

## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE ARAB REGION

### *League of Arab States (LAS)*

#### A. BACKGROUND

The Population Policies and Migration Department of the League of Arab States (PPMD/LAS) launched the Arab Observatory for International Migration (AOIM)<sup>1</sup> in 2004 and since then, it has worked on filling the gap in migration data for Arab countries and updating such data continuously by:

1. Sustaining the technical capabilities of the bodies dealing with migration in Arab countries;
2. Contributing to knowledge transfer in the international migration field, and
3. Finding mechanisms to enhance the benefits of migration for development and Arab regional integration.

#### B. AOIM ACTIVITIES IN 2009

##### *1. The Arab Regional Report for International Migration*

The report, published biannually, aims to:

- (a) Increase knowledge of Arab migration processes and dimensions;
- (b) Promote dialogue between decision makers and researchers and other national and regional parties dealing with migration issues, and
- (c) Clarify the Arab vision and regional policies to maximize the benefits from migration and reduce its negative impacts within the framework of a broad partnership.

The 2008 report entitled *Arab Labour Migration: Brain Drain or Brain Gain?* was launched at the Second Arab Regional Expert Group Meeting on Migration and Development, held in Cairo, Egypt, from 29 June to 1 July 2009, and highlighted that highly-skilled migration is a growing phenomenon in the region. Worldwide, the number of highly-skilled migrants doubled from 9.4 million people in 1992 to 19.7 million people in 2000, and from 2.5 million people to 4.9 million people in European countries. Also, the number of skilled migrants from Arab countries doubled during the last decade.

TABLE 1  
DISTRIBUTION OF SKILLED WORKERS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES LIVING IN OECD COUNTRIES BY CITIZENSHIP, 2000  
(NATURALIZED – NON NATURALIZED)

	<i> Holders of diplomas </i>			
	<i> Non-naturalized </i>	<i> Naturalized </i>	<i> Not specified </i>	<i> Total </i>
<b>Maghreb countries</b>				
Algeria	44 338	162 564	8 445	215 347
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	2 794	5 086	7 661	15 541
Mauritania	1 690	722	333	2 745
Morocco	49 391	113 241	44 485	207 117
Tunisia	15 065	49 465	3 660	68 190
<b>Total</b>	<b>113 278</b>	<b>331 078</b>	<b>64 584</b>	<b>508 940</b>
<b>The Arab Mashreq countries – neighbouring countries</b>				
Comoros	725	1 164	12	1 901
Djibouti	552	995	45	1 592
Egypt	35 994	93 392	18 449	147 835
Jordan	8 892	14 559	3 189	26 640
Lebanon	22 755	80 955	6 980	110 690
Palestine	1 287	3 764	1 530	6 581
Somalia	5 063	6 203	5 250	16 516
Sudan	7 289	5 157	4 620	17 066
Syrian Arab Republic	12 814	26 643	4 441	43 898
Yemen	1 723	1 987	2 577	6 287
<b>Total</b>	<b>97 094</b>	<b>234 819</b>	<b>47 093</b>	<b>379 006</b>
<b>Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Iraq</b>				
Bahrain	872	801	1 344	3 017
Iraq	24 318	35 845	23 302	83 465
Kuwait	7 144	7 183	2 215	16 542
Oman	374	151	487	1 012
Qatar	635	515	315	1 465
Saudi Arabia	6 386	3 833	2 129	12 348
United Arab Emirates	1 568	986	933	3 487
<b>Total</b>	<b>41 297</b>	<b>49 314</b>	<b>30 725</b>	<b>121 336</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>251 669</b>	<b>615 211</b>	<b>142 402</b>	<b>1 009 282</b>

Source: www.oecd.org/database (accessed in 2009).

