



2011 - 2012

Model Arab League

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers

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National
Council
on US-
Arab
Relations



September 18, 2011

Dear Delegates,

It is my great honor to serve as your chair for the upcoming National University Model Arab League! Last year I was a delegate in the Environmental Committee and I am looking forward to exploring a new set of topics with you all.

I currently serve as the President of the United Nations Association at Northeastern University, which hosts all the Model UN, Model NATO and Model Arab League programming on Northeastern University's campus. I mention this because I want to offer myself as a resource during your preparations, either for Nationals or for any of the regional conferences. My email is leahy_noreen@yahoo.com if you would like to reach out to me, or if you attend the Northeast Regional Model Arab League in Boston, MA in November feel free to introduce yourself.

The topics you will address as a member of this committee are important, and, unfortunately, often overlooked. They are also complex, and can be taken in many different directions. It is my hope that this guide will serve as a starting point for your exploration and research.

Sincerely,
Noreen Leahy

1. Advancing the progress of member states in reaching the Millennium Development Goal to Achieve Universal Primary Education

Definitions Related to Topic

- **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):** “Eight development goals were set by U.N. General Assembly's [Millennium Declaration](#) (Res. 55/2 of 18 September 2000): eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a Global Partnership for Development. These MDGs comprise 21 quantifiable targets measurable by a total of 60 indicators. The Secretary-General produced a Road Map towards the Implementation of the U.N. Millennium Declaration in September 2001 (*U.N. Doc. 56/326*), which has formed the basis of his subsequent annual reports”.¹ These goals are meant to be achieved by 2015.
- **Universal Primary Education:** “To achieve universal primary education, children everywhere must complete a full cycle of primary schooling. Current statistics show that the world is far from meeting that goal. Only 87 out of 100 children in the developing regions complete primary education. In half of the least developed countries, at least two out of five children in primary school drop out before reaching the last grade”.²

General Background

The Millennium Development Goals were designed to tackle the largest problems of the world's poor. If all the goals are completed as originally envisioned they have the potential to lift 500 million people out of poverty, but progress has been slow. That is not to say that no progress has been made, but it does mean that continued, concerted effort on the part of all nations is required if the goals are to be reached.

In addition to being one of the Millennium Development Goals, education is considered by some to be a fundamental human right – and is listed as such in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. According to the World Bank, which is responsible for tracking data associated with the progress of the MDGs, the “goal of providing universal primary education has proved surprisingly hard to achieve. Completion rates measure the proportion of children enrolled in their final year of primary education after adjusting for repetitions. In 2011, 49 countries had achieved, or were on task to achieve, 100 percent primary completion rates, only three more than in 2004. Additionally the number of countries seriously off-track increased, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.”³ This means that despite international attention on these issues, the global community has yet to make significant progress on this issue.

The goal of universal primary education cannot be discussed in isolation of the other MDGs, as they are all tied together. For example, if gender equality is stagnant, then promoting the education of young females will be more difficult. Therefore, the difficult question becomes how to divide and conquer among the goals while maintaining the big picture of their interconnected nature.

¹ "Millennium Development Goals" Encyclopaedic Dictionary of International Law Northeastern University Libraries. 19 September 2011 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t289.e1459>>

² http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/11_MDG%20Report_EN.pdf

³ <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>

History of Topic in the Arab World

Progress on the MDGs in the Arab World has demonstrated the huge achievement gaps between those countries with the resources to fund the development of their peoples, and those countries that do not. According to the Millennium Project, “in many countries the rural/urban education gap is the most important factor explaining education differentials.”⁴ As an important regional actor, it could rest with the Arab League to bridge those gaps through League-wide efforts. Worldwide, the most successful efforts have encouraged students to attend school by subsidizing the overall cost of attendance, such as tuition, supplies, etc.

The tendency to separate genders throughout their education has also proven to be a challenge for Arab countries to achieve this goal, as “studies have indicated that the lack of female teachers is one of the factors resulting in low enrolment and retention of girls in schools, particularly in higher grades when parents tend to object to male teachers.”⁵ This is a clear demonstration of the importance of looking at the Millennium Development Goals collectively when addressing universal education.

