of the more developed countries and of the countries in transition (5.1 and 5.2 percent respectively). See Figure 9.

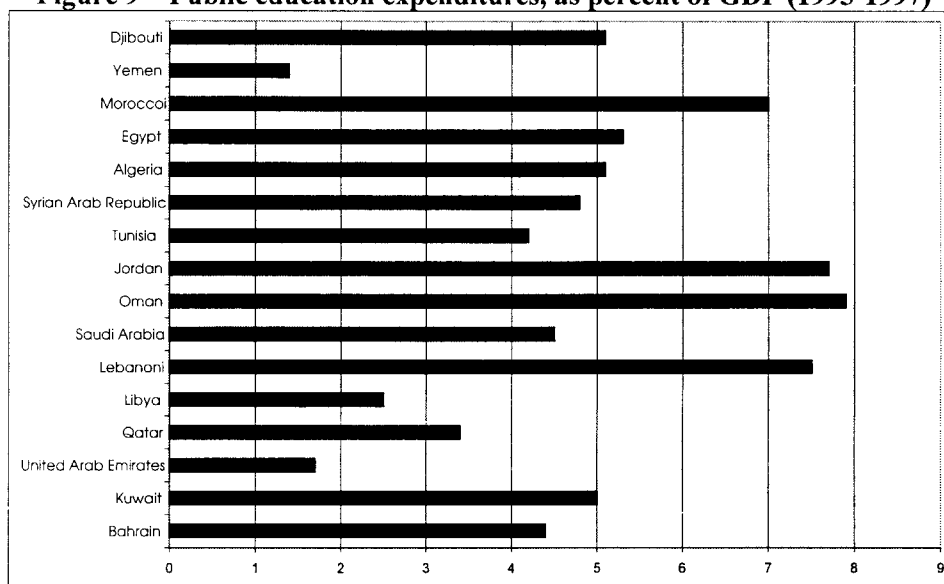
Unemployment

Data on unemployment in the Arab region is very unreliable in general. Data on this topic is only available for 15 of the Arab countries, and the latest year of availability of the data varies. This shows the need for countries to dedicate efforts to standardizing the collection of data in a timely fashion. With this in mind, it can be seen that the highest rate of unemployment is in Algeria, with a 33.9 percent overall unemployment rate, a 33.9 percent rate for men, and a 29.7 percent rate for women. It is followed by Morocco with a 22 percent overall unemployment rate, and with a higher female unemployment rate than that of males (27.6 versus 20.3). It is worth mentioning that Oman the highest rate of female unemployment, at 37 percent of the female population. The lowest overall unemployment rate is evidently in Kuwait with a 0.7 percent unemployment rate for females, and a 0.8 percent rate for males. See Figure 10. These unemployment statistics highlight areas where efforts could be concentrated on the "re-education" of workers and building of a skilled workforce that could be used for powering innovation activities.

