



2025-2026

Model Arab League

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers

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**Original draft by Allie Manning, Chair of the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers
at the 2026 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the
dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations**

Honorable Delegates,

My name is Allie Manning, and I'm excited to welcome you to the 2025-2026 season of Model Arab League, and to the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers! I am a sophomore at Converse University majoring in Child & Family Studies and Psychology, and I am honored to serve as the chair of this council at the 2026 National University Model Arab League.

One of the most impactful decisions I've ever made was choosing to join my school's Model Arab League team. I don't know what path it took to get you to this point, but I want to congratulate you on it. The Social Affairs Council gets to delve into a wide range of issues, but all are impactful and thought-provoking as we explore issues of human rights, discrimination, healthcare, and more.

As you research and prepare for conferences this year, I encourage you to be thorough and thoughtful. Think outside the box and consider a variety of perspectives. Remember to stay true to your country's policy while forming solutions of change and progress. Be original and creative, but don't shy away from learning from others.

When it comes to debate, be present and confident. Speak your ideas clearly and aim to be understood, rather than to impress. Listen to the work of your fellow delegates and be considerate, especially of those with less experience. Collaborate, challenge each other, and strive for excellence in your resolutions. I can't wait to see how your discussions, deliberations, and diplomacy come to fruition!

My role as your chair is to guide you to make the most out of your time as a delegate. I hope the information in this background guide provides insight into our topics and helps jump-start your research. If at any point I can be of assistance, don't hesitate to reach out at amanning001@converse.edu.

Happy researching, and I look forward to meeting you all at NUMAL!

Allie Manning
Chair of the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers

Topic I: Exploring ways to alleviate the gender literacy gap with special attention to women and girls

I. Introduction

A. General Background

Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write, or communicate with written language; illiteracy is the *inability* to do so.¹ Illiteracy impacts people worldwide, and is detrimental for a multitude of reasons. While children not attending school may seem like a small problem, they will become adults who are left behind in the information age, with impacts to their ability to vote, be employed, contribute to society, and more. Those with poor literacy skills are more than two times more likely to be unemployed.² Indeed, many have already reached adulthood without reaching this important milestone. In some Arab countries, less than half of the population is literate.³

Around the world, higher rates of illiteracy are seen among females of all ages.⁴ This can be due to a multitude of factors, but it is important to address, as closing this gap will benefit men and women alike. Every individual unable to contribute to scientific research, to international policy, or any other field is a net loss to society. Female voices are powerful and should be enabled, and this starts with literacy. Women's lives are improved by education—studies show that they are more informed about health matters, and marry at a later age.⁵ In 2011, even attending primary school for just one year increased women's wages later in life by 10-20%.⁶

B. History in the Arab World

Although strides have been made recently across the region in both overall literacy and female literacy, with several Arab countries' statistics beating the global averages, the gender gap has not been eradicated, as other countries lag behind.⁷ As adult literacy rates cover such a large range of ages, it may take decades for efforts focused on children to make an appearance in the statistics. However, other data, such as enrollment in different

¹ "Literacy." Encyclopedia Britannica, 28 May 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/literacy>. Accessed 24 July 2025.

² "750 Million People in the World are Illiterate." World Literacy Foundation, https://worldliteracyfoundation.org/why_literacy/. Accessed 22 August 2025.

³ Hammound, Hassad R. "Illiteracy in the Arab World." DVV International, <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-662006/education-for-all-and-literacy/illiteracy-in-the-arab-world>. Accessed 20 August 2025.

⁴ "The Literacy Gender Gap." Vital Voices, 9 September 2019, <https://www.vitalvoices.org/international-literacy-day-the-literacy-gender-gap/>. Accessed 24 July 2025.

⁵ "Girls' Education." World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation>. Accessed 29 August 2025.

⁶ "The Effect of Girls' Education on Health Outcomes." PRB, 15 August 2011, <https://www.prb.org/resources/the-effect-of-girls-education-on-health-outcomes-fact-sheet/>. Accessed 29 August 2025.

⁷ Hammound, Hassad R. "Illiteracy in the Arab World." DVV International, <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-662006/education-for-all-and-literacy/illiteracy-in-the-arab-world>. Accessed 25 July 2025.

levels of schooling, can shed some light on what progress is being made. In Egypt, the gap in primary school enrollment, more than 20 percentage points in 1971, was eliminated by 2012. However, while the gap in tertiary school enrollment narrowed considerably in this same time frame, it is still present at 1.3 percentage points. Yemen's enrollment rates are lower across the sexes, but more males are still enrolled in both levels of education.⁸

It would be imprudent to examine only the statistics of gender literacy issues without considering the causes. The countries that tend to struggle the most in this area, including Egypt, Mauritania, Iraq, Yemen, Djibouti, Morocco, and Sudan, are those with large rural populations and limited financial resources.⁹ This results in infrastructure that is inaccessible to many, and no funding to build more schools. For boys in rural areas, not attending school is usually due to poverty, but for girls, early marriage is another contributing factor.¹⁰ Additionally, since domestic labor is not considered child labor, girls may spend their days with responsibilities such as housework and childcare. Often, because of these cultural constraints, girls may attend primary school, but drop out of school around age ten. Even if girls are able to get an education, they may not be motivated to when the future they see ahead of them is one of early marriage, childbearing, and domestic pursuits.¹¹

Illiteracy is a dangerous cycle, as parents who are illiterate are more likely to raise illiterate children. Even more at risk are disabled individuals, as education systems are often not set up for them, whether through physical accessibility barriers, learning differences, or social perception. Partly due to factors including poverty, malnutrition, violence, and blood marriages, the disabled population is on the rise in the MENA region. While this is a tragedy, people born out of these circumstances are not and should be encouraged to learn as much as anyone.¹²

One challenging factor in regards to literacy in the Arab region is the Arabic language itself.¹³ Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the language primarily used for reading and writing, is nearly a distinct language from the various dialects spoken throughout the region. It is often taught as a second language in schools due to its relevance in domains

⁸ Grande, Isabella. "School is Not Just for Boys: A Look at Girls' Education in Egypt and Yemen." Global Majority E-Journal, December 2018, https://www.american.edu/cas/economics/ejournal/upload/grande_accessible.pdf. Accessed 25 July 2025.

⁹ Hammound, Hassad R. "Illiteracy in the Arab World." DVV International, <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-662006/education-for-all-and-literacy/illiteracy-in-the-arab-world>. Accessed 17 August 2025.

