



© UNHCR / C. Herwig

2015 Situation Report on International Migration

Migration, Displacement and Development
in a Changing Arab Region

Report Summary



UNITED NATIONS

العربية
ESCWA



IOM • OIM

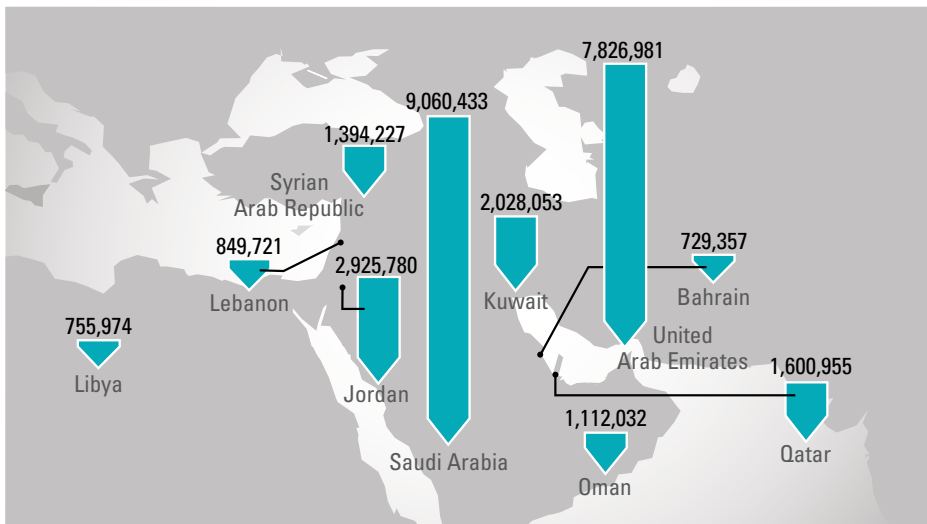
International Organization
for Migration

1. Background

The Arab region has long witnessed the ebb and flow of international migration, one of the main factors driving social and economic changes within and outside the Arab region. Migration has great potential to positively impact the economic and social development across a number of different areas, including health, urban development, youth employment and gender relations. To understand and make the most of the positive impacts of migration – and to mitigate its potentially adverse effects – an approach based on a wide range of perspectives and expertise is required.

Yet, little research has been done on migration in the Arab region. At a time when forced displacement has reached record numbers, this report aims to address this knowledge deficit and provide a comprehensive update on the situation in order to facilitate the development of appropriate responses to various patterns of migration and displacement. Drawing on the expertise of the member agencies of the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region, the Report highlights the need for coordinated and holistic responses to current migration and displacement challenges.

Top 10 countries of destination in the Arab region, 2013



Source: Data are from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

Note: Due to data limitations, the figures in this table do not fully reflect the number of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR.



Syrian refugees cross over into the outskirts of Kobani, Turkey, after fleeing their homes.
© UNHCR / I. Prickett

2. About the report

Chapter I

Chapter I provides an overview of the principal migration patterns in the Arab region with labour migration followed by forced displacement and mixed migration flows being the most distinctive patterns of population movement.

Chapter II

Chapter II summarizes international migration trends in the Arab region based on the latest data from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the World Bank, open-source information and academic literature. It describes trends at the regional, subregional and country levels, describing migrant flows to and from Arab countries, migration of specific socio-demographic groups, and remittance flows. The report presents disaggregated data by sex and age where available.

Key findings:

- In 2013, The Arab region hosted, with over 30 million international migrants, one of the largest migrant populations in the world. It is estimated that 21,974,881 people migrated from Arab countries in 2013, almost double the 12,091,398 recorded in 1990.
- The main destination countries for migrants from the Arab region vary. Saudi Arabia and the United States are the most popular among GCC migrants. Migrants from the Maghreb mainly head towards Europe, those from the Mashreq to other Arab countries, and those from LDCs mostly remain in less developed regions. Migrants in the region are predominantly Asian, in particular from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines. Arab migrants represented 40 per cent of all migrant stock within the region in 2013.
- Migrant flows between Arab countries have decreased since 1995. That progressive decline has recently been reversed by an upsurge in forced displacement to neighbouring countries, especially as a result of the Syrian crisis which had a major impact on migrant and refugee flows. By mid-2014, Syrians constituted the largest group of refugees in the world.