Finding a Solution to the Problem

Solutions will be varied and creative, but a set of ‘best practices’ will enable countries throughout the region to collectively achieve the MDGs. There are several key strategies that have been implemented by those countries faced with more limited resources, including cost reduction, improvement of teachers, mobilization of the private sector, and steps to ensure equality⁶. The Arab League has the capacities to create umbrella programs or initiatives that effectively promote these four general areas, although this list is by no means exhaustive. Quality of programming is far more important than quantity of programming, especially in regards to early childhood education. Inspiring youth to become teachers makes the system more sustainable, essentially allowing teachers to teach their eventual replacements.

Unfortunately, a nation’s ability and willingness to focus in on these issues can be dependent on resources and political willpower. The solution, while it will likely require funding, should not be dependent on funding – which is why the four categories listed above are so important.

Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What progress has your country made in fulfilling its commitment to the MDGs?
- How does the current education system in your country compare to others in the Arab League? Others worldwide?
- Does your country actively promote the separation of gender in the education system? What impact, if any, does this have on your country’s ability to achieve universal primary education?
- What resource does your country currently lack, if any, in order to obtain universal primary education?
- Which other member states need more or less assistance in this area?

⁴ <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Education-complete.pdf>

⁵ <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:22705814~menuPK:141310~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>

⁶ <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Education-complete.pdf>

Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What actions can the council take to further the goal of the *entire* Arab League achieving universal primary education?
- Should the committee adopt a new protocol to address education throughout the region?
- What role does the Arab League have in the promotion of universal primary education?

Resources to Review

- The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011:
http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/11_MDG%20Report_EN.pdf - this report is essential reading for this topic.
- http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMENA/Resources/EDU_03-Chap03-Education.pdf - this is a chapter discussing the challenges which currently face the education systems of the Middle East and North Africa, this reading is also essential for this topic.
- <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>
- <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Education-complete.pdf>

2. Reviewing and promoting the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols (2000), with special reference to the prevention of trafficking in persons and firearms, and involvement in organized crime

Definitions Related to the Topic:

- **United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTC):** “The Convention was adopted on 15 November 2000 as an annex to General Assembly Res. 55/25 (U.N. Doc. A/55/383) and entered into force 29 September 2003 [...] and is intended ‘to promote cooperation to prevent and combat transnational organized crime more effectively.’ [...] The Convention against Transnational Organized Crime has three Protocols, all adopted on the same day and bearing the same citation, designed to extend its basic provisions on jurisdiction, duty to prosecute, extradition, and mutual assistance to further areas in which transnational organized crime is known to flourish: Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children; Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air; and Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition.”⁷
- **Organized Criminal Group:** a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.⁸
- **Trafficking in Persons:** the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.⁹
- **Firearm:** any portable barreled weapon that expels, is designed to expel, or may be readily converted to expel, a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive, excluding antique firearms or their replicas.¹⁰

General Background

This topic is heavily reliant on a firm understanding of the definition of the terms outlined in the Convention. It is important to review Article 3 in each of the Protocols to ensure you have a good grasp on the meaning of the terms. The UNTC is designed to cover those criminal acts which are not confined to the national borders of one country. It was designed before the world stage set its eyes on ideas of ‘terrorism’ and so does not contain specific language relating to that idea, however, this should not limit

⁷ "Transnational Organized Crime, Convention against" Encyclopedic Dictionary of International Law. Northeastern Univ. School of Law. 19 September 2011 <<http://0-www.oxfordreference.com.ilsprod.lib.neu.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t289.e2303>>

⁸ Article 2, Annex I to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime

⁹ Article 3, Annex II to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime

¹⁰ Article 3, Annex (Protocol against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components...) to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime

attempts to apply this convention to those individuals. Please remember that financial gain is a major component of the defining terms, and so purely politically motivated crimes do not fall under this definition. Furthermore, keep in mind that the issues encompassed in this topic overlap with other councils, such as the Joint Defense Council and Council on Political Affairs. Any solutions must address the social implications of criminal trafficking and organized crime.

Issues surrounding migration and human trafficking are nothing new to the international community. This convention, however, provides a specific set of tools (in terms of international cooperation) to address these problems. For example, “without providing enforceable rights guarantees, the protocol urges states to protect victims by offering opportunities for work and medical care rather than punishment or immediate deportation.”¹¹ The question then becomes how your nation’s policy (and the policy of the Arab League) follows this Convention. In other words, the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers might establish programs and/or policies which ensure compliance with this Convention.

