

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 September through November 2024. Next issue will be circulated in March 2025.

الله أكبر

IRAQ

- A workshop on **the methodology of the Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) Index 2024** was held in Baghdad in September, bringing together technical counterparts from the Ministries of Labor and Social (MOLSA), and Planning (MoP), and the Council of Ministers Secretariat. The workshop provided an in-depth overview of the updated indices. Following the workshop, technical discussions were held to review and propose adjustments to the draft labor law. **Recommendations on flexible employer-supported childcare arrangements** were endorsed by MOLSA in December 2024, marking a significant step toward aligning labor policies with global best practices.
- A **childcare Training of Trainers (TOT)** in Duhok (KRI) equipped 20 caregivers to support children with developmental delays. The training brought in experts from KRI's public childcare centers. Following the training, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (KRG) expressed interest in expanding these sessions to other governorates.
- A high-level event, chaired by H.E. Deputy Minister of Planning, **showcased Iraq's national priorities and economic progress under the MGF** (Sept 16, 2024). Attendees included representatives from the KRG, the Canadian and Norwegian Embassies, UN agencies. Priorities highlighted included the need to strengthen the legal framework in aspects related to private sector, entrepreneurship and public procurement; and for better sex-disaggregated access to finance indicators.



JORDAN

- As part of continued efforts for legislative reforms, the GoJ requested **MGF support to facilitate a 2-day training workshop with the global Women, Business and the Law (WBL) team**, to introduce the WBL 2.0 methodology, bringing together over 40 government officials from twenty agencies. A follow up consultation session with government representatives helped identify amendments to the Jordan WBL report card, specifically under the supportive legislative framework questions. The main focus was on the GoJ gender-responsive policy in procurement, and awareness raising on women's rights based on the labor law. The training enabled MOPIC to collect and share feedback on the WBL portal in a timely manner, and to update the GoJ workplan to include additional indicators.
- The **MENA ICT Forum**, coordinated by Int@j, was held in Jordan in November. The MGF was represented in a panel on **"Catalyzing Change: Empowering Women in MENA's Tech Ecosystem"**, showcasing the role of Int@j and JNCW as partners in successfully implementing the IFC-led Peer Learning Platform to engage with the private sector in improving the workplace conditions to advance women's employment and leadership. Discussions highlighted the role of governments in creating an enabling environment for women to work, and facilitating women's access to digital skills, technology platforms and digital entrepreneurship and financial services through evidence-based policies.



LEBANON

- International evidence demonstrates a risk of increased prevalence of GBV in times of crisis. In response to a request from the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), **user-friendly information materials on sexual harassment** were developed and distributed to displaced individuals in shelters in October 2024 for prevention and awareness purposes. These brochures defined harassment and its various forms, explained victims' rights under Law #205/2020, outlined the legal consequences, and provided hotline contacts to ensure accessible support for those in need.
- The IFC Care Arabia team developed a guidebook for private sector firms, **"Navigating Family-Friendly Policies in Challenging Times,"** tailored to the Lebanese context, to help companies address workplace challenges and support employees in balancing professional and personal responsibilities during crises. A session was held with 10 Lebanese companies to introduce the guide, focusing on flexible work arrangements, emergency housing support, mental health support, and childcare support. The session highlighted how companies have supported employees and offered actionable insights to promote workplace resilience and adaptability. Some companies opened their premises as shelters to displaced people, while others emphasized the **need to support the mental health of their employees**, including counseling services, stress management programs, and ensuring a supportive environment to help employees cope with the aftermath of the crisis.



MGF Regional Work Program

SPOTLIGHT ON: MGF IN GLOBAL WOMEN'S FORUM

The **Global Women's Forum** was held in Dubai November 26–27, 2024, under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. Organized by the Dubai Women Establishment (DWE) in collaboration with international organizations, the Forum welcomed high-level representatives from Iraq -the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs- and Jordan -Minister of Social Development, and representatives from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the Jordanian National Commission for Women and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women Empowerment.

During the Forum, representatives from Iraq and Jordan actively participated in a learning session on **legal reforms & pay equity**, led by the World Bank, showcasing key draft laws and recent reforms, many supported under the MGF. The Forum facilitated **regional and global dialogue** and **peer-to-peer learning** on critical topics such as **sex-disaggregated data in entrepreneurship** and **access to finance**, fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing among diverse stakeholders. H.E. Minister of Social Development of Jordan highlighted positive legal reforms, supported through the MGF, in a session with World Bank's Women Business and the Law and UAE representatives.

As an outcome of the event, the participants from Iraq and Jordan identified best practices and examples from across the region and beyond that will benefit the agenda to advance women's economic inclusion and to continue the dialogue in their respective countries.



MGF Budget Report

Reporting Period: June 1, 2019 – Dec 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

Iraq Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	3,192,120.39
Available balance	\$	257,879.61

Jordan Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	2,841,796.26
Available balance	\$	608,203.74

Lebanon Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	2,699,304.16
Available balance	\$	750,695.84

Regional Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,207,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	2,808,968.82
Available balance	\$	398,031.18

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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