¹⁰ Grande, Isabella. "School is Not Just for Boys: A Look at Girls' Education in Egypt and Yemen." Global Majority E-Journal, December 2018, https://www.american.edu/cas/economics/ejournal/upload/grande_accessible.pdf. Accessed 25 July 2025.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Hammound, Hassad R. "Illiteracy in the Arab World." DVV International, <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-662006/education-for-all-and-literacy/illiteracy-in-the-arab-world>. Accessed 25 July 2025.

¹³ Ibid.

ranging from paperwork, education in subjects besides reading, and media.¹⁴ Literacy not just in one's native dialect, but also in MSA, is critical.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

Many attempts have been made to improve female literacy, but none have been implemented widely across the region. Several programs have been designed to target at-risk girls directly; one of these involved one-room girls' schools in rural Egypt. Designed for girls of multiple ages to learn together, these have been successful in keeping girls in school for longer. Because of the easy access provided by the schools' location close to home, many girls are able to help their families with chores and still attend. However, they were unable to make a difference for much of the target group. Due to a lack of funding, only a limited number of schools were able to be built and maintained. Some families are in very remote areas where educational facilities are not available, and others don't prioritize their daughters' education.¹⁵ In Yemen, similar schools have been set up in remote areas, with the added factor of ensuring low costs—families in rural areas often struggle with poverty. An initiative in Egypt also aimed to lower costs by removing textbook requirements since budgeting for supplies can be more of a constraining issue than tuition. Through a program called BRIDGE (Broadening Regional Initiative for Developing Girls' Education), Yemen ensured that co-ed schools were girl-friendly by constructing female restrooms. This initiative's success was limited by its struggles with funding.¹⁶

Programs in Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Algeria have targeted girls and women more indirectly by adding essential skills such as sewing to the curriculum. This incentivises hesitant women to enroll in education programs, and otherwise reluctant families to allow their daughters to attend school. In Libya, the Open University aimed to reach large areas through its distance learning model including a satellite channel. Several countries have trained large numbers of new teachers at once, allowing them to broaden their educational coverage.¹⁷

Sudan faces unique situations, including large numbers of nomadic people, mobile by choice, as well as people displaced by conflict. A government department was created and instituted mobile schools designed to travel along with the Bedouin community—a

¹⁴ "The difference between Modern Standard Arabic and Arabic dialects." Lingualism, 12 February 2023, <https://resources.lingualism.com/arabic/the-difference-between-modern-standard-arabic-and-arabic-dialects/>. Accessed 24 July 2025.

¹⁵ Hammound, Hassad R. "Illiteracy in the Arab World." DVV International, <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-662006/education-for-all-and-literacy/illiteracy-in-the-arab-world>. Accessed 27 July 2025.

¹⁶ Grande, Isabella. "School is Not Just for Boys: A Look at Girls' Education in Egypt and Yemen." Global Majority E-Journal, December 2018, https://www.american.edu/cas/economics/ejournal/upload/grande_accessible.pdf. Accessed 27 July 2025.

¹⁷ Hammound, Hassad R. "Illiteracy in the Arab World." DVV International, <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-662006/education-for-all-and-literacy/illiteracy-in-the-arab-world>. Accessed 27 July 2025.

nomadic people group prominent in the MENA region.¹⁸ For those living in refugee camps, an open learning environment is used, where students of all ages can learn everything from basic literacy to high school level. In addition, Sudan targets its remote female populations by assessing each community's needs and developing curricula based on those needs.¹⁹

Other specific factors affecting the education of women and girls are menstrual care, transportation, and food insecurity issues. One in three girls in the MENA region reported missing school during their period. Many cited a lack of safe, private toilets at school, making menstrual hygiene difficult, and others mentioned concerns with having water to clean themselves.²⁰ Transportation is a safety issue for women and girls in both urban and rural areas, preventing many from attending school.²¹ Food insecurity impacts girls more than boys, and families are more likely to pull girls out of school when resources are scarce. For girls who continue to attend school despite hunger, their learning is severely affected.²²

Childcare programs are an avenue that could “kill two birds with one stone.” Many women and older girls spend most of their time doing unpaid care work, leaving no time for education. A program in Mozambique found that by providing community childcare, enrollment rates for older children increased. Another benefit of childcare programs is that they set up children for successful learning in a group environment early, with results showing in school readiness and lower dropout rates.²³ Jordan's National Childcare Policy hopes to promote social progress by improving both the quality and accessibility of childcare.²⁴

As many countries in the region face the same challenges affecting their female literacy, the League should learn from each other. In countries with a smaller gender gap, what has been successful in reaching this point? In countries where larger differences remain, are there unique challenges not affecting other countries? Are there programs which were attempted, but unsuccessful, and what factors contributed to their failure? Even if an

¹⁸ Jacob, Leah. “Bedouin.” EBSCO, 2024, <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/ethnic-and-cultural-studies/bedouin>. Accessed 20 August 2025.

¹⁹ Hammound, Hassad R. “Illiteracy in the Arab World.” DVV International, <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-662006/education-for-all-and-literacy/illiteracy-in-the-arab-world>. Accessed 27 July 2025.

²⁰ “Period Poverty.” United Nations Children's Fund, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/24606/file/%20Period%20Poverty.pdf>. Accessed 27 July 2025.

²¹ “Closing Gender Gaps in Transport.” World Bank, 18 July 2025, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/transport/brief/closing-gender-gaps-in-transport>. Accessed 27 July 2025.

²² “Education for girls is at risk due to global hunger crisis.” Plan International, 3 August 2022, <https://plan-international.org/news/2022/08/03/education-girls-at-risk-global-hunger-crisis/>. Accessed 27 July 2025.

²³ Brixi, Hana, Amanda Devercelli, Michal Rutowski, Jaime Saavedra. “Expanding access to childcare helps women, children, and economies.” World Bank, 10 October 2022, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/education/expanding-access-childcare-helps-women-children-and-economies>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

²⁴ “Jordan introduces landmark National Childcare Policy to empower families and boost economy.” International Rescue Committee, 23 December 2024, <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/jordan-introduces-landmark-national-childcare-policy-empower-families-and-boost>. Accessed 29 August 2025.

individual country feels its female illiteracy rates are no longer an issue, that country should consider how it can be of assistance to countries still struggling.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What dialect of Arabic is spoken in my country? How should Modern Standard Arabic be incorporated into literacy programs?
- Does my country have a significant population of either nomadic people or internationally displaced persons? Are there literacy programs set up to target women and girls among these groups?
- What factors prevent girls from attending school in my nation, and how can they be combatted?
- Are there any programs which have been successful within my country and could be implemented on a larger scale?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the League support NGOs that are already making progress in female education?
- What programs can be put in place to support female literacy at every stage of life?
- What resources do girls need to be able to attend school, and how can the League provide these?
- Should a certain statistic or benchmark that the League would strive for in regards to female literacy rates be put in place?
- How can the League ensure that any programs put in place will be effectively carried out?

