



## The Southern Regional Model United Nations—SRMUN XVII



Dear Delegates,

I would like to take this time to welcome you to the Southern Regional United Nations Conference (SRMUN) XVII and the League of Arab States (LAS). My name is TJ Harvey, and it is an honor for me to serve as the Director for the LAS. This is my second year on staff at SRMUN. I have participated at SRMUN for the past four years, and the Mississippi Model Security Council for three. I recently graduated from Mississippi State University with a degree in business and two minors in Political Science and German. I am currently working in the political arena in Jackson, Mississippi for the 2006-2007 election cycles.

The League of Arab States was formed in 1945 to allow for a political forum and collective voice for Arab states. The LAS constitution provides administration for management among the signatory nations on education, finance, law, trade, and foreign policy, and it forbids the use of force to settle disputes among the members. As the LAS labors to strengthen the union of Arab states, we have chosen the following topics to discuss at this year's conference due to the importance they play in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and in the future of the Arab region:

- I. Investment in Marginalized Persons;
- II. The Impact of Conflict in the Arab Region on Accomplishing the MDGs;
- III. Institutional Capacity Building.

This background guide is an excellent start for your research and should lead you to explore the topic yourself. Excellent delegations should be well versed in their country's position on the topic and general topic information as well. Researching each topic will enhance your position papers, better prepare you for committee debate and make the entire SRMUN experience more rewarding.

Each delegation required to submit a position paper on each of the three topics. Position papers should be not longer than 2 pages in length and single spaced. It is important that they not only define your country's positions and policies on the topics but also provide recommendations. The position paper is an opportunity to state what your country plans to accomplish in this committee. More detailed information about how to write position papers can be found at the SRMUN website ([www.srmun.org](http://www.srmun.org)). **All position papers MUST be submitted by October 30th, 11:59pm EST to Deputy Director General Sarah Donnelly at [srmunddg@yahoo.com](mailto:srmunddg@yahoo.com).**

The Arab world is a hotbed of activity and I am positive that we will have plenty to discuss within the boundaries of our topics at the conference. Please feel free to contact Sarah, Earl, or me if you have any questions. Best of luck in your conference preparation and I look forward to meeting you in November.

TJ Harvey  
Director  
[las@srmun.org](mailto:las@srmun.org)

Earl Fields  
Assistant Director  
[las@srmun.org](mailto:las@srmun.org)

Sarah Donnelly  
Deputy-Directory General  
[srmunddg@yahoo.com](mailto:srmunddg@yahoo.com)

## History of the League of Arab States

On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1945 the League of Arab States Charter was officially ratified and thus became a regional inter-governmental organization (IGO).<sup>1</sup> It was seen by member states as, “a kind of harmonization between the regional and national tendencies.”<sup>2</sup> The League was initially founded in Cairo by delegations from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan and Yemen, with additional Arab countries signing on to the Charter later.<sup>3</sup> Currently, there are 22 members of the LAS and a noteworthy difference of the LAS from the United Nations is that the League recognizes Palestine (membership 1976) as a state with voting rights in the League.<sup>4</sup>

Originally, the idea of creating an Arab League came from the British in 1942 as a way to prevent the Arab region from rallying with the Axis powers at the end of World War II.<sup>5</sup> Yet, official implementation of the LAS only happened after the end of World War II. At the time of the League’s Charter ratification, its main goals were independence of Arab countries under colonial rule and the prevention of a Jewish minority in Palestine creating an independent Jewish state.<sup>6</sup> Obviously, the Allied powers’ influence at that time prevented it from attaining its second goal, as the independent Jewish state of Israel was formed out of Palestine in 1948. In response, the members of the LAS jointly attacked Israel, but were unsuccessful in their attempt and instead created the Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Treaty (JDECT) in 1950, which was also unsuccessful in creating a comprehensive strategy to liberate Palestine from the newly formed Israeli state.<sup>7</sup> The JDECT, however, unified the member states of the LAS in response to the use of force, as Article II states:

“The Contracting States consider any (act of) armed aggression made against any one or more of them or their armed forces, to be directed against them all. Therefore, in accordance with the right of self-defense, individually and collectively, they undertake to go without delay to the aid of the State or States against which such an act of aggression is made...”<sup>8</sup>

The LAS has been involved in several conflicts throughout its history. In 1945, the League came to the support of Syria and Lebanon in French aggression and simultaneously demanded that Libya be granted independence.<sup>9</sup> In 1948, there was an aggressive attempt, mentioned above, by the League to liberate Palestine. The League has also been involved in brokering peaceful settlements to inter-Arab conflicts, most notably the Egyptian-Sudanese conflict of 1958, the Moroccan-Algerian conflict of 1963 and the Yemeni conflict in 1987.<sup>10</sup> In 1979, Egypt was briefly expelled by the League, after it signed a peace agreement with Israel but it was readmitted to the League in 1989, and the League’s headquarters relocated to Cairo.<sup>11</sup>

Most recently, the League’s Defense Treaty and Defense Council were tested by the US-coalition war in Iraq, where some member states supported the war while others opposed it and still others sat on the fence.<sup>12</sup> The failure of the League to reach a cohesive response to the Iraqi invasion, under Article II of the Defense Treaty, has created severe

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<sup>1</sup> “The History of the League of Arab States.” The League of Arab States.

[http://www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/english/details\\_en.jsp?art\\_id=1175&level\\_id=10](http://www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/english/details_en.jsp?art_id=1175&level_id=10)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> “Member States.” The League of Arab States. [http://www.arableagueonline.org/las/english/level2\\_en.jsp?level\\_id=11](http://www.arableagueonline.org/las/english/level2_en.jsp?level_id=11)

<sup>5</sup> “Profile: The Arab League.” British Broadcasting Company News. December 29, 2004

[www.newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/](http://www.newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. Columbia University Press. 2005.

[www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/A0804481.html](http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/A0804481.html)

<sup>8</sup> *The Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Treaty*. The League of Arab States. February 2, 1950.

[www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/details](http://www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/details)

<sup>9</sup> “The History of the League of Arab States.” The League of Arab States.

[http://www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/english/details\\_en.jsp?art\\_id=1175&level\\_id=10](http://www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/english/details_en.jsp?art_id=1175&level_id=10)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> “The Arab League.” The League of Arab States. <http://www.arab.de/arabinfo/league/htm>

<sup>12</sup> “Profile: The Arab League.” British Broadcasting Company News. December 29, 2004

[www.newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/](http://www.newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/)

divides between the member states and caused many in the Western world to view the Joint Defense Treaty as “ineffectual”.<sup>13</sup>

While a major part of the Arab League is the security of its member states, it has also had much success in the development of Arab economy, education and culture. The League oversees organizations such as the Arab Labor Organization, The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALESCO), the Arab Permanent Telecommunication Committee and the Arab Trade Union.<sup>14</sup>

Most importantly, the League of Arab States serves as a platform for member states to draft and conclude documents that continue to promote economic and cultural integration, and has been instrumental in developing educational curriculums and preserving ancient Muslim manuscripts.<sup>15</sup> Additionally,

“The Arab League has launched literacy campaigns, and reproduced intellectual works, and translated modern technical terminology for the use of member states. It encourages measures against crime and drug abuse and deals with labor issues (particularly among the emigrant Arab workforce).<sup>16</sup>

The Palestinian issue continues to be a priority item on the agenda of the League, and the member states’ support for the Palestinian plight is one of the few issues that continuously receives unanimous consent within the League, and one of the League’s greatest successes has been the economic boycott of Israel, which lasted from 1948 to 1993.<sup>17</sup> Other priority issues on the League’s agenda include the Israeli occupied Syrian Golan Heights situation and the Lebanese consolidation issue.<sup>18</sup> The ongoing war in Iraq, the heightening of tensions between Western powers and non-member state but neighbor and fellow Muslim nation Iran, and the humanitarian situation in Sudan are major concerns for the League as well.

On the development front, the UNDP’s Millennium Development Goals regional report “In Arab Countries” has highlighted considerable development challenges in the region with regards to education, health, gender equality, environment and poverty.<sup>19</sup> The League of Arab States must also address growing arguments within the Arab world that the definition of “human rights” is a Western ideal and does not encompass the doctrines of Islamic Law that many of the member states use to govern their nations.

