



MASHREQ NEWS



Economic Growth in MENA Stymied by Political Instability

Three years after the Arab Spring, the economies of the Middle East and North Africa region remain depressed. Political turmoil in Egypt, stalemate in Tunisia and an escalation of the civil war in Syria, with spillovers to neighboring Lebanon and Jordan, have weakened activity in the developing, resource-poor countries. The regional outlook for 2013 – and even more so for 2014 – is shrouded in uncertainty and contingent on indigenous and exogenous political shocks. In contrast, global economic conditions have become more favorable. Tourism, a key revenue resource for oil-importing countries in the region, was drastically hit because of security uncertainties and the continuing Syrian civil war. Production in oil-exporting countries – accounting for nearly a third of the region’s oil output – has fallen by nearly 8.5 percent in 2013, reflecting security setbacks, strikes and infrastructure problems in Algeria, Iraq and Libya, and the international sanctions imposed on Iran. The World Bank’s **Global Economic Prospects (GEP)** report, released in January, analyses these challenges and provides an insight into economic growth potentials in 2014.

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HIGHLIGHTS



Strengthening Iraq’s Emergency Medical System

The World Bank and Iraq have launched a technical assistance program in the health sector at a workshop in Erbil. “*The Emergency Medical System Strengthening Technical Assistance Program*” falls under the Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Trust Fund for Iraq. The workshop assessed the general needs of the Iraqi Ministry of Health to improve the country’s emergency medical system at the levels of the community, dispatch centers, pre-hospital care, hospital care and blood banks. The program involves a situational analysis, development of a five-year Emergency Medical System, training and drafting clinical practice guidelines.



New Social Assistance Program well on Track in Jordan

A World Bank project, the National Unified Registry and Outreach Program for Targeting Social Assistance, is being implemented in Jordan under a \$10 million grant from the institution’s MENA Transition Fund. The project aims to build a unified registry for targeting the underprivileged (\$2.5 million) and piloting an integrated outreach worker program (\$7.5 million). Direct beneficiaries will be the poor and middle-income households, roughly 50 to 60 percent of the Jordanian population. Although no special targeting of women will take place, it is expected that some 50 percent of beneficiaries will be women. [More »](#)



Lebanese Youth Volunteers: A Gift to Nation-Building

The Middle East and North Africa needs to invest in scaled-up volunteerism for youth and promote a general culture of community service. In Lebanon, there are some volunteerism opportunities for youth, but they have been affected by political and security instability. To redress the situation, the World Bank has stepped in with a National Volunteer Service Program (NVSP). This US\$2 million grant from the State and Peace-Building Fund seeks to increase youth civic engagement by providing volunteering opportunities in communities other than their own. The first three volunteering activities were implemented in November and December 2013, and January 2014, attracting around 330 volunteers. [More »](#)



Exposing the Plight of Refugees and Host Communities

The World Bank has launched a new website dedicated to the [impact of the Syria crisis on neighboring countries](#), namely Lebanon and Jordan. The website features news on the impact of the influx of refugees and the World Bank’s work in support of host communities and governments straining under massive social and economic repercussions of the crisis.



Social Safety Support to Iraq

A World Bank social protection team has launched the Iraq *Capacity Building for Social Safety Nets Framework Development Program*, which consists of a US\$2,097,985 million grant from the Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Trust Fund. The program aims to support the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in Iraq in its efforts to design and implement an efficient social safety net through improved service delivery through October 2014.

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