



**WORKING PAPER**

# **FAMILY MATTERS**

**AN OVERVIEW OF POLICIES ON  
FAMILY RELATED ISSUES IN  
SELECTED ARAB COUNTRIES**

**Nasser Yassin  
Nadine Ghalayini  
and Hana Addam El-Ghali**



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# **FAMILY MATTERS**

## **AN OVERVIEW OF POLICIES ON FAMILY RELATED ISSUES IN SELECTED ARAB COUNTRIES**

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***“The family is a fundamental social unit. Families produce, nurture, and protect children. They educate and socialize future adults. They care for the disabled and the aged. Families engage in work and production”***

***(Butterfield, Rocha & Butterfield, 2009).***

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## ABSTRACT

Public policies have a fundamental impact on families. Globally, many countries have established policies that ensure the wellbeing of families. In the Arab world, there are no policies explicitly directed at families but rather, there are social policies that have an indirect influence on them. In many countries of the Arab world, there has been a historical lack of social insurance policies that comprehensively address the needs of vulnerable groups. Instead, there are few social policies that only cover specific strata of the population. Families in the Arab world, however, substitute in many instances the functions of the government in supporting the elderly, the ill, children, youth, unemployed and the dependents. This paper looks at policies that affect the family, namely looking at children, adults and elderly in eight Arab countries<sup>1</sup>. The selected countries have been going through political transformation and instability.

The paper commences with a belief that in light of the recent Arab uprisings, it is an appropriate time to revisit research on the dynamics of the social change and to examine some of its likely effects on the development or amendment of policies that affect families.

The policies addressed in this paper include fertility and family planning, maternity and paternity leave schemes, workplace protection measures for women and pay equity, unemployment insurance, family allowances, old age pension and health coverage for the elderly. A comparative analysis reveals that there is wide cross-country variance in the provision and application of the policies. Existing policies that serve families should be amended based on a contextual and country-specific value of the policy. Realizing the changing structure of Arab families, the governments should develop responsive strategies to address the needs of all family members.

<b>TABLE 1</b>	Global family policy instruments
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<sup>1</sup> Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen



# I. INTRODUCTION

## **Families, Policies and the State**

The family is seen as the essence of social organization and economic activities in both traditional and modern Arab societies. Family members depend on each other reflecting a solid sense of cohesion in their relationships (Barakat, 2000). Dahlgren (2008) perceives the family as “a fundamental social institution in providing basic needs, assigning identity and socializing its members” (p.1). With recent global socio-economic changes, the Arab family has gone through a transitional phase which has influenced its structure and functions (Rashad, Osman, & Roudi-Fahimi, 2005). However, some argue that the Arab family is always a comfortable framework within which people always adjust to new circumstances (Hopkins, 2003).

Families are considered the main social security system for the elderly, sick and disabled, and provide refuge for children, youth, the unemployed and dependents (Rashad et al., 2005). The sixteenth article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) acknowledges the states’ responsibility in the protection of families. Due to their indispensable societal contributions, families should be promoted as a fundamental focus of policy-making (Bogenschneider, 2011; Butterfield, Rocha & Butterfield, 2009). In the international arena, many governments have recognized the role of families for the development of nations and have established policies aimed at supporting families (Lohmann, Peter, Rostgaard, & Spiess, 2009; Robila, 2014) (see table 2). Since there is no general consensus on a unified definition of “family policy”, the latter could be regarded as policies and legislations established by the government for the family (Doha International Family Institute & United Nations, 2009). Family policies have typically been concerned with women and children. However, researchers and policy-makers have recently been calling for a more equitable approach to defining family policies (Lamb & Sagi, 2014). Family policies encompass the essential functions of families: family creation, economic support, childrearing and care giving (Bogenschneider, 2011). These instruments address basic needs of the families such as their access to work, food, housing, health care, as well as the care and support of children and the elderly, improving their overall wellbeing (Butterfield, Rocha & Butterfield, 2009) (see table 1). In times of financial crisis, family policies are expected to address the discrepancies arising from demands

of employment and those for child care (Waldfogel, 2009; Widener, 2007 a).

The formulation of a comprehensive single national family policy in developing countries might be challenging due to the societal variations between regions, rural and urban areas, social classes and ethnic groups (Doha International Family Institute & UN, 2009). Also, the development of family legislations is a sophisticated process that requires collaboration between governments, policy experts, scholars, nongovernmental organizations and families (Robila, 2014). In the Arab world, there are no explicit family policies. Rather, there are policies that address the needs of the family. These policies address areas such as fertility, unemployment, workplace protection measures, maternity and paternity leaves, family provisions and old age pension. Realizing the changing structure of Arab families, the governments should develop responsive strategies to address the needs of all family members.

*Table 1  
Global family policy instruments*

### **SOME FAMILY POLICY INSTRUMENTS**

- ▶ Laws of inheritance, adoption, guardianship, child protection, foster care, marriage, separation, divorce, custody, and child support
- ▶ Income transfers, including child and family allowances, social insurance, social assistance, and tax policies
- ▶ Policies assuring time for parenting, including paid and job protected leaves from employment following childbirth or adoption, and during children’s illnesses or school transitions
- ▶ Early childhood care and education policies
- ▶ Family planning
- ▶ Social service programs
- ▶ Housing policies
- ▶ Maternal, child and family health services

*Source: “Family policy in a changing world: Promoting social protection and intergenerational solidarity” by Doha International Family Institute & UN (2009).*

*Table 2  
Family policies in a global context*

**SOME FAMILY POLICY INSTRUMENTS**

- ▶ One hundred and sixty-three countries around the world offer paid leave to women in relation to childbirth
- ▶ Forty-five countries ensure that fathers receive paid paternity leave or have a right for parental leave
- ▶ At least 76 countries protect women's right to breastfeed
- ▶ At least 96 countries around the world mandate paid annual leave
- ▶ Forty countries have government mandated evening and night wage premiums
- ▶ At least 98 countries require employers to provide a mandatory day of rest
- ▶ At least 84 countries have laws specifying the maximum length of the work week
- ▶ Forty-two countries secure leave for major family events

*Source: Adapted from a report by Jody Heymann, as cited in Widener, A (2007). Family-friendly policy: Lessons from Europe-Part II. Public Manager, 36(4), 44.*

The socio-economic situations of Arab states are not homogeneous (Karshenas, Moghadam & Alami, 2014). As a result, family support is weakening, private provision of social services is rising, and the need to develop public support schemes is intensifying. Social insurance strategies are flawed, mainly due to the absence of workers' unions and associations. Although pensions, sickness and injury benefits are available, mostly to formal employees, other benefits, such as unemployment benefits, family allowances, and maternity leave, are either severely limited or nonexistent (Karshenas et.al., 2014).

