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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

# **Status of Urban Development Policy in the ESCWA Region**

**A summary of policies and programmes**



**United Nations**  
Beirut, 2019

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The Economic Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) comprises 18 Arab countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

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## Chapter I: Global and Regional Frameworks for the ESCWA Region and their Significance in Fostering Urban Development by the Year 2030

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, the Agenda 2030 aims to chart out a better, safer, and more sustainable future for our planet. The Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form a framework for global accountability to achieve targeted results in vital areas such as eradication of poverty and hunger, quality education, sustained health, stable employment, a sustainable environment, accountable institutions, and others.

In this framework, Goal 11 “Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable” charts out priorities in urban development. Its 10 targets comprise topics such as housing and basic services, accessible transport systems, governance, cultural and natural heritage, disasters, including water-related, environment, green and public spaces, rural-urban linkages, resource consumption, climate change, risk management, and technical/financial assistance to encourage local material usage for resilient buildings in least developed countries. Acknowledging the fact that urbanization is fundamental for achieving a prosperous, sustainable future is a prerequisite for attaining the SDGs.

The New Urban Agenda (NUA) represents, yet another, global framework that fosters urban sustainability. Adopted by UN-Habitat III Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in Quito in 2016, the NUA provides an action plan for sustainable urban development. Specifically, it is based on three guiding principles: urban equity and poverty eradication; sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity; and ecological resilient cities and human settlements. In focus, it provides the fundamental parameters that would properly guide urban strategies in cities. In turn, these parameters encompass urban policies, urban governance, urban planning and design, local economy and municipal finance, and local implementation.<sup>1 2</sup>

These two global frameworks share a common vision for a more sustainable urban future. Particularly, the NUA underscores the vital relationship between increasing urbanization and an improved standard of living.

In order to highlight the synergies between the NUA and the SDGs, UN-Habitat and partners in the UN system have elaborated an “Action Framework for Implementation of the New Urban

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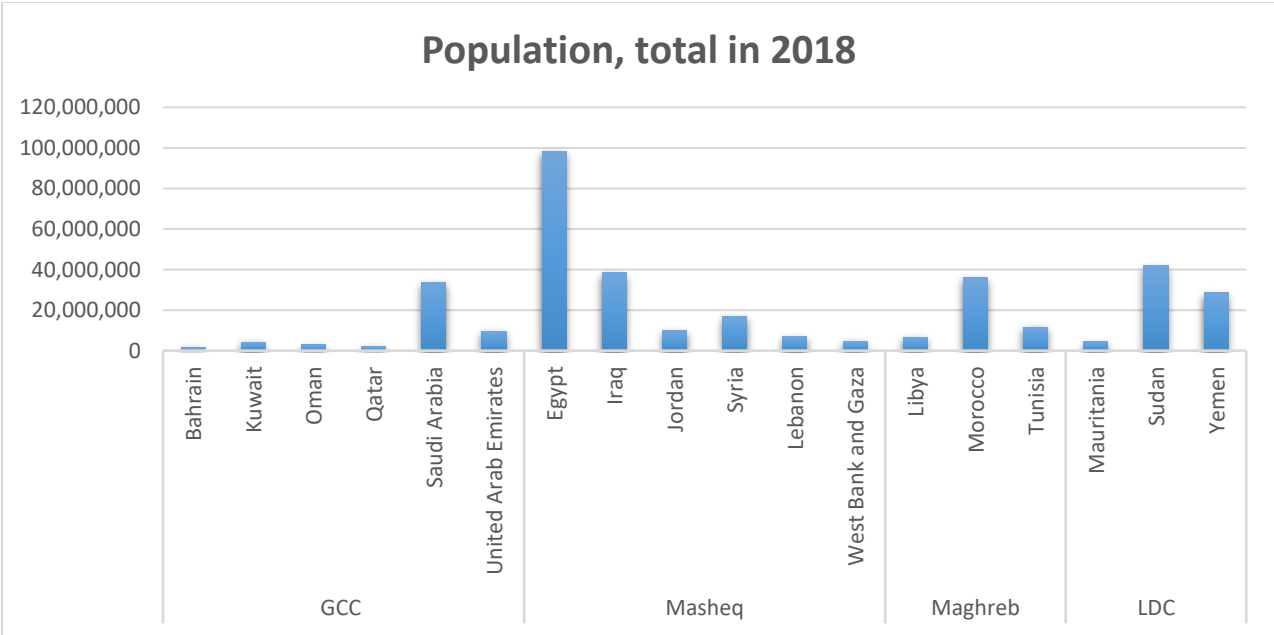
<sup>1</sup> The New Urban Agenda has been formally Adopted. So what happens next? (2016). Retrieved from: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/11/last-month-a-new-global-agreement-to-drive-sustainable-urban-development-was-reached-so-what-is-it-and-happens-next/>

<sup>2</sup> New Urban Agenda (2016), pp. iv. Available at: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>

Agenda (AFINUA, 2017)<sup>3</sup>. The Action framework relates the individual articles of the New Urban Agenda to one or more SDG indicators. For example, indicators pertaining to Goal 11 are matched with about 65 issues mentioned in the NUA. Other SDGs are also related such as SDG 8 regarding employment, SDG 7 considering energy, SDG 6 concerning water issues, SDG 3 for health, SDG 13 for climate change, SDG 2 for food security, SDG 4 for education and culture, SDG 5 regarding gender, SDG 12 concerning sustainable consumption and production, and SDG 15 mirroring the issue of biodiversity. Indeed, while the New Urban Agenda requires its own implementation process and follow-up mechanisms, it is important to remember that it is complementary to the several Goals and targets mentioned in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

For the ESCWA region, urbanization is an accelerating development trend. Figure 1 presents the current population dynamics and the status of urbanization in 2018. It shows that in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the population is highly concentrated in cities. In the most populous countries of the non-GCC ESCWA region such as Egypt, Morocco, and Sudan, the percentage of the urban population tends to be smaller, but nevertheless, rural-urban migration tends to increase urbanization.

**Figure 1: Total Population of ESCWA member countries, 2018**

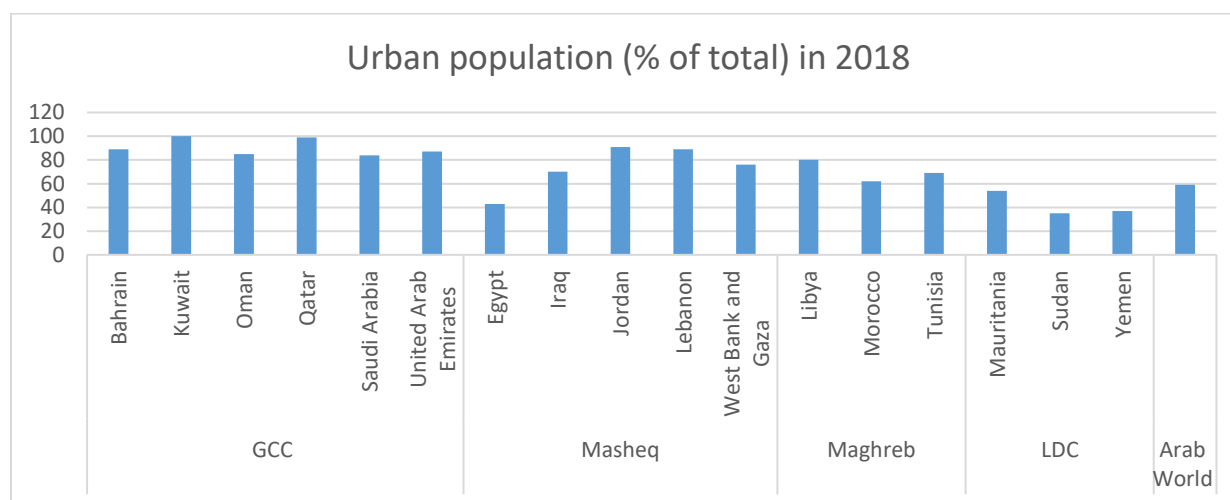


Source: The World Bank (2018). *Population (total)*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Action Framework for implementation of the New Urban Agenda (2017). Available at: <http://nua.unhabitat.org/AFINUA19thApr.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Data from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=SY-BH-LB-QA-AE-OM-KW-SA-EG-JO-IQ-MA-LY-TN-YE-SD-MR-1A-PS>

**Figure 2: Urban population in ESCWA member countries, 2018**



Source: The World Bank (2018). *Urban population (% of total)*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=SY-BH-LB-QA-AE-OM-KW-SA-EG-JO-IQ-MA-LY-TN-YE-SD-MR-1A-PS>

In order to strengthen Arab regional cooperation on sustainable urban development, the League of Arab States (LAS) in coordination with UN-Habitat and other partners developed “The Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030”<sup>5</sup>. This Strategy aims at guiding the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and related SDGs in the Arab region according to the region’s specificities. It identifies the main regional challenges as being: Housing, basic services and infrastructure; Urban demographics; Land and Planning; Urban administration and legislations; Urban environmental sustainability and climate change; and productivity/urban economy, related to SDG 11.1 (housing, basic services and infrastructure), SDG 11.A (equity and social cohesion through developing rural-urban linkages), SDG 11.3 (formulating national integrated policies for sustainable human settlements) and SDG 11.5 and 11.6 (improving urban environmental sustainability and resilience against climate change (SDG 11.6 and 11.5)). An Executive Plan guides implementation 2019-2030.

## **Chapter II: Trends of Urbanization in the ESCWA Region According to the Targets of SDG 11**

Across the ESCWA region, strong rural-urban migration is fueling rapid urban growth with an average annual growth rate of 2.4 percent in 2017.<sup>6</sup> Despite considerable progress in certain

<sup>5</sup> Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030 (2016). Available at: <https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Arab-Strategy-English.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The World Bank (2018). *Urban population growth (annual %)*. Arab World. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.GROW?locations=1A>

countries to engage with urban sprawl, urban policies have to be more comprehensive while addressing the specific needs of the population. In this chapter, we take stock of relevant urban policies and trends according to the targets of SDG 11, clustered by GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia), Mashreq countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria), Maghreb countries (Libya, Morocco, Tunisia) and the LDCs (Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen).

***SDG 11.1: By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums***

Increasing urban sprawl often includes informal settlements, which document sustained crisis in housing and adequate accommodation. These settlements often do not follow official building legislations, have no exact boundaries, and have weak, inadequate infrastructure. According to the World Health Organization<sup>7</sup>, basic services in these settlements are of poor quality. For instance, water is non-potable and sanitation is deficient; making inhabitants susceptible to a wide range of illnesses. Additionally, electricity is non-reliable, and the heating facilities are often elementary. Overcrowding is also a huge problem for these settlements, and they are often seen as pockets of poverty and violence.

The first target of SDG 11 has only one indicator – the proportion of the urban population living in slums, informal settlements, and inadequate housing. Effectively, in 2018, there was 1 billion people living in slums globally, expected to reach 2 billion by 2030<sup>8</sup>. The open data presented by the World Bank Open Data indicate that, in 2014, 33 percent of the population in the ESCWA region was living in slums.<sup>9</sup>

***GCC Countries***

GCC countries represent the most developed countries in the Arab region. They are characterized by large inflows of migrants, searching for jobs. High demand for housing remains a common problem that is faced by all the GCC countries, especially for young people who have to pay most of their wages on home-purchasing. **Kuwait**, for instance, is known as a city-state as most of its population is concentrated in the Kuwait Metropolitan area – covering about 8 percent of the country's total land. As for the issue of affordable housing, efforts have been made by the Public

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<sup>7</sup> WHO (n.d.). *People Living in Informal Settlements*. Available at: <https://www.who.int/ceh/indicators/informalsettlements.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Habitat for Humanity Ireland. (n.d.). 1 billion people live in slums. Retrieved from: <https://www.habitatireland.ie/2018/01/1-billion-people-live-slums/>

<sup>9</sup> The World Bank (2014). *Population living in slums (% of urban population)*. *Arab World*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.SLUM.UR.ZS?locations=1A>

Authority of Housing Welfare such as establishing the Kuwait Credit Bank that provides one-time free interest housing loan for married Kuwaiti citizens.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the Kuwait National Development plan (2015-2020) focuses on the housing sector by investing in 500 projects related to infrastructure, utilities, and housing.<sup>11</sup> The **United Arab Emirates** is 86.5 percent urbanized, with most of its inhabitants concentrated in the three largest emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah. While Abu Dhabi presents a quota for affordable housing when it comes to new developments, however, Dubai still needs to implement such a measure.<sup>12</sup> A ‘National Housing Policy for Residential Communities’ initiative, in line with the UAE Vision 2021, has been approved by the government in an effort to alter the structure of residential communities and improve the standards of living in the UAE.<sup>13</sup> **Qatar** is working on increasing the housing supply for both citizens and expats through the National Housing Strategy – part of the Qatar Master Plan 2030.<sup>14</sup> **By 2030**, 97.6 percent of Saudi Arabia’s population is expected to become urbanized with the capital Riyadh taking in most of the influx.<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that millions of low and middle-income earners in Saudi are unable to afford buying new homes. Years of savings are required before young Saudis can afford to take such a step.<sup>16</sup> Effectively, there seems to be a mismatch of high prices and low salaries. In order to boost Saudi ownership of houses to 70 percent by 2030, the Kingdom is working on a new housing program with 120 billion Riyals reserved as funding.<sup>17</sup> Considered an imperative center of trade with the rest of the Gulf, the capital of **Bahrain**, Manama, exhibits a highly urbanized population. The Kingdom, however, faces the issue of affordable housing. A program entitled “Mazaya” has been introduced in 2019 by the Ministry of Housing along with the private sector that provides immediate housing for citizens who are listed on the Ministry’s waiting lists. The program, however, only targets Bahraini

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<sup>10</sup> UN Habitat - National Report Kuwait Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, pp. 64. (2016). Retrieved from : <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Report-Asia-Pacific-Kuwait-Final-in-English.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Oxford Business Group (2015). Retrieved from: <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/analysis/setting-wheel-motion-new-development-plan-lays-out-ambitious-project-agenda>

<sup>12</sup> The affordable housing challenge re-examined (2018). Retrieved from: <https://gulfnews.com/business/property/the-affordable-housing-challenge-re-examined-1.2187408>

<sup>13</sup> Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid unveils new Emirati housing strategy (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/sheikh-mohammed-bin-rashid-unveils-new-emirati-housing-strategy-1.811387>

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Municipality and Environment - Qatar National Housing Strategy (n.d.). Retrieved from: <http://www.mme.gov.qa/QatarMasterPlan/English/strategicplans.aspx?panel=housing>

<sup>15</sup> UN Habitat Saudi Arabia – Urban Issues (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/saudi-arabia-urban-issues/>

<sup>16</sup> Poor Saudi slums highlight wider housing problems (2014). Retrieved from: <https://www.denverpost.com/2014/01/11/poor-saudi-slums-highlight-wider-housing-problems/>

<sup>17</sup> Saudi Arabia unveils new housing programme to boost ownership (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.thenational.ae/business/property/saudi-arabia-unveils-new-housing-programme-to-boost-home-ownership-1.702221>



citizens.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the issue of affordable housing is being taken care of by the **Omani** government in collaboration with the private sector. Effectively, in March 2019, it was announced that more than a thousand adequate and affordable housing units are to be built in Barka.<sup>19</sup> The current social housing programs in Oman include: Social Housing Program; Housing Assistance Program; and Housing Loan Program.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the issue of inadequate infrastructure and basic services entails Oman and Saudi Arabia. Particularly, **Oman** still needs to improve its infrastructure and its electricity in urban and rural settlements. The demographic changes in **Saudi Arabia** increased the demand for basic services such as water and electricity, which partly still need to be addressed. Improvements, however, have been made in Qatar, Kuwait and UAE. **Qatar**, for instance, has introduced the “Tarsheed” Law No. 20/2015 that raises awareness on the optimal consumption of water.<sup>21</sup> According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, **Qatar** has managed to provide affordable access to electricity and clean water.<sup>22</sup> In the **UAE**, the Fujairah emirate is working on improving housing facilities through its Fujairah 2040 Plan<sup>23</sup>. In terms of water use, the UAE developed the National Strategy for Preserving Water Resources to rationalize the use of water. Additionally, the government has improved the provision of clean water, sanitation, and sewerage.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, in **Kuwait**, it is expected that the National Plan would increase the provision of infrastructure by 15-20 percent.<sup>25</sup> Basic services – particularly sanitation – in the country are extended to everyone, including women and people with disabilities.<sup>26</sup> **Bahrain** has faced no issues regarding this target of the SDG 11. In the 2018

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<sup>18</sup> Kingdom of Bahrain – Ministry of Housing (n.d.). Retrieved from:

<http://www.housing.gov.bh/en/Services/Pages/Social-Housing-Finance-Scheme.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> Oman – More than 1,000 affordable houses to come up in Barka (2019). Retrieved from:

<https://menafn.com/1098305217/Oman-More-than-1000-affordable-houses-to-come-up-in-Barka>

<sup>20</sup> Ministry looks at feasibility of transferring affordable loans programme to Oman housing bank (2018). Retrieved from: <https://muscatdaily.com/Archive/Oman/Ministry-looks-at-feasibility-of-transferring-affordable-loans-programme-to-Oman-Housing-Bank-5bsh>

<sup>21</sup> Law on water and power waste in force (2016). Retrieved from:

<https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/24/01/2016/Law-on-water-and-power-waste-in-force>

<sup>22</sup> Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform - Qatar Voluntary National Review (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/qatar>

<sup>23</sup> The Official Portal of the UAE Government (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://government.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/local-governments-strategies-and-plans/fujairah-2040-plan>

<sup>24</sup> The official portal of the UAE government – Clean water and sanitation (n.d.). Retrieved from:

<https://www.government.ae/en/about-the-uae/leaving-no-one-behind/6cleanwaterandsanitation>

<sup>25</sup> Privacy Shield – Country Commercial Guide (n.d.). Retrieved from:

<https://www.privacyshield.gov/article?id=Kuwait-Infrastructure>

<sup>26</sup> The World Bank (2017). *People using at least basic sanitation services (% of population)*. Kuwait. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data:

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.BASS.ZS?end=2015&locations=BH&start=2015&view=bar>

voluntary national review, it is stated that 100 percent of its population has access to drinking water sources and improved sanitation facilities<sup>27</sup>. It is worth noting that neither the SDG Global Database nor the World Bank Open Data presents any statistics on slums for GCC countries, except for Saudi Arabia.

