

TRENDS IN ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION IN THE ARAB STATES

Findings from the
4th Global Report on Adult
Learning and Education



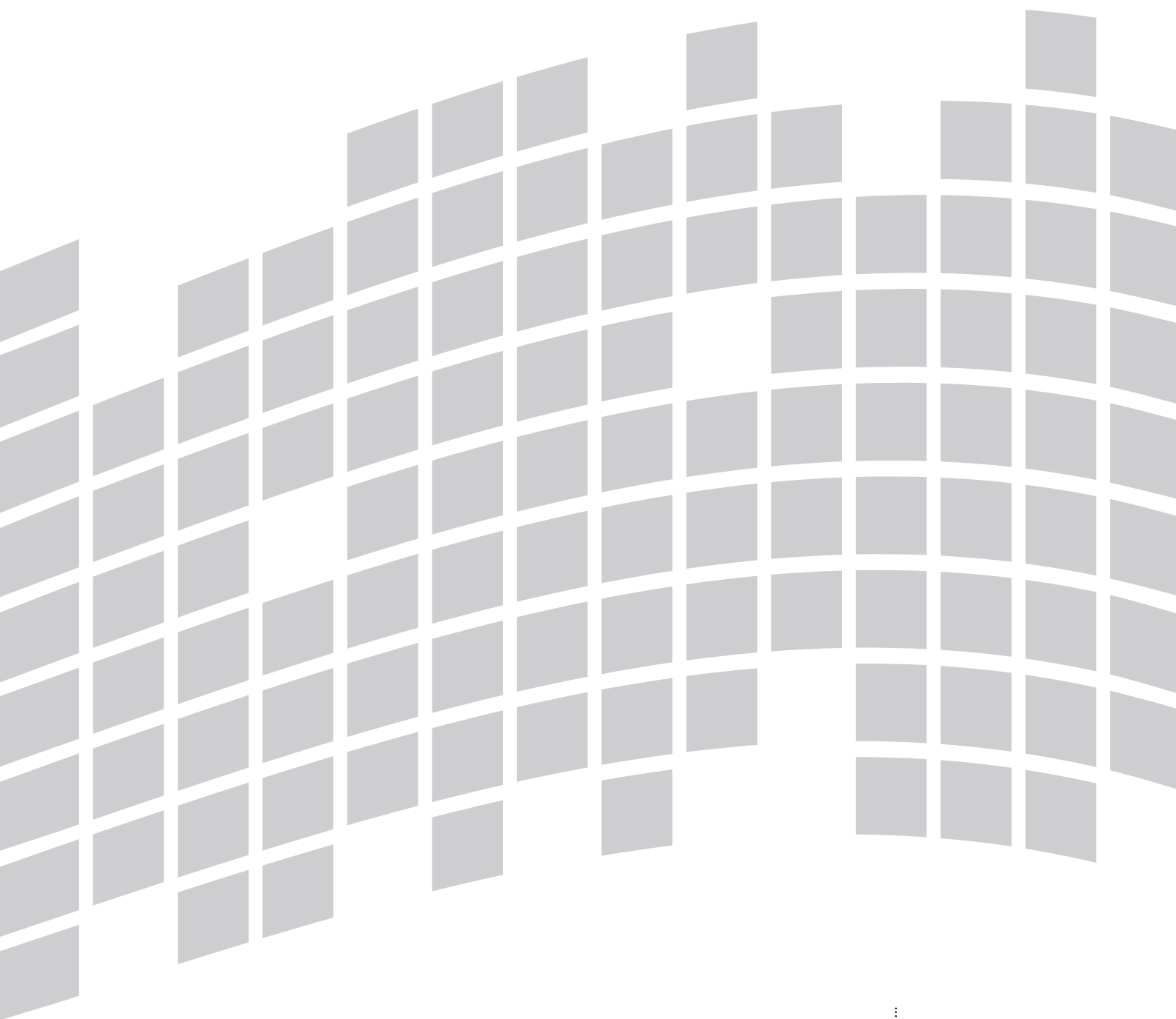
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Institute
for Lifelong Learning

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FOREWORD

As signatories to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations Member States recognize education as a human right, within a lifelong learning perspective, and are committed to promoting equal access to learning and education in securing a better, fairer and more inclusive future.

In the last decades, Arab States have faced many challenges, including a huge increase in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons, rapid urbanization, demographic change, unemployment and other issues. This has put pressure on Arab governments to ensure adequate provision of quality education, including non-formal education for youth and adults. Adult learning and education can play a key role in overcoming these challenges and in realizing the potential of lifelong learning in the region as a driver of peace and sustainable development.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) prepares the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)* every three years in order to strengthen understanding of 'where we stand' as a global community, and to address the growing need for youth and adult education. The present report draws on data from *GRALE 4*, published in 2019, to provide a regional snapshot of the progress made in adult learning and education in the Arab States between 2015 and 2018.

Drawing on information from 18 Arab countries, it allows for a comparative analysis both among Arab countries and with the rest of the world, and provides insights useful to governments, education experts and policy-makers in the Arab States keen to monitor and accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education and, indeed, the wider sustainable development agenda.

The focus of *GRALE 4* is on participation, inclusion and equity in adult learning and education. Arab countries reported significant progress in the participation of women in adult learning and education since 2015. However, ALE access to quality non-formal education with a lifelong perspective remains underdeveloped, in particular for disadvantaged groups. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that more women are participating in ALE, thus narrowing the gender gap across all levels and forms of education in the region. Such advances are crucial in creating an enabling learning environment within communities and countries more generally, and in fulfilling the promise of the SDGs.

The report reveals that adult learning and education in the region is strongly focused on literacy, with less attention given to other areas of adult learning, such as continuing education and professional development, and citizenship education. This suggests that, while further progress is needed in achieving basic education for all, the other dimensions of adult learning need to be given adequate attention to ensure provision that is comprehensive and relevant to the diverse needs of adult and youth learners.

Furthermore, the report suggests that good governance, supportive political will and adequate funding are key to fully realizing the potential of adult learning and education for economic, social, technological, and societal transformation. It is hoped that this report can provide some benchmarks and be a source of inspiration for policy-makers and stakeholders in Arab countries to further enhance the provision, quality and relevance of adult learning and education in order to build a sustainable and resilient future.



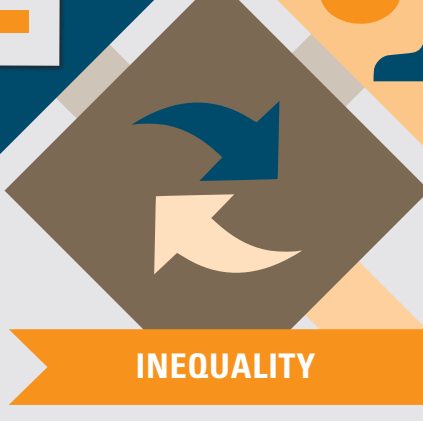
David Atchoarena
Director, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

KEY MESSAGES



3

GOVERNANCE



INEQUALITY



6

KEY MESSAGES

1

The majority of Arab countries reported an increase in participation in adult learning and education. Among marginalized, disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, however, inequalities in participation and provision persist. Member States and the international community must do more to address this imbalance and ensure that the least advantaged are taken into account when policy is made.

- Twelve out of 18 Arab countries reported an increase in ALE participation, a rate of improvement that is second only to sub-Saharan Africa. Of these 18 countries, 15 stated that their information was based on actual figures.
- Of the 17 countries in the Arab States that responded to the question of who is participating, 14 reported an increase in women's participation – the highest increase among all UNESCO world regions – 10 reported an increase in the participation of unemployed adults, and 10 reported increased participation by those living in remote or rural areas. Despite these positive developments, disadvantaged and marginalized groups, especially adults with disabilities and minority groups, continue to have low ALE participation rates.
- The learning field with the biggest increase in participation was literacy and basic skills at 82% (14 out of 17 countries reporting). Relatively less progress occurred in the other fields of learning: 69% reported progress in citizenship education and 53% in continuing education and professional development.

2

Progress in ALE policy and governance is encouraging, but it is by no means enough, with some countries in the Arab States continuing to lag behind.

