

**المنتدى العربي للتنمية المستدامة**  
إسراع العمل نحو خطة عام 2030 ما بعد كوفيد

29-31 March 2021 – 2021 آذار/مارس 29-31



**17** PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



# SDG 17

## PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Strengthen the means of implementation  
and revitalize the global partnership  
for sustainable development: data

Relevant, timely and usable data are essential for countries to set priorities, make informed choices and implement better policies for sustainable development. Arab countries, through their national statistical offices, are making significant efforts to produce data to inform and monitor the implementation of the SDGs and national priorities. Considerable progress in data availability has been recorded in recent years. Arab countries are also increasingly using voluntary national reviews as opportunities to broaden the scope of data collection and enhance data quality.

However, large gaps in data availability still exist in several areas related to sustainable development. Key challenges also include the quality and frequency of the statistical information produced nationally, and their international comparability, as well as data transparency and accessibility.

The lack of comparable and disaggregated data on people with disabilities, older persons, women, girls and other marginalized groups is a critical development issue in the Arab region. Without robust data, it is not possible to adequately plan and allocate the resources necessary to ensure that programmes and services achieve their objectives and reach the intended population groups. This effectively limits countries' ability to respond to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to prioritize action and resources, and to design responsive measures that leave no one behind. Consequently, the production of timely high-quality disaggregated data is not only a technical pillar for achieving the 2030 Agenda, but also a political one as it is fundamental to ensuring inclusivity and justice and to enhancing institutional and societal resilience to future shocks.

## Impact of COVID-19 on data collection in the Arab region



**The functioning of national statistical offices has been heavily impacted across the region.**<sup>1</sup> Lockdown and emergency measures have impacted the work of statistical offices, especially operations requiring field data collection. The pandemic has halted also operations for household surveys and censuses. Around 80 per cent of national statistical offices have fully or partially stopped face-to-face data collection as a result of the crisis. Only 20 per cent have continued preparatory work activities for the population census, with 80 per cent postponing until after 2021 or not announcing plans for resumption. Moreover, 69 per cent of countries indicated that the pandemic had negatively impacted their ability to work on price statistics.

In addition, several disruptions were witnessed to 2030 Agenda frameworks of cooperation, coordination

mechanisms, and partnerships with line ministries, private producers and funding entities, including efforts to monitor SDG data. Such disruptions have been compounded by instability in some Arab countries, namely Libya, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen. Across the region, this disruption was further exacerbated as efforts were diverted towards rapid and humanitarian responses to address the implications of COVID-19. This has slowed efforts towards harmonized statistical frameworks linked to long-term national development plans.

**The complex crises unleashed by the pandemic have highlighted existing data gaps, and the importance of coordination and data sharing between various ministries and institutions.** A cohesive and integrated statistical system that leaves no one behind was

<sup>1</sup> ESCWA, Effect of COVID-19 on price and expenditure statistics, 2020; and the World Bank, Monitoring the state of statistical operations under the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020.

absent in most Arab countries, causing difficulties in effectively responding to the crisis. The pandemic has also highlighted the need for new indicators that measure the ability to produce rapid assessments at

any time. This was particularly evident with regard to socioeconomic data for the health sector, whose availability would have increased the effectiveness of efforts to address the health crisis.

## Measures taken by Arab Governments

**National statistical offices across the region have adapted planned activities in response to the pandemic, and introduced innovative data collection practices.**

Those measures include changing data collection dates, organizing new surveys, adapting new collection tools, and using administrative data in countries such as Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and the State of Palestine. Around 44 per cent of surveyed national statistical offices have changed or adapted planned data collection activities. As a result, existing surveys have been amended to include new questions, administrative data is being used more widely, and phone surveys are the most used approach to analyse or monitor aspects of the pandemic.

**National statistical offices are considering new data sources and partnerships.** National statistical offices have forged new partnerships during the pandemic

to enhance data collection efforts, including between national statistical offices and the ministries of communication in Lebanon, Morocco and Oman. Of all the new partnerships, 45 per cent are with the public sector, 34 per cent are with international partners, and 18 per cent with the private sector. However, nearly a quarter of national statistical offices have not developed new partnerships.

**A number of Arab countries are enhancing efforts to make data more accessible by adapting new dissemination tools, such as online dashboards.** Around 93 per cent of national statistical in the region have set up or are planning to set up national data platforms to serve government and public data needs. The pandemic may also open up new horizons for transparency and data sharing with various stakeholders.

