

Towards stronger trade policymaking in Palestine

To assist the Government of Palestine in formulating strategies and policies towards the upcoming participation to the signed Arab Agreement in trade in services, the League of Arab States partnered with UNDP to conduct a national workshop on trade in services. Officials, negotiators or negotiators to-be with knowledge in trade in services from numerous ministries attended the training and actively engaged in the discussion of technical contents. The workshop was delivered by experts from UNDP and UNCTAD.

Officials of the League of Arab States also participated to the training in assisting Palestinian officials.

Practical exercises, interactive exchange of views among national policy makers and dedicated sessions on multilateral and regional trade agreements, including issues related to trade in services. Participants and experts emphasized the increasing importance of services in the eco system of trade and growth, and in particular their role in creation of jobs and new opportunities for Arab countries. Further progress in making trade in services a part of economic diversification in Palestine would certainly strengthen resilience and livelihood as highlighted by Sustainable Development Goal 17.10.

The workshop equipped trade policy makers and negotiators of the Government of Palestine with adequate knowledge, technical skills in the development of national policies toward the forthcoming participation to signed Arab Agreement in trade in services. Participants were provided with substantive understanding of modalities of negotiations of trade in services, in line with international practices.

Palestinian officials, representatives from the League of Arab States and UNDP expressed high appreciation to the support, provided by Sida, to Arab countries in deepening regional economic integration, promotion of competitiveness, and policy coordination. In addition, the strong partnership between UNDP and UNCTAD proved to be effective in the delivery support in trade policy and economic cooperation in the Arab region.



The world's first Future of Knowledge Foresight Report

After years of measuring the current state of knowledge based on traditional data, and given the exponential growth of knowledge creation, a new knowledge measurement was designed to better understand the future of knowledge societies. The Future of Knowledge Foresight Report was

launched by UNDP and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation during the 2018 Knowledge Summit (Dubai, 5-6 December 2018), presenting a pilot study on the future fields of knowledge that will shape the future of our societies.

The report collects and analyzes big data from multiple online sources, covering 20 countries; it guides policymakers, business leaders, researchers and civil society to the new emerging fields and trends in the areas of Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Cybersecurity,

Biotechnology, and Future Skills that will become strategic for the future of societies. The report will therefore promote forward-thinking strategy to help present societies cope with the demands of the future fields of knowledge economy and sustainable development around the world.

“As we strive to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, knowledge is our strong ally,” said Khaled Abdel Shafi, Director, Regional Hub for Arab States, UNDP. “Its application develops capabilities and expands opportunities in multiple sectors of our lives, from education to economy to technology.”

During the Summit, UNDP also launched the 2018 edition of the Global Knowledge Index (GKI), which covers 134 countries providing valuable insights on knowledge assets that are key to more effective sustainable development.

According to the results of the Global Knowledge Index, Switzerland retained its number-one rank, followed by Sweden and Finland. The United States and Luxembourg broke into the world’s top 5 countries, ranking 4th and 5th respectively, while the Netherlands and Singapore lost their spots in the top 5, ranking 6th and 7th respectively this year. The United Arab Emirates broke into the world’s top 20 countries, ranking 19 on the global level –moving up 6 positions –and first among all the Arab states while retaining its second place globally on the level of the economy.

“Data can help the Arab region speed up development in the right direction while embracing the technology of the future,” said Hany Torky, Chief Technical Advisor of the UNDPs Knowledge for All Project, adding “the Global Knowledge Index plays a significant role in encouraging the countries to make their data available.”



Helping Least Development Countries advance the regional trade agenda

To assist the Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) part of the Pan Arab Free Trade Agreement (PAFTA) to benefit from regional integration as a key contributor towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the League of Arab States partnered with UNDP to conduct an Advanced Trade Policy Course. Officials from the Palestine, Sudan and Yemen attended the course, delivered by trainers from UNDP, UNCTAD and other international experts. It is important to note that fifty percent of the participants were female officers who plays a significant role in making trade an important tool for development in their countries.



The course placed strong focus on how Arab LDCs can benefit of Arab regional economic integration, and particularly through facilitation of free movement of goods and customs modernization. There were also important discussions on how to assist Arab LDCs and developing countries that are afflicted by wars and armed conflicts through customization and modernization of trade policies.

Dr. Bahgat Aboelnasr, Director of the Arab Economic Integration department at the League of Arab States stressed the need of more capacity building for LDCs of PAFTA to enhance their contribution to the development and implementation of regional trade policy, and to unleashing trade potential for sustainable and inclusive growth in the region. This is even of a higher importance for countries who are negotiating the membership to the World Trade Organization as well to other regional groupings.