- Eleven out of 17 countries reported progress in ALE policy since 2015, including seven of the eight countries that reported progress in 2009 and four 'newcomers': Egypt, Iraq, Palestine and Qatar. Five countries reported no change since 2015, and only one reported regression in ALE policy since 2015.
- Of the 17 Arab countries that responded to the question regarding ALE policy development, 15 countries reported progress in stakeholder involvement. The lowest level of progress in disaggregated categories of ALE policy development was in recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning, with only 65% of countries reporting progress in this area.
- However, 16 of the 18 Arab States that responded to the *GRALE 4* questionnaire reported improvements in governance. Furthermore, more than half reported progress in developing additional effective monitoring and evaluation systems, which is important for ALE planning as well as for quality assurance.
- Yet only four of these 18 countries reported that ALE planning and provision had become more decentralized. This matters because decentralizing provision is key to ensuring it meets the needs of learners and their communities.
- Responding countries generally reported progress in policy processes for two fields of learning: literacy and basic skills, and vocational skills and professional development. Citizenship education, by comparison, received marginal attention.

3

Funding for adult learning and education is insufficient. Countries in the Arab States did not meet the commitments they made in *GRALE 3* to increase spending and introduce new funding mechanisms for ALE, both of which are essential if it is to reach its potential.

- Of the 18 countries that reported on ALE funding between 2015 and 2018, only five indicated progress on ALE spending as a proportion of public spending on education; four reported a decrease and seven reported no change in financing.
- Seventeen out of 18 Arab countries provided information on the proportion of public spending on education currently allocated to adult learning and education; of these, 12 reported spending less than 2% and only one country reported spending 4% or more.
- Furthermore, only seven of these countries introduced new mechanisms for financing ALE, four of which are in the lower middle income group.
- The group most prioritized for ALE financing in the Arab States is women (11 of 18 countries reporting), followed by older adults. Migrants and refugees and minority groups (ethnic, linguistic, religious) were the least prioritized in ALE financing.

4

Adult learning and education provision is improving, but further investment is needed to develop assessments for enhancing ALE quality and to improve the employment conditions of facilitators/teachers. Efforts to improve ALE quality are unevenly spread across the three key ALE fields of learning of the 2015 Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE).

- The Arab States have the third-highest rate of improvement in ALE quality after Latin America and the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa. Two-thirds of Arab countries reported major improvements to the quality of their ALE provision since 2015.
- Most notable was the improvement in quality criteria for teaching methodologies and learning materials, with 12 out of 17 of countries reporting advancement in this area, although less progress was made in improving the quality criteria for ALE curricula and assessment.
- The Arab States also had the highest rate of improvement globally in in-service training for adult educators, at 82% (16 out of 18 countries). Nevertheless, progress in pre-service training, at only 44% (seven out of the 16 countries that responded to the question), was far below the world average.
- However, employment conditions for ALE educators in the Arab States have progressed: 12 out of the 17 countries that responded to the question, said employment conditions have improved since 2015, with the most progress made in high-income Arab countries.
- Most progress in RALE fields of learning in terms of quality was made in literacy and basic skills; little progress was made in continuing education and professional development, and almost none in the quality of citizenship education programmes.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In times of exceptional economic, social, technological and political unpredictability, adult learning and education (ALE) is more necessary than ever to ensure youth and adults update and develop their skills to be able to cope with and benefit from the rapid pace of change. Ensuring high-quality, equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for everyone – ‘leaving no one behind’ – is at the heart of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and SDG 4 on education in particular. ALE has a crucial role to play in implementing SDG 4, but it can only play this role fully if countries meet their commitments in developing responsive education policies, investing more in ALE, enhancing ALE provision, and monitoring developments with accurate data.

Adopted by 144 UNESCO Member States at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in 2009, the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) commits countries to promoting ALE and harnessing its power through five main areas of action: policy; governance; participation, inclusion and equity; financing; and quality of provision. To monitor progress in these five areas of commitment, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) developed a monitoring tool, the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)*. The most recent report, *GRALE 4*, also monitors the implementation of the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education. This Recommendation reaffirms the central role ALE plays in the 2030 Agenda; more specifically, it identifies three key fields of learning and skills that are of importance for ALE:

- Literacy and basic skills;
- Continuing education and professional development (vocational skills);
- Liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills).

RALE also focuses attention on information and communication technologies (ICTs) and their potential to make learning more accessible to all, including people with disabilities, and marginalized or disadvantaged groups.

Inspired by the five main principles of designing policy for ALE found in the BFA, the Arab States adopted a regional statement, known as the Sharm El Sheikh Statement, in 2015, to promote contextually relevant priorities for education. The Statement highlights the need to reinforce the provision of youth and adult education and learning, including literacy, through formal and non-formal pathways, in collaboration with all governmental and non-governmental actors.

The Statement also identified equitable and inclusive access to education for all – in particular, for people with disabilities, and girls and women – as a high priority. Its signatories committed themselves to increasing their efforts to achieve justice, equity and parity by addressing all forms of exclusion, marginalization and discrimination at all levels of learning. Furthermore, they made a commitment to develop effective strategies to overcome any obstacles blocking girls and women from continuing their education.

In addition to the Sharm El Sheikh Statement, the Riyadh Declaration (2015–2024), endorsed by participants at the Regional Meeting on Citizenship Education and Common Human Values: From Theory to Practice, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in January 2020, highlights the importance of developing further ALE policies, concepts and practices, and of promoting the principles of citizenship education to empower youth and adults. Against this background, this report gives insight into the results of the *GRALE 4* Survey,

with a particular focus on the Arab States. The survey was conducted in May 2018, and collected responses from 157 of the 193 UNESCO Member States and two of the 11 Associate Member States. This report covers the responses of 18 Arab countries (see Annex).

1.1 THE PARTICIPATION OF ARAB STATES IN *GRALE 4*

The *GRALE 4* Survey (UIL, 2018a) consists mostly of closed-ended questions concerning changes in the five areas of commitment on ALE. This is to help ensure global coverage, relevance and comparability, and is achieved via the introduction of standardized measures for the responses. To add depth to the closed-ended responses and to capture some country context, the survey also asks open-ended questions in order to collect specific examples or illustrations of progress or regression in a particular BFA area.

Overall participation by Arab States in the *GRALE 4* Survey was the highest of all UNESCO world regions. As indicated in **Table 1.1**, 18 out of 20 Arab countries responded to the 2018 survey (see Annex), a 25% increase in the response rate of *GRALE 3* in 2015, when only 13 out of 20 countries responded. This increase is a positive sign that countries in the Arab States are willing to track ALE development. The situation in the two countries that did not take part in the *GRALE 4* Survey, namely Libya and Yemen, is likely to be quite different from the rest of the Arab States, this due to the ongoing conflicts, which might have direct impact on ALE.

The regional ‘picture’ of ALE offered in this report is therefore based on information provided by these 18 responding countries.¹

TABLE 1.1
Participation of Arab Member States in *GRALE 4*, by income group

	All Member States	Member States that submitted information	Participation rate (%)
WORLD	159		
ARAB STATES	20	18	90%
INCOME GROUPS			
Low income	2	1	50%
Lower middle income	7	7	100%
Upper middle income	5	4	80%
High income	6	6	100%

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

¹ *GRALE 4* does not attempt to achieve representativeness, e.g. by weighting responses by population, but instead presents the number of responses and the percentage it represents of participating countries.

Inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation supports the implementation of ALE policy; therefore, the engagement of various ministries, civil society and other relevant stakeholders in tracking progress in ALE is key. The *GRALE 4* Survey asked Member States to report which stakeholders provided input in response to the survey. In the majority of Arab States – 14 countries² – the ministry of education was involved in providing inputs to responses. Four countries – Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – reported the involvement of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), while five countries – Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and UAE – invited international NGOs to provide inputs to the survey. Only three countries – Palestine, Saudi Arabia and UAE – reported that ALE providers contributed to the survey, and only two (Egypt and Palestine) indicated university involvement and two (Egypt and Kuwait) the involvement of research institutes.