The report also showed that:

- (a) More than one million highly-skilled migrants born in Arab countries were living and working in OECD countries with about 50 per cent from Maghreb countries;
- (b) The number of Arab-born in OECD countries exceeded the number of Indians and Chinese in OECD countries;
- (c) About one fifth of Maghreb-born highly-skilled Arabs were working in industrialized Western countries and 40 per cent of the highly-skilled Arab migrants were living in France;

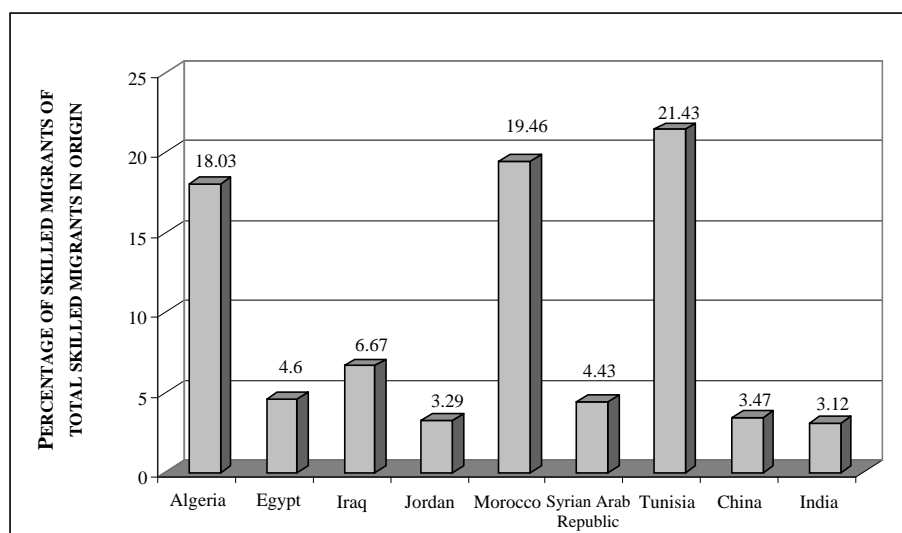
- (d) The Arab community in OECD countries had a higher level of education than the native-born in OECD countries. The percentage of highly-educated persons reached 21.6 per cent among the Arab community and 19.9 per cent among the native-born;
- (e) In France, about one out of ten doctors was born in an Arab country, and these doctors represented 63 per cent of all foreign-born doctors residing in France.

TABLE 2  
NUMBER OF DOCTORS AND NURSES BORN IN ARAB COUNTRIES AND LIVING IN OECD COUNTRIES

<i>Countries of origin</i>	<i>Number of doctors in OECD countries</i>	<i>Percentage of doctors having left country of origin</i>
Arab	43 369	
India	55 794	8.0
China	13 391	1.0
Pakistan	10 506	8.3
Africa (excluding Northern African countries)	30 700	
Latin America	42 500	

Source: www.oecd.org/database (accessed in 2009).

GRAPH 1  
SKILLED MIGRANTS IN OECD COUNTRIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL SKILLED WORKERS IN ORIGIN COUNTRIES



Source: www.oecd.org/database (accessed in 2009).

One of the main points of the 2008 report was related to brain drain in the health sector. The report showed that the percentage of doctors born in Arab countries but living abroad out of the total number of doctors living in Arab countries had reached 18.2 per cent. About 12-14 per cent of highly-skilled persons born in Arab countries were living abroad. Further, the report showed that there was increased demand for skilled health workers in developed countries. In fact, the number of skilled migrants working in the health sector in OECD countries was equivalent to or exceeded the number of all skilled health professionals working in African countries. About half of all doctors working in Australia and New Zealand were migrants born

outside these countries, and this percentage had reached one third in Canada, England, Ireland, and Luxemburg. In France where Arab-born represented half of all migrants, the number of foreign doctors had increased by more than 60 per cent over the last three years (2002-2005). The European markets attracted highly-skilled workers by providing incentives and utilizing specialized “chasseur de tetes” offices for recruiting highly-skilled people from less developed countries, especially for the health care sector. Overall, the report stated that this raised concerns regarding the ethical recruitment of foreign workers emphasizing that an ethical code for recruiting and employing highly-skilled workers was needed.