IV. Additional Resources

[Literacy rate, adult female \(% of females ages 15 and above\) - Arab World](#)

An interactive graph from data.worldbank.org that shows how literacy rates have changed over time. Information on the region as a whole as well as individual countries is available, and many similar graphs can be found on the website.

[The girls' education initiative in Egypt](#)

A 2008 document from UNICEF detailing the steps made since the Girls' Education Initiative was launched six years previously. Includes a lot of information on how actions were determined, the process of setting up programs, enticing students to enroll, and how the schools were running at the time of the review.

[Despite steep funding cuts, heroic teacher determined to keep girls in school and out of child marriage in Yemen](#)

A United Nations article about a woman, Ms. Aida Damoom, who fought to keep teaching girls in her community after she lost her classroom.

Daughters for Life

The Daughters for Life Foundation promotes female education in the Middle East, with three levels of scholarships girls can apply for.

Broadening Regional Initiative for Developing Girls' Education Phase II

A snapshot into a joint initiative between the Republic of Yemen and the Japan International Cooperation Agency aimed at targeting gender disparity between both the enrollment rate as well as the adult literacy rate in Yemen.

Topic II: Encouraging League-wide promotion of participation in women's sports and building infrastructure to support the growing industry

I. Introduction

A. General Background

The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup had a global audience of nearly 2 billion, and the 2024 Paris Olympic Games were reported to be the most gender-equal in history, showing the rising presence of women's sports. Media coverage has risen significantly, with many female sporting events now being pushed to primetime. Women are entering sports leadership, and significant strides have been made in the International Olympic Committee, as well as other major sporting organizations. Non-professional sports also have an impact on young girls' confidence and ability to work in teams and help them to become successful in any field they choose, not just sports.²⁵ However, when examining statistics around the benefits of sports, it is important to recognize that sports are not inexpensive, and the girls who are able to play sports may have other opportunities that also contribute to their success.

Many factors hinder women's participation in sports. Women are paid far less than men in both salary and prize money—although pay has increased significantly in recent years, it is far from equal. In addition, many women face sports-related violence. Rates of sexual abuse in sports are much higher among females, and cyber abuse is also a concern.²⁶ Another issue which has been prominent in the recent past is accusations against female athletes for having more “masculine” physiques. Although the athletes have been successful, negative comments still have harmful effects.²⁷

B. History in the Arab World

In just the past few years, new and exciting steps have been taken to improve women's sports in the Arab region. However, significant cultural barriers present challenges, although the region is generally varied in its views on women. While Islam itself does not prohibit women from participating in sports, social obligation entangled with religion makes it very difficult for women in some areas. For instance, in some areas, women must get consent from a male family member in order to play. One woman, Nadine, who plays for the Palestinian elite women's football team, was required by her uncle to wear a headcovering while playing and be accompanied by her older brother. Often, comments are made by other family members that playing sports is too masculine and will make a woman unfit for marriage, and these may influence decisions. Additionally, women face

²⁵ “Facts and figures: Women in sport.” UN Women, July 2024, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/paris-2024-olympics-new-era-for-women-in-sport/facts-and-figures-women-in-sport>. Accessed 29 July 2025.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ “Women Athletes in MENA Challenge Gender Norms Against All Odds.” [Fanack.com](https://fanack.com/society/features-insights/women-athletes-in-mena-challenge-gender-norms-against-all-odds~269873/), 18 November 2024, <https://fanack.com/society/features-insights/women-athletes-in-mena-challenge-gender-norms-against-all-odds~269873/>. Accessed 29 July 2025.

biological challenges such as menstrual cycles that may make playing sports more difficult.²⁸

Football (known as soccer in some countries) is hugely popular around the world, and the MENA region is no exception. In 2014, the UAE formed an all-female team, one of the first in the region. A Qatari team has also been formed, although this has been regarded with scrutiny due to its reactionary nature to attitudes after Qatar's successful bid for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.²⁹ A Women's Department was created within the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, which resulted in the creation of a Saudi Women's Premier League in 2020 and a national, FIFA-recognized, team in 2023.³⁰ Until recently, FIFA had banned players from wearing head coverings. The lifting of this ban has allowed many women to participate in football who had not before.³¹

The 2024 Olympics, held in Paris, included many advancements for Arab women. Countries' total participation varied, from 53 Egyptian female athletes to just 1 from Libya, Syria, and Sudan. Tragically, a female Palestinian karate champion who planned to compete in Paris was killed before the games, a sobering reminder that sports go on with a backdrop of violence in many countries.³² One Algerian woman, a wrestler named Imane Khelif, found herself at the center of controversy regarding her gender, after a separate organization not related to the Olympics had found her ineligible to participate in their previous year's event due to higher testosterone levels. The International Olympic Committee upheld her rights, stating that Khelif is recognized as a woman in her home country. Khelif was allowed to participate and walked away with a gold medal.³³

Motorsports is a unique category of sports that is widely popular in the Arab world and is gaining female participation. Saudi Arabia started allowing women to drive in 2017,³⁴ and female Saudi racers have made headlines in F1 Academy (part of the Formula One

²⁸ "Lebanese Women in Sports: Overcoming Disparities and Striving for Recognition." [fanack.com](https://fanack.com/society/features-insights/lebanese-women-in-sports-overcoming-disparities-and-striving-for-recognition~263583/), 23 August 2023, <https://fanack.com/society/features-insights/lebanese-women-in-sports-overcoming-disparities-and-striving-for-recognition~263583/>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

²⁹ Rouhani, Niloofar Margarite. "Women's sport participation in the United Arab Emirates: a case study." Deakin University, July 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Niloofar-Rouhani/publication/328118111_Women%27s_sport_participation_in_the_United_Arab_Emirates_a_case_study/links/5d98ab25458515c1d396d8fc/Womens-sport-participation-in-the-United-Arab-Emirates-a-case-study.pdf. Accessed 31 July 2025.