2 United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Djibouti, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Sudan



CHAPTER 2

POLICY

GRALE 4, like the other *GRALE* reports, is based on the commitments made by Member States in the BFA. These include the importance of establishing coordinating mechanisms involving all ALE stakeholders, and improving the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of all forms of learning (including non-formal and informal learning). In addition, Member States agreed to design and implement specific ALE action plans that take the main international development priorities and policies on board. Finally, the overarching commitment by Member States in the BFA concerns the development and implementation of policies, alongside well-targeted plans and legislation for addressing ALE.

2.1 THE STATE OF ALE POLICY IN ARAB MEMBER STATES

ALE policy development reflects the level of priority Member States have given to keeping the commitments they made as part of the BFA. In *GRALE 4*, 17 Arab countries reported on whether ALE policies have progressed. Rates of progress, regression or no change (same levels) are shown in **Figure 2.1**.

Results show that the majority of countries (65%, or 11³ out of 17 countries responding to the question), especially those in the high- and lower middle income bracket, made significant progress in ALE policy development since 2015. These 11 countries include seven⁴ of the Arab States that had reported improvements in ALE policy in *GRALE 3*.

Five out of 17 Arab countries that responded to the survey reported no changes in ALE policies since 2015 (Algeria, Djibouti, Jordan, Mauritania and Tunisia). The Syrian Arab Republic, which is ranked fourth on the Fund for Peace's Fragile State Index (Fund for Peace, 2018; see also OECD, 2018a, p. 85), reported regression in ALE policies since 2015.

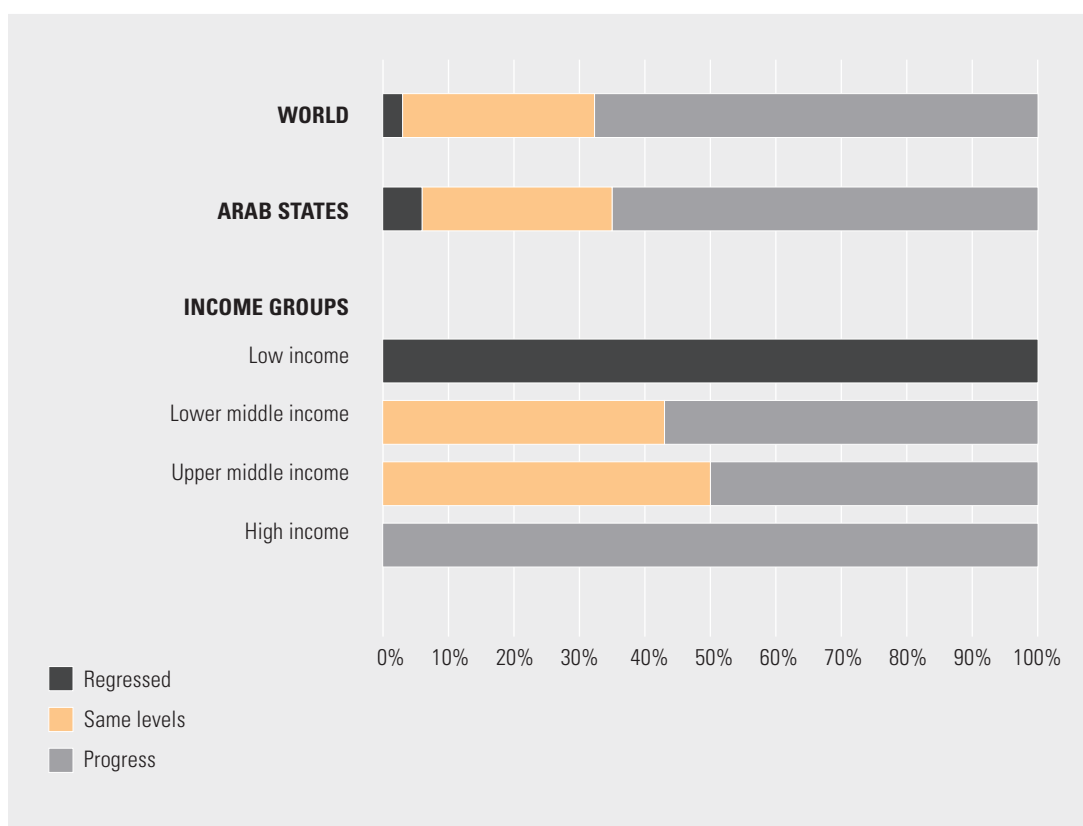
To capture detailed progress in ALE policy across different processes, Arab countries were asked about policy progress in disaggregated categories, as shown in **Table 2.1**. The responses from 18 countries to these disaggregated categories of ALE policy indicated that the highest regional progress was made in involving stakeholders in developing ALE policies and plans. Fifteen out of 18 Arab countries reported progress in this area since 2015, a rate of progress higher than the world average. For example, Palestine reported creating a national team, including representatives of ministries and local and international institutions, to formulate a nationwide adult education plan. Morocco reported the establishment of a National Agency to Combat Illiteracy, with a board of directors chaired by the head of government.

Developing specific plans and implementing policies were the next key areas in which regional progress was made. **Table 2.1** shows that ALE policy implementation in Arab countries is on the same level as the rest of the world. The implementation of legislation that regulates ALE and supports the implementation of ALE policies saw lower progress.

³ Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and UAE

⁴ Bahrain, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and UAE

FIGURE 2.1
Overall progress on ALE policy since 2015



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

TABLE 2.1
Progress in the field of ALE with respect to different policy processes

	Total responses	Implementing legislation	Implementing policies	Developing plans	Involving stakeholders	RVA non-formal & informal
WORLD	147	68%	73%	82%	86%	66%
ARAB STATES	17	71%	72%	72%	89%	65%

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

Saudi Arabia has been developing a national strategy for lifelong learning that aims to build knowledge and a dynamic learning society. The strategy aims to equip people with continuous learning and training opportunities to prepare them for the labour market and enhance their contribution to society.

Oman also gave examples of progress, ranging from renewed regulations governing adult education, targeting marginalized populations, to registration and enrolment and the use of ICT. The country also reported passing amendments to the rules applicable to the opening of adult education centres to facilitate enrolment procedures and thus increase participation

It does this by making the learning outcomes that young people and adults acquire in the course of their lives in non-formal and informal settings visible and accredited (UIL, 2018).

2.2 POLICY PROGRESS BY RALE FIELD OF LEARNING

The responses from Arab countries indicated significant regional progress in literacy and basic skills across the categories, with less progress for continuing training and professional development (see **Table 2.2**). The third RALE field of learning, citizenship education, continues to receive marginal attention in ALE across disaggregated categories of ALE. Only one country, Kuwait, reported progress in implementing policies and developing plans for citizenship education.