### ***Mashreq Countries***

The Mashreq countries are challenged by bad housing conditions, slums, and inefficient basic services for parts of their population. Inadequate housing is an issue in Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt. Due to continuous wars, the situation is similar in **Palestine** and Syria. In 2019, 4.7 million people are reported to need shelters in urban areas that are most densely populated.<sup>28</sup> Additionally a shortage of affordable housing and limited access to housing finance is a prominent case in **Jordan** and Lebanon, especially for low and middle-income earners. Essentially, **Lebanon** suffers from an increasing urban divide. The initiative “Keep Lebanon Green!” highlights issues such as poor sanitation, poverty, and the influx from rural and refugee migration in the eastern and southern parts of Beirut.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, due to the Syrian crisis and the already-existing Palestinian refugee camps, urban poverty has been increasing. The influx was mostly in poor neighborhoods. Due to outdated planning systems, ever since the civil war in 1975 the country is witnessing continuous electricity outages, with water being either of poor quality or happens to get lost in the sewage networks. The water storage capacity is low and is further aggravated due to the mismanagement of resources.<sup>30</sup>

In **Iraq** (excluding the governorates of Kurdistan), informal settlements cover a small part of the neighborhood, mostly those occupied by IDPs, and economic migrants, which have little access to water, sanitation and waste management. Approximately 1/3 of Iraqi households use public sanitation services, two-third of whom live in urban areas.<sup>31</sup>

**Egypt** has developed several programmes to address the spread of informal housing in and around the cities with a constant deterioration of basic public services. The Social Housing Program (SHP) had begun in Egypt in the year 2013 to replace all previous programs, dating back to the 1940s. Production levels, however, are considered low, reaching only a small portion of

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<sup>27</sup> The Kingdom of Bahrain’s First Voluntary National Review (2018). Available at:

<https://www.bahrain.bh/wps/wcm/connect/72881a32-957e-43eb-af3b-f245bff64ac9/SDGs+EN.PDF?MOD=AJPERES>

<sup>28</sup> Humanitarian Needs Overview Summary (2019). Available at:

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019\\_Syr\\_HNO\\_Summary.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019_Syr_HNO_Summary.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Understanding Beirut’s Slums and their rehabilitation (2011). Retrieved from:

<https://keeplebanongreen.wordpress.com/2011/08/22/lebanon-understanding-beiruts-slums-and-their-rehabilitation/>

<sup>30</sup> UN Habitat Lebanon – Urban Issues (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/lebanon/lebanon-urban-issues/>

<sup>31</sup> UN Habitat Iraq – Urban Issues (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/iraq/iraq-urban-issues/>

the desired target.<sup>32</sup> The Ministry of Housing claimed to have already developed 85 percent of Egypt's slum and is working on eradicating unsafe-areas by the end of 2019.<sup>33</sup> "Tahya Misr (2014)" aims to remove slums by building 15,000 units to rehouse 60,000 residents.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the country has established the Informal Settlements Development Fund (ISDF) back in 2008.<sup>35</sup> The German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has commissioned a program for the improvement of public services with an overall term of 2015-2021.<sup>36</sup> **Lebanon** has developed a national plan that addresses specifically the humanitarian refugee crisis. The "Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (2017-2020)"<sup>37</sup> addresses issues such as urban services in cooperation between the Government, United Nations agencies and NGOs, although housing is not specifically mentioned in this plan. Other projects include the Economic and Social Fund for Development which aims at community development. Its activities include improving potable water systems and upgrading health services in remote areas.<sup>38</sup> The Lebanese government has not developed a housing strategy but provides subsidized loans for home buyers. Affordable housing opportunities for low-income residents are an issue in **Jordan** as well.<sup>39</sup> Recently, the Jordanian 2025 Development Plan<sup>40</sup> specified "Quality, affordable housing, and safe neighborhoods" as one of its desired outcomes. Currently, there is no clear information as to whether **Palestine** or **Syria** have developed housing strategies. Only previously did Palestine develop a Strategic Plan for the Housing Sector for the years 2011-2013.<sup>41</sup> It appears that development is underway in Damascus for high-rise residential and shopping centers. The government seems to be focusing on attracting investments to join the expensive reconstruction.<sup>42</sup> In terms of facilities, **Palestine** is still formulating the National Spatial Plan (NSP)

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<sup>32</sup> UN Habitat – Egypt Housing Profile (2016), pp. 13-14. Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/books/egypt-housing-profile/>

<sup>33</sup> Egypt's Voluntary National Review (2018), pp.46. Available at: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20269EGY\\_VNR\\_2018\\_final\\_with\\_Hyperlink\\_972018\\_5b45d.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20269EGY_VNR_2018_final_with_Hyperlink_972018_5b45d.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Egypt to be declared slum-free country by end of 2019 (2018). Retrieved from: <http://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/61300/Egypt-to-be-declared-slum-free-country-by-end-of>

<sup>35</sup> Cairo Urban Initiatives Platform – Informal Settlements Development Fund (ISDF) (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.cuipcairo.org/en/directory/informal-settlements-development-fund-isdf>

<sup>36</sup> GIZ - Improvement of Public Services (2015-2021). Retrieved from: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/36607.html>

<sup>37</sup> Lebanon Crisis Plan 2017-2020. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/67780.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Economic and Social Fund for Development. Available at: <http://www.esfd.cdr.gov.lb>

<sup>39</sup> Al-Homoud, M., Al-Oun, S., & Al-Hindawi, A. (2009). The low-income housing market in Jordan. *International Journal Of Housing Markets And Analysis*, 2(3), 233-252. doi: 10.1108/17538270910977536

<sup>40</sup> Jordan 2025 – A National Vision and Strategy. Available at: [http://www.nationalplanningcycles.org/sites/default/files/planning\\_cycle\\_repository/jordan/jo2025part1.pdf](http://www.nationalplanningcycles.org/sites/default/files/planning_cycle_repository/jordan/jo2025part1.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Palestinian National Authority – Ministry of Public Works and Housing - Strategic Plan for Developing the Housing Sector in Palestine (2010). Available at: [http://www.lacs.ps/documentsShow.aspx?ATT\\_ID=4778](http://www.lacs.ps/documentsShow.aspx?ATT_ID=4778)

<sup>42</sup> Luxury Marota City Project shows blueprint for Syria's rebuilding plans (2018). Retrieved from: <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1399411/middle-east>

targeting the infrastructure and services sector.<sup>43</sup> Although **Iraq** faces challenges related to reconstruction after decades of armed conflict, most recently involving ISIS, it has clearly developed a strategy for housing. Specifically, it has introduced the Iraqi National Housing Policy in 2010 through the Ministry of Construction and Housing. In 2018, The Ministry of Planning in cooperation with the World Bank developed the Iraq Reconstruction and Development Framework<sup>44</sup>. The same year, another reconstruction project in Mosul has been carried out by UN-Habitat that aims to rebuild houses and rehabilitate impaired structures.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, housing is targeted in the Regional Strategic Development Vision for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq 2020<sup>46</sup>. Adequate public services are mentioned in the National Development Plan (2018-2022)<sup>47</sup>.

### ***Maghreb Countries***

Informal settlements are a common challenge for Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. **Libya's** determination to develop a framework for managing and planning, residential communities, infrastructure, and services, has been expressed in the National Spatial Development Policy (2006-2030)<sup>48</sup>. No further information on this policy, however, has been mentioned since the conflict. Nonetheless, "Rebuilding National Infrastructure" is part of the Libya 2020 Vision<sup>49</sup>. It is worth mentioning that this vision is prepared by Libyan Citizens involving civil society organizations, media, students, leaders of the community and leaders of businesses, among others. Moreover, the UNFPA is working on an interim country strategic plan for the year 2019-2020 which provides access to basic services for all vulnerable groups.<sup>50</sup>

**Tunisia** and **Morocco** are among the few countries in the ESCWA region with the most notable national commitments to slum upgrading and the production of affordable housing. According to the UN Habitat's Arab Cities Report (2012)<sup>51</sup>. Tunisia has been working on eliminating slums, regulating land tenure, and ensuring basic services to the urban poor. Nonetheless, affordable

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<sup>43</sup> UN Habitat Palestine – Urban Issues (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/palestine/urban-issues-palestine/>

<sup>44</sup> Iraq –Reconstruction and Development Framework (2018). Available at: <http://www.cabinet.iq/uploads/Iraq%20Reconstruction/Iraq%20Recons%20&%20Inves.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> The Initial Planning Framework for the Reconstruction of Mosul (2017). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/reconstruction-of-mosul/>

<sup>46</sup> Kurdistan Region of Iraq 2020, p.26. Available at: [http://www.ekrg.org/files/pdf/KRG\\_2020\\_last\\_english.pdf](http://www.ekrg.org/files/pdf/KRG_2020_last_english.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> National Development Plan (2018-2022), p. 32. Available at: [http://www.iraq-iccme.ip/pdf/archives/nationaldevelopmentplan2018\\_2022.pdf](http://www.iraq-iccme.ip/pdf/archives/nationaldevelopmentplan2018_2022.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> National Spatial Development Policy (2006-2030)

<sup>49</sup> Libya 2020 Vision – A Plan for Transformative Change by 2020. Available at: [http://www.nationalplanningcycles.org/sites/default/files/planning\\_cycle\\_repository/libyan\\_arab\\_jamahiriyah/libya-vision-2020\\_english.pdf](http://www.nationalplanningcycles.org/sites/default/files/planning_cycle_repository/libyan_arab_jamahiriyah/libya-vision-2020_english.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> Libya interim country strategic plan (2019-2020). Available at: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000101916/download/>

<sup>51</sup> Arab Cities Report (2012), pp. 97. Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/books/the-state-of-arab-cities-2012-challenges-of-urban-transition/>

land development has been insufficient, and inadequate and formal housing remains largely unaffordable for lower-income residents.<sup>52</sup> While no governmental strategy is in place, Cities Alliance – Cities Without Slums are implementing a non-governmental project “The Tunisia Country Programme” in two phases: the first one between 2016-2018, and the second between 2019-2023. The plan has 630 million dollars in funding to help municipalities fund critical infrastructure projects and is technically and financially supported by the World Bank.<sup>53</sup> In **Morocco**, Cities Without Slums<sup>54</sup> is a project initiated by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Policy in 2004<sup>55</sup> that aims to eradicate slums across 85 cities to end unsanitary housing, social exclusion, and lessen homegrown violent extremism. Moreover, the reconstruction of underequipped neighborhoods and improvement of basic services’ extension to vulnerable groups is targeted in the Greater Casablanca Development Plan PDGC (2015-2021)<sup>56</sup>. Construction projects in Morocco are at large and are executed by big investment companies. In 2018, there were 200 active megaprojects with 2.5 Billion US dollars as an estimated value.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Least Developed Countries***

LDCs exhibit the weakest housing provision policies in the ESCWA region. Effectively, high percentages of inhabitants live in slums or are considered house-deprived in **Mauritania**, with expensive accommodation being one of the most critical issues in the country.<sup>58</sup> It is likewise challenged with inequitable distribution of infrastructure. **Sudan**, similarly, suffers from informal settlements due to vacant lands being occupied, agricultural land being subdivided, and insufficient urban planning.<sup>59</sup> The infrastructure, especially, for efficient drainage of water is poorly developed. Sudan has established the National Fund for Housing and Reconstruction (NFHR) in 2008 to build and sell adequate/affordable housing for various income-level earners. Yet, the purpose of the fund was hindered due to defective budgets.<sup>60</sup> A regional plan has been carried out in Darfur in order to reconstruct the infrastructure of the region and improve its basic

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<sup>52</sup> Africa Housing Finance Yearbook 2018 – Tunisia (2018), pp.262. Retrieved from: <http://housingfinanceafrica.org/app/uploads/Tunisia-2018-Final.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Tunisia Country Programme (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.citiesalliance.org/how-we-work/our-operations/country-programmes/tunisia-country-programme#Objectives>

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of Housing (n.d.). Retrieved from: <http://www.maroc.ma/en/content/housing>

<sup>55</sup> Supported by UN Habitat and Al-Omrane Group

<sup>56</sup> Invest We Casablanca – Strategic Development 2015-2020. Retrieved from:

<https://www.casainvest.ma/en/casablanca-settat/development-plans/strategic-development-2015-2020>

<sup>57</sup> Meg construction projects in Morocco (2018). Retrieved from: <https://cceonlinenews.com/2018/05/21/mega-construction-projects-in-morocco/>

<sup>58</sup> Center for Affordable Housing in Africa (2018). Retrieved from:

<http://housingfinanceafrica.org/countries/mauritania/>

<sup>59</sup> UN Habitat Sudan – Urban Issues (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/sudan-urban-issues/>

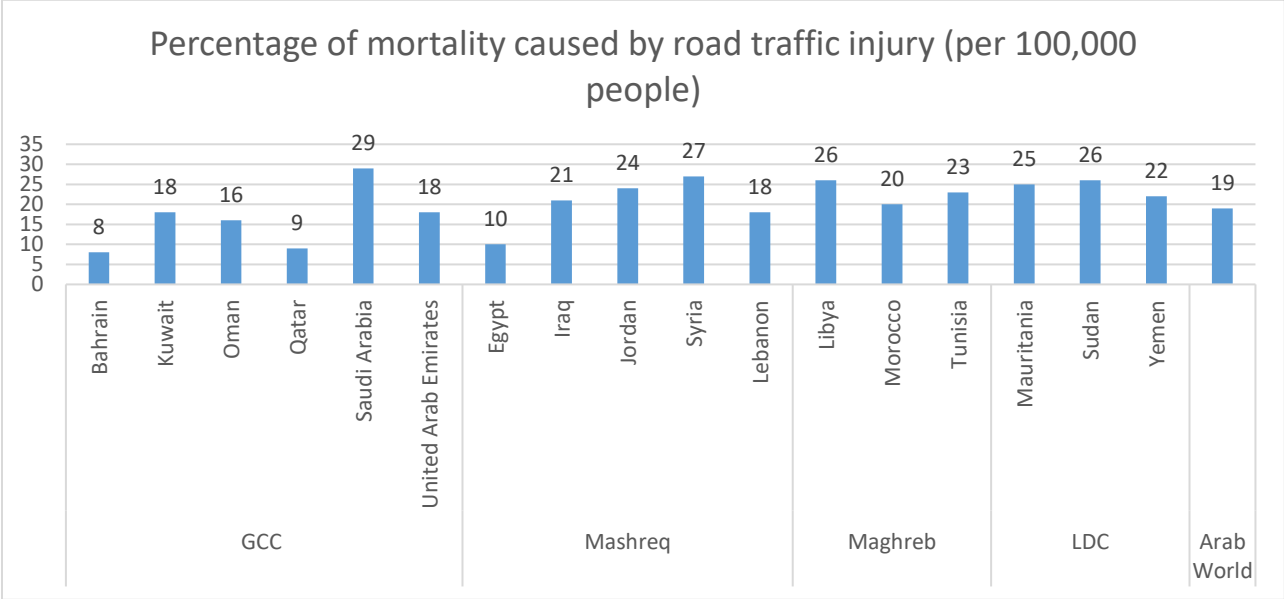
<sup>60</sup> Sudan National Report – UN Habitat III (2016), pp.5. Available at : <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Sudan-National-Report.pdf>

services.<sup>61</sup> As for **Yemen**, and in the context of the extensive damages due to the civil war, the “Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen” has been launched in 2018 as part of a cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Yemen<sup>62</sup>. Moreover, in order to restore basic urban services in the country, the World Bank and the United Nations<sup>63</sup> launched the Yemen Integrated Urban Services Emergency Project (2017-2020)<sup>64</sup>.

**SDG 11.2: Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons**

The second most common challenge faced by the ESCWA region is related to transport as it has long been suffering from poor car maintenance, unsafe roads, and inadequacy or lack of

**Figure 3: Percentage of mortality caused by road traffic injury.**



Source: The World Bank. *Mortality caused by traffic injury (per 100,000 people)*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.TRAF.P5?locations=BH-KW-QA-AE-OM-SA-LB-SY-PS-EG-JO-IQ-TN-LY-MA-MR-SD-YE-1A&most\\_recent\\_year\\_desc=false](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.TRAF.P5?locations=BH-KW-QA-AE-OM-SA-LB-SY-PS-EG-JO-IQ-TN-LY-MA-MR-SD-YE-1A&most_recent_year_desc=false)

Note: All data is for the year 2016, except for Bahrain and Yemen whose estimates are for 2013

<sup>61</sup> Regional Spatial Planning Strategy of Darfur (2015). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/books/regional-spatial-planning-strategy-of-darfur/>

<sup>62</sup> Saudi Arabia, Yemen Sign Development, Reconstruction Agreement (2019). Retrieved from: <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1741591/saudi-arabia-yemen-sign-development-reconstruction-agreement>

<sup>63</sup> The Office for Project Services (UNOPS) acting as the implementing agency

<sup>64</sup> Yemen Integrated Urban Services Emergency Project (2017-2020). Retrieved from: <http://projects.worldbank.org/P164190/?lang=en&tab=overview>



public transport modes. Adequate, affordable, and accessible urban mobility is a prerequisite for sustainable cities. Essentially, transport constitutes the backbone of urban development as it enables access to basic services and permits social and political participation.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the various layers that this target presents, only one indicator is offered by the UN Global SDG Database: “Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and persons with disabilities”, and unfortunately, no data for this indicator is currently available. However, the World Bank Open Dataset presents an indicator relevant to road safety: “Mortality caused by traffic injury”. Essentially, traffic caused 19 percent (per 100,000 people) of the mortality rate in 2016 in the Arab world.<sup>66</sup> Graph 4 clearly indicates the percentage for each country in the ESCWA region.