³⁰ Goetz, Corina. "Women in Sports in the Middle East." Star Cat, 12 May 2024, <https://star-cat.co.uk/blog/the-rise-of-womens-sports-in-the-middle-east/>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

³¹ Rouhani, Niloofar Margarite. "Women's sport participation in the United Arab Emirates: a case study." Deakin University, July 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Niloofar-Rouhani/publication/328118111_Women%27s_sport_participation_in_the_United_Arab_Emirates_a_case_study/links/5d98ab25458515c1d396d8fc/Womens-sport-participation-in-the-United-Arab-Emirates-a-case-study.pdf. Accessed 31 July 2025.

³² Khurma, Merissa. "Beacons of Hope: MENA Women at the Paris Olympics." Wilson Center, 5 August 2024, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/beacons-hope-mena-women-paris-olympics>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

³³ "Women Athletes in MENA Challenge Gender Norms Against All Odds." [fanack.com](https://fanack.com/society/features-insights/women-athletes-in-mena-challenge-gender-norms-against-all-odds~269873/), 18 November 2024, <https://fanack.com/society/features-insights/women-athletes-in-mena-challenge-gender-norms-against-all-odds~269873/>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

³⁴ "Women's motorsport picks up speed in the Middle East." Abdul Latif Jameel, 28 June 2022, <https://alj.com/en/perspective/womens-motorsport-picks-up-speed-in-the-middle-east/>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

pyramid) and motorcycle racing. In addition, Aseel Al Hamad became the first woman on the board of the Saudi Arabian Motor Federation. The region also boasts an all-female Palestinian racing team known as the Speed Sisters, which competes on the professional circuit.³⁵ A monumental event in 2022 was Rally Jameel, an all-female rally hosted in Saudi Arabia. Rallying is a unique style of racing that competes off-road and focuses as much on endurance and navigation as speed. 34 teams representing 15 countries took part, and teams from the UAE and Saudi Arabia finished second and third, respectively.³⁶

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

The rise of women's sports is due to efforts made by individuals and organizations as well as governments. Princess Reema bint Bandar Al-Saud, Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United States, has been a champion of the cause, serving as a member of the International Olympic Committee Women in Sports Commission, and, formerly, vice president of women's affairs for the Saudi General Sports Authority.³⁷ Every female athlete serves as a role model, inspiring young girls to participate and reminding others of the benefits of sports.³⁸ WiMENA has hosted conferences since 2024 focused on women's sports, featuring speakers and sessions on topics such as role models and technology, along with networking opportunities.³⁹ Qatar Foundation hosts an event called Ladies Night, where girls and women ages six and up are invited to try a variety of sports and fitness activities.⁴⁰

Many women continue their athletic careers during pregnancy and child-raising, and the League should ensure these women are not discouraged. Egyptian fencer Nada Hafez competed at the Paris Olympics while seven months pregnant, and broke her personal record by finishing 16th.⁴¹ Allowing mothers to participate in sports shows that women can be successful in multiple areas simultaneously. It also encourages a family atmosphere of athleticism.

Some countries have instituted programs targeting youth. Saudi Arabia has a girls' football league supervised by the Women's Football Department of the Saudi Arabian Football Federation. The league has had great success, involving 48,324 students in 2022, as well as female coaches and referees.⁴² In the 2025 tournament, both "Under-12" and

³⁵ Rafik, Farah. "Need For Speed: 6 Arab Women in Motorsports." Egyptian Streets, 13 May 2023, <https://egyptianstreets.com/2023/05/13/need-for-speed-6-arab-women-in-motorsports/>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

³⁶ "Women's motorsport picks up speed in the Middle East." Abdul Latif Jameel, 28 June 2022, <https://alj.com/en/perspective/womens-motorsport-picks-up-speed-in-the-middle-east/>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Khurma, Merissa. "Beacons of Hope: MENA Women at the Paris Olympics." Wilson Center, 5 August 2024, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/beacons-hope-mena-women-paris-olympics>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

³⁹ "WiMENA Sport" WiMENA, <https://www.wimena.com/>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

⁴⁰ "Fitness, Fun, and Innovation at QF's Ladies Night." Qatar Foundation, 7 July 2025, <https://www.qf.org.qa/stories/fitness-fun-and-innovation-at-qfs-ladies-night>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

⁴¹ Khurma, Merissa. "Beacons of Hope: MENA Women at the Paris Olympics." Wilson Center, 5 August 2024, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/beacons-hope-mena-women-paris-olympics>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

⁴² "Girls' school football league kicks off." Saudi Arabian Football Federation, 8 October 2022, <https://www.saff.com.sa/en/news.php?id=1841>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

“Under-9” categories were added for girls, showing an interest in football among younger populations.⁴³ Although not affiliated with the Qatari government, the nonprofit organization Qatar Foundation runs a program known as Creating Pathways. It is designed to target girls already interested in sports and provide them with quality training, with mentorship from local athletes and coaches.⁴⁴

Other projects have included a women in sport leadership program in partnership between Kuwait and The Safeguarding Alliance. This program harnesses the expertise of women leaders from other countries through a series of workshops hosted at Kuwait’s Olympic training facilities, designed to operate as professional development for women in sport leadership roles.⁴⁵ The UAE hosts the Arab Women Sports Tournament,⁴⁶ as well as the UAE Tour Women, a cycling event taking place over 4 stages.⁴⁷ The League should consider the successes and shortcomings of all these endeavors in planning new ways to address these issues.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What facilities in my country that already exist can be made suitable for women’s sports?
- What sports do men play in my country? What sports do women play? If these are different, why?
- What cultural factors prevent women in my country from playing sports?
- What benefits of sports would most motivate young girls and their families to participate?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can less financially privileged women and girls participate in sports?
- What measures can be taken to ensure female sporting is safe and fair?
- In order for women’s sports to be successful, what things need to be not merely allowed, but incentivised?
- How can Arab women become competitive against elite athletes from other nations?

