



"Periodical"

Arab Countries Efforts to Leave No One Behind: Evaluation of 2024 SDGs

2nd issue: Zero Hunger



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Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights



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Preamble

The sustainable development facts in the Arab region, both regionally and nationally, reflect ongoing efforts to achieve its goals across environmental, social, and economic dimensions. These efforts demonstrate a strong commitment to accelerating implementation and achieving the set targets and indicators. Annually, the region evaluates its progress at the High-Level Political Forum.

Aligned with global and national endeavors to periodically review progress in sustainable development performance and indicators, and in line with **Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights** interest in sustainable development goals, the association launches the second issue of its research periodical, titled "**Arab Countries Efforts to Catch Up: Evaluating Development Goals for 2024.**"

This edition of Maat periodical focuses on "**Food Security in Arab Region: Assessing Discrepancy Between Goals and Indicators.**" It sheds light on evaluating the second Sustainable Development Goal, which addresses hunger in all regions of the Arab world. The periodical specifically examines hunger and food security indicators and rates in the current Arab region. Furthermore, it presents an expected performance outlook for Arab countries in relation to second goal indicators and targets during 2024, particularly in the lead-up to the national voluntary reviews in July.

About this Issue:

This periodical provides an assessment of the development goals set for review at United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2024. This includes Goals 1, 2, 13, 16, and 17. The Forum's mechanism involves reviewing and evaluating five goals each year.

In line with Maat's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and its regular participation in the High-Level Political Forum, the foundation launches this research periodical to monitor and evaluate the development goals under review in the Arab region from February to July 2024. The periodical consists of five issues, each dedicated to one of the five development goals under review. It monitors and evaluates the progress of each goal in the Arab region, taking into account international and regional dynamics. The publication concludes with an analytical assessment of Arab countries' performance for each goal. Based on past performance and indicators, the periodical will also provide a future outlook highlighting the opportunities and

challenges that the development goals in the Arab region may face in 2024. This will be particularly relevant during the period of national preparations for the voluntary review in the upcoming High-Level Political Forum session.

Monitoring Methodology:

This periodical employs a monitoring methodology that involves direct tracking of published information in both Arab and Western media regarding government efforts to enhance development work. It also relies on a variety of secondary research sources, including open sources such as the internet and reliable news sites that cover development realities in Arab countries and development pathways in general.

This periodical also relies on information and data published on the official websites of Arab ministries responsible for sustainable development, as well as reports from electronic and print media that highlight the efforts of Arab governments in achieving sustainable development goals and the challenges they encounter. This approach aims to shed light on these efforts.

Global Hunger Index:



This periodical utilizes data from the Global Hunger Index (GHI), a tool designed to measure and track hunger on a global and regional scale. GHI assesses progress or decline in combating hunger, increases awareness and understanding of the phenomenon, and allows for comparisons of hunger levels between different countries.

It is important to note that the index covers only 125 countries, not all countries worldwide. The top 20 countries in the GHI ranking are those with low rates of malnutrition or hunger prevalence. Thus, when the classification reaches the end, it signifies a highly concerning position regarding hunger rates.

Table (1): GHI in Arab region

Country	GHI Ranking /125 Country	GHI Score		
		2008	2015	2023
Kuwait	9	<5	<5	<5
UAE	19	6.8	5.6	<5
Tunisia	27	7.4	6.4	5.9
Algeria	33	11.1	8.5	6.8
KSA	37	10.6	9.1	7.3
Oman	45	11.2	11.2	8.3
Morocco	47	12.2	9.1	9.0
Lebanon	Not Ranked	-	-	9.9
Egypt	57	16.9	15.2	12.8
Iraq	64	20.3	16.5	13.8
Libya	72	12.8	18.5	16.1
Jordan	Not Ranked	-	-	19.9
Mauritania	87	18.8	22.4	21.0
Comoros	92	30.4	24.0	22.7
Djibouti	93	33.9	29.6	23.0
Syria	100	16.2	23.9	26.1
Sudan	103	-	28.5	27.0
Yemen	123	37.8	42.1	39.9
Somalia	Not Ranked	59.2	-	49.9

Source: GHI¹

Low	≤ 9.9
Moderate	10.0–19.9
Serious	20.0–34.9
Alarming	35.0–49.9
Extremely Alarming	≥ 50.0

¹ <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/pdf/en/2023.pdf>



Axis I: Monitoring Reality of Goal 1 in Arab Region

The political and economic realities experienced by each country in the Arab region over the past decade have varied, leading to different hunger crisis scenarios among the countries and regions of the Arab world. The monitoring reveals the following aspects of the crisis:

1. North African Countries:

✦ Egypt:

According to the 2023 GHI, Egypt experiences a moderate level of hunger, ranking 57th out of 125 countries. Challenges remain in terms of food affordability, quality, and safety, as Egypt heavily relies on global markets for more than half of its basic food needs.² Malnutrition is also a significant public health concern, with a stunting rate of 13% and 4% of children under the age of five suffering from underweight. Additionally, Egypt ranks 77th in the world in terms of the deteriorating global food security index.