The Arab Economic Integration for Sustainable Development project (AEISD) has been working over the past years to deepen the research around the potential of trade to contribute to sustainable development. As part of this effort, AEISD design the training in a way that contributes to strengthening capacities and skills that will be useful to push forward specific SDG areas, namely SDG 1 2, 5, 10.a (Special and Differential Treatment for LDCs), 16, and 17 (Promote a universal, rule-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization).

In particular, the training touched upon issues such as trade multilateralism and the rule-based system of the global trade, trade facilitation, protection of Intellectual Property Rights, and modalities of capitalizing on regional preferential trade agreement to support economic growth in the countries. Through interactive exercises and discussions, participants were equipped with knowledge on the analysis of trade data, information and trade statistics, technical barriers to trade and non-tariff measures.

Participants, League of Arab States and UNDP expressed high appreciation to the Swedish International Cooperation Agency for the support to Arab countries in regional economic integration, promotion of competitiveness, and policy coordination.

Youth from the Arab region visualize the future they want

The second edition of Visualize 2030 data camp, organized by UNDP's Arab Development Portal (ADP) was held in Beirut from 12 to 16 October. The five-day camp gathered around 50 participants from 14 Arab countries to strengthen their capacity to collect and analyze data and create visual and audio data products that address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



This year's hackathon was held in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development. Over the five days, the event received additional media attention when the participants were joined by Jaafar Abdulkarim, the host of the Deutsche Welle Interactive Talkshow Shabab Talk. In his remarks, Khaled Abdelshafi, Director of the UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States in Amman commented: "Young people are capable of utilizing the tools at their disposal to take a proactive role in addressing the development challenges in the region. Engaging them in identifying

development challenges as well as their solutions, is an extremely important step to achieve the 2030 Agenda and I'm proud UNDP can provide the platform for this".

In the age of increased open access to data and technology, all actors in society are able to engage to achieve the goals agreed upon in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Throughout four intense days (and nights) of work, these young participants collected and analyzed data, narrowed down their SDGs ideas and crafted impressive visual and audio data products. From animated infographics to virtual reality games, from technologically-advanced videos to interactive presentations. No more than three minutes to convince the panel that their ideas can truly make a change in their communities, and beyond.

Over 150 people attended the closing ceremony, which took place in the historic Beit Beirut, a building destroyed during the Lebanese war and now operating as a cultural center. During the ceremony the three winning teams were announced, namely:

- First place: Hekaya from Yemen, to raise awareness among local communities about the importance of family planning.
- Second place: ArtMoony from Tunisia, calling for more transparent use of national resources as a way to rebuild trust between citizens and institutions;
- Third place: Dania Al Khalaf from Syria, calling for immediate action to stop the devastating effect of the conflict, especially on children.

Representing the Arab Coordination Group -key partners and donor of this initiative- Jaafar Almahdi, Senior Operations Officer at the OPEC Fund for International Development stressed that the group greatly believes in the power of youth. "This camp," he commented, "is an important event that unleashes the potential of young people in the Arab world to engage in data-driven debates and make an impact on their communities."

From youth unemployment to climate change, from unsustainable urbanization to poverty, and much more. The development challenges tackled by the other 20 teams of Visualize 2030 covered a broad range of issues - reflecting their countries' and the region's priorities. All the visual products that were produced by the teams are a tangible example of youth engagement and commitment to take an active role and make a difference in the lives of the people of the region. And with initiatives such as Visualize 2030, UNDP stands ready to support youth in their journey towards a better and more sustainable future.

Supporting UNDP reconstruction efforts in Mosul Governorate

The Funding Facility for Stabilization of Iraq was established by UNDP in June 2015, to help newly retaken areas from ISIL to return to normal life. The programme is currently implementing more than 1,100 reconstruction and rehabilitation projects in 28 locations in Iraq. Gladys Gbenedji is a Civil Engineer from Spain working together with 14 other UN Volunteers and Iraqi engineers, to support UNDP reconstruction efforts in Mosul Governorate, in the areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant



(ISIL). She observes that she can see every day the huge impact of UN/UNDP contribution. It is clear that Kids can go back to school and families are able to return to their villages, because electricity, water supply and sanitation services have been restored. Also, the communities feel safer, because the hospital and clinics have become accessible and functional again. Gladys supports a team of twenty-four local engineers, directly involved in the reconstruction of water treatment plants, schools, electrical substations and hospitals. She describes it as a rewarding experience. "I remember with special affection when we went to visit several schools in Tel Kaif, a city of 40,000 inhabitants north east of Mosul," she recalls. Iraqi forces recaptured the town from ISIL in January 2017. "A year and a half later, the rehabilitation of the schools is already completed, and kids were attending classes. Everybody was so grateful to UNDP and to the work done by our team. They all wanted to take pictures with us. That day, I felt really happy and proud."

