

Advancements in SDGs within the Arab Region: Reflecting towards 2030: Challenges and Way Forward

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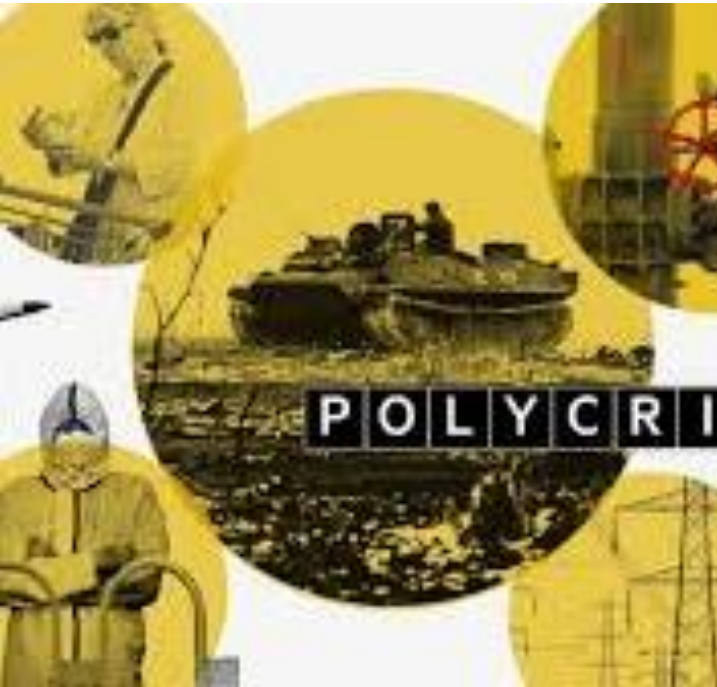


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Impact of Polycrisis on SDG progress in the region

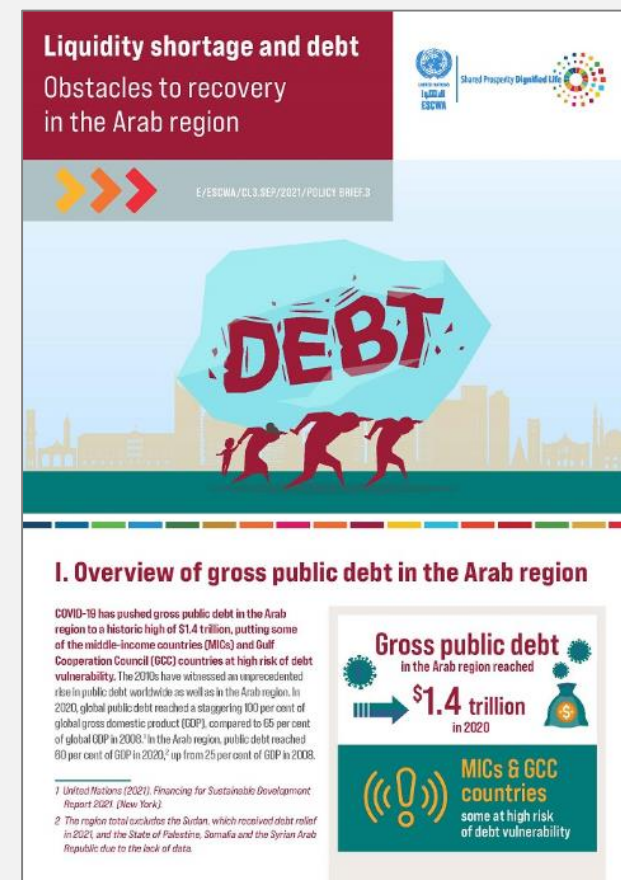


Additional 29 million people in poverty
15% in 2022, most of which is attributed to surging
food prices
90% of the population are now living in countries
grappling with water scarcity

Debt Burden

Debt projections as a percentage of GDP, by Subregion

	2023	2024	2025
Arab Region	46.8	46.1	45.8
GCC countries	30.9	31.9	32.2
Middle-income countries	71.1	67.4	64.9
Conflict-affected countries	52.1	55.0	58.7
Least developed countries	78.0	70.3	70.4



ESCWA, 2021

Financing the SDGs



- 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on interest than education or health.
- For half of the countries in the Arab region, external debt service amounted to at least 9.4% of revenues in 2021.
- Debt servicing is growing faster in Arab countries than in other developing regions, and faster than many other public expenditures. For example, net interest payments doubled in Arab countries over the last decade, while health spending fell by 14%.