### **GCC Countries**

Urban mobility in the GCC countries is challenged by poor road safety combined with an increase in the number of vehicles. The dataset indicates that **Saudi Arabia** exhibited the highest rate of mortality caused by road traffic injury – 29 percent in 2016. In comparison, **Kuwait and UAE** were at 18 percent, followed by **Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain** with rates of 16, 9, and 8, respectively.<sup>67</sup> Other common challenges include accessible public transport, the dominance of private urban transport means, and hardship in walkability. Governments, however, are working on improving the situation. **Bahrain’s** “Kingdom’s Economic Vision 2008-2030<sup>68</sup>” aims to deliver high-quality urban transport infrastructure to ensure an accessible, affordable, reliable, and safe transport systems for the inhabitants of the country. Furthermore, the Kingdom initiated a National Development Strategy for the years 2015-2018 focusing on excellence in urban infrastructure, road safety, and expanding connectivity as one of its strategic priorities (5<sup>th</sup> priority). Some of the projects are still at the Feasibility Study phase such as the Bahrain Urban Transit Network (Bahrain Metro) initiated by the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications (MTT), to be completed by 2030<sup>69</sup> and the GCC Rail – Bahrain Link. The latter project aims to connect **UAE,**

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<sup>65</sup> Delatte, A., Baouni, T., Belwal, R., Daou, L., Gourram, D., & Imam, R. et al. (2018). Understanding the needs of MENA public transport customers: Culture of service and gender-responsive recommendations. *Tema. Journal Of Land Use, Mobility And Environment*, 7-30. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6092/1970-9870/5458>

<sup>66</sup> The World Bank (2016). *Mortality caused by road traffic injury (per 100,000 people)*. Arab World. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.TRAF.P5?locations=1A>

<sup>67</sup> The World Bank. *Mortality caused by road traffic injury (per 100,000 people)*. Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.TRAF.P5?locations=KW-BH-OM-QA-SA-AE>

<sup>68</sup> The Economic Vision 2030 (2008). Available at: <https://www.bahrain.bh/wps/wcm/connect/38f53f2f-9ad6-423d-9c96-2dbf17810c94/Vision%2B2030%2BEnglish%2B%28low%2Bresolution%29.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>

<sup>69</sup> Advancing Public Transport UITP – Bahrain (n.d.). Available at: <https://www.uitp.org/sites/default/files/Bahrain.pdf>

**Oman, Saudi Arabia and Qatar** by the year 2021 while Kuwait and Bahrain would join by the end of 2023.<sup>70</sup> **Saudi Arabia** is also working on a National Transformation Programme (NTP) (2016-2020)<sup>71</sup> aiming to develop the public transport sector in large cities. Various projects such as the Riyadh Metro and bus networks are either under-construction or soon to be constructed.<sup>72 73</sup> In the **United Arab Emirates**, the Department of Transport in Abu Dhabi is working on the Abu Dhabi Transportation Mobility Management Strategy and the Surface Transport Master Plan for a sustainable transport system<sup>74</sup>. In Dubai, they launched the “Dubai Autonomous Transportation Strategy” cutting transportation costs by 44%.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, Dubai has launched an initiative for the inclusion of people with disabilities. The latter campaign: “My Community... A City for Everyone” aims to transform the city of Dubai to be fully accessible by the year 2020.<sup>76</sup> It is worth mentioning that Dubai’s public transportation is fully equipped for wheelchair users, making it easily accessible.<sup>77</sup> the Dubai Expo 2020 covers various themes including mobility and road improvement, including the expansion of Al Maktoum International Airport, and the New Metro Line that will link the main transportation hubs to the Expo site.<sup>78</sup> In moving towards more sustainable transport solutions, **Kuwait** is currently working on the Metro Transport System project that would facilitate public transport and reduce traffic congestion.<sup>79</sup> A metro and an expressway are also being built in **Qatar** as part of the Qatar National Master Plan (2023)<sup>80</sup>. Additionally, the Ministry of Transport and Communication in **Oman** announced in 2017 a vision entitled: “2017-2025 vision for public transport” that aims to reduce the traffic noise and improve

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<sup>70</sup> GCC Railway to link four Gulf states by 2021 (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://www.railjournal.com/regions/middle-east/gcc-railway-to-link-four-gulf-states-by-2021/>

<sup>71</sup> National Transformation Programme (2018-2020). Available at:

[https://vision2030.gov.sa/sites/default/files/attachments/NTP%20English%20Public%20Document\\_2810.pdf](https://vision2030.gov.sa/sites/default/files/attachments/NTP%20English%20Public%20Document_2810.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> Riyadh metro mega-project to be fully operational by 2021 (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://www.thenational.ae/business/travel-and-tourism/riyadh-metro-mega-project-to-be-fully-operational-by-2021-1.711522>

<sup>73</sup> Saudi plans extensive Riyadh bus network (2018). Retrieved from: <https://gulfbusiness.com/saudi-plans-extensive-riyadh-bus-network/>

<sup>74</sup> The Official Portal of the UAE Government (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://government.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/local-governments-strategies-and-plans/surface-transport-master-plan-abu-dhabi>

<sup>75</sup> Dubai Future Foundation (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.dubaifuture.gov.ae/our-initiatives/dubais-autonomous-transportation-strategy/>

<sup>76</sup> Meet the faces of “My Community... A City for Everyone” Campaign (2016). Retrieved from:

<https://gulfnnews.com/going-out/society/meet-the-faces-of-my-community--a-city-for-everyone-campaign-1.1659972>

<sup>77</sup> Wheelchair Travel - Dubai Public Transportation (n.d.). Retrieved from:

<https://wheelchairtravel.org/dubai/public-transportation/>

<sup>78</sup> Extended Expo 2020 metro line project is on schedule (2019). Retrieved from:

<https://www.thenational.ae/uae/transport/extended-expo-2020-metro-line-project-is-on-schedule-1.835038>

<sup>79</sup> Kuwait Metro transport system by 2019 (2018). Retrieved from: <https://kwttoday.com/kuwait-metro-transport-system-2019/>

<sup>80</sup> Railway Technology – Doha Metro (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.railway-technology.com/projects/doha-metro/>



public transport.<sup>81</sup>

### ***Mashreq Countries***

The situation in the Mashreq is also marked by a lack of public transportation, unsafe roads, weak networks and infrastructure, and traffic congestion. According to the dataset by the World Bank, in 2016, **Syria** appeared to have the worst mortality rate cause of road traffic injury by 27 percent. Traffic injuries are the cause of 24 percent and 21 percent of mortality in **Jordan** and **Iraq**, respectively. In **Lebanon**, it is at 18 percent and **Egypt** at 10 percent.<sup>82</sup>

In the Mashreq area, transport sector developments are still at the planning stage. Particularly, **Iraq** displays a set of priorities mentioned in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in 2020. Moreover, in **Lebanon**, “The Greater Beirut Public Transport Project” for rapid transport was approved by the World Bank.<sup>83</sup> The concept of a Bus Rapid Transport (BRT), to improve transport connectivity and mobility on the coast of North Beirut, is being studied for its environmental and social impact.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, new traffic laws addressing road safety have been implemented since 2015. In **Egypt**, the government signed 398 million US dollars to upgrade Cairo’s Underground Metro – expected to be completed in 2019.<sup>85</sup> Old buses are also being replaced with new ones, and an electric train shall soon be available in the capital of Egypt.<sup>86</sup> In **Jordan**, the Minister of Transport has announced an initiative to upgrade public transportation in the Zarqa governorate<sup>87</sup>. In Amman, the municipality has floated tenders to start working on a bridge, two tunnels, and a bus station, in addition to the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).<sup>88</sup> In **Palestine**, the European Investment Plan in collaboration with international Palestinian professionals has launched the “National Transport Plan for Palestine” with an implementation period up to 2045<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> Transport vision for Oman: Trains, sea taxis and park and ride schemes (2017). Retrieved from: <https://timesofoman.com/article/108775>

<sup>82</sup> The World Bank (2016). Mortality caused by road traffic injury (per 100,000 people). *Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic, Egypt Arab Republic, Jordan, Iraq*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.TRAF.P5?locations=LB-PS-SY-EG-JO-IQ>

<sup>83</sup> \$295 million for rapid transport (2018). Retrieved from: [http://www.businessnews.com.lb/cms/Story/StoryDetails/6455/\\$295-million-for-rapid-transport](http://www.businessnews.com.lb/cms/Story/StoryDetails/6455/$295-million-for-rapid-transport)

<sup>84</sup> Council for Development and Reconstruction (2018). Available at: [http://www.cdr.gov.lb/procurement\\_docs/612L\\_TOR.pdf](http://www.cdr.gov.lb/procurement_docs/612L_TOR.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> Egypt signs \$298 mln deal to upgrade Cairo metro (2018). Retrieved from: [https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/business/story/Egypt\\_signs\\_398mln\\_deal\\_to\\_upgrade\\_Cairo\\_metro-ZAWYA20181220061134/](https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/business/story/Egypt_signs_398mln_deal_to_upgrade_Cairo_metro-ZAWYA20181220061134/)

<sup>86</sup> Egypt’s Voluntary National Review (2018), pp. 47. Available at: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20269EGY\\_VNR\\_2018\\_final\\_with\\_Hyperlink\\_972018\\_5b45d.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20269EGY_VNR_2018_final_with_Hyperlink_972018_5b45d.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> Jordan to be pave way for Bus Rapid Transit project in Zarqa (2019). Retrieved from: [https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/business/story/Jordan\\_to\\_pave\\_way\\_for\\_Bus\\_Rapid\\_Transit\\_project\\_in\\_Zarqa-SNG\\_142080614/](https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/business/story/Jordan_to_pave_way_for_Bus_Rapid_Transit_project_in_Zarqa-SNG_142080614/)

<sup>88</sup> GAM floats tenders for Bus Rapid Transit’s Amman Zarqa section (2019). Retrieved from: <http://jordantimes.com/news/local/gam-floats-tenders-bus-rapid-transits-amman-zarqa-section>

<sup>89</sup> Palestine’s Road and Transportation Master Plan (n.d.). Available at: <http://www.mot.gov.ps/ntmp/>

### **Maghreb Countries**

Maghreb countries suffer from high average mortality rates caused by road traffic in the region. Particularly, in 2016, **Libya** exhibited 26 percent of deaths caused by accidents, compared to 23 percent in **Tunisia**, and 20 percent in **Morocco**.<sup>90</sup> **Libya** has been unable to continue the construction of the national network rail since the 2011 revolution. On the other hand, in order to enhance the services provided by the urban transport systems, **Morocco** has launched its Urban Transport project (P4R) for the years 2015-2020 in collaboration with the World Bank<sup>91</sup>. Other projects include Africa's first high-speed rail link which they started working on in 2018.<sup>92</sup> As for **Tunisia**, it is worth noting that in 2017, the Ministry of Transport in the country has begun developing the National Transport Master Plan for 2040.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, the World Bank in 2015, has approved a 230 million US dollar loan as part of "Road Transport Corridors Project" to Tunisia to improve its road networks.<sup>94</sup>

### **Least Developed Countries**

The LDCs exhibit the highest average mortality rate caused by road traffic injury. Specifically, in 2015, **Sudan** and **Mauritania** had approximately 26 and 25 percent of road accidents leading to death, respectively, followed by **Yemen** at 22 percent.<sup>95</sup> **Generally speaking, Sudan's** roads are not in good shape and highly congested. Similarly, **Mauritania and Yemen** face a deterioration of their urban infrastructure. To address the situation, the Ministry of Transport in Sudan has developed the Sudan National Transport Master plan (NTMP) its implementation is afoot.<sup>96</sup> In **Yemen**, although plans for the development of roads have been prepared, such as the Public Investment Plan, the National 5-year Investment Plan, and others, none of these strategies have been adopted.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The World Bank (2016). Mortality caused by road traffic injury (per 100,000 people). *Morocco, Tunisia, Libya*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data:

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.TRAF.P5?locations=MA-TN-LY>

<sup>91</sup> Morocco Urban Transport Project (P4R) (2015). Retrieved from: <http://projects.worldbank.org/P149653?lang=en>

<sup>92</sup> Will Africa's first high-speed train be a £1.5bn magic bullet for Morocco? (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/dec/13/africa-high-speed-train-magic-bullet-morocco>

<sup>93</sup> Tunisia develops the National Transport Master Plan for 2040 (2017). Retrieved from:

<https://www.railwaypro.com/wp/tunisia-develops-national-transport-master-plan-2040/>

<sup>94</sup> Oxford Business Group (2018). Retrieved from: <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/revamping-system-transport-infrastructure-spending-set-fuel-economic-growth>

<sup>95</sup> The World Bank. *Mortality caused by road traffic injury (per 100,000 people)*. *Sudan, Mauritania, Yemen*.

Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data:

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.TRAF.P5?locations=SD-MR-YE>

<sup>96</sup> Sudan's transport system a key cog in economic development (2016). Retrieved from:

<http://www.leadingedgeguides.com/guide-sudan-2016-transport-economic-development/>

<sup>97</sup> World Bank Group - Yemen Transport Sector (2017). Retrieved from:

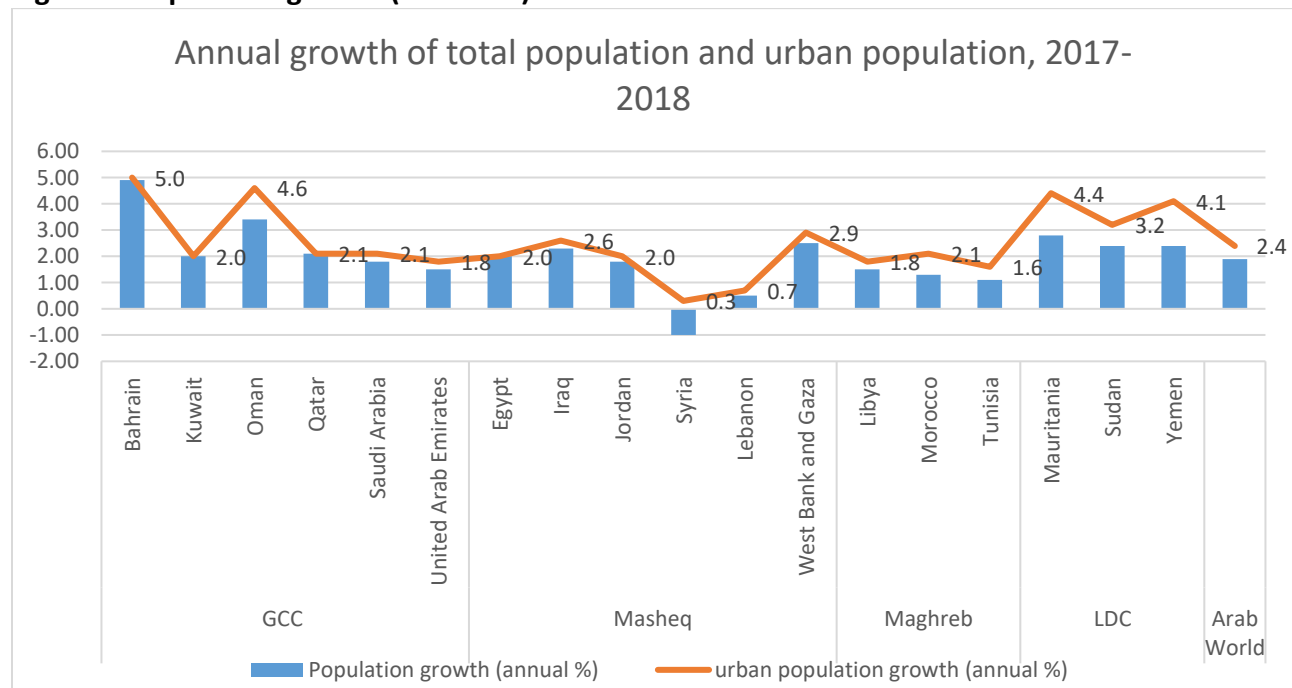
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/636961508411397037/Yemen-transport-sector>

**SDG 11.3: By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries**

Countries of the ESCWA region are often characterized by widening urban sprawl with few channels for participatory governance of urban planning and management. With a growing population, National Urban Policies are needed to capitalize on the potential benefits of urbanization. In 2018, the urban population in the region consisted of approximately 59 percent of total population,<sup>98</sup> growing at an annual rate of 2.4 percent.<sup>99</sup> Figure 4 below displays the annual growth of the total population and urban population of the countries in the ESCWA region for the year 2017-2018.

Target 3 of SDG Goal 11: “By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries” contains two indicators to measure progress: (i) “Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate” and (ii) “Proportion of cities with a direct participation structure of civil society in urban planning and management that operate regularly and democratically”.

**Figure 4: Population growth (annual %) 2017-2018**



Source: The World Bank (2018). Population growth (annual %), Urban population growth (annual %). Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org>

<sup>98</sup> The World Bank (2018). *Urban Population (% of total population)*. Arab World. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=1A>

<sup>99</sup> The World Bank (2018). *Urban population growth (annual %)*. Arab World. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.GROW?locations=1A>

Several ESCWA member countries are in the process of developing National Urban Policies (NUPs), with a bigger part (65 percent) still at the stage of “feasibility, diagnosis, formulation”.<sup>100</sup>

### **GCC Countries**

Urban growth in the GCC has increased from 2017 to 2018 at an average rate of 2.93 annually.<sup>101</sup> Limited land availability influences the urbanization patterns in the Sultanate of **Oman** as 75 % of its surface is covered by desert. Scattered settlements follow the distribution of agricultural land, rural-urban migration increases and pressures on the shrinking land resources.<sup>102</sup> Facing the demographic changes, the Supreme Council for Planning announced, in 2017, the development of the “**National Spatial Strategy (ONSS)**” to establish the Sultanate’s future spatial planning system. The project targets the development and implementation of a comprehensive framework of land use development at the national and regional level. The strategy aims to ensure balanced and sustainable urban development. The strategy is being prepared in a participatory framework, involving national, regional, private and governmental stakeholders.<sup>103</sup> The 9<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2020) mandates the adoption of the “National Strategy for Urban Development” in cooperation with the private sector, which takes into consideration the increase in the population and their needs, serving the development of governorates and local communities.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, the Sultanate is working on a Smart City in Muscat with the following characteristics: improvement of the quality of life, enhancing urban mobility, ensuring environmental sustainability and safety, as well as a better participatory governance.<sup>105</sup>

**Bahrain** has completed the “Bahrain-French Town Planning Initiative” in 2018, developed by the Urban Planning and Development Authority in Bahrain. In particular, it provided a new land-use strategy to restore urban coherence at the neighborhood scale.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, the Ministry of Culture prepared the “Manama City Urbanism” project – a scheme that proposes an urban

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<sup>100</sup> Global State of National Urban Policy (2018), pp.49. Retrieved from:

<https://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Global%20Report%20NUP%281%29.pdf>

<sup>101</sup> The World Bank (2018). *Urban population growth (annual %). Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data:

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.GROW?locations=KW-QA-AE-OM-SA-BH>

<sup>102</sup> Urban Oman Research (n.d.). Retrieved from: <http://urbanoman.org/urbanpress/>

<sup>103</sup> Here is how Oman plans to ensure sustainable growth and land use through National Spatial Strategy (2017).

