

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 December 2021 to February 2022. Next issue will be circulated early June 2022.

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



IRAQ

- To better understand obstacles women face in **employment in the private sector**, a small survey of 100 female and male employees, was finalized in Erbil. Only 9% of respondents were aware that women have maternity benefits and 13% are aware of their rights within the workplace. Currently, the survey is under way in Baghdad and Basra.
- To capture **women's informal sector activities and challenges**, technical coordination and deep dive technical discussions with Central Statistical Organization (CSO) in Ministry of Planning and Kurdistan Regional Statistical Office (KRSO) were held to agree on the scope of required data collection and analysis. A survey tool was developed to cover Baghdad, Misan, Anbar and Erbil.
- Under the skills development pillar, the MGF is collaborating with the World Bank Agriculture team to identify obstacles to women's inclusion in the agricultural sector, using the **Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index** (WEAI). Ongoing activities include the development of a manual for data collection and analysis, and a pilot data collection exercise. The findings will inform the design of vocational training activities for women in agriculture under the MGF and beyond.



JORDAN

- A **ministerial event** to present and discuss findings of the **Jordan Assessment of Supply and Demand of Childcare Services** was held late February. The study shows a lack of licensed childcare facilities in 11 out of 51 districts; a total of 1.45 million unserved children under the age of five; and a wide gap between cost of provided services and parents' willingness to pay, especially outside Amman. Close to 100 participants joined in-person and online, and the event included a tripartite MoU signing between MoSD, NCFA, JNCW.
- The **draft guidance for SME's and large companies to address workplace sexual harassment** within the legal framework was validated with representatives from ten private sector firms. The workshop included recommendations for next steps to enrich the guidance and to raise private sector awareness, and was attended by representatives from MoL and development agencies.
- To support evidence on **women's entrepreneurship and export readiness**, a roundtable kick off discussion on the IFC-led market study was held. The roundtable included exchange on available data sources and programs supporting female entrepreneurship, and the importance of the study for informing the upcoming activity on building capacities of women exporters through the MGF.



LEBANON

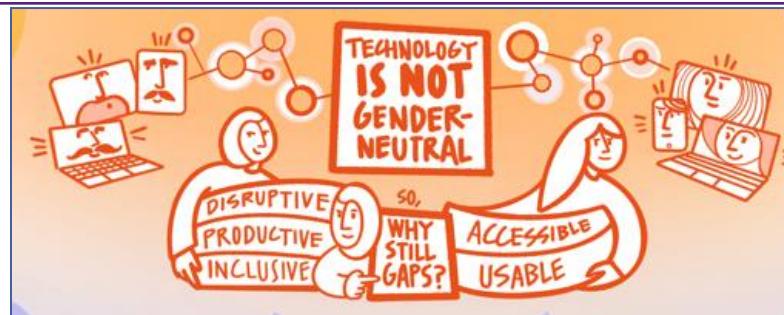
- To formalize women-owned, often small-scale enterprises, the MGF is supporting the development of an **online guide on how to register and protect a business** and how to protect their Intellectual Property Rights in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Trade and the Sader Law Firm. A series of webinars to women entrepreneurs will further strengthen capacity.
- To **validate the findings of the Lebanon childcare assessment**, three roundtable discussions were conducted with stakeholders across government, civil society, academia and private sector. Priority topics raised included the need for a uniform curriculum and quality standards, as well as for clear roles and responsibilities across institutions with a mandate related to the regulation and provision of childcare services.
- The **Access2market booster was launched** and the selection of female entrepreneurs who will receive training on procurement and export readiness has started. These women will also benefit from buyer matchmaking activities.
- The **Leadership4Equality program was launched** virtually early February 2022 with the cohort of 10 selected private companies. A needs assessment of participating companies will be used for adapting program content.



MGF Regional Work Program

SPOTLIGHT ON: DIALOGUE & PARTICIPATION

A virtual Mashreq Gender and Digital Development Clinic was held in four sessions between February 1 and 9, 2022. Around 27 speakers and 200 participants engaged, representing mainly government, private sector and civil society from Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon.



The main objective of the clinic was to increase participant understanding of the intersection of digital development and gender in supporting female labor force participation. The sessions presented both the challenges and opportunities to get digital tech to work for women's economic opportunities, bringing in examples from the region and beyond. Technical resources and tools applied by the private and public sector were shared to showcase how inclusive, bottom-up approaches can enhance greater equity and maximize benefits for all in rapidly evolving digital economies.

After setting the stage during the first module with essential building blocks and key data on access, representation, and inclusion of women in technology, the clinic took participants on a journey that delved deep into addressing demand and supply side issues women face across key dimensions of gender equality in each of the five pillars of digital development. Participants learned about how skilling through targeted delivery can be done effectively and in fragile, low-bandwidth contexts; they also heard about how the rise of e-commerce platforms can help women enter new markets and productive sectors as well as the important role of mental resilience throughout the process (based on female tech entrepreneurs on the ground experiences). In concluding the clinic, participants walked away with a shared understanding that key to unlocking the benefits of technology for women in the Mashreq is an actively engaged, multi-stakeholder community that fosters awareness and collaboration.

MGF Budget Report

Reporting Period: June 1, 2019 – March 1, 2022

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	2,350,000.00
Jordan Work Plan	2,650,000.00
Lebanon Work Plan	2,500,000.00
Regional Work Plan	2,600,000.00
Total committed	10,100,000.00

Available Funds

Available balance	3,457,000.00
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Iraq Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 2,350,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 1,121,977.43
Available balance	\$ 1,228,022.57

Jordan Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 2,650,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 1,696,469.02
Available balance	\$ 953,530.98

Lebanon Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 2,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 1,306,731.96
Available balance	\$ 1,193,268.04

Regional Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 2,600,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 1,520,293.00
Available balance	\$ 1,079,707.00

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** (UFGE) 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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