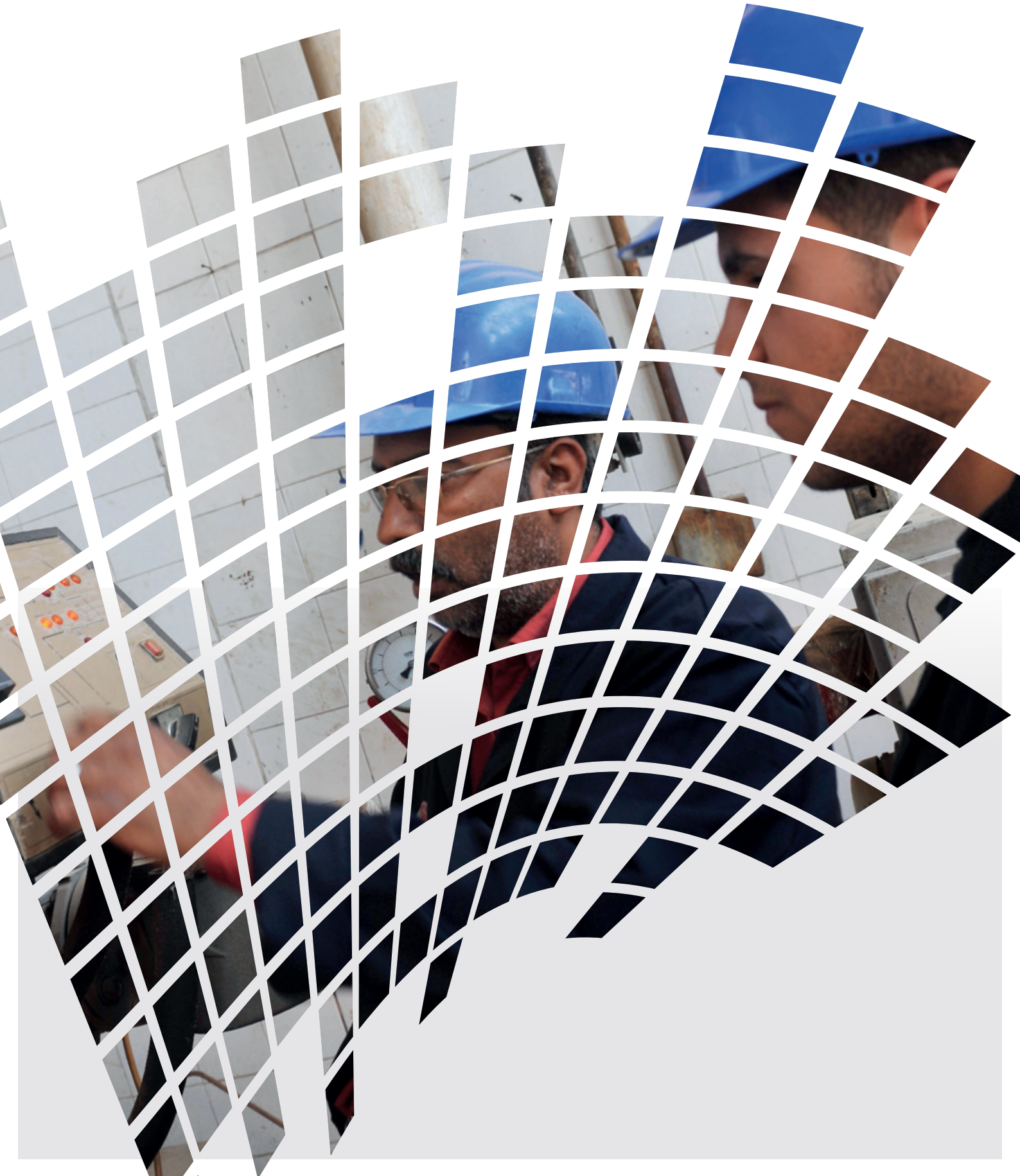
Recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning in the Arab region improved less compared to other categories of ALE policy process. Eleven out of 17 countries that responded to this question reported progress in this area. RVA of all forms of learning has the potential to motivate young people and adults to continue learning and to ensure equity and inclusion through organized learning opportunities.

It is worth noting that some Arab countries have adopted an inter-sectoral approach to ALE. For instance, Saudi Arabia reported on opening community learning centres in low-income areas which are designed to extend the concept of adult education beyond literacy programmes to lifelong education. These centres thus promote learning for employment and wider social change. In Algeria, literacy embraces competences related to health, environment, skills development, ICTs and citizenship (national and global).

TABLE 2.2
Policy processes with respect to RALE fields of learning

	Total responses	Literacy and basic skills	Continuing training and professional development (vocational skills)	Liberal popular and community education (active citizenship skills)	Do not know
Implementing legislation	11	82%	18%	0%	0%
Implementing policies	13	77%	15%	8%	0%
Developing plans	13	77%	15%	8%	0%
Involving stakeholders	16	75%	25%	0%	0%
RVA non-formal & informal	11	82%	18%	0%	0%

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey



CHAPTER 3

GOVERNANCE

The BFA highlighted the importance of good governance for implementing ALE policy and ensuring ALE benefits both for learners and for society. Strengthening or creating cooperative structures and participatory processes based on multi-stakeholder partnerships at local, national, regional and international levels is indispensable in order to implement effective, transparent and equitable ALE policies and to guarantee responsiveness to the needs of all learners, in particular, the most disadvantaged groups (UIL, 2010, p. 7). Without such cooperation, provision would not be sufficiently organized and systematic, thus reducing the possibility of achieving the overall social benefits of ALE.

3.1 THE STATE OF ALE GOVERNANCE IN THE ARAB STATES

The Arab States reported remarkable progress in enhancing ALE governance. Sixteen countries out of 18 reported improvement in governance since 2015 (see **Table 3.1**). This rate of progress (89%) is the highest regionally, followed by 86% for sub-

Saharan Africa and 85% for North America and Western Europe.

To capture in depth their progress towards an inclusive and equitable process of governance, as recommended by the BFA, countries were asked to report on ALE governance progress against disaggregated categories (see **Table 3.2**). The responses of the Arab countries showed that the highest regional progress in disaggregated categories of ALE governance since 2015 was achieved in developing more effective monitoring and evaluation systems, with 10 out of 18 countries reporting progress. This is important for both ALE planning and quality assurance. Half of Arab countries reported progress in involving civil society and in improving inter-ministerial cooperation for the implementation and provision of ALE. Eight countries reported making much progress in stakeholder participation and increasing inter-sectoral cooperation to support the implementation of ALE policies. Stakeholder participation was achieved through organized programmes and through collaboration between the government and other key providers, educators and adult learners.

TABLE 3.1
Overall improvement in the governance of ALE in Arab countries since 2015

	Total responses	Improvement	Proportion
WORLD	137	103	75%
ARAB STATES	18	16	89%

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

Sudan provided an example of coordination efforts between ministries, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Finance, in planning and implementing a literacy campaign. More specifically, the Ministry of Education, through the General Secretariat of the National Council for Literacy and Adult Education, plays a technical role and is involved in the training of graduate civil service staff of the Ministry of Defence. The Ministry of Defence provides administrative supervision, while the Ministry of Finance funds textbooks and provides training and follow-up.

indicated little progress in this area, and only six countries, namely Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, United Arab Emirates and Qatar, reported notable progress in strengthening capacity-building initiatives. Moreover, the decentralization of ALE has not witnessed much progress in the Arab region since 2015, with only four out of 18 countries, namely Jordan, Morocco, Oman and the Syrian Arab Republic, reporting ALE becoming more decentralized.

In **Oman**, ALE decentralization included increasing the involvement of educational governorates by decentralizing the management of reviewing and developing curricula, developing regulations governing employment in adult education, and planning projects in partnership with various sectors (governmental, private, civil), among others.

Strengthening capacity-building initiatives, which is key for stakeholders in making informed decisions about ALE, was reported to receive less attention by the majority of Arab States. Hence, 12 out of 18 countries

TABLE 3.2
Disaggregated reporting on ALE governance in the Arab States

	Total responses	Not much	Somewhat	Much	Do not know
ARAB STATES					
Increased stakeholder participation	18	11%	44%	44%	0%
Developed more effective monitoring and evaluation systems	18	11%	33%	56%	0%
Strengthened cooperation with civil society	18	0%	50%	50%	0%
Improved inter-sectoral coordination	18	17%	39%	44%	0%
Improved inter-ministerial cooperation	18	6%	44%	50%	0%
Improved transnational cooperation	18	28%	44%	28%	0%
Strengthened capacity-building initiatives	18	28%	39%	33%	0%
Become more decentralized	18	28%	44%	22%	6%

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey



CHAPTER 4

FINANCING

According to the BFA, a ‘significant financial investment’ is imperative to any viable ALE system (UIL, 2010, p. 7). Consistent financing over time can determine whether adequate attention goes into creating ALE policies and in developing and maintaining governance systems. Quality provision, as defined in the BFA, is often the focus of the discussion on financing ALE, and must be situated within a robust ALE system that maintains, accredits and improves it.

4.1 THE STATE OF PUBLIC SPENDING ON ALE IN THE ARAB STATES

In the Arab States, spending on ALE as a proportion of public education spending has remained stable or decreased since 2015, similar to the trend at global level (see **Table 4.1**). Four countries reported a

decrease in ALE financing and seven countries reported that ALE financing remained the same (no change from 2015 to 2018). Only five out of 18 countries reported an increase in public spending on ALE as a proportion of public education since 2015. Yet, in *GRALE 3* (2016), seven out of 12 countries responding to this question reported on government plans to increase spending on ALE.