Retrieved from: <https://timesofoman.com/article/118621/Oman/Environment/Here-is-how-Oman-plans-to-ensure-sustainable-growth-and-land-use-through-National-Spatial-Strategy>

<sup>104</sup> Oman’s Ninth Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2020). Available at: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/rgi-documents/a3a35ba35019e33f9c6f35b869837f39b195d000.pdf>

<sup>105</sup> Smart City Muscat (2018). Retrieved from: <https://muscatdaily.com/Archive/Opinion/Smart-City-Muscat-5cd9>

<sup>106</sup> AREP - Bahrain-French Town Planning Initiative (2017). Retrieved from:

<https://www.arepgroup.com/projects/8-66/cat-city-and-territory/bahrain-french-town-planning-initiative>

future for the city.<sup>107</sup> Regarding the issue of participatory planning, the Kingdom's Economic Vision (2008-2030)<sup>108</sup> stresses the importance of private-public partnerships. The National Development Strategy 2015-2018, launched by the Economic Development Board, places the private sector as the lead in development and focuses on economic growth as the main priority.<sup>109</sup>

According to UN-Habitat, it is expected that by 2030, 97.6 percent of **Saudi Arabia's** population will be urbanized, with the capital, Riyadh, taking in most of the influx.<sup>110</sup> Secondary most-populated cities in the country include Jeddah, Dammam, Mecca, and Medina. Most fundamentally, Saudi Arabia, in collaboration with UNDP has developed the Saudi National Urban Spatial Strategy to sustain urbanization until the year 2025. With regards to the participatory urban planning initiatives, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in a partnership with UN-Habitat developed the "Future Saudi Cities Programme (FCSP)"<sup>111</sup> that pushes forward for urban sustainability (SDGs) and territorial development by offering an approach for a new national urban policy while also contributing to the New Urban Agenda and helping with the 10<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan<sup>112</sup>. The programme, additionally, helped develop the review of the National Spatial Strategy previously adopted in the Kingdom. It serves as a catalyst for citizen engagement in the process of governance. More generally, the government first addressed the issue of urbanization by funding new municipal agencies and improving the capacities of established ones. Decentralization was proven effective thanks to the expansion of citizens' participation in the management of local affairs as well as by their right to elect half of the municipal council members.<sup>113</sup> The decentralization was further productive once the citizens had the right to establish regional principalities (AMANAT) to which local municipalities report to. In terms of urban planning and management, the government also established a High Commission, tasked with the coordination of efforts among government agencies and organizations in the private sector.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Tyrrell Studio – Manama City Urbanism – Bahrain (n.d.). Retrieved from:

<http://www.tyrrellstudio.com/manama-city-bahrain>

<sup>108</sup> The Economic Vision 2030 (2008), pp.02. Available at: <https://www.bahrain.bh/wps/wcm/connect/38f53f2f-9ad6-423d-9c96-2dbf17810c94/Vision%2B2030%2BEnglish%2B%28low%2Bresolution%29.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>

<sup>109</sup> Economic Development Board – National Development Strategy (n.d.). Retrieved from:

<https://bahrainedb.com/about-us/national-development-strategy/>

<sup>110</sup> UN Habitat – Saudi Arabia (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/saudi-arabia/>

<sup>111</sup> UN Habitat Saudi Arabia – Projects (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/saudi-arabia-projects/>

<sup>112</sup> The objective of the 10<sup>th</sup> Development Plan (2015-2019) is economic development

<sup>113</sup> UN Habitat Saudi Arabia – Urban Legislation, Land and Governance (n.d.). Retrieved from:

<https://unhabitat.org/saudi-arabia-urban-legislation-land-and-governance/>

<sup>114</sup> Saudi Arabia National Report – UN Habitat III (2016), p.62. Available at: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/FULL-REPORT-ENGLISH.pdf>

**Qatar** has an estimated population of approximately 2.7 million<sup>115</sup>, with non-nationals constituting most of them due to the influx of laborers. In terms of urbanization, the country has 99 percent of its residents living in cities. The physical infrastructure of Doha grows extensively with new commercial buildings and apartment blocks replacing old city centers and expanding the urban periphery<sup>116</sup>. Although Qatar has several neighborhood-developing projects, the capital Doha is witnessing major urban challenges. One of Qatar's plans to face the challenge of unsustainable urbanization includes the Population Policy of the State of Qatar (2017-2022) aiming to: "achieve a balance between population growth and sustainable development requirements"<sup>117</sup>. Additionally, there is the Qatar National Master Plan (QNP) (2014-2023) which consists of the National Development Framework (QNDF)<sup>118</sup> that directs the future of spatial growth of the state (national, municipal, and local) and adopts a detailed plan for the municipalities in their local areas. Another important strategic project in the QNP is the Qatar Urban Design Compendium Project that will be used as a guide for proper urban design and a national development reference for the country.<sup>119</sup> Urban planning in Qatar is mostly centralized through the Urban Planning Authority or the ministries of the country, but various initiatives are being undertaken by private actors in terms of workshops and raising awareness. Proper regulation by the government is crucial to ensure that the private sector actively gets indulged in the urban development of the country.

In **Kuwait**, 100 percent of the total population resides in urban areas. Kuwait has developed three master plans since 1952 with each one of the plans envisioning the development of new cities to support the redistribution of the population to the northern and southern part of the country to relieve some pressure from the central area. The main actor in their preparation was the Municipality, acting as the focal point for urban legislation.<sup>120</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Master Plan that was expected to be completed in 2018<sup>121</sup> and no news of the plan has been mentioned since 2017.

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<sup>115</sup> The World Bank (2018). *Population. Qatar*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=QA>

<sup>116</sup> Shandas, V., Makido, Y. and Ferwati, S. (2017). Rapid Urban Growth and Land Use Patterns in Doha, Qatar: Opportunity for Sustainability? *European Journal of Sustainable Development Research*, 1(2), 11. doi: 10.20897/ejosdr.201711

<sup>117</sup> The Population Policy of the State of Qatar 2017-2022. Available at: [https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/statistics/Statistical%20Releases/Population/Population/2017/population\\_policy\\_2017\\_EN.pdf](https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/statistics/Statistical%20Releases/Population/Population/2017/population_policy_2017_EN.pdf)

<sup>118</sup> Ministry of Municipality & Environment – Qatar National Development Framework (2016). Retrieved from: <http://www.mme.gov.qa/QatarMasterPlan/English/QNDF.aspx?panel=qndf>

<sup>119</sup> Strategic Plans and Projects – Qatar Urban Design Compendium Project (n.d). Retrieved from: <http://www.mme.gov.qa/QatarMasterPlan/English/strategicplans.aspx?panel=CompendiumProjects>

<sup>120</sup> National Report Kuwait Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – UN Habitat III (2016), pp. 56. Available at: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Report-Asia-Pacific-Kuwait-Final-in-English.pdf>

<sup>121</sup> National Report Kuwait Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – UN Habitat III (2016), pp. 9. Available at: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Report-Asia-Pacific-Kuwait-Final-in-English.pdf>



In order to facilitate more public participation, the Cabinet of Ministers has issued a draft decree in 2016 that regulates the system of governorates and the powers given to the governors.<sup>122</sup>

The **United Arab Emirates**, equally challenged by rapid population growth, urbanization, and industrial development, is actively working towards sustaining its urbanization. The Abu Dhabi Plan (2030), also known as the Urban Structure Framework Plan, provides the guiding principles for urban policies, plans, and standards to be followed by the Abu Dhabi Planning Council (UPC). One of its elements is the “Urban Planning Council or Department of Urban Planning and Municipalities Strategy (2016-2020)”, designed to integrate urban areas to meet the needs of the community and increase the quality of life.<sup>123</sup> The Emirate of Dubai developed the “Smart Dubai 2021” project, which includes smart city planning as one of its strategic themes.<sup>124</sup> Regarding the status of participatory planning, the approval process of development projects has been decentralized.<sup>125</sup> The government has established the office known “Smart Dubai” that partners with the private sector and academia to deliver best-quality services for an efficient and smart city.<sup>126</sup>

### ***Mashreq Countries***

In 2017, Mashreq countries had an average urban growth rate of 1.75 percent.<sup>127</sup> High levels of migrants and IDPs are hosted in urban areas, and most of them are from the young population. **Egypt** has faced many challenges related to a clear and adequate policy that supports urban development. In 2013, a National Strategic Plan for Urban Development 2052 was approved, including the ambition to build new cities in order to reduce the density of the urban population. The Minister of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities indicated that there are currently 709,000 housing units for low-income population being built.<sup>128</sup> With regards to the status of participatory urban planning, the central government is taking steps in including local authorities in the decision-making process. This is thanks to the modification being made in the legislations: in 2009, the state established a decentralization and local administration reform unit to support the various admin tasks including the capacity development of local leaders.

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<sup>122</sup> National Report Kuwait Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – UN Habitat (2016), pp. 58. Available at: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Report-Asia-Pacific-Kuwait-Final-in-English.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> Plan Abu Dhabi 2030. Available at: <https://www.ecouncil.ae/PublicationsEn/plan-abu-dhabi-full-version-EN.pdf>

<sup>124</sup> Smart Dubai 2021. Retrieved from: <https://2021.smartdubai.ae>

<sup>125</sup> CTBUH New York Conference (2015). Available at: <http://global.ctbuh.org/resources/presentations/urban-planning-in-dubai-cultural-and-human-scale-context.pdf>

<sup>126</sup> Smart Dubai 2021. Retrieved from: <https://2021.smartdubai.ae>

<sup>127</sup> The World Bank (2018). Urban population growth (annual %). Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, West Bank and Gaza, Syrian Arab Republic. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data:

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.GROW?locations=LB-EG-JO-IQ-PS-SY>

<sup>128</sup> Egypt’s National Strategic plan 2052 aims to increase urban areas to 14% (2019). Retrieved from: <https://dailynewssegypt.com/2019/03/04/egypts-national-strategic-plan-2052-aims-to-increase-urban-areas-to-14/>

Moreover, in 2014, the state took some steps towards improving urban legislations. This included the involvement of local authorities in decision making. To better monitor the implementation of decentralization and its impact on the citizens, the Local Development Observatory has been established by the Ministry of Local Development.<sup>129</sup>

In **Lebanon**, the population, mostly lives in the main cities and coastal towns, a trend that has been increased by massive construction projects being launched in coastal areas. The National Master Plan of 2005, which included land use planning, is now considered outdated, also since it could not take into consideration the impact of the Syrian crisis in 2011. In 2016, the “Program for Economic and Urban Resilience in Lebanon (PEURL)” has been designed by the Urban Projects Finance Initiative (UPFI) with support to the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) and Lebanese municipalities. According to the official website: “the programme will encompass beneficiary cities of different sizes and several projects that will address various urban issues...”<sup>130</sup>. Other plans and projects are frozen such as the Development Board for the Tripoli 2020 Stimulation Plan and the New Master Plan of Tripoli Municipality, which had been launched in 2016 as part of a regional programme to help with developing a national urban policy.<sup>131</sup> It shows how planning in Lebanon remains highly centralized due to the importance of the real-estate sector and related decision-making processes.<sup>132</sup>

**Palestine** experiences similar rapid urbanization and high population growth against the background of a scarcity of land and territorial fragmentation due to the Israeli occupation. As a result, random and uncontrolled developments have expanded in and around cities and towns, encroaching on surrounding agricultural land. In essence, UN-Habitat recommends a national urban policy to achieve a more sustainable and resilient community.<sup>133</sup> National, regional and local levels of planning are mandated by the Ministry of Local Government and are represented by governmental planning committees (regional planning committees and local planning committees).<sup>134</sup> The ongoing occupation makes it difficult to engage with population in planning processes in large parts of the West Bank.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Arab Republic of Egypt National Report – UN Habitat III (2016), pp. 52. Available at : <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Egypt-Final-in-English.compressed-1.pdf>

<sup>130</sup> UPFI - PEURL Lebanon (2016). Retrieved from: <http://upfi-med.eib.org/en/projects/multi-city-urban-development-programme-in-lebanon/>

<sup>131</sup> Launch of the Regional Programme on National Urban Policies in the Arab States (2016). Available at: [http://icnup.urbanpolicyplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Launch\\_Arab-States-NUP.pdf](http://icnup.urbanpolicyplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Launch_Arab-States-NUP.pdf)

<sup>132</sup> UN Habitat Lebanon – Urban Issues (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/lebanon/lebanon-urban-issues/>

<sup>133</sup> State of Palestine Cities Report (2016), pp. 86. Available at: [https://www.urbangateway.org/system/files/documents/urbangateway/spcr\\_2016pre-final-low.pdf](https://www.urbangateway.org/system/files/documents/urbangateway/spcr_2016pre-final-low.pdf)

<sup>134</sup> State of Palestine Cities Report (2016), pp. 22. Available at: [https://www.urbangateway.org/system/files/documents/urbangateway/spcr\\_2016pre-final-low.pdf](https://www.urbangateway.org/system/files/documents/urbangateway/spcr_2016pre-final-low.pdf)

<sup>135</sup> UN Habitat Palestine – Urban Legislation, Land and Governance (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/palestine-urban-legislation-land-and-governance-2/>



The National Development Plan for **Iraq** (2018-2022) envisages spatial planning and promoting decentralization to facilitate participating in the management of development. In the framework of the Local Area Development Programme (LADP), the UNDP is helping Iraq in implementing the National Urban Strategy (NUS) framework and 9 Governorate Urban Strategies (GUS). The main purpose of these strategies is to improve national and local initiatives to deal with the challenge of rapid urbanization. Interestingly, the project promotes an integrated bottom-up approach for managing urban growth, including national ministries, governorates, and administrations.<sup>136</sup>

As for **Jordan**, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, in cooperation with the World Bank, has developed the “Jordan Urban and Municipal Program for Balanced and Inclusive Growth” in 2018,<sup>137</sup> and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs has initiated in collaboration with UN-Habitat, a workshop that discusses a national consultation on the development of a national urban policy.<sup>138</sup> In Jordan, the municipalities are responsible for urban management.<sup>139</sup>

### **Maghreb Countries**

The urban population in this sub-region is growing at an average annual rate of 1.83 percent from 2017 to 2018.<sup>140</sup> In that same year, **Morocco** was populated by approximately 36 million people<sup>141</sup> with a rate of growth of 1.3 percent<sup>142</sup>. Currently, around 60 percent of the population is urban, with a population mainly concentrated on the axis of Kenitra-Rabat-Casablanca-El Jadida. The remainder is scattered in smaller settlements across the country. Estimates, however, show that the country’s urban population would reach 76 percent by 2050., which requires a planning framework in order to capitalize on the trend, especially for the younger population.<sup>143</sup> In this context, the government developed the “Greater Casablanca Development Plan (PDGC) 2015-2020” as part of the Casablanca Municipal Support Program Project (2017-2022). Some of its objectives are, first, to improve living standards for vulnerable communities by enhancing basic services. Most importantly, it aims to improve governance of

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<sup>136</sup> National Urban Strategy (NUS) framework (n.d). Retrieved from: <https://new.ladp-iraq.eu/nus>

<sup>137</sup> The World Bank – Jordan Urban and Municipal Program for Balanced and Inclusive Growth (2018). Retrieved from: <http://projects.worldbank.org/P166577/?lang=en&tab=documents&subTab=projectDocuments>

<sup>138</sup> UN Habitat (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/jordan-national-urban-policy-launching-workshop/> (UN Habitat , n.d.)

<sup>139</sup> Global State of National Urban Policy (2018), pp. 44-45. Retrieved from:

<https://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Global%20Report%20NUP%281%29.pdf>

<sup>140</sup> The World Bank (2018). Urban population growth (annual %). Morocco, Libya, Tunisia. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.GROW?locations=MA-LY-TN>

<sup>141</sup> The World Bank (2018). *Population, total. Morocco*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=MA>

<sup>142</sup> The World Bank (2018). *Population growth (annual %). Morocco*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=MA>

<sup>143</sup> United Nations – World Urbanization Prospects: the 2018 Revision (2018). Available at: <https://population.un.org/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2018-Report.pdf>

local institutions and make municipalities more accountable towards the citizens.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, a new sustainable city is being built in Rabat, expected to be completed by 2024. Other projects include the “City of Green Valley” that will comprise residential buildings and facilities.<sup>145</sup> Since 2016, UN-Habitat has worked with Morocco on an explicit National Urban Policy.<sup>146</sup> Regarding participatory urban planning, Morocco’s constitution has set off the way for participatory planning. Effectively, the decentralization policy was launched by King Mohammed VI on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October in 1999, outlining the specific role of the state of central and local levels to encourage local initiative. A municipal jurisdiction named: “Communal Planning through Community Development (PCD)” became responsible for municipal planning and institutional strengthening through the decentralization and rehabilitation of the political work at the local level. In order to train for capacity building, a development guide was established as an information system. Consequently, more than a thousand municipalities were engaged in the planning process. Around 1,046 Communal Development plans (CDP) are being implemented by councils of municipalities.

In 2010, a National Plan for Strengthening Decentralization (NRPD) was launched with the aim of solidifying decentralization.<sup>147</sup> Citizens’ engagement in the urban development process has increased with the adoption of “La Politique De La Ville” (or City Policy). Essentially, the latter policy was developed in 2012, with the objective of reforming the urban governance system and to coordinate action by different urban actors from governmental to non-governmental authorities and the private sector.<sup>148</sup> Urban networks in Morocco play an essential role, such as “MAJAL” which promotes the process of knowledge-exchange among public institutions, private organizations, and civil society.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, the Superior Council of Territorial Planning is considered a space for debate between all urban actors on key urban issues concerned with territories in Morocco.<sup>150</sup>

With the start of the post-revolution period in 2011, **Tunisia** has engaged in efforts supported by external donors to bolster the democratization and decentralization processes. With an urbanization rate of 67 percent, Tunisia is considered a highly urbanized country. The two most

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<sup>144</sup> Invest We Casablanca – Strategic Development 2015-2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.casainvest.ma/en/casablanca-settat/development-plans/strategic-development-2015-2020>

<sup>145</sup> UAE’S Green Valley launches \$ 136m Moroccan project (2016). Retrieved from: <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/uae-s-green-valley-launches-136m-moroccan-project-631784.html>

<sup>146</sup> Launch of the Regional Programme on National Urban Policies in the Arab States (2016). Available at: [http://icnup.urbanpolicyplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Launch\\_Arab-States-NUP.pdf](http://icnup.urbanpolicyplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Launch_Arab-States-NUP.pdf)

<sup>147</sup> Morocco - Decentralization and deconcentration in Morocco: Cross-sectoral status review. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/168151468169166242/pdf/697060ESWOP1020n0StatusReview0Final.pdf>

<sup>148</sup> Habitat III Regional Report – Arab Region (2016), pp. 76. Retrieved from: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Habitat-III-Regional-Report-Arab-Region.pdf>

<sup>149</sup> Federation Des Agences Urbaines Du Maroc (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.federation-majal.ma/en-gb>

<sup>150</sup> Morocco National Report – UN Habitat III (2014), pp. 20. Retrieved from: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Morocco-National-Report-Habitat-III-Final-1.pdf>

populated cities are Tunis and Sfax, with a combined population of 1.1 million residents.<sup>151</sup> Over the years, most investments had gone to Tunisia's coastal cities, which host the majority of industries. The port in the city of Sousse has seen upgrades to stimulate investments. Meanwhile, the coastal city of Sfax has invested in improving its infrastructure.

By contrast, many smaller inland cities and towns have largely been left behind and there are large regional disparities in infrastructure, access to services, investment and job opportunities. To reverse this trend, the government has been planning for competitive techno poles in the country's inland, secondary cities, away from coastal areas.<sup>152</sup> UN-Habitat agreed to support Tunisia in the development of a National Urban Policy that aims to develop a comprehensive framework laying essential foundations for an urban development that is integrated and sustainable.<sup>153</sup> Decentralization legislation was passed before the local municipal elections that took place in May 2018. The implementation of the Local Collectives Code entails the progressive transfer of powers and finances to three communal levels; municipalities, regions (directly elected), and districts (indirect polls). Issues pertaining to public transport and the construction of hospitals and schools, for example, will fall from now on under their responsibility.<sup>154</sup> Adding to the momentum of advancing the decentralization process, is the fact that many external donors are actively supporting participatory urban planning in the country as well as projects to strengthen local governments funded, for example by the World Bank (Urban Development and Local Governance Project that ends in 2023)<sup>155</sup>.

**Libya** in 2018 was populated by approximately 6.67 million people<sup>156</sup> of whom 80 percent was considered urban dwellers. These numbers along with the fact that about 90 percent of the country's land is either a full or semi-desert illustrate its constraints for urban development.<sup>157</sup> Although Libya has the National Spatial Development Policy 2006-2030 which is used as an outline for local urban plans at the sub-regional level, and provided guidance for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation Planning Project, none of them were implemented due to the socio-political situation after 2011. Before the revolution, the government was known for its highly centralized decision making, complex bureaucracy, and the limited participation of the people in the urban

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<sup>151</sup> UN Habitat (2012). The State of the Arab Cities Report, p.89. Retrieved from: <http://unhabitat.org/books/the-state-of-arab-cities-2012-challenges-of-urban-transition/>

<sup>152</sup> UN Habitat (2012). The State of the Arab Cities Report, p.3. Retrieved form: <http://unhabitat.org/books/the-state-of-arab-cities-2012-challenges-of-urban-transition/>

<sup>153</sup> UN-Habitat establishes a country office in Tunisia (2017). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/un-habitat-establishes-a-country-office-in-tunisia/>

<sup>154</sup> La Tunisie fait un bond vers la décentralisation (2018). Retrieved from: [https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2018/04/27/la-tunisie-fait-un-bond-vers-la-decentralisation\\_1646341](https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2018/04/27/la-tunisie-fait-un-bond-vers-la-decentralisation_1646341)

<sup>155</sup> TN-Urban Dev. And Local Governance (2014). Retrieved from: <http://projects.worldbank.org/P130637/tn-urban-development?lang=en>

<sup>156</sup> The World Bank (2018). Population, total. Libya. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=LY>

<sup>157</sup> UN Habitat – Libya (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/libya/>

planning process.<sup>158</sup> It is important to note that the citizens of Libya developed the Libya 2020 Vision that is based solely on consultations from civil society. Fundamentally, this online citizen portal plays as a catalyst role for debate on key development issues and suggests transformation projects related to infrastructure and urban mobility.

