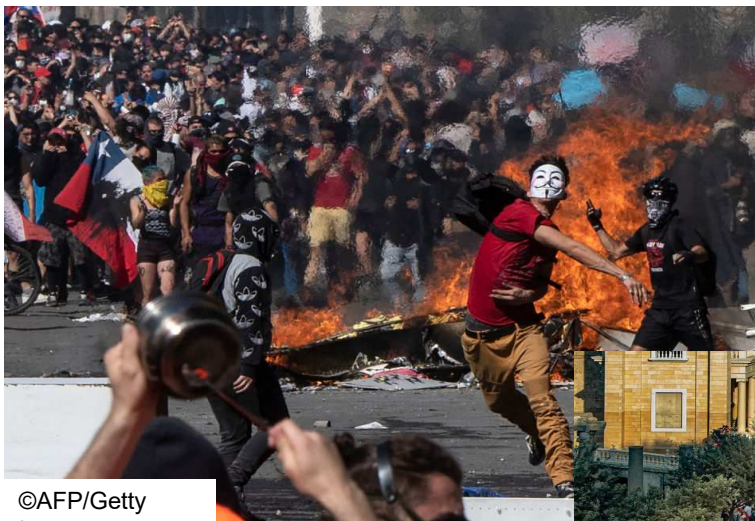# Agile government responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Arab region : What are we learning for the future?

19 November 2020

©Getty Images/iStockphoto

COVID-19 unfolded at a time of simmering public frustration
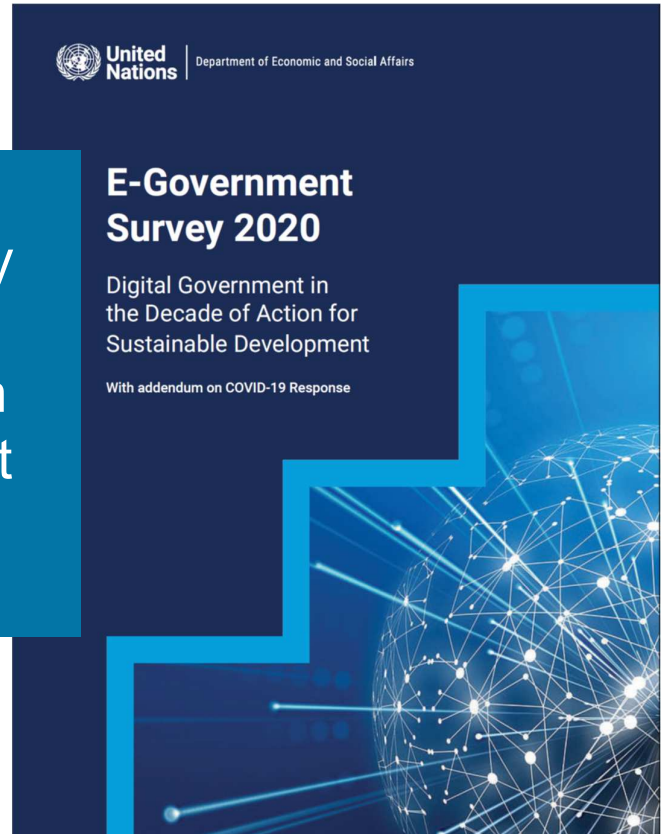
©AFP/Getty Images

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Did the Arab region reap the benefits of digital divides?

"Conflict and civil strife have caused major disruptions in many parts of the Arab region, and the millions of people who have been displaced find it extremely difficult or even impossible to access services, including e-government

E-Government Survey 2020

Digital Government in the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development

With addendum on COVID-19 Response

United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

In the Arab world, the adoption of cutting-edge technology is concentrated in higher-income countries

E-government development in the member countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC)

Country	Rating class	EGDI Rank	Sub-Region	OSI value	HCI value	TII value	EGDI (2020)	EGDI (2018)
United Arab Emirates	V3	21	Western Asia	0.9000	0.7320	0.9344	0.8555	0.8295
Bahrain	V2	38	Western Asia	0.7882	0.8439	0.8319	0.8213	0.8116
Saudi Arabia*	V2	43	Western Asia	0.6882	0.8648	0.8442	0.7991	0.7119
Kuwait*	V1	46	Western Asia	0.8412	0.7470	0.7858	0.7913	0.7388
Oman*	V1	50	Western Asia	0.8529	0.7751	0.6967	0.7749	0.6846
Qatar	HV	66	Western Asia	0.6588	0.6698	0.8233	0.7173	0.7132

* Countries that moved from the high to the very high EGDI group in 2020.