The Arab region has recently witnessed instability, conflict and popular uprisings in a number of countries, namely Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen (Karpati, 2011). Slogans of the demonstrations that started in 2011 reflected the need for social justice and economic prosperity (UN, 2012). Some states have adopted new priorities that address education, job creation, rebuilding the health sector and reducing emigration (Mirkin, 2010). Such challenges unfold vital societal changes that call for states to adopt dynamic family policies (Robila, 2014). Four years after the first social upheavals in the Arab region, little progress was made in reducing unemployment (UN, 2013). Nevertheless, Arab

governments seem to be feeling the urge to address the needs of workers and tackle the predicament of unemployment by responding to the social demands that have been witnessed in a number of countries of the region (AFDP, 2014). Egypt started to implement a National Program for Training for Employment since 2012, the transitional government in Tunisia formulated an Employment Emergency Plan to enhance employment, and Libya has been concentrating on the reintegration of fighters in the labor force (AFDP, 2014). Karshenas, Moghadam & Alami (2014) suggest that developmental policies are made via social dialogue by interest groups under democratic conditions and present evidence from Tunisia where the Union General des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT) is achieving success. They claim the problem doesn't revolve around the amount of public spending solely, but also around the allocation of funds since many resources are wasted in the public domain in the region, and they recommend governments to replace universal subsidies with targeted family support mechanisms (Karshenas et al., 2014).

**Purpose of the Paper**

The rationale for our focus on select family related policies is best illustrated by the examination of global trends that transcend to countries of the MENA region, with a particular perspective remaining that which differentiates these states and their respective societies. This paper provides an overview of some of the policies and regulations crafted by nation states in the MENA region in order to address family-related issues and needs that societies in this part of the world have become increasingly aware of the need to address in a systematic approach. The attitudes of governments towards family policy have changed considerably with the social, cultural and economic changes witnessed in the Arab region especially in light of the Arab uprisings. The socio-economic factors experienced by Arab countries have been coupled with the demographic changes which lead to a paradigm shift in the understanding of the concept of a family. This in turn has resulted in the adoption of family friendly policies in response to these changes. In analyzing the select policies, the paper shows that there are a number of major similarities across countries of the MENA region in the ways family policy has evolved and in the ways governments have viewed and supported families. It also shows that there are major dissimilarities shaped by country-specific

events, ideologies, and circumstances. It concludes by mapping a typology of family policy bases on these inter-country differences and similarities.

### ***Methodology***

In recent years, a number of societal issues have emerged as a result of global socio-economic changes and the recent Arab uprisings, posing a threat to the strong cohesion characterizing family structures. Some of these issues include unemployment, family disintegration, marginalization of certain groups and poverty. A number of governments in the MENA region have established policies that address such risks through their social protection programs and economic support mechanisms. For instance, Tunisia and Bahrain are among few other states that provide unemployment benefits. Some governments tend to seem less aware of the importance of policy instruments for the wellbeing and development of families. While Arab states have different economic and societal contexts, they all lack national explicit family policies and they share the need to formulate, apply and monitor such policies. The Arab uprisings brought forth social demands that present the need for revisiting research on the dynamics of the social change and to examine some of its likely effects on the development or amendment of policies that affect families. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of existing policies that have an impact on families in eight Arab countries<sup>2</sup> in transition or experiencing political instability, with a focus on the following topics: fertility and family planning, maternity and paternity leave schemes, workplace protection measures for women and pay equity, unemployment insurance, family allowances, old age pension and health coverage for the elderly.

This paper presents a comprehensive literature review of select policies that address the needs of families in the Arab world. The paper aims to provide the reader with some background for understanding current practices of family policies in select Arab states which had some form of political instability in recent years. Previous research on policies related to the welfare of families in the Arab world has also been extracted from existing literature on policy-making and family dynamics. A variety of documents have been consulted such as legislations, personal status and labor law codes of Arab states, online databases, journal articles, government and institutional reports, newspapers, book chapters and technical publications and reports from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations

(UN). Available literature was critically examined comparing the relevant information across each of the investigated countries. Themes and conclusions were drawn from the descriptive data derived from the secondary sources listed. The scoping process was driven by fundamental questions revolving around the data sought, the significance of information and their applicability to the purpose and framework of the paper.

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<sup>2.</sup> Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen



## ***II. POLICIES THAT AFFECT FAMILIES IN SELECTED ARAB COUNTRIES***

Conjugal families go through significant stages throughout their life span. These typically include marriage, birth of children, children leaving home, the «post children» or «empty nest» period, and the dissolution of the marriage through death of one of the spouses. The succession of these stages is best referred to as “family life cycle” (Glick, 1977). This section provides a descriptive and analytical overview of policies that affect families in eight Arab countries in transition (see table 3). Following are the policies examined in this paper, organized based on the family lifecycle approach:

*Table 3  
Social policies examined in the paper*

FAMILY PLANNER	LABOR	FAMILY ALLOWANCES	ELDERLY
► Fertility & family planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Unemployment benefits</li> <li>► Workplace protection measures for women &amp; Pay equity</li> <li>► Leave arrangements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Child benefits</li> <li>► Family allowances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Old age pension</li> <li>► Health coverage</li> </ul>

### ***1. Fertility & Family planning***

“To achieve universal access to reproductive health” is a Millennium Development Goal which is intended mainly to improve maternal health (UN, 2014). The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo was a milestone for family planning policies. A total of 179 governments signed ICPD Program of Action that urges all policy-makers, in governmental and non-governmental organizations, to cooperate in order to provide accessible family planning services and information (UN, 1995). More and more countries are adopting pro-family planning policies. Currently, 180 out of 197 governments around the world are actually offering direct or indirect support for family planning (UN, 2013 b).