## Policy recommendations on data for ensuring an inclusive recovery and achieving the SDGs by 2030

Update and modernize statistical legislation, in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, to authorize national statistical offices to play their new role as 'chief data managers' in adopting new data collection modes, forging new partnerships, openly disseminating data from the statistical system, coordinating and validating national information beyond official statistics, and integrating geospatial information and big data

Promote statistical literacy programmes to promote the use of data and evidence-based decision-making by engaging different stakeholders in monitoring and evaluating policies and interventions; improve data accessibility by adopting open data policies; and advance intersectoral analyses to leave no one behind

Increase support for data collection and capacity development needs, as stipulated in the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics, in the following six major categories essential for producing SDG-relevant statistics: national survey programmes; decennial censuses; administrative data, including civil registration and vital statistics systems; economic statistics, including national accounts; geospatial infrastructure; and environmental monitoring<sup>2</sup>

2 Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals, 2015.

Embrace the data revolution by using new sources of data, adopting innovative methods for producing and using statistics, modernizing administrative records for statistical purposes, integrating statistical and geospatial data, using big data and other data for high frequency statistics, including linking microdata from surveys and administrative sources through registers of people and businesses, and forging partnerships with other data producer and user communities

Prioritize the production of high-quality and timely data disaggregated by income, sex, age, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant to national contexts; and implement the recommended disaggregation of 12 priority SDGs by forced displacement status<sup>3</sup>

Establish and fully operationalize national reporting platforms with transparent and standardized use of metadata, and develop systematic coordination channels between all data sources to increase data flow and avoid wasted resources and duplication of efforts

Urge the United Nations and the international community to scale up technical support to national statistical offices, and increase partnerships with academia and the private sector to enhance innovation and the use of new technologies, tools and methodologies in data collection and analysis, including capacity-building for national statistical offices on adopting the International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, and include such statistics in national statistical frameworks

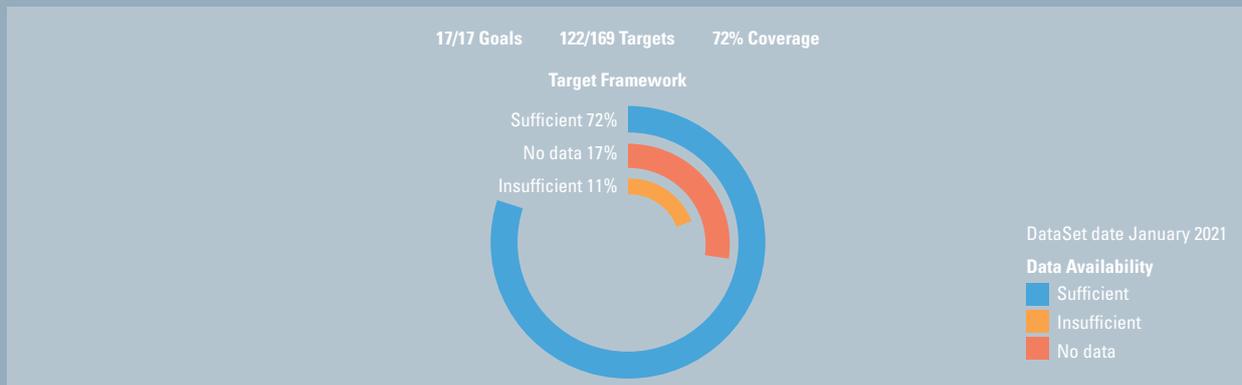
3 Statistical Commission, Data Disaggregation and SDG Indicators: Policy Priorities and Current and Future Disaggregation Plans, 2019.



# Key Facts on SDG 17 - Data

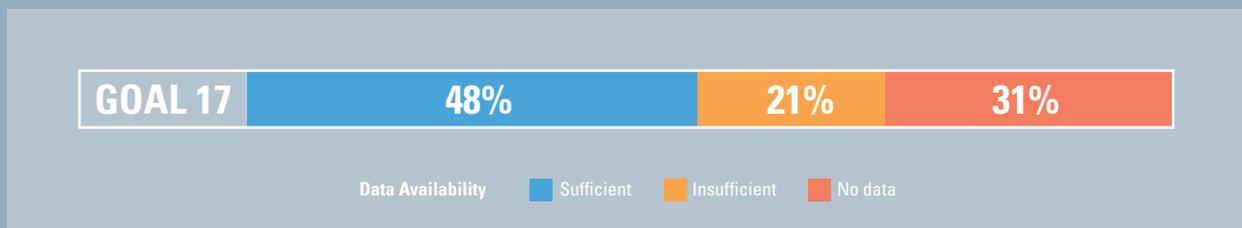
As per the SDG Target Framework, Arab region data cover 72 per cent of 122 SDG targets. However, country data constitute only half of those disseminated data in the Global SDG database.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1.** SDG target coverage