The current member states of the League of Arab States include: ALGERIA, BAHRAIN, COMOROS, DJIBOUTI, EGYPT, IRAN, IRAQ, JORDAN, LEBANON, LIBYA, KUWAIT, MAURITANIA, MOROCCO, OMAN, PALESTINE, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, SOMALIA, SUDAN, SYRIA, TUNISIA, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND YEMEN.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> “The History of the League of Arab States.” The League of Arab States. [http://www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/english/details\\_en.jsp?art\\_id=1175&level\\_id=10](http://www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/english/details_en.jsp?art_id=1175&level_id=10)

<sup>15</sup> The Arab League.” The League of Arab States. <http://www.arab.de/arabinfo/league/htm>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> “Profile: The Arab League.” British Broadcasting Company News. December 29, 2004

[www.newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/](http://www.newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/)

<sup>18</sup> “Arab Issues.” The League of Arab States. [http://www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/english/level1\\_en.jsp?level1\\_id=2](http://www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/english/level1_en.jsp?level1_id=2)

<sup>19</sup> *The Millennium Development Goals: In Arab Countries*. Report by UNDP. 2003. [http://www.undg.org/documents/3495-The\\_Arab\\_Regional\\_MDG\\_Report\\_-\\_English.pdf](http://www.undg.org/documents/3495-The_Arab_Regional_MDG_Report_-_English.pdf)

## I. Investment in Marginalized Persons

*“Of all the impediments to an Arab renaissance, political restrictions on human development are the most stubborn.”<sup>20</sup>*

### **Introduction**

In efforts to stabilize the Arab region and to reach the UN Millennium Goals of 2015, endeavors must be made to increase the socio-economic status of marginalized persons in the Arab region. Marginalized people are those that are disadvantaged and struggle to gain access to resources and full participation in life in socio-cultural, political and economic spheres.<sup>21</sup> Simply put, those that are marginalized are socially, economically, politically and legally ignored. People are defined by their perceived lesser status in society due to age, race, gender, education, class or geography resulting in exclusion from the mainstream and wide disparities.<sup>22</sup> Marginality reflects the underlying conditions of society. The conditions are, “represented by lack of resources, skills and opportunities, reduced or restricted participation in public decision-making, less use of public space, lower sense of community and low self-esteem.”<sup>23</sup> In developing countries, physical vulnerabilities caused by conflict are often seen as the main reason for lack of peace and development. However conflict is more often than not the result of population dynamics, political instability, intensification of agriculture, degradation of land resources, poor access to technologies and slow industrial growth which all contribute to marginality.<sup>24</sup>

Marginalization is closely related to the vulnerability of both people and environment.<sup>25</sup> The most obvious form of marginalization often has to do with the physical world or what is known as ‘spatial marginality.’ This is recognized as vulnerability due to poor location and scarcity of natural resources (such as a region lacking in water or arable land) and people’s inability to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from daily life struggles.<sup>26</sup> Oftentimes, these physical vulnerabilities are seen to be less challenging in comparison with another form of marginality known as ‘societal marginality.’ These societal vulnerabilities include historical background, ethno-cultural characteristics, minority status, immigration status, age, gender and educational status.<sup>27</sup>

Marginality is often described in terms of poverty. Poverty can be defined as a, “state of economic, social and psychological deprivation occurring among people or countries lacking sufficient ownership, control or access to resources to maintain minimal acceptable standards.”<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the root causes of poverty including inequality, vulnerability and exclusion are closely linked with marginalization.<sup>29</sup> In many respects the border between marginalization and poverty is at times blurred.

Marginalized groups in the Arab world include, but are not limited to, women, children, certain ethnic groups, the impoverished, the disabled, rural populations, the uneducated and illiterate and the unemployed. Because of their position in society these people do not have the opportunity to contribute to their civil society, economy or the political process. With no opportunity to have their voices heard sometimes these groups turn to violence. Investment in these groups will make the Millennium Development Goals achievable and provide opportunities for overall development for the region: “The world awaits true leadership from the Arab world to empower its people

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<sup>20</sup> *Arab Human Development Report: Towards Freedom in the Arab World*. The United Nations Development Programme. [http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr\\_2004/AHDR\\_2004\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr_2004/AHDR_2004_Executive_Summary.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Ghana S. Gurung and Michael Kollmair. *Marginality: Concepts and their Limitations*. Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research North-South Dialogue. 2005

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> *Nepal Human Development Report 2001, Poverty Reduction and Governance*. United Nations Development Programme. 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Ghana S. Gurung and Michael Kollmair. *Marginality: Concepts and their Limitations*. Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research North-South Dialogue. 2005

for the cause of social development, economic progress, and political democratization. And much more important than “the world” are the millions of Arab citizens who require such leadership immediately.”<sup>30</sup>

### *Marginalized People in Arab Societies*

Within the Arab region there are multiple groups that lack a voice in their societies and governments. Because of their lesser status they are more likely to not have adequate healthcare or education, affordable housing, political and legal representation, employment or even food or transportation.<sup>31</sup> Below are several explanations of marginalized people in the Arab world.

In the village of Akkar, Lebanon about 60% of the quarter of a million citizens is below or at the poverty line.<sup>32</sup> Most families live in small two room apartments with sometimes as many as 13 family members and many struggle to bring in \$200 a month.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, this picture is only indicative of the entire Arab region taken as a whole. Poverty not only has an effect on their living conditions, but also their education. When large families choose to send a member of the family to school often they will send the male because he will in all likelihood be the breadwinner.<sup>34</sup> Contributing to this problem is the lack of industry and other forms of employment. Farming is the main economic activity of the area and local farmers are finding it more difficult to compete in the market. Due to the increase of imported crops at lower prices the farming industry is being devastated and in return putting local farmers out of work.<sup>35</sup> Akkar has the poorest living conditions in all of Lebanon but the majority of all development programs are concentrated to the capital of Beirut.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, national and international organizations do little to help the region despite the need of economic relief.

The status and the rights of the women is a key issue in many countries in the League of Arab States. In Yemen only 30% of women are literate, compared to 70% of men.<sup>37</sup> Women are also limited to certain kinds of employment, thus reducing their opportunities and straining economic conditions for the entire family and society.<sup>38</sup> Girls often do not continue their education after the age of 13 because of financial and cultural reasons.<sup>39</sup> Women are also marginalized in other parts of society outside of education. In Egypt it is reported that women are still being marginalized in parts of the government, mainly in the judiciary sector.<sup>40</sup> There are approximately 6,000 members of the Egyptian judicial body and there is only one woman among them.<sup>41</sup> Observers in the area have said that the reluctance to advance the equality of women in the country is due to the fear of religious opposition.<sup>42</sup> In fact it has become a great area of debate since many of the legal codes of Egypt are based on the Sharia.<sup>43</sup> The Sharia law comes from the Qur’an, Hadith- conduct of Mohammed, and fatwas- rulings of Islamic scholars.<sup>44</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, does not believe in the appointment of women in the judiciary.<sup>45</sup> Conversely, many jurists site historical precedents to the early days of Islam that did allow women to hold judicial positions in

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<sup>30</sup> Denis J. Sullivan. “NGOs and Development in the Arab World: The Critical Importance of a Strong Partnership between Government and Civil Society.” *Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World: The Ibn Khaldun Center*. Cairo, Egypt: June 2000, vol. 9, no. 102. Published on the Web with permission of Ibn Khaldun Center. <http://www.mideastinfo.com/arabngo.htm>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> “Lebanon: Poor people in the north continue to suffer without a master-plan.” United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks. April 20, 2006. <http://www.irinnews.org>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Kathryn Lynch. “IFES targets voters and marginalized populations in remote Yemen.” Democracy at Large. May 26, 2006. <http://www.ifes.org/mena-project.html?projectid=yementarget>

<sup>38</sup> “Lebanon: Poor people in the north continue to suffer without a master-plan.” United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks. April 20, 2006. <http://www.irinnews.org>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> “Egypt: Women still marginalized from judiciary.” The Lebanon Daily Star. March 31, 2006. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> “Sharia: An Introduction.” British Broadcasting Company. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/sharia>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

society.<sup>46</sup> Many women do teach law and practice law, but some look at their absence in higher post as a matter of the slow evolution of society.<sup>47</sup> In LAS Member States, as in other regions, women continue to suffer from strict laws and social norms which accept unequal personal status laws, violence in the home and lack of legal remedy.<sup>48</sup> Around 10 million women in the Middle East continue to be refused equal rights, which are reflected in the high rate of illiteracy, maternal mortality, and in the low rate of the political participation and in religion.<sup>49</sup>

Refugees also pose another group of individuals often systematically marginalized. Usually it is conflict or even this group's marginalization in society which causes them to flee their homes. Groups such as the state-less Palestinians, Syrian-born Kurds, Bidun in Kuwait and Bahrain, Lebanese in Syria and other victims of regional conflict all face multiple challenges and difficulties. Defined as the world's largest refugee population at 4 million, the Palestinian refugee issue continues to be one of the most complex for the region.<sup>50</sup> Palestinian refugees number about 90,000 in Iraq, which is "the largest number among the more than 428,000 Palestinians who live outside the immediate Middle East, where they come under the mandate of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)."<sup>51</sup> Though, Iraq has its own share of fleeing refugees as well.

The government of the Iraq continues forcing Kurds and other minorities from the Kirkuk region into the autonomous three north governorates.<sup>52</sup> At least 200,000 Iraqis illegally inhabited Jordan in 2001.<sup>53</sup> Many Iraqis fleeing to Turkey were denied protection and forcibly returned.<sup>54</sup> Iran hosted an estimated half a million Iraqi refugees and 1.4 million Afghan refugees, making it, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the leading refugee host country in the world.<sup>55</sup> Egypt continued to be host to an estimated 2 million or more Sudanese, although most did not have formal refugee status.<sup>56</sup> The UNHCR estimates that there are currently about 50,000 Lebanese refugees in Syria.<sup>57</sup>

Children and young people are also highly marginalized in many societies around the world despite the important role that young people play in shaping a country's future. Youths are often not viewed as resources that need to be developed or as a group that can play a significant role in sustainable development. As the largest proportion of young people in the world with 38% of Arabs under the age of 14, this group cannot be ignored.<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately, young people in the Arab world face many problems: unemployment, lack of education, gender suppression and lack of mobilization.<sup>59</sup> The 2003 MDG Report for Arab countries revealed that 10 million children do not attend school and therefore will not have opportunities for employment as the population increases.<sup>60</sup> In 20 years time it is calculated that the Arab youths will top 400 million.<sup>61</sup> How the Arab world addresses their youth population will be important in stemming issues arising from marginalization.

