



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.



مؤسسة محمد بن راشد آل مكتوم  
MOHAMMED BIN RASHID  
AL MAKTOUM FOUNDATION

# 2016 ARAB KNOWLEDGE

# INDEX



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This report has been originally written in Arabic. The English translation has been edited for flow and clarity, and as such may not reflect all parts or sentences in the Arabic version.

## Foreword

### Chairman of the Board

#### Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation

### Arab Reading and Knowledge Indices... Objectively and scientifically tracking situations and trends for a sustainable development

“History teaches us that no civilisation has endured by relying solely on its might and its wealth, but rather by virtue of the efforts of its people to innovate solutions for the challenges that faced them. Civilisations that stopped learning and researching future opportunities declined and were reduced to being the subject of history books,” said His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, underlining the unparalleled importance of hard work and innovation in building nations.

To be sure, for this paradigm to achieve its objectives, we need to exert tremendous efforts to create the scientific tools that would see us through the challenges; we need to propose solutions and implement best practices to face them. With that in mind, we present you today with the fruit of these efforts, which reaffirm Dubai and the UAE’s lead when it comes to launching innovative initiatives and project that seek to spread knowledge around the world.

The first of its kind in the region, Arab Reading Index initiative was the fruit of a collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and extensive efforts by top-tier experts and specialists in research- and knowledge-related fields. It supports the UAE’s National Reading Strategy, which seeks to instil a reading culture in the country.

The Index is an objective scientific tool that tracks the status of reading and evaluates cultural development in the Arab World. It also serves to measure the extent to which our knowledge-related initiatives have succeeded in realising their objectives. We are confident that the Index will be a go-to source for facts and figures for stakeholders and decision makers in their efforts to set policies that encourage reading and knowledge.

With the same frame of mind, we had previously launched the Arab Knowledge Index, another unique product that studies knowledge in the Arab World along six main axes: pre-university education, higher education, technical vocational education and training, information and communications technology, economy and research, development and innovation.

The Arab Knowledge Index has successfully offered stakeholders in the Arab World a roadmap to rely on when setting strategies, providing them with accurate data and statistics, updated on a yearly basis in accordance with international standards.

The Arab Reading and Knowledge Indices thus become part of the Arab Knowledge Project, which seeks to fill the knowledge gap in our region, enabling our countries to produce and disseminate knowledge, and to use it for the good of our people and future generations.

Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum  
Chairman of the Board  
Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation



## Preamble

### United Nations Development Programme

The release of this report comes as the Arab Knowledge Project enters its 10th year investigating the complementarity between knowledge and development, and how this interaction can contribute to achieving sustainable human development in the Arab region. Over the course of a decade, the Project has moved from studying and analysing the state of knowledge in the region and its theoretical foundations, to applying rigorous quantitative tools to monitor and evaluate the sectors which present a strong link between knowledge and development. These are pre-university education; higher education; technical vocational education and training (TVET); information and communications technology (ICT); economy; and research, development and innovation (RDI).

This year's report encompasses two distinct but related components. First, the 2016 Arab Knowledge Index, an updated and revised version of the 2015 edition to better capture the state of knowledge systems in the Arab region. Second, the Arab Reading Index, a new initiative resulting from an electronic survey on reading practices which received more than 145,000 responses from 22 Arab countries.

While the Arab Knowledge Index focuses on how the relation between knowledge and development can help meet contemporary challenges, the Arab Reading Index assesses the practice of reading in the lives of people across the region. It emphasizes the role of reading as an indispensable tool which empowers individuals, improves skills and capacities, and supports innovation and creativity. Reading is to knowledge what letters are to the alphabet; it is the embodiment of the passion and curiosity that drive advances in knowledge and development. Reading is a distinguishing feature of developed nations that offers limitless opportunities for learning, providing a distinct advantage in an era of unprecedented progress in science and technology. Reading also provides

the means to understand ourselves, others and our social environment, as well as to devise effective and sustainable solutions to complex economic, social, political, environmental and development challenges.

The Arab Knowledge Index and the Reading Index are complementary efforts towards the establishment of knowledge societies in the Arab region. Both indices seek to provide reliable data to inform decision-making processes and to support the development of evidence-based policies aiming at advancing knowledge-led human development in the region and beyond.

The methodology adopted for the Arab Reading Index marks a shift for the Arab Knowledge Project from the utilization of external data and/or development of case studies on specific countries, toward producing its own data by conducting an electronic survey covering 22 Arab countries. In the coming years, the intention is to develop further tools of study and expand their coverage in terms of topics and participation.

Despite the challenging circumstances in the region, the Arab Knowledge Project has remained steadfast. Its milestone achievements are a result of the longstanding and solid partnership between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation, and are guided by the vision of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, who maintains that: "The race for excellence has no finish line".

We would like to express our gratitude namely to the teams at the Arab Knowledge Project, Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation; looking forward highly and with eagerness to the yet upcoming initiatives and publications by the Arab Knowledge Project.

Sophie de Caen  
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