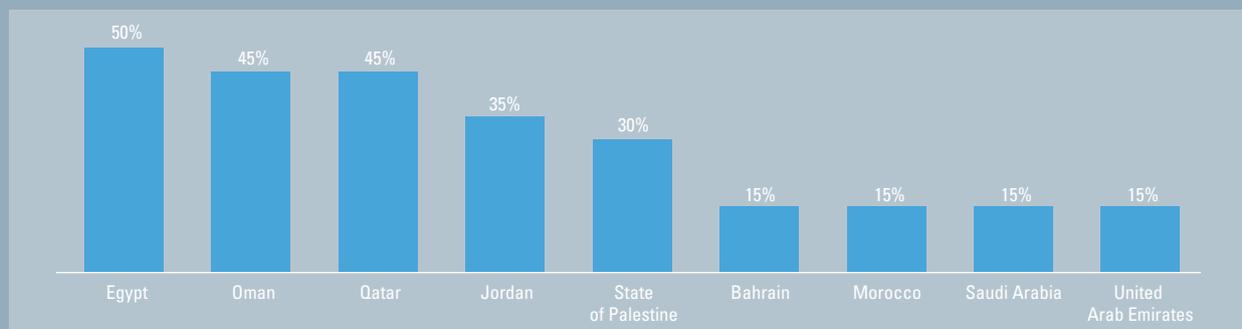
Sufficient data (two data points or more), for example, are available for only half (48 per cent) of the indicators under SDG 17.

**Figure 2.** SDG 17 data coverage



This is mainly because the data flow to the Global SDG database is weak; only 37 per cent of data are available for the 17 Goals are country data; the rest are unavailable or have been produced either through estimation or modelling methods, or are global indicators.

**Figure 3.** Arab countries' NRP implementation score

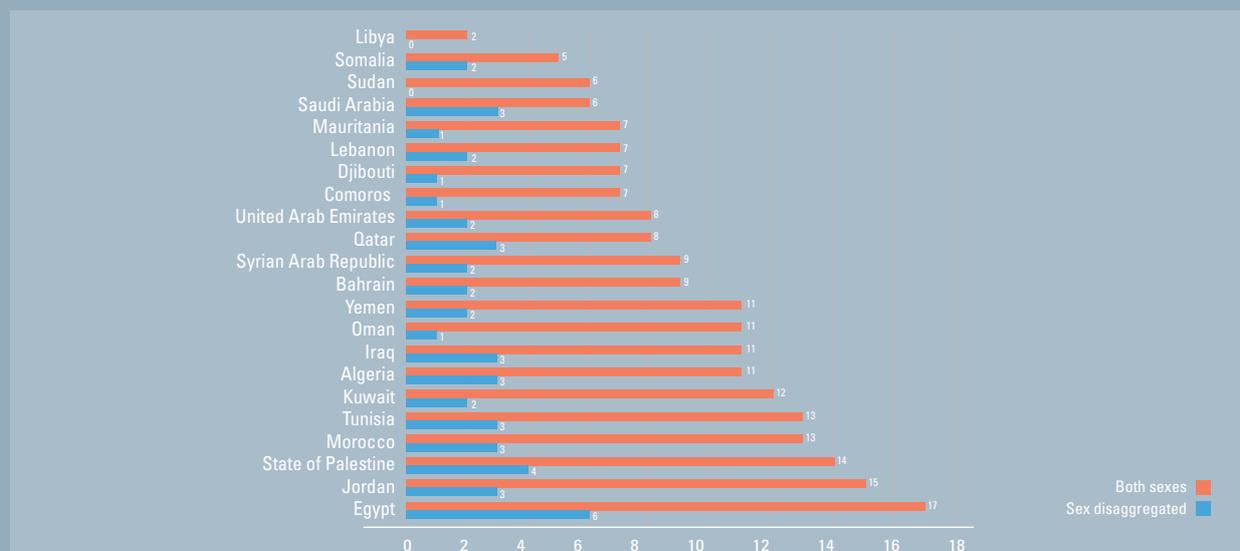


<sup>4</sup> Arab SDG Monitor – SDG Regional.