TABLE 3  
NUMBER OF DOCTORS AND NURSES BORN IN ARAB COUNTRIES AND LIVING IN OECD COUNTRIES

Country	Doctors	Percentage of doctors having left country of origin	Nurses
	Number of workers in OECD countries		Number of workers in OECD countries
<b>Maghreb countries</b>			
Algeria	10 793	23.4	8 796
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	592	8.5	100
Mauritania	38	10.8	96
Morocco	6 221	28.0	5 730
Tunisia	2 415	15.3	410
<b>Total</b>	<b>20 059</b>		<b>15 132</b>
Per cent	46.3		76.1
<b>The Arab Mashreq countries – neighbouring countries</b>			
Comoros	20	14.8	64
Djibouti	25	16.2	
Egypt	7 243	15.8	1 128
Jordan	1 014	8.2	363
Lebanon	4 552	28.3	1 400
Somalia	155	33.3	250
Sudan	778	9.3	183
Syrian Arab Republic	4 721	16.6	319
Yemen	248	3.5	231
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 756</b>		<b>3 938</b>
Per cent	42.7		19.8
<b>Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council + Iraq</b>			
Bahrain	74	8.4	77
Iraq	3 730	18.0	415
Kuwait	465	11.5	152
Oman	23	0.6	18
Qatar	45	3.3	
Saudi Arabia	421	1.2	151
United Arab Emirates	44	0.7	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 802</b>		<b>824</b>
Per cent	11.1	18.2	4.1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>43 617</b>		<b>19 894</b>
Per cent	100		100

Source: International Migration Outlook OECD, Sopemi (accessed in 2009).

## *2. The Annual Arab-Regional Meeting for Governmental Experts of Migration*

Since 2006, the Arab-Regional Meeting for Governmental Experts of Migration has been held annually to exchange information and coordinate and unify the Arab vision in preparation for the Global Forum on Migration and Development. In particular, the meeting aims to:

- (a) Evaluate the achievements concerning the recommendations of the Global Forum in the Arab world;
- (b) Identify common views, recommendations and suggestions related to Global Forum panels;
- (c) Exchange information and discuss developments in the field of international migration in the Arab region; and
- (d) Make suggestions to support the roles of the “AOIM” programme by the LAS as one of the main mechanisms to activate the developmental roles of Arab migration.

## *3. The 2009 Arab Regional Expert Group Meeting on Migration and Development*

The meeting was organized by PPMD/LAS and the IOM with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower and Migration held in Cairo, Egypt, from 29 June to 1 July 2009. About 80 participants, representing Governments, international organizations and research organizations attended the meeting, including participants from 16 Arab countries. The meeting focused on integrating human mobility issues into development policies in the Arab region.

In conclusion, the meeting recommended that participants, including civil society organizations and Government representatives attend the 2009 Global Forum meeting. The meeting also asked the Arab League and other donors to provide financial support for low-income countries to attend the Global Forum. At the end of the meeting, participants adopted a common regional view on issues to be raised at the forthcoming Global Forum meeting in Athens in 2009. The regional view,

- (a) Reconfirms the request of Arabic countries to adopt Arabic as one of the main languages of the Global Forum, and calls upon the Arab League to follow-up on Global Forum recommendations;
- (b) Calls for the establishment of an Arab regional research and training center within the framework of the League of Arab States in cooperation with relevant international and Arab organizations. This center would contribute to collecting necessary renewable and updated data, and create national and regional databases on international migration, and technical support for national related institutions; and
- (c) Calls to intensify and strengthen broad international cooperation and partnership to address the consequences of the global economic crisis on migrants in receiving countries, to protect their human rights and to provide support for sending countries in order to enable them to reintegrate return migrants.

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NOTE

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the Observatory, see <http://www.poplas.org/en/page.asp?id=3> (accessed March 10, 2010).

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REFERENCE

League of Arab States (2009). *Regional Report on Arab Labour Migration: Brain Drain or Brain Gain?* Cairo, Egypt: League of Arab States.