### ***Role of International Organizations***

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> *Human Rights Watch World Report 2001*. Human Rights Watch. 2001. <http://www.hrw.org/wr2k1/mideast/index.html>

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> "UNHCR releases book on refugee work in Arab World." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. August 11, 2003. <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&page=home&id=3f3768faa>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> *Human Rights Watch World Report 2001*. Human Rights Watch. 2001. <http://www.hrw.org/wr2k1/mideast/index.html>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> "UN Refugee Agency ready to assist Lebanese refugees in Syria." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. August 10, 2006. <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&page=home&id=44dc83872>

<sup>58</sup> "Self-doomed to failure." *The Economist*. July 4, 2002. [http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=1213392](http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=1213392)

<sup>59</sup> "Youth in Arab Countries." Arab NGO Network for Development.

<http://www.annd.org/Youth%20In%20Arab%20World/Youth.asp>

<sup>60</sup> *The Millennium Development Goals: In Arab Countries*. United Nations Development Programme. New York: United Nations Development Programme. 2003. [http://www.undg.org/documents/3495-The\\_Arab\\_Regional\\_MDG\\_Report\\_-\\_English.pdf](http://www.undg.org/documents/3495-The_Arab_Regional_MDG_Report_-_English.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> "Self-doomed to failure." *The Economist*. July 4, 2002. [http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=1213392](http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=1213392)

International organizations have been working with the League of Arab States to formulate strategic plans to implement human development programs and policies to decrease marginalization and increase investment of people. Human development programs structure growth in society by educating people, helping individuals increase their income and decreasing the child mortality rate.<sup>62</sup> These efforts lay the foundation for a better future in the Arab region by providing them the tools to increase the positive impact marginalized persons can have in their communities and the region.

An example of a regional organization that focuses on human development is the International Fund for Agricultural Development in the Middle East region (IFAD). This organization includes the following member states of the League of Arab States: Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.<sup>63</sup> In the Middle East, IFAD invests in programs and projects that empower small farmers, nomadic herders and rural women.<sup>64</sup> These programs allow them to have their voices heard in decisions affecting their future. One of the organizations main focuses is helping women with traditional activities such as gardening and preserving food - utilizing this knowledge can have an impact on the economic structure at a local and potentially national level.<sup>65</sup> The key to empowerment is building upon skills that people already know. This concept gives people a sense of power and even political leverage that would not have existed previously.

Another organization who focuses on investing in marginalized people is the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES). IFES is a private organization with a mission to encourage democratic development in societies.<sup>66</sup> Field personnel travel to rural villages and small towns educating people on the electoral system of that region.<sup>67</sup> As demonstrated recently in Yemen, IFES strives to educate marginalized persons on the importance of voting and participating in local elections.<sup>68</sup> On a recent project the team felt resistance from local authorities and even defeatist attitudes, "If we can't select our husbands--how could we select the president of the country?"<sup>69</sup> The challenges faced by the IFES are excellent examples of how local, regional and national governments will need to work together in order to achieve development goals.

That attitude of cooperation was adopted by the League of Arab States in its Arab Initiative of 2002. The initiative focuses on developing a regional program through sustainable development and aims at addressing the development challenges faced by Arab nations.<sup>70</sup> The initiative not only reaffirms the Arab state's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and Agenda 21, but lays out an action plan of how the states want to realize those goals. In April 2006, the United Nations and the League of Arab States met in Vienna to discuss issues of cooperation.<sup>71</sup> While at the conference, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressed the importance of a close working relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations.<sup>72</sup> There was also discussion of the United Nations and the League of Arab States in the continued cooperation in designing a plan for an Arab project on the empowerment of youth.<sup>73</sup> Youth in Arab countries represent hope for a future, but they are also

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<sup>62</sup> "Poverty and Growth Blog." World Bank.

<http://pgpblog.worldbank.org/poverty-reduction-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa>

<sup>63</sup> "IFAD Strategy for Rural Poverty Reduction in Near East and North Africa." International Fund for Agricultural Development. March 2002. <http://www.ifad.org/operations/regional/2002/pn/pn.htm>

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Kathryn Lynch. "IFES targets voters and marginalized populations in remote Yemen." International Foundation for Election Systems. May 26, 2006. <http://www.ifes.org/mena-project.html?projectid=yementarget>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> "The Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region." The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Division for Sustainable Development. [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships/activities\\_initiate/101202\\_sd\\_initiative\\_arab\\_region.pdf#search=%22Arab%20Initiative%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20%22](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships/activities_initiate/101202_sd_initiative_arab_region.pdf#search=%22Arab%20Initiative%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20%22)

<sup>71</sup> "United Nations and League of Arab States Discuss Cooperation in Vienna." United Nations Information Service. April 13, 2006. <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2006/unisinf138.html>

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Kathryn Lynch. "IFES targets voters and marginalized populations in remote Yemen." International Foundation for Election Systems. May 26, 2006. <http://www.ifes.org/mena-project.html?projectid=yementarget>

plagued with many problems. Meetings, such as this one, between LAS and the UN further define the League's relationship with other international bodies and their commitment for cooperation.

### ***Outlook***

Recognizing the importance in human development, some of the Arab world has mobilized to invest in these marginalized groups. With the MDGs emphasizing gender equality, women's issues have had more attention brought to them. In Morocco, changing the discriminating regulations of personal status law and a national plan of action which proposed to give women more rights led to large demonstrations and mobilization of women.<sup>74</sup> Jordanian women and men joined together in a campaign to eliminate laws of "honor killings." Women in Kuwait engaged strongly for the right to vote and run for public office, and recently enjoyed that right with their first elections in 2005.<sup>75</sup> In September 2001, Saudi Arabia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).<sup>76</sup>

There have also been efforts to help refugees that have been shuffled around because of regional conflicts.<sup>77</sup> Palestinian activists in the region and beyond introduced in campaign of a right to return based on the international law human rights.<sup>78</sup> UN Habitat has also been working with the region to address the issues of refugees, especially in the wake of the conflict in Lebanon.

Children, the unemployed, and the impoverished have also become more of a focus for many Arab states. In May 2006 Arab media professionals, human rights organizations, academia and UN agencies initiated an in-depth dialogue on the issue of girls' education and child's rights in the Arab world.<sup>79</sup> And UNICEF has reported that some of the Gulf States have made significant improvements in advancing the situation of children.<sup>80</sup> To address poverty and unemployment Egypt's National Employment Programme, with support of the United Nations of Development Fund, resulted "the adoption of active labor market policies and a change in labor laws to encompass small and medium enterprise."<sup>81</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

Many of these marginalized groups overlap – impoverished rural people, unemployed women, uneducated males, making the issue even more complex. Deficits in freedom, knowledge, and opportunities to develop continue to marginalize Arabs, "[holding] frustrated Arabs back from reaching their potential."<sup>82</sup> Though, sustainable development is not an unachievable goal, it will not be an easy process: "The reform required in Arab countries will be marked by the total respect of the key freedoms of opinion, expression and association in Arab countries and the ending of all types of marginalization of, and discrimination against social groups."<sup>83</sup> People are the real wealth of the Arab world, and investment in them can only lead to more opportunities and growth.<sup>84</sup>

### ***Committee Directive***

Between 2000 and 2003 the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), namely, Bahrain,

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<sup>74</sup> *Human Rights Watch World Report 2001*. Human Rights Watch. 2001. <http://www.hrw.org/wr2k1/mideast/index.html>

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> "Second Arab Regional Media Forum on child rights kicks off in Dubai." United Nations Children's Fund. May 2, 2006. [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_33739.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_33739.html)

<sup>80</sup> "At a glance: Kuwait." United Nations Children's Fund. <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/kuwait.html>

<sup>81</sup> "UNDP's Work in the Arab Region." United Nations Development Programme. April 2004. [http://www.undp.org/dpa/publications/FFarab010304\\_E.pdf#search=%22improvements%20in%20arab%20world%20poverty%22](http://www.undp.org/dpa/publications/FFarab010304_E.pdf#search=%22improvements%20in%20arab%20world%20poverty%22)

<sup>82</sup> "Self-doomed to failure." *The Economist*. July 4, 2002. [http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=1213392](http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=1213392)

<sup>83</sup> *Arab Human Development Report: Towards Freedom in the Arab World*. The United Nations Development Programme. [http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr\\_2004/AHDR\\_2004\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr_2004/AHDR_2004_Executive_Summary.pdf)

<sup>84</sup> Moez Doraid. *Human Development and Poverty in the Arab States*. United Nations Development Programme. March 2000. <http://www.worldbank.org/mdf/mdf3/papers/labor/Doraid.pdf#search=%22arab%20world%20and%20poverty%22>



Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates provided \$13.7 billion in development aid to the region.<sup>85</sup> It is important to examine how aid money is being spent and how it is or could be invested in these marginalized groups. Think about how your country has addressed the issues of marginalized groups within its own population. Why is it important to invest in these people? Why is cooperation important in human development activities? What is holding this region back from reaching their full potential? If people are the future of the region then what does the future hold for the region? What skills and abilities do marginalized people already possess that can be used to make them more fully participatory members of society? What types of program can be enacted at all levels of society?