Arab states are not homogeneous in their demographic features or their population trends. They share some characteristics and diverge in others; population growth rates and fertility rates vary considerably among Arab states. However, the reproductive age of women is increasing in all Arab states (PRB, 2012). Although the total fertility rate for the Arab region declined from 6.28 live births per woman in the first half of the 1980s to 3.41 live births per woman in the second half of the 2000s, it remains above the world average of 2.52 live births per woman (ESCWA, 2011).

During the past decades, many governments in developing countries have adopted policies to lower fertility levels, while some governments in developed

countries have adopted policies aiming at raising fertility levels (see table 4) (UN, 2013 b). Measures to decrease fertility include integrating family planning programs into health care systems, raising the minimal legal age of marriage and improving female access to education and employment (Mirkin, 2013; UN, 2013 b).

*Table 4  
Fertility policies in selected countries from the Arab world*

	VIEW ON FERTILITY 2009	POLICY ON FERTILITY	GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR FAMILY PLANNING
Bahrain	Too high	Lower	Direct
Egypt	Too high	Lower	Direct
Iraq	Satisfactory	No intervention	Direct
Lebanon	Satisfactory	No intervention	Direct
Libya	Satisfactory	No intervention	No support
Syria	Satisfactory	Lower	Direct
Tunisia	Satisfactory	Lower	Direct
Yemen	Too high	Lower	Direct

*Source: “World Fertility Policies 2011”, by United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division” Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/worldfertilitypolicies2011/wfpolicies2011.html>*

In 2011, Bahrain, Egypt and Yemen viewed their own fertility levels as too high and they adopted (in addition to Syria and Tunisia) policies aimed at lowering them (see table 4). On the other hand, some governments such as Iraq, Libya and Lebanon did not intervene to influence fertility. Besides, direct support for family planning in 2011 was addressed by the governments of Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen (see table 4). Apparently, several Arab countries have been successful in family planning and population control, yet the region seems to have a long way ahead to catch up with the developed world in this regards. Hence, there is a growing need for family planning in the region, though in each country, it is recommended that fertility policies are tailored according to its distinctive factors.

Having the right to decide the number of children, and spacing and timing of births allows women to gain more autonomy and reduces maternal mortality rates. Family planning also helps in reducing unintended pregnancies which may ensue in unsafe abortions, especially if those who seek abortion face legal barriers, which is the case in most Arab countries. In addition, avoiding unintended pregnancies can lower the chances of child and mother morbidity, as unintentional pregnancies usually are associated with developmental problems for the newborn babies, inadequate care, lower birth weight, and also increases the risk of the mother's death. One of the most serious damages of the unintentional pregnancies is abortion, as many women have used unsafe methods practiced by non-professionals (PRB, 2012).

## **2. Labor**

### *a. Unemployment benefits*

“Unemployment benefits” is a support mechanism under which unemployed workers are offered noncontributory cash transfers to save them from poverty and aid them to maintain a level of living until they’re back to work (ILO, 2013). It aims at increasing employability; hence, some countries have used a positive connotation to refer to it as “employment insurance” (ILO, 2013). Unemployment benefits schemes reduce poverty lessen household vulnerability (UN, 2012).

The ILO embraced unemployment insurance since its creation in 1919. Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention in 1952, The Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention in 1988, and more recently, the Social Protection Floors Recommendation in 2012, emphasized the importance of unemployment benefits and developed its schemes (ILO, 2013). More than 70% of workers around the globe do not have access to unemployment

insurance, and only 16 countries offer support for unemployed first time job seekers (ILO, 2012). Almost 80% of unemployed in Western Europe, North America, and Central and Eastern Europe receive unemployment benefits, while this proportion is less than 10% in Africa, less than 40% in Latin America and the Caribbean, and less than 20% in the Middle East and Asia (ILO, 2012).

Unemployment insurance is not common across Arab nations (See table 5). Even when a country offers unemployment benefits, the program is almost non-existent in practice due to the limited number of beneficiaries (Angel-Urdinola & Kuddo, 2010). For example, in Egypt, the first Arab country to establish unemployment insurance in 1965 (ESCWA, 2012), less than 350 people per year received benefits during the period 2001-07 (Angel-Urdinola & Kuddo, 2010). Moreover, Libya, Tunisia, Iraq, and Algeria have also officially adopted some sort of unemployment schemes (UN, 2014). Additionally, in 2006, Bahrain established an “Unemployment Insurance Scheme” which was described in a joint report by ILO and the Government of Bahrain as “an example of best practice for other countries in the region” (ILO & Government of Bahrain, 2010). The absence of unemployment benefits and assistance in Yemen, Syria, Libya and Lebanon in addition to the restricted provisions in Egypt (see table 5), raises questions on the possible link between the prevailing economic situation and the motive behind the massive involvement of youth in the revolutions. According to Alami & Karshenas (2012), the autocratic regimes in many Arab countries are the reason behind the deficiencies in social protection and health care systems, triggering a role in motivating the people for demanding social change.

*Table 5  
Unemployment policies in selected Arab countries*

TYPE OF PROGRAM	COVERAGE AND EXCLUSION	QUALIFYING CONDITIONS		
		UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT	UNEMPLOYMENT AID	
Bahrain	Social insurance system	Civil servants, private-sector employees, Bahraini first-time job seekers  <b>EXCLUSION:</b> Self-employed persons	Must be younger than the retirement age and a legal resident of Bahrain. Must have at least 12 consecutive months of employment for the first benefit claim; 12 months of employment during the last 18 months for the second benefit claim; 18 months during the last 24 months for the third benefit claim; and 36 months during the last 48 months for any subsequent claim.	Paid to first-time job seekers or insured persons who do not qualify for the unemployment benefit. Must be aged 17 to retirement age. Must not be engaged in gainful activity or own a business, and must be capable of and available for work.
Egypt	Social insurance system	Public- and private-sector employees  <b>EXCLUSION:</b> Temporary, seasonal, and casual workers; family labor; household workers; civil servants; employees older than 60 years; self-employed persons; and artisans	Must have at least six months of contributions, including the three consecutive months before unemployment. Unemployment must not be the result of voluntary leaving, misconduct, or the refusal of training or a suitable job offer.	
Iraq	Social assistance system			
Lebanon	N/A			
Libya	N/A			
Syria	N/A			
Tunisia	Social assistance system	All non-agricultural salaried employees.  <b>EXCLUSION:</b> Self-employed persons, agricultural workers, and household workers	The insured must have paid at least 12 quarters of contributions to the National Social Security Fund and must be involuntarily unemployed, ineligible for an old-age pension or a disability pension, and registered at an employment office	
Yemen	N/A			