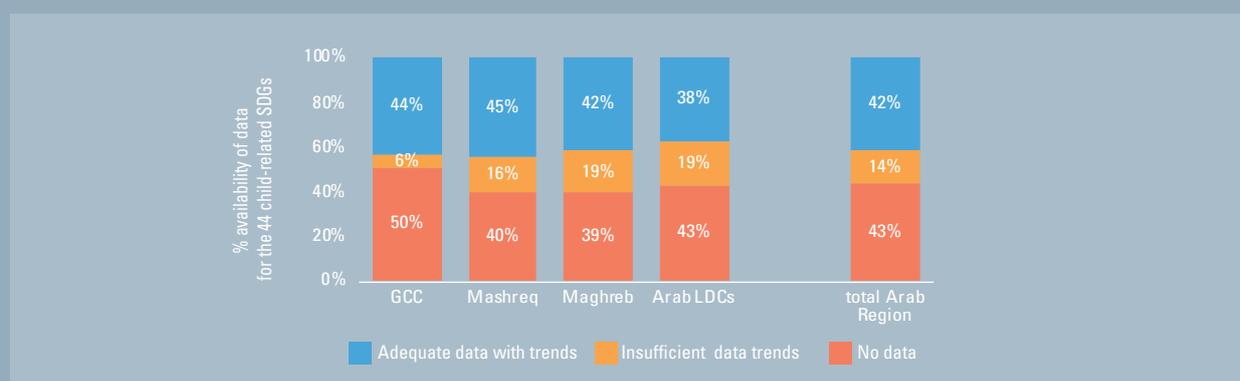
Research shows that less than half of Arab countries have SDG national reporting platforms,<sup>5</sup> many of them fell short of complying with the seven main criteria for developing an effective national reporting platform.

ESCWA analysis of countries' performance implemented in 2019 shows that all countries have collected few SDG gender-related indicators. However, while Egypt, for example, ranks first in this area, it only collects 17 per cent of the SDG gender-related indicators and disseminates most of them in totals – only 6 per cent of those are disaggregated by sex, as per the Global SDG database.

**Figure 4.** Availability of gender indicators disseminated in totals and disaggregated by sex (%)



**Figure 5.** Availability of data for the 44 child-related SDGs



Only 42 per cent of the child-related SDG indicators in the Arab region have adequate country-level data allowing trend analysis. The lowest availability is in the Arab least development countries.<sup>6</sup>

National statistical legislation in almost half of Arab countries is old and outdates the endorsement of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics by the Statistical Commission in 1994.

National statistical offices are often trapped in a vicious cycle of statistical underdevelopment, where limited awareness and appreciation of the importance of data has led to sustained underfunding for statistics.

5 ESCWA, Arab National Reporting Platforms for the Sustainable Development Goals: Assessment, 2020.

6 UNICEF, Progress for every child in the SDG era, 2020.

A total of 14 Arab countries have national statistical plans under implementation; however, only eight countries reported to the Global SDG database that their plans were funded by the Government.

**Figure 6. Arab countries' responses to Global SDG database**



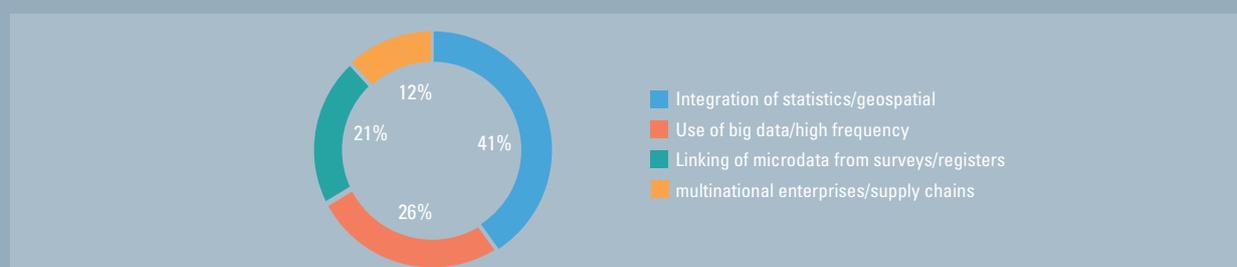
A total of 13 countries reported to the Global SDG database that they have implemented at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years. A total of 12 Arab countries stated that their birth registration data were at least 90 per cent complete, and 10 noted that their death registration data were at least 75 per cent complete.<sup>7</sup>

### Household surveys

*In terms of implementing three main national household surveys, namely household income and expenditure surveys, labour force surveys, and health-related surveys, only five out of 22 Arab countries have implemented all three in the past five years. The remaining countries have implemented only one or two main surveys. The Comoros, Libya and Yemen have not implemented any in the past 10 years.*

*In the past five years, household income and expenditure surveys and health-related surveys were implemented in only half of the 22 Arab countries, whereas labour force surveys were organized in 16 countries.*

Arab countries are embracing the data revolution and starting to make use of new technologies and methods. In 2020, the World Bank conducted an assessment showing that the majority of Arab countries (41 per cent) consider that the integration of statistical and geospatial data is highly important, followed by the use of big data and other data for high frequency statistics (26 per cent), linking of microdata from surveys and administrative sources through registers of people and businesses (21 per cent), and the role of multinational enterprises including the integration global and domestic supply chains (12 per cent).<sup>8</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Global SDG database.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank, Monitoring the State of Statistical Operations under the COVID-19 Pandemic: Highlights from the Second Round of a Global COVID-19 Survey of National Statistical Offices, 2020.