## II. The Impact of Conflict in the Arab Region on Accomplishing the MDGs

*“We will have time to reach the Millennium Development Goals-worldwide and in most, or even all, individual countries-but only if we break with business as usual. We cannot win overnight. Success will require sustained action across the entire decade between now and the deadline. It takes time to train the teachers, nurses, and engineers; to build the roads, schools, and hospitals; to grow the small and large businesses able to create the jobs and income needed. So we must start now. And we must more than double global development assistance over the next few years. Nothing less will help to achieve the Goals.”*

-United Nations Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan<sup>86</sup>

### *The Creation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*

In September 2000, 189 world leaders gathered at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York, NY to discuss goals, targets and indicators for the betterment of the global populace. The result of this meeting was a declaration of commitment focusing on 8 objectives to better global citizenry by 2015.<sup>87</sup> This declaration, adopted by the General Assembly as Resolution 55/2, not only explicated the 8 goals designed to better the world in a decade and a half, but detailed the responsibilities of the 147 heads of State and Government to realize these goals.<sup>88</sup> Encompassed in each of the following goals were these targets and indicators: the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the achievement of universal primary education, the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the reduction of child mortality, the improvement of maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and the development of a global partnership for development.<sup>89</sup> They have been documented each year in a Human Development Report (HDR), and were also reviewed in 2005 to indicate progress - the results varied from extremely positive to exceptionally unsuccessful.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to the Human Development Reports, the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Arab States launched the Arab Human Development Report Series (ADHR) in 2002:

“The Arab Human Development Reports series represents an effort to crystallize a strategic vision of change, developed by Arabs...to deepen an Arab-owned and Arab-led dialogue on ways to safeguard the dignity and well-being of the Arab people. There can be no doubt that self-reform

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<sup>85</sup> *The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2005: Summary*. Economic and Social Council of Western Asia. New York: United Nations, 2005. <http://www.undg.org/documents/6587-The MDGs in the Arab Region - ESCWA - Summary in English.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> “What are the Millennium Development Goals?” The United Nations Millennium Development Goals. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

<sup>87</sup> “Implementing the Millennium Goals.” United Nations Fact Sheet. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/MDGs-FACTSHEET1.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> A/RES/55/2. *United Nations Millennium Declaration*. United Nations General Assembly. Attachment A.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> “About the Millennium Development Goals Indicators.” United Nations Millennium Summit. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/About.htm>

stemming from open, scrupulous and balanced self-criticism is the right, if not the only alternative to plans that have apparently been drawn up outside the Arab world for restructuring the region and for reshaping its identity.”<sup>91</sup>

The international community expressed concerns pertaining to the lack of adequate data to compile the indicators in many parts of the developing world.<sup>92</sup> In response, many organizations have been providing a number of reliable and comparable data sources including the World Health Survey and the Pan Arab Project for Family Health. Thus, the annual ADHR series, developed based on the National MDG reports generated annually, are designed to provide a meticulous self-critique and to chart the signposts along the route to accomplishing the Millennium objectives. The 3rd ADHR series in 2004 documented the progress towards the MDGs after a series of conferences within the region after the 2nd ADHR was published. Arab governments and civil society organizations launched several initiatives, such as the Declaration on the Process of Reform and Modernization during the Arab Summit in 2004, which called for the “continuation and intensification of political, economic, social, and educational change initiatives that reflect the will and aspirations of Arabs,” along with the Sana’a Declaration and the Alexandria Charter which were both initiatives that came from early 2004 conferences on human rights and reform issues.<sup>93</sup>

However, the Arab Region 2005 summary of the Millennium Development Goals illustrates the continuing difficulties in the implementation and realization of accomplishing development goals in the Arab region. Development policies have been a low priority, if a priority at all, for Arab states due to the overly complex regional political dynamics from the Occupied Palestinian Territories to the recent Lebanese crisis to the Somali piracy in the Gulf: “Recent political upheavals, military conflicts and escalation of political instability have complicated development and poverty reduction. The Iraq war, the Palestinian-Israeli conflicts, the Sudan civil war and terrorist acts in many countries have resulted in considerable loss of life and property, generated psychological and economic insecurity, and increased the numbers of displaced persons.”<sup>94</sup> However, the region does not lack the tools to foster development despite the geopolitical and ethnic conflicts.<sup>95</sup> Nation-states will need to more firmly commit to the goals and possibly rely on assistance from the wealthier and more stable countries in the region – without this it is less likely that progress will be made.<sup>96</sup>

### ***Promising Progress in Accomplishing MDGs***

Despite the less-than-perfect status of the ADHR series in 2004 and 2005, several countries such as Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Syria and Tunisia are on their way to accomplishing the MDGs by the target year of 2015. While each of these countries have had, and continue to have, setbacks to the full implementation of the goals, they have set several steps in motion to the satisfaction of the United Nations Development Programme MDG coordinators.

#### *Arab Northern African Success: Egypt*

The UNDP declares that Egypt is making good progress towards accomplishing their 8 development goals by 2015: “Four out of the eight goals-eradication of extreme hunger and poverty, reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health, achievement of universal primary education- will ‘probably’ be met.”<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately, the additional 4 goals are not being achieved with successful implementation in Egyptian society. A lack of information on HIV/AIDS is preventing the efforts towards the accomplishment of MDG Goal 6 because social conservatism alone will not be enough to stop the advance of HIV/AIDS in Egypt. Gender equality targets are proving difficult

<sup>91</sup> Dr. Rima Khalaf Hunaidi. “Brief on AHDR Series.” UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States. United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr.cfm>

<sup>92</sup> “About the Millennium Development Goals Indicators.” United Nations Millennium Summit. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/About.htm>

<sup>93</sup> “Arab Human Development Report: Towards Freedom in the Arab World.” United Nations Development Programme. Executive Summary. p.5 [www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr\\_2004/AHDR\\_2004\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr_2004/AHDR_2004_Executive_Summary.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> “Overview: The Arab States.” United Nations Population Fund. [http://www.unfpa.org/profile/arab\\_overview.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/profile/arab_overview.htm)

<sup>95</sup> “MDGs in the Arab Region: A tool and A challenge, 2005.” Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND). <http://www.socialwatch.org/en/informes/Tematicso/95.html>

<sup>96</sup> “The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2005: Summary.” The Economic and Social Council for Western Asia. <http://www.escwa.org.lb/information/publications/edit/upload/scu-05-3-sum-e.pdf>

<sup>97</sup> “Egypt Guide: MDGs One World.” One World United States. <http://us.oneworld.net/guides/egypt/development>

for Egypt as well: “Egypt was recently ranked bottom of a World Economic Forum survey of 58 countries measuring women’s empowerment.”<sup>98</sup> From 1990 to 2003, Egypt lost 2% of national parliament seats held by women.<sup>99</sup> The table below illustrates this information. Egypt is also ranked among the worst 10 countries in the world for literacy rates and its education (although it increased the primary enrollment ration of boys to girls) and health services are an integral aspect of their overall poverty and development issues and needs to be prioritized as such.

Overall, not only is UNDP willing to consider Egypt on a successful path to the accomplishment of the MDGs, but UNICEF is content with the progress Egypt has made.<sup>100</sup> Egypt has already decreased child malnutrition, increased the number of births attended by skilled health staff, reduced the under five years old mortality rate, increased Tuberculosis detection using DOTS and increased access to improved sanitation. Despite the challenges it faces in achieving the other four MDGs, Egypt remains an excellent example of how the goals can be achieved in the Arab world.

<b>MDG</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2002-2003</b>
Child Malnutrition	10.4	8.6
Net primary enrollment ration	83.7	91.4
Reducing under 5 child mortality	104	39
Births attended by skilled health staff	46.3 (1993)	69.99
Tuberculosis detected using DOTS	43.5 (1995)	56.2
Access to improved sanitation	54 (1993)	68
Proportion of Women in National Parliament	4.0	2.0

Source: World Development Indicators Database, April 2004<sup>101</sup>

#### *Gulf State and Middle East Successes: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan*

The June 2006, landmark parliamentary elections in Kuwait allowed women to cast their vote for the first time in Kuwaiti history. Women’s suffrage was realized due to a May 2006 Parliamentary decision to amend the electoral law in favor of gender equalization.<sup>102</sup> The act of voting proved to be a significant step towards progress in the region: “Even though only 35% of eligible females voted, the level of their participation was higher than women’s participation in many other countries including western ones.”<sup>103</sup>

With the ascension of King Abdullah to the throne, the Republic of Jordan issued a process of economic liberalization, gradual democratization and a “semi-liberal approach to Arab nationalism.”<sup>104</sup> With these reforms, and the continued “security, political, and intellectual struggle with terrorism,” the Republic is being viewed as a model for the region despite the region’s poor natural resources, an inevitable population growth in the next decade and continued political instability.<sup>105</sup> Jordan’s first NHDR in 2004 specifically addressed the difficulties Jordan faces by being economically dependent on other nations for natural resources and gender inequalities in employment opportunities; however, Jordan has one of the best health systems and almost full primary school enrollment for both