History of Topic in the Arab World

Although the International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that three-fourths of the world’s trafficking takes place in Asia and the Pacific Region, the problem is not isolated to that region. Even if nations do not have people trafficking into them or from them, they can be transit nations – meaning those nations are links in the chain that make human trafficking possible. One estimate puts the number of trafficked people in the Middle East and North Africa at 230,000.¹² The largest reason that people are trafficked is to fuel the sex trade, which exists even within the Arab League as “young women and girls, particularly those from poor families, are often married to men”¹³ for short periods of time. Sometimes referred to as ‘seasonal’ or ‘temporary’ marriages, these arrangements can be used as a smokescreen for providing sexual services. Marriage brokers, sometimes linked to international criminal syndicates, profit enormously.

Other types of human trafficking also occur. Furthermore, this does not always happen within the bounds of one country as illustrated by the case below:

“A 17-year-old Indonesian woman travelled to Kuwait to work as a domestic worker. After six months, her Saudi employer took her to Egypt, where she was forced to work for five years without pay. She was subjected to severe physical abuse and forced to sleep in the bathroom. Despite the long working hours, she was not provided with adequate food, and her employer retained her travel documents at all times. She subsequently managed to escape from her employer and sought refuge at the Indonesian embassy. In the meantime, the employer filed a criminal complaint against her for stealing, and she was detained by the authorities. She was subsequently deported to Indonesia without any compensation for her work for five years.”¹⁴

¹¹Howard B. Tolley Jr. "Human Trafficking" *Encyclopedia of Human Rights*. Ed. David P. Forsythe. Oxford University Press, 2009. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Northeastern University Libraries. 19 September 2011 <<http://0-www.oxfordreference.com.ilsprod.lib.neu.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t286.e127>>

¹²Howard B. Tolley Jr. "Human Trafficking" *Encyclopedia of Human Rights*. Ed. David P. Forsythe. Oxford University Press, 2009. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Northeastern University Libraries. 19 September 2011 <<http://0-www.oxfordreference.com.ilsprod.lib.neu.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t286.e127>>

¹³ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/129/17/PDF/G1112917.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁴ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/129/17/PDF/G1112917.pdf?OpenElement>

This example demonstrates the need for a League-wide solution because without cooperation, these individuals will continue to fall through the cracks of varying, uncoordinated, contradictory domestic laws.¹⁵

Illegal trafficking in other forms, such as firearms, also continues to be a significant issue in the Arab world. While some member states are more prominent in the illegal firearms trade, nearly all are destinations, transit points, or origins of illegal arms. This, too, is linked to international organized crime and terrorist activity.

Finding a Solution to the Problem

Solutions for this topic will likely need to look beyond what domestic programs can be implemented and focus on League-wide efforts. That being said, there should be a firm understanding of steps each member state has taken in the past in order to understand how currently existing programs or laws would interact with potential new policies and programs by the League.

Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Has your country signed and/or ratified the UNTC? What limitations did they place on their signature?
 - A full list of signatures can be found here:
<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/signatures.html>
- What domestic legislation does your country have that relates to this topic?
- Does your country use different legal definitions than those used by the UN?
- Does your country consider the trade of humans and firearms a social problem?

Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What League-wide policies can be implemented to promote full compliance of the UNTC?
- How would new policies prevent the trafficking of persons and firearms specifically?
- How can the Arab League promote the acceptance of the policies outlined in the UNTC?
- How can social implications of criminal trafficking and organized crime be mitigated?

Resources to Review

- UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and Protocols:
<http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>
- <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/about-migration/key-migration-terms/lang/en>
- United Nations High Commission for Human Rights: <http://www.ohchr.org>

¹⁵ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G07/124/75/PDF/G0712475.pdf?OpenElement>

3. Analyzing policies and determining ‘best practices’ for providing services to widows, orphans, and the elderly who lack the support of traditional family structures

General Background

As with all social issues, the context of the problem is important. In order to understand, for example, the role and status of women there must also be an understanding of the way women participate in the economy.¹⁶ It will, therefore, be important to formulate an understanding of the driving factors that have impacted services to widows, orphans and the elderly so that you can examine how to improve them.