Such initiatives are important to the Iraqis because the surge of violence in Iraq has produced three million internally displaced persons across the country and over 11 million Iraqis in need of humanitarian assistance. In addition, over 90 per cent of displaced persons live in host communities, predominantly in the Kurdish Region, which experienced a 30 per cent increase in population over two years due to the crisis. Moreover, many Syrians have taken refuge in Iraq too.

3RP Information Management Workshop brings together five UN Agencies

A two-day workshop held in Beirut on 1 - 2 October 2018 brought together 25 participants drawn from 3RP (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan) Information Management (IM), Reporting and Interagency Coordinators from UNHCR, UNDP, UNFPA, WFP and IOM to assess and streamline 3RP information management tools and review regional reporting requirements for 2019. All five 3RP countries –Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt –were represented via one or the other agency.



Samuel Rizk, UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility Manager opened the first day of the workshop with a few welcoming remarks, noting the importance of such a workshop in bringing together colleagues from different organizations to share knowledge and best practices. After a brief presentation by Michael Moroz (UNDP) and Ryan Marshall (UNHCR) on the regional overview of the 3RP and next steps in the 2019 planning cycle.

Country Offices were given an opportunity to present on their specific approach to 3RP Information Management and discuss the challenges and opportunities they face in 3RP reporting. The first day of the workshop ended with a brief session on how regional indicators are mapped and selected. Then, participants were split into country groups to review, assess and provide recommendations on how regional indicators can be amended to make them more relevant to their country context.

The second day of the workshop kicked off with a presentation on the tools developed for the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), Monitoring & Evaluation framework, and another presentation on the No Lost Generation (NLG) reporting framework by UNICEF. The session was followed by a presentation on the challenges of financial tracking systems (FTS) and how to

capture inflow of funds. The day continued with group work on how to improve reporting (multi-year, carry over and FTS) for the 2019 cycle focusing on improvements in reporting and social media. The outcomes of this workshop will be presented to the Regional Steering Committee for further action.

Tapping into UNDP's well “distributed capacity” for innovation

Anisha, Head of the Strategic Planning, Partnerships, and Communications Unit and the Innovation Focal Point for UNDP Sudan, travelled to Palestine to share advice based on innovation experiences in Sudan and to support “entrepreneurs” in UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP), under the auspices of the UNDP Innovation Facility's Peer-to-Peer Exchange.

She shared Sudan's extensive experience with data innovation. One project is using new data sources (community radio talk shows) and analytics to measure citizen satisfaction with government services, SDG 16.6.2 (a Tier III Indicator). Another is exploring the capacity and efficiency of big data sources such as night time lights and mobile phone use to serve as proxies for measuring poverty levels. Both initiatives are being conducted in partnership with the Sudan Government and private entities from the telecom sector.

Anisha's animated presentations on these initiatives left colleagues in Gaza and the West Bank feeling inspired. Chikako Kodama, UNDP/PAPP Team Leader and Advisor for Governance, remarked: *“Anisha's presentation explained that the processes of Sudan's initiative were based on trial and error with an eye for managing risks. UNDP is not perceived as a risk-taking organization, but Anisha's example showed us that we can take risks for the purpose of learning. And through experimenting with different innovation methodologies we can actually minimize risks and costs.”*

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Our Palestinian colleagues were not the only ones to benefit. Anisha returned to Sudan re-energized and full of new ideas. In particular, she was impressed by UNDP/PAPP's collaboration with the Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence. This organization, established by presidential decree, was a perfect example of the kind of governmental partnership that Anisha would like to establish in Sudan. *“In Sudan as UNDP we are advocating for that kind of setup, that is owned and prioritized by the government,”* Anisha remarked. She left Palestine excited to share this example with her government counterparts in Sudan. *“Having visited this office, through the Peer-to-Peer Exchange, talking to that team, and learning how they were able to create this kind of institution within the governance system despite constraints in a complex setting like the West Bank was a lesson learnt for me.”*

The colleague in PAPP, Ms. Chikako was equally excited to further develop some of the ideas inspired by Anisha. She stated: *“It is a great opportunity because the Peer-to-Peer Exchange gave us the chance to learn from other Country Offices directly, I really hope that colleagues from UNDP and the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People will continue to engage with Peer-to-Peer Exchange so that hopefully we can share our experiences with other Country Offices in the future.”*

This exchange occurred as part of the UNDP Innovation Facility's Peer-to-Peer Exchange initiative in which Country Offices are invited to request support from innovation experts in other Country



Offices to support them in strengthening their innovation agendas. Other Peer-to-Peer Exchange missions have taken place between Lesotho and Rwanda and between Benin and Togo with Lebanon-Lesotho coming up soon. Support has been in the form of advocating for innovation, identifying programme entry points for innovation, developing proposals, meeting with national partners, etc.