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> “Marginalized Violent Internal Conflict in the Age of Globalization: Mexico and Egypt.” United Nations Children’s Fund. *Arab Studies Quarterly*. Summer 1999. <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/egypt.html>

<sup>101</sup> “World Development Indicators Database, Egypt.” World Bank. April 2004. <http://devdata.worldbank.org/idg/IDGProfile.asp?CCODE=EGY&CNAME=Egypt%2C+Arab+Rep.&SelectedCountry=Egy>

<sup>102</sup> “UNDP together with Kuwaiti Women in a Historic Election.” United Nations Development Programme. July 15, 2006. <http://www.undp-kuwait.org/Media/July06/Womens%20Article.htm>

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> “Jordan Guide. One World.” One World United States. <http://us.oneworld.net/guides/jordan/development>

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

boys and girls.<sup>106</sup> Jordan also has the first ever plant in the Middle East and one of the few globally that converts waste to energy.<sup>107</sup> Saudi Arabia has followed in Jordan's footsteps by committing to MDG 5 through strong government support: "At the beginning of 2004, Saudi Arabia witnessed an unprecedented number of civil initiatives distinctive insofar as they were relatively acceptable to the government."<sup>108</sup> Through this Saudi Arabia has lowered its live birth death rate to 20 per 100,000 live births – in contrast to 40 per 100,000 in Jordan and 14 to 100,000 in fully developed nations.<sup>109</sup>

Within the Arab world these nations represent some of the strongest case studies for development and achievement of the MDGs. However, there is one major development roadblock that the entire region must overcome – conflict.

### ***Conflict and Threats to Regional Stability***

To understand the implications of conflict one must understand the causes of conflict. Conflict, by nature, does not necessarily have to be a negative force: "Conflict is an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of social change. It is an expression of the heterogeneity of interests, values, and beliefs that arise as new formations generated by social change come up against inherited constraints."<sup>110</sup> Conflict becomes problematic when different parties perceive themselves in pursuit of incompatible goals. This broad understanding of conflict is condensed when attempting to define violent conflict, or deadly conflict, which is when at least one and sometimes both parties resort to the use of force, or direct, physical violence.<sup>111</sup> The main factors that contribute to inter-party violent conflict involve global, regional, state, societal and elite/individual level issues such as inappropriate systemic structures, regional diasporas, unequal distribution of economic resources and/or generally weak economies, ethnic stratifications which can lead to religious and/or ideological expression, authoritarian rule or an imbalance of political power, human rights abuses and general social exclusionist policies.<sup>112</sup>

The crippling effects of conflict continue to plague the Arab region. Of the major deadly conflicts between 1995 and 1997, the Middle East had at least 3 revolution/ideological conflicts and 4 identity/secession conflicts.<sup>113</sup> Comparative to other regions, such as Asia or Africa, this is not a particularly high number of conflicts. However, what is startling that the Arab region has not developed a better comprehensive regional cooperation plan to address the danger in violent conflicts within the region: "One region which strikingly lacks a comprehensive organization is the Middle East, where the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council represent the interests of their members, but no regional organization spans the region's political fault lines."<sup>114</sup> Unfortunately it is no surprise that the Arab region continues to struggle with intra-state and inter-state, economic, political and social conflicts and that this struggle carries over to achievement of the MDGs.

Somalia, Sudan, Palestine and Yemen are examples of Arab countries that are unable to fulfill their MDG targets and goals because of a series of the factors for violent conflict listed above. The ADHR 2004 not only claims that there has been "no significant easing of the human development crisis in the Arab region" and that "incipient reforms are taking place in more than one of the areas identified in {the 2004 report}, but for the most part those reforms have been embryonic and fragmentary."<sup>115</sup> This only acknowledges that "comprehensive societal reform in Arab countries can no longer be delayed or slowed down on account of vested interests."<sup>116</sup> The case studies mentioned previously have also had their share of conflict and violence but have been able to find mechanisms for curtailing the damaging effects of conflict and strive towards their development goals. It is important to note how

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> "United Nations Development Programme helps Jordan convert waste to energy." United Nations Development Programme. June 12, 2006. [http://undp-jordan.org/newsroom/press\\_releases/releases109.htm](http://undp-jordan.org/newsroom/press_releases/releases109.htm)

<sup>108</sup> "Arab Human Development Report: Towards Freedom in the Arab World." United Nations Development Programme. Executive Summary. p.6 [www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr\\_2004/AHDR\\_2004\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr_2004/AHDR_2004_Executive_Summary.pdf)

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Hugh Miall, et. Al. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. 2005. p. 5.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 20-21.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. pp. 17 and 108.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. p. 80.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

<sup>115</sup> "Arab Human Development Report: Towards Freedom in the Arab World." United Nations Development Programme. Executive Summary. p. 7. [www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr\\_2004/AHDR\\_2004\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr_2004/AHDR_2004_Executive_Summary.pdf)

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

they have been successful. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the region to assure that the countries failing to reach their development goals, such as Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Palestine and Yemen are part of a larger regional comprehensive social environment, enabling them to fulfill their global promise.

### *Iraq, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen*

While the invasion of Iraq freed the people from a despotic regime, they now face new development obstacles.<sup>117</sup> The Geneva Convention requires that occupying forces protect the citizens of the country they are invading. Iraq has seen an unprecedented loss of internal security, and the Iraqi women have suffered the most: “They were, and still remain, at risk of abduction and rape by professional gangs. In some cases, coalition soldiers reportedly also sexually abused female prisoners.”<sup>118</sup> The Coalition forces continue to struggle with the upkeep and re-establishment of basic human services, such as electricity, water and telephone service and will continue to do so until they are able to curb the security vacuum that is Baghdad.<sup>119</sup>

The Occupied Palestinian Territories have also suffered greatly due to terrorism and violence:

“Israel continued its violation of the Palestinians’ right to life through direct assassinations of Palestinian leaders and the killing of civilians during raids and incursions into, and re-occupation of cities and villages in the West Bank and Gaza. Between May 2003 and June 2004, and as a result of repeated invasion and bombing, a total of 768 Palestinians were killed and 4,064 injured. 22.7% of Palestinians killed during that period were children under 18.”<sup>120</sup>

Because of Israeli inability to follow international law, including the cessation of destroying property, 58.1% of Palestinians live below the poverty line and will continue to do so.<sup>121</sup> In addition, the International Court of Justice July 2004 ruling against the construction of the Security Wall, which incorporates Palestinian land, represents Israel’s blatant disregard of yet another piece of international legislation. This is an important aspect of the continued violent conflict between the occupiers and the rightful owners of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Somalia has been crippled by internal conflict and protracted clan warfare following its civil war, which began in the late 1980’s, and the fall of President Barre in 1991 after the 1988 bombing of Somaliland. Inter-armed factional conflict plagued Somalia during the 1990’s as the contest over political power and sovereignty over the fertile lands and access to seaports reigned. The end result of the 2 decades of instability has sub-divided Somalia into Somaliland, Puntland and the Rahanweyn, and 14 failed peace conferences to find a final solution for the formation of a national government for the nation-state.<sup>122</sup> Somalia exists with a war economy conducted by local and regional warlords: “Over the past fifteen years, Somalia has become divided into clan-based regional entities, leading to political segregation and the localization of power and authority. Violent conflict between factions has been rife in many regions. Islamic Sharia law has been introduced in certain areas to promote law and order alongside traditional systems of jurisdiction.”<sup>123</sup> A Transitional National Government (TNG) was established in 2000 but lacked the legitimacy from the populace due to contested authority: “The transitional government of Somalia was rendered ineffective in part because the US funded the warlords directly and not the government. In response, prominent business leaders in Mogadishu funded the Union of Islamic courts (UIC) to bring order to the capital city—something the warlords never could do.”<sup>124</sup> Thus, almost 2 decades of political insecurity has left Somalia in the bottom echelon for development: “It is estimated that still only about 14% of primary-age children attend school.

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 7

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 6

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 6

<sup>122</sup> “DFID Country Engagement Plan for Somalia.” United Kingdom Department for International Development. FINAL 031104. p. 2 [www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/somaliaep04.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/somaliaep04.pdf)

<sup>123</sup> “Country Profile: Somalia.” European Commission Development Program. [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/development/body/country/sp/home/so\\_home\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/development/body/country/sp/home/so_home_en.htm)

<sup>124</sup> “Somalia: Revisiting Afghanistan’s Failed Policy?” August 13, 2006. *Arab News*. <http://arabnews.com/?page=7&section=0&article=77820&d=13&m=8&y=2006>

There are estimated to be less than .5 doctors and 2 nurses per 100,000 people.<sup>125</sup> In addition, terrorism has found fertile ground in Somalia and, in spite of the 2002 UN-imposed arms embargo against the country, weapons proliferation remains a major concern of the Arab League.<sup>126</sup> Overall, Somalia's lack of governance over its economy and political structure continues to hinder the establishment of sustainable economic frameworks.