Source: United Nations E-Government Survey 2020

Lebanon's Digital Platforms amid COVID-19

The Inter-Ministerial Platform for Assessment, Coordination and Tracking – IMPACT

https://impact.cib.gov.lb/home

The Lebanon Citizen Budget Dashboard

http://www.institutdesfinances.gov.lb/data/lebanon-citizen-budget/
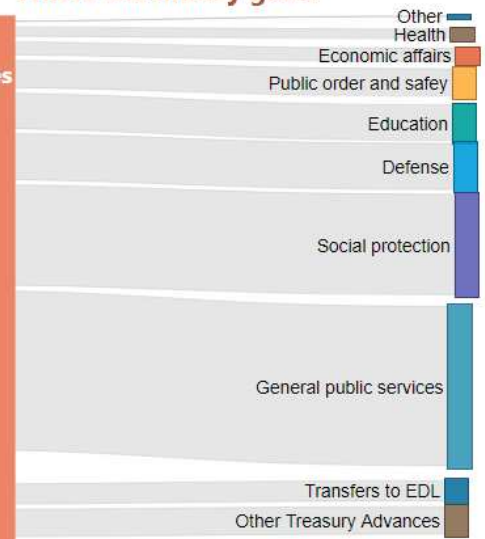
The Donor Coordination Platform

https://dcp.pcm.gov.lb/

THE WAY FORWARD: Addressing three vulnerabilities

Vulnerability No.1 – TRUST

Trust feeds on merit and accountability of public service and a belief that everyone, not only the happy few, will reap the rewards of technological progress. With regressing governance indicators and a large, expensive, often coercive state apparatus, the trust vulnerability is exacerbated.

Indicator	Country	Year	Percentile Rank (0 to 100)
Voice and Accountability	* Middle East & North Africa	2009	
		2019	
Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Ter..	* Middle East & North Africa	2009	
		2019	
Government Effectiveness	* Middle East & North Africa	2009	
		2019	
Regulatory Quality	* Middle East & North Africa	2009	
		2019	
Rule of Law	* Middle East & North Africa	2009	
		2019	
Control of Corruption	* Middle East & North Africa	2009	
		2019	

Source: Worlwide Govenance Indicators

Vulnerability No.2 – CAPACITY

With COVID-19, digital transformation itself was disrupted.
In financially fragile countries, governments lack of capacities stood in the way of agility, adaptability, and positive trans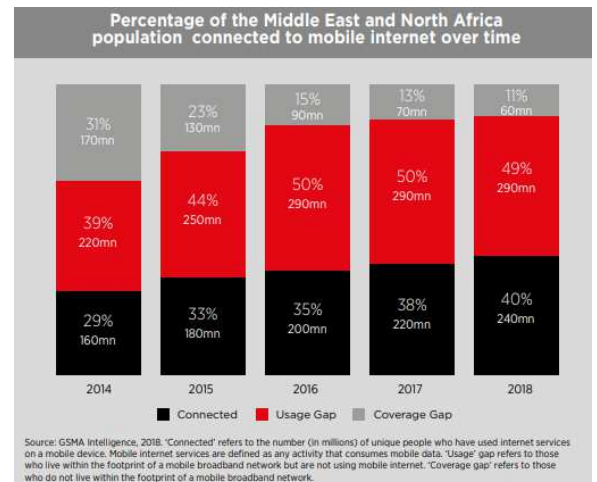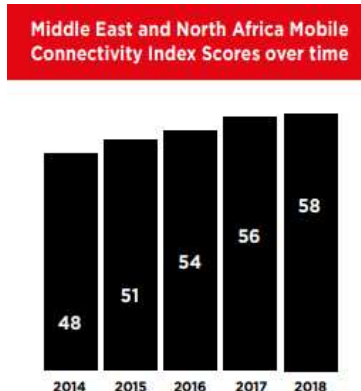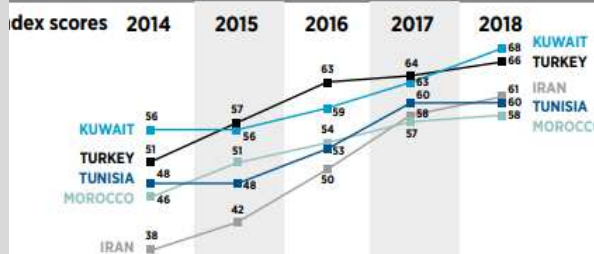formation needed. **Technology accessibility & preparedness would spare the growth of a "lost generation" that would otherwise be particularly prone to crime and violent conflicts.**
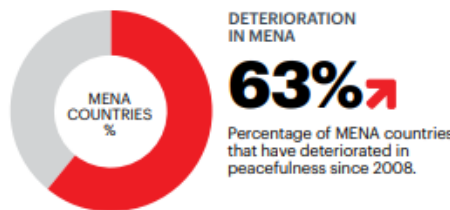
Source: Mobile Internet Connectivity 2019

