

# Evaluation criteria of social protection: effectiveness, efficiency and good governance

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**“Social Protection: A lever for a more equitable and resilient  
development”**

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# Overview

1. Definitions of key terms
  2. Macro-level data on social spending and socio-economic context
  3. Key policy and institutional challenges
  4. Post-Arab Spring and Covid-19 pandemic
  5. Some policy conclusions
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# Social policy and Social protection

- **Social policy:** (1) a system of public service delivery that includes social insurance, social safety nets, health, housing and education services; (2) a political settlement reflecting the social rights of citizens and residents.
- *“**Social protection** describes all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups”* Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004)
- Together, global, national and local providers of social services form the social policy landscape of a country
- **Aran Human Development Report, 2009:** “the Arab region is richer than it is developed”

# The Big Questions for Social Policy

- Consumption-smoothing, poverty alleviation?
- Human capital, capabilities, social justice, social cohesion, prosperity?
- The role of the private, informal sectors?

# Institutional mechanisms of delivery

- **Universal programmes:** free to all citizens regardless of income or resource testing measures e.g food and fuel subsidies in the Arab region or the National Health Service in the United Kingdom
- **Targeted means-tested social assistance programmes:** mainly eligible beneficiaries based on a calculation of their income/other resources e.g cash transfers usually based on a household survey of income and resources
- **Categorical social assistance programmes:** the entire population category benefits such as a universal child benefit or universal support for adults with disabilities

# Types of Programmes Covered under Social protection

- **(formal employment-based) Social insurance and pensions:** schemes funded by workers' voluntary or compulsory contributions
- **Targeted social assistance:** schemes funded by public resources (non-contributory); in-kind or cash transfers
- **Labour market programmes:** designed to help the unemployed to access the job market and guarantee minimum standards in the workplace

# A Life course approach to Social Policy

- Aims to ensure that all citizens have access to social protection and income maintenance support throughout their lives, from birth to death
- Reinforces Sustainable Development Goal agenda of 'leaving no-one behind'
- Linked to horizontal redistribution of wealth through taxation and work-based contributions

# Key criteria of evaluation

- **Effectiveness:** Coverage/reach and adequacy of benefits
- **Efficiency:** Absence of wastage or duplication of resources, timeliness
- **Good governance:** transparent and accountable decision-making; supports rule of law and social justice outcomes
- Evaluation criteria may be set by the policy-maker or against well-recognised measures such levels of inequality or poverty



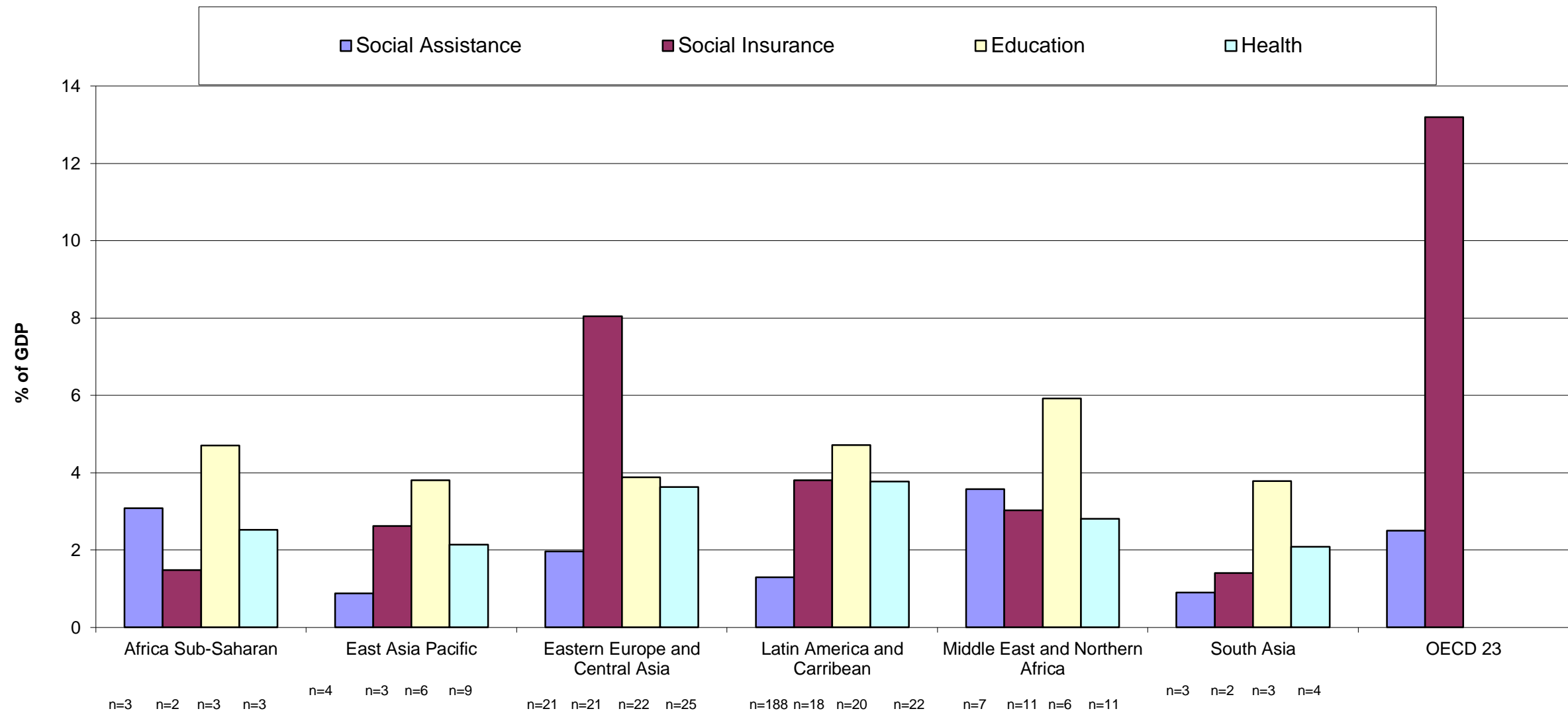
# Arab Countries: Historic Emphasis on Social Safety Nets