There can be very little doubt that the insecurity in Somalia has hindered the country's ability to accomplish the MDGs as set in 2000: "Where information is available, the measurements of key indicators rank Somalia amongst the worst in the world."<sup>127</sup> High rates of disease, recent floods causing crop damage, consistently high rates of infant mortality and a crumbled education system due to lack of investment leave Somalia far below the indicator marks for all 8 MDGs. However, this is only when Somalia is taken at as a whole. In some regions, Somalia shows signs of progress: "In the more stable north-western regions of Somaliland and the adjoining Puntland State, there are encouraging signs of progress. Basic infrastructure in both regions, such as hospitals and clinics that were destroyed during the years of civil war, are gradually being rebuilt and education systems are developing."<sup>128</sup> Perhaps Somalia does have a chance at development.

The Western region of Darfur crisis became Sudan's civil war's latest conflict area after the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement and Justice and Equality Movement rebels took arms against the government in 2003. Violence erupted after the government, tired of suffering defeats to these rebels, armed an Arab "Janjaweed" militia "to clear civilian population bases of African tribes though to be supporting rebellion."<sup>129</sup> Darfur has become a humanitarian disaster due to the increasing number of deaths per month and atrocities continually going unreported: "In Darfur, violations of minority rights continued. Conflict and human suffering increased, despite the cease-fire agreement and the interventions of the international community."<sup>130</sup> The continued violence not only threatens the internal security of Sudanese citizens, but the stability of a very volatile neighboring country, Chad. The Darfur Peace Agreement, signed by African Union countries in May 2006 is a first step in ending the violence. However continued strategies are required not only to assure that Sudan does not become a failed state, but that it finds its way toward the accomplishment of its development goals.

Yemen is known as one of the poorest nations in the Arab region due to its government spending on military. According to the World Bank and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Yemen ranks as the 12<sup>th</sup> most unstable nation in world with 42% of Yeminitis living below the poverty line.<sup>131</sup> Yemen's adult literacy rate of 49% "is indicative of the low average net enrollment in primary education which at 72% is one of the lowest in the Middle East and North Africa region."<sup>132</sup> Corruption by governments can lead many marginalized groups in nation-states to turn to various social/political groups that appear willing to listen to their grievances about the government while providing the social services the government has been thus far unable to deliver. Yemen is a good example of this case. Yemen is considered by many theorists and practitioners one poor election away from being a failed state. The government of President Abdullah Saleh has not been able to secure the northwest region of the Republic that is the home to the Shi'ite minority in the country. This decentralization of social services provided to the Sadah region of Yemen has enabled the Al-Houthi Tribal group to provide services while continuing to distance the region from central government in Sanaa.<sup>133</sup> This tension has come to a head several times in the past 10 years, but has continued to involve Saudi Arabia in its internal conflict due to Sadah's proximity to the Shi'ite population in southwest Saudi Arabia. This case is not far removed from Egypt's dealing with Islamic Jihad movement.

The Arab League is well aware that Yemen will probably not meet its MDGs if its internal development continues to play a secondary role to its military build-up. Yemen is behind on all of its development goals, with some like

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<sup>125</sup> "DFID Country Engagement Plan for Somalia." UK Department for International Development. FINAL 031104. p. 2  
[www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/somaliaep04.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/somaliaep04.pdf)

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 2

<sup>127</sup> "Country Profile: Somalia." One World United States. <http://us.oneworld.net/guides/somalia/development>

<sup>128</sup> "Country Profile: Somalia." One World United States. <http://us.oneworld.net/guides/somalia/development>

<sup>129</sup> "Sudan." International Crisis Group.  
[http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict\\_search&1=1&t1&c\\_country=101](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict_search&1=1&t1&c_country=101)

<sup>130</sup> "Arab Human Development Report: Towards Freedom in the Arab World." United Nations Development Programme. Executive Summary. p. 7. [www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr\\_2004/AHDR\\_2004\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr_2004/AHDR_2004_Executive_Summary.pdf)

<sup>131</sup> "Yemen." *The Middle East Journal*. June 2006, Issue 368. p. 13.

<sup>132</sup> "Country Profile: Yemen." One World United States. <http://us.oneworld.net/guides/yemen/development>

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

environmental sustainability promising to become a major conflict point in the next decade. Yemen has a deepening water crisis, limited soil resources, and forest depletion. Yemen does have the potential to achieve universal primary education if the “public and private efforts in this regard are genuinely sustained.”<sup>134</sup>

### ***Outlook***

The ADHR 2004 claims that while there are some fragmented reforms being implemented, the status of the Arab region in accomplishing the MDGs by 2015 is highly unlikely if the individual countries continue to implement a patchwork of reforms without taking in the larger spirit of development, betterment and effective, sustainable change.<sup>135</sup> Despite variations from country to country, freedoms enjoyed by Arabs in the Arab world are minimal and are threatened “by two kinds of power: that of undemocratic regimes, and that of tradition and tribalism, sometimes under the cover of religion.”<sup>136</sup> Only 3 Arab countries (Algeria, Occupied Palestinian Territories and Yemen) can rightfully claim that they host direct elections for the presidency with more than one candidate and for a presidential position that has lawfully enforced term limits.<sup>137</sup> There are continued abuses of minority rights that continue to threaten not only the accomplishment of the development goals by 2015, but the stability of the region as a whole: “Violations of human rights in Arab countries are more pronounced when cultural, religious or ethnic dimensions are present. In areas of protracted conflict in Iraq and the Sudan, minority groups have suffered overt and covert persecution.”<sup>138</sup> For example, oil migrant workers in the oil-producing Arab states have suffered great injustices and abuses of their international migrant worker legally protected rights because the accountability and enforcement mechanisms are absent from several Arab countries. In Mauritania and the Sudan, socio-economic and military circumstances are creating a situation where servitude and slavery co-exist harmoniously where women and children are the main victims.<sup>139</sup>

The Arab Middle East is projected to continue to experience a climbing birth rate due to its large youth population, thus stimulating economic growth as well.<sup>140</sup> For example, it is predicted that population in Palestine will double every 20 years.<sup>141</sup> Additionally, only 23% of the population use contraceptives as of 2005, which is in stark contrast to a country like Iran which boasts a 74% usage rate.<sup>142</sup> Yemen is a transitional democracy undergoing political and economic reform and needs methods for increasing public confidence and participation in democratic political institutions. The National Democratic Institute, International Crisis Group and US Agency for International Development have conflict mitigation teams in Yemen to mitigate and resolve long standing conflicts between tribes.

For the Middle East, governmental corruption is a double-edged sword. Not only are citizens of nations dependent on the government to provide social services, they are fully aware that Arab governments in the process of establishing checks and balances of governmental power, are able to abuse their power without full disclosure or accountability. “Economic corruption is the natural result of political corruption. In some counties corruption may be characterized as “structural” because individual abuse of public office and misuse of public finances are considered normal according to prevailing custom.”<sup>143</sup> Therefore, if the answer to ending corruption includes deep economic reform implementation and establishing mechanisms of accountability and transparency within the governing apparatus, structural corruption can only be eradicated by a similar process.<sup>144</sup> “There is a near-complete consensus that there is a serious failing in the Arab world, and that this is located specifically in the political

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> “Arab Human Development Report: Towards Freedom in the Arab World.” United Nations Development Programme. Executive Summary. p. 7 [www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr\\_2004/AHDR\\_2004\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr_2004/AHDR_2004_Executive_Summary.pdf).

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>140</sup> “Overview: the Arab States.” United Nations Population Fund. [http://www.unfpa.org/profile/arab\\_overview.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/profile/arab_overview.htm)

<sup>141</sup> “2005 World Population Data Sheet.” Population Reference Bureau. [http://www.prb.org/pdf05/05WorldDataSheet\\_Eng.pdf#search=Population%20Reference%20Bureau%2C%202005%2C%20World%20Population%20Data%20Sheet](http://www.prb.org/pdf05/05WorldDataSheet_Eng.pdf#search=Population%20Reference%20Bureau%2C%202005%2C%20World%20Population%20Data%20Sheet)

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> “Arab Human Development Report: Towards Freedom in the Arab World.” United Nations Development Programme. Executive Summary. p.17 [www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr\\_2004/AHDR\\_2004\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr_2004/AHDR_2004_Executive_Summary.pdf)

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

sphere,”<sup>145</sup> and if the repressive governance continues, there is a greater likelihood that societal conflict will continue or flourish in order to eliminate injustice.<sup>146</sup> “Without the majority of people behind them, most Arab regimes resorted to other sources of legitimacy: traditional (religious/tribal), revolutionary (nationalist/liberation) or patriarchal, claiming authority based on the wisdom of the ‘family head.’”<sup>147</sup> There is also a very clear division between Islamic parties on one hand and liberal/nationalist parties on the other, both vying for the attention and adoration by the region’s populace. It is claimed that numerous failures to accomplish said tasks: the question of Palestine, pan-Arab cooperation, foreign intervention, the advancement of human development and popular dissent, are all driving the Arab region into a crisis of legitimacy.<sup>148</sup>

In addition to government corruption and ineffective governing over the entire territory, economic disasters involving heavy economic and political centralization and a minimal free market economy has put much distance between the Arab region and another much more troubled region, South East Asia. For example, Iraq is one of 3 countries with Iran and Turkey that hold 2/3rds of the available freshwater resources in the Arab region, which exacerbates the scarcity. Oil-rich Gulf States such as Kuwait pay for desalinization processes, something which countries like Yemen cannot afford.

