

This Newsletter presents highlights of the progress made under the **Mashreq Gender Facility (MGF)** through the three country work programs – Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon - and the regional work program. It also reports on budget. The period for this quarterly Newsletter is December 2023 through February 2024. Next issue will be circulated in June 2024.

الله أكبر

IRAQ

- Based on workshops held Fall 2023, a series of guidance materials has been developed: (a) A draft **guidance manual on how to improve childcare data collection and management** using “Kobo Toolbox” and “GIS” software’s has been shared with GOI including KRG counterparts, and (b) a draft **guidance manual on Women-Responsive M&E** with the Iraq Poverty Reduction Strategy III as a demonstration case. This directly informs the PRS and further be used as reference across government agencies.
- A draft review of the **legal framework regulating childcare in Iraq** has been developed and shared with GOI, highlighting key gaps and global good practices. The finalized review will be integrated into the forthcoming Childcare Supply and Demand Assessment.
- Based on the results of a survey by CBI, collection of **key financial indicators from banks** will be initiated by CBI. This is expected to improve availability of disaggregated data, that can inform policy decisions to close the gender gap in access to finance.
- A draft scoping note on **grievance redressal mechanisms related to discrimination in access to finance** was finalized. It includes recommendations on setting up/enhancing grievance mechanisms with a focus on specific needs of women consumers, including updating the Consumer Protection Regulations/Guidelines of the CBI. The draft note will be discussed with the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) and relevant stakeholders.



JORDAN

- Contribution to the focus chapter in the Jordan Economic Monitor fall edition titled: **Building Success, Breaking Barriers: Unlocking the Economic Power of Women in Jordan**, highlighting the need to build women’s human capital and to address access to affordable quality childcare and affordable safe transport as two main constraints women face to enter and stay in the labor market. It was launched in a December event held in partnership with the Jordan Strategy Forum and JNCW.
- In support of the GOJ efforts to improve Jordan’s score in the **Women, Business and the Law index**, a review of the scores was facilitated, considering the new methodology and building on ongoing engagement with the GOJ team working towards achieving this target under the Economic Modernization Vision.
- To improve access to **gender data**, the MGF contributed to shaping the Department of Statistics’ forthcoming status of gender statistical thematic report, identifying key socio-economic indicators based on international indices and national priorities.

In preparation for the **IFC Care Arabia** initiative, partly funded by the MGF, 10 private sector companies in Lebanon and 7 firms in Jordan have been recruited to be engaged under a **peer learning platform** to exchange experiences and knowledge on care policies and practices at the firm level. Additionally, to strengthen the **business and financial management capacities** of 60 private nurseries from Lebanon and Jordan, a letter of engagement was signed with the Jordan Kuwait Bank to support the project through financial expertise as well as potential responsible investing and access to finance to nurseries identified with high potential to expand their businesses.



LEBANON

- A **second phase of the “Reaching our full potential” campaign** is being developed with the launch of the conceptualization and production of a video focused on paternity leave. The video will focus on cultural change and highlight the importance of fatherhood then feature a call for action related to the passage of the paternity leave legislation.
- The team participated in several **roundtables around legal reforms at the Parliament**, including on family-friendly policies, and on the results of a recent analysis of the implementation of Law 205/2020 on the criminalization of sexual harassment.
- A review of international evidence and research have been completed on **improving saving behaviors amongst poor women** as well as on increasing formality amongst agricultural workers. The next phase consists of adapting these findings to the local context and providing recommendations for project and legislation design that can, for example, be implemented under WB operations ensuring sustainability of MGF work.



MGF Regional Work Program

SPOTLIGHT ON: LEVERAGING MGF RESULTS FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPACT



The MGF was created as a five-year initiative (2019-2024), coinciding with generous funding from the governments of Canada and Norway. Over the years, the MGF has leveraged internal World Bank trust funds and bank budget, as well as partnerships with other bilateral donors for specific activities. One example is the IFC-led **Care Arabia initiative** that was born out of MGF-supported assessments on the supply and demand for childcare and on private investment in early childhood care and education, and continuous engagement across the public and private sector on family-friendly workplace policies. The Care Arabia initiative, partly funded by the MGF, aims to bridge the gap in the childcare market between private employers and care enterprises by building the capacity of childcare providers to grow their businesses and by supporting private employers in implementing workplace-based childcare solutions for their workforce - ultimately leading to more women being economically active.

The **World Bank lending portfolio** is another venue the MGF is using to ensure its impact extends beyond its direct activities. Providing targeted support to teams during the design of lending operations has led to 16 lending projects in the last three years - totaling over US\$ 3.3 billion- identifying and addressing at least one gender gap. In addition, topic-specific work under the MGF has helped directly shape World Bank-financed projects. For example, in Lebanon the successful training of women entrepreneurs under the MGF was scaled up in operations responding to the Port of Beirut blast, and in Jordan the analytical work and engagement across sectors led to a pipeline operation to address multiple constraints that women face to enter and stay in the labor market.

Finally, the MGF is informing **strategic World Bank Group core analytical products and instruments** that guide the operational and analytical engagement at the country level, including Country Partnership Strategies and related learning reviews. For example, the Jordan Economic Monitor included a special focus on female labor force participation, informed by the analytical work produced under the MGF. Similarly, the MGF informed the Iraq Economic Monitor Spring 2021 special focus on economic opportunities for women. Last but not least, the Maghreb Facility for Women’s Economic and Social Inclusion was modeled after the MGF, which is considered an effective way to identify, prioritize and address gender issues in a collaborative, multi-sectoral manner.

MGF Budget Report

Reporting Period: June 1, 2019 – March 1, 2024

Received to Date

Donor	Amount Received
Canada	10,662,540.00
Norway	2,894,460.00
Total received	13,557,000.00

Committed to Date

Funds Allocation	Estimated amount
Iraq Work Plan	3,450,000.00
Jordan Work Plan	3,450,000.00
Lebanon Work Plan	3,450,000.00
Regional Work Plan	2,600,000.00
Total committed	12,950,000.00

Available Funds

Available balance	607,000.00
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Iraq Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 2,641,998.00
Available balance	\$ 808,002.00

Jordan Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 2,663,976.79
Available balance	\$ 786,023.21

Lebanon Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 2,521,798.75
Available balance	\$ 928,201.25

Regional Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 2,600,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 2,707,775.56
Available balance	\$ (107,775.56)

disbursements = actual expenditures & committed budget

The **Mashreq Gender Facility** (MGF) is a 5-year Facility (2019-2024) that provides technical assistance to **Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon** to enhance **women’s economic empowerment and opportunities** as a catalyst towards more inclusive, sustainable, and peaceful societies, where economic growth benefits all. Working with the private sector, civil society organizations and development partners, the MGF supports **government-led efforts, country level priorities** and **strategic regional activities** that: (i) Strengthen the enabling environment for women’s economic participation; and (ii) Improve women’s access to economic opportunities.

The MGF is a **World Bank - IFC initiative** in collaboration with the governments of **Canada and Norway**. It is mainly supported by the **Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality** that counts on generous contributions from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

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