Structural challenges

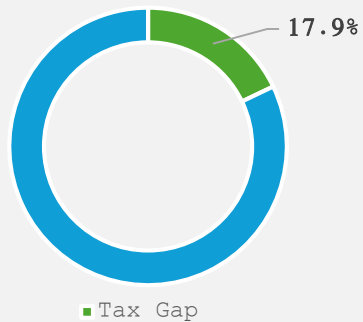
Broken or weak policymaking cycle



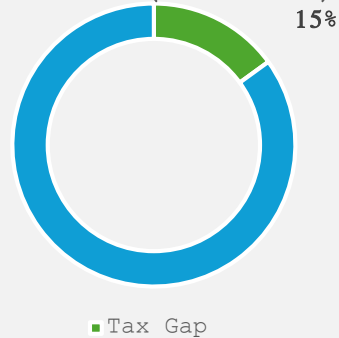
Domestic Resource Mobilization

The region suffers from inefficient tax policies and weak enforcement. An estimated \$8.9 billion in annual revenues is lost due to corporate tax abuse, while tax competition cost the region an estimated \$50 billion between 1980 and 2020.

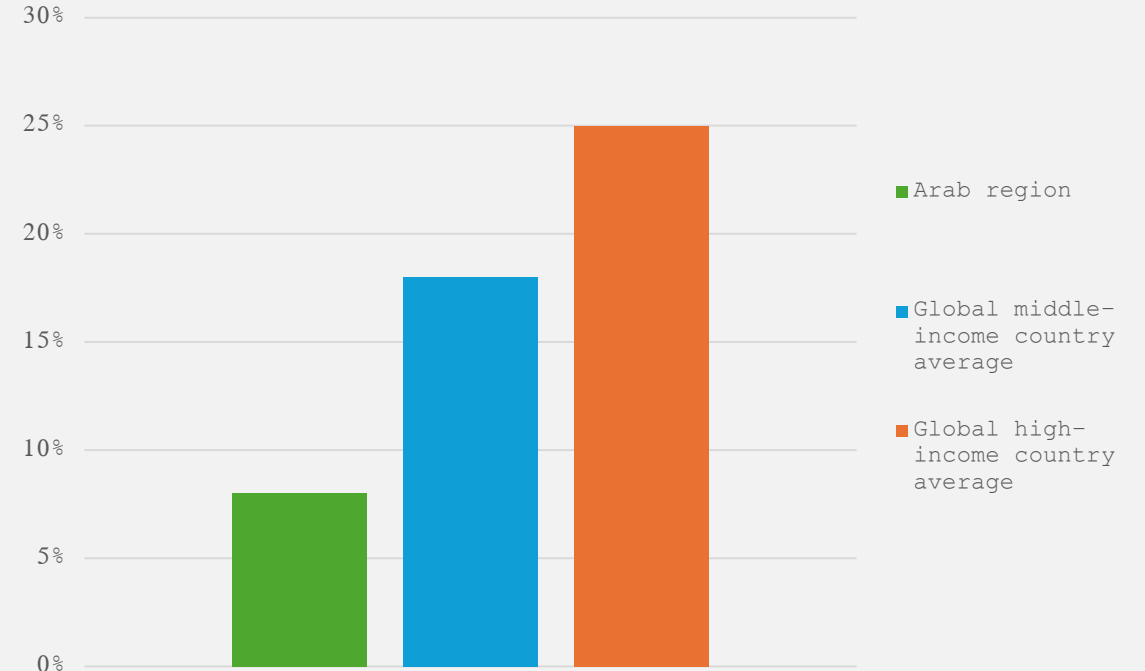
Tax gap in non-hydrocarbon-exporting Arab countries (% of GDP)



