

# ARAB WOMEN,S HEALTH FUTURE THREATS

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## FUTURE THREATS

- Development policies and actions have failed to take gender inequality into account and failed to address disparities between males and females .
- The Arab Development Report in 2002 cited the low empowerment of women was one of the three deficits which seriously hampered human development in the Arab region in the past decades .Despite the substantial social and economic progress, huge social inequalities and health inequities exist inter and intra Arab countries. A large percentage of populations, especially in rural areas are deprived of access to health facilities .Consequently, many women still die during pregnancy and labor, yielding unacceptable levels of maternal and infant mortality .

# Threats to Women's Health

- Tradition, norms and customs continue to be the most important determinant governing the status of women in the Arab region. Gender imbalances persist and Arab women face several hurdles in their quest for improvement. Among these are the high illiteracy rates (50 % of Arab women are illiterates), unemployment and poverty levels, obsolete and/or gender-blind legislation, discriminatory practices in the workplace and limited access to and unequal opportunities in the political ,economic, social and legal spheres. These factors have been aggravated by the political instabilities, conflicts and wars,and compounded by religious extremism and fundamentalism .

# Gender-Based Violence(GBV)

- Gender based violence is one of the most pervasive problems facing Arab communities .It permeates throughout different parts of Arab societies, cutting across ethnic, religious ,economic and social lines and manifests itself in financial , physical ,psychological and sexual forms .
- Vulnerability to GBV increases with poverty and in times of conflict . Poor younger women and girls in war zones (refugee camps ) are especially vulnerable to physical violence, rape , sexual harassment and trafficking .

# Arab Women's Health-Future Threats

- The total fertility rate(TFR) in the Arab world has declined from an average of 7 children per woman in 1960 to 3.3 children in 2002, however TFR remains high in some Arab countries, with 5 children /woman .
- The average population growth rate is 2.3% with an estimated doubling time of 29 years .
- The current number of Arabs in the 22 countries of the Arab League is 280 million . ESCWA Future projections : 394 million in 2015,467 million in 2025 and 631 million in 2050 .Most of this increase occurring in populous Arab countries that are least developed .
- This increase will strain the environment, involving soil exhaustion ,water depletion and aggravate existing poverty, one of the most important factors leading to ill health .

# Arab Women's Health-Future Threats

- During past decades , Arab populations recorded a substantial drop in infant mortality rates and total fertility rates and the growth rate of Arab population has diminished by half since a peak in the late 1960s and the average life expectancy has increased by almost 10 years .
- The result of these changes will be an ageing population which will herald age related changes in the burdens of disease .The capacity of countries to fund health systems are varied, and the disparities between and within countries are vast .

# Threats to Arab Women's Health

- Global warming and declining rainfall will reduce food yields and adversely impact nutritional health.
- A positive relationship has been observed between regional trends in climate (rising temperature and declining rainfall) and childhood stunting .
- The extreme heat and wildfires in western Russia in the summer of 2010 destroyed one third of the country's wheat yield .This was followed by a ban on export leading to a 20% rise in the price of wheat worldwide .Importing countries like Egypt and Pakistan had to spend more to support this essential commodity .

# Average Rainfall in mm/year-2010

Data source :World Weather and climate graphs

● Algeria	691	Mauritania	157
● Bahrain	76	Morocco	423
● Comoros	2562	Oman	96
● Djibouti	129	Palestine	493
● Egypt	26	Saudi Arabia	106.5
● Iraq	156	Somalia	399
● Jordan	273	Sudan	164
● Kuwait	96	Tunisia	468
● Lebanon	601	Yemen	39
● Libya	251		

# Future Threats to Arab Women's Health

- Emergence of new infections ( 30 new diseases have been identified ) and resurgence of old ones like tuberculosis and cholera and malaria- a reflection of changes in human ecology : rural to urban migration resulting in high density per urban slum, increasing long distance mobility and trade, social disruption of wars and conflicts .
- Increasing resistance of common pathogens to currently available antibiotics because of indiscriminate use .
- Many other aspects of globalization will influence population health ,like rising rates of obesity ,especially amongst women , the spread of tobacco marketing .
- Rising rates of caesarean births in Arab countries- the 'caesarean section epidemic' .