The outlook for the impact of conflict in the Arab region on accomplishing the MDGs by 2015 is, therefore, both positive and negative. There are several countries on their way to accomplishing several, if not all of the MDGs at the 1st review period in 2005 and there are an equal number of those that were noticeably behind in the last ADHR, and sadly, continue to be. While there is no general statement to make that all the countries in the latter category have had internal, external, religious, ethnic and natural resource conflict in the past and present that is continuing to hinder their ability to accomplish the millennium development targets and goals, there is evidence to support a correlation between the countries struggling to accomplish the MDGs in 2006 and those that have had one or any number of the aforementioned conflicts in the last decade. Couple the physical conflict with corruption at the governmental level and/or absence of some form of free-market economic reforms, and there is much room to discuss the possible success of the countries that are currently failing to meet the development goals, and to project the outcome of those countries that are currently on their way to fulfilling their fifteen millennium promises.

### **Conclusion**

Achieving the MDGs in all Arab countries will continue to be an enormous challenge for the region, though not impossible. According to the UNDP the Arab states could still meet the MDGs with the conditions that immediate action will be taken with clear development priorities.<sup>149</sup> It has been made clear to many “governments, growing segments of civil society and the general population that curbing rapid population growth, investing in girls’ education and reducing high maternal mortality ratios contribute to socio-economic development and stronger families,” and the achievement of many other development goals.<sup>150</sup> Some nations have had their share of success in achieving or partially achieving the goals while still dealing with many of the same issues that plague the greater Middle Eastern and Arab world. For nations ravaged by conflict achieving the goals alone seems nearly impossible. Realizing all eight goals will take at the least increased support from national governments, cooperation between the more developed states of the region with the LDCs, fighting corruption, and addressing the consequences of conflict in the region. Though the states of the Arab world may not be able to entirely eradicate conflict, they do have the opportunity to reduce and/or eliminate the crippling effects of violent conflict within the region and potentially provide an opportunity for development.<sup>151</sup>

### **Committee Directive**

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p. 19.

<sup>146</sup> “Arab Governments Suffer From Crisis of Legitimacy.” *Arab Human Development Report 2004*. April 5, 2005.  
[www.undp.org/rbas/adhr](http://www.undp.org/rbas/adhr)

<sup>147</sup> “Arab Human Development Report: Towards Freedom in the Arab World.” United Nations Development Programme. Executive Summary. p. 16. [www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr\\_2004/AHDR\\_2004\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr_2004/AHDR_2004_Executive_Summary.pdf)

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 16

<sup>149</sup> “Overview: the Arab States.” United Nations Population Fund. [http://www.unfpa.org/profile/arab\\_overview.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/profile/arab_overview.htm)

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> See Johan Galtung for a deeper understanding of the different kinds of violence, including structural and cultural violence. Galtung, Johan. “Cultural Violence.” *Journal of Peace Research*, 27 (3), 291-305; and Hugh Miall, et. al. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. 2005. p. 15



While this background guide serves as a basic overview of the achievement of the MDGs within the Arab region and the effects of conflict on achieving them, it should not serve as the area of research available to the committee. While there are several countries that have been highlighted within this topic, each country should be more than familiar with the efforts their country has made in attaining the MDGs by researching their country profiles through several sources such as the Arab Human Development Report. Secondly, it is important to also analyze the myriad ways in which conflict effects the achievement of the MDGs and sustainable human development. Your goal as representatives of your country is to find all, if any, underlying connectors between the achievement of the MDGs and lasting peace and sustainability. You should focus your efforts in addressing this topic on the overarching systemic issues apparent. What recommendations may the League of Arab States make in order to create a foundation for the achievement of the MDGs? What coordinating and capacity building measures and precautions it offer its Member States?

### **III. Institutional Capacity Building**

*"Specifically, capacity building encompasses the country's human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional and resource capabilities. A fundamental goal of capacity building is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options, based on an understanding of environment potentials and limits and of needs perceived by the people of the country concerned."*<sup>152</sup>

#### ***Introduction***

The League of Arab States encompasses a region of the world steeped in rich history and culture. From the Fertile Crescent and Mesopotamia to the Pyramids of Egypt, this area gave began as a nexus of civilization as our modern world knows it. However, today many people are ignorant of the region's illustrious past and are not convinced of the possibility that it also has a bright future. However, while it may be best to hold an optimistic view of the potential of the region, it is also important to be realistic in approaching its current circumstances. While the region was once the center of art, literature, science and culture, it now may be considered to be the center of world affairs in a vastly distinct way. Unfortunately, for the majority of the last century the area has seen unpredictable, unstable and violent social and political changes.

These changes have not only slowed down regional economic and social development, they have also vastly impacted surrounding countries and the international community as a whole. The League of Arab States was created to coordinate economic, social and political issues between Arab countries. However, the region has lacked significant integration, which has not contributed to achieving lasting peace and stability and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). One of the ways that the League of Arab States may be able to address the needs of the Arab region would be to increase its efforts in coordinating and expanding the use of human and institutional capabilities, a process known as capacity building. Capacity building allows countries and organizations the ability to address a multitude of issues by increasing their abilities rather than the multitude of issues and their 'symptoms.' In this way, you can actually attack many different problems by developing the individuals and institutions that do address them in the same capacities.

#### ***What is Capacity Building?***

Capacity-building is a broad area which addresses development at different levels of society; it deals with entities of different size and scope and through the different stages of the development process.<sup>153</sup> The capacity of people and institutions can determine the extent to which a country can develop sustainably.<sup>154</sup> Capacity-building encompasses a wide variety of endeavors including the country's human, scientific, technological, organizational, and institutional

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<sup>152</sup> "Capacity Building: Agenda 21, Chapter 37." United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Division for Sustainable Development. <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/english/agenda21chapter37.htm>

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

and resource capabilities.<sup>155</sup> The main goal of capacity-building is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and forms of implementation among development options. This is done based on an understanding of potentials and limits associated with the issue at hand and of needs as perceived by the people of the country concerned.<sup>156</sup> This proves that the need to strengthen national capacities is a responsibility that all States can participate in order to effectively address a variety of issues at once by expanding the capability of the actors that support them.

In 1991, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Institute for Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering organized the symposium “A Strategy for Water Sector Capacity Building.” Delegates from developing countries, European Space Agency (ESA) and supporting institutes defined “capacity building” as the creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks; institutional development including community participation (or women in particular); and human resource development and strengthening of managerial systems.<sup>157</sup> While capacity building was defined in 1991 by the UNDP and an environmental organization, it is important to note that many similar capacity building initiatives can be used across sectors.

The UNDP recognizes that capacity building is a long-term continuing process, in which all stakeholders participate (ministries, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and water user groups, professional associations, academics and others).<sup>158</sup> It focuses on existing initiatives, commitments and potential as distinct from relief, which addresses problems and needs.<sup>159</sup> One of the aims of capacity building is to build partnerships at different levels, which requires shared commitments and objectives. Capacity Building is much more than training and includes human resource development, the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively; organizational development, the elaboration of management structures, processes and procedures, not only within organizations but also the management of relationships between the different organizations and sectors (public, private and community); and institutional and legal framework development, making legal and regulatory changes to enable organizations, institutions and agencies at all levels and in all sectors to enhance their capacities.<sup>160</sup> In plain terms what this all means is providing technical support and training, advisory services and specialized expertise in favor of regional, national and local institutions or structures.<sup>161</sup>

Capacity building also encompasses human resource development (HRD) as an essential part of development based on the concept that education and training lie at the heart of development efforts and that without HRD most development interventions will be ineffective.<sup>162</sup> HRD focuses on actions directed at helping participants in the development process to increase their knowledge, skills and understandings and to develop the attitudes needed to bring about the desired developmental change. The FAO recognizes human recourse capacity development as a pre-requisite for broader social and economic development.<sup>163</sup> Another essential mechanism for capacity building is partnership development.<sup>164</sup> Partnerships give a local NGO access to: knowledge and skills; innovative and proven methodologies; networking and funding opportunities; replicable models for addressing community needs and

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Furley, Kemlin et. al. editors. *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 1998

<sup>160</sup> “Defining Capacity Building.” The Global Development Research Center.  
<http://www.gdrc.org/uem/capacity-define.html>

<sup>161</sup> Furley, Kemlin et. al. editors. *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 1998

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> L. Van Crowder. “Human Resource and Institutional Capacity Building through Agricultural Education.” Food and Agricultural Organization. 1996

<sup>164</sup> Furley, Kemlin et. al. editors. *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 1998

managing resources; options for organizational management and governance; and strategies for advocacy, government relations and public outreach.<sup>165</sup>

The needs for capacity building are always changing and the solutions to meet these challenges must also continue to be innovative. While local government, communities and NGOs are the proponents of capacity building, central government, the private commercial sector and regional agencies also should make use of it.<sup>166</sup> Community groups, often with strong NGO support, need to improve their capacity to plan, organize and manage their neighborhoods.<sup>167</sup> Departments of local government play an increasingly important role in enabling community groups to enhance their capacities and effectiveness.<sup>168</sup>

### *Examples of Capacity Building in the Arab Region*

While many regions of the world have been practicing capacity building for a longer period of time, it is a relatively new concept that is just beginning to be put into place by some of the LAS Member States and within the Middle East as a region. However, there are several particular examples of capacity building focusing on a number of sectors that desperately need it.