1. Charity in all forms: religious and non-religious, giving cash via cash transfers
2. The share of income accruing to the top 10 per cent and 1 per cent exceeded 60 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively of total regional income in 2016 (Alvaredo et al., 2018). Rising poverty and inequality rates in Arab countries that have been made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. The lack of data on taxation, wealth redistribution and public spending is especially significant in the Arab countries due to weak state accountability
4. The dependency on oil revenues in Arab countries has exacerbated the volatility of economic systems and the effectiveness of social protection further by fostering a rentier model of distribution
5. Formal private or public sector work is even more important but harder to find – against a background of “jobless growth”

# Reduction of inequality is key

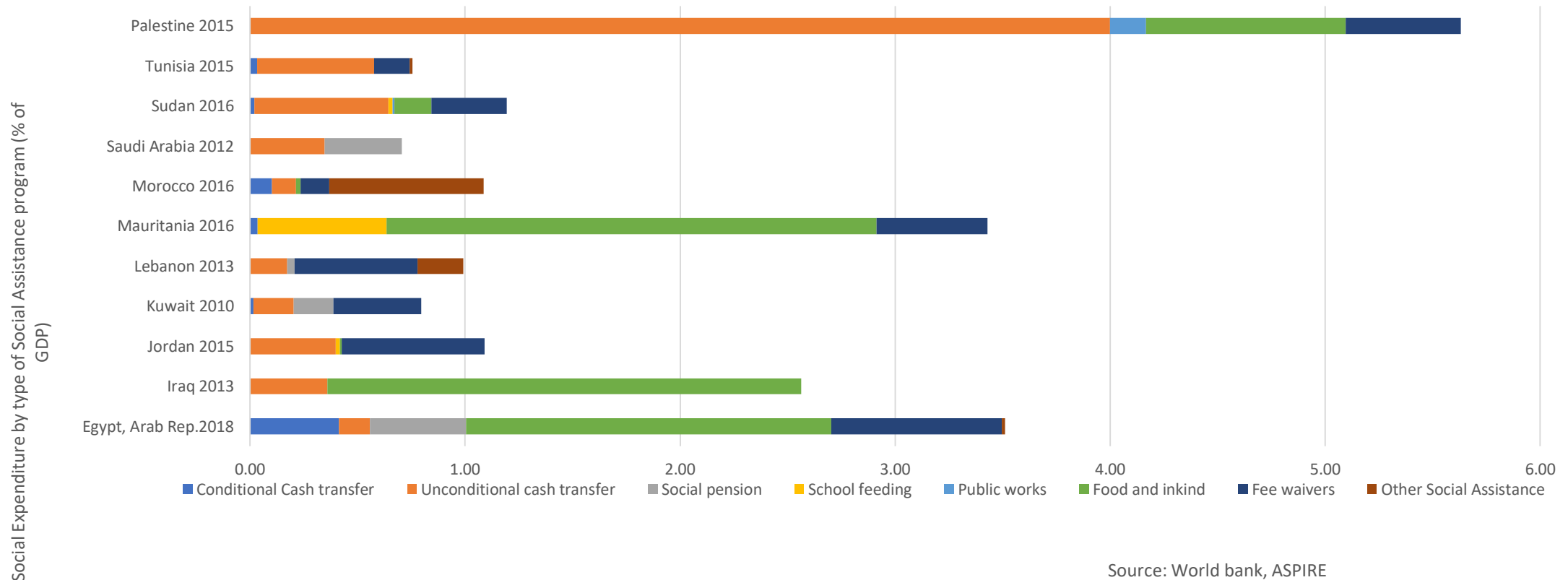
- Effectiveness, governance, efficiency
- Europe after the second world war
- Latin America following expansion of social assistance programmes
- East Asian countries
- Donor agencies: for example World Bank shared prosperity