*Source: International Social Security Association Database. Data*

*retrieved November 8, 2013, from International Social Security*

*Association Database: <http://www.issa.int/country-profiles>*

### b. Workplace protection measures for women & pay equity

It is globally recognized that equality for women at the workplace is an essential human right (ILO, 2014 a). In relation to maternity, non-discrimination refers to the “right of all women not to be treated less favorably in a work situation based on their sex or due to circumstances arising from their reproductive functions” (ILO, 2014 b p.81). Many ILO conventions recommend the members to develop legislations that protect women from dismissal during pregnancy, maternity leave and even during the period of time following their return to work (ILO, 2014 b). In the workplace, it is essential to protect women from risks that may affect her child during pregnancy and breastfeeding (ILO, 2010). Adjustments to work conditions, avoidance of dangerous work and the provision of daily breaks or a reduction in working hours to breastfeed the child are examples of workplace protection measures that ensure women’s rights (ILO, 2010).

Most governments have developed some legislation that protects women from maternity-based discrimination, but these legislations differ from one country to another (ILO, 2014 b). According to ILO Convention No. 183 (2000), employers have the right to dismiss an employee when the reason for dismissal is unrelated to maternity; however the employer has to prove that the dismissal was not related to maternity. It also forbids the use of pregnancy tests by employers. Another ILO concern would be the protection of women’s guaranteed right

to return to work. Convention No.183 (article 8 (2)) discusses women’s right to return to the same position or an equivalent one paid at the same rate. This type of leave is considered “temporary interruption of employment” and should be implicit in the entitlement to take leave (ILO, 2014 b).

In the Arab world, women face discrimination on many levels and men are still perceived as heads of the household and the sole breadwinners (ILO, 2014 a). The discrimination could be due to the prevailing cultural and religious beliefs that assign different social and economic roles to each gender. These gender roles have been translated into laws and regulations that pose challenges to women’s economic rights (ILO, 2014 a).

Pay equity achieved through “equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value”, reduces women’s financial dependence and the pressure on families (ILO, 2013 b, p. viii). At present, the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Arab region are still hindered by cultural, legislative and economic obstacles (UN, 2012). Women are also disadvantaged on the level of wages, since many Arab countries still apply laws and regulations that discriminate against women. Pay equity is yet to be acquired by most Arab countries. In Saudi Arabia, amendments to the Labor law prohibit gender based gaps in salaries. The Jordanian labor law will be amended soon to include the principle of “pay equity” (ILO, 2014 a).

*Table 6  
Workplace protection measures for women in selected Arab countries*

	<b>DOES THE LAW MANDATE EQUAL REMUNERATION FOR MEN AND WOMEN FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE?</b>	<b>ARE THERE LAWS PENALIZING OR PREVENTING THE DISMISSAL OF PREGNANT WOMEN?</b>	<b>ARE EMPLOYERS REQUIRED TO PROVIDE BREAK TIME FOR NURSING MOTHERS?</b>	<b>DO EMPLOYEES WITH MINOR CHILDREN HAVE RIGHTS TO A FLEXIBLE/PART-TIME SCHEDULE?</b>
Bahrain *	No	Yes	Yes	No
Egypt	No	Yes	Yes	No
Iraq **	No	No	Yes	No
Lebanon	No	Yes	No	No
Libya***	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Syria	No	No	Yes	No
Tunisia	No	Yes	Yes	No
Yemen	No	No	Yes	No

*Sources: World Bank. (2013). Data retrieved November 1, 2013, from World Data Bank Database: <http://wbl.worldbank.org/Data/ExploreEconomies/lebanon/0?topic=getting-a-job>*

\*. Retrieved November 18, 2013, from <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/668/The%20Labour%20Law%20for%20the%20Private%20Sector.pdf>

\*\*. Retrieved November 18, 2013, from <http://www.iraq-lg-law.org/en/node/243>

\*\*\*. Adapted November 18, 2013, from <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/2079/Law%20No.%2012%20for%202010%20concerning%20of%20labor%20relations.pdf>

Governments that recently experienced political instability do not seem to prioritize workplace protection measures for women. All eight countries investigated in this paper do not ensure the right of employed women with minor children to a flexible schedule, while only in Libya, the law mandates equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value (see table 6). In Iraq and Syria, there are no laws that penalize or prevent the dismissal of pregnant women. With the exception of Lebanon, employers in all of the investigated countries are required to provide break time for nursing mothers (see table 6). Gender equality is necessary for both development and the reduction of poverty for men as well as for women, contributing to improved living standards for both. In spite of these facts, the road towards the abolition of sex-based discrimination remains very long. Many women still face discrimination based on their gender and reproductive functions. Based on the analysis of regulations related to women at the workplace, governments in Arab countries do not seem to strive to ensure a fair treatment of women at the workplace during and post pregnancy. There is a need to amend existing policies with this regard in all eight countries in order to ensure that women are getting their minimal rights when it comes to employment.

### *c. Leave arrangements (maternity, paternity, parental)*

Maternity protection is an essential labor right enshrined in key universal human rights instruments (ILO, 2014 b). One of the major elements of maternity protection is maternity leave, which has long been considered a concern for international organizations such as the ILO and the UN. The promotion of maternity leave has been rationalized by its various benefits in the improvement of the health and wellbeing of the mother and the child, the decrease in child and maternal mortality, as well as in the promotion and achievement of gender equality (ILO, 2014 b). Globally, most countries abide by the standards put in place by ILO conventions. The development of maternity protection legislations was favored by the increase in women's paid work, the growth in non-standard work (i.e. part-time work) in addition to the changes in family patterns and the increased number of single parent households) (ILO, 2014 b). Convention No. 183 implies that the minimal duration of maternity leave should be 14 weeks, applicable to all employed women. The convention also mentions the right of women for cash benefits. Countries opt to one of three approaches in financing maternity cash benefits: social security, employer liability or mixed systems (ILO, 2010). ILO recommends that the states should finance part of the cost through social security or public funds (ILO, 2010).

