

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 2019 to February 2020. Next issue will be circulated early June 2020.

الله أكبر

IRAQ

Progress has been slow due to the unstable situation in the country, but some highlights are as follows:

- **Entrepreneurship:** Seven incubators and accelerators were identified to work with the support to female-led startups via trainings and webinars on investment readiness.
- Proposals for **peer learning platform** for the private sector to recruit, retain and promote more women in their workforce are being discussed with the Chambers of Commerce in Baghdad and Erbil.
- Review process undertaken with government officials on supporting **preferential agreements for women's SMEs** tied to public procurement; a draft agreement has been submitted to the MOP for review and approval. A similar review process is underway in KRI.
- Diagnostic review of existing **vocational training** programs in Iraq and KRI underway building on a series of meetings with MOLSA, MOA, MOE and MOP to explore challenges and priorities associated with current vocational training and educational curricula. The review includes baseline research and data gathering.
- Preliminary **legal review** has been completed pertaining to women's SMEs and ownership of land, and additional work has been identified to advance the agenda.



JORDAN

In Jordan, implementation of several activities has started based on extensive coordination across different stakeholders.

- In partnership with the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE), a **Peer-Learning Platform** that aims to raise the capacity of the private sector to recruit, retain and promote more women in the workforce has been conceptualized and developed. MoUs are being signed with six business associations to be part of the platform, and a launch event will be planned soon.
- To ensure **safe public transportation free of sexual harassment** against women, the team is working with the Ministry of Transport to develop and implement a Code of Conduct. A screening of available GBV services was completed to assess current availability, access and types of services that address harassment in public transportation to tailor the intervention. A stakeholder mapping, accountability and response protocols are being developed.
- Based on request from JNCW, inputs were provided to the **National Women's Strategy** to build on and position existing and planned work of the government and other stakeholders under the MGF.
- A series of activities has been identified and planned in coordination with the Women's Work Directorate at MoL. This includes developing a policy note for expansion of **satellite work units**, a digital **tool for measuring pay equity**, supporting the private sector in implementation of **sexual harassment legislation** and **flexible work policies**.
- The team is working with the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship to support the development and implementation of the **digital payments plan**, with a focus on informing and incentivizing women to use these payments.



LEBANON

The recent events in Lebanon have initiated a long road of economic and political reforms, starting with a new Cabinet that includes 30% female ministers. The mandate of women's economic empowerment, including the MGF, has transitioned to the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), a founding member of the Facility since its inception. Progress has been made:

- On legal reforms: (i) technical support to consolidate five different existing draft **legal frameworks** on **sexual harassment** into one draft, ongoing stakeholder engagement; (ii) developed draft **code of conduct for sexual harassment** for private and public sectors; (iii) proposed **Labor Law amendments** submitted to the legal task force at MoL related to enabling environment for women's work.
- Discussions with public communications agency "OGERO" on recommended enhancements to its **internal regulations to better support gender equality and rights**. This work has the potential to be disseminated as a best practice across public institutions.
- To support women-led enterprises, training of trainers will be provided on (i) **investment readiness for female-led start-ups**; and (ii) **gender sensitization for accelerators and incubators** to increase share of female-led entrepreneurs in their portfolio.
- Given the current context in Lebanon, the team is planning to replicate and adapt an **SME crisis management training** to target women-led SMEs.

MGF Regional Work Program

DIALOGUE & PARTICIPATION

MGF Secretariat – MGF website was launched (www.worldbank.org/en/programs/mashreq-gender-facility), including country level feature stories and a blog by WB Regional Director Saroj Jha. Technical support to WBG project teams provided, e.g. strengthening the gender equality framework for Multi Donor Trust Funds in Jordan and Iraq.

Mashreq Conference on Women’s Economic Empowerment II – A multi-stakeholder Conference Task Force worked diligently to prepare the event planned for March 30 in Amman, Jordan under the patronage of Prime Minister Razzaz. However, early March 2020, international recommendations aimed at limiting the spread of COVID-19 led to the decision to postpone the Conference.

DATA & KNOWLEDGE

State of the Mashreq Women report – A draft report has been finalized and peer reviewed internally at the WBG. Given the postponement of the Conference where the report was to be launched, team is exploring a potential soft launch.

Building on evidence and experience to inform country priorities – Two technical deep dives were planned alongside the Conference: on child care and on transport & mobility. These hands-on clinics will directly support MGF country teams and partners in the implementation of their activities, but preparation is now on hold.

INNOVATING 4 RESULTS

Enhancing forcibly displaced women's access to economic opportunities – Implementation plans have been developed to leverage existing engagements with: (i) the Refugee Investment and Matchmaking Platform (RIMP) team, with whom the scope of the gender work has been jointly identified and initial work is being commissioned; and (ii) the Economic Opportunities for Jordanians and Syrians Program, with whom collaboration will include the design of a social norms campaign aiming to address negative perceptions limiting female refugees’ labor force participation. The team has updated government and begun dialogue with NGOs and private sector to map out existing activities, and explore challenges, gaps and opportunities for the economic empowerment of displaced women.

MGF Budget Report

Reporting Period: June 1, 2019 – March 1, 2020

MGF TOTAL BUDGET. Aggregate totals, to date.

Received to Date

Donor	Amount Received
Canada	7,458,697.00
Norway	1,213,873.00
Total received	8,672,570.00

Committed to Date

Funds Allocation	Amount Committed
Iraq Work Plan	1,500,000.00
Jordan Work Plan	1,500,000.00
Lebanon Work Plan	1,500,000.00
Regional Work Plan	1,500,000.00
Total committed	6,000,000.00

Available Funds

Available balance	2,672,570.00
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Iraq Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	157,420.43
Available balance	\$	1,342,579.57

Jordan Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	210,724.72
Available balance	\$	1,289,275.28

Lebanon Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	97,328.29
Available balance	\$	1,402,671.71

Regional Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	411,801.70
Available balance	\$	1,088,198.30

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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