# Social Spending as a % of GDP – All Regions (Source: World Bank 1996-2006)



Notes: Data on 87 countries taken from WB Public expenditure reviews or other similar work. We used OECD-23 since OECD countries such as Poland and Mexico are already accounted for in the regional averages. OECD data

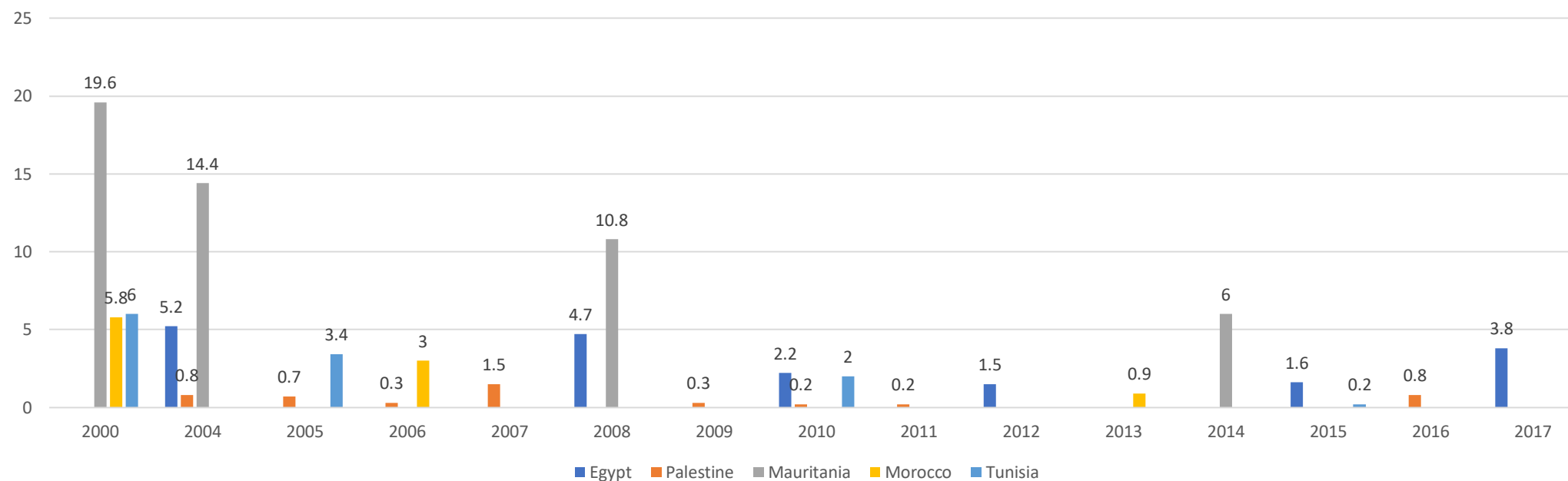
# Current context: Spending by type of social assistance programme (% GDP)