In addition to maternity leave, many countries have developed other kinds of leaves such as paternity and parental leaves. Paternity leave is given to fathers and is usually a short leave around the time of childbirth, while parental leave is a longer period of leave to care for the child, typically available to both parents. Although neither of these leaves is mentioned in ILO conventions, parental leave is mentioned in ILO's 191 recommendation (ILO, 2014 b). Countries of the Middle East and North Africa lack legislations at that level, and most of them do not adhere to ILO standards regarding maternity protection. All Arab countries lack policies on parental leave, and only two have paternal leave consisting of a single day (ILO, 2014 b). Bahrain and Tunisia provide paternity leave consisting of one fully paid day (see table 8).

*Table 7  
Maternity leave provisions in selected Arab countries*

	<i>LENGTH OF MATERNITY LEAVE</i>		<i>PERCENTAGE OF WAGES PAID IN COVERED PERIOD (%)</i>		<i>PROVIDER OF BENEFIT</i>	
Bahrain	45	days	100		Social security	
Egypt	90	days	100		Social insurance (75%) and Employer (25%)	
Iraq	62	days	100		Employer	
Lebanon	10*	weeks	100		Employer	
Libya	14	weeks	50, 100	c	Employer, social security for self-employed women	
Syria	120, 90, 75	days	100	a	Employer	
Tunisia	1, 2	month(s)	i	67, 50, 100	b	National Social Security Fund
Yemen	60	days	100		Employer	

*a. One hundred and twenty days for the first childbirth, 90 days for the second childbirth and 75 days for the third childbirth.*

*b. For women covered by the Labor Code the amount is two-thirds (66.7%) of the average daily wage. For women working in agriculture, it amounts to 50% of the flat-rate daily wage calculated on the basis of the guaranteed minimum wage in agriculture. For civil servants, the full salary is paid during maternity leave.*

*c. Fifty percent of wages for employees, and 100% of presumptive income for self-employed women for a period of three months,*

*i. Civil servants are entitled to 2 months of maternity leave.*

*Sources: United Nations. (2013). Data retrieved October 31, 2013, from UN data: <http://data.un.org/DocumentData.aspx?q=maternity&id=344>*

\*Source: <http://www.aljoumhuria.com/pages/view/130032>

*Table 8*

*Paternity leave and parental leave in selected Arab countries*

	<i>DOES THE LAW MANDATE PAID OR UNPAID PATERNITY LEAVE?</i>		<i>WHAT PERCENTAGE OF WAGES IS PAID DURING PATERNITY LEAVE?</i>		<i>DOES THE LAW MANDATE PAID OR UNPAID PARENTAL LEAVE?</i>
Bahrain *	Yes	1 day	100%	No	
Egypt	No			No	
Iraq **	No			No	
Lebanon	No			No	
Libya ***	No			No	
Syria	No			No	
Tunisia	Yes	1 day	100%	No	
Yemen	No			No	

*Sources: World Bank. (2013). Data retrieved October 23, 2013, from World Data Bank Database: <http://wbl.worldbank.org/Data/ExploreEconomies/lebanon/0?topic=getting-a-job>*

*\* Retrieved November 18, 2013, from <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/668/The%20Labour%20Law%20for%20the%20Private%20Sector.pdf>*

*\*\* Retrieved November 18, 2013, from <http://www.iraq-lg-law.org/en/node/243>*

*\*\*\* Retrieved November 18, 2013, from <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/2079/Law%20No.%2012%20for%202010%20concerning%20of%20labor%20relations.pdf>*

All examined governments provide maternity leaves to employed women. However, the length and benefits associated with the leave, as well as the adherence to ILO standards, vary among countries. Tunisia provides only one month maternity leave, and only Libya and Syria provide a minimum of 14 weeks maternity leave, as recommended per ILO standards (see table 7). With regard to the financial coverage of the leave period, governments rely either on social security systems, employers or mixed systems, and the provisions of cash benefits ranges from 50% to 100% (see table 7). On the other hand, only Bahrain and Tunisia provide fathers with the right to spend some time with their newborn, granting them one fully paid leave day (see table 8). Based on an examination of the leave arrangements in the selected Arab, it can be concluded that governments grant mothers leave periods of very short durations. ILO standards related to maternity protection were created for the welfare of the families, precisely the mothers and newborns. The governments in these countries need to amend the policies in this regard, ensuring the grant of the minimal leave period that is much needed for all family members. Moreover, governments might as well mandate paternity leave, an aspect which is absent in most countries. The social security's contribution to the fees associated with maternity leave provisions reduces the burden carried by employers alone in some cases.

### ***3. Child Benefits & Family Allowances***

Social protection is a human right protected by the UN convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Globally, 108 countries have already implemented legislations on child and family benefits, while 75 countries don't have any such available programs at all. Even in the countries that offer protective legislations, only small groups of the population benefit from them. Social protection is linked to many aspects that affect the overall wellbeing of families and children, including nutrition, health, education and child labor (ILO, 2014 c). Social protection improves income security and health and education outcomes (UN, 2012). ILO's recommendation in this regard implies the importance of granting family benefits to each child with a link to the actual cost of raising a child as well as the general cost of living (ILO, 2014 c).

According to the International Social Security Association (ISSA), family allowances are “benefits in cash or in kind designed to facilitate the normal constitution or development of families, whether by providing permanent or regular contributions towards the maintenance of those dependent on the head of the family or by providing special support in certain

circumstances affecting family life, particularly at the time of its formation” (ISSA, 2007, p.2). Family allowances play an important role in the formation of families, and can also be used as an instrument to reduce poverty, as well as a means to provide universal education. Like any other social policy, family allowances differ among countries, in terms of the population covered, financial coverage and overall provision (ISSA, 2007). Only Lebanon, Algeria and Morocco and Tunisia offer child benefits in the Arab region (UN, 2012). Overall, social protection coverage is limited in the region (UN, 2012). A large part of social protection comes from informal sources; kinship based networks are very important in critical times, structuring protection measures in the Arab region. Other types of informal sources include remittances and nongovernmental organizations. However, if no proper coordination is ensured between different schemes, support is inequitably allocated (UN, 2012).