Middle East and North Africa Mobile Connectivity Index Scores over time

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
48	51	54	56	58

Percentage of the Middle East and North Africa population connected to mobile internet over time

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Coverage Gap	31% 170mn	23% 130mn	15% 90mn	13% 70mn	11% 60mn
Usage Gap	39% 220mn	44% 250mn	50% 290mn	50% 290mn	49% 290mn
Connected	29% 160mn	33% 180mn	35% 200mn	38% 220mn	40% 240mn

Legend: ■ Connected ■ Usage Gap ■ Coverage Gap

Source: GSMA Intelligence, 2018. 'Connected' refers to the number (in millions) of unique people who have used internet services on a mobile device. Mobile internet services are defined as any activity that consumes mobile data. 'Usage' gap refers to those who live within the footprint of a mobile broadband network but are not using mobile internet. 'Coverage gap' refers to those who do not live within the footprint of a mobile broadband network.

Most Improved Countries (2014-2018)

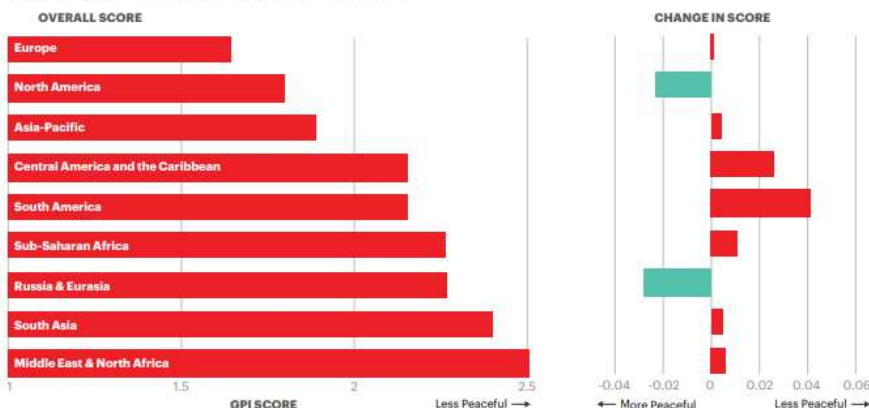|	2014 Mobile Internet Penetration	2018 Mobile Internet Penetration
KUWAIT	50%	53%
TURKEY	37%	42%
TUNISIA	35%	53%
IRAN	32%	49%
MOROCCO	25%	40%

Vulnerability No. 3 – PEACE

In the least peaceful region in the world, how can ICT support the transition from violence to stability and recovery?

Sources: Global Peace Index 2020

MENA COUNTRIES %

DETERIORATION IN MENA

63% ↗

Percentage of MENA countries that have deteriorated in peacefulness since 2008.

Middle East & North Africa

Regional Rank	Country	Overall Score	Score change	Overall Rank
1	Qatar	1.616	-0.046	27
2	Kuwait	1.723	-0.048	39
3	United Arab Emirates	1.752	-0.042	41
4	Oman	1.941	-0.012	68
5	Jordan	1.958	-0.027	72
6	Morocco	2.057	0.005	83
7	Tunisia	2.09	0.009	92
8	Bahrain	2.209	-0.111	110
9	Algeria	2.287	0.002	117
10	Saudi Arabia	2.443	-0.021	128
11	Egypt	2.481	0.052	130
12	Iran	2.672	0.137	142
13	Palestine	2.699	0.052	143
14	Israel	2.775	-0.004	145
15	Lebanon	2.828	-0.054	146
16	Sudan	3.043	0.1	153
17	Libya	3.258	-0.011	157
18	Yemen	3.411	0.051	159
19	Iraq	3.487	0.119	161
20	Syria	3.539	-0.023	162
REGIONAL AVERAGE		**2.513**	**0.006**	

Regional GPI results, 2019

Only two regions became more peaceful from 2019 to 2020.

OVERALL SCORE

- Europe
- North America
- Asia-Pacific
- Central America and the Caribbean
- South America
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Russia & Eurasia
- South Asia
- Middle East & North Africa

GPI SCORE — Less Peaceful →

CHANGE IN SCORE
← More Peaceful | Less Peaceful →

Source: IEP

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Thank You

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