**Source:** World Bank, ASPIRE Atlas (cited in UN-ESCWA forthcoming 2021)

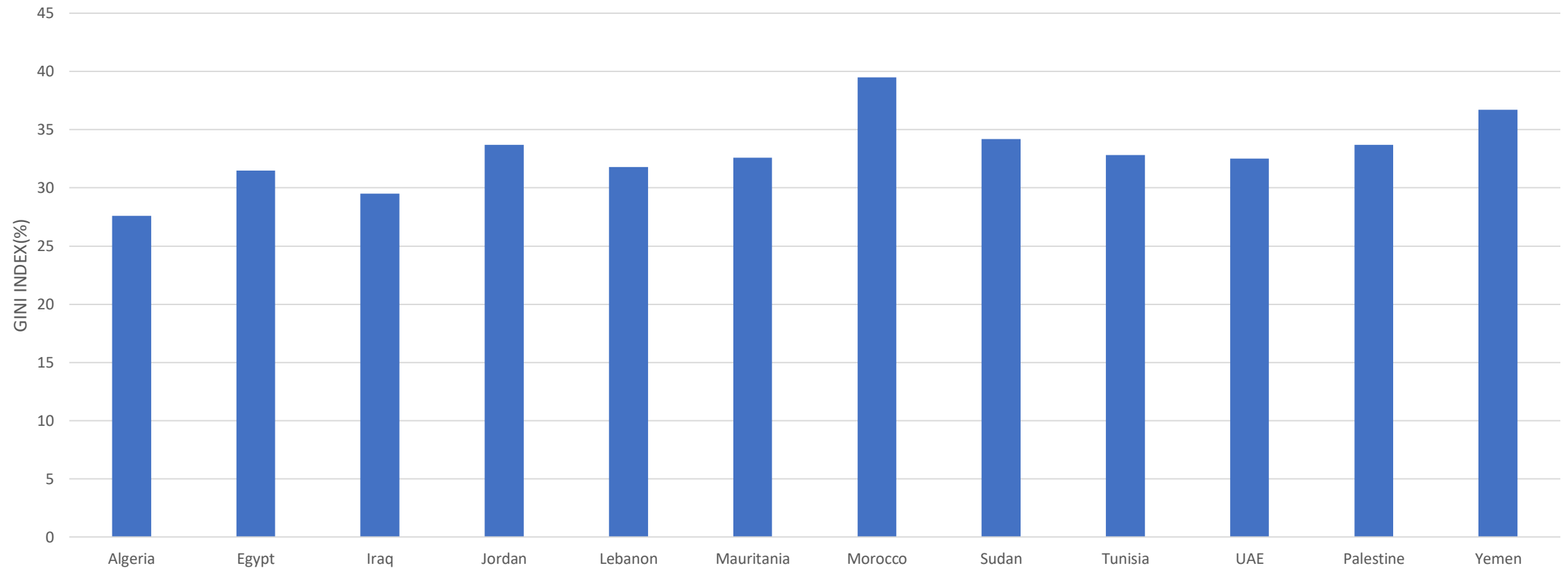
# Current Context: Poverty

**Figure 1: Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (% of population) 2000-2017**



**Source:** World Bank World Development Indicators, cited in UN-ESCWA (Forthcoming 2021)

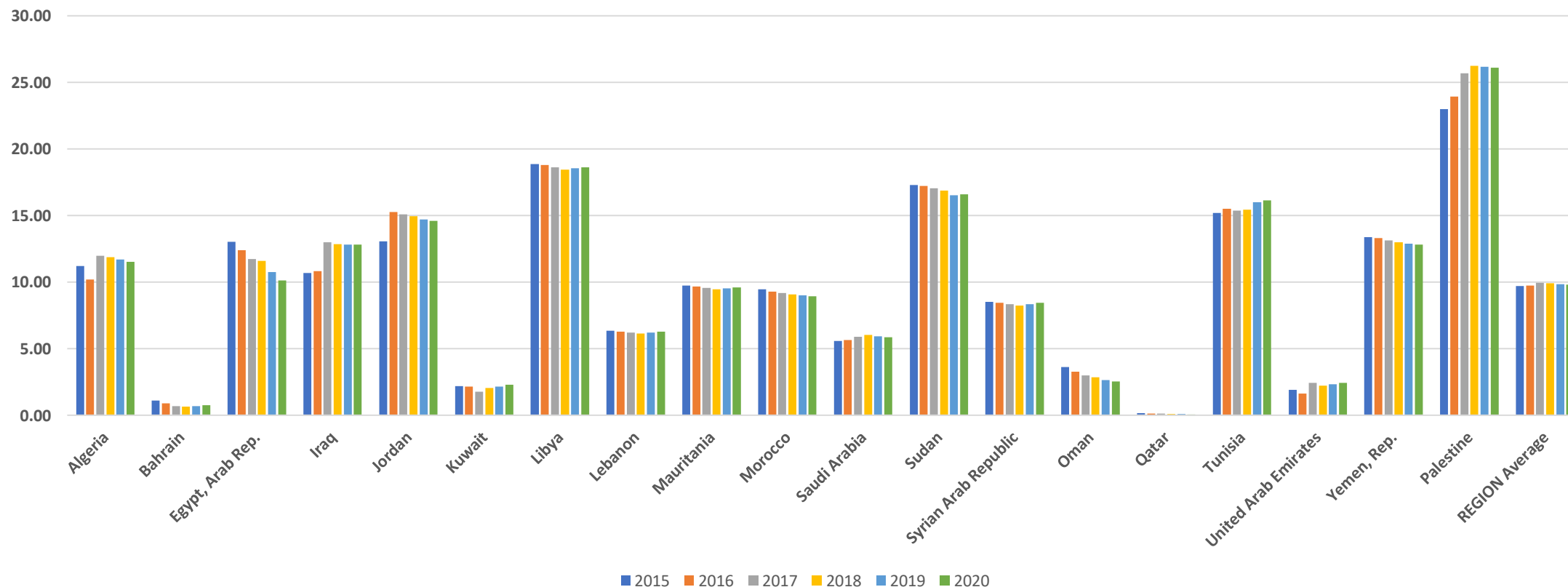
# Current context: Inequality (various years, 2011-2014)