IV. Additional Resources

⁴³ “The Saudi Schools Tournament continues its competitions under the supervision of the SAFF and in partnership with the Ministries of Sport and Education.” Saudi Arabian Football Federation, 13 May 2025, <https://www.saff.com.sa/en/news.php?id=3637>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

⁴⁴ “Qatar Foundation Launches “Creating Pathways Program” for Girls in Sport.” Beyond Sport, 20 September 2024, <https://beyondsport.org/2024/09/20/qatar-foundation-launches-the-creating-pathways-program-for-girls-in-sport/>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

⁴⁵ “IWG Supports Launch of Kuwait's Women In Sport Leadership Programme.” IWG Women & Sport, 2 December 2023, <https://iwgwomenandsport.org/iwg-supports-launch-of-kuwaits-women-in-sport-leadership-programme/>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

⁴⁶ Goetz, Corina. “Women in Sports in the Middle East.” Star Cat, 12 May 2024, <https://star-cat.co.uk/blog/the-rise-of-womens-sports-in-the-middle-east/>. Accessed 31 July 2025.

⁴⁷ “UAE Tour Women 2025.” Cycling News, 19 February 2025, <https://www.cyclingnews.com/uae-tour-women/>. Accessed 1 August 2025.

WiMENA

Website of an organization working with businesses and governments of Arab countries along with the United Kingdom to promote sports as an avenue to further progress for women.

Meet the Inspirational Arab Women in Motorsports

An About Her article by about five Arab women in motorsports.

Inspiring the next generation - mothers paving the way through sports in Qatar

A Qatar Foundation article where Jawaher Al-Nasr, a Qatari football coach and player, talks about the attitudes about sports she grew up around, and how she is working to change these attitudes.

Harnessing the Power of Sports for Diversity and Inclusion

A statement by Saudi Arabian ambassador Her Royal Highness Reema Bandar Al-Saud on Vision 2030 and how her country has made progress in women's sports.

Sporting gender and race: Lessons from Imane Khelif humiliation

An article by Zainab Mehdi that analyzes a situation from the 2024 Paris Olympics involving an Algerian woman and how this story paints a picture of wider issues.

Topic III: Securing healthcare infrastructure and safety nets to meet the demands of a rapidly aging population

I. Introduction

A. General Background

As people age, they need progressively more care. In the past, multi-generation family structures used to be common, but these are now declining, in part due to situations of displacement and migration. Along with lower fertility rates and longer life expectancies, causing the overall age of the population to trend upwards, a large demographic of people needing care is emerging.⁴⁸ Due to several factors such as longer average lifespan and different living patterns, aging affects women more than men, but both are vulnerable to elder abuse, which affects 30-50% of older people.⁴⁹

Because of medical advancements, communicable diseases which used to be life-threatening have either been eradicated or treatments have been developed. This allows chronic conditions such as arthritis, obesity, hypertension, and diabetes to become the main concern. Over a lifetime, these conditions “stack up” and leave the body frail and needing assistance with day-to-day tasks.⁵⁰ Additionally, because aging is the main risk factor for cancer, health systems are burdened with more cancer patients than before.⁵¹

B. History in the Arab World

Ongoing economic situations in the MENA region often impact the elderly the hardest. Medical costs are expensive, and older people with declining health need more advanced care. While some individuals benefit from government assistance, this is often limited to government employees, and many do not receive social security. Financial struggles force older people in some Arab nations to work far past retirement age. In Somalia and Comoros, more than 80% of those past the legal age of retirement were employed.⁵²

⁴⁸ Sibai, Alba Mehio, Aline Semaan, Jiana Tabara, Anthony Rizk. “Ageing and health in the Arab region: Challenges, opportunities and the way forward.” Population Horizons, 1 February 2018, <https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/download/288>. Accessed 2 August 2025.

⁴⁹ “Expert comment - Social inclusion among older people in the Middle East.” London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, 6 April 2023, <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2023/expert-comment-social-inclusion-among-older-people-middle-east>. Accessed 2 August 2025.

⁵⁰ Sibai, Alba Mehio, Aline Semaan, Jiana Tabara, Anthony Rizk. “Ageing and health in the Arab region: Challenges, opportunities and the way forward.” Population Horizons, 1 February 2018, <https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/download/288>. Accessed 2 August 2025.

⁵¹ Hajjar, R R, T Atli, Z Al-Mandhari, M Oudrhiri, L Balducci, M Silberman. “Prevalence of aging population in the Middle East and its implications on cancer incidence and care.” Annals of Oncology, 24 October 2013, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3767158/>. Accessed 2 August 2025.

⁵² Sibai, Alba Mehio, Aline Semaan, Jiana Tabara, Anthony Rizk. “Ageing and health in the Arab region: Challenges, opportunities and the way forward.” Population Horizons, 1 February 2018, <https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/download/288>. Accessed 2 August 2025.

Religious and social views in the Arab world have traditionally placed elders in family-centered care, with care homes seen as a last resort for those with more challenging needs. Yet, the supply of families does not meet the demand, and many older people find themselves “orphaned.” Higher levels of female employment means not every household has someone home all day, rendering many families unable to provide the level of care their older relatives need.⁵³

Older people are more vulnerable to chronic health conditions, yet infectious disease is still a concern. Especially in low-income countries, both communicable and noncommunicable diseases combine to strain healthcare systems that are already struggling. Globally, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death among older individuals, and the Arab region is no exception. Cancer, another top cause of mortality, is on the rise in the region. In particular, Lebanon and Jordan have high mortality rates, with lung, bladder, prostate, and breast cancer being of particular concern. Dementia is another debilitating disease, often caused by Alzheimer’s disease, that causes progressive cognitive impairments among older people. Data is lacking around the mental health of older people, but numbers are expected to increase significantly in the MENA region.⁵⁴

Personal choices also impact the health of older people. Many develop a sedentary lifestyle after retirement. This, along with nutrition, causes higher rates of obesity, which increases risk for other health concerns. Smoking is also common—11.3% of older adults in Lebanon reported using waterpipes, and this number is expected to increase as younger adults age. Both obesity and smoking affect both men and women, but obesity is more common among women and smoking is more common among men.⁵⁵

Recent global events have had a negative effect on older Arab populations. Social isolation is severely detrimental to their well-being, but an increase in loneliness of older people was seen with the COVID-19 global pandemic that has not since been rectified.⁵⁶ After a 2024 crisis in Lebanon, several elderly people reported being left out in post-conflict recovery efforts. They were particularly harmed by a lack of access to healthcare services, with many unable to receive necessary medications.⁵⁷

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

Older people experience complex health problems, which increases the need for both geriatric and palliative medical professionals. Geriatric healthcare professionals

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ “Expert comment - Social inclusion among older people in the Middle East.” London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, 6 April 2023, <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2023/expert-comment-social-inclusion-among-older-people-middle-east>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

