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Arab NGO Network for Development
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

POLICY BRIEFS

MONITORING SDGs GOAL 1

Prepared by: SAMIR AITA
January 2017

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POVERTY



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ANND works in 12 Arab countries with 9 national networks (with an extended membership of 250 CSOs from different backgrounds) and 23 NGO members.

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Monitoring the SDGs

In the framework of its critical engagement in the 2030 Agenda, ANND launched an effort to document national programs for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and socio-economic reform initiatives in the Arab region. This effort takes the form of national assessment reports and seeks to check if such implementation is made within a comprehensive rights-based development strategy, adopted with an inclusive, participatory and transparent approach.

The assessment reports link between monitoring and evaluation by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) of the implementation of Agenda 2030 and other similar human rights monitoring mechanisms. They shed light on the necessity to adopt an inclusive social dialogue for policy making at the national level. With the limited resources available, the reports shall be made on a few countries (namely Jordan, Egypt and Morocco) and shall focus on 3 SDGs only:

Goal 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 8 Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all

Goal 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries

In addition, ANND is launching an effort to monitor SDG indicators in Arab countries, in particular those related to the 3 SDGs above.

The SDGs Indicators

The UN has established an “Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals indicators” (IAEG-SDGs), where 3 Arab countries are members: Algeria, Bahrain and Egypt. An initial report on the indicators, involving a large number of organizations, was issued in June 2015.¹ In February 2016, the UN

Economic and Social Council issued a report² giving the final list of proposed SDGs indicators, for consideration by the Statistical Commission. Nine indicators were chosen for Goal 1, fifteen for Goal 8, and thirteen for Goal 10.

COSs have criticized the way in which the indicators have been set.³ It was also the case for many governments who found the chosen indicators biased, not matching the spirit of the SDGs, and influenced by choices made by International Financial institutions (IFIs) and rich countries. On March 11, 2016, the UN Statistical Commission recognized that “*the development of a robust and high quality indicator framework is a process that will need to continue overtime and authorized the IAEG-SDGs to continue its work*” beyond considering the list of February 2016 “*as a practical starting point*”. On the other hand, the UN Statistics Division (UNSD) criticized this position and showed the “widespread distrust of many developing countries” on the process of choice, further development, and comparability of indicators.

Arab SDG indicators

In addition, Arab CSOs have noted that, in fact, economic and social statistics and surveys are not conducted yearly in most Arab countries, as requested in the framework of the 2030 Agenda. They do not often follow international standards. The results of which are also not accessible to the public in detail in order to assess the validity of the indicators transmitted by governments to UN and international agencies. This leaves CSOs lacking tools to defend their position on several core issues of the SDGs.

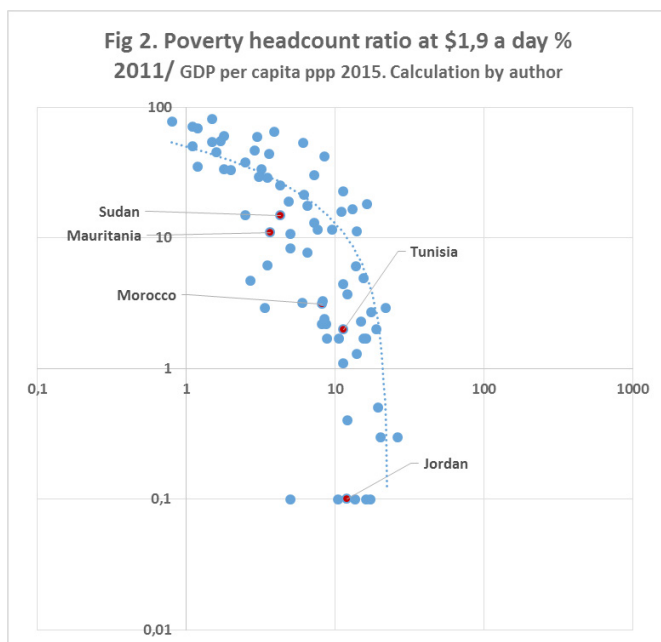
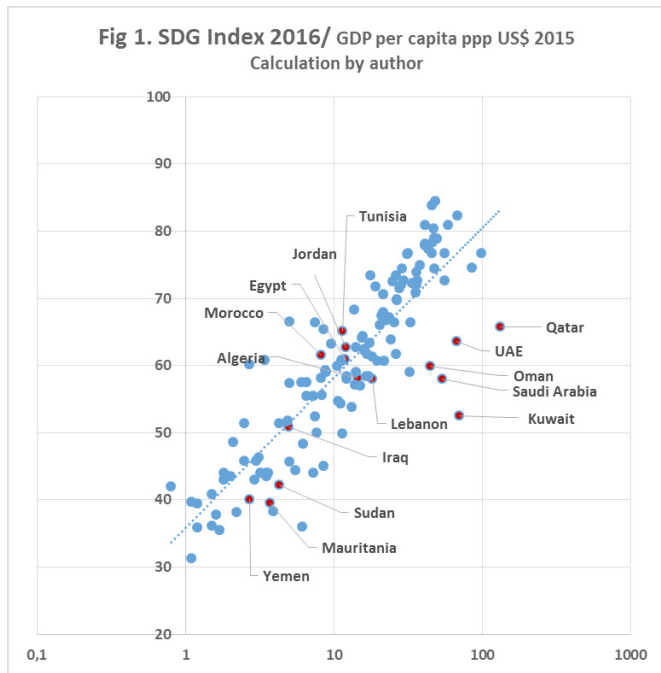
ANND is thus inviting all Arab CSOs to advocate with their own governments on performance and issuing the following statistical reports on a yearly basis:

¹ Sustainable Development Solutions Network: *Indicators and a monitoring framework for the Sustainable Development Goals; Launching a data revolution for the SDGs; a report to the Secretary general of the UN*; June 12, 2015.

