

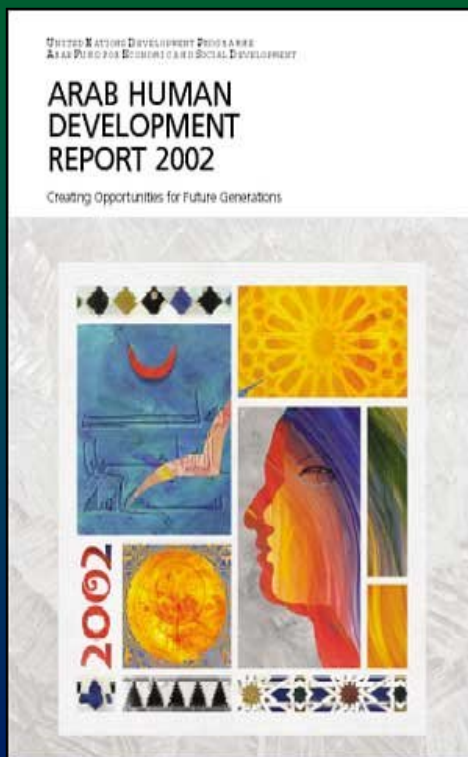


Arab Human Development Report IV, 2005

***TOWARDS THE RISE OF WOMEN IN
THE ARAB WORLD***

A Brief Presentation

AHDR SERIES



Addressed the most significant challenges facing development in 22 Arab countries.



Knowledge



Freedom



Women's Empowerment

"The most important publication of 2002."

-- Time Magazine

AHDR Methodology

- **Independent papers;**
- **Public Opinion Surveys;**
- **Consultative Process - AHDR;**
- **Core team of over 100 authors from around the region with proven record of publications in Arabic.**

Advisory Board

- **Between 30-40 renowned scholars, intellectuals, and representatives from regional institutions and UN agencies reflecting the region's cultural and political diversity: age, gender and political orientation.**
- **The Advisory Board decides on the thematic approach, outline, and suggests names of expert contributors from around the region, while regularly engaging in the formulation of the Report and its advocacy thereafter.**

A Hostile Regional and Global Environment

- **The Global Anti-Semitism Review Act equates criticism of Zionism with anti-Semitism.**
- **The conundrum of terrorism.**
- **Palestine: a unilateral withdrawal does not remove Israeli control of Gaza. Occupation continues to stifle human development.**
- **Iraq: the blunders of occupation become manifest.**

Part I: CHANGE IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The Spring of Arab Reform Has Yet to Bloom

- **Flawed elections insufficient for freedom and good governance.**
- **Cosmetic reforms cover up continuation of suppression of freedom.**
- **Continued violation of human rights.**
- **Escalating civil society struggle.**

