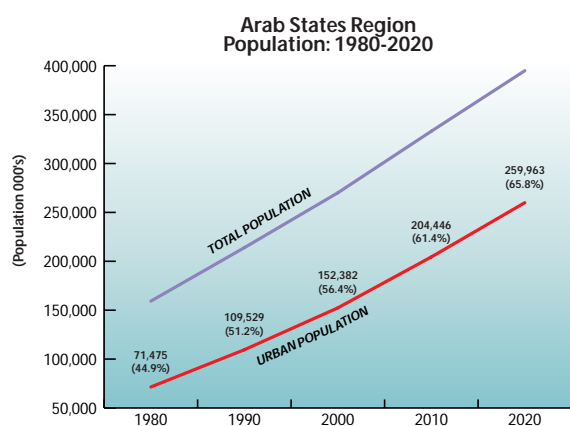


The Arab States' urban population is projected to be 260 million, or 66 percent of its estimated total of 395 million, by 2020. Today, urban areas account for 56 percent of the total population of 270 million. Municipalities capture about US\$46 per capita in revenue per year.



Source: UN, World Urbanization Prospects, 1999

The Arab States comprise a great diversity of socio-economic and human settlement profiles and characteristics: from least developed, through developing to oil rich countries; conflict and post-conflict situations; from very open economies to economic isolation; and highly urbanized to predominantly rural.

The region's considerable internal disparities are reflected in the conditions in its cities and have resulted in widely varying domestic needs and priorities: rehabilitation and reconstruction (Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Somalia); poverty alleviation (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Morocco and Yemen); urban management and housing needs (Egypt, Jordan and Algeria); and capacity building (Gulf countries).

Rapid population growth remains a major challenge. Some countries have annual population growth rates between 3 and 5.5 percent, while some urban growth rates are even higher: 6.4 percent (Iraq), 5.9 percent (UAE), and 4.1 percent (Oman and Bahrain). Urban growth rates will remain higher than total population growth rates in the foreseeable future. In the region's more diversified economies, urban growth has been the result of rural-to-urban migration as well as high fertility and declining rates of mortality. In some countries, however, high rates of urbanization have been stimulated by transnational migration as well as by natural increase.

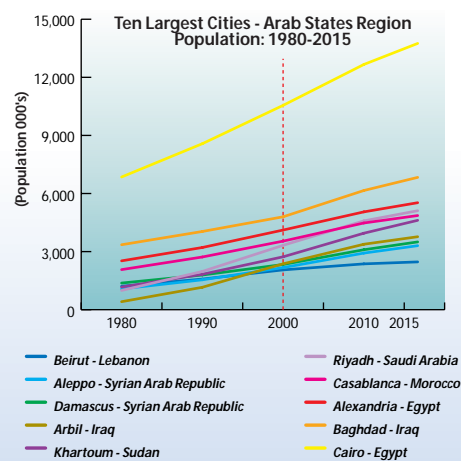
Urban population is greatest in the smaller states (Kuwait 97 percent, the Gaza Strip 95 percent, and

Bahrain and Qatar 92 percent). Saudi Arabia, one of the largest Arab States, is 86 percent urban, and is projected to rise to 89 percent urban by 2010.

Egypt is 45 percent urban and Sudan 36 percent. Both countries will remain among the region's least-urbanized in the years to come.

Although rural populations have declined in most of the region's countries during the 1990-2000 period and will continue to do so during 2000-2010, six countries need to deal not only with high urban growth rates, but also with rapidly expanding rural populations between now and 2010: Yemen 38.5 percent, the Gaza Strip 31.1 percent, Syria 13.7 percent, Iraq 11.1 percent, Jordan 11.8 percent, and Egypt 9.9 percent.

Thus, several Arab States need to prepare for both urban and rural growth. Urban agglomerations such as the Amman-Zarqa urban corridor, Jordan, in which most of the country's industrial activity and social and educational facilities are concentrated, serve as major pulling forces for rural-to-urban migration. Likewise, Damascus, Cairo and Alexandria can also expect further strong rural-to-urban migration. Many cities are now going through a critical phase of development, marked by dwindling resources, increasing poverty, and serious environmental degradation.



Source: UN, World Urbanization Prospects, 1999

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