### ***Least Developed Countries***

Although the LDCs have the least urbanized population in the Arab world, their 2017-218 annual urban growth rate is the highest (3.9 percent)<sup>159</sup>. **Sudan** has been witnessing political instability since the revolution in 2011, when South Sudan declared its independence. Sudan's population is approximately 41.8 million.<sup>160</sup> Greater Khartoum comprises the largest number of people. While only 35.3 percent of Sudan's population is urban, the rate of urbanization is increasing each year with an annual growth of 3.2 percent in 2018. According to UN-Habitat, this trend is mainly due to four factors: rural-urban migration, natural disasters, political instability, and insufficient rural development. There is a lack of urban development strategies at the national level as there is no coordination between the development plans provided by the state. Additionally, there a comprehensive vision for the utilization of land and natural resources is largely missing.<sup>161</sup> The state of Khartoum has established a structured plan (KPP5), for the period of 2008-2033, that has eventually become an enforceable law. It mentions the creation of smart cities and towns with the potential to take in migrants and urban newcomers.<sup>162</sup> However, many of the KPP5 Strategies do not explicitly address urban poverty and deficit of adequate housing in line with global standards. The strategies also fail to provide solutions for the residential areas recently established in the Nile valleys and the establishment of high-rise buildings and private residences in public spaces. The preservation of urban heritage is also not clearly expressed.<sup>163</sup>

The government – in collaboration with the UN-Habitat – developed the Spatial Planning Strategy for Darfur, which includes the reintegration of IDPs as one of its targets. It is worth noting that the strategic concerns itself with the regional, state, and local level. Concerning the regional level, there is a plan to establish Nodal Towns or Economic Development Areas (EDAs) with the purpose of connecting countries, regions, and states. A Regional and Urban Planning

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<sup>158</sup> Libya National Report – UN Habitat III (2016), pp 25. Retrieved from: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Libya-National-Report-AR-Final.pdf>

<sup>159</sup> The World Bank (2018). *Urban population growth (annual %)*. Mauritania, Sudan, Yemen. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.GROW?locations=MR-SD-YE>

<sup>160</sup> The World Bank (2018). *Population, total*. Sudan. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=SD>

<sup>161</sup> UN Habitat – Sudan (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/sudan/>

<sup>162</sup> Sudan National Report – UN Habitat III (2016), pp. 11, 30. Retrieved from: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Sudan-National-Report.pdf>

<sup>163</sup> Sudan student protests show how much city planning and design matter (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/sudan-student-protests-show-how-much-city-planning-and-design-matter-58877>

Strategy for Blue Nile State is also mentioned. Since 2016, UN- Habitat has worked with Sudan to develop a National Urban Policy.<sup>164</sup> According to UN-Habitat, progress is being made towards decentralization, participatory urban planning, and capacity building of government authorities.<sup>165</sup>

**Mauritania's** urban population stands at 54 percent and is mainly concentrated in the capital Nouakchott. Mauritania's vast territory and large, uninhabited desert results in substantial rural development and infrastructure challenges. Parts of Mauritania where population densities are higher such as Senegal River Valley and Aftout are characterized by a multitude of small towns scattered and sometimes distant from each other, making the provision of basic social services difficult and more expensive. Access to land has become particularly difficult in the northeast of Mauritania, resulting in the fact that many poor people are being pushed to the outskirts of the city where they end up living in informal settlements. The general difficulty in accessing land has resulted in so-called "waiting areas". These refer to public land that is illegally occupied by poor families. The situation is particularly difficult for women, who hold less than 8 percent of the 27,000 title deeds recorded nationally.<sup>166</sup> Plans for the formulation of National Urban Policies were discussed at a recent high-level meeting in April 2019.<sup>167</sup>

In terms of decentralization, the country is considered decentralized at the level of municipalities. Nouakchott is classified as an urban community divided into nine municipalities, which deal directly with the state and rely on central ministries to discharge key functions and services. The way forward in the decentralization process is further described in the country's new program to "Support Regional Governance and Local Economic Development in Mauritania (PAGOURDEL)"<sup>168</sup>. The latter aims to enhance decentralization, and spatial planning.

**Yemen** is known to be one of the poorest, least developed countries in the ESCWA region. The ongoing civil war poses additional challenges for its massive population of 28.4 million and its high population growth rate – reaching 2.4 percent in 2018<sup>169</sup>. With most of the people concentrated in the Capital, Sana'a (2.8 million), total urban dwellers constitute only 36.6 percent of the total population. The rate of urbanization, however, accelerated to 4.1 percent in 2018. At the same time, and due to the war, Yemen is facing a reverse internal migration,

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<sup>164</sup> Launch of the Regional Programme on National Urban Policies in the Arab States (2016) . Retrieved from: Available at: [http://icnup.urbanpolicyplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Launch\\_Arab-States-NUP.pdf](http://icnup.urbanpolicyplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Launch_Arab-States-NUP.pdf)

<sup>165</sup> UN Habitat Sudan– Urban Planning and Design (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/sudan-urban-planning-and-design/>

<sup>166</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung (2018): BTI Country Report Mauritania, p.22. Retrieved from: [https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2018/pdf/BTI\\_2018\\_Mauritania.pdf](https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2018/pdf/BTI_2018_Mauritania.pdf)

<sup>167</sup> Mauritania hosts High-Level Meeting on New Urban Agenda (2019). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/mauritania-hosts-high-level-meeting-on-new-urban-agenda/>

<sup>168</sup> An Ambitious New Program Aims to Support Regional Governance and Local Economic Development in Mauritania (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.localizingthesdgs.org/story/view/99>

<sup>169</sup> The World Bank (2018). *Population growth (annual %). Yemen*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=YE>

with people moving from urban areas such as Sana'a, Aden, and Taiz to rural areas.<sup>170</sup> Since Yemen, currently, lacks a national urban policy, UN-Habitat – in collaboration with the EU launched a new project to gather data on Yemeni cities in order to compile an “Urban Informational and Analysis framework”. Essentially, one of its expected outcomes is to assess the damage in seven cities and to develop a National Urban Recovery Strategy.<sup>171</sup> As for its status of participatory urban planning, as a matter of fact, the decentralization legislation in Yemen was undertaken in the law No.4 [Local Authorities Law] in the year 2000. Essentially, activities concerning urban planning and management were decentralized from the central government to the elected local councils at the governorate and municipal/district levels. The municipality of Sana'a is considered to be an autonomous entity at the level of a governorate.<sup>172</sup>

#### ***SDG 11.4: Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage***

Cultural and natural heritage, the numerous archaeological sites are fundamental cornerstones of Arab collective identity. If urbanization is planned and managed in a sustainable way, the heritage of urban areas would be rightfully safeguarded and protected. However, due to political conflict in many Arab countries, various sites have been destroyed.

The relevant indicator for the SDG target proposes to measure: “Total expenditure (public or private) per capita spent on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage, level of government, type of expenditure and type of private funding”. Currently, the UN statistics department is in the process of developing the methodology and to date no data is available for this target.

#### ***GCC Countries***

GCC countries acknowledge the importance of preserving their heritage national traditions, also under the aspect of increasing tourism and related economic potential. **Saudi Arabia**, in the framework of the “Kingdom’s Vision 2030”, aims to establish more museums and work on its historical sites and cultural venues. In **Kuwait**, The General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, in collaboration with the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters is partnering with UNDP and UNESCO for the establishment of a framework for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage (2018-2019)<sup>173</sup>. **Qatar** developed in 2014 the

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<sup>170</sup> Yemen UNHCR Update, March 2018 (2018). Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-unhcr-update-march-2018>

<sup>171</sup> EU and UN-Habitat launch city profiling project in Yemen to coordinate humanitarian, recovery and development investments (2019). Retrieved from: <https://unhabitat.org/eu-and-un-habitat-launch-city-profiling-project-in-yemen-to-coordinate-humanitarian-recovery-and-development-investments/>

<sup>172</sup> Republic of Yemen National Report – UN Habitat III (2016), pp 28. Retrieved from: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Yemen-National-Report-September-2016.pdf>

<sup>173</sup> Preserving and promoting Kuwait’s cultural heritage (2017). Retrieved from: [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/doha/about-this-office/single-view/news/preserving\\_and\\_promoting\\_kuwaits\\_cultural\\_heritage/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/doha/about-this-office/single-view/news/preserving_and_promoting_kuwaits_cultural_heritage/)



“Qatar Cultural Heritage Information Management System (QCHIMS)”, aiming to share information about the activities being done to conserve heritage structure.<sup>174</sup> **UAE** is celebrating festivals and events and establishes heritage villages, in addition to constructing and maintaining mosques.<sup>175</sup> **Bahrain**, on the other hand, is working on integrating its natural environment with the modern developments in the context of the “Large-Scale Waterfront Development Project” to be completed by 2023 in line with Bahrain’s Economic Vision 2030. As for **Oman**, the National Records and Archives Authority are working on digitizing Omani manuscripts in an effort to create a digital archive for the country’s heritage<sup>176</sup>.

### ***Mashreq Countries***

In **Egypt**, an agreement was signed between the Antiquities Minister and the US-based coalition to protect the Egyptian Antiquities (ICPEA) and its cultural heritage sites. According to the ICPEA’s website, a series of short, medium, and long-term programs were agreed.<sup>177</sup> The National Development Plan (2018-2022) of **Iraq** mentions “Culture, Tourism and Antiquities” as one of its targets, and “The Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative” advocates for the preservation of two potential World Heritage Sites in Iraq<sup>178</sup>. Moreover, an initial planning framework for reconstructing Mosul has been presented by UN-Habitat and UNESCO.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, the EU and UNESCO are currently developing a project that aims to safeguard the intangible cultural asset at risk and increase the access to culture for IDPs.<sup>180</sup> In **Lebanon**, a new draft law for preserving cultural and archeological heritage was approved in 2017 by the Cabinet but has not yet been passed by the Parliament.<sup>181</sup> A Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project has been developed but was closed in 2016.<sup>182</sup> In **Jordan**, the American Center of Oriental Research started the “Sustainable Cultural Heritage Through Engagement of Local Communities Project” as an initiative for the civil society to preserve Jordan’s ancient sites.<sup>183</sup> Moreover, the US

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<sup>174</sup> Conserving Qatar’s cultural heritage (2014). Retrieved from: <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/403226/Conserving-Qatar-s-cultural-heritage>

<sup>175</sup> Efforts of the UAE Government in preserving the heritage (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://government.ae/en/about-the-uae/culture/arab-and-islamic-heritage/efforts-of-the-uae-government-in-preserving-the-heritage>

<sup>176</sup> Call to create integrated digital manuscript preservation unit in Oman (2019). Retrieved from: <https://timesofoman.com/article/1140746>

<sup>177</sup> The International Coalition to Protect Egyptian Antiquities (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://archaeology.columbian.gwu.edu/international-coalition-protect-egyptian-antiquities>

<sup>178</sup> Solidarity in Action! (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/mission-statement>

<sup>179</sup> UN-Habitat and UNESCO presented the Initial Planning Framework for Reconstruction of Mosul (2018). Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/un-habitat-and-unesco-presented-initial-planning-framework-reconstruction-mosul-enar>

<sup>180</sup> UNESCO - EU-UNESCO Project: Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/culture-in-emergencies/Protecting-Cultural-Heritage-and-Diversity-in-Complex-Emergencies-for-Stability-and-Peace>

<sup>181</sup> A Success for Beirut’s Heritage, But Not Yet a Victory (2019). Retrieved from: <http://beirut-today.com/2017/10/31/success-beiruts-heritage-not-yet-victory/>

<sup>182</sup> Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project (2003-2016). Retrieved from: <http://projects.worldbank.org/P050529/cultural-heritage-urban-development-project?lang=en&tab=overview>

<sup>183</sup> In Jordan, Antiquities Sites Enlist Nearby Communities as Partners (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2019/01/in-jordan-antiquities-sites-enlist-nearby-communities-as-partners/>

Embassy in Amman has funded the project for conserving the Roman Tunnel in northern Jordan. The project aims to pave the road for collaborative cooperation and better coordination on the local, regional and global level.<sup>184</sup> In **Syria**, while renovating historical sites is not yet on the government's agenda, initiatives to preserve its memory are maintained. For instance, "The Syrian Heritage Archive" collects pictures of Syria's long-celebrated sites before and after the civil war.<sup>185</sup> In 2014, a project to safeguard the Syrian heritage, was launched by UNESCO as an emergency initiative which led to the establishment of an observatory to monitor the state of Syria's cultural heritage.<sup>186</sup> In an effort to renovate and safeguard cultural heritage in the cities of **Palestine**, an agreement was signed, for the period of 2012-2018, with Sweden to implement the project "Local Development through the Rehabilitation and Revitalization of the Historic Built-in Palestine".<sup>187</sup>

### ***Maghreb Countries***

In **Tunisia**, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development sheds light on the importance of adapting the buildings based on its cultural characteristics<sup>188</sup>. A new draft law was being promoted in 2018 by the Ministry of Culture to support the protection of the diverse heritage in **Morocco**.<sup>189</sup> In order to protect the archaeological sites and historic monuments in **Libya**, the US Embassy has given an amount of 946,000 dollars to the Libyan Department of Antiques.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, the EU and UNESCO are currently implementing a project to rehabilitate the physical collections and storages in Libya.<sup>191</sup>

### ***Least Developed Countries***

**Sudan** is working on preserving its broad cultural heritage. Essentially, it has signed a project with UNESCO to implement the project for "Strengthening national capacities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Sudan".<sup>192</sup> Moreover, Western Sudan has been granted a

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<sup>184</sup> Jordan Completes Renovation of Longest Roman Water Tunnel (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1512256/jordan-completes-renovation-longest-roman-water-tunnel>

<sup>185</sup> Syria's cultural heritage before and after the war (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.dw.com/en/syrias-cultural-heritage-before-and-after-the-war/g-47727914>

<sup>186</sup> Cultural Heritage Sites of Syria (2014). Retrieved from: <https://www.wmf.org/project/cultural-heritage-sites-syria>

<sup>187</sup> International Local Development through the Rehabilitation and Revitalization of the Historic Built Environment in Palestine (2012). Retrieved from: [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/about-this-office/single-view/news/international\\_local\\_development\\_through\\_the\\_rehabilitation\\_a/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/about-this-office/single-view/news/international_local_development_through_the_rehabilitation_a/)

<sup>188</sup> UNECA - The green economy in Tunisia (2014-2020). Available at: [https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/SROs/NA/AHEGM-ISDGE/egm\\_ge\\_tunisa\\_eng.pdf](https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/SROs/NA/AHEGM-ISDGE/egm_ge_tunisa_eng.pdf)

<sup>189</sup> Morocco Pledges Broad New Strategy to Preserve National Heritage, Historic Sites (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/03/241769/morocco-pledges-strategy-preserve-cultural-heritage-historic-sites/>

<sup>190</sup> U.S. Embassy in Libya – Cultural Heritage (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://ly.usembassy.gov/education-culture/cultural-heritage/>

<sup>191</sup> UNESCO - EU-UNESCO Project: Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/culture-in-emergencies/Protecting-Cultural-Heritage-and-Diversity-in-Complex-Emergencies-for-Stability-and-Peace>

<sup>192</sup> British Council – Conserving Sudanese cultural heritage (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-protection-fund/projects/sudan-library>



fund to restore three museums in the area. In 2018, a project on digitizing written and photographic cultural material archives were supported by the British Council in 2018 for a period of two years.<sup>193</sup> In Mauritania, UNESCO has issued a new project on strengthening the NGOs' capacities to be active in the field of Mauritania's cultural heritage in 2018.<sup>194</sup> As for Yemen, due to the conflict situation, EU and UNESCO in 2017 have begun implementing a project to first assess the damage and then to rehabilitate the heritage sites in danger.<sup>195</sup>

***SDG 11.5: By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations***

Due to the increased risk of climate change, disaster risks are high in the ESCWA region. The most common natural hazards affecting the Arab world are droughts, floods, earthquakes, followed by heatwaves and dust storms. Subsequently, people's livelihoods are affected, and are often associated with an economic loss, misplacement, and even sometimes death. According to the ODI (2018), the ESCWA region has lost an estimated 13 billion US dollars in consequence of the dust storms.<sup>196</sup> Other disasters include food security, and water availability. It is fundamental to keep in mind that climate change is the most fundamental reason behind increasing disasters.