⁵⁷ “‘We’re still here’: older people in Lebanon struggle to recover from conflict and crisis.” Helpage International, 23 June 2025, <https://www.helpage.org/news/were-still-here-older-people-in-lebanon-struggle-to-recover-from-conflict-and-crisis/>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

specialize in treating the elderly and have experience with conditions affecting them, while palliative care focuses on comfort for those at the end of life, facing severe illness. There is a global shortage of professionals trained in these areas, which makes recruitment especially challenging.⁵⁸ Many organizations have taken the lead on caring for frail or disabled elderly people, but these tend to focus on individuals in institutional settings, while the majority of those needing care remain at home.⁵⁹ Home care has many advantages for the patient, such as comfort, safety, and privacy. As this is a newer development, the industry needs to adapt. A variety of technologies could be used for this, such as smart home devices for monitoring older people who live alone, remote therapies through virtual reality, and telemedicine.⁶⁰

If home-based health care is promoted, consideration must be given to those who do not have family support for a variety of reasons. Successful programs in South Korea and Canada have bridged generations by matching college students and other young professionals with older adults looking for housemates. This arrangement has been very successful at reducing loneliness and depression among older people who may have otherwise gone weeks without social interaction, and students are happy to assist with a few chores in exchange for affordable housing.⁶¹ In Tunisia, “surrogate families” have been set up, where families can volunteer to host an older person in exchange for a small allowance.⁶² Oman has a similar program where older people can apply for placement with an “alternative family,” which is obligated to provide a safe environment and meet all their basic needs.⁶³

Preventative measures could significantly reduce the load on overburdened healthcare systems. Rather than treating more severe health problems, the League can focus efforts on lifestyle choices that increase risk. After retirement, many women don’t remain active. Factors such as a lack of public parks, harsh weather, and fewer incentives to participate

⁵⁸ Bell, Jennifer. “Aging population in UAE drives demand for geriatric healthcare services.” Alarabiya English, 7 February 2025, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/gulf/2024/05/10/aging-population-in-uae-drives-demand-for-geriatric-healthcare-services>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

⁵⁹ Hajjar, R R, T Atli, Z Al-Mandhari, M Oudrhiri, L Balducci, M Silbermann. “Prevalence of aging population in the Middle East and its implications on cancer incidence and care.” *Annals of Oncology*, 24 October 2013, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3767158/>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

⁶⁰ Bell, Jennifer. “Aging population in UAE drives demand for geriatric healthcare services.” Alarabiya English, 7 February 2025, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/gulf/2024/05/10/aging-population-in-uae-drives-demand-for-geriatric-healthcare-services>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

⁶¹ Zouiten, Sara. “How Morocco Can Prepare for an Aging Population.” *Morocco World News*, 9 June 2025, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2025/06/210253/how-morocco-can-prepare-for-an-aging-population/>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

⁶² Sibai, Alba Mehio, Aline Semaan, Jiana Tabara, Anthony Rizk. “Ageing and health in the Arab region: Challenges, opportunities and the way forward.” *Population Horizons*, 1 February 2018, <https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/download/288>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

⁶³ “Compassion and care for elderly get a priority in Oman.” *Times of Oman*, 8 July 2024, <https://timesofoman.com/article/147573-compassion-and-care-for-elderly-get-a-priority-in-oman>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

in their communities, contribute to this.⁶⁴ An expert commented that many profess to care about older people, but few will act on this by engaging with the elderly on a regular basis.⁶⁵

Many cases of cancer and dementia go undetected until the damage caused by these devastating diseases has progressed severely. Survival rates for cancer patients are considerably lower in Lebanon and Jordan than other countries.⁶⁶ Dementia and other mental health conditions affecting older people often go undetected, in part due to public beliefs that symptoms are just typical symptoms of age.⁶⁷ In order to address both of these concerns, both the elderly and those who care for them need to be educated on early warning signs, and systems need to be set up for screening and early detection.

Several countries in the MENA region have developed national policies, national strategies, or commitments on their care for the elderly. The UAE provides services including government-funded care homes, care at home, and reduced rates for things such as transportation. Its policy has pillars including effective civic participation, financial stability, and quality of future life, and laws give senior Emiratis specific rights including social care, medical care, and independence.⁶⁸ Somalia's National Strategy for Aging emphasizes aging with dignity and mentions the importance of building the knowledge base about the needs of older persons.⁶⁹ Bahrain's commitment is unique in its inclusion of several government facilities taking different approaches in the care of the elderly, as well as access to telemedicine.⁷⁰

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What method of care is most common for elders in my country? Is this expected to change in the next 20-25 years?
- What health problem is the most concerning for older people in my country? How can this be prevented?
- How can the League involve elderly people in developing policies that will affect them?

⁶⁴ Sibai, Alba Mehio, Aline Semaan, Jiana Tabara, Anthony Rizk. "Ageing and health in the Arab region: Challenges, opportunities and the way forward." Population Horizons, 1 February 2018, <https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/download/288>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

⁶⁵ "Expert comment - Social inclusion among older people in the Middle East." London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, 6 April 2023, <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2023/expert-comment-social-inclusion-among-older-people-middle-east>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

⁶⁶ Sibai, Alba Mehio, Aline Semaan, Jiana Tabara, Anthony Rizk. "Ageing and health in the Arab region: Challenges, opportunities and the way forward." Population Horizons, 1 February 2018, <https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/download/288>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ "Senior Emiratis." The Official Portal of the UAE Government, 27 June 2024, <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/senior-emiratis>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

⁶⁹ "National strategy for ageing in Somalia." Federal Republic of Somalia, June 2024, https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/national-strategy-ageing-somalia-english_0.pdf. Accessed 3 August 2025.

⁷⁰ "The Kingdom of Bahrain's Commitment to Elderly Care." Bahrain Ministry of Health, <https://www.moh.gov.bh/Services/ElderlyCare?lang=en>. Accessed 3 August 2025.

- Are there programs for training geriatric and/or palliative medical professionals in my country?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the League support those caring for elderly family members?
- What changes need to be made to humanitarian aid efforts to ensure older people are not left out?
- How can the League ensure that essential health devices (hearing aids, walkers, etc.) are provided for older people who need them?
- What region-wide changes might encourage older people to adopt healthier lifestyle choices?