Increasing concern over care of the elderly is not isolated to the Arab world. As global life expectancy increases there is increasing pressure on society to care for a ‘graying’ population. From China to the United States, civil society is addressing the question of care for the elderly outside the support system of ‘traditional’ family structures (however widely varying that definition of ‘traditional’ may be). Care for orphans and support for widows is not a new problem, but one that is generally exacerbated by conflict or limited economic resources.

History of Topic in the Arab World

In the Arab world, family structures have traditionally taken the responsibility to care for orphans, widows, and the elderly. For example, orphans are often taken in by relatives. However, modernizing factors have, in some views, deteriorated these traditional family structures, necessitating new systems to care for these vulnerable populations. Others that fall outside of the help of traditional family structures include those without families, and those whose families have shunned them for any number of reasons.

There will be a tendency to link the traditional ‘Arab’ family structure to religious values found throughout the region. Many member states will take this line, but keep in mind that cultural components sometimes play just as important a role in the makeup of traditional family structures. That being said, there are many principles of Islam and other prominent religions of the region that should encourage nations to actively try to improve the quality of service they offer to the most vulnerable segments of their population.

The ‘youth bulge’ has decreased the average age in the Arab world, but simultaneously average life spans are also increasing. A good example of this is in Palestine, where the “proportion of elderly is projected to double in less than 20 years, while the number of people 65 years old and above was 75,933 in 2007 and it is expected to reach 171,500 in the year 2020.”¹⁷ That same study concluded that, “developing supportive community programs and social activities to improve the quality of life of the elderly and provide specific service should be developed and adapted to the culture of the... society.”¹⁸ The phrase ‘adapted to the culture of the society’ should be of specific concern to the delegates.

¹⁶ Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East by Valentine M. Moghadam American Ethnologist Vol. 22, No. 4 (Nov., 1995), pp. 1078-1079

¹⁷ <http://www.me-jaa.com/sept2011/Palestine.htm>

¹⁸ <http://www.me-jaa.com/sept2011/Palestine.htm>

This type of thinking should also apply to others who fall outside of traditional family structures, including orphans and widows. Even those with families that are ostensibly caring for them might be considered under this topic, for example “while Islam positively values the care of orphaned and abandoned children by others, the legal recognition of the relationship between the orphaned child and their caregivers is based on the system of *Kafala*—the Islamic duty to save any abandoned child, and provide appropriate care and financial support for such children—which does not allow for inheritance or carrying the same family name of the caregiver. There is a notable stigma attached to children abandoned as a result of being born out of wedlock.”¹⁹

Unfortunately widows sometimes float outside this traditional family structure as well, as their status is often defined by their role as a mother, sister, etc. This varies from nation to nation, depending largely on cultural factors. Therefore, it will be important to consider how your nation has responded thus far.

Finding a Solution to the Problem

There are a tremendous number of factors that impact the way League-wide policies could be implemented in regards to family structure and care for the vulnerable. Some of those factors include birth rate, urbanization rate, and demographic transitions. As each of these factors changes from country to country, so would the ideal approach to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable as well. The Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers must find a way to synthesize these factors to make any resolution beneficial for all members.

Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How does your country define ‘elderly’ and ‘orphan?’
- What is your country’s policy in regards to promoting or protecting traditional family structures?
- What is your country’s policy towards protecting the most vulnerable segments of the population?
- What is your country’s approach to alternative family care (in the context of the UNICEF definition)?
- Which members states are succeeding at helping these groups? Which are not, and why?

Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What are the League-wide definitions for these groups?
- What League-wide efforts can be made to coordinate efforts in protecting these groups?
- How do all of the above relate to existing protocol at either the domestic or international level?
- How should the Arab League approach care for the vulnerable? Is there an umbrella policy that would allow each country to develop their own framework? Or would it be better to have specific League-wide programming to combat this issue?