Two indicators are connected to this target: 11.5.1 shall measure the "Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population". The second indicator focuses on the "Direct economic loss in relation to global GDP, damage to critical infrastructure and number of disruptions to basic services, attributed to disasters". Due to the diverse implications of these indicators, we will include some for each country. We also indicate, when appropriate, the cases where disasters led to disruptions in basic services.<sup>197</sup>

***GCC Countries***

For the GCC, one of the main impacts of Climate Change are rising sea levels and water scarcity. The UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain have seen a series of floods over the years while Oman also experienced cyclonic activity. The United Nations Environment Programme

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<sup>193</sup> ICCROM - Community museums of Western Museums in Western Sudan (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.iccrom.org/news/community-museums-western-sudan>

<sup>194</sup> UNESCO Intangible Heritage – Mauritania (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/mauritania-MR?info=projects>

<sup>195</sup> UNESCO - EU-UNESCO Project: Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/culture-in-emergencies/Protecting-Cultural-Heritage-and-Diversity-in-Complex-Emergencies-for-Stability-and-Peace>

<sup>196</sup> Disaster Risk Reduction and violent conflict in Africa and Arab states (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.odi.org/publications/11208-disaster-risk-reduction-and-violent-conflict-africa-and-arab-states-implications-sandai-framework>

<sup>197</sup> United Nations Statistics Division. Retrieved from SDG Global Database: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>

submitted a proposal to the Green Climate Fund, for a 9.8 million USD in support of “Enhancing climate resilience of the water sector in **Bahrain**”.<sup>198</sup> In 2016, Kuwait has submitted its first Nationally Determined Contribution, focusing on avoiding the increase of greenhouse gas emissions. It further seeks to have a low-carbon economic system that is adaptable to climate change through various projects such as: establishing centers for forecasting and protection from the water level rise, reducing the open desert land ratio, reducing electricity consumption and increasing awareness on the lack of water resources.<sup>199</sup> The **Qatar** National Master Plan 2023 integrates a climate change strategy (CCS) for the urban planning and urban development sector.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, according to the Gulf Times, Qatar has ensured the availability of water<sup>201</sup>. In the **UAE**, a significant change has been made in terms of mitigating against climate change by establishing the federal Ministry of Climate Change and Environment along with the National Climate Change Plan of the UAE (2017-2050)<sup>202</sup>. Minimizing the consequences of climate change and protecting water resources are objectives also considered in the Environmental Vision 2030.<sup>203</sup> Moreover, concerns in that area are integrated into the country’s natural resource management policies. **Saudi Arabia** has enforced a new law through the Saudi Arabian Standards Organization, which aims at improving the water efficiency consumption rate (applicable since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018)<sup>204</sup>. Moreover, Saudi Arabia’s climate change adaptation plan is still in the early stages.<sup>205</sup> The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change in **Oman** presented the Ashjar Initiative in 2016 in an effort to combat desertification.<sup>206</sup>

### ***Mashreq Countries***

According to the UNISDR (2013), Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria are all highly prone to earthquakes. History indicates that devastating earthquakes have happened in Lebanon (1956), Palestine (1927), and in Egypt (1992). Furthermore, UNISDR (2013) indicates that Jordan and

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<sup>198</sup> “Back to the Future” for GCF After Recent Bahrain Board Meeting (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://www.germanclimatefinance.de/2018/11/21/back-future-gcf-recent-bahrain-board-meeting/>

<sup>199</sup> The State of Kuwait Environment Public Authority - Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (2015). Retrieved from:

[https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Kuwait%20First/Kuwait%20First%20NDC\\_English.pdf](https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Kuwait%20First/Kuwait%20First%20NDC_English.pdf)

<sup>200</sup> Qatar National Master Plan – Strategic Plans and Projects (n.d.). Retrieved from:

<http://www.mme.gov.qa/QatarMasterPlan/English/strategicplans.aspx?panel=ccs>

<sup>201</sup> Qatar achieves goal of water for sustainable development (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/596961/Qatar-achieves-goal-of-water-for-sustainable-devel>

<sup>202</sup> National Climate Change Plan of the United Arab Emirates (2017-2050). Available at:

<https://www.moccae.gov.ae/assets/30e58e2e/national-climate-change-plan-for-the-united-arab-emirates-2017-2050.aspx>

<sup>203</sup> Environment Agency Abu Dhabi – Environment Vision 2030. Available at:

<https://www.ead.ae/Publications/Environment%20Vision%202030/Environment-Vision-2030-Eng.pdf>

<sup>204</sup> Understand Water Efficiency Labelling for Saudi Arabia (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://www.export.org.uk/news/382904/Understand-Water-Efficiency-Labelling-for-Saudi-Arabia.htm>

<sup>205</sup> Climate Scorecard – Saudi Arabia’s Climate Action Plan (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://www.climatecorecard.org/2018/08/saudi-arabias-climate-action-plan/>

<sup>206</sup> New initiative to protect trees to be launched (2016). Retrieved from: <http://www.omanobserver.om/new-initiative-protect-trees-launched/>

Syria have gone through the worst recorded droughts during 2007 and 2010.<sup>207</sup> Following the trend of natural hazards and water inefficiency, **Egypt**, in collaboration with the European Union Delegation to Egypt prepared a national water resources plan for 2017-2037.<sup>208</sup> In 2011, Egypt has developed “The National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction”<sup>209</sup>. UNDP has also helped implement various projects for climate change such as “Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in the North Coast and the Nine Delta Regions in Egypt (2015-2024)”<sup>210</sup>. It is worth noting that the number of deaths and missing persons in Egypt attributed to disasters have decreased from 2246 in 2016 to 1362 in 2017.

In **Jordan**, the government implements the National Climate Change Policy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2013-2020)<sup>211</sup> as well as the Water Strategy (2016-2025).<sup>212</sup> According to the SDG Global Database, the number of deaths and missing persons attributed to disasters was 8 in 2018, an increase from 5 in 2017. At the same time, the number of disruptions to basic services decreased from 5182 in 2016 to 57 in 2017. In **Iraq**, water resources are targeted in the National Development Plan (2019-2022). While no specific policy addresses climate change adaptation, the country is committed to develop its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to follow up on the implementation of the Climate Agreement (signed at the 2015 Paris Summit) with assistance from UNDP.<sup>213</sup> The Ministry of Environment has also expressed its intention to develop a national strategy for climate change adaptation.<sup>214</sup>

The National Spatial plan (NSP) of **Palestine** addresses issues of resource management. Statistics estimate that 70 people were either dead or missing due to disasters in 2017, with only small direct economic loss. In 2011, Palestine has developed the National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation and in 2016 became a member of the UN climate convention (UNFCCC).<sup>215</sup> In **Lebanon**, in the year 2018, there were 10 persons considered either dead or

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<sup>207</sup> UNISDR Factsheet – Overview of Disaster Risk Reduction in the Arab Region (2013). Available at: [https://www.unisdr.org/files/31693\\_drrfactsheetarabregionfinal.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/files/31693_drrfactsheetarabregionfinal.pdf)

<sup>208</sup> Preparation of the National Water Resources Plan for Egypt 2017-2037 (NWRP 2017-2037) (€2 million grant) (2018). Retrieved from: [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/egypt/43747/preparation-national-water-resources-plan-egypt-2017-2037-nwrp-2017-2037-€2-million-grant\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/egypt/43747/preparation-national-water-resources-plan-egypt-2017-2037-nwrp-2017-2037-€2-million-grant_en)

<sup>209</sup> Egypt’s National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (2011). Available at: <http://www.climasouth.eu/docs/Adaptation011%20StrategyEgypt.pdf>

<sup>210</sup> Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation in North Coast of Egypt (n.d.). Retrieved from: [https://www.adaptation-undp.org/sites/default/files/resources/naps\\_in\\_focus\\_lessons\\_from\\_egypt.pdf](https://www.adaptation-undp.org/sites/default/files/resources/naps_in_focus_lessons_from_egypt.pdf)

<sup>211</sup> Ministry of Environment - The National Climate Change Policy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan 2013-2020. Available at: <https://globalnaps.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/climate-change-policy-of-jordan.pdf>

<sup>212</sup> Ministry of Water and Irrigation - National Water Strategy 2016-2025. Available at: [http://www.mwi.gov.jo/sites/en-us/Hot%20Issues/Strategic%20Documents%20of%20The%20Water%20Sector/National%20Water%20Strategy%202016-2025\)-25.2.2016.pdf](http://www.mwi.gov.jo/sites/en-us/Hot%20Issues/Strategic%20Documents%20of%20The%20Water%20Sector/National%20Water%20Strategy%202016-2025)-25.2.2016.pdf)

<sup>213</sup> UNDP – Iraq committed to progressing climate change mitigation (2018). Retrieved from: <http://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2018/10/20/iraq-committed-to-progressing-climate-change-mitigation.html>

<sup>214</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands – Climate Change Profile: Iraq (2018). Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/climate-change-profile-iraq>

<sup>215</sup> Climate Change, the Occupation, and a Vulnerable Palestine (2019). Retrieved from: <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/climate-change-the-occupation-and-a-vulnerable-palestine/>

missing due to disasters, but the direct economic loss was negligent relative to the GDP. While there is no explicit policy on climate change in Lebanon, issues relating to biodiversity, green products, renewable energy industries are targeted in a number of regulations.<sup>216</sup>

### ***Maghreb Countries***

In terms of efforts done by the governments, **Morocco** is considered the leader in Africa in its efforts to combat climate change.<sup>217</sup> Moreover, the National Office of Electricity and Drinking Water in Morocco is working on fixing the water shortage issue.<sup>218</sup> Statistics show that only 1 person had died in 2014 due to a disaster. In **Tunisia**, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development<sup>219</sup> sheds the light on the importance of resource efficiency and the construction of new energy efficient buildings. The Ministry of Environment, the Coastal Protection and Planning Agency, and UNDP are implementing the “Climate Resilient Integrated Water Resource and Coastal Management” Programme.<sup>220</sup> Statistics show that 19 persons were identified as either dead or missing in 2018 due to disasters with little economic loss. Unfortunately, **Libya** lacks a national climate legislation since 2016.<sup>221</sup> While no data has been recorded on the SDG Global database, a report by OCHA, published in 2019, indicates that areas in the south of Libya were badly affected by floods, which caused 34 casualties with four of them fatal.<sup>222</sup>

### ***Least Developed Countries***

LDCs are known for their vulnerability to disasters. Essentially, Yemen experiences severe water crises –accelerated by the war.<sup>223</sup> Sudan is facing floods<sup>224</sup> and Mauritania is going through recurrent droughts<sup>225</sup>. Regarding the indicators 11.5.1 and 11.5.2, for **Yemen**, estimates in 2010 show that 156 persons were considered to be either dead or missing due to disasters. Subsequently, approximately 3 million dollars were attributed as direct economic loss in the

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<sup>216</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands - Climate Change Profile: Lebanon (2018). Available at:

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lebanon\\_4.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lebanon_4.pdf)

<sup>217</sup> Morocco ranked second in Climate Change Performance Index 2018 (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/12/260052/morocco-climate-change-performance-index/> (Bazza, n.d.)

<sup>218</sup> Morocco’s Plan to Reduce Water Shortages (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/06/248086/moroccos-plan-water-shortage/>

<sup>219</sup> The green economy in Tunisia (2014-2020). Available at: [https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/SROs/NA/AHEGM-ISDGE/egm\\_ge\\_tunisia\\_eng.pdf](https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/SROs/NA/AHEGM-ISDGE/egm_ge_tunisia_eng.pdf)

<sup>220</sup> Addressing Climate Change Vulnerabilities and Risks in Vulnerable Coastal Areas of Tunisia (n.d.). Retrieved from:

<https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/scf-tunisia>

<sup>221</sup> Climate Change Risk Profile - Libya (n.d.). Retrieved from:

[https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017\\_USAID\\_GEMS\\_Climate%20Change%20Risk%20Profile\\_Libya.pdf](https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017_USAID_GEMS_Climate%20Change%20Risk%20Profile_Libya.pdf)

<sup>222</sup> OCHA – Libya: Floods in the South – West (2019). Available at:

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/190611-Flash-Update---Floods.pdf>

<sup>223</sup> Yemen is Running Out of Water (2019). Retrieved from: <https://lobelog.com/yemen-is-running-out-of-water/>

<sup>224</sup> Sudan: Floods – Jul 2018 (2018). Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/disaster/fl-2018-000128-sdn>

<sup>225</sup> How Draught is making life harder in southern Mauritania (2018). Retrieved from: <https://insight.wfp.org/how-drought-is-making-life-harder-in-southern-mauritania-8a8a19194ff7>

same year. According to Yemen's Climate Change Profile (2019)<sup>226</sup>, the country's lack of proper governance regarding the use of natural resources is hindering Yemen's ability to face the impact of climate change. In Sudan, statistics show that 54 persons were either dead or missing due to disasters in 2018. In the same year, direct economic loss relative to GDP was 0.00484 percent. There are no statistics regarding the indicators for **Mauritania**. The country is currently working on developing a National Adaptation Strategy with the support of UNDP and other international development agencies.<sup>227</sup>

***SDG 11.6: By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management***

The issue of pollution and environmental degradation is the third most common issue faced by the ESCWA region. Populated cities in the Arab world have increased in density at least since the 1960s. The World Bank estimates that population density in the Arab World was at 37 people per sq. km of land area in 2018.<sup>228</sup> This trend has placed extremely difficult pressure on public and basic services leading to poor waste management and threatening the quality of life, health, and biodiversity. Generally, challenges are further imposed when the population, the economy, and the urban areas are growing.

Two indicators for this target of Goal 11 are proposed: 11.6.1: "Proportion of urban solid waste regularly collected and with adequate final discharge out of total urban solid waste generated, by cities", taking into account not only waste collection, but also its transportation, recycling, treatment and disposal. Reducing environmental impact is only effective if all of these stages are soundly carried out. The second indicator – 11.6.2 is the "Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g.: PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted)." 11.6.2 specifically stresses on urban air pollution. The rationale behind it is that a high level of health risk is associated with the fine particles in the air we breathe. According to the World Bank, the mean annual exposure of the Arab world to the PM2.5 pollutant has significantly increased to 59 in 2017.<sup>229</sup> Available data for countries is extracted from the SDG Global Database.<sup>230</sup> We indicate the values for 11.6.1 and 11.6.2 in Figure 5 and 6 below.

**Figure 5: Municipal Solid Waste Collection Coverage, by cities (%).**

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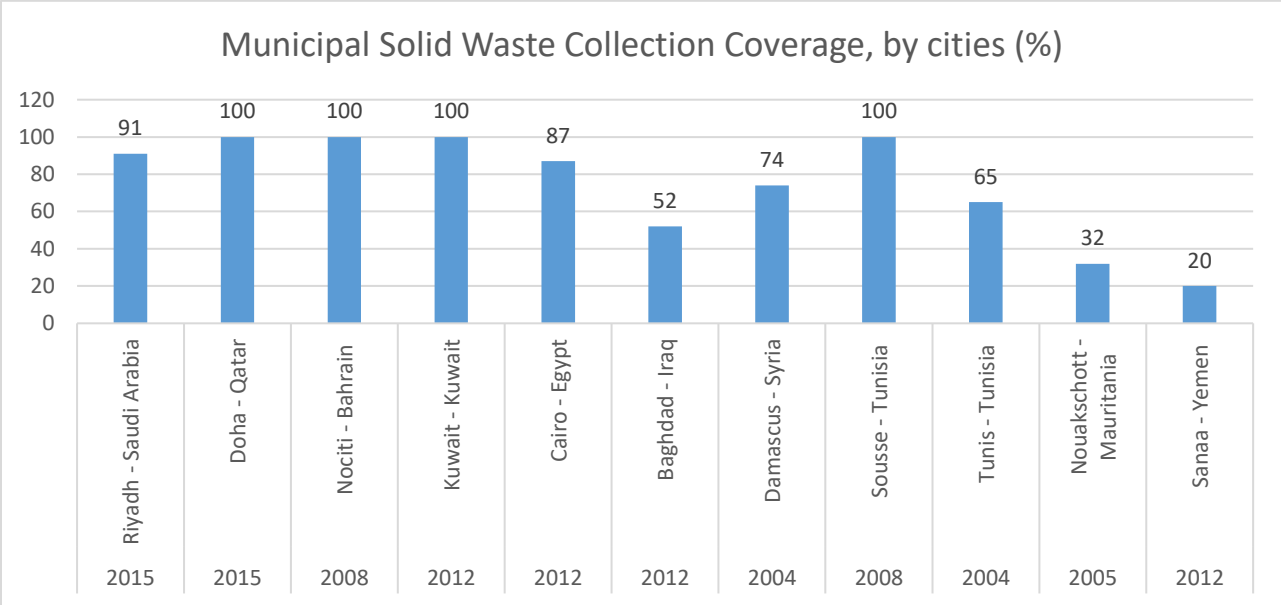
<sup>226</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands - Climate Change Profile: Yemen (2018). Available at: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Yemen\\_2.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Yemen_2.pdf)

<sup>227</sup> Supporting Mauritania to advance their NAP Process (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/mauritania-nap-process>

<sup>228</sup> The World Bank (2018). *Population density (people per sq. km of land area). Arab World*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?locations=1A>

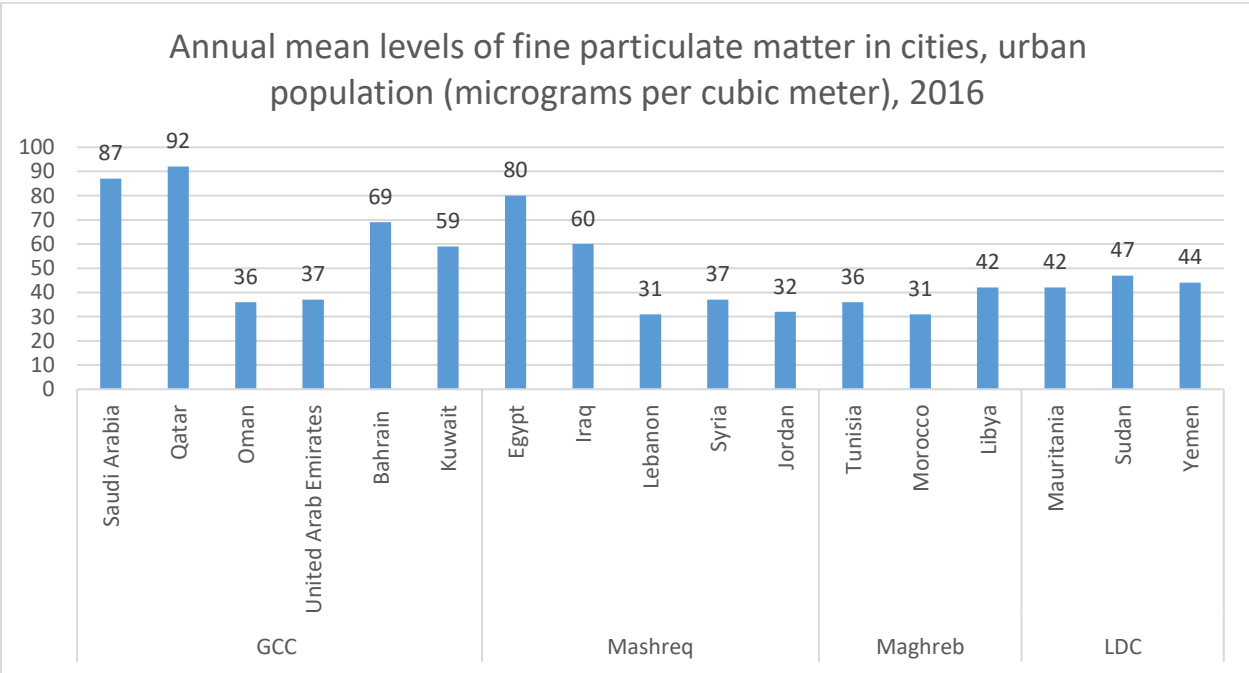
<sup>229</sup> The World Bank (2017). *PM2.5 air pollution, mean annual exposure (micrograms per cubic meter). Arab World*. Retrieved from World Bank Global Development Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.PM25.MC.M3?locations=1A>

<sup>230</sup> United Nations Statistics Division. Retrieved from the SDG Global Database: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>



Source: United Nations Statistics Division. *Municipal Solid Waste collection coverage, by cities (%)*. Retrieved from SDG Global Database: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>

**Figure 6: Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter in cities, urban population (micrograms per cubic meter).**



Source: United Nations Statistics Division. *Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter in cities, urban population*. Retrieved from SDG Global Database: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>