*Table 9  
Family benefits provisions in selected Arab countries*

<b>QUALIFYING CONDITIONS</b>						
	<b>TYPE OF PROGRAM</b>	<b>COVERAGE</b>	<b>EXCLUSION</b>	<b>FAMILY ALLOWANCES</b>	<b>FAMILY SUPPLEMENTS</b>	<b>NURSERY SCHOOL FEES</b>
Bahrain	N/A					
Egypt	N/A					
Iraq	N/A					
Lebanon	Employment related system	Employees and social insurance beneficiaries	Self-employed persons	The child must be younger than age 18 (age 25 if a full-time student or an unmarried, unemployed daughter; no limit if disabled). The wife must not be gainfully employed.		
Libya	N/A					
Syria	N/A					
Tunisia	Employment related system	Private sector employees, including casual and temporary workers; fishermen; members of agricultural cooperatives; employees of farms with 30 or more workers; students younger than age 28; and trainees of any age.	Self-employed persons, household workers, and employees of farms with fewer than 30 workers.	The child must be younger than age 16 (age 18 if an apprentice, age 21 if a student or the insured's daughter providing care for her brothers and sisters, no limit if disabled). Allowances are paid for up to three children.	Paid to families with a nonworking spouse. The children must be eligible for family allowances.	Paid to working mothers with monthly earnings of less than 2.5 times the legal minimum wage based on a working week of 48 hours. The child must be aged 2 months to 36 months and eligible to receive family allowances.
Yemen	N/A					

*Source: International Social Security Association Database. Data retrieved November 8, 2013, from <http://www.issa.int/country-profiles>*

The majority of the investigated countries do not provide family benefits. Tunisia and Lebanon provide family allowances (employment related system) covering and excluding certain categories of workers (see table 10). Tunisia is the only country among the investigated ones that provides, in addition to family allowance, family supplements and school nursery fees paid to special categories of workers. Libya provides “some family benefits” under the 1998 legislation (see table 10). An adequate provision of family benefits and child allowances complements family earnings. The measures taken by social security organizations do support well-coordinated family policies in the reduction of child poverty (ISSA, 2007). Since no social protection plan can be standardized to all Arab countries, unique packages should be developed based on elements valued most. Countries cannot accomplish considerable steps forward without an improvement of the situation of vulnerable groups (UN, 2012).

#### **4. Elderly Old Age Pension**

The elderly represent a fragile population who face more health problems than the other age groups as they grow old. They rely on their savings which are often insufficient to satisfy their needs. In some cases, they can rely on their relatives to take care of them, causing more difficulties especially in low-income families. Rarely, they might opt to continue to keep working. Since these resources are not sustainable solutions, the importance of state intervention is further needed. The state can assist on many levels, by providing housing and energy subsidies, home help and care services, residential care, pensions and others (ILO, 2014 c).

Despite the fact that most countries (166 of 176) offer a pension to at least a portion of the population, only half of the world population eligible for a pension gets access to one (ILO, 2014 c). Around one third of workers in the Arab region are covered by pension schemes (UN, 2012). Countries that implement old age pensions schemes face many difficulties. In most states, old age pensions are only available for individuals who worked in the formal economy. Another issue would be the loss of value of the allocated pension. The pension is fixed for many years, but doesn't always take into consideration inflation, depreciation and devaluation of the currency. ILO conventions recommend periodic revaluation of the pensions (ILO, 2014 c).

In the Middle East and North Africa, public pension schemes are characterized by low coverage, high administrative cost, unsustainable condition of

beneficiaries and ineffective investment policies (UNRISD, 2009). The coverage of pension-type government care does not seem to be a priority on the decision-makers' agenda (Karpati, 2011). Moreover, social protection systems tend to protect only employed individuals, while the financially disadvantaged population either work in the informal economy or are unemployed (Jawad, 2014). In Lebanon, the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) covers all Lebanese nationals that are workers and employees in the private non-agricultural sector, permanent employees in the agricultural sector, employees of public institutions and independent offices that are not subjects to civil service, public school teachers, taxi drivers, newspaper sellers, and university students (Kronfol, 2006). The fund covers sickness, maternity payments, 90% of hospitalization, 80% of medical consultations, and medications with the exception of dental care, paving the way for many private insurance companies to satisfy the disparities resulting from its limited coverage (Kronfol, 2006).

The elderly are among the most vulnerable groups in society; they are more prone to disabilities and chronic diseases, yet in the region, they have a special status; they are considered to be a “source of spiritual blessing, religious faith, wisdom and love” (Abyad, 2006). Hence, the state has largely relied on kin networks to offer support and care for older citizens (Abyad, 2006). However, as levels of urbanization increase in the region and an increasing number of females join the labor market, family roles are changing and extended family networks are disintegrating (CSA, 2009). As a result, governments should realize the changing nature of family relations and develop a responsive strategy.

*Table 10  
Old age pension in selected Arab countries*

	<b>TYPE OF PROGRAM</b>	<b>COVERAGE</b>	<b>EXCLUSION</b>	<b>QUALIFYING CONDITIONS: OLD-AGE PENSION</b>	<b>N.B.</b>
Bahrain	Social insurance system	Employed Bahraini citizens working in establishments with at least one employee or in one of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates)	Household workers, certain groups of agricultural employees, casual workers, temporary noncitizen workers, and other groups specified by law	Age 60 (men) or age 55 (women) with at least 10 years of coverage	Special system for public-sector employees
Egypt	Social insurance system	Employed persons aged 18 or older (aged 16 for government employees)	N/A	Age 60 with at least 120 months of contributions.	
Iraq*	Social insurance system	Employees of enterprises with five or more workers, including cooperative workers	Agricultural employees, temporary employees, domestic servants, and family labor.	Age 60 (men) or age 55 (women) with 20 years of contributions; at any age with 30 years (men) or 25 years of contributions (women).	Special systems for public-sector employees, employees of semi-governmental agencies including nationalized industries, lawyers, and journalists.
Lebanon	Social insurance system. Lump-sum benefits only	Employees in industry, commerce, and agriculture	Temporary agricultural employees, citizens of countries without reciprocal agreements with Lebanon, and self-employed persons	Old-age benefit: Age 60 (compulsory at age 64); at any age with at least 20 years of employment or for a woman who marries and leaves employment during the first year of marriage	Special system for public-sector employees and teachers
Libya**	Social insurance system	All persons residing in Libya	N/A	Old-age pension: Age 65 (men), age 60 (women), age 62 (civil servants), and age 60 (workers in hazardous or unhealthy occupations), with 20 years of contributions for a full pension	Special system for armed forces personnel
Syria	Social insurance system	Employees in industry, commerce, and agriculture; civil servants; freelance workers; and employers	Temporary workers, household workers, and self-employed persons	Age 60 (men) or age 55 (women) with at least 15 years of contributions; age 55 (men) or age 50 (women) with at least 20 years of contributions; at any age with at least 25 years of contributions (with at least 15 years of contributions if engaged in physically demanding or dangerous work)	