ALE in Arab countries receives, as elsewhere, a minor share of public spending on education. Data from *GRALE 4* reveals that the majority of Arab countries (12 out of 17) spend less than 2% on ALE as a proportion of public education expenditure.

Only one Arab country, the United Arab Emirates, reported spending 4% or more on ALE (see **Table 4.2**)

TABLE 4.1
Changes in public spending on ALE as a proportion of public education spending

	Frequency	Decreased (%)	Stayed the same (%)	Increased (%)	Do not know (%)
WORLD	149	17%	41%	28%	14%
ARAB STATES	18	22%	39%	28%	11%
INCOME GROUPS					
Low income	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Lower middle income	7	29%	14%	43%	14%
Upper middle income	4	25%	50%	25%	0%
High income	6	17%	50%	17%	16%

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

TABLE 4.2
ALE spending as percentage of public education expenditure per country

The range of ALE spending as % of public education expenditure	0–0.4%	0.5–0.9%	1.0–1.9%	2.0–3.9%	4% or more	Do not know
COUNTRY	Iraq	Algeria	Kuwait	Morocco	UAE	Djibouti
	Jordan	Bahrain	Lebanon			Egypt
	Palestine	Oman	Qatar			Syria
	Saudi Arabia		Sudan			
	Tunisia					

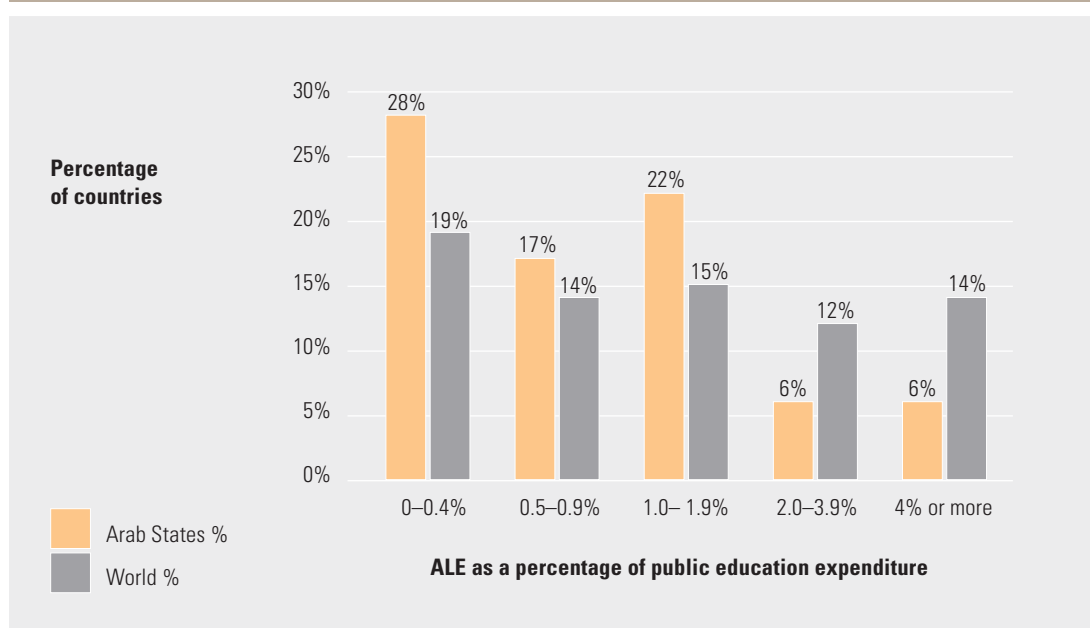
Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

Figure 4.1 shows that ALE in Arab countries received a low share of public education spending in comparison with the rest of the world. This indicates that the Arab States are lagging behind in fulfilling the commitment made in the BFA to ‘seek investment of at least 6% of Gross National Product (GNP) in education, increasing the allocation to ALE’.

Seven out of 18 countries (see **Table 4.3**) reported introducing new funding mecha-

nisms or resources for ALE since 2015 to boost ALE financing and overcome the low percentage that goes to ALE from public education expenditure. The majority of countries that introduced new funding mechanisms to ALE are in the lower middle income group (see **Table 4.3**), which might indicate that these countries are recognizing the importance of ALE and the positive return on ALE investment in socio-economic development.

FIGURE 4.1
Public spending on ALE in the Arab States



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey.

TABLE 4.3
Proportion of countries that have introduced new mechanisms or sources of funding for ALE since 2015

	Total responses GRALE 4	Yes	Proportion (%)
ARAB STATES	18	7	39%
INCOME GROUPS			
Low income	1	0	0%
Lower middle income	7	4	57%
Upper middle income	4	1	25%
High income	6	2	33%

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

Egypt has provided information for cross-collaboration with non-governmental and civil society organizations, along with telecommunications companies, to improve ALE financing.

In **Morocco**, regional councils are funding territorial literacy programmes as part of their development plans. In a declaration to parliament, the government pledged to give the necessary support to the National Agency to Combat Illiteracy to improve the rate of literacy in the country.

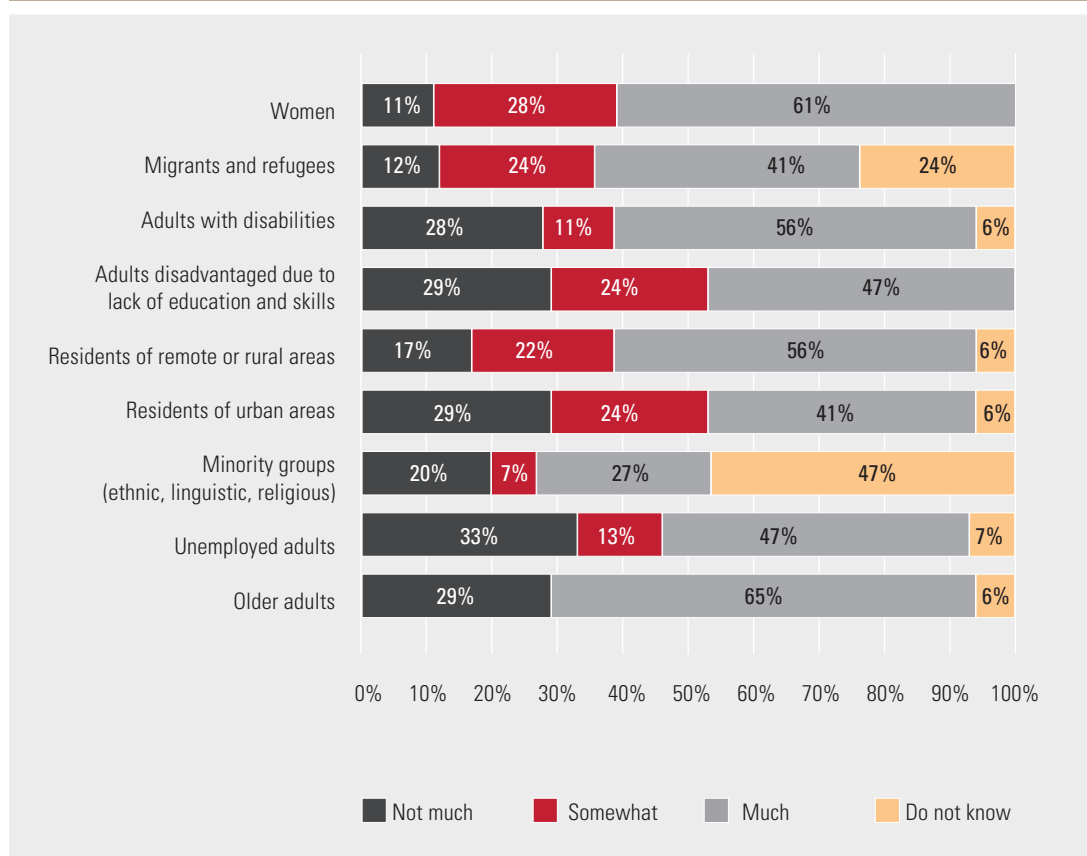
Bilateral agreements, as well as a decentralized budget to improve ALE financing, were reported by **Palestine**. The country highlighted new agreements that have been signed with donors and national and international institutions to fund and develop the adult education sector.