✦ Libya:

During 2023, Libya faced political and economic instability, which resulted in an increase in hunger rates, particularly after disasters like floods. In 2023 GHI, Libya ranked 72nd

² Egypt, WFP, <https://ar.wfp.org/countries/egypt-ar>

out of 125 countries, indicating an average level of hunger prevalence.³ The country imports over 60% of its food requirements, with the percentage exceeding 90% for grains. Libya relies on Russia and Ukraine for wheat supplies. The country's main source of income, oil revenues, is often entangled in political disagreements and subject to divisions, leading to periodic closures of export sites and ports in recent years.⁴

👉 Tunisia:

In 2023, Tunisia ranked 27th out of 125 countries on GHI,⁵ indicating progress towards achieving Goal 2 of eliminating hunger. This means that the country maintains a low hunger index. Unfortunately, the percentage of import coverage by exports decreased to 94.4% in 2023 compared to 96.6% in 2022. This puts Tunisia at risk of worsening the food deficit, primarily due to the drought it has experienced over the past four years.⁶

👉 Algeria:

Algeria ranks 33rd out of 125 countries on the GHI,⁷ reflecting progress towards achieving Goal 2 of eliminating hunger in 2023. The latest classification on food security places Algeria as the top-ranked country in Africa and eighth in the Arab world. It positions Algeria as one of the countries capable of supporting the United Nations' efforts to eradicate hunger and achieve "zero hunger" rates by 2030.

👉 Morocco:

Morocco is making positive strides in eliminating hunger. According to the 2023 GHI, Morocco ranks 47th among the least hungry countries out of 125, with a low hunger index. However, significant challenges persist in terms of food security, primarily related to crises in the agricultural sector. These challenges, including high global inflation rates and successive drought seasons not experienced in decades, have had widespread dimensions and continue to impact the country.

👉 Mauritania:

In GHI for 2023, Mauritania ranked 87th out of 125 countries,⁸ indicating an average hunger index and reflecting a deteriorating nutritional situation in the country. During 2023, 5% of the population in Mauritania suffered from food insecurity. Expectations

³ Libya, Global Hunger Index, 2023. <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/libya.html>

⁴ 31% من العائلات الليبية تتفق أغلب دخلها على الغذاء، بوابة الوسط، 7 أبريل 2023، <https://bitly.ws/3d9dy>

⁵ Tunisia, Global Hunger Index, 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9eb>

⁶ هل تواجه تونس مخاطر فقدان الأمن الغذائي؟، اندييندينت عربية، 18 أبريل 2023، <https://bitly.ws/3dbJz>

⁷ Algeria, Global Hunger Index, 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9eq>

⁸ Mauritania, Global Hunger Index, 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9eJ>

suggest that the proportion of the population facing food insecurity will rise to 8% by June and July 2024.⁹

2. Countries of East Africa:

📍 Sudan:

Sudan is currently grappling with an armed conflict crisis that has significantly hindered the achievement of Goal 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Security threats and the disruption of food supplies by the Rapid Support Forces have left approximately 18 million people across the country facing acute hunger, including about 3.6 million children under the age of five suffering from acute malnutrition. This means that at least 42% of the population is experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, particularly in displaced people's camps. The impact of violence on agricultural productivity continues to escalate, posing a threat to the upcoming harvest season and exacerbating the hunger crisis.

📍 Somalia:

Somalia continues to face prolonged hunger crises due to extreme weather events ranging from droughts to floods. The drought has resulted in the loss of millions of livestock, destruction of vast areas of pastures and agricultural land, and hindered the country's recovery. In 2023, Somalia experienced a catastrophic hunger situation, with over 6.5 million people facing acute food insecurity amid the driest conditions in 40 years. Concerns are growing that the drought will worsen recurring climate shocks, further exacerbating insecurity and instability.¹⁰

📍 Djibouti:

In 2023, Djibouti did not make progress towards achieving Goal 2: Zero Hunger. Disturbingly, 42% of the population lives in extreme poverty, and 24% of the total population suffers from acute food insecurity.¹¹ Djibouti heavily relies on imports to meet up to 90% of its food needs and has been severely affected by the repercussions of the war in Ukraine, which disrupted food supplies. Additionally, the economic situation inside the country has deteriorated due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict in neighboring Ethiopia.

