

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 2024. Next issue will be circulated in December 2024.

الله أكبر

IRAQ

- Following the successful MGF-supported business and financial management courses, the Iraqi Federation of Chambers of Commerce issued a Board of Directors Decision (No. 13 of 16/May/2024) to **establish entrepreneurship departments in all chambers of commerce across Iraq**. These departments will develop and implement targeted entrepreneurship training for youth, recent graduates, and women.
- Under the Childcare pillar, and in collaboration with the private sector, a three-day **Training of Trainers (TOT) was held for 29 caregivers in public institutions for children with developmental delays** in Baghdad. The training aimed to improve teachers' care skills and quality of services. Following the session, MOLSA proposed establishing a new department focused on capacity building for these institutions. A similar training is planned for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.
- The **legal review report was updated to reflect the latest Women, Business, and the Law 2.0 indicators**. This update highlights barriers and opportunities for improving women's economic participation in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, and outlines key areas for necessary legal reforms. The review was shared with the Iraqi legal taskforce to inform potential labor law reforms that are currently undergoing discussions by the Government of Iraq. It is also being used internally to guide other World Bank operations in Iraq.



JORDAN

- A **month-long multi-sectoral social media awareness campaign on childcare, "Atfaluna Awlaweyatuna"**, was launched in August in collaboration with various government partners. The campaign highlights the importance of nurseries for children's development. It leverages behavioral science-informed messaging, using content that includes a main campaign video, still posts, and interactive stories on government Instagram and Facebook pages; influencer videos; childcare expert videos; and content shared on municipality-run WhatsApp groups. Videos and posts have reached millions of unique users, and have encouraged users to share their opinions on, experiences with, and concerns around childcare, generating important discussion that can inform future campaigns and policy decisions.
- The initial **eco-system mapping of government-provided funds and services for supporting women's economic empowerment** indicates that most programs, including donor-funded, focus on women's entrepreneurship rather than skills development. Upon review from the JNCW, it was agreed that data collection will cover the private sector next, including chambers of industry and trade.
- As part of the **Reaya program assessment**, the field survey was completed. Initial findings show that many female SSC beneficiaries are unaware of the option to enroll their children in nurseries, and thus opted for the home-care option. The assessment will serve as a reference for public programs that support the childcare sector.



LEBANON

- Phase II of the **campaign "Reaching Our Full Potential"** was launched on Father's Day June 21. The video depicts a new father's desire to spend more time with his child, emphasizing equal caregiving responsibilities and aiming to inspire legislative change for paternity leave. The campaign was broadcast across TV, radio, websites and social media, and engaged 13 influencers. It reached over 2.4 million impressions on Facebook and Instagram.
- A series of activities focusing on implementing gender-specific laws and policies took place:
 - To build capacity on **gender-sensitive internal policies in public and private workplaces**, over 100 trainee lawyers of the Beirut Bar Association (BBA) were trained on drafting of such policies. The training addressed policies around paternity leave, childcare support, flexible work, and anti-sexual harassment measures, and was delivered in partnership with NCLW.
 - To strengthen the capacity for **Implementing the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law**, in partnership with NCLW, 56 lawyers from the BBA were trained on the content and implementation of the law, relevant case law, and internal policies drafting.
 - To raise awareness about the **status of women's rights in the workplace**, the Women, Business and the Law Report 2024 methodology and findings were presented at a high-level workshop organized by the Women & Child Parliamentary Committee and UNESCWA.



MGF Regional Work Program

SPOTLIGHT ON: CARE ARABIA INITIATIVE LAUNCHED

MGF [research](#) shows that women in the Mashreq consider inadequate childcare support, including lack of employer-supported childcare, as a key barrier to their workforce participation. For example, Jordan needs more than 44,000 additional nurseries to accommodate the number of children of nursery age and the expansion of formal childcare services could create at least 100,000 jobs in the paid care sector, thus benefiting women looking for job opportunities. To respond to this need, MGF carried out a market assessment of the early childhood care and education sector in the Mashreq and identified suitable business models for private scale-up of these services in each country.

In response, the IFC-led Care Arabia initiative was launched under the MGF in June 2024, counting on close to 200 participants from the private sector and government. Care Arabia aims to bridge gaps in the childcare sector in Jordan and Lebanon, planning to support the growth and sustainability of private nurseries and help employers in the private sector provide childcare solutions for working parents. As part of the program, the Nursery Booster will support business growth of up to 60 private nurseries in Jordan and Lebanon, in partnership with the Jordan Kuwait Bank (JKB) through capacity building workshops in business and financial management, as well as through direct financing by JKB. In addition, Care Arabia is supporting 19 committed private employers (9 in Jordan, 10 in Lebanon) in identifying and implementing specific actions to support childcare for their employees based on workforce assessments. Out of the 19 employers, 16 made public pledges related to childcare during the Care Arabia launch event. Care Arabia is also leveraging funds from other donors, such as the Netherlands, ensuring sustainability of the actions. Further, the Mashreq experience is expected to be replicated across the Arab region for broader impact.



"The private sector plays a significant role in providing support to working parents, allowing more women to enter and stay in the labor market." H.E. Wafaa Bani Mustafa, Minister of Social Development & Head of the Interministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment, Jordan.

MGF Budget Report

Reporting Period: June 1, 2019 – Sept 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	3,207,000.00
Total committed	13,557,000.00

disbursements = actual expenditures & committed budget

Disbursements in some work streams are lower in the September Newsletter compared to the June one, as the MGF was able to leverage internal World Bank budget, freeing up trustfund resources.

Iraq Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	2,956,320.85
Available balance	\$	493,679.15

Jordan Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	2,797,032.46
Available balance	\$	652,967.54

Lebanon Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	2,650,729.03
Available balance	\$	799,270.97

Regional Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,207,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	2,773,225.05
Available balance	\$	433,774.95

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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