	<b>TYPE OF PROGRAM</b>	<b>COVERAGE</b>	<b>EXCLUSION</b>	<b>QUALIFYING CONDITIONS: OLD-AGE PENSION</b>	<b>N.B.</b>
Tunisia	Social insurance system	Private-sector employees from non-agricultural sectors	Prisoners working in prison workshops	Age 60 with at least 120 months of contributions; age 50 with at least 180 months of contributions if prematurely aged due to arduous work, involuntarily unemployed for at least six months, or the mother of three or more children.	Special systems for civil servants, members of parliament, armed forces personnel, agricultural workers, farmers, self-employed persons, household workers, artists, and certain categories of fishermen and low-income earners
Yemen	Social insurance system	Public sector system: Permanent employees of government agencies and all public sector or quasi-public entities  Private sector system: Private sector employees (nationals and foreigners), including Yemeni workers abroad	Casual workers, self-employed persons, agricultural workers, household workers, seamen, and fishermen	Public sector system: Old-age pension: Age 60 with at least 15 years of contributions (men) or age 55 with at least 10 years of contributions (women); age 50 (men) with at least 26 years of contributions; age 46 (women) with at least 20 years of contributions; at any age with at least 30 years of contributions (men) or 25 years of contributions (women)  Private sector system Old-age pension: Age 60 (men) or age 55 (women) with at least 15 years of contributions	Special system for military and police personnel

\*This information is more than ten years old

\*\*Note: Information dates from 2003

Source: Adapted from International Social Security Association Database. Data retrieved November 8, 2013, from: <http://www.issa.int/Observatory/Country-Profiles>

According to table 10, all examined countries provide old age pension as per the social insurance system. There is a wide dispersion across the examined countries regarding the set of conditions that apply as prerequisites for the pension. The retirement age for men is currently set at 60 in all countries except in Libya where men can retire at the age of 65, whereas women qualify for old age pension when they reach 55 years old in Bahrain, Iraq and Syria (see table 10). There is a special system for public sector employees in Bahrain, Iraq and Lebanon, and for military/ armed forces personnel in Yemen, Tunisia and Libya (see table 10). Social insurance is the most common social protection policy for older persons. Those insurance programs cover workers in the public sector, the military and formal private sector, excluding many other categories in most countries in the Arab world (UN, 2012).

#### *Health coverage*

Elderly population in the Arab region is growing steadily due to increased fertility rates and higher life expectancy at birth (WHO, 2006). In 2010, there were 14.6 million people aged 65 or over in the Arab region, whereas in 2025, the number is estimated to rise to 27.5 million senior citizens. On a national scale, by 2030, the elderly are going to constitute more than 8% of the total population of seven Arab states including Tunisia, Lebanon, Bahrain and Egypt, and by 2050, seven new countries will cross the 8% mark, with Libya and Syria joining the club (ESCWA, 2011). In addition, life expectancy in the region reached unprecedented levels. Between 1980-85 and 2005-10, life expectancy of males and females in the Arab region improved by almost eight years, and the trend is expected to maintain its upward rise (ESCWA, 2011).

Increasing life expectancy is not the sole challenge facing the developing world; the provision of health care services that accommodate the needs of the elderly and guarantee a good quality of life is also a pressing challenge. The World Health Organization's regional office for the Eastern Mediterranean signaled the matter as a priority, and set an objective to "adding life to years and not only years to life" (WHO, 2006). In the Arab region, health care coverage is limited, and over 50% of all health expenditure is compensated via out-of-pocket payments (UN, 2013). In particular, the elderly are among the most marginalized groups. Most hospitals in the region lack special care units for the elderly, and geriatricians are rare in both the private and the public domains. Additionally, outreach activities don't exist in the community at large, and research in the field of geriatric medicine is scarce or nonexistent in countries of the region (WHO, 2006). The health care system is highly fragmented as it

focuses mainly on the urban areas and the public sector workers (around 30-40%), disregarding the other percentage of the population (Alami & Karshenas, 2012). Nonetheless, Arab states are trying to address elderly health care through various means. In Egypt and Syria, day care centers are established to offer both social and psychological support. In Lebanon there are civil society organizations such as the Alzheimer Association that are active in this domain. In Tunisia, the government's policy is to maintain the aged within families; it established a program through which a monthly allowance is transferred to volunteer families who host a senior citizen. Finally, Yemen is lagging behind as the elderly are not covered in national development plans (CSA, 2009). Moreover, some Arab countries have recently increased their per capita health spending in order to advance the provision of quality health care services (UN, 2012).

Although governments are responsible for the provision of equal access to health care services to all citizens, their attempts to ensure equal access to healthcare provisions are restricted by cost effectiveness, overconsumption or duplication (ESCWA, 2013). The institutional care systems of Arab governments are unqualified to provide elderly care, particularly to women (Karpati, 2011). Private health insurance, a form of involvement of the private sector in financing health care, is prevalent in a number of countries (ESCWA, 2013). In the Arab world, there is a deficiency in old age insurance systems (Yount & Sibai, 2009) and family based support is prevalent (Karpati, 2011; Sibai & Kronfol, 2011). Even in middle and high income Arab states, vulnerable populations can't always access basic health care services, which results in an increased out-of-pocket spending (UN, 2012).