IV. Additional Resources

[Ageing in the Middle-East and North Africa: Demographic and health trends](#)

An article from the International Journal on Ageing in Developing Countries examining aging populations. Includes lots of statistics and projected trends.

[Rights of older people in the Middle East](#)

A website by HelpAge International with links to aging strategies, policies, and data on older people in several Arab countries.

[MENARAH](#)

Website of a non-profit organization helping older people and their caregivers in the MENA region. MENARAH operates as a network connecting experts and aims to both conduct research and implement findings based on that research.

[Dementia in the MENA region uncharted challenges and emerging insights a literature review](#)

An article from npj Dementia compiling data on dementia across the MENA region, including prevalence, risk factors, and socioeconomic factors contributing to treatment.

[The National Strategy for Older Persons in Lebanon](#)

A policy made in cooperation between the Republic of Lebanon and the United Nations, in effect from 2020-2030. Lebanon's first policy on this subject, it details the development process, context, vision, and planned approaches.

Topic IV: Addressing substance use and addiction in the youth population across the Arab League

I. Introduction

A. General Background

Substance use includes legal and illegal recreational drugs as well as alcohol. Drug abuse is defined as persistent use of drugs for nonmedical purposes, despite harmful consequences to oneself and potentially others.⁷¹ Alcohol, in addition to many drugs, is addictive, which makes it difficult and often dangerous for individuals to discontinue use due to withdrawal symptoms. Harmful effects can affect a variety of bodily functions, both mental and physical, and can cause long-term damage or even death.⁷² Tobacco and alcohol are legal in most countries; but legal and illegal drugs alike affect individuals around the globe.

One population that is at particular risk is youth. 5.3 percent of youth between ages 15-16 worldwide admitted to using cannabis in the past year,⁷³ and this number merely scratches the surface of a global concern. Youth may be attracted to drugs because of societal pressure, higher levels of risk-taking, or other factors. As these young people are both the most at-risk and they account for the future of our world, it is imperative that we address these issues.

B. History in the Arab World

While many substances such as hashish, a cannabis derivative, and khat, a native plant, are commonly used in the region, one drug in particular stands out as a danger. An amphetamine known as captagon was developed in the 1990s⁷⁴ and has been on the rise since, now comprising a majority of amphetamines seized in the region. Between 2019-2022, over a billion captagon tablets were seized in Arab countries.⁷⁵ A major concern is that the equipment required to make captagon is easily transportable, which makes it more difficult to shut down manufacturing facilities. Captagon is a relatively new drug and appeals to youth because of its potency and, potentially, lack of social stigma compared to “harder” drugs such as opiates.⁷⁶

⁷¹ “Drug Abuse.” Encyclopedia Britannica, 11 July 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/science/drug-abuse>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁷² “Middle East and North Africa.” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/middle-east-and-north-africa.html>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁷³ “World Drug Report 2023.” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, June 2023, https://www.unodc.org/res/WDR-2023/WDR23_Exsum_fin_DP.pdf. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁷⁴ Felbab-Brown, Vanda. “The Middle East is Awash in Drugs.” Foreign Affairs, 11 April 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/middle-east-awash-drugs>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁷⁵ Shaar, Karam. “No quick fixes for the Middle East’s captagon crisis.” Atlantic Council, 24 August 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/middle-east-captagon-crisis/>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁷⁶ Pouramadi, Adam and Abbas Al Lawati. “Saudi Arabia is becoming the drug capital of the Middle East.” CNN, 2 September 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/02/middleeast/saudi-drug-capital-mime-intl>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

Since 2014, most of the world's captagon is made in Syria, and other Arab nations have struggled to restrict its flow into their countries. Syria has a ready supply of unemployed chemists which made it the perfect environment for this industry to flourish. Initially, various terrorist groups that were in power in Syria at the time used captagon both as a moneymaking scheme as well as for personal use among members, due to its tendency to raise confidence and lower inhibitions. When the Assad regime eventually beat back the groups, rather than stomping out the drug trade, they made use of it themselves. It became a vital source of income as well as a connection with other states. Other extremist groups that hold power in Lebanon and Iraq have been able to participate in this trade without severe repercussions.

In particular, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have attempted to push against the trade through various methods, but these have not been completely successful. In exchange for rejoining the League of Arab States in 2023, Syria promised to intensify its efforts against drug trafficking, although it is difficult to tell how effective any initiatives have been. After the fall of Assad in December 2024, President Sharaa and the new government have promised to “put an end” to the industry and have shown work toward this goal, including the discovery of at least 15 captagon factories and several major seizures. However, these efforts seem ineffective, as few arrests have been made, and individuals who were deeply involved in the trade appear to be welcomed into the new regime with open arms.⁷⁷

Finally, there are warning signs that the drug system may be moving towards methamphetamine (commonly referred to as meth). Due to its similarity to the already popular captagon, it is likely that meth is catching on quickly with both dealers and users. Reporters found large amounts of sodium hydroxide, which is used to produce meth, while investigating the production and trade of captagon under the Assad regime. Additionally, regional officials have noticed an uptick in crystal meth trafficking along routes primarily used for captagon.⁷⁸ In Türkiye, 78 tons were seized in 2022 alone, a significant increase from previous numbers, which is consistent across the region.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

As the League looks toward addressing substance use in the region, cooperation is crucial. In the past, many efforts have been made by individual countries, from arrests and executions of traders and seizures of various amounts, to airstrikes targeting dealers and their warehouses. However, due to the vast nature of the drug trafficking network,

⁷⁷ Tram, Nam and Natalie Ecanow. “Syria’s captagon industry continues to flourish despite new regime crackdowns.” Long War Journal, 23 May 2025, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2025/05/syrias-captagon-industry-continues-to-flourish-despite-new-regime-crackdowns.php>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁷⁸ Ecanow, Natalie and Ahmad Sharawi. “A new window into the Assad regime’s narcotrafficking operations.” Long War Journal, 16 December 2024, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2024/12/a-new-window-into-the-assad-regimes-narcotrafficking-operations.php>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

even combined, these have not made a significant impact.⁷⁹ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has a history of cooperating with the Arab League on “regional programmes,” but these have focused on support of national law enforcement of select countries and have not involved the level of coordination necessary to ensure headway can be made.⁸⁰ A main barrier to this is a general lack of trust within the region, which is not unfounded, due to persistent conflict.⁸¹ Yet, it is this very conflict which is part of a symbiotic relationship, a vicious cycle wherein conflict-induced confusion and movements of large groups promote the smuggling and trade of substances, and substances prolong the conflict.⁸²

