The family and social integration in the Middle East and North Africa

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Outline

• Strong global trend toward smaller and more educated families (economic-demographic transition)
• This transition contributes to social integration, through greater gender balance
• But also causes more inequality by reproducing existing inequality
• Weak and sometimes conflicting policy responses to accommodate these changes
The economic-demographic transition

- Explains the role of the family in economic growth
- Has implications for social integration because it improves the gender balance within the family
- Suggests policies to take advantage of the transition at the level of the family
Fertility transition in groups of countries
Child mortality declined earlier
Rise of schooling

![Graph showing the rise of schooling across different income levels from 1960 to 2010. The graph indicates an increase in average years of schooling for 15-19 year olds across income groups.]
Schooling in Arab countries has grown faster than in other regions
Economic-demographic transition

Source: WDI and Barro and Lee (2010)
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Total fertility rate vs. Years of schooling (15-19)

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Positive micro trends, contrary macro trends

• Labor markets have not accommodated the change in the role of women in the family
• Education has not helped youth get jobs, creating a burden for the family and making the micro transition incongruous with the rigid macro setting
• Investment in education quantity, less in quality
• Education-oriented families reduce social integration by increasing inequality of opportunity
The share of women in employment
# High rates of youth unemployment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Youth Unemployment</th>
<th>Total Unemployment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>24.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
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<td>10.1</td>
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<td>Iraq</td>
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<td>Jordan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
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<td>11.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
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<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td>Syria</td>
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<td>Tunisia</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is wrong with MENA education?

- High levels of attainment (schooling) not matched by achievement (learning and skill formation)
- The role of families in achievement is stronger than in attainment
- Families reproduce, sometimes increase inequality
Average mathematics scores in 2007 and 2011 for MENA countries for 8th grade boys and girls
Girls scores are higher in oil-rich nations

[Bar chart showing girls scores for various countries in 2007 and 2011]
Math scores: boys vs. girls in TIMSS 2011
The share of circumstances in inequality of education achievement
Policy implications

• Align policies with secular trends corresponding to the economic-demographic transition.
  – Reform family laws to increase the bargaining power of women within the family in accordance with their changing roles.
  – Increase women’s status in economic and civic life to correspond to their increased status within the family
  – Reform education to increase returns to family investments in educating their children.
  – Reform labor markets to increase returns to the type of skills families have a comparative advantage in.

• Equality of opportunity policies: level the playing field by lifting the low end of the social spectrum.