The overall goal is to build on the Innovation Facility's efforts over the past four years to create a global community of social innovators who have developed entirely new skills, and to tap into these sought-after advisors to transfer their knowledge, to inspire other colleagues with new approaches, and to build lasting connections of support as colleagues venture into the unknown, take risk, sometimes fail, and always learn. Taking advantage of this pre-existing "distributed capacity" is a key part of UNDP's new strategic plan; when we are able to leverage our own knowledge and experience on innovation for development, we are finding we are better able to infuse innovation into our programmes and projects, helping us achieve better results and realize the #NextGenUNDP vision.

Climate action for SDGs achievement

As countries move forward to implement their Nationally Determined Contributions to climate change (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, UNDP's Regional Hub is expanding its support to develop and implement new country programming that helps build climate resilience of communities, while achieving co-benefits across the SDGs.

In **Somalia**, the Regional Hub fielded a mission to the region of Somaliland to support UNDP Country Office and the Government develop new programming to reduce and reuse plastic waste in line with SDG 12, to scale up decentralized solar solutions at the community level under SDG 7, and to expand use of solar desalinization for clean water production to help achieve SDG 6. The mission involved consultations with community stakeholders, private sector, NGOs and Government including Ministry of Environment and Rural Development, Ministry of Water Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Energy, NGOs like CARE International, YOVENCO Youth NGO and PENHA Environmental NGO, and private sector partners like Golis Energy, KAAFI Solar, and KEEPS plastic recycling and waste collection company. Support included design of three new projects for review with donors.



Support to **Iraq** was provided for scaling up climate actions as part of broader efforts to move from crisis to sustainability in the country. This includes support for a new UNDP Green Climate Fund (GCF) Readiness project in Iraq, in which UNDP helps develop capacity for identifying financing needs to achieve Iraq's NDC under the Paris Agreement and for identifying bankable projects for scaling up results. Regional Hub provided support for an initial capacity development event held with Government to elaborate the nature of NDC implementation process globally and plans for local implementation in the Iraq context. Support was also provided for mainstreaming of climate action into a cross-thematic SDG implementation project being developed between UNDP and the Government.

At the regional level, the Hub also **expanded strategic partnerships for climate action and sustainable energy with sister UN agencies**. This includes a new SDG Climate Facility regional

and determine ways that UNV can help, whether through strengthening current partnerships, forming new ones or providing profiles for specific skillsets needed. The packages required significant initial research per country, both on the crisis context and on the work done by UN agencies. To achieve this, Emily decided to task UN Online Volunteers to conduct background research for each country, using the huge amount of open-source data that already exists on UN websites.

Amazingly, within a span of twenty-four hours after the requests and opportunities went up, she received nearly 15 applications indicating willingness to contribute through this UN innovative online platform. This also enabled Emily to reach out to 13 incredibly qualified candidates and spoke with them on the phone to explain the projects in greater depth. It is a clear sign how complex issues can be addressed through networking and establishment of online platforms. Notably, UNDP through the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), support to country offices on preventing violent extremism and humanitarian response in Somalia, has been able to exploit existing platforms to realize integrated solutions to development challenges. In its new strategy, UNDP will strengthen existing partnerships and establish country platforms that work with innovators, private sector, entrepreneurs, civil society and think-tanks. This means the idea of the online platforms and links to other systems of expanded networks will increasingly become vital in creating synergies to solve complex issues.

Moon Shots & Puddle Jumps - Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

In 2014, UNDP, with the generous support of the Government of Denmark, established the Innovation Facility to improve service delivery and support national governments and citizens to tackle complex challenges. Over the past years, the Innovation Facility has invested in more than 170 country-level experiments.

In **'Moon Shots & Puddle Jumps – Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals'**, UNDP Innovation Facility shares case studies from over 25 countries of how innovation can make development more impactful.