Part II: TOWARDS THE RISE OF WOMEN

A) FRAME OF REFERENCE: Concepts and problematic issues

Rise of Arab Women: total equality in human rights

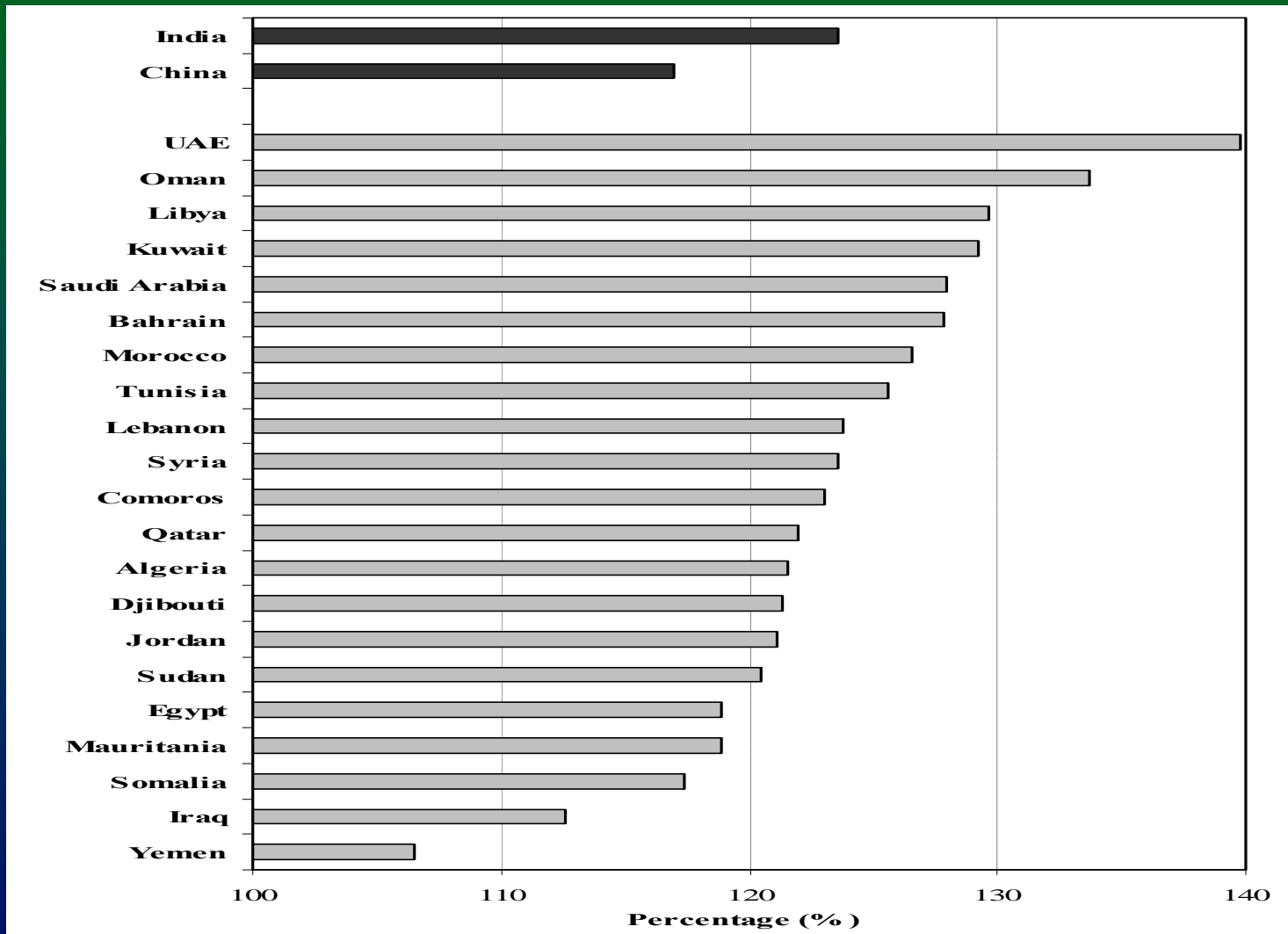
- *Perfect equality of opportunity in the acquisition, and utilisation, of human capabilities between women and men.*
- *Guaranteed citizenship, and human rights, to all women on par with men.*
- **Need for respect of gender differences in order to protect human dignity.**

