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 2022. Next issue will be circulated in December 2022.

IRAQ

- A series of webinars on marketing online and managing business during crises were held in collaboration with the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce in June and July 2022. Around 900 attendees, around 85% female, participated in a total of five webinars and 97% of attendees reported being highly satisfied with the webinars, with the sessions that discussed digitization and social media use being the most appreciated ones. Participants highlighted the need to improve women’s access to finance.

- To support the Government of Iraq on a pilot gender responsive budgeting activity covering MOLSA, the MGF team produced technical tools on approaches to GRB, best practices and lessons learned from other countries in addition to outlining a TOT manual to be delivered to relevant stakeholders. A peer-to-peer learning event with the Government of UAE was planned but had to be postponed due to health reasons.

- In Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the Ministry of Planning established a taskforce for Gender-Responsive Public Procurement (GRPP). In preparation for producing policy recommendations, the MGF team conducted desk research on female entrepreneurs and public procurement in KRI, and a series of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with government stakeholders, female lead business and banks.

JORDAN

- The MGF is providing technical support to the GoI to identify and prioritize legislative entry points for improving Jordanian women’s access to economic opportunities aligned with the Jordan Economic Modernization vision. An introductory workshop on the Women, Business and the Law report, published annually by the World Bank and in which Jordan scored 46.9 out of 100 in 2022, was held in July and will be followed by a technical deep dive in September.

- Three training sessions were held for 20 Aspiring Female Leaders from the private sector, covering leadership skills, communication and critical thinking skills. The training is part of the IFC-led Leader4Equality activity, enabling private sector firms to adapt best practices for improving gender diversity and inclusive workplaces. Training sessions were held in partnership with the JNCW and Int@j.

- A coordination meeting was held with the government team representing MoL, MoDEE, CBJ and JNCW, following up on the digital payments transformation plan for workers in the private sector. Participants agreed on criteria for developing a roadmap that considers the enabling environment, availability of financial products band services, private sector readiness, workers attitudes and perceptions as well as feasibility and impact of digital transformation, especially on women’s employment.

LEBANON

- The Leaders4Equality (L4E) initiative has successfully completed 10 tailor-made Diversity and Inclusion Coaching Sessions to the 10 companies of the cohort. L4E also delivered a day-long peer2peer knowledge day, where all cohort companies shared their progress, challenges and lessons learned as a result of the D&I sessions’ guidance. Additionally, the L4E initiative has delivered three capacity building sessions tailored to the needs of 20 female aspiring leaders from companies in the cohort. A closing event is planned for December.

- The Access2Markets Booster program kicked off with the export readiness training for WSMEs. 24 selected Business Advisors have been trained on leadership, coaching and soft skills which they will apply in the upcoming one-on-one coaching sessions with the cohort of 64 Women-led SMEs.

- Company insights were published on the MGF website showcasing three leading Lebanese private sector companies that have taken strides to advance gender equality within their workplaces: Holdal Group, Malia Group and ITG Holding. The company insights dive deep into the topics of advancing gender diversity through effective anti-sexual harassment mechanisms, fostering productivity and well-being through family-friendly policies, and promoting and supporting women in leadership positions.
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.

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