Gross National Income

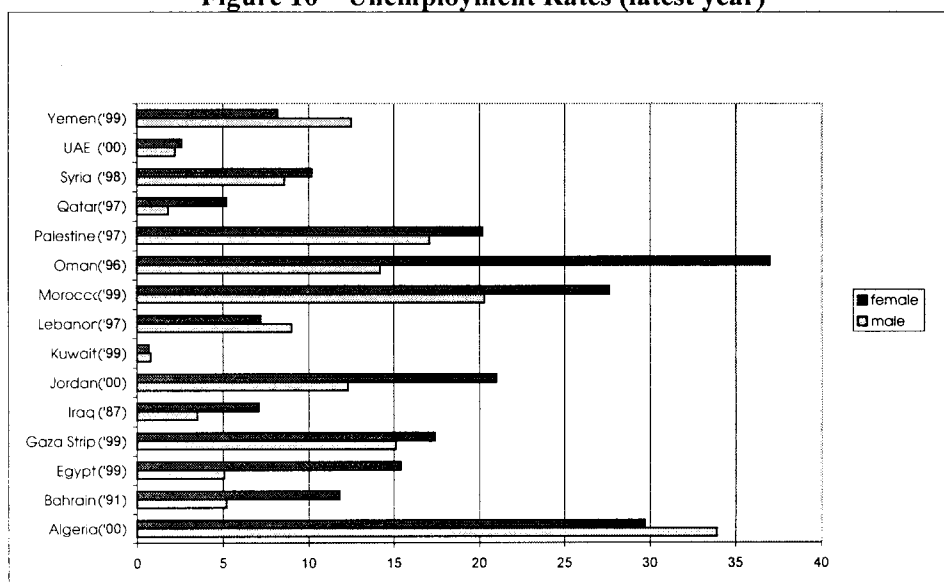
The Gross National Income (GNI) per capita in the Arab region is characterized by inconsistent changes over the time. Taking the average of all Arab countries into consideration, it can be observed that there was a continued growth in GNP until the year 1999, when oil prices collapsed. GNI began to grow again but it has not reached the levels it once did in 1998. The same analysis can be applied to all ESCWA member countries, particularly the GCC countries, which depend highly on their oil exports. The exceptions to this behavioral pattern are the non-GCC ESCWA countries that have experienced a steady and continuous growth over the same period due to their more diversified economies. The magnitude of the GNI varies widely among the Arab countries; GCC countries have the highest GNI per capita ranging between 8,000 and 10,000 US\$; whereas the non-GCC ESCWA countries' GNI varies between 1,200 and 1,400 US\$ per capita. The Arab region's GNI varies between 1,800 and 2,000 US\$ per capita. See Figure 11.

Figure 9 – Public education expenditures, as percent of GDP (1995-1997)



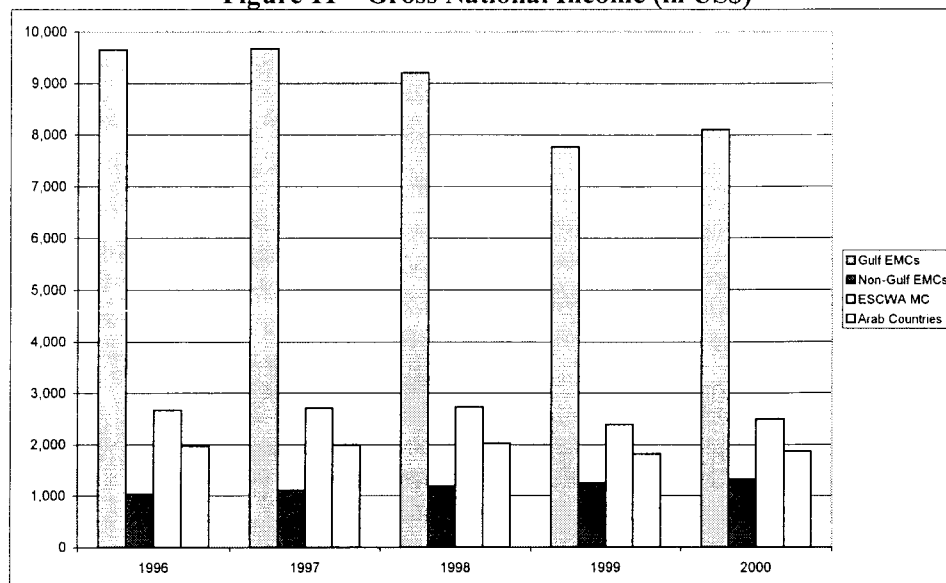
Source: HDR 2001

Figure 10 – Unemployment Rates (latest year)



Sources: Compendium of Social Statistics and Indicators, 5th edition, 2002, ESCWA; World Employment Report ILO 2001; and ILO Yearbook of Statistics.

Figure 11 – Gross National Income (in US\$)



Source: World Development Indicators Database (April 2002), World Bank

This brief analysis of some of the most relevant social indicators shows that the opportunities and challenges open for the authorities and policy makers to concentrate their efforts on priority areas to would enable them to enter and participate the information age.