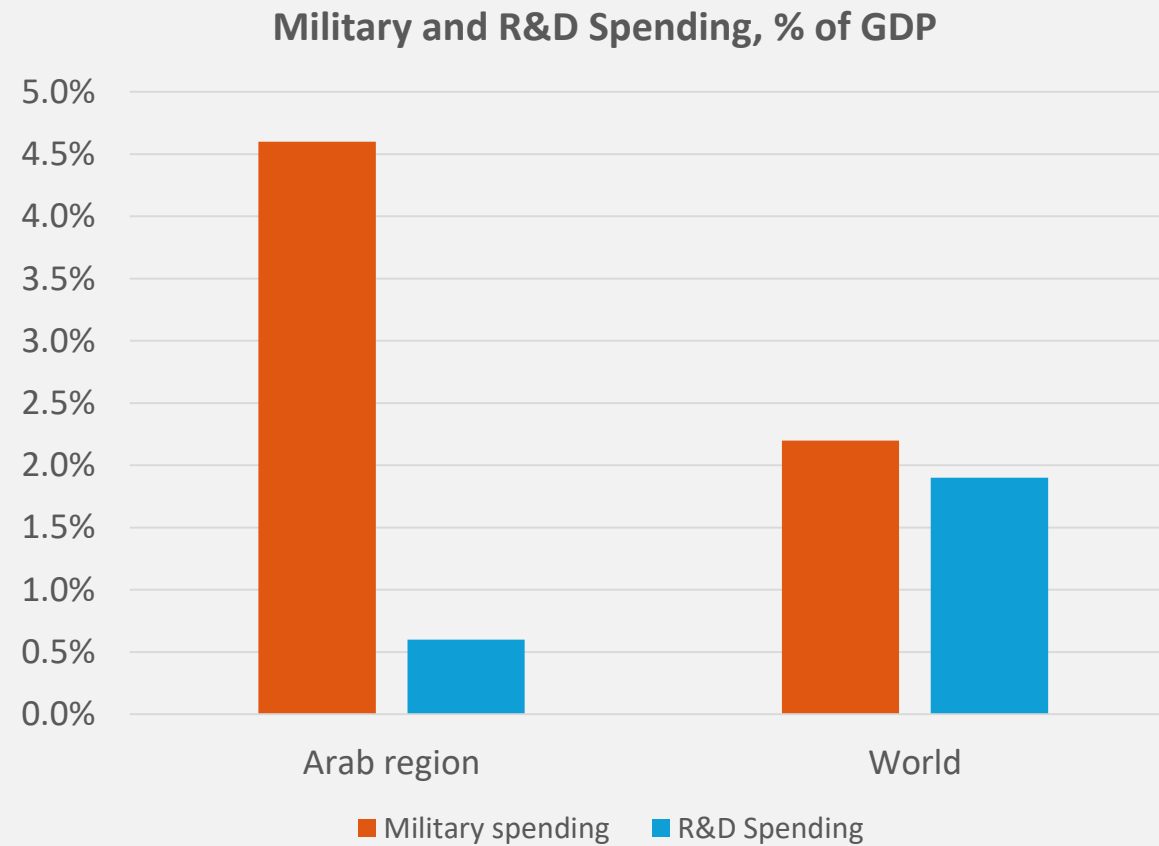
Tax gap of non-oil GDP in hydrocarbon-exporting Arab countries (% of GDP)



Tax-GDP Ratio (2019)



