

*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 through August 2023. Next issue will be circulated in December 2023.*

الله أكبر

IRAQ

- Under the **entrepreneurship microloan** activity, preparation meetings were held with the Iraqi Private Banks League and Baghdad Chamber of Commerce on matching female entrepreneurs, who completed at least 6 out of the 11 financial management courses, with the banks and financial institutions to obtain loans with eased conditions.
- Technical discussions to consider international standards and best practices in the **revision of the draft of the labor law** are undergoing with government stakeholders, including Council of Ministers Secretariat and Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The focus of these discussions is on the removal of restrictions on women's ability to work at night and in all sectors, as well as the removal of the condition of female employment for employers to support childcare to allow flexible forms of support, such as basing employer-provided childcare on the number of children rather than number of female employees.
- Discussions on next steps related to **Women's Inclusion in Public Procurement Policy in KRI** took place with the Kurdistan Regional Government to include technical workshops with high level government officials and awareness raising on the value of greater inclusion of women owned and led businesses in public procurement as a means to promote women's entrepreneurship and innovation. This can contribute to achieving other goals such as women led businesses subcontractors scaling up to become prime contractors.



JORDAN

- Based on a request from the Ministry of Labor, the **policy and guidelines for protection against violence, harassment and discrimination** in the world of work for the private sector were reviewed in light of recent legal amendments to the labor law. The amendments provide a definition for sexual harassment, and stipulate handling of violations by employers under article 29. The team provided recommendation to the updated document that will be available on the ministry's website.
- During the GoJ retreat "A Year of Modernization" at the end of August, the MGF regional coordinator contributed to the **panel discussion on enhancing women's economic empowerment**. The intervention stressed the need for a whole of government approach to support women's ability to enter and stay in the workforce throughout their life cycle, with a focus on sectors with job growth and high potential for recruiting women. Other topics raised included constraints such as the lack of transport, childcare, and financial inclusion, and the importance of reinforcing positive social norms and an enabling legal environment.
- To support the GoJ efforts to improve **data availability** on the specific topics of early childhood development, elderly care and on support programs for women's entrepreneurship, information gaps and potential methodologies for data collection and analysis were mapped out to identify needed support under the MGF phase III workplan in Jordan.



LEBANON

- A **workshop for Lebanese rural women** on the necessary legal and practical tools for protecting a business titled "Protect your Business" was conducted in June 2023 in partnership with the National Commission for Lebanese Women, the Ministry of Economy and Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture, and in collaboration with SADER & Associates (Advocates and Legal Consultants). 43 women entrepreneurs with businesses in the Agriculture and Agri-food sectors attended the workshop, expressing high level of satisfaction of the training in the post evaluation forms.
- The **dissemination strategy** for the campaign related to women's (paid and unpaid) work was finalized and will be shared on multiple media channels, including TV stations, radio and websites during its two weeks of broadcasting, September 15 to 28, 2023. Several Lebanese influencers were recruited and will be engaged on social media to complement the messages in the videos that have been produced and to maximize campaign outreach.
- In response to the MGF mid-term review recommendations to **engage more with civil society**, an initial plan has been developed to strengthen outreach and learning across the workplan pillars. This plan will be fleshed out and implemented with the support from a new team member focusing on this work.



MGF Regional Work Program

SPOTLIGHT ON: INNOVATING FOR RESULTS – CARE4MASHREQ

Leveraging its partnerships and building on results from ongoing MGF activities to support women in the workplace through a better understanding of market gaps and opportunities in the care sector, the IFC (as the private sector arm of the MGF) is preparing to launch its **Care4Mashreq Initiative**, co-financed by the MGF and IFC through other donor trust funds, this fall in Jordan and Lebanon. The Care4Mashreq initiative puts into action some of the key findings from the MGF IFC study on investment potential in the childcare industry which also helped identify regional and international childcare operators interested in co-investing in the Mashreq.

The new initiative will also benefit from the successes and lessons learned via the MGF’s first **Women’s Employment Peer Learning Platform (PLP)** carried out in partnership with the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) and Int@j in Jordan and the Chamber of Commerce of Industry and Agriculture – Beirut & Mount Lebanon (CCIA-BML) in Lebanon, June 2020 – June 2021. These first nation-wide PLPs created a community of 250+ employers with increased knowledge, capacity and commitment to support jobs for women and built the awareness of the private sector on topics of gender diversity at the workplace. This prepared attending companies for the in-depth work under the second PLP **“Leaders4Equality”** (July 2021 - Nov 2022). The L4E platform worked with 20 employers committed to designing and implementing workplace initiatives that support jobs and careers for women in their respective companies. For example, Eskadenia Software and JoPACC in Jordan developed an equal recruitment, retention and promotion Tracking tool and policy, and in Lebanon Al Yafi Group a Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Fattal Group an Anti-Harassment Strategy and Policy. Under the same platform, middle-level female employees were trained to enhance their leadership skills and create a pipeline of female leaders.



The MGF PLP experience will be replicated in the Care4Mashreq Initiative to enhance knowledge and capacity of private employers regarding employer supported care solutions, followed by components that aim to improve capacity of nurseries, accelerate start-up potential, and strengthen demand and supply market linkages. Competitions, prizes and a pledge campaign will also be launched to incentivize the private sector and add momentum to a budding care movement in the Mashreq.

MGF Budget Report

Reporting Period: June 1, 2019 – September 1, 2023

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	\$ 2,348,823.63
Available balance	\$ 1,101,176.37

Jordan Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 2,461,629.54
Available balance	\$ 988,370.46

Lebanon Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 2,457,295.64
Available balance	\$ 992,704.36

Regional Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 2,600,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 2,544,765.74
Available balance	\$ 55,234.26

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.

For more information contact the **MGF Secretariat** at:

Jonna Lundwall
jlundwall@worldbank.org
mgf@worldbankgroup.org