Prioritizing investment in ALE and lifelong learning for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged groups (women, migrants, people with disabilities, unemployed adults and others) is a commitment made by Member States in the BFA. Between 15 and 18 Arab countries provided information on whether their country had met this commitment by prioritizing financing ALE for the above-mentioned groups since 2015.

The majority of Arab countries reported that women had been prioritized in ALE financing since 2015. Residents of urban areas and migrants and refugees do not emerge as major priorities for ALE spending in the region. Almost half of the countries, however, are not able to track how much is spent on ALE for minority groups.

Prioritizing women in ALE financing can be interpreted as an encouraging sign of an increased willingness of the authorities to narrow the gender gap and provide equitable learning opportunities for all. The women's literacy rate in Arab countries is among the lowest in the world (only 67.45%, compared to the global average of 82.77% (UIS data, Adult literacy rate, population 15+ years, females, 2018). This low rate has implications for the participation of women in social life as well as in the labour market. For that reason, increasing spending on women's ALE can significantly contribute to increasing their labour market participation rate by providing them with the skills and certificates needed

FIGURE 4.2
Rates of priority in ALE spending in key groups in the Arab States



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

for jobs. The labour force participation rate for women is particularly low in the Middle East. Such low participation comes with economic and social costs. It is estimated that if women in the United Arab Emirates and Egypt were to participate in the labour force to the same extent as men, GDP would rise

by an estimated 12% and 34%, respectively (Weinstein, 2018). To unlock the potential of ALE and benefit from the power of the human capital in the Arab countries, ALE spending, in particular for women, should be perceived as a long-term investment.



CHAPTER 5

QUALITY

Themes covered in other areas of the BFA – policies, governance, finance and participation – may improve over time, but if these do not result in high-quality provision, then ALE will not make a difference for the learner or for society. Provision is where ‘the rubber meets the road’, where policy, governance, participation and finance help define a quality offer.

The BFA describes quality ALE provision as a ‘holistic, multidimensional concept and practice’, which should be regularly tracked and evaluated for improvement (UIL, 2010, p. 8). Member States agreed to ‘fostering a culture of quality in adult learning’, as laid down in Article 16 (*ibid.*). Quality requires relevant content, delivery and assessment so that provision can empower individuals and communities. Therefore, Member States committed to developing quality criteria for curricula, learning materials and teaching methodologies, and to take steps to elaborate criteria for assessing learning outcomes and improving training and employment conditions for adult educators.

Of 13 Arab countries that responded to *GRALE 3* in 2015, 54% collected information about learner completion rates, and 54% collected information about certificates or qualifications issued. These findings are linked by administrative procedures that recognize achievement through standardized qualifications which are embedded in the larger ALE system. Such immediate outcomes of ALE provision are easy to track.

However, *GRALE 3* showed that tracking the economic and social outcomes of ALE provision for the learner and society – whether from a non-formal programme with recognized qualifications or informal learning activities – was not done systematically.

Challenges remained for the adequate monitoring of ALE outcomes over time. In this respect, in *GRALE 3*, only three countries reported systematic collection on employment outcomes, and on wider social outcomes of adult learning.

5.1 ALE PROVISION OF QUALITY IN THE ARAB STATES

GRALE 4 focused on the following variables to monitor and assess the progress achieved in quality since 2015 against the commitment made by countries in the BFA:

- Progress in developing quality criteria for curricula and assessment in ALE since 2015;
- Progress in developing quality criteria for learning materials and teaching methodology since 2015;
- Progress in pre-service training and employment conditions since 2015.

According to *GRALE 4* data, 13 out of 17 countries in the Arab States reported major improvements since 2015 in the quality of ALE.

Twelve out of 17 countries reported improvement in teaching methodology, followed by progress in the quality of learning materials and curricula. On the other hand, Arab States made little progress in assessing learning outcomes; the regional rate of progress in this field is the lowest globally (see **Figure 5.1**).

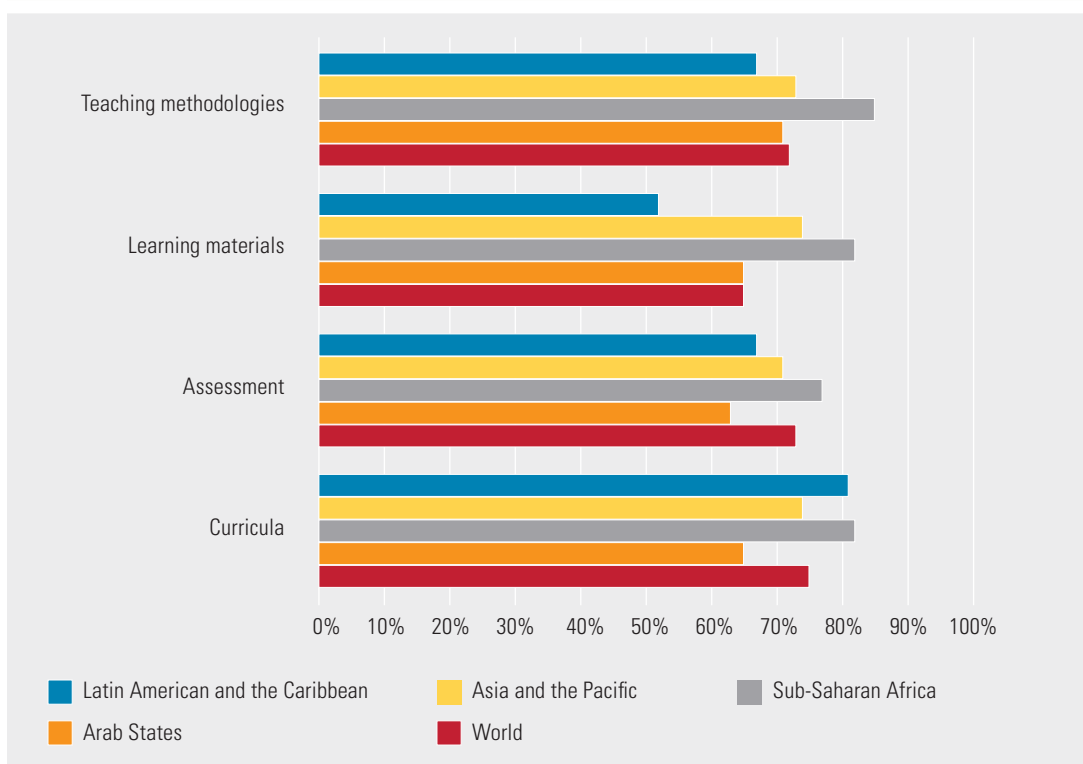
A key means of increasing quality in adult learning and education, besides curricula, teaching/learning methodology and learning materials, is improving the capacity of ALE educators and their employment conditions.

TABLE 5.1
Proportion of countries reporting improvement in the quality of ALE since 2015

	Frequency	Yes %
WORLD	142	75%
REGIONAL GROUPS		
Sub-Saharan Africa	29	86%
Arab States	17	76%
Asia and the Pacific	32	63%
North America and Western Europe	21	71%
Central and Eastern Europe	19	63%
Latin America and the Caribbean	24	88%

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

FIGURE 5.1
Progress in developing quality criteria, learning materials and assessment in ALE since 2015



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

With respect to enhancing the capacities of adult educators, Arab States have made remarkable progress since 2015. As indicated in **Figure 5.2**, 82% of the Arab countries (13 out of 16 countries) reported progress in in-service training for adult educators. This rate of progress is the highest globally. However, only 44% (seven out of 16 countries) reported