B) THE STATE OF WOMEN IN ARAB COUNTRIES

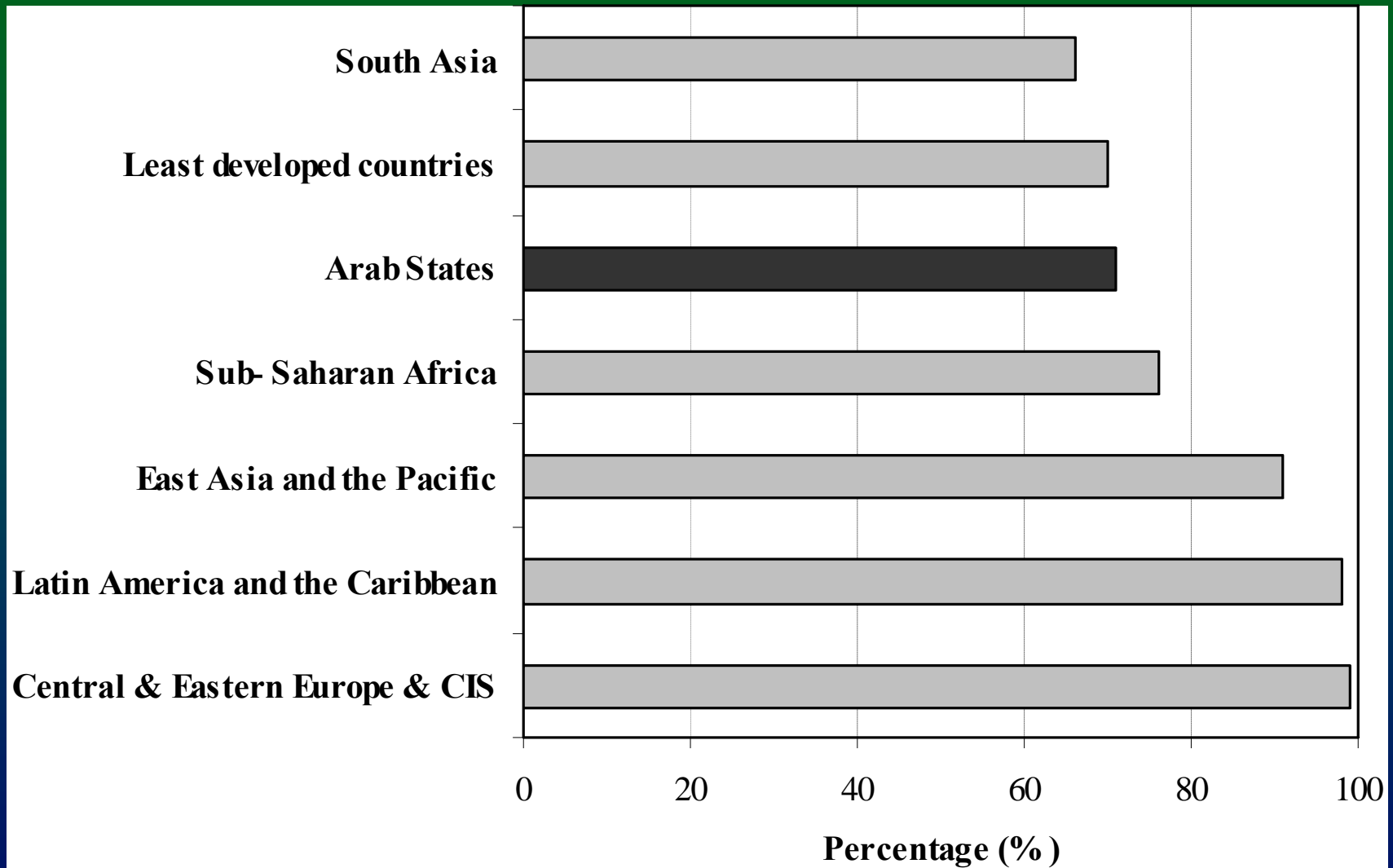
Acquisition of Human Capabilities

- **Women suffer a higher degree of loss of years of life to disease, a reflection of a general mode of gender-related discriminatory mode of life.**
- **In spite of far-reaching achievements in the education of girls, women still suffer a higher level of deprivation in knowledge acquisition than men in Arab countries.**
- **This is in spite of the fact that girls continue to excel vis-à-vis boys in educational attainment.**

Expectation of lost healthy years at birth, females as a percentage of male



Female literacy rate as a percentage of male



Arab Public Opinion Survey

- In tradition of previous AHDRs, the Report team conducted a public opinion survey relating to the rise of Arab women in four Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco.
- The most important result: Arab public aspires to a much greater degree of equality between men and women.

Utilization of Human Capabilities

- Participation of women in *formal* economic activity, according to standard statistics, is still low due to a number of *social factors*.
- Women suffer higher rates of unemployment, and discrimination in the benefits of employment, especially in the private sector.
- The increased presence of women in politics does not necessarily mean political empowerment.

Arab Women's Achievements

- **Higher enrollment at all levels of education.**
- **Increased political rights and parliamentary representation.**
- **More progressive personal status codes and labor laws.**
- **Advances in the fields of social and natural sciences, the media, arts, sports.**

Human welfare

- **No clear evidence on the ‘feminization of poverty’, in the sense of low income. But a higher level of human deprivation is manifest.**
- **Women suffer a noticeable level of infringement of personal liberty.**
- **Marginalized women, and those living under difficult conditions, particularly in regions of conflict and under occupation, are the most poverty-stricken in terms of opportunities for development.**

Experiences of Arab Women's Struggle

- **Long history replete with advances and setbacks in the context of engagement with the state and societal forces.**
- **Challenges are still many and disparate.**
- **Personal status laws are a major domain of engagement.**

C) THE SOCIETAL CONTEXT OF THE STATE OF WOMEN

Culture

- Underlying principle in **Islam** is **equality** among human beings, women and men in particular.
- Some interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence have, however, helped undermine the status of women in Muslim societies.

