

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 June to August 2021. Next issue will be circulated early December 2021.

Implementation of the MGF work has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which has caused some adaptations and delays.



IRAQ

After several months of preparation the second MGF Iraq workplan has been finalized and endorsed by the GOI, including a stronger focus on vulnerable populations (IDPs and refugees) and liberated areas.

- **Venture Spark4Her**: A gender sensitization training for incubators and accelerators, and an investment readiness training for women entrepreneurs was completed in August 2021, with 7 trained incubators/accelerators, 32 trained women entrepreneurs.
- A webinar on **marketing and adapting to challenges posed by the Covid-19** pandemic was delivered in June to 44 female entrepreneurs.
- A **survey on legal awareness and enforcement of the law** was completed in KRI covering 100 public and private sector respondents. Initial findings indicate low awareness of rights (only 13% are aware of legal rights) and inequalities based on gender in hiring in the private sector (54%).
- A draft **manual on strengthening enforcement of the labor law and agricultural laws** was developed to be shared with government officials responsible for implementation. These laws are key to ensure an enabling environment for women's economic participation.



JORDAN

- GoJ entities recognize the need to address the **licensing burdens for Home-based Businesses**, including the National Aid Fund targeting as well as municipal and Jordan Food and Drug Association requirements. Ministry of Local Administration is reviewing detailed guidance that will update HBB registration and licensing process.
- The quantitative analysis to measure the **socio-economic impact of microlending** on women micro-entrepreneurs was completed. Initial findings reveal that only 7 percent of women recipients end up with a business, and these employed on average 1.2 additional persons.
- A closing event for the **Women's Employment Peer Learning Platform** was held in partnership with int@j and JNCW to highlight year-long achievements of the PLP activities. The event launched the third case study that showcases Amin Kawar and Sons and their work on family friendly policies, and announcement of the **Leaders4Equality program**.
- Initial findings from the **MGF Childcare Assessment** report that 20 percent of districts lack any formal childcare services, and that increasing childcare demand to 25 percent of children could create 60,000 jobs.
- The Minister of Social Development in a meeting with WB has provided guidance to coordinate on approved additional MGF resources on childcare through the National Council for Family Affairs as the national arm for wider inclusion of stakeholders



LEBANON

- Three winners were selected following the **DigitalAG4Her hackathon** and won incubation prizes to kick start their innovative ICT-based solutions to support women working in agriculture. One of the winning solutions, Pure Farms, aims to produce and sale microgreens resulting in high quality, safe, strong taste food with long shelf life; another solution, Kawafungo, is about using coffee waste to grow mushrooms; while the third solution, Rivaland, aims at providing farmers with a product-service system for purifying polluted irrigation water.
- A closing event for the **Women's Employment Peer Learning Platform** was held in July 2021 in partnership with CCIA-BML during which achievements were highlighted and the Leaders4Equality cohort was launched. 35 participants attended.
- The **Venture Spark4Her**, a gender sensitization training for incubators and accelerators and an investment readiness training for women entrepreneurs, was completed, with 33 trained women entrepreneurs, and 5 trained incubators/ accelerators.
- A **law project amending several articles in the Labor Code** was approved in June 2021 and signed by six members of the Parliament. Drafted by NCLW with technical assistance of the MGF, articles include provisions on equal work for equal value; maternity, paternity and family care leaves; breastfeeding; and childcare. To become law, the General Assembly of the Parliament needs to vote it through.

MGF Regional Work Program

DIALOGUE & PARTICIPATION

The MGF supported the regional launch of the World Bank childcare flagship report 'Better Jobs and Brighter Futures: Investing in Childcare to Build Human Capital' on July 28, 2021. The report highlights the potential of investments in childcare to increase women's employment and productivity, create new jobs, improve child outcomes, drive economic growth and support more resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic. The regional launch aimed to elevate the issue of childcare in the region, and facilitate discussions among attending policy-makers and key stakeholders, within and between countries in the MENA region, and included government representatives from Jordan.

DATA & KNOWLEDGE

State of the Mashreq Women Report II - To inform the report that will be focused on the care economy, new data has been collected. Initial findings of surveys covering Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, show that lack of time due to family responsibilities is the most common reason mothers, especially those with children under 5, are out of the labor force. During the COVID-19 pandemic, time spent on care activities increased and time spent on income-generating activities declined for the average woman. Most households with children under 5 do not use any childcare services and the willingness-to-use formal daycare, especially paid daycare, among current non-users is quite low. However, demand for formal childcare services as well as demand for work in the childcare industry are higher for unemployed women actively seeking work. The report is expected to be published late 2021.

INNOVATING 4 RESULTS

Enhancing forcibly displaced women's access to economic opportunities – A policy note on the Economic Empowerment of Refugee Women in Jordan was finalized, building on extensive consultations with stakeholders like JNCW, UNHCR, UN Women and CSOs. The note identifies obstacles to refugee women's access to decent work in Jordan, such as legal and regulatory challenges, lack of access to financial services and to information, scarcity of support services, and predominance of patriarchal social norms. Against these challenges, the note presents a series of short- and medium-term policy recommendations that can be implemented by governmental bodies and institutions to address some of the identified barriers to refugee women's economic empowerment. The note will be published in September, followed by engagement with government and other actors.

MGF Budget Report

Reporting Period: June 1, 2019 – September 1, 2021

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	1,500,000.00
Jordan Work Plan	2,450,000.00
Lebanon Work Plan	2,250,000.00
Regional Work Plan	1,500,000.00
Total committed	7,700,000.00

Available Funds

Available balance	5,857,000.00
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*The amounts reflect additional funding allocations for the Jordan and Lebanon Phase II work plans. The Iraq and the regional Phase II work plans are expected to be finalized and endorsed shortly. "disbursements" = actual expenditures & committed budget.

Iraq Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	885,897.80
Available balance	\$	614,102.20

Jordan Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	2,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	1,393,733.63
Available balance	\$	1,056,266.37

Lebanon Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	2,250,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	1,146,715.74
Available balance	\$	1,103,284.26

Regional Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	1,001,649.44
Available balance	\$	498,350.56

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 (UFGES)** with contributions from the governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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