The Arab Partnership for Conflict Prevention & Human Security in the Arab world expands the ability for civil society organizations to take an active role in conflict prevention and human security. Their success critically depends on their ability to sustain their own organizational survival and capacity for reaching out and helping others.<sup>169</sup> In order to achieve this goal, they have begun to develop skills for working with governments, understanding and applying concepts of good governance, developing mission statements, creating credible action agendas and building realistic fundraising and budgeting strategies.<sup>170</sup>

The League of Arab States and UNHCR are working with Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen to help build infrastructure for refugee neighborhoods.<sup>171</sup> By building and providing means to allow refugees to become self sufficient, LAS and UNHCR are promoting the creation of stronger national infrastructures enhancing the capacity building principles. They are working with local government to provide schools and housing for refugees seeking 3rd county asylum. However, they do not have much of a choice in regards to asylum countries outside to the region so they are forced to often stay within the areas of conflict.<sup>172</sup> Current asylum procedures limit and in some cases deny the options of these persons the move freely within the region. UNHCR and the LAS are working together on asylum and refugee law to give countries a greater authority in the protection process of refugees, and example of capacity building which will enhance the already existing institution surrounding refugee law.<sup>173</sup> The countries of Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic are not part of the 1951 Refugee Convention, but the UNHCR continues to work with them and will continue to encourage them to sign the 1951 convention.<sup>174</sup> By building mechanisms to allow these persons to contribute to the nations the can serve as additional resources in the building of the national infrastructure within the Arab region.

The Arab International Women's Forum is working to improve institutional and legal framework to provide increased opportunities for women in business and to help women in all levels of government throughout the Arab

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<sup>165</sup> Md. Habidur Rahman. "The Role of the Accountant in Poverty Alleviation Through Capacity Building." *The Cost and Management*. July-August, 2005.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> "The Arab Partnership for Conflict Prevention & Human Security: Middle East Action Agenda." The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict.

[http://www.gppac.org/documents/GPPAC/Regional\\_Action\\_Agendas/MENA\\_RAA\\_June\\_05.doc](http://www.gppac.org/documents/GPPAC/Regional_Action_Agendas/MENA_RAA_June_05.doc)

<sup>170</sup> Ibid

<sup>171</sup> "The Middle East." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/publ/opendoc.pdf?id=41ab28d5c&tbl=PUBL>

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

region.<sup>175</sup> The inclusion of women in the economic process can be a fundamental catalyst for dynamic social and economic development.<sup>176</sup> The Arab States region is home to some 320 million people living in 22 countries, and women comprise 43% of the population in the region.<sup>177</sup> The least developed countries, which represent 22 percent of the population of the region, and rural areas have generally fared poorly both economically and developmentally.<sup>178</sup> Fewer than 20% of women are employed in the non-agricultural sector, and women occupy only a small percentage (about 5%) of legislative seats in the region.<sup>179</sup> However, the prospects of women are rising every day due to many capacity building measures leading to women's substantial and rising contributions to the local, national and global economy.<sup>180</sup> Still too many women remain excluded from the economic mainstream, to the detriment of their societies, their families and their own individual lives.<sup>181</sup> In many Arab states women continue to suffer from gender inequality which limits their access to the full benefits of society.<sup>182</sup> Women in the region are still facing difficulties in reaching leadership positions in corporations and/or running lasting and efficient entrepreneurial ventures.<sup>183</sup> One of the reasons identified is lack of awareness of the opportunities available, which represents a gap that could be filled by capacity initiatives.<sup>184</sup> Another is the need for specific management skills and competencies, as well as the need for more solid links with partners in Europe and other regions.<sup>185</sup> The full integration of women into society serves to further the goals of capacity building by allowing nations to carry out their functions and achieve desired results over time.<sup>186</sup>

The United Nations University's International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU/INWEH) in the Middle East has identified and been developing projects and fund-raising opportunities since 1998.<sup>187</sup> The Arab Gulf Program for UN Development Organizations (AGFUND) in Saudi Arabia and the Zayed Charitable Foundation in Abu Dhabi has considered employing project-specific funding and operational grants.<sup>188</sup> UNU/INWEH, the UNDP and the Islamic University of Gaza have been diligently working on several capacity-building proposals in response to urgent water sector needs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip identified by the Palestinian Ministry of Environment and the Palestinian Water Authority.<sup>189</sup> Other regional UNU/INWEH initiatives currently are and have included: projects on environmental database systems and pollution of water in the UAE; a cooperative project to assess the aquatic impacts of effluents from sewage treatment plants in Saudi Arabia; participation in the organization, delivery and certification of water-related training programs and creation of an "Environmental Management Training Center" in Jordan and organization and delivery of workshop programs on "Environmental Management Information Systems" throughout the region.<sup>190</sup> These programs provide a basis for work currently underway in the region. The future work taken up by this committee should further refine these efforts, while maintaining the focus on building sustainable means of ensuring future development.

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<sup>175</sup> "2005 Programme Report & Recommendations Women as Engines of Economic Growth in the Arab World." Arab International Women's Forum. [http://www.aiwfonline.co.uk/downloads/AIWF%202005%20Report%20&%20Recommendations%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.aiwfonline.co.uk/downloads/AIWF%202005%20Report%20&%20Recommendations%20(English).pdf)

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> "Overview: The Arab States." United Nations Population Fund. [http://www.unfpa.org/profile/arab\\_overview.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/profile/arab_overview.htm)

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> "2005 Programme Report & Recommendations Women as Engines of Economic Growth in the Arab World." Arab International Women's Forum. [http://www.aiwfonline.co.uk/downloads/AIWF%202005%20Report%20&%20Recommendations%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.aiwfonline.co.uk/downloads/AIWF%202005%20Report%20&%20Recommendations%20(English).pdf).

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> "Capacity-building of women's national machinery for promoting gender equality in selected ESCWA member countries." Economic and Social Council for Western Asia. <http://www.escwa.org.lb/divisions/pptcd/upload/CfW.pdf#search=%22women%20arab%20capacity%20building%22>.

<sup>183</sup> "2005 Programme Report & Recommendations Women as Engines of Economic Growth in the Arab World." Arab International Women's Forum. [http://www.aiwfonline.co.uk/downloads/AIWF%202005%20Report%20&%20Recommendations%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.aiwfonline.co.uk/downloads/AIWF%202005%20Report%20&%20Recommendations%20(English).pdf)

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> "Grassroots Women Gaining a Voice." United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=46136&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=46136&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

<sup>187</sup> "UNU-INWEH water health seminar." United Nations University- International Network on Water, Environment and Health. <http://www.inweh.unu.edu/inweh>

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

In 2004 the International Human Rights Network (INRN) was commissioned in order to provide support for Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working to enhance and strengthen capacity building in Iraq. They serve to facilitate a better understanding of the challenges faced by the human rights community in Iraq and to address ways of meeting these challenges promote the building of long term professional relationships between Iraqis and regional and international human rights experts and activists. This is considered to a crucial step in providing and maintaining sustainable growth throughout the nation.<sup>191</sup>

Adequate capacity building requires a sufficient level of communication. Today, it is easier to communicate ideas across long distances and through several cultures and languages than it ever has been before. Greater communication can allow for better understanding of issues and efficiency in addressing them. However, access to communication technology is not equitable between countries and communities. Another capacity building measure within the Arab region is by the Economic and Social Council for Western Asia (ESCWA) which is driving technology capacity building initiatives for their member states. Their initiatives strive to increase the effectiveness of science and technology capacity building initiatives including technopoles, incubators and high-technology industry clusters.<sup>192</sup> These initiatives also include management of integrated policies, economic analysis and forecasting, data collection for improved planning and decision-making and the advancement of women.<sup>193</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

As you have read above, expanding capacity within one sector can greatly enhance the capacity of others. Effective assessment and design processes must take into account ways in which capacity in other areas are likely to be affected. The Arab region, and thereby, the League of Arab States has not as actively pursued institutional capacity building measures as other regions and organizations has. However, the time has come to research and employ methods of bridging the gap between wanting to affect change around utilizing the human and organizational abilities available.

### ***Committee Directive***

This issue can cover a variety of capacity building schemes. However, it is important that delegates focus their attention on capacity building of LAS and other Arab institutions and frameworks rather than the issues that these organizations address. What kinds of capacity building measures would be particularly suited to LAS Member States? Should initiatives begin at regional, local or international levels? On the other hand, what would be the impact of creating capabilities that address several levels at once? Who should design and implement initiatives? How should those initiatives be manage? What involvement should LAS have in the capacity building schemes of its Member States?

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<sup>191</sup> "Human Rights NGO Capacity-Building Iraq: Next Steps Report." International Human Rights Network. <http://www.ihrnetwork.org/iraqngos/index.php?id=232>.

<sup>192</sup> "About Us: Initiatives and Schemes." Economic and Social Council for Western Asia Network of Technology Parks and Incubation Schemes. <http://www.escwa.org.lb/nmpi/initiatives.asp>

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.