- **Folk culture tends to be harsh on women and accepts their oppression, sometimes even urges it.**
- **Nevertheless, women are praised and valued for their noble functions restricted to the home, notably motherhood and home making.**

Society

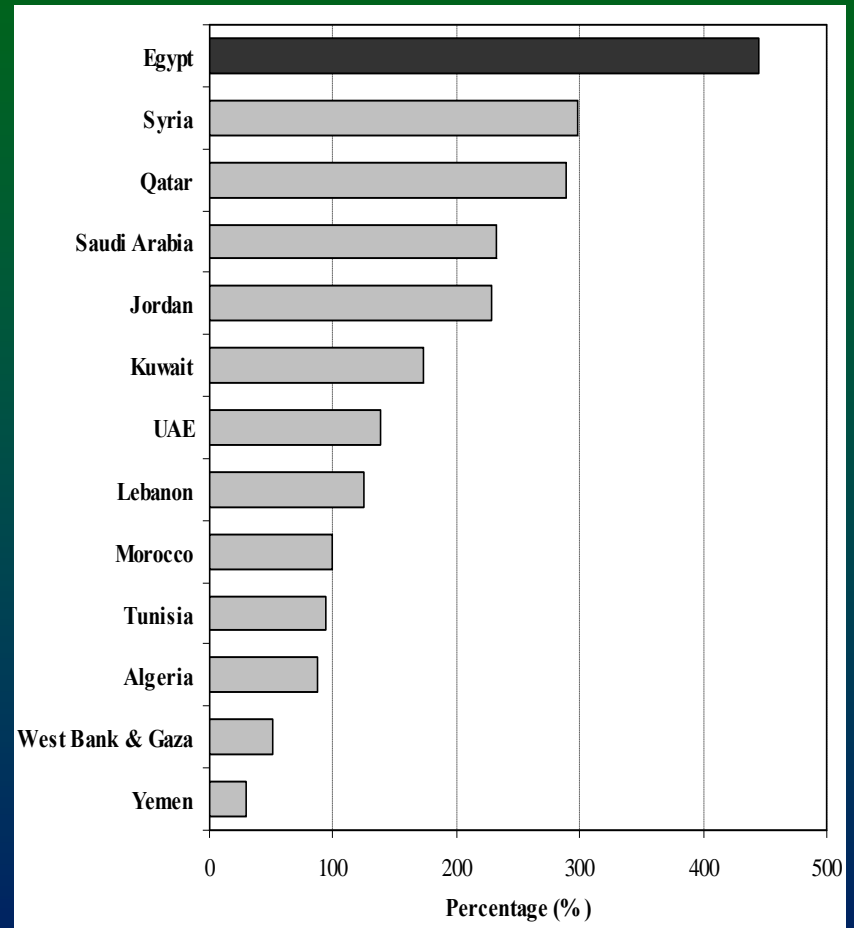
- **Traditional kinship relations, under patriarchy and private ownership, have tended to perpetuate the oppression of women.**
- **Women, however, tend to internalise gender oppression and even help reproduce it, especially through socialisation.**

Legal Structures

- **Ratification of the CEDAW by Arab states is marred by reservations.**
- **Significant variety among Arab countries in the extent of safeguarding women's rights by law, especially in personal status laws.**
- **It is perhaps the rather conservative conscience of the judiciary that tends to foster discrimination against women in the legal sphere.**

Political Economy

- Rentier mode of production.
- Stagnant economic growth.
- Reliance on foreign labour.
- Economic globalization without the institutional structures necessary for efficient and equitable distribution.



Female unemployment rate as a percentage of male

Politics

- **Formal political structures restrict the empowerment of women to tokenism.**
- **Even in opposition political movements and civil society organisations, the role of women remains marginal.**

D) A STRATEGIC VISION FOR THE RISE OF ARAB WOMEN

Two 'wings' for the rise of Arab women

FIRST WING: Package of societal reforms:

- Purge cultural constructs of gender biases.
- Ensure consistency with CEDAW.
- Reform education and media to impact the socialization process.
- Legal reform- Affirmative action and use of temporary measures (e.g. quotas).
- Poverty eradication and encouraging utilization of women Capabilities .

SECOND WING: Civil society-based activist movement for the rise of Arab women.

TWO BASIC PRIORITIES:

- 1. Overcome obstacles to women's acquisition of essential human capabilities.**
- 2. Guarantee women the ability to effectively employ their capabilities as they choose.**

Operationalization

- Knowledge (AHDR II)
 - **Regional level:** Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning in Arab Universities, Information & Communication Technology for Development, Trends in Mathematics & Science, KAGUAR (Regional E-Government Institute, Arab Quality Assurance Agency, Arab Social Science Research Center)
 - **Country level:** Syria, Jordan, Yemen, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia

Operationalization

- **Governance (AHDR III)**
 - **Regional level:** Programme on Governance in the Arab Region
 - **Country level:** Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan
- **Women's Empowerment (AHDR IV)**
 - **Regional level:** Center for Arab Women Research & Training (CAWTAR), ICTDAR & HIV/AIDS Regional Programme (HARPAS)
 - **Country level:** Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, Somalia, Yemen

THANK YOU