**Source:** World Bank World Development Indicators (cited in UN-ESCWA, forthcoming 2021)

# Current context: Unemployment

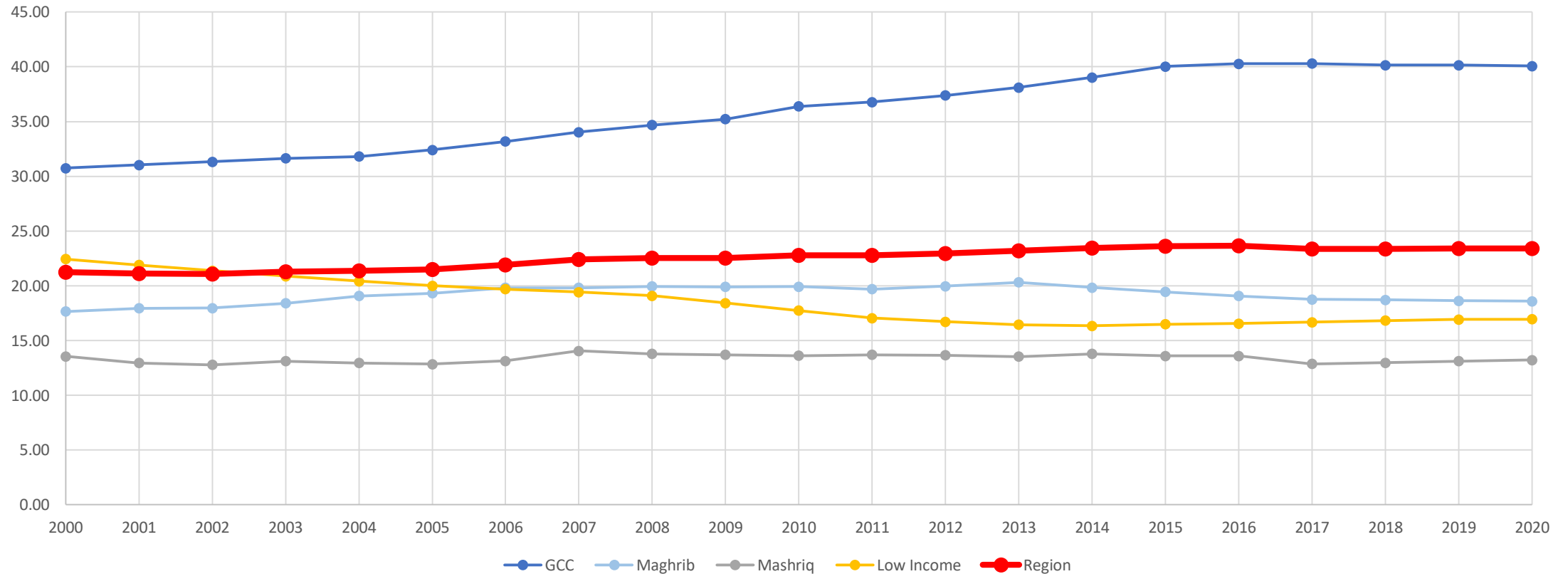
% Unemployment Rate from 2015 to 2020



**Source:** World Bank, World Development Indicators (cited in UN-ESCWA forthcoming 2021)

# Current Context: Female Unemployment

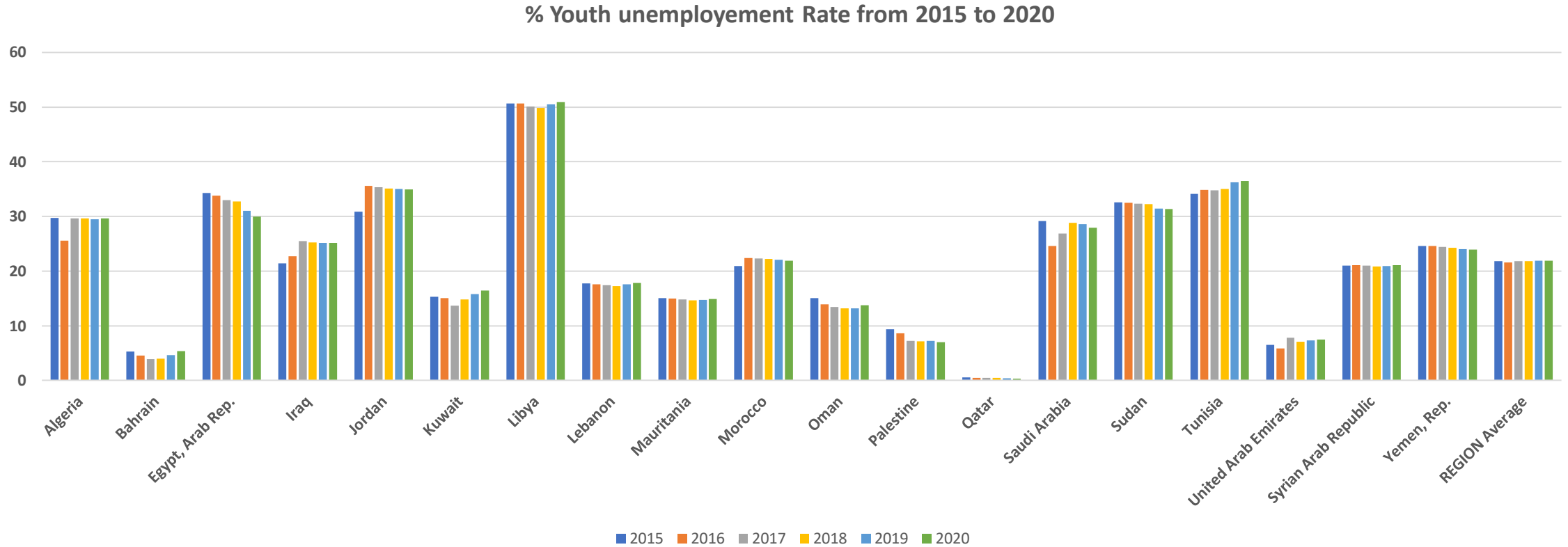
Arab Sub-regions - Female Employment (% for 2000-2020)