**GCC Countries**

Countries in the GCC, unfortunately, are listed among the world's most polluted.<sup>231</sup> In **Saudi Arabia**, environmental problems range from air pollution to lack of biodiversity, and desertification. The SDG Global Database shows the annual mean levels of fine particulate matter in Saudi urban areas to be 87 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2016. On the positive side, municipal waste collection coverage in Riyadh was relatively high, at 91.2 percent in 2015. Also, the Kingdom has started working on reducing its greenhouse gas emissions. Since 2010, the country has invested in renewable energy and implemented energy efficiency projects. Effectively, more than 24.8 million barrels of fuel and 13 million barrels of diesel were saved in 2016 thanks to the Saudi Electricity Company programs. In 2017, Saudi Arabia signed a bilateral carbon reduction agreement with the US Department of Energy. In the same year the Kingdom established the Green Saudi Company for Carbon Services which aims to develop programs for carbon emission reduction and sustainable development. Policy coherence across existing environmental laws and regulations, however, still is a challenge.<sup>232</sup> **Bahrain**, mainly suffers from pollution through the oil-spill. The Kingdom's Economic Vision (2008-2030) indicates its intention to protect Bahrain's natural environment by implementing energy-efficient regulations, reducing pollution, and well as increasing investment in technologies that reduce carbon emissions. Estimates show that in 2016, 69 µg/m<sup>3</sup> was the annual mean level of fine particulate matter in Bahrain's urban areas. In Bahrain, 1.2 million tons of solid wastes are generated each year. The country has only one dumpsite for municipal, agricultural and non-hazardous industrial wastes. It is planning to adopt the National Waste Management Strategy starting 2020 and ending in 2040 and thus expected to develop sufficient capacity in a few years.<sup>233234</sup>

In the **United Arab Emirates**, 37 µg/m<sup>3</sup> was the annual average level of fine particulate matter in its urban areas in 2016. In addition to air pollution, the country suffers from oil-spills, pollution and a high level of waste generation. Nonetheless, Dubai has taken clear steps to address air pollution through the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment.<sup>235</sup> Additionally, there exist strict legislations (UAE Federal Law No. 24 of 1999) that prevent the intentional dumping of waste into the sea.<sup>236</sup> In Abu Dhabi, the government established in 2008 "Tadweer" – a center for waste management – responsible for policies, strategies, and contracts for waste management in the

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<sup>231</sup> This map shows the countries with the most "toxic" environments on Earth (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.businessinsider.com/map-of-the-most-polluted-and-toxic-countries-2017-2>

<sup>232</sup> Developing a green economy in Saudi Arabia (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.petroleum-economist.com/articles/low-carbon-energy/renewables/2019/developing-a-green-economy-in-saudi-arabia>

<sup>233</sup> Waste & Recycling Middle East - An Overview of Solid Waste Management In Bahrain (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.waste-recyclingme.ae/focus-bahrain-an-overview-of-solid-waste-management-in-bahrain/>

<sup>234</sup> Solid Waste Management in Bahrain (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.ecomena.org/solid-waste-bahrain/>

<sup>235</sup> UAE ramps efforts to tackle air pollution (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.thenational.ae/uae/environment/uae-ramps-up-efforts-to-tackle-air-pollution-1.782903>

<sup>236</sup> Environmental Protection (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.government.ae/en/information-and-services/environment-and-energy/environmental-protection>



emirate.<sup>237</sup> Furthermore, Abu Dhabi's Environment Vision 2030 also addresses issues of waste management.<sup>238</sup> In Dubai, the project "The Wastenizer", prepared by the Dubai Municipality for the Dubai 10X (Dubai Future Foundation) initiative, aims to use waste for generating energy.<sup>239</sup> Additionally, the Dubai EXPO 2020 revealed future plans for waste management.<sup>240</sup> The Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050, developed in 2015, aims to provide 75 percent of Dubai's energy through clean energy sources.<sup>241</sup>

In **Oman**, the annual mean level of fine particular matters in urban areas amounted to 36 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2016. According to the Be'ah's website (also known as the Oman Environment Services Holding Company) the country produces an average of 2 million tons per year of Municipal solid waste.<sup>242</sup> There is a lack of collection and disposal facilities in the country with scattered landfills and many unauthorized dumpsites. Accordingly, proper waste management constitutes one of Oman's top priorities, as new engineered landfills are to be established along with waste transfer and waste treatment plans across the country.<sup>243</sup> Recently, in 2018, Oman has signed a contract with the multinational French company SUEZ, in order to operate and maintain an Industrial Waste Landfill at North Al Batinah Governorate.<sup>244</sup> Moreover, promoting environmental sustainability is mentioned in the 9<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2022).

In **Qatar**, there the concentration of fine particulate matter was a mean level of 92 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in the urban areas of Doha in 2016. Despite the fact that Doha had a 100 percent municipal solid waste collection coverage in 2015, Qatar still exhibits one of the highest per capita waste generation in the world, ranging from 1.6 to 1.8 kg per day.<sup>245</sup> One of the prominent environmental issues the country faces is the lack of regular recycling schemes. In terms of developments against this challenge, a company called Qatar Steel is working on reducing the environmental impact, waste, and emissions (based on the Sustainability Roadmap 2020).<sup>246</sup> Moreover, Doha launched the "cities sans garbage bins" project where small trash cans will be provided to the households. The

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<sup>237</sup> Tadweer Waste Treatment LLC. Available at: <http://tadweer.com>

<sup>238</sup> Environment Agency Abu Dhabi – Environment Vision 2030. Available at :

<https://www.ead.ae/Publications/Environment%20Vision%202030/Environment-Vision-2030-Eng.pdf>

<sup>239</sup> Dubai unveils the Wastenizer to turn waste into energy (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://www.arabianbusiness.com/technology/392676-dubai-unveils-the-wastenizer-to-turn-waste-into-energy>

<sup>240</sup> Expo 2020 explains waste management plans (2019). Retrieved from:

<https://www.arabianindustry.com/construction/news/2019/jan/17/expo-2020-explains-waste-management-plans-6027346/>

<sup>241</sup> Mohammed launches DH50bn Dubai Clean Energy Strategy (2015). Retrieved from:

<https://www.emirates247.com/news/emirates/mohammed-launches-dh50bn-dubai-clean-energy-strategy-2015-11-29-1.612173>

<sup>242</sup> be'ah (n.d.). Available at: <https://www.beah.om>

<sup>243</sup> Solid Waste Management in Oman (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.ecomena.org/solid-waste-oman/>

<sup>244</sup> Oman awards industrial waste landfill contract (2018). Retrieved from:

[https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/business/story/Oman\\_awards\\_industrial\\_waste\\_landfill\\_contract-SNG\\_127921770/](https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/business/story/Oman_awards_industrial_waste_landfill_contract-SNG_127921770/)

<sup>245</sup> Waste Management Outlook for Qatar (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.ecomena.org/waste-qatar/>

<sup>246</sup> Qatar Steel - Sustainability Roadmap 2020 (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.qatarsteel.com.qa/our-sustainability-approach/sustainability-roadmap-2020/>



vehicles of the General Cleanliness Department will collect the waste free of charge.<sup>247</sup> In **Kuwait**, the annual mean level of particulate matter in urban areas was 59 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2016. The last published estimation for 11.6.1, however, was in 2012. The country had started working on drawing up a waste management plan at the start of January 2017. The last phase of the project will be a national waste management plan for the country.<sup>248</sup>

### ***Mashreq Countries***

**Lebanon** is challenged by high volumes of solid waste as well as significant pollution levels (air, water, soil). Specifically, 31 µg/m<sup>3</sup> is the annual mean level of fine particulate matter in urban areas. This phenomenon is further worsened due to the garbage crisis in the city of Beirut, since the closure of the Al Naameh landfill site in 2015. Legislation requires that certain projects, including concerning infrastructure, hospitals, and industrial factories require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to measure the positive/negative environmental consequence of a project. Moreover, the Ministry of Public Powers has the right to refuse to grant a building permit in case of risk to health, natural landscape, environment, and safety, but suffers from proper enforcement.<sup>249</sup> Regarding waste management, the country lacks a clear legal framework for sustainable waste management. Ever since the garbage crisis, dumping wastes in illegal sites and waste burning has become widespread.<sup>250</sup> In April 2019, an exhibition on waste management addressed the issue and encouraged exchanging of ideas concerning the latest proper management techniques.<sup>251</sup>

In **Egypt**, insufficient urban expansion is considered to be the biggest factor in environmental degradation. The country exhibits water and air pollution in addition to a poor sewage treatment system. The SDG Global Database indicates that 80 µg/m<sup>3</sup> is the annual mean level of fine particulate matter in Egyptian urban areas (2016). In 2012, 87percent of Cairo's municipal solid waste was collected. An article by Egypt Today (2018) states that 44.8 percent of Egyptian households dump their garbage in the streets while 55.2 percent of them dispose of their garbage through private companies. Efforts are undertaken by the Minister of Environment who has indicated the development of a new Municipal Waste Management Program 2020 to rehabilitate the waste dumps and establish new sanitary landfills. The head of the Garbage Collectors union

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<sup>247</sup> Qatar to launch "cities sans garbage bins" project on experimental basis (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/05/03/2019/Qatar-to-launch-cities-sans-garbage-bins-project-on-experimental-basis>

<sup>248</sup> A waste management plan for the Emirate of Kuwait (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.umsicht-suro.fraunhofer.de/en/departments/recycling-management/emiskwaste.html>

<sup>249</sup> National Report Lebanon – UN Habitat III (2016), pp. 25-26. Retrieved from: [http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Report\\_LEBANON.pdf](http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Report_LEBANON.pdf)

<sup>250</sup> Lebanon's garbage problem: No time to waste (2018). Retrieved from: <https://en.annahar.com/article/841443-lebanons-garbage-problem-no-time-to-waste>

<sup>251</sup> RAWMEC – Recycling & Waste Management Exhibition & Conference (n.d.). Available at: <https://www.wastemgmtexpo.com>

is also planning on collaborating with an Italian company to build a new waste recycling plant that can convert waste to energy.<sup>252</sup>

In 2016, **Iraq** had an annual average concentration of 60 µg/m<sup>3</sup> of particulate matter in urban areas. The last reporting date was in 2012, where Baghdad had a 52 percent coverage of its municipal solid waste. Effectively, due to continuous conflict, solid waste had increasingly become mismanaged. Iraq is estimated to produce around 31,000 tons of solid waste each day.<sup>253</sup> Unfortunately, this challenge is not properly faced as solid wastes are being randomly thrown out in landfills with no regard to the process of recycling. Allegedly, none of the only two landfills in Baghdad meets the standard of an environmental landfill. Essentially, the municipal budgets are being largely consumed by an inefficient management system, absence of strategies, and outdated equipment. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, the government has introduced strict punishments from financial fines to vehicle-confiscation upon litterers and polluters.<sup>254</sup> Additionally, it has launched a weeklong environmental campaign for the “Keep Kurdistan Clean” Initiative, encouraging political and civil engagement in reducing the pollution in the region.<sup>255</sup> Moreover, the Minister of Municipalities and Tourism stated that in the upcoming two to three years, Kurdistan will witness region-wide recycling facilities.<sup>256</sup>

In **Jordan**, there is an annual 32 µg/m<sup>3</sup> mean level of PM<sub>2.5</sub> in cities. The country generates around 2 million tons of municipal waste annually.<sup>257</sup> Although 90 percent of them are estimated to be collected, there is a lack of a formal infrastructure aimed at recycling or separation in the municipal waste management system.<sup>258</sup>

To address the waste crisis Gaza, **Palestine**, the “Gaza Solid Waste Management Project” was developed in 2018. It mainly aims to construct a sanitary landfill to serve 3 out of 5 governorates in Gaza until 2027, as well as serve the Gaza Strip until the year 2040. Moreover, stations for solid waste transfers will be constructed within a holistic approach to enhancing the capacity of the institution in charge of waste disposal.<sup>259</sup> A recent improvement in the management of household garbage waste is the public-private partnership between the World Bank Group and

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<sup>252</sup> Municipal solid waste management system to be developed (2018). Retrieved from:

<http://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/59354/Municipal-solid-waste-management-system-to-be-developed>

<sup>253</sup> Mustafa, A. S., Mohsin, A. A., Ali L. N. (2017). Management of Municipal Solid Waste in Baghdad, Iraq. *International Journal of Environmental and Ecological Engineering*. 11(7). (Mustafa, 2017)

<sup>254</sup> Enough of your rubbish: KRG to crack down on polluters (2019). Retrieved from:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/110420191>

<sup>255</sup> Keep Kurdistan clean: KRG launches week-long campaign (2019). Retrieved from:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/160420192>

<sup>256</sup> Buried under trash, KRG plans region-wide recycling (2019). Retrieved from:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/170420191>

<sup>257</sup> Solid Waste Management in Jordan (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.ecomena.org/swm-jordan/>

<sup>258</sup> Jordan Green Building Council - Your Guide to Waste Management in Jordan (2016), pp. 16-18. Retrieved from:

<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/amman/12729.pdf>

<sup>259</sup> Gaza Solid Waste Management Project GSWMP (2018). Available at: <https://www.mdif.org.ps/Files/Docs/ESMP%20-%20Sofa%20Landfill%20Access%20Road%20October%2023th%202018.pdf>

West Bank. Three landfills were constructed that would serve more than 2 million residents.<sup>260</sup> Palestine has also collaborated with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for the “Technical Assistance in Solid Waste Management” Project to encourage the proper waste collection as well as assistance in the formulation of a national strategy for Palestine.<sup>261</sup> Before the war, **Syria** had a serious challenge in its waste management. The war has further worsened the situation. In 2016, the country was exposed to a mean level of 37 µg/m<sup>3</sup> of particulate matter in its urban areas. Getting exposed to air pollution is further exacerbated due to the fact that an estimated 80 percent of solid waste is disposed at open dump sites in the suburbs.<sup>262</sup> Before the war, legislation targeted environmental sustainability (Law No. 50, enacted 2002) encouraged initiatives for recycling hazardous waste.<sup>263</sup>

### **Maghreb Countries**

**Libya** is the most affected country in the Maghreb, with an annual mean exposure of 42 µg/m<sup>3</sup> particulate matter in its cities, compared to 36 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in Tunisia, and 32 in Morocco. Also, Libya’s conflict since 2011 has generated a large volume of waste and rubble from destruction and demolition with an estimated 82 million tons.<sup>264</sup> This comes on top of an inefficient municipal waste management and collection system with a lack of sanitary landfills, leading to solid waste being dumped and burned. There are no clear strategies to deal with the country’s huge volume of waste generated. As for **Tunisia**, the latest data in the Global SDG Database show that in 2004, 65 percent of the municipal solid waste was collected in Tunis. More recent statistics indicate that 4 percent of Tunisia’s solid waste is recycled, 70 percent is dumped in legal and controlled landfills, while 21 percent is disposed of uncontrolled. Moreover, the volume of solid waste produced rises annually by 2.5 percent. Nonetheless, efforts are being made by the government to reduce the environmental impact of cities. In 2012, 10 operational landfills were in operation specific for municipal solid waste while 5 were under construction and another 5 were in the planning phase.<sup>265</sup> The National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2014-2020) emphasizes the importance of integrating an environmental dimension into national planning, mentioning specifically integrated and sustainable waste management and the preservation of air quality.

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<sup>260</sup> Solid Waste Management (2019). Retrieved from: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/brief/solid-waste-management>

<sup>261</sup> Palestinian Territories – Tackling Garbage Problems Peculiar to Conflict Areas (2018). Retrieved from: [https://www.jica.go.jp/english/publications/i-world/1810\\_03.html](https://www.jica.go.jp/english/publications/i-world/1810_03.html)

<sup>262</sup> PAX for Peace - Amidst the debris (2015), pp. 20. Retrieved from: <https://www.paxforpeace.nl/publications/all-publications/amidst-the-debris>

<sup>263</sup> Global Information Society Watch (2010). Retrieved from: <https://www.giswatch.org/country-report/2010-icts-and-environmental-sustainability/syria>

<sup>264</sup> Ali, A., & Ezeah, C. (2017). Framework for Management of Post-Conflict Waste in Libya. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, 13(5), 32. doi: 10.19044/esj.2017.v13n5p32

<sup>265</sup> SweepNet and GIZ - Report on the Solid Waste Management in Tunisia (2014), pp. 7. Retrieved from: [https://www.retech-germany.net/fileadmin/retech/05\\_mediathek/laenderinformationen/Tunesien\\_laenderprofile\\_sweep\\_net.pdf](https://www.retech-germany.net/fileadmin/retech/05_mediathek/laenderinformationen/Tunesien_laenderprofile_sweep_net.pdf)

Tax incentives are set to encourage waste reduction or recycling by companies.<sup>266</sup> In **Morocco**, the World Bank Group in 2015 approved of a 130 million US dollars loan to the country to help dispose of the all municipal solid waste in sanitary landfills, 20 percent of which would be recycled, until the end of 2022. Subsequently, solid waste services would be boosted in urban areas.<sup>267</sup> Moreover, a joint program was developed by the Ministries of Interior, Finance, and Environment: “National Solid Waste Program (PNDM)” for the years 2008-2022. It primarily aims to improve the management of municipal solid waste.<sup>268</sup> An example of the civil society participation is the “Clean City” startup by young Moroccans, which accelerates trash collection, and maintenance services.<sup>269</sup>

### ***Least Developed Countries***

LDCs are highly exposed to air pollution. In particular, urban areas in Sudan are exposed to an annual mean of 47 µg/m<sup>3</sup> particulate matter in the air, followed by 44 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in Yemen, and 42 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in Mauritania. In Sudan, environmental problems range from the lack of sewage treatments increasing water pollution in the Nile river. In Yemen, the same problem is exacerbated by the destruction of the sewage systems during the war. In Mauritania, environmental degradation is at large, along with limited water resources. **Sudan** has poor waste management, principally limited to collection from the rich urban areas only to be dumped in open landfills, the ground, or directly into waterways.<sup>270</sup> In **Yemen**, before the war, statistics in 2012, show that only 20 percent of Sana’a’s municipal solid waste was collected. Due to the bombing of a treatment plant in Sana’a, waste is accumulated and contaminating the water supply. The pile of hazardous waste included chemicals that cause numerous diseases, including, cancer, birth defects and others.<sup>271</sup>

### ***SDG 11.7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.***

Cities are strong drivers of the economy, but first of all they are a vital social space. Accessible public and green space forms the identity of cities and facilitates the human interaction necessary for becoming icons of civility and civilization.

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<sup>266</sup> Tunisia – Pollution Control (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Tunisia-Pollution-Control-Equipment>

<sup>267</sup> US\$130 Million to Support Recycling and Improved Solid Waste Management in Morocco (2015). Retrieved from: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/02/12/130-million-support-recycling-improved-solid-waste-management-morocco>

<sup>268</sup> GIZ - Report on the Solid Waste Management in Morocco (2014), pp. 15. Retrieved from: [https://www.retech-germany.net/fileadmin/retech/05\\_mediathek/laenderinformationen/Marokko\\_RA\\_ANG\\_WEB\\_Laenderprofile\\_sweep\\_net.pdf](https://www.retech-germany.net/fileadmin/retech/05_mediathek/laenderinformationen/Marokko_RA_ANG_WEB_Laenderprofile_sweep_net.pdf)

<sup>269</sup> How Moroccan Startup “Clean City” Uses Technology to Fight Trash (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/04/270277/morocco-startup-clean-city-trash/>

<sup>270</sup> El Tohami, A., & El Siddig, A. (2018). Threats to Smart Solid waste Management in Sudan. *Biomedical Journal of Scientific & Technical Research*, 8(1). doi: 10.26717/bjstr.2018.08.001595

<sup>271</sup> Yemen’s toxic trash mountain adds to war woes (2016). Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-garbage/yemens-toxic-trash-mountain-adds-to-war-woes-idUSKBN1421HF>

Two indicators are attached to this target: 11.7.1: “Average share of built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and persons with disabilities,” and 11.7.2: “Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months”. The importance of this indicator lies in the fact that a safe urban space is more likely to be accessible and inclusive. Unfortunately, data for both of these indicators (11.7.1 and 11.7.2) are unavailable in the Global SDG database.

