HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN ARAB COUNTRIES
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Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED)

HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN TIMES OF CORONA

Opening Statement

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Main Findings and Recommendations

النتائج الرئيسية والتوصيات
OVERVIEW
نظرة عامة
- Over 676,000 Arab citizens will lose their lives prematurely in 2020 due to exposure to conventional environmental risks.

- Diseases most driven and impacted by environmental causes include: cardiovascular diseases, diarrheal diseases, respiratory infections and cancers.

- The main environmental risk drivers:
  - ambient and household air pollution,
  - lack of access to clean water,
  - marine pollution,
  - uncontrolled urbanization,
  - land degradation
  - exposure to waste and harmful chemicals
WATER
المياه
- COVID-19 pandemic: lack of access to safely managed WASH services
- 50 million Arabs have no access to basic drinking water services.
- 74 million people in the region with no access to basic sanitation services.
- Poor WASH services cause 40,000 premature, avoidable deaths annually.
- Only 9 of the 22 Arab countries are on track to achieve SDG 6.
- Wars and refugees increased the stress on water resources.
- Water and sanitation programs, commitment to financing.
- Advance the enabling conditions that make strong policies, laws and plans possible.

- 9 دول فقط من أصل 22 دولة عربية تسير على الطريق الصحيح لتحقيق الهدف السادس من أهداف التنمية المستدامة من حيث المياه النظيفة والصرف الصحي.
- أدّت الحروب وتدفق الأجانب إلى زيادة ضعف موارد المياه الشحيحة أصلاً.
- يتعين على البلدان تطوير وتنفيذ برامج المياه والصرف الصحي، والتزام التمويل، وتعزيز الظروف والإجراءات التي تجعل تنفيذ السياسات والقوانين والخطط القوية ممكنة.
AIR
الهواء
- Levels of air pollution exceed the WHO limits by 5 to 10 times.
- Several Arab cities are among the 20 most polluted cities in the world.
- Rise in the number of deaths attributed to indoor and outdoor air pollution.
- The overall disease burden due to air pollution is increasing.
- Coronavirus: urgency to enhancing air quality.
- Improve health risk assessments based on air monitoring would provide Arab policy-makers with the right control tools to reduce the public health impact.
WASTE
- Solid waste generation has been increasing at an alarming rate in the Arab region.
- Health problems attributed to solid waste mismanagement: respiratory disorders, eye infections and gastrointestinal.
- 53 percent of all generated waste indiscriminately disposed of in an unsanitary manner.
- The COVID-19 pandemic: increase of the use of single-use items such as masks and gloves, generating more hazardous waste.
- Replace outdated waste facilities with new ones that can reduce associated health risks and halt the dispersion of pollutants.
- Circular and 3R-centric approach (Reduce-Reuse-Recycle) to waste management is critical to reduce the harmful impact of waste on human health and nature.
Marine Environment

البيئة البحرية
- Direct discharge of untreated sewage into coastal zones, offshore oil exploration and extraction, and microplastics have impacted the health of the Arab population.

- Only 60% treated. Half of the treated water is re-used.
- Oil exploration, extraction and transport: major pollution to the marine environment, and has led to heavy metal contamination of fish that are subsequently consumed by humans.
- More research is needed on pathogens, toxin transfer to humans & antimicrobial resistance.
climate change
تغير المناخ
- Direct impacts of climate change include: cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, heatstroke, injuries and fatalities.
- A 1°C increase in average temperature is expected to lead to a 3% increase in mortality.
- Public health issues are generally missing in national climate change adaptation strategies.
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- The region is largely lacking national adaptation plans based on projected health risks, to heat waves, extreme weather events, air pollution and infectious diseases.

- Better understanding of the various factors influencing the impact of climate change on health in order to design effective mitigation and adaptation strategies, catered to country-specific situations, with direct and clear effects on the Arab population’s health.
• Exchange of expertise in health and environment-related disciplines across the Arab countries

• Emergency preparedness to face health and environmental disasters

• Primary health care system, including health education.

• Regional strategies setting common goals to achieve the SDGs

The AFED report demonstrates that a healthy environment is a prerequisite to healthy people.