**Source:** World Bank World Development Indicators (cited in UN-ESCWA, forthcoming 2021)

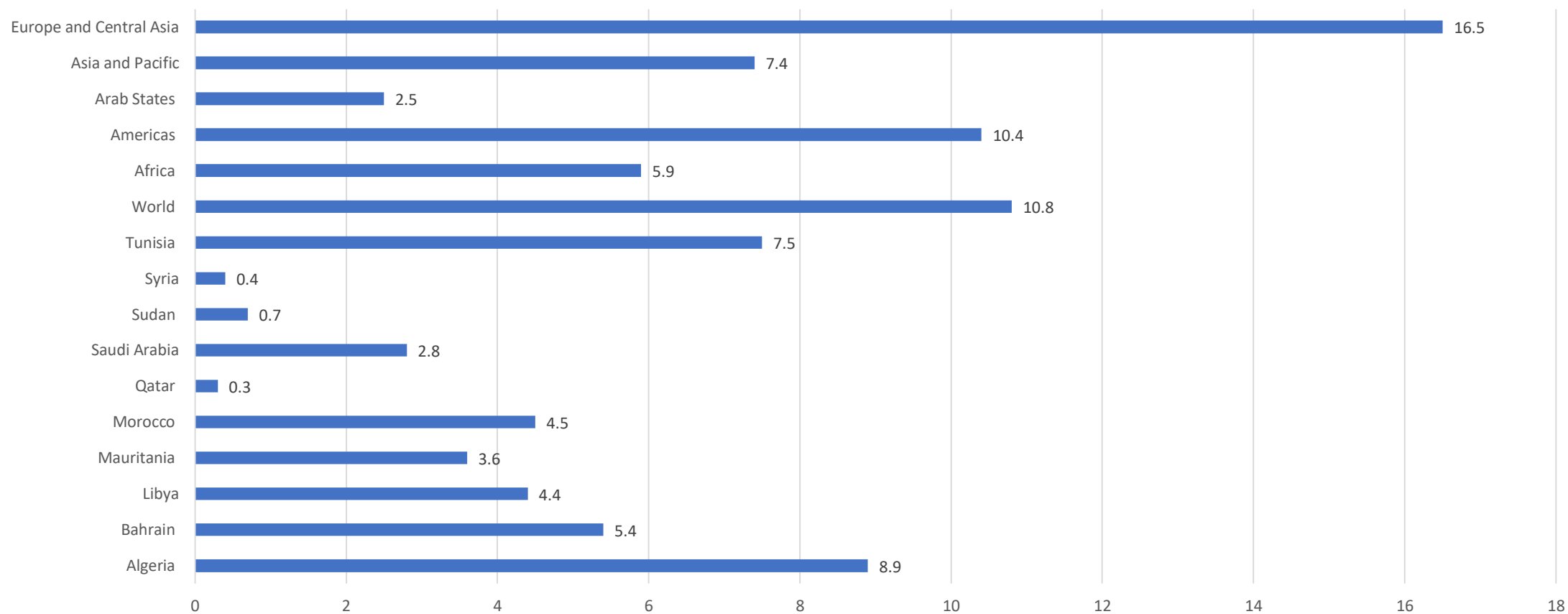