Military Spending



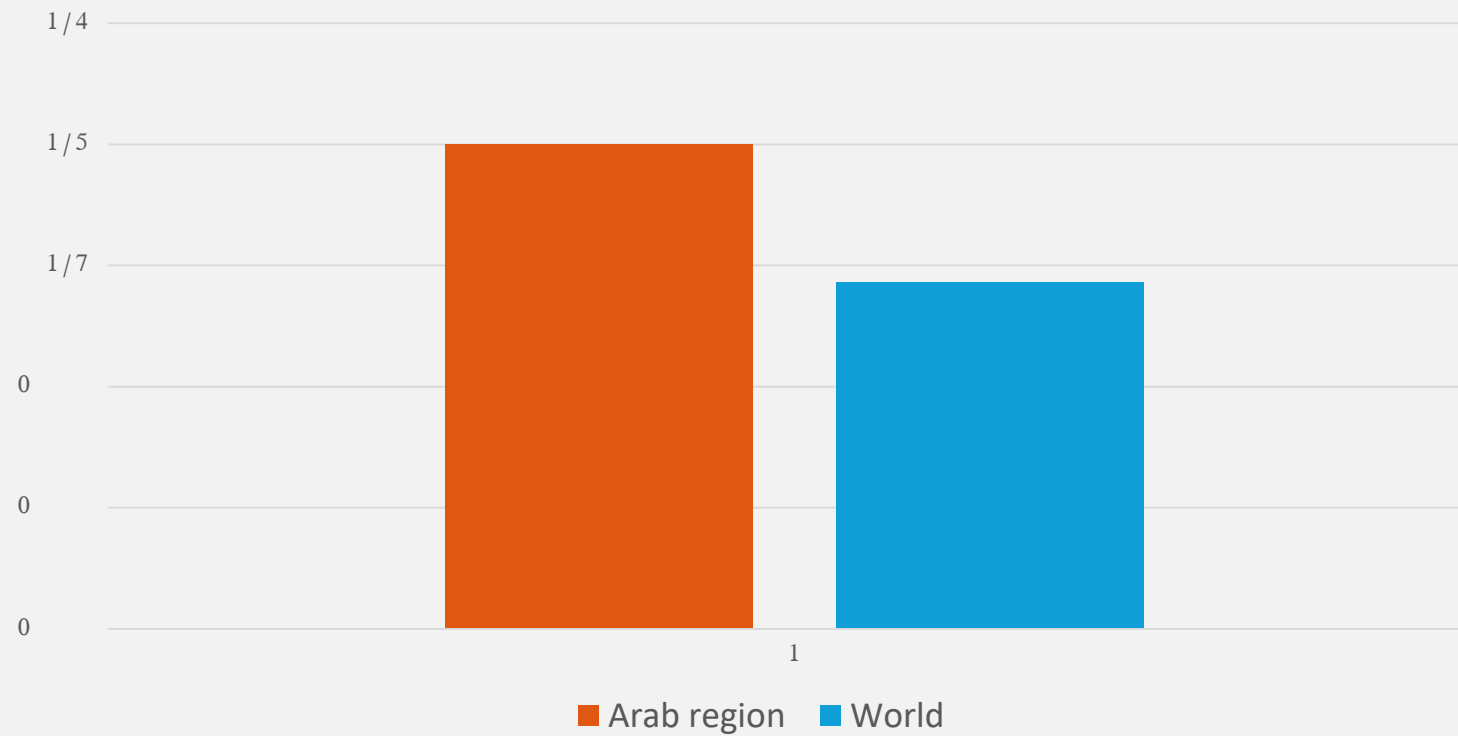
Access to information

Public participation is weak in the region, with most countries lacking a specific open government strategy or action plan.

- Some countries have initiated national plans that include some dimensions of open government, especially open data.
- Only 8 Arab countries have laws or guarantees of public access to information.
- 11 countries have launched their own open data platforms, and an additional 6 make open data available through the portal of the African Development Bank.

Corruption

Firms receiving at least one bribe request in 2022



Missing Data: Political as well as Technical issues

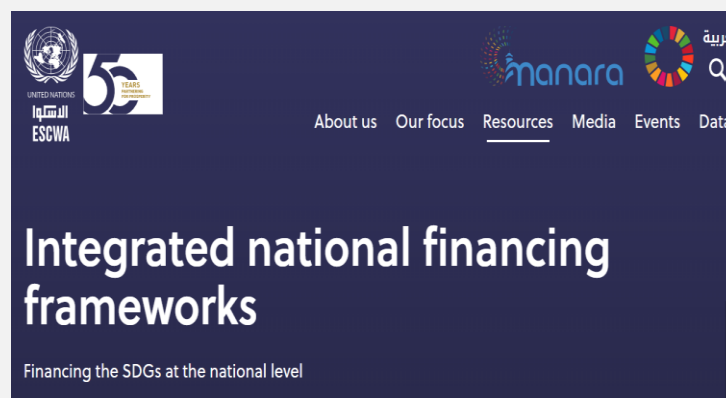
Critical data gaps related to governance, human rights, gender equality and discrimination

- 5.1 Discrimination against women and girls
- 5.2 Violence against women and girls
- 5.a Equal economic rights
- 10.1 Income growth, bottom 40%
- 10.3 Eliminate discrimination
- 16.10 Public access to information
- 16.b Non-discriminatory laws and policies

Select Strategies: Financing the SDGs

- Improve the efficiency of public expenditures, including through measures to improve the transparency of budgeting processes and track the impact of spending on SDG progress.
- Rationalize tax incentives.
- Reforms to the international financial architecture and business models of multilateral development banks:
 - Fair debt relief and restructuring procedures
 - More favourable borrowing terms for developing countries
 - Equitable access liquidity support during crises
 - Greater representation in the governance of international financial institutions.

Select ESCWA Tools



Select Strategies: Governance

- **Strengthen accountability** mechanisms and the capacities of public servants to design and implement evidence-based policies and deliver public services for all.
- **De-escalate conflict** and boost peace building through efforts to identify and address the root causes of conflict and to enhance regional dialogue and cooperation to achieve SDG 16. Peace-building initiatives must integrate the humanitarian and development approaches, fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and social cohesion.
- **Ensure the full realization of the right to self-determination** of the Palestinian people, promoting peace and stability in the region. This includes diplomatic efforts and international cooperation to address the longstanding occupation of **Palestine** in full compliance with international law.

Additional Resources

Arab Sustainable Development Report 2024



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Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab region



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Note: ASDR 2024
Forthcoming (July)

<https://www.unescwa.org/publications/progress-towards-sustainable-development-goals-arab-region>



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Thank you

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