Chapter III

Chapter III presents an overview of developments in migration governance in the Arab region between January 2012 and April 2015. It outlines national policy developments by thematic areas such as labour migration, human trafficking and irregular migration, health, forced migration, expatriate engagement, nationality and statelessness, and discusses international cooperation on migration, emphasizing the role of governance in protecting human rights. The work is based on a desk review of legal texts, government sources, information provided by country offices of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and news reports.

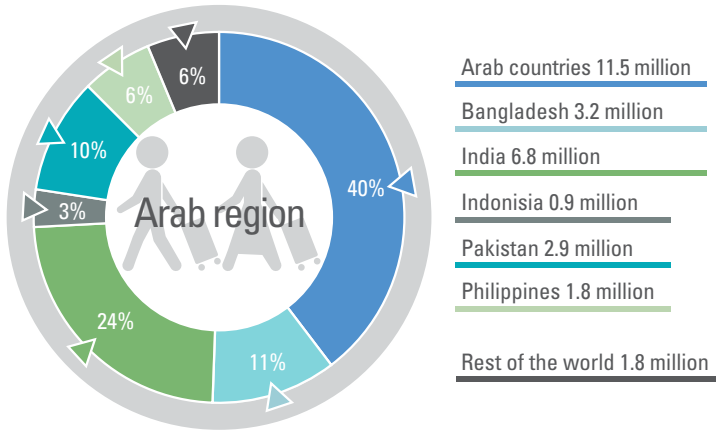
Key findings:

- Best outcomes of international migration occur when policies are formulated and implemented in a coherent, comprehensive and balanced manner, integrating a development perspective with due regard for social, economic and environmental dimensions and respecting human rights.
- Since the beginning of 2012, significant changes and reforms in migration governance have taken place throughout the Arab region. Policy reforms at the national and sub-national levels have touched on aspects of migration ranging from nationality and expatriate engagement to migration and development. Arab States have also engaged in bilateral, regional and global cooperation on migration.
- The reforms come at a time marked by the continuing influx of labour migrants to GCC countries, mass refugee flows in the Mashreq, and the transformation of North African countries into de facto countries of destination. They reflect developments in the region, such as the changing conceptions of political community brought about by the Arab uprisings, civil society pressure in some countries, and concerns about the employment of nationals in GCC countries.

Chapter IV

Chapter IV explores the link between development and forced displacement. It highlights the need to go beyond a humanitarian approach and coordinate holistic responses across areas including health, education, environmental sustainability, labour markets, human capital, remittances and social cohesion. The chapter examines the nature and effects of different kinds of forced migration in the Arab region, and looks at ways of mitigating the negative impact on development, promoting peacebuilding and reconstruction, and encouraging good governance and respect of the rights of refugees and other displaced populations as well as host communities.

Main countries of origin for migrants to the Arab region, 2013



Source: Data are from DESA.

Key findings:

- According to UNHCR, more than 50 million people around the world had been forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations by the end of 2013. Never since the end of the Second World War had the number of refugees, IDPs and other forcibly displaced persons exceeded that grim marker.
- Many of the displaced are in the Arab region. In total, there are 5,150,899 Palestinian refugees and some of the largest numbers of IDPs worldwide: 7,600,000 IDPs within the Syrian Arab Republic, 3,276,000 in Iraq, 3,100,000 in Sudan and 1,106,800 in Somalia. The number of Syrian refugees has surpassed 4 million in 2015.
- Mainstreaming forced population movements into development initiatives is important in order to mitigate the adverse effects of displacement and to harness the development opportunities provided by these movements.
- Solutions to the root causes of such complex movements remain elusive, resulting in prolonged or recurring episodes of displacement, with far-reaching consequences at the local, national and regional levels. As such, responses to situations of displacement and refugee flows need to be integrated with long term developmental approaches, with a view to mitigate adverse consequences for development, strengthen peace-building and reconstruction, encourage good governance, and promote respect for

the fundamental rights of refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and displaced populations, as well as of host communities.

- The remainder of the chapter is devoted to an examination of the relationship between forced population movements and five key areas of development: health; education and opportunities for young people; labour markets, human capital and remittances; environmental sustainability; and social cohesion and stability.



The Report was prepared under the aegis of the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region, co-chaired by UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) and comprising of further 12 United Nations agencies, which have worked together in order to examine the plight of migrants and refugees in the region in the light of the relevant political and academic considerations. This report is the fruit of their combined efforts.