# Current context: Youth unemployment



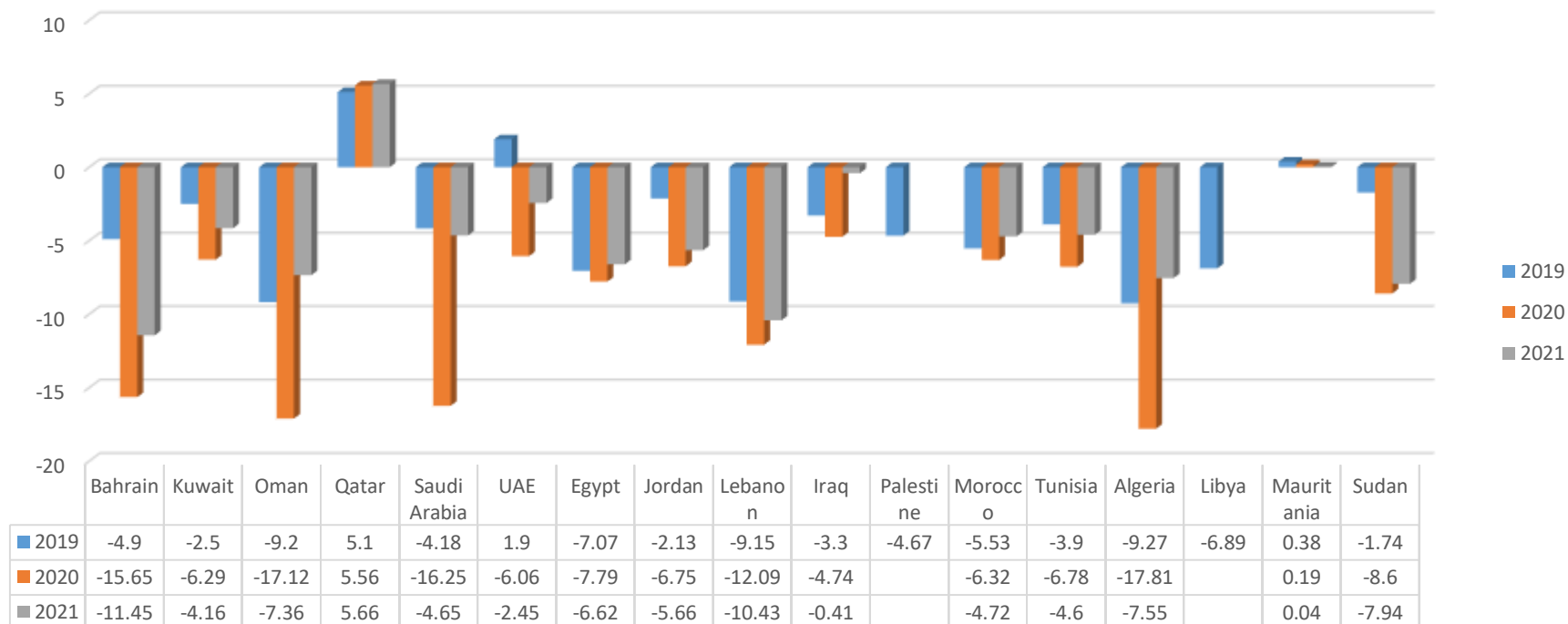
**Source:** World Bank, World Development Indicators (cited in UN-ESCWA forthcoming 2021)

