

Why is Yemen the poorest country in the Middle East?

Learning objectives

- ▶ To understand factors that hinder development.
 - ▶ To compare the levels of development for two countries.
- Yemen is the poorest country in the Middle East. It is also a country of great beauty and heritage, including four UNESCO World Heritage sites. Yemen's population is 25.4 million and approximately 54 per cent of those people live in poverty, surviving on fewer than \$2 per day. Approximately 45 per cent of the population is malnourished. In 2017, the latest civil war in Yemen has created a humanitarian crisis (see B and C). This war is the result of extreme poverty and the political instability and corruption that has hindered any possibility of economic development. In this lesson you investigate why the country is so poor and make comparisons with the UAE.

Yemen economic report

Conflict

Until 1990, Yemen was divided into two different countries – the north and south. Regular outbreaks of civil war between these two areas have drained the wealth created by oil reserves. Instead, wealth has been used on military and arms spending.

Imports/exports

Virtually no products are exported. Agriculture is poorly developed and most food is imported. The economy is reliant on oil exports, foreign aid and money sent from Yemenis living abroad. In the 1970s and 1980s, every family had at least one male relative working in Saudi Arabia who sent home large sums of money. But when Yemen declared itself neutral during the Gulf War, many Yemeni workers in Saudi Arabia were forced to leave. This meant much less money received by Yemen from this source.

Governments and wealth from oil

Many corrupt governments have misused the nation's wealth. In 2005, oil revenues accounted for 67 per cent of government income, and 86 per cent of export revenues. These oil reserves are running out, but gas fields have been discovered. Exploration and investment by oil companies have not developed due to the insecurity of the country. Oil pipelines in Yemen's eastern desert were destroyed by opponents of the former president to prevent the government getting export revenues.

Infrastructure

There are no railways, leaving many areas inaccessible and many people unable to access medical, and other basic services.

Population

The population is due to double to more than 40 million in the next 20 years, and to reach 60 million in 30 years. Two-thirds of the population are under 24, but unemployment among young people is estimated at 60 per cent and this will only worsen as the population grows.

Gender equality

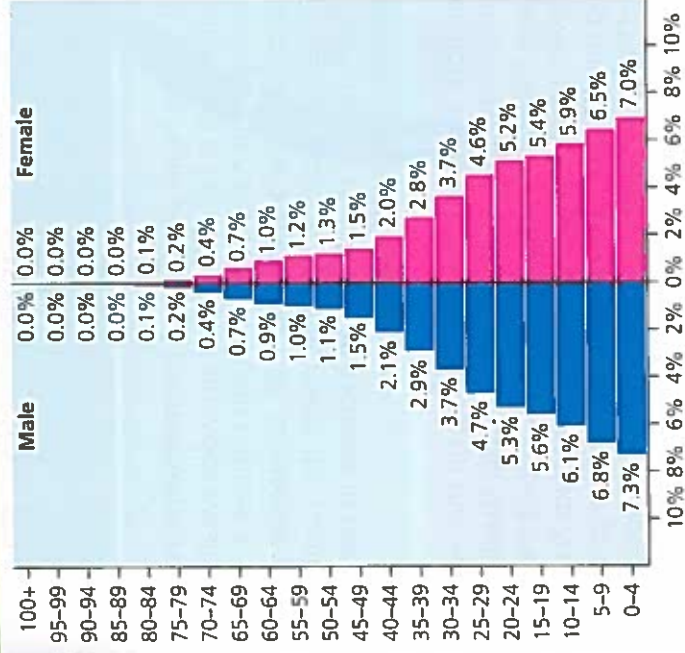
The World Economic Forum named Yemen the worst country for gender equality. Yemeni girls are often taken out of school to marry young or care for relatives. As a result, school attendance and graduation rates for women are far lower than for men. Approximately 49 per cent of Yemeni women are illiterate.

Water

Yemen is ranked as the seventh most water-stressed country on the planet. This is due to mismanagement of water supplies. In Yemen's capital city, Sana'a, tap water is only available once every four days for its 2 million people.

Tourism

Yemen has potential in tourism. Its physical geography is spectacular. Yemen's cultural heritage, including its distinctive architectural styles, has in the past attracted travellers worldwide. Future development of this is dependent upon solving Yemen's security crises, developing tourism's infrastructure, and providing a stable and secure environment.



A Population pyramid for Yemen 2017 (total population of 28,119,545)

Yemen at 'point of no return' as conflict leaves almost 7 million close to famine

Aid agencies have warned that Yemen is 'at the point of no return' after new figures released by the UN indicated 17 million people are facing severe food insecurity and will fall prey to famine without urgent humanitarian assistance, due to the latest war in the country.

After the outbreak of war, Awad Alhamad Qasemal-Wesabi fled street fighting in Taiz with his wife and four-year-old son, Jamal, relocating to Ibb, a city 30 miles to the north. 'We ran from our home because of the conflict,' he said. 'Yet food proved hard to come by in Ibb, where makeshift tents house thousands of people displaced from elsewhere in Yemen.'

Al-Wesabi lost his wife to the cold weather and is struggling to feed Jamal. 'We ran from the war to be in another city, yet my son and I suffer from malnutrition here on a daily basis.'

'Our survival depends on what is left from other people. Sometimes we eat but other times we don't find anything to eat, we eat only one meal a day, my son goes into the restaurant next to our tent and takes what is left from people's food; some rice and bread. We eat corn with water and the water is not clean.'

B Article from *The Guardian*, 8 March 2017

C

14.7 million people don't know where their next meal is coming from

8.6 million people don't have access to adequate healthcare

840,000 children are acutely malnourished

334,000 people are displaced within the country

56% of the \$596m requested to respond to humanitarian needs

13.1 million people don't have access to safe water and sanitation

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Activities

- 1 Read the Yemen economic report.
 - a) Turn back to Lesson 7.6, page 132, and reread the causes of poverty.
 - b) Draw a spider diagram as in Lesson 7.6, page 132, and use the report to summarise the reasons for lack of development in Yemen.
- 2 Read B and C about the impact of the latest war in Yemen. C was produced on 21 January 2015.
 - a) Identify five key points from the data that best identify the issues.
 - b) Write a paragraph to describe what life must be like in Yemen.
 - c) Why has this organisation published the poster?
- 3 What do you think is the main reason Yemen is poor?
 - a) Describe the shape and structure of the pyramid.
 - b) Which stage of the Demographic Transition Model (page 146) do you think Yemen is in? Justify your choice.
 - c) Write a paragraph comparing A with the population pyramid for the UAE on page 273.
- 4 Look carefully at the population pyramid for Yemen, A.
 - a) Go back and look at the Sustainable Development Goals in Lesson 7.9, page 138. Identify the four goals that would best support the Yemen.
 - b) Draw Development Compass Roses for UAE and Yemen.
 - c) Use your DCRs to help you compare the development of UAE and Yemen. Write a paragraph to explain why there is such a difference in development between the two countries.
- 5 What do you think are the three most important reasons for the differences in development, between the UAE and Yemen?