📍 Comoros:

⁹ الجوع يهدد سكان موريتانيا، الخبر 24، 9 يناير 2024. <https://bitly.ws/3d9ff>

¹⁰ حالة الطوارئ في الصومال، برنامج الأغذية العالمي، 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9fG>

¹¹ Climate crisis and conflict push more people to drought-stricken Djibouti, Climate Centre, 13 October 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9g8>

The Comoros Islands will face significant levels of hunger in 2023, placing them in a dangerous situation. Approximately 45% of the population lives below the national poverty line, and 44% of the population experiences moderate to severe food insecurity. The rise in global food and fuel prices has further exacerbated the economic challenges faced by the Comoros Islands. Inflation levels reached a record high of 12.4% in 2022, and by December 2022, overall inflation rose to 20.6% on an annual basis, largely driven by increasing food prices.¹²

3. Levant Countries:

✦ Jordan:

In 2023, 62.7% of Jordan's indicators showed progress towards the sustainable development goals, with Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) achieving the highest progress. However, Jordan still faces indirect impacts from regional conflicts and unrest.¹³ More than 53% of Jordanian families are vulnerable to food insecurity in the coming years, coinciding with major challenges and chronic economic problems such as unemployment and poverty, which have reached alarming levels.¹⁴

✦ Syria:

Syria continues to struggle in making progress towards Goal 2 of eliminating hunger. The country is facing record levels of hunger, with Syria being classified among the six countries with the highest rates of food insecurity in 2023. Over 12.1 million people, more than half of the population, suffer from food insecurity.¹⁵ Malnutrition rates, including stunting among children and malnutrition among mothers, continue to rise to unprecedented levels.

✦ Palestine:

Indicators for achieving Goal 2 and its objectives, which aim to eliminate hunger, enhance social protection, and improve basic services in the Palestinian territories, have sharply declined due to intensified conflict, fighting, and war. This is particularly evident in the aftermath of the war that targeted the Gaza Strip since October 2023. Unprecedented levels of acute food insecurity, hunger, and famine-like conditions are affecting Gaza, with all of its 2.2 million people classified among the three worst levels of hunger, ranging from level three (**emergency**) to level five (**disaster**).

¹² The World Bank in Comoros, WB, <https://bitly.ws/3dcv7>

¹³ 62.7% of Jordan's indicators show progress towards Sustainable Development Goals, The Jordan Time, Aug. 24, 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9gQ>

¹⁴ ناقوس الخطر يدق .. هل الأردنيون يقتربون من الجوع؟، أخبار الأردن، 29 يونيو 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9gQ>

¹⁵ سوريا: الجوع يطرق أبواب أكثر من نصف السكان في ظل تفاقم الأزمة الاقتصادية، الأمم المتحدة، 14 مارس 2023، <https://bitly.ws/3d9hq>

📍 Lebanon:

Indicators for Goal 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, aimed at eradicating hunger in Lebanon, are declining. The country recorded the highest inflation rate of 350% on the food price inflation index worldwide during the 2022-2023 period, classifying it as a "hunger hotspot." This has resulted in high levels of food insecurity among children, with a nutrition survey showing that 75% of children under the age of five suffer from food insecurity, leaving them highly vulnerable to stunting and severe wasting.¹⁶

📍 Iraq:

Iraq has shown improvement in the GHI. In 2015, its score on the index was 16.5, which decreased to 13.8 in 2023. However, Iraq still ranks first in the Arab world and sixth globally out of 196 countries, making it one of the countries with the highest food waste in 2023. The Ministry of Planning has been making notable efforts, such as calling for the enactment of a law to regulate and combat food waste, as well as promoting its redistribution, recycling, and donation.¹⁷

4. Arab Gulf Countries:

📍 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has achieved significant progress towards self-sufficiency in many essential food products, with a sufficiency rate exceeding 100%. It ranks 37th out of 125 countries on the GHI, indicating a **low** hunger index. However, the climate situation in Saudi Arabia poses challenges for the country in terms of global food insecurity in the coming years.¹⁸

📍 United Arab Emirates (UAE):