## Public social expenditure, excluding health (% GDP)



**Source:** ILO, 2018 (cited in UN-ESCWA forthcoming 2021)

# Fiscal deficits, General Government, 2019 and 2020

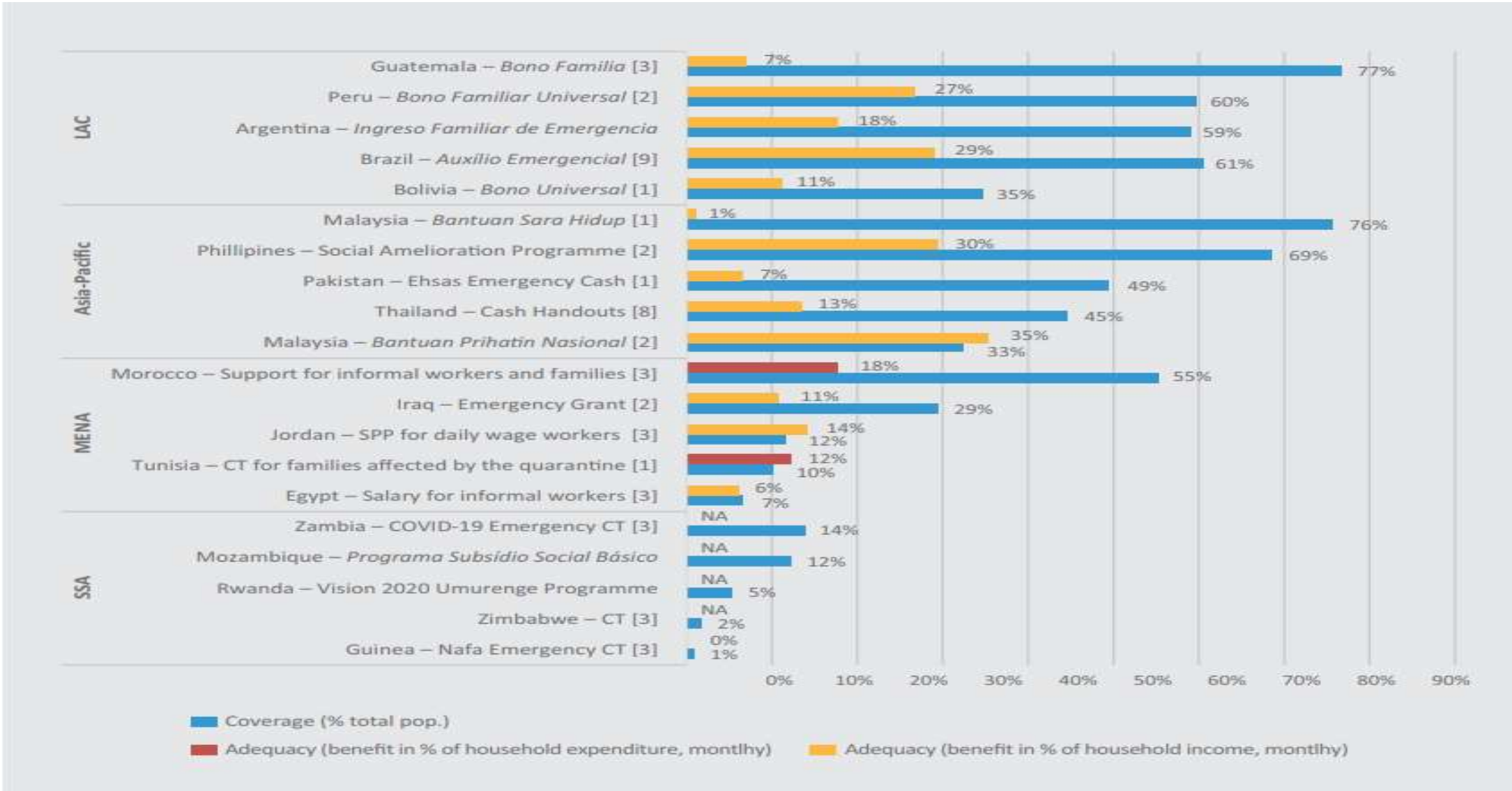


Source: Compiled from [Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region 2019-2020 - ESCWA \(unesco.org\)](https://unesco.org)

# Since the Arab Spring: Logic of Social Safety Nets

- Increased subsidies
- In-cash social assistance
- Poverty targeting data-bases
- Limited increases in employment-based insurance

# Covid-19 pandemic response Coverage and benefit level of selected cash transfer programmes, as of February 2021 (Source: The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, 2020)



# Challenges of the Social Policy Institutions

- **Post-colonial political systems:** influence of sub-national political drivers such as religion, tribe, military, patrimonialism
- **Ownership of social policy:** Ministries of social solidarity, affairs, social assistance, social development, development and planning
- **Post-independence:** civil and workers rights movements soon turned to a social contract described as an “Autocratic bargain”
- **Regimes:** based on employment-based social insurance, targeted social assistance, reliance on food and fuel subsidies
- **Regional imbalance:** Urban-bias in social welfare provision
- **Governance issues:** Financing, duplication, costly and slow bureaucratic reforms

# Key Policy Challenges for effective Social Protection

- **Reactive, crisis management approach to social policy systems:** social strategies, rather than long-term policies; donor influence and oil/gas funding
- **Emphasis on targeted social assistance** and cash transfer programmes that are insufficient in coverage and levels of benefit
- **Arab barometer surveys:** low trust in government, aspiration to migrate
- **Excluded/adversely included:** agricultural workers, self-employed, informal workers, people with disabilities
- **Civil society and religious welfare groups** support a means-tested approach to social assistance

# Conclusions (1): Effectiveness, efficiency

Forthcoming UN-ESCWA report on the Covid-19 social protection response notes the following:

1. Low coverage of existing employment-based social insurance systems
2. Legislative shortcomings that can facilitate inclusion of populations in need or lead to transparent debate about permanent changes in the law
3. Inadequate access to health coverage
4. Inadequate levels of income benefits



# Conclusions (2): Social policy governance

- **Purpose of social policies:** consumption smoothing vs enhancing capabilities and opportunities
- **Universal health and education** support a more productive workforce, more politically engaged citizenry and more accountable government
- **Access to jobs:** linking social assistance systems to better education and work opportunities
- **Social protection must not only be about cash transfers** – social welfare for everyone (lifecourse approach), not just the deserving poor



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# Thank You!

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