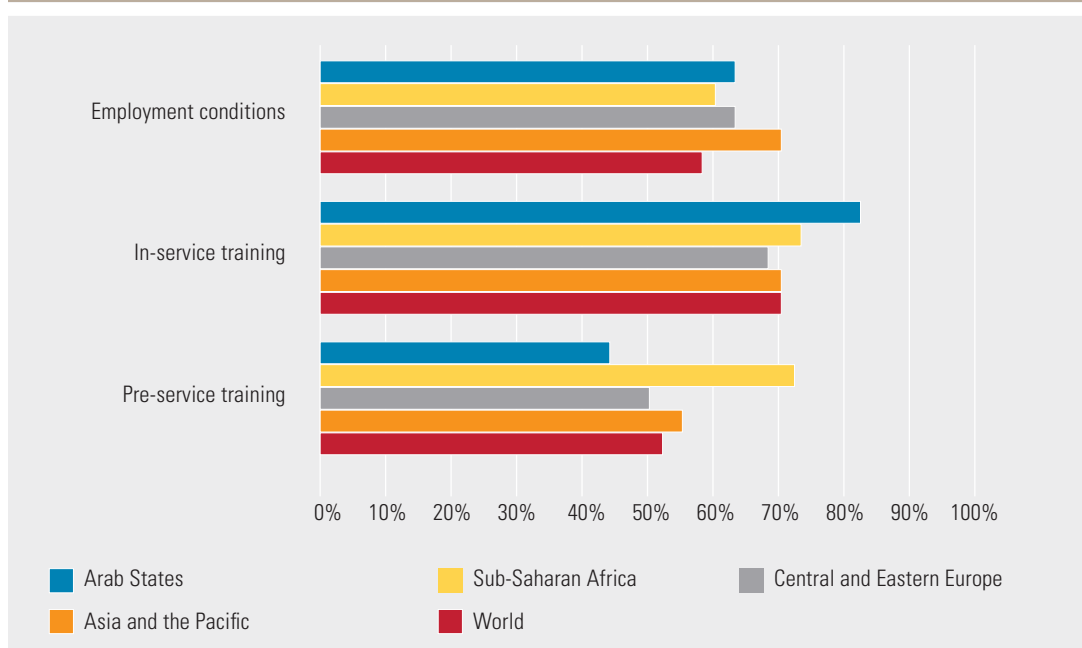
progress in pre-service training, while 63% noted progress in employment conditions. Progress in enhancing the capacities and employment conditions of adult educators varies among Arab countries according to income group. The high-income countries reported the highest rate in improving in this area, followed by the upper middle income countries.

5.2 QUALITY: PROGRESS BY RALE FIELD OF LEARNING

According to *GRALE 4* data, ALE quality improvement in Arab countries is spread unevenly across the three RALE fields of learning. **Table 5.2** shows that, since 2015, Arab countries have prioritized improving the quality criteria of literacy and basic

skills curricula, teaching methodology and enhancing the capacity of teaching personnel. Eighty-three per cent (10) of 12 responding Arab countries reported developing quality criteria for teaching methodologies for literacy, compared with only 18% reporting progress in the quality of continuing training and vocational skills. No country reported progress in the quality of citizenship education since 2015.

FIGURE 5.2
Progress in pre-service, in-service training and employment conditions since 2015



Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

TABLE 5.2
Progress in the quality of ALE with respect to RALE fields of learning since 2015

	Total responses <i>GRALE 4</i>	Literacy & basic skills	Continuing training and professional development (vocational skills)	Citizenship education	Do not know
ARAB STATES					
Developing quality criteria for curricula	11	82%	18%	0%	0%
Developing quality criteria for learning materials	11	82%	18%	0%	0%
Developing quality criteria for teaching methodologies	12	83%	17%	0%	0%
Improving pre-service training for educators	7	100%	0%	0%	0%
Improving in-service training for educators	14	71%	21%	0%	7%
Improving employment conditions	10	70%	30%	0%	0%
Assessing learning outcomes	10	80%	20%	0%	0%

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*



CHAPTER 6

PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Participation is the result of individuals engaging in ALE provision that is available to them. ALE should be accessible to all learners, regardless of income, rural/urban development, gender, ethnicity, sexual identity or orientation, disability, language or any other social, economic, demographic or cultural marker of differentiation, in order for them to participate fully. The BFA equates fair access to ALE provision with achieving social development and helping to establish peace and prosperity. It emphasizes no exclusion of an individual in any circumstance. Equality and inclusion are also highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals and are important to guarantee that the benefits of ALE are available to all.

Collecting and analysing adequate participation data should enable countries to adjust and offer better, more targeted ALE provision in the future. Without it, planners have no way of knowing if people are actually participating in ALE, what their needs are and if they are benefitting from the provision. Therefore, monitoring data on the personal, family and social benefits of ALE is important to capture the returns that countries are achieving on ALE investment. Another

advantage of monitoring learner participation and progress in ALE provision concerns identifying good practice. This is useful for confirming the effectiveness of ALE provision, and the policy and governance that informs and organizes it. But it does not stop there. Good practice can be disseminated within and between countries and adapted to the contextual and specific realities of learners.

In order to track the commitment made by Member States on collecting and analyzing data and information on participation and provision in ALE, the *GRALE 4* survey captured the overall changes in participation rates since 2015. Countries provided national participation rates, whether these were from actual figures or based on estimates.

6.1 THE STATE OF PARTICIPATION IN ALE IN THE ARAB STATES

According to *GRALE 4* data, 67% of Arab States have increased their overall participation rate since 2015, while 17% reported no change and 11% reported a decrease, as shown in **Table 6.1**.

TABLE 6.1
Change in overall participation rates in ALE since 2015

	Frequency	Decreased	Stayed the same	Increased	Do not know
WORLD	152	9%	28%	57%	7%
REGIONAL GROUPS					
Sub-Saharan Africa	32	9%	16%	72%	3%
Arab States	18	11%	17%	67%	6%
Asia and the Pacific	37	8%	27%	49%	16%
North America and Western Europe	21	0%	62%	38%	0%
Central and Eastern Europe	19	11%	26%	58%	5%
Latin America and the Caribbean	25	12%	24%	60%	4%

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

Palestine increased participation in ALE through annual media campaigns in each governorate to inform potential beneficiaries of the adult education opportunities available. In light of the Arab Literacy Decade, literacy classes have been opened in marginalized areas and a mobile education centre has been used to reach out to learners in the governorates of South Hebron and Yatta. In addition, computer skills programmes for adults have been introduced, to enable learners to acquire self-learning skills and to establish the concept of lifelong learning.

The countries were asked whether data on monitoring participation rates were based on actual figures rather than estimates. Seventy-eight per cent of countries (14 out of 18) reported having actual figures on ALE participation rates.

Half of the countries that gave a participation rate based on actual figures reported a participation rate below 5%. This indicates that the participation rate in ALE in Arab States is low in comparison with countries in other regions that also provided participation rates based on actual figures (see **Table 6.2**).

TABLE 6.2
Participation rates by region, based on actual figures

	Sub-Saharan Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	North America and Western Europe	Central and Eastern Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean
Below 1%	5%	29%	5%	7%	0%	0%
1–3%	0%	21%	11%	0%	29%	13%
3–5%	16%	0%	16%	7%	14%	13%
5–10%	21%	14%	32%	36%	36%	13%
10–20%	0%	7%	11%	0%	21%	25%
20–50%	37%	14%	11%	21%	0%	31%
More than 50%	21%	14%	16%	29%	0%	6%
Number of countries	19	14	19	14	14	16

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

Data on the participation of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, such as migrants and refugees, minority groups, adults with disabilities and low-skilled workers, were not available from many of the countries that participated in *GRALE 3*. The report recommended improving monitoring and evaluation of the participation of different groups in ALE. In response to this recommendation, *GRALE 4* asked countries about changes made in ALE participation and provision for the following groups:

- Women,
- Migrants and refugees,
- Adults with disadvantages due to lack of education and skills,
- Residents of remote or rural areas,
- Residents in urban areas,
- Minority groups (ethnic, linguistic, religious),
- Unemployed adults,
- Older adults.