Resources to Review

¹⁹ http://www.unicef.org/sudan/UNICEF_Sudan_Technical_Briefing_Paper_1_-_Alternative_family_care.pdf

- Ch. 4: Patriarchy and the Changing Family in Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East. By: Valentine M. Moghadam (At the time of writing this guide, this book is available via Google Books.)
- Middle East Journal of Age and Aging (ISSN: 1449-8677)
- UNICEF's report on Alternative Family Care in Sudan:
[http://www.unicef.org/sudan/UNICEF_Sudan_Technical_Briefing_Paper_1 -
_Alternative_family_care.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sudan/UNICEF_Sudan_Technical_Briefing_Paper_1_-_Alternative_family_care.pdf)
- UNICEF Statistics: <http://www.unicef.org/protection/MENA.pdf>

4. Evaluating the status of persons with physical, hearing, vision, and ambulatory impairments, and promoting ease of physical accessibility to public places and facilities as well as economic and educational opportunities

General Background

There are many legal instruments on which the committee could base their evaluation; one to consider as a launching point is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol. This is a document that outlines the rights that all disabled peoples should be afforded. The Arab Charter on Human Rights²⁰ does not mention this segment of society specifically, though many of its articles apply to all people, including those with disabilities. Non-governmental actors came together in 1999 to adopt the Casablanca Declaration of the Arab Human Rights Movement, which calls upon “all Arab intellectuals and politicians to refrain from entangling Islam in a confrontation with human rights, and to consider those rights provided by international human rights law as a minimum to build upon and not to seek to reduce or call for their violation in the name of specificity or any other pretext.”²¹ These pre-existing structures form a solid framework for this topic, though challenges still exist and on-the-ground conditions and accessibility likely require improvement.

History of Topic in the Arab World

There is certainly room for improvement in providing economic and educational opportunities to those with disabilities.²² Yet, many member states have committed themselves to a rapid pace of development, through which they may be able to explore options to promote opportunities and ease physical accessibility. That being said, this is not true in all member states; there is great inequality in the level of infrastructure present in each country.²³ This discrepancy should be accounted for in any proposed solutions to this topic.

Another factor to consider is societal discrimination against people with disabilities. In many cases, the degree to which the disabled have access to public health and other services is severely limited low levels of infrastructure, alone. However, this can be amplified by public ostracization, discrimination, and misinformation. This is another tack the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers might take.

Additionally, there are others of a more technical nature. In fact, “a major [barrier to overcome] is the shortage of factual evidence. Many countries cannot provide accurate and detailed information about the status of their disabled people.”²⁴ Further complicating matters, “there is a direct and positive correlation between the level of development of a country and the reported percentages of disability. While Europeans place the percentage of persons with disabilities in their countries in the double digits, the Arab countries invariably report that figure at under 5%.”²⁵ True levels are certainly higher, particularly with the high occurrence of disabilities caused by war and violence. This discrepancy is the result of the combination of discrimination and lack of resources to accurately survey the population.

²⁰ <http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/international/hr1994.htm>

²¹ http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID%3D4685&URL_DO%3DDO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION%3D201.html

²² <http://www.independentliving.org/docs1/dispeopleintldev2.html#anchor2586938>

²³ http://www.iiz-dvv.de/index.php?article_id=137&clang=1

²⁴ <http://www.daa.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Overcoming%20Obstacles.pdf>

²⁵ http://www.iiz-dvv.de/index.php?article_id=137&clang=1

Finding a Solution to the Problem

There are many angles which nations may choose to approach the problem, but from the perspective of the Arab League, it is important to envision policy that can be applied equally across all member states. The Council, then, might consider proposals that include solutions to issues relating to access to services, physical accessibility, societal discrimination, or collection of accurate information.

Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How does your country, if at all, define disability?
- What legislation or initiatives does your country have in place to address public access?
- How many disabled people resided within your country?
- Should disabled people have access to special services, i.e. health care?

Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What best practices are feasible for all countries to implement?
- What League wide policies can be implemented to foster action by each member state on this issue?
- What programs or initiatives can be put in place to alleviate societal discrimination?
- How can the League assist in accurate collection of data on people with disabilities?

Resources to Review

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:
<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150>
- Arab Charter on Human Rights: <http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/international/hr1994.htm>
- The Casablanca Declaration of the Arab Human Rights Movement, 1999:
http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID%3D4685&URL_DO%3DDO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION%3D201.html
- <http://www.independentliving.org/docs1/dispeopleintldev2.html#anchor2586938>
- http://www.iiz-dvv.de/index.php?article_id=137&clang=1
- <http://www.daa.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Overcoming%20Obstacles.pdf>