Cooperation should not be limited to just between Arab nations. Many communities have shown their stance against drug trafficking through assassinations of trade leaders.⁸³ Although these actions may be misguided, the League should consider how to involve concerned citizens. Another piece that should be considered is cooperation with the United States in taking down drug networks, particularly through the sharing of intelligence, as some sources encourage. The United States has shown interest in assisting the region, but only a few countries have agreed to work with it, and no unified partnerships involving more than one Arab nation along with the United States have emerged.⁸⁴

A united effort is imperative due to something known as the “balloon effect,” as shown through the efforts of Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia. These three countries each made individual attempts to eliminate plants used for making cocaine. Despite their efforts seeming successful, the amount of cocaine on the market did not show a significant decrease. Because all three nations’ efforts were not coordinated, the other two countries’ production had simply expanded to make up for the deficit when a country was cracking down on the plants.⁸⁵

Because the “supply” can often find a way around if the “demand” remains, the League should address both simultaneously. This involves targeting the market, the substance users themselves. Despite past viewpoints of these users as criminals, some nations are shifting toward seeing them as victims and people who need help. In Saudi Arabia, some individuals have been offered to be free from prosecution if they submit themselves to a

⁷⁹ Felbab-Brown, Vanda. “The Middle East is Awash in Drugs.” Foreign Affairs, 11 April 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/middle-east-awash-drugs>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁸⁰ “Middle East and North Africa.” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/middle-east-and-north-africa.html>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁸¹ Felbab-Brown, Vanda. “The Middle East is Awash in Drugs.” Foreign Affairs, 11 April 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/middle-east-awash-drugs>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁸² “World Drug Report 2023.” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, June 2023, https://www.unodc.org/res/WDR-2023/WDR23_Exsum_fin_DP.pdf. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁸³ Haid, Haid. “Locals fight their own war on drugs in Syria’s Daraa Province.” Middle East Institute, 9 January 2024, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/locals-fight-their-own-war-drugs-syrias-daraa-province>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁸⁴ Felbab-Brown, Vanda. “The Middle East is Awash in Drugs.” Foreign Affairs, 11 April 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/middle-east-awash-drugs>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁸⁵ Shaar, Karam. “No quick fixes for the Middle East’s captagon crisis.” Atlantic Council, 24 August 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/middle-east-captagon-crisis/>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

rehabilitation program, several of which have been licensed by the Kingdom in recent years.⁸⁶ This is a positive option, especially because sending users to jail has proven to increase, rather than decrease, their chances of becoming repeat offenders.⁸⁷ When dealing with youth, turning young addicts around is vital as it shapes the course of their lives.

As well as finding more compassionate ways to deal with drug users, countries should consider messaging and other ways to prevent drug use before it even starts. An analyst reported a stark lack of public programming regarding the dangers of substances like captagon.⁸⁸ A United States media campaign noticed that youth often turn to substances as a way to deal with stress, and highlights healthy coping mechanisms to encourage young people to ask for help.⁸⁹ In Abu Dhabi, a 2021 campaign held workshops targeting youth, focused around the idea “Drugs can ruin your life.”⁹⁰

Finally, a few other things must be kept in mind in an evolving world. Nothing is constant in the drug landscape, and this ranges from the types of substances used, the ways they are transported, their origins and destinations, to the avenues they are sold through, which now includes the internet. The league’s efforts need to be easily adaptable so they can successfully cover these bases for years to come.⁹¹

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What regulations does my country have around substances? Have they been changed recently? What effect has that had?
- What is my country’s view on outside assistance from non-Arab countries in combating substance use?
- Does my country have any state-sponsored rehabilitation programs for youth? How successful have these been?
- What actions is my country doing to cut back on smuggling of illegal substances?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the Arab League’s law enforcement cooperate in taking down the drug industry?

⁸⁶ Felbab-Brown, Vanda. “The Middle East is Awash in Drugs.” Foreign Affairs, 11 April 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/middle-east-awash-drugs>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁸⁷ Shaar, Karam. “No quick fixes for the Middle East’s captagon crisis.” Atlantic Council, 24 August 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/middle-east-captagon-crisis/>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁸⁸ Pouramadi, Adam and Abbas Al Lawati. CNN, 2 September 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/02/middleeast/saudi-drug-capital-mime-intl>. Accessed 23 July 2025.

⁸⁹ “CDC Launches New Campaign to Address Youth Substance Use and Mental Health.” CDC Newsroom, 5 August 2025, <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2025/2025-cdc-launches-new-campaign-to-address-youth-substance-use-and-mental-health.html>. Accessed 29 August 2025.

⁹⁰ “New Abu Dhabi anti-drugs campaign targets youth.” ARN News Center, 3 March 2021, <https://www.arnnewscentre.ae/news/uae/new-abu-dhabi-anti-drugs-campaign-targets-youth/>. Accessed 29 August 2025.

⁹¹ “World Drug Report 2023.” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, June 2023, https://www.unodc.org/res/WDR-2023/WDR23_Exsum_fin_DP.pdf. Accessed 23 July 2025.

- What causes substance addictions in youth populations, and how can we stop them before they start?
- What programs can be put in place to assist in youth rehabilitation?
- How can we make youth aware of the dangers of substances such as captagon?

IV. Additional Resources

[CAPTAGON Act](#)

An act of the United States Congress passed under President Joe Biden in 2022, it acknowledges the captagon trade as an important issue of international security and requires the U.S. government to take action. Although the act refers to the Assad regime which is no longer in power in Syria, it is an example of efforts by nations outside the region.

[Gulf Criminal Information Center to Combat Drugs](#)

The website of a center headquartered in Qatar which aims to develop coordination between six member countries in security and other measures in the fight against all kinds of substances and “related criminal activities.”

[Drugs behind the veil of Islam: a view of Saudi youth](#)

A research paper by three individuals of Nanchang University. Researchers interviewed 18 Saudi men with ages ranging from 16-25. The paper includes a wide variety of information, including many direct quotes from those interviewed.

[Arab League readmits Syria as relations with Assad normalise](#)

A Reuters article centering on the terms of Syria’s readmission to the Arab League in 2023.

[Want to Win the War on Drugs? Portugal Might Have the Answer](#)

A Time article by Naina Bajekal detailing the process that went into Portugal’s 2001 decision to decriminalize the use of all drugs, and its overwhelmingly successful results.