The 2017-2018 Innovation report takes the reader through the innovation journey at UNDP. Introducing innovation concepts - present and emerging service lines –it features initiatives that tested or scaled new ways to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, prevent conflict, manage climate change risk and advance gender equality.

The case studies encompass a wide range of development innovation in action –some are pursuing moon shots, others puddle jumps: from a collaboration with Makers Space in Honduras to jointly design with persons with disabilities 3-D printed prostheses for inclusion; a spatial data sandbox aimed at improving biodiversity conservation efforts globally together with UN Environment, MapX, NASA and UN Global Pulse; a joint experiment with Nudge Lebanon and national partners to improve efforts on preventing violent extremism in Sudan based on findings from behavioural science; a trial to improve remittances transfers in Serbia with the help of blockchain and scaling public sector innovation processes in Armenia, Bangladesh, Georgia, Moldova and Sri Lanka, among others.



“In the review and for additional information, you can refer to the following case studies on innovation from the Arab States:

Designing for Behavior Change

Behavioral Design to Fight Gender Based Violence –Egypt

Behavioral Design to Prevent Violent Extremism –Sudan, Yemen

Leveraging New Data to Unlock Development, Leaving No One Behind

Augmenting Early Warning Systems –Lebanon

Measuring Multidimensional Poverty Using Mobile Data –Sudan

Measuring the Unmeasured –Egypt, Sudan

Operationalizing a prevention and risk-informed approach for a more peaceful region

In light of the continued instability and insecurity that mark the Arab States region, the UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States dived into a week-long discussion on how to deepen and share knowledge of conflict-related phenomena, replicate and improve best practices, define entry points for future programming and expand partnerships.

A first two-day workshop was organized to discuss and share UNDP experience in the areas of risk analysis and early warning, bringing together various country offices from the region as well as expertise from the UNDP Crisis Bureau (CB). A second workshop, co-organized with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and with the participation of the Peace Building Support Office, academia and conflict experts looked at how to operationalize and tailor the UN-World Bank Study “Pathways for Peace” to the Arab region to advance the UN Sustaining Peace Agenda.

According to the Global Peace Index, the Middle East and North Africa remained the world’s least peaceful region in 2018. Conflict and protracted crises afflict seven out eighteen countries, with others being impacted by their spillover effects. These crises have exacted a devastating human toll, caused human suffering and displacement, making the region a host to 57.5% of all refugees, 48.8% of all internally displaced people worldwide. The 2017 Global Terrorism Index notes that the MENA region has witnessed the most marked increase in terrorist activity globally over the last 15 years.

Although the root causes of such conflicts and violence are to be found in the many development challenges that affect the region (e.g. marginalization, rising poverty, climate change, economic instability, governance deficits), countries failed to adopt a preventive approach that addresses such challenges to avoid the outbreak, escalation or recurrence of conflict and violence.

Aggravating that is the complex geo-political situation, coupled by weak regional mechanisms of risks assessment, analysis and early warning.

A number of recent high-level policy and reform processes, including the UN Sustaining Peace Agenda and the UN-World Bank Pathways for Peace report have stressed the importance of informed prevention. According to this UN-WB study, it is estimated that effective prevention would save anywhere from \$5 billion to \$70 billion per year for the affected country and the international community combined. The organization of last week’s discussion is a manifestation of the



collaboration between UNDP and ESCWA to regionalize the findings of this global study and to articulate a research agenda that will explore questions that are particularly relevant to the Arab States.

The discussions reflected the complexity and multidimensional nature of conflicts in the region, acknowledging that meaningful progress can be achieved only by 'breaking the siloes' and addressing the interconnectedness of issues. In particular, it was stressed that the prevention approach should look at addressing the key development, structural and societal factors of fragility, marginalization and exclusion, which would also require innovative and strengthened engagement with governments, civil society and the private sector. Emphasis was also placed on how additional focus should be placed on the role that local communities, tribal leaders and youth can play in this regard. These and other topics will form the basis of a series of policy papers that will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of prevention in the Arab context and inform the design of future prevention work.

While the meeting on Pathways for Peace embraced the broader range of issues relating to conflict and prevention, the first two days of discussion revolved mainly around ways to strengthen UNDP's knowledge and practices in areas related to context analysis, early warning and crisis preparedness. It presented the successful examples of UNDP Tunisia and Lebanon, where structured systems of risk-assessment inform the agency's work and that of the UN Country Team –and translate into more risk-informed programming and targeted advocacy. Examples from UNDP offices in other regions were showcased by CB, who also presented its Global Crisis Risk Dashboard that provides a user-friendly and technologically-advanced way to visualize data and information on risks at the local, national, regional and global levels.