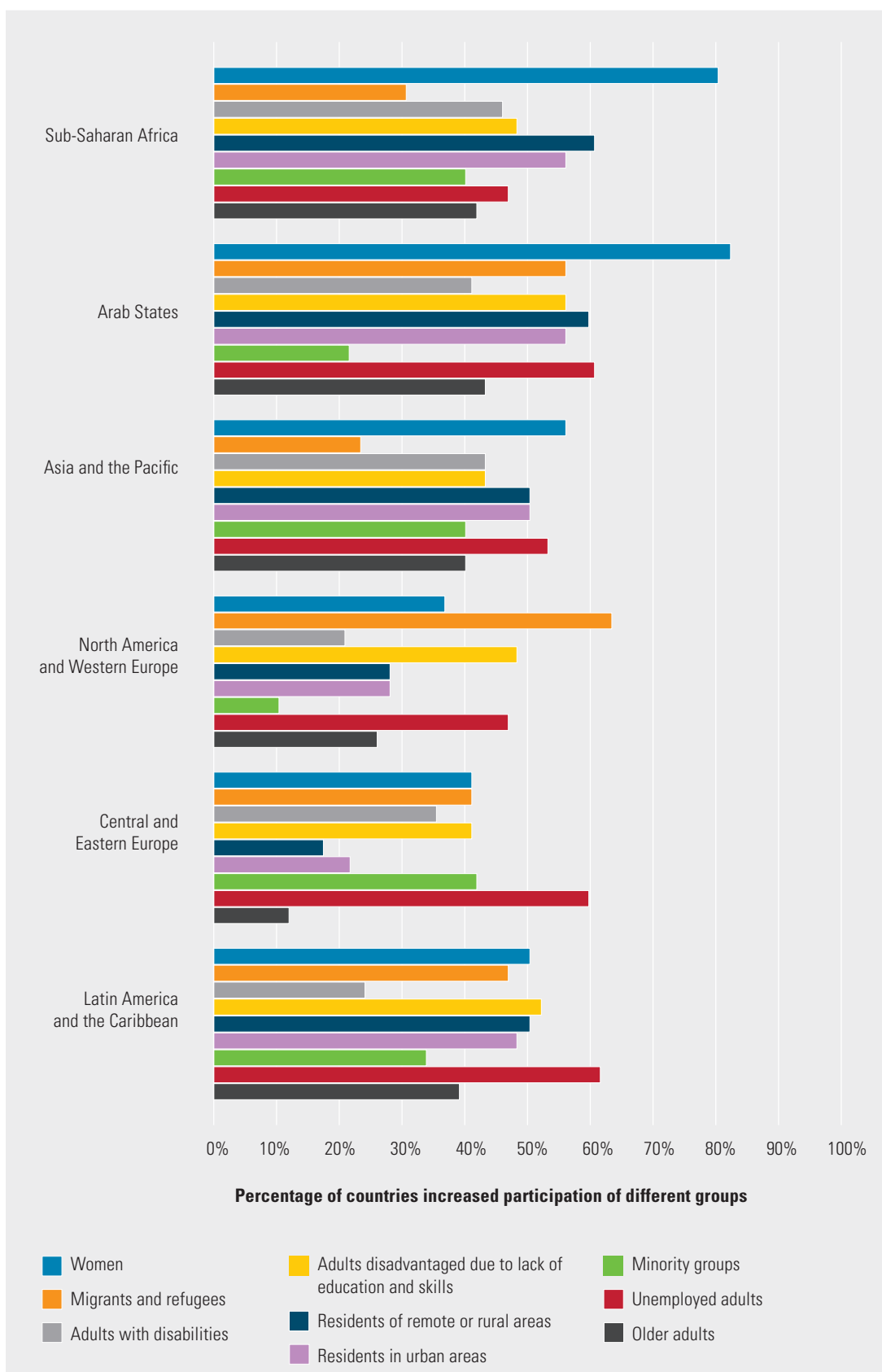
On a global level, the largest increase in participation since 2015 has been for women, with 59% of 139 countries reporting an increase in women's participation in ALE, followed by unemployed adults and adults with disadvantages due to a lack of education and skills⁵. These three groups also demonstrated the largest increase in provision. The change in ALE participation varies among regions: some regions reported remarkable increases in the participation of migrants and refugees, while others reported an increase in the ALE participation of unemployed adults. **Figure 6.2** shows that the Arab States reported the biggest change in increasing women's participation, compared to other regions. Eighty-two per cent (14 out of 17 that responded) of Arab countries reported a remarkable increase in women's participation in ALE since 2015.

Lebanon launched a national adult post-literacy programme in the social service centres in one of the country's most densely populated cities, Bourj Hammoud. The programme targets neo-literate women and girls, aiming to help them retain their literacy skills and so avoid relapsing into illiteracy. The project has demonstrated the significance of the post-literacy phase in improving the living conditions of neo-literates. The centres offer a wide range of programmes, seminars and activities about health, nutrition and cooking.

Adults with disabilities, minority groups and migrants and refugees have experienced the lowest levels of change in participation in Arab countries since 2015. Some 44% of Arab countries reported that they do not know how the participation of migrants and refugees has changed in that time. This number may indicate that Arab countries need to improve data collection on this group, in order to identify their learning needs in a way that can inform education policies and enhance provision. The Arab States, which hosted almost 38 million migrants and refugees in 2017 (68% of them are of working age [ESCWA & IOM, 2019]), could benefit enormously from unlocking the positive potential of this group to be a contributor to development through inclusive ALE provision.

⁵ See **Figure 1.5** in the main report

FIGURE 6.2
Progress made in participation of different groups, since 2015, by region



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

6.2 PARTICIPATION: PROGRESS BY RALE FIELD OF LEARNING

The majority of Arab countries reported an increase in participation in all the three areas, particularly in literacy and basic skills. As **Table 6.3** shows, 82% of Arab countries reported increases in participation in literacy and basic skills, followed by citizenship education. Participation in continuing training and professional development/vocational skills increase the least compared to the other fields. It is worth noting that none of the countries reported a decrease in participation for any of the three fields.

TABLE 6.3
Changes in participation according fields of learning since 2015

	Frequency	Decrease	No change	Increase	Do not know
ARAB STATES					
Literacy and basic skills	17	0%	18%	82%	0%
Continuing training and professional development (vocational skills)	17	0%	24%	53%	24%
Liberal, popular and community education (citizenship education skills)	16	0%	25%	69%	6%

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey



CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Monitoring ALE progress in the Arab States since 2015 against the five areas of action of BFA and the three RALE fields of learning has been the core focus of this regional report. The majority of Arab countries reported progress in ALE policies, but the data from 18 Arab countries submitted to the *GRALE 4* survey, indicate that this progress is uneven. Stakeholders have been involved to a greater extent in policy issues, and a wide range of new policies have been put into place. However, progress in the implementation of ALE policies and the legislation that regulates ALE has been slower.

While data from Arab countries indicate a willingness to implement new policies and to make governance practices more efficient, it is clear that a lack of ALE funding undermines these actions. The majority of Arab countries participating in *GRALE 4* reported spending less than 2% on ALE, as a percentage of public education expenditure. Modest financial allocations are likely to affect more socially disadvantaged adults, such as those with disabilities or from minority groups, thus limiting their participation in ALE. Besides funding, quality criteria of ALE also deserve increased attention in the region. Improvements in ALE quality are lagging behind world averages, in particular regarding curricula and assessment of learning outcomes.

The report demonstrates that the Arab States are making more progress than countries in other regions in increasing women's participation, but a discernible pattern of low participation persists among vulnerable groups, in particular minority groups and adults with disabilities. This situation requires further attention from all relevant stakeholders.

GRALE 4 represents a useful point of reference for policy-makers wishing to strengthen their ALE system and stimulate demand among their least-advantaged citizens. Despite the progress made, ALE remains a largely untapped resource in efforts to promote and achieve the SDGs. It is important that stakeholders appreciate ALE's critical role as a driver of individual self-fulfilment, economic competitiveness and community development. A holistic approach to ALE in the Arab States is a prerequisite for ensuring inclusive, quality and equitable learning opportunities for all youth and adults.

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ANNEX

LIST OF ARAB COUNTRIES

Country	Participation in <i>GRALE 3</i>	Participation in <i>GRALE 4</i>
Algeria	yes	yes
Bahrain	yes	yes
Djibouti	no	yes
Egypt	yes	yes
Iraq	no	yes
Jordan	yes	yes
Kuwait	no	yes
Lebanon	yes	yes
Libya	no	no
Mauritania	yes	yes
Morocco	yes	yes
Oman	yes	yes
Palestine	no	yes
Qatar	no	yes
Saudi Arabia	yes	yes
Sudan	yes	yes
Syrian Arab Republic	yes	yes
Tunisia	yes	yes
United Arab Emirates	yes	yes
Yemen	no	no



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