Addressing the health care needs of the elderly, governments of the region should at least work on programs that prevent chronic diseases and consequently disabilities; this way, officials are able to cut health care expenditure resulting from ageing. Unfortunately, only few Middle Eastern countries have implemented primary prevention programs (Abyad, 2006).



### III. CONCLUSIONS

Hitherto, families and religious institutions in the Arab world have, to a certain degree, substituted the state in providing social welfare. In light of globalization and communications and media penetration, Western influence on Arab communities has increased. This has reshaped the role of Arab families and had led the function of extended kin relationships to fade. Hence, the states' development of responsive strategies that target the welfare of the family has become a necessity in a region where most countries lack explicit family policies. Some success stories from other parts of the world can offer options for vibrant and diverse social policies that can accommodate all the basic needs of different members of the family. Such policies are related to family planning, unemployment benefits, workplace protection measures for women, pay equity, leave arrangements, child benefits and family allowances, and old age pension, in addition to health coverage for the elderly.

Despite the fact that unemployment benefit schemes reduce poverty lessen household vulnerability (UN, 2012); they are not prevalent in Arab countries, especially in those that witnessed demonstrations. The region is in need for a change that can shift paradigms to a more tolerable system that includes new economic policies that tackle issues facing primarily the youth and that also aim at reducing problems like unemployment and social injustice (Alami & Karshenas, 2012). The situation of underprivileged populations that do not have access to the basic health and social protection services should be improved as a first step in the development of adequate social protection plans.

This paper reviewed a number of policies that affect the family, among which are children, elderly and employed adults in eight Arab countries<sup>3</sup> in transition or experiencing some level of political instability. Our reviews have observed that in the absence of maternity leave legislations, female workers tend to interrupt their participation in paid work in order to bear and rear a child, resulting in considerable loss of income and labor on the market. Qualified and educated women in the Arab world still face discrimination when applying for jobs, because there are no laws that protect them against discrimination throughout the hiring process. On the other hand, the provisions of family and child allowances and pension schemes are very limited in Arab countries. They cover specific categories and totally disregard others.

<sup>3</sup>. Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen

Comparatively, there is somewhat wide cross-country variance in the provision and application of policies that serve families. While some policies (i.e., unemployment, paternity leave, workplace protection measures, family benefits) exist in only few countries, other policies are more prevalent but still limited in scope (maternity leave, old age pension, fertility). There is a need to either create new policies or amend existing ones to better serve families in Arab countries, based on the value of the policy which is contextual and country specific. Following below are some recommendations which assist families in better addressing family needs:

- ▶ The private and public sector need to work together on raising awareness on family planning methods
- ▶ Most governments under review might opt to amend the policies regarding the minimal maternity leave duration as recommended by ILO standards, ensuring the grant of the minimal leave period that is much needed for all family members. Besides, governments might as well mandate paternity leave, which is only available in very few Arab countries
- ▶ There is a need to improve policies that protect women from workplace discrimination
- ▶ There is a need to ensure adequate pension and healthcare packages
- ▶ Social protection policies should in essence strive to reduce child poverty by allocating monthly payments to families with children

It would be helpful to examine the similarities among the policies across the countries of the region. This can be done using Lowi's typology of policies which incorporates both a policy's intent and the policy-making process (Lavis et al., 2002). Some of the policies examined represent governmental decisions that were designed to provide specific benefits to specific groups, such as children and women. These policies, also known as distributive policies whereby certain services are extended to select members of a society or an organization, while distributing the costs amongst the members of the society at large (Coate, 2005; Lavis et al., 2002). Workplace protection measures for women, such as maternity leave and other measures, which in turn impose a cost on the wider group, and regulations of child benefits and family allowances are examples of this type of policy. Other policies may be seen as regulatory policies,

with leave arrangements, in which case are also gender biased policies, and are offered to women, which are quite restrictive in many cases. These policies represent a government decision that defines who will be indulged and who will be deprived on the basis of some general rule (Coate, 2005). As for policies addressing health coverage issues, old age pension, and unemployment benefits, these represent governmental decisions that involve broad categories of citizens to whom benefits are extended or from whom losses are taken (Coate, 2005; Lavis et al., 2002). This view of the different types of policies that regulate family related matters across Arab countries further addresses the need for increased research to inform policy-makers of modifications that can improve the status of families.

From a policy perspective, this paper contributes to the existing pool of literature on the status of families in the Arab world. It highlights the need for a holistic outlook for family related policies. The current transformation in the countries under study and in the Arab world in general calls for reform of welfare policies that chiefly addresses the needs of the families. While implicit family policies exist in some Arab countries, there is a need to develop explicit family policies which support family income and provide services in areas like education, health and work-life balance. In the process of developing such policies, it is implicit to view policies as dynamic, rather than just a static list of laws. The development of effective family policies should become a priority for Arab governments. Such policies shall support families to fulfill their roles in society and assist them in difficult times through the establishment of special programs and initiatives addressed to vulnerable groups.

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# **ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

## *Education and Youth Policy*

*The Education and Youth Policy Research Program aims at informing educational policy and promoting improved educational practices and achievement through an increased understanding of the issues of education in the Arab world and their impact on children and youth in the region. The program further aims at engaging in applied, policy-relevant research to help policy-makers make decisions based on best available information. The program will serve as a resource for government agencies and other institutions in order to shape the education and youth policy debate through evidence.*

# **ABOUT AUB POLICY INSTITUTE**

*The AUB Policy Institute (Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs) is an independent, research-based, policy-oriented institute. Inaugurated in 2006, the Institute aims to harness, develop, and initiate policy-relevant research in the Arab region.*

*We are committed to expanding and deepening policy-relevant knowledge production in and about the Arab region; and to creating a space for the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, civil society and policy-makers.*

### *Main goals*

- ▶ *Enhancing and broadening public policy-related debate and knowledge production in the Arab world and beyond*
- ▶ *Better understanding the Arab world within shifting international and global contexts*
- ▶ *Providing a space to enrich the quality of interaction among scholars, officials and civil society actors in and about the Arab world*
- ▶ *Disseminating knowledge that is accessible to policy-makers, media, research communities and the general public*

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