Due to the common issue of having the appropriate amount of safe public and green spaces in Arab countries, we will mention the currently available policies and initiatives in the four sub regions.

### ***GCC Countries***

In the **UAE**, the Complete Sustainable Communities initiative, which stakeholders ought to follow when proposing a new master plan for Abu Dhabi, is essentially comprised of a set of policies and regulations that direct urban planners to design cities with well-connected public spaces.<sup>272</sup> Back in 2013, the civil body has announced its intention in turning 4 percent of Dubai into parks, as part of the Municipality’s effort to make Dubai green.<sup>273</sup> More recently, the Municipality has announced that it is planning on creating 3.1 square meters of green space for each resident.<sup>274</sup> While there exist 500 parks in Jeddah, **Saudi Arabia**, estimated to be covering around 20 million square meters, the Capital’s Municipality has announced, in 2018, its commitment to increasing the green spaces even more through projects focused on reforestation and gardening.<sup>275</sup> The Ministry of Environment in Doha, **Qatar** is planning to improve the green cover of Qatar’s desert by planting lemon and Sadr trees.<sup>276</sup> In several Arab states, however, public spaces are often considered to be spaces for men, making it challenging for women to be walking on their own.<sup>277</sup>

### ***Mashreq Countries***

In the Mashreq, access to public spaces is limited as they are often built in rich neighborhoods. Additionally, due to the ongoing political turmoil in the area, displacements of people along with rapid urbanization have narrowed the places where green/public park initiatives can be established. In **Lebanon**, lands tend to be over-exploited with very few parks and green areas due

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<sup>272</sup> DPM Management (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.dpm.gov.abudhabi/en/About-Us/DPM-Management>

<sup>273</sup> Dubai to be a green city by 2020 (2013). Retrieved from: <https://gulfnews.com/uae/environment/dubai-to-be-a-green-city-by-2020-1.1199879>

<sup>274</sup> Dubai Municipality to create square metres of green space per resident (2019). Retrieved from: <https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/dubai-municipality-to-create-31-square-metres-of-green-space-per-resident-1.62328879>

<sup>275</sup> Jeddah has never been greener but authorities say their work has just begun (2019). Retrieved from: <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1390271/saudi-arabia>

<sup>276</sup> Greening of Qatar (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/539835/Greening-of-Qatar>

<sup>277</sup> “Public Spaces – Urban Identities in Muscat”, exhibition opens in Bait Al Baranda (2019), para. 3. Retrieved from:

[https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/press-releases/story/Public\\_Spaces\\_Urban\\_Identities\\_in\\_Muscat\\_exhibition\\_opens\\_in\\_Bait\\_Al\\_Baranda-ZAWYA20190421160230/](https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/press-releases/story/Public_Spaces_Urban_Identities_in_Muscat_exhibition_opens_in_Bait_Al_Baranda-ZAWYA20190421160230/)

to the high prices of land and the interest of private investors.<sup>278</sup> In **Jordan**, the government has developed the Green Amman 2020 initiative (2014) aiming to restore the already-existing public spaces and create new ones.<sup>279</sup>

### ***Maghreb Countries***

**Morocco** is preparing laws related to the accessibility to public spaces. Parliament issued legislation incriminating harassment in public spaces.<sup>280</sup> Accessible and open space for pedestrians is also lacking in **Libya**.<sup>281</sup>

### ***Least Developed Countries***

**Mauritania** has some of its public land illegally occupied by poor families, forming what is called “waiting areas”.<sup>282</sup> In **Sudan** high-income or first-class neighborhoods have a higher percentage of developed open spaces than others.<sup>283</sup> It is estimated that 60 percent of the total open spaces in select neighborhoods are considered to be small, while 65.7 percent of them have greenery. No comprehensive development program for open spaces is currently available. A certain leading Sudanese youth to meet in private spaces.<sup>284</sup>

### ***SDG 11.A: Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.***

Capitalizing on the potential of urbanization essentially depends on strong rural-urban linkages, designed to ensure that urbanization does not divide but can unite the rural and urban population. Such a policy should include the strengthening of secondary cities and sustainable rural development.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> What has happened to parks and public spaces in Lebanon’s capital? (2018). Retrieved from:

<https://en.annahar.com/article/894946-what-has-happened-to-parks-and-public-spaces-in-lebanons-capital>

<sup>279</sup> Greater Amman Municipality - Amman Green Policies Projects and Challenges (2017). Available at:

<http://transferproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/CE09-Jordan.pdf>

<sup>280</sup> Morocco debates a law to protect women in public spaces. Passing it is another matter (2017). Retrieved from:

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/morocco-debates-a-law-to-protect-women-passing-it-is-another-matter/2017/11/05/8aa859d8-ba7e-11e7-be94-fabb0f1e9ffb\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.58340eec093f](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/morocco-debates-a-law-to-protect-women-passing-it-is-another-matter/2017/11/05/8aa859d8-ba7e-11e7-be94-fabb0f1e9ffb_story.html?utm_term=.58340eec093f)

<sup>281</sup> Mohamed, A., Abdelmonem, M., & Selim, G. (2016). Understanding Walkability in the Libyan Urban Space: Policies, Perceptions and Smart Design for Sustainable Tripoli. *International Journal Of Civil, Environmental, Structural, Construction And Architectural Engineering*, 10(12).

<sup>282</sup> Habitat Worldmap - Urbanization and Social Organization (2019). Retrieved from: [http://habitat-](http://habitat-worldmap.org/en/pais/africa/mauritania-2/)

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<sup>283</sup> Eltayeb Awad, Z. (2018). Evaluating Neighborhoods Developed Open Spaces in Khartoum-Sudan. *Civil Engineering and Architecture*, 6(6), pp.269-282

<sup>284</sup> Shrinking Public Spaces in Sudan (2018). Retrieved from: <https://7dnews.com/news/shrinking-public-spaces-in-sudan-sunrise-watchers>

<sup>285</sup> UN Habitat – Implementing the New Urban Agenda by Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages (2017). Available at:

[http://www.uncrd.or.jp/content/documents/7015Urban%20Rural%20Linkages%20for%20implementing%20the%20New%20Urban%20Agenda\\_08112017\\_spreads.pdf](http://www.uncrd.or.jp/content/documents/7015Urban%20Rural%20Linkages%20for%20implementing%20the%20New%20Urban%20Agenda_08112017_spreads.pdf)



### ***GCC Countries***

**Saudi Arabia**, through its Agricultural Development Fund (ADF) has announced in September 2019 its mission to support sustainable rural development by allocating 800 million US dollars to the programme.<sup>286</sup> Moreover, it is through the Riyadh Regional Plan (2017), that Saudi Arabia is enhancing linkages between its towns. Essentially, the plan aims to develop a network of roads in order to connect areas of the region. The regional plan, as a whole, plans to achieve balanced development.<sup>287</sup> **Oman** has coordinated with FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) in developing the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy Towards 2040, particularly, in the areas of economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability, rural development, and institutional capacity for agricultural and rural development interventions.<sup>288</sup>

### ***Mashreq, and Maghreb Countries***

In both of the Mashreq and the Maghreb, the concentration of economic activities, the centralization of governmental services in the main urban centers, and the lack of investments in fundamental sectors (health, education) has led to a high level of rural-urban migration. Subsequently, the discrepancy between rural and urban areas has increased. Currently, no public policies seem to specifically address rural-urban linkages.

### ***Least Developed Countries***

There are notable disparities between the urban and rural areas in LDCs. Particularly, in **Sudan**, where rural-urban migration is increasing due to the concentration of services in or close to Khartoum state.<sup>289</sup> Similar issues challenge integrated and sustainable development in **Mauritania**. The country programme document for Mauritania (2018-2020) aims to support a more inclusive economy and society as well as to decrease inequality suffered by the vulnerable in rural areas of the country.<sup>290</sup> In Yemen, the civil war and the destruction of infrastructure, increase the isolation of the rural population and decrease economic development. Reverse migration (from urban to rural areas) leads to additional pressure on resources and services.<sup>291</sup> Previously, the World Bank has funded the Government of Yemen to build a Corridor Highway

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<sup>286</sup> Saudi fund allocates \$800m to sustainable rural development (2018). Retrieved from: <https://gulfbusiness.com/saudi-fund-allocates-800m-sustainable-rural-development/>

<sup>287</sup> Plan developed to realized full potential of Riyadh region (2017). Retrieved from: <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1041031/saudi-arabia>

<sup>288</sup> Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy towards 2040 (2016). Available at: <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/oma174263.pdf>

<sup>289</sup> UNDP – About Sudan (n.d.). Retrieved from: <http://www.sd.undp.org/content/sudan/en/home/countryinfo.html>

<sup>290</sup> UNDP – CPD Template and Guidance - Country programme document for Mauritania (2018)

<sup>291</sup> Republic of Yemen National Report – UN Habitat III (2016), pp. 8. Retrieved from: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Yemen-National-Report-September-2016.pdf>



for better transport connectivity between the cities of Aden and Taiz. The project was completed in 2017.<sup>292</sup>

***SDG 11.B: Substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels***

Cities are only sustainable if they are resilient. Essentially, the attainment of all SDGs through development planning must include disaster risk reduction strategies as a core factor. The mounting impact of climate change increases the need for risk prevention and adaptation policies, also in view of earthquakes, droughts, and floods over the recent years. While it is important to adapt against climate change, it deems fundamental to integrate a disaster risk reduction strategy for all kinds of hazards.

The two indicators attached to the target are designed to build the bridge between the SDGs and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030). Indicator 11.b.1 suggests to measuring the “Number of countries that adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030”. Indicator 11.b.2 looks at the “Proportion of Local Governments that Adopt and Implement Local Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies in line with National Disaster Risk Strategies”. Essentially, 11.B.1 pays particular attention to the Sendai Framework, while 11.B.2 concerns itself with national strategies. The following data are extracted from the Sendai Framework review reports.

***GCC Countries***

The 2017 Sendai Framework Reports note that **Bahrain**<sup>293</sup> and **Qatar**<sup>294</sup> have national DRR strategies that are adopted and implemented. Moreover, 100 percent of Bahrain’s local governments have local DRR strategies. The **Kuwait**<sup>295</sup> report states that the country plans to develop its strategy once the disaster management system and legislations are updated. There are no reports published for neither Oman, Saudi Arabia, nor United Arab Emirates. Nevertheless, the government of Saudi Arabia has made a statement in 2017 that indicates that the country

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<sup>292</sup> The World Bank – Corridor Highway Project. Retrieved from: <http://projects.worldbank.org/P145361?lang=en>

<sup>293</sup> Bahrain: Sendai Framework data readiness review report (2017). Retrieved from: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53143\\_bahrainbhr.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53143_bahrainbhr.pdf)

<sup>294</sup> Qatar: Sendai Framework data readiness review report (2017). Retrieved from: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53147\\_qatarqat.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53147_qatarqat.pdf)

<sup>295</sup> Kuwait: Sendai Framework data readiness review report (2017). Retrieved from: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53141\\_kuwaitkwt.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53141_kuwaitkwt.pdf)

has already taken initiatives in adopting the objectives of the Sendai Declaration.<sup>296</sup> Similarly, an official statement made by the government of the United Arab Emirates indicated that the country has adopted national and local disaster risk reduction strategies.<sup>297</sup>

### ***Mashreq Countries***

Concerning national strategies, **Egypt** displays a National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2030.<sup>298</sup> The report states that 48 percent of Egypt's local governments have local DRR strategies aligned with the national strategy.<sup>299</sup> Similarly, both **Lebanon**<sup>300</sup> and **Palestine**<sup>301</sup> have adopted and implemented local strategies for DRR aligned with their national strategies. It is worth noting that all of Palestine's local governments have adopted the local DRR strategies. While **Jordan**<sup>302</sup> has a national DRR strategy, it was not yet adopted in 2017; no local DRR strategies are recorded. According to the Journal of Disaster Risk Studies (2019), the legislation in **Iraq** is not focused on the prevention, preparedness, nor mitigation of risk, but rather on the reactive response to the damage.<sup>303</sup> The country does not present a national DRR strategy, although the national program is being prepared.<sup>304</sup> No available readiness review report for the Sendai Framework is available for **Syria**.

### ***Maghreb Countries***

**Tunisia** is accelerating the implementation of the Sendai Framework by launching the monitoring system by UNISDR in March 2018 in order to regularly update on the progress in the framework's implementation.<sup>305</sup> In **Morocco**, the government has recognized the intensified disasters and climate risks faced by the country. Therefore, an integrated Disaster Risk Management (DRM)

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<sup>296</sup> Saudi Arabia: Statement made at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.preventionweb.net/english/policies/v.php?id=53858&cid=150>

<sup>297</sup> United Arab Emirates: Statement made at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/policies/v.php?id=53877>

<sup>298</sup> Egypt: National strategy for disaster risk reduction 2030 (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/policies/v.php?id=57333>

<sup>299</sup> Egypt: Sendai Framework data readiness review report (2017). Retrieved from: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53144\\_egyptegy.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53144_egyptegy.pdf)

<sup>300</sup> Lebanon: Sendai Framework Data readiness review report (2017). Retrieved from: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53146\\_lebanonlbn.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53146_lebanonlbn.pdf)

<sup>301</sup> State of Palestine: Sendai Framework data readiness review report (2017). Retrieved from: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/54716\\_palestinestateofpse.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/54716_palestinestateofpse.pdf)

<sup>302</sup> Jordan: Sendai Framework data readiness Review report (2017). Retrieved from: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53145\\_jordanjor.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/53145_jordanjor.pdf)

<sup>303</sup> Al-Shamsi, M. (2019). Disaster risk reduction in Iraq. *Jàmbá: Journal Of Disaster Risk Studies*, 11(1), 1-3. doi: 10.4102/jamba.v11i1.656

<sup>304</sup> Iraq: Sendai Framework data readiness review report (2017). Retrieved from: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/54275\\_iraqir.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/54275_iraqir.pdf)

<sup>305</sup> Declaration of the Sixth High Level Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction, Tunis, Tunisia (2018). Retrieved from: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/57759\\_finaladopteddrafttunisdeclaration13.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/57759_finaladopteddrafttunisdeclaration13.pdf)

reform program – in collaboration with the World Bank – was implemented and completed.<sup>306</sup>  
<sup>307</sup> **Libya** lacks a national disaster risk strategy.

### ***Least Developed Countries***

**Mauritania** has completed an assessment for disaster risk, resilience in five of its cities as well as starting developing city actions in line with the Sendai Framework.<sup>308</sup> In 2017, the Republic of Sudan has made a statement at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. Essentially, in 2017 **Sudan** had prepared a draft of national and local plans of action concerning the Sendai Framework.<sup>309</sup> Despite being extremely vulnerable to disasters, **Yemen** lacks a comprehensive disaster risk management framework.

## **Chapter III: Summary and recommended action**

With accelerating urbanization, implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs to larger parts takes place in cities. This report aimed to summarize available information government policies in the ESCWA region related to SDG goal 11, in order to shed light on discernible gaps and challenges. This chapter provides a preliminary gap analysis that may be useful for further research and monitoring of Goal 11 in the region.

### ***GCC countries***

Although countries in the GCC seem to be well on track, several challenges would still need to be addressed. One of them regards the availability and affordability of housing, especially for youth. Governments who are effectively working towards offering better affordable housing opportunities are Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman. On the other hand, the city of Dubai in **UAE** lacks a quota for affordable housing in contrast to Abu Dhabi. Recently in Dubai's a new national housing for residential communities has been launched. Its main purpose is to provide an integrated living experience.. Also, in **Saudi Arabia**, the mismatch between residential high prices and low salaries remains.. In Bahrain, the “Mazaya” program launched by the Ministry of Housing only targets national citizens. Moreover, there is a need to tackle the increased demand for scarce water and basic services in Saudi Arabia.

GCC countries are known for their high levels of urbanization, yet, the main challenge is to sustain that urbanization, keeping in mind that large surface areas are covered by desert with related

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<sup>306</sup> Integrated Disaster Risk Management in Morocco: Managing risk by rewarding results (2018). Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/morocco/integrated-disaster-risk-management-morocco-managing-risk-rewarding-results>

<sup>307</sup> The World Bank - Integrated Disaster Risk Management and Resilience Program (2016). Retrieved from: <http://projects.worldbank.org/P144539?lang=en>

<sup>308</sup> Mauritania acts on urban resilience (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.unisdr.org/archive/59556>

<sup>309</sup> Sudan: Statement made at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.preventionweb.net/files/globalplatform/Republic%20of%20Sudan%20Statement-GP-final.pdf>

scarcity of land. Careful urban planning is therefore required, including special plans that include safe public and green spaces and ensure accessibility of the built environment.

Climate change has led to a series of disaster floods over the years for UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and increasingly also impacts the availability of freshwater resources. Strategies adapting to climate change are followed by GCC member countries.

### ***Mashreq countries***

Housing challenges and the need to improve basic services are common challenges in the Mashreq as well. Gaps in proper housing policies exist for **Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine**. Effectively, Lebanon's Banque del Habitat has only a small quota for housing loans. While housing strategy has been displayed in several Mashreq countries, it does still not sufficiently serve low-income citizens. Public transport equally needs more attention in the Mashreq.. Available land tends to be over-exploited, including by private interest, leading to limited open public and green space and especially also public beaches. Cultural heritage is under increasing threat in most of the countries.

Adverse environmental consequences are increasing in the Mashreq, including increasing water risk and, large volumes of solid waste and high levels of air pollution. Rural-urban linkages need to be strengthened in all countries.

### ***Maghreb countries***

Maghreb countries need to continue addressing informal settlements as well as improve rural-urban linkages which could be an element of containing rural-urban migration. Environmental protection, heritage preservation and climate change adaptation should equally be integrated into these policies. Cultural heritage is under increased risk in Libya.

High mortality rates due to insufficient means of transportation call for increased attention. As do considerable levels of air pollution.

### ***Least Developed Countries***

As over 60 per cent of each LDC country's population is living in slums, adequate housing and basic service provision policies are a top priority for the LDCs.

At the same time, better rural-urban linkages, proper disaster risk strategies and climate change adaptation deserve to be seen in containing uncontrolled rural-urban migration.

Statistics show that air pollution is quite at high levels in this sub-region. Other issues include contaminated water, destroyed sewage treatments, and environmental degradation, aggravated by poor waste management. Urban planning in general needs to be improved, taking into account safe public and green spaces adequately distributed over poor and richer neighbourhoods.

## Concluding Points

Despite its considerable diversity in terms of size, level of development, level of urbanization and existing urban planning capacity, countries in the region are facing common challenges in terms of affordable housing, accessible, safe and green public space, climate change and water scarcity, public transport and air pollution.

And despite this commonality, the means to address these issues diverge considerably. National policies need to address them according to the specific country environment, but in all countries adequate policies will contribute to achieving not only SDG 11 but, due to the multiple interlinkages all SDGs and the objectives of the New Urban Agenda.

This technical paper has tried to review available policies and can be used as a foundation to monitor progress in the ESCWA region. In this process, all countries require the broad engagement of Governments, academia, the private sector, local authorities and communities and civil society at large.

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