² UN ECOSOC: *Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable development Indicators*, E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1.

³ Barbara Adams and Karen Judd: *2030 Agenda and the SDGs: Indicator framework, monitoring and reporting*; Global Policy Watch, March 18, 2016.

- National GDP statistics given in current terms and in PPP
- National income and expenditure surveys
- Household integrated economic surveys (HIES)
- Labor force surveys (LFS)
- Living standards Measurement studies (LSMS)
- Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)
- Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)



The SDG Index

A Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) was created and launched in 2012 by the

UN Secretary General. The SDSN is managed by a Leadership Council, constituted of eminent personalities of governments, the private sector, and academics. In 2016, it launched a first SDG index and dashboards report,⁴ including an SDG index.⁵ Despite the above mentioned comments and criticisms, ANND considers this effort as a reference to deal with.

Arab countries can be grouped into 3 categories according to their wealth. According to the 2016 SDG index (Fig. 1 comparing Arab and world countries), both low and high-income countries rank much less than their world counterparts do. The medium-income countries compare well with both, their world counterparts and the Arab high-income countries. Surely, this is a too general index to help monitoring specific goals and indicators. However, it is expected that the SDSN shall issue yearly reports, which shall allow following its view on the general progress of specific countries on SDGs.

Poverty indicator (Goal 1)

The SDG index draws on only one of the poverty indicators proposed by the IAEG-SDG: the poverty headcount ratio at US\$1.90 a day (%), collected from the World Bank database. The value of this poverty indicator was “assumed zero” for Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE. It was not available for Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen⁶ (despite the presence of 3 of these countries as members of the IAEG-SDG). The results are shown in Fig.2.

Fig. 3 Working poverty trends and projections Arab States, 2017-2018. (Source: ILO).

	Extreme working poverty rate, 2007-18 (percentages)				Extreme working poverty, 2016-18 (millions)		
	2007-2015	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Arab States	4.2	3.9	3.7	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9
GCC	1.9	1.8	1.8	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4
Non-GCC	6.6	6.1	5.7	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5
	Moderate working poverty rate, 2007-18 (percentages)				Moderate working poverty, 2016-18 (millions)		
	2007-2015	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Arab States	17.2	16.9	16.7	8.3	8.4	8.4	8.4
GCC	5.9	5.8	5.7	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Non-GCC	29.0	28.2	27.5	6.9	6.9	7.0	7.0

4 SDSN: *SDG Index & Dashboards. A Global Report*; 2016.

5 <http://www.sdgindex.org/>

6 Syria was not considered for the report.

Not only does the absence of poverty data for most Arab countries restrain any monitoring of the achievement of the SDGs, but those available contradict with Arab CSOs' observations and advocacy activities. They also contradict those collected and published by the ILO,⁷ which show extreme poverty even in the GCC countries, as in Fig. 3.

Otherwise, the IAEG-SDGs has suggested a list of indicators for each of the targets of Goal 1, as follows:

- 1-1-1** Proportion of population below \$1.25 (PPP) per day, with disaggregation of it by sex and age group;
- 1-2-1** Proportion of population living below national poverty line, disaggregated by sex and age group;
- 1-3-1** Proportion of poor and vulnerable population covered by social protection systems, with further breakdown for old persons, children, unemployed, disabled persons, pregnant women, poor and vulnerable;
- 1-4-1** Proportion of the population living in households with access to basic services;
- 1-5-1** Number of people affected by hazardous events by age and sex;
- 1-5-2** Direct disaster economic loss in relation to global GDP;
- 1-6-1** Share of total overall government spending (incl. subnational) on programs directed to bottom 40% of population of country;
- 1-6-2** Number of national action plans related to multi-lateral environmental agreements that support accelerated investment in actions that eradicate poverty and sustainably use natural resources.

Recommendations

Arab CSOs must advocate with their government and with regional and international institutions their concerns related to the “severe limitation of poverty data,” as pointed out by SSDN.⁸ This “limitation is especially striking when compared to the data availability concerning other economic phenomena,” such as GDP, inflation, or stock markets. It is due to the absence or irregular performance of consistent household surveys.

As recommended by the UN and the SSDN, and demanded by developing countries, poverty should be measured regularly (at least yearly) and in both its monetary and multidimensional aspects. For this, Arab CSOs can adopt the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI),⁹ compiled by the University of Oxford, which, however, still depends on the availability of household surveys.

Alternatively, Arab CSOs could build momentum to perform the necessary surveys by themselves, adopting the brief survey method promoted by the SSDN,¹⁰ which could be used, with reduced cost and effort, to systematically collect more frequent and consistent poverty data.

If household surveys are not available and at least yearly performed, there is no way to monitor the achievement of the sustainable development goal on poverty. And there is no meaning to follow more global SDG indicators.

⁸ SSDN: *Towards Frequent and Accurate Poverty Data*; Briefing Paper, September 2014.

⁹ <http://www.ophi.org.uk/>

¹⁰ SSDN 2014, op. cit.