In 2023, the UAE topped the countries of the Middle East and North Africa on the Global Food Security Index, surpassing its previous ranking of 3rd on the index. Globally, it ranked 23rd in the overall food security index, advancing 12 places compared to the previous year. The UAE also ranked among the 20 countries with a low score on the 2023 GHI.¹⁹

¹⁶ 75% من أطفال لبنان يواجهون انعدام الأمن الغذائي، مركز الاتحاد للاخبار، 13 نوفمبر 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9iA>
¹⁷ العراق يجمع بين النقيضين: هدر في الطعام وفقراء يتضورون جوعاً، شفق، 28 يناير 2024. <https://bitly.ws/3d9ju>

¹⁸ Saudi Arabia's strategic plans to safeguard food security for pilgrims, BBM, 21 June 2023, <https://bitly.ws/3dcy5>

¹⁹ United Arab Emirates, Global Hunger Index, 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9ku>

👉 Kuwait:

Kuwait continues to make progress towards Goal 2 of eliminating hunger, ranking among the top 20 countries with a low score on the GHI in 2023. It also ranks second in the Gulf region and 30th globally in food security efforts, with a score of 72.2 out of 100 points.²⁰

👉 Bahrain:

Bahrain is listed among the 50 most food secure countries, ranking 49th on the World Food Security Index. The latest rankings in 2020 indicate that no one in Bahrain lives on or below the global poverty line.²¹

👉 Sultanate of Oman:

The Sultanate of Oman is making strides towards achieving Goal 2 of eliminating hunger. In the 2022 Global Food Security Index, it ranked 35th, an improvement from its 40th rank in 2021. It also holds the third position in the Arab world, surpassing its fifth rank in 2021.²²

👉 Yemen:

The ongoing war in Yemen, which has lasted nearly nine years, continues to have catastrophic economic and humanitarian consequences, negatively affecting the progress towards sustainable development goals. Goal 2 of eliminating hunger witnessed a decline in 2023. Food insecurity in Yemen remains at alarming levels, with approximately 50% of families unable to meet their food needs and more than 55% of families suffering from insufficient food consumption. The number of Yemenis suffering from hunger has also increased from 10.6 million in 2014 to 17 million in 2023.²³

👉 Qatar:

In general, the State of Qatar lacks sufficient data on its food security situation, including in the GHI for 2023. However, it is ranked 24th in the world in terms of food security, according to available classifications.

²⁰ الأمن الغذائي في الكويت.. الفرص والتحديات، القيس، مارس 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9m2>.

²¹ Food Safety and Security, Government of Bahrain, 16 Mar, 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9n2>

²² سلطنة عُمان تشارك في المؤتمر الدولي للأمن الغذائي بجمهورية أوزبكستان، وكالة الأنباء العمانية، سبتمبر 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9nw>

²³ واشنطن: تقرير دولي يؤكد زيادة عدد الجوعى في اليمن بأكثر من 6 ملايين شخص بسبب الحرب، يمن فيوتشر، 16 ديسمبر 2023. <https://bitly.ws/3d9nI>



Axis II: Expectations for Indicators of SDG2 in Arab Region during 2024

Based on an analysis of hunger and food crises in Arab region, which reflect the diverse political and economic contexts experienced by countries in the region, it is possible to predict and project indicators for the year 2024. These indicators highlight the efforts of the region's countries in addressing the hunger crisis.

a. General Facts of SDG 2 in Arab Region:

It is noteworthy that the United Nations has prioritized the goal of eliminating hunger among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals for 2024. However, the Arab region has witnessed a steady increase in the number of hungry people and those suffering from malnutrition. This is due to a complex combination of human and natural factors, leading to approximately 171 million people experiencing different levels of food insecurity. Official statistics reveal that hunger in the Arab region has increased by over 91% compared to 2000.

In 2022, the number of undernourished people in the Arab region reached 59.8 million, accounting for 12.9% of the total population. This exceeds the global average of 9.2%. Notably, hunger prevalence is highest in low-income and least-developed Arab

countries, where approximately one-third of the population suffers from hunger. Additionally, countries affected by conflict have undernourishment rates approximately four times higher than those not experiencing conflict.²⁴

Forecasts for 2024 indicate a dire humanitarian situation in the Arab region due to ongoing conflicts, emergency climate conditions, and economic decline. Particularly, the Middle East and East Africa (**Palestine and Sudan**) are expected to face the greatest challenges due to their turbulent circumstances. International support is no longer keeping pace with basic needs, leading to an expected increase in malnutrition and food shortages, exacerbated by rising inflation indicators and ultimately resulting in loss of life.

