



## Well-Targeted Social Safety Net Programs are Critical for Promoting Development in the Arab World

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Effective, resilient and well-targeted social safety net (SSN) programs can mitigate the impact of subsidy reforms in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Senior policymakers, analysts, and government officials are meeting in Kuwait this week to share knowledge and practical experiences about the design and implementation of SSNs.  
The week-long course, held for the second year in Kuwait, is sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Middle East Center for Economics and Finance in Kuwait, with World Bank support. Participants from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Oman, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain, Morocco, Tunisia, West Bank and Gaza, Mauritania, Djibouti, Libya, and Algeria will discuss challenging SSN issues facing their own countries and identify solutions. They will join the World Bank-supported global community of practice to share their main findings and lessons learned.  
When compared to other interventions like universal price subsidies, well designed social safety net programs have a profound impact on reaching the poorest segments of the population, said Philippe Karam, IMF-Middle East Center for Economics and Finance Acting Director.  
The course provides a knowledge-sharing platform and builds on practical experiences from around the world, including the latest research findings and operational work of the World Bank and other institutions. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss the conceptual and implementation issues involved in the set-up, implementation, as well as performance monitoring and evaluation of the safety net programs. Participants will then address specific issues facing the region, including: inclusion and resilience of safety nets in a changing political economy; design and implementation of safety nets to mitigate the impact of subsidy reforms; accountability and governance in service delivery; and, use of SSNs to promote human capital development and labor market activation in various countries.  
This course provides an excellent and timely opportunity for practitioners from across the region to discuss not only best practices, but also ideas for implementing them, said Bassam Ramadan, World Bank Country Manager in Kuwait. "This fruitful dialogue can help improve the effectiveness of social safety net programs in better addressing the specific needs and issues faced by the various countries of the region."  
One of the main priorities of the Ministry of Social Affairs is to ensure that the benefits of Kuwait's significant economic growth are broadly shared across various households and social strata especially vulnerable individuals, said Abdelmuhsin Al Mutairi, Undersecretary, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor. "Effective social safety net programs in Kuwait are key in supplementing such growth."  
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