Food security is not solely about addressing hunger but is also a critical factor for sovereignty and stability. The Arab region possesses significant wealth and has the resources to feed its population. However, the region continues to face threats of food insecurity. The main reason for this lies in the region's widest inequality gap in the world. Solidarity and redistribution are **key solutions**, but the magnitude of the problem is too vast for one country to tackle alone.



²⁴ القضاء على الجوع في المنطقة العربية.. تحديات أمام استراتيجية الأمن الغذائي، الوطن، 15 أكتوبر 2022، <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/6330323>

Axis III: Food Security Challenges in Arab Region

Global food security, with a particular focus on the Arab region, is facing significant challenges. Concerns are growing due to the lack of a clear vision to develop effective solutions to the crisis. Several key challenges related to food security have emerged:



☛ Intense Dependence on Imports:

The Arab region relies heavily on food imports, particularly from the Black Sea region. However, the decline in the value of many local currencies has led to record-high food price inflation. This inflation disproportionately affects the poor, who spend a larger portion of their income on food. Since 2017, food price inflation has been a major driver of food insecurity in several Arab countries.

☛ Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic and Russian-Ukrainian War:

While the Arab region was already facing challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal targets of eliminating hunger and improving nutrition, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have further exacerbated the situation. These crises have disrupted supply chains and increased the prices of essential commodities such as grains, fertilizers, and energy.

Given region's heavy reliance on imported food, these two crises have had a severe impact on food insecurity and malnutrition in the Arab region.

☛ Inflation:

The hunger crisis extends beyond food scarcity; the rising prices of food have become a major issue. This phenomenon, often referred to as "hidden hunger," occurs when food is available in the markets but becomes unaffordable for the poor. Inflation is known as a "tax on the poor" as it disproportionately affects individuals with low incomes. In recent years, inflation levels have reached historic highs, leading to increased disparity and inequality in the Arab region.

☛ Climate Change:

Climate change is a significant factor contributing to the rise in hunger rates. Increasing temperatures, decreasing rainfall, and the process of desertification are all consequences of climate change. Major industrialized countries, which are responsible for a significant portion of environmental pollution, are frequently criticized for their role in exacerbating this issue. Addressing the hunger crisis is closely linked to confronting climate change and reducing environmental pollutants generated by these countries.

☛ Armed Conflicts:

Violence and armed conflicts continue to be the main drivers of acute food insecurity in various Arab countries. The longer these conflicts persist, the more devastating their impact becomes. Conflict-affected areas often face severe food shortages, resulting in acute malnutrition among thousands of children and risks of imminent death for adults without access to sufficient food, medical supplies, and necessary treatments for their illnesses and injuries.

This is evident in the Israeli occupation authorities' use of hunger as a weapon to harm and kill civilians in Gaza. Since October 7 of last year, over 600,000 children in Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, have fallen victim to hunger. Additionally, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan have deliberately raised security threats and disrupted the work of humanitarian agencies, leading to nearly 5 million people across Sudan facing emergency levels of hunger.

Recommendations

- Maat denounces the use of starvation policies as a tool of war, whether in Palestine or Sudan, and condemns starvation of civilians by Israeli occupation forces in Gaza, and demands immediate need to open food supply crossings to Gaza and stop harming innocent civilians and threatening their food security.
- Maat recommends that Arab governments need to reduce trade barriers among themselves and facilitate trade, by adopting digital technologies, harmonizing non-tariff measures, improving transparency, and strengthening governance.
- The Arab region must develop its agricultural food systems, making them more resilient in the face of emerging shocks and crises, and more efficient, comprehensive and sustainable to achieve the goals of the second goal of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Maat appreciates the efforts of League of Arab States in launching the initiative to eradicate hunger in the Arab region in February 2022, and calls on it in this context to further strengthen cooperation with Arab countries, especially those suffering from long-term conflicts, occupation, dwindling natural resources for food production, and heavy dependence on Imports in order to meet all these challenges and enhance self-sufficiency in resources.
- Maat urges Arab governments that suffer from high levels of food waste, for example the government of Iraq, to reduce food loss and waste, and to enhance awareness of the importance of preserving natural resources.
- Maat calls on Arab governments to develop and develop national strategies for sustainable agricultural development, taking into account the resources available locally in the country and its comparative advantage in producing various crops and agricultural commodities.
- Maat calls on Arab governments to widely disseminate sustainability concepts and practices, exchange successful experiences between governments, countries, the private sector and stakeholders, and find innovative and creative solutions to provide new sources of food, based on modern technology.