

*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 March through May 2023. Next issue will be circulated in September 2023.*

الله أكبر



IRAQ

- Between January and April, 11 **financial management training** modules were delivered to 30 female entrepreneurs in partnership with the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce, covering topics such as identifying business risks, cash flow, managing business loans effectively and increasing profitability. At least 10 female entrepreneurs who successfully completed at least six of the training modules will have the opportunity to apply for a microloan under the pilot initiative that the MGF facilitated and launched with banks and financial institutions.
- Two **awareness raising campaign videos on women's economic inclusion** with support provided by male relatives, were produced in partnership with Iraqi Private Banks League and Iraqi Media Network in Federal Iraq, and in partnership with Kurdistan24 channel in KRI. The final videos will be disseminated on social media and television in August 2023.
- A taskforce composed of technical staff from the budgeting and planning directorates in MOLSA was established to participate in **gender responsive budgeting training** as a pilot activity upon agreement with the GOI. The technical training based on programs of MOLSA will also include representatives from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and will kick off in July/August 2023 upon completion of a gender needs assessment.



JORDAN

- To improve the enabling legal environment for women's economic activity, the MGF team helped inform the development of a project card with the aim to **improve Jordan's score on the Women, Business and the Law index**. This exercise -led by MOPIC- aligns with the GoJ Economic Modernization Vision (EMV) and paves the road for an inclusive process for legal reforms.
- Capitalizing on MGF support to create more diverse and gender responsive workplaces in the private sector, the team contributed to **developing the criteria for a national Gender Seal**, in a consultative process with the GoJ and international partners. The Seal is a priority action under the EMV engendered strategy and aims to promote safe and equitable workplaces that respond to women's needs.
- Chaired by the JNCW, and building on MGF analytical work and dialogue on female entrepreneurship, a round table discussion to capture the **gaps in the financial and non-financial services for women entrepreneurs** was held with 30 representatives of the private sector, government, academia and civil society. Discussions revealed that a key challenge is the lack of inter-linkages between financial services such as microfinance and banking, as well as financial literacy and managerial skills programs. Outcomes of the discussions will help JNCW in identifying needed support to promote women's entrepreneurship.



LEBANON

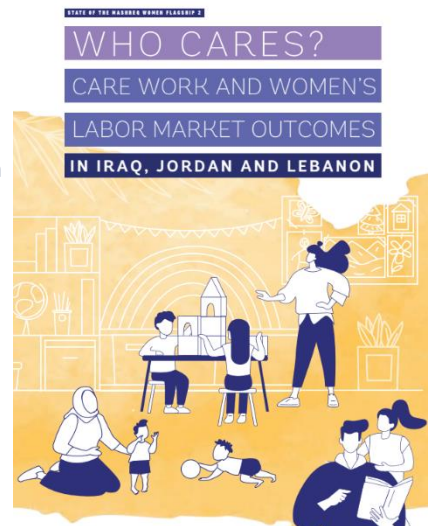
- The **Lebanon childcare report** draft was finalized. To capture the most recent data post-COVID, an additional phone survey was conducted, with an 80% response rate. The updated supply-side exercise showed that 9.5% of interviewed nurseries permanently closed due to the COVID19 pandemic and the economic crisis.
- An endline feedback survey with participants from the **Access2Markets Booster**, completed 6 months after the training, found that most respondents (73%) have successfully implemented at least some of the lessons and changes recommended by the trainers throughout this program.
- To advance the **discussions around legal reforms**, the MGF presented the findings of the 2023 Women, Business and the Law report in a workshop held at the Parliament for MPs, representatives of relevant ministries, and international and local organizations. The event focused on the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law 205/2020 with practical discussions around identifying and addressing implementation challenges, organized by the Women and Children's Parliamentary Committee and Westminster Foundation for Democracy.
- The development of a "**gender-sensitive content**" **media toolbox** has started in partnership with the Syndicate of Advertising Agencies in Lebanon. The toolbox will provide guidance for advertising agencies on how to develop gender-conscious content that focuses on empowering women economically and addressing restrictive social norms.

MGF Regional Work Program



SPOTLIGHT ON: DATA & KNOWLEDGE – LAUNCH OF CHILDCARE REPORT

On March 2, the Mashreq Gender Facility, under the patronage of His Excellency Dr. Bisher Al-Khasawneh, Prime Minister of Jordan, launched the Second State of the Mashreq Women Report titled: **“Who Cares?” Care Work and Women’s Labor Market Outcomes in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon**” in Amman. Bringing together 80+ participants, including high-level participants from the three country governments, as well as representatives from private sector and civil society and development partners, the event was one of the first of its kind to spotlight the state of supply-demand policies in childcare provision in the Mashreq and why expanding access to quality childcare provision options is central to contribute to building human capital and advance women’s economic activity. Based on the analysis and a review of international best practice, the report identifies the need for a three-pronged approach to achieve: (i) more equitable distribution of the unpaid care work burden within the household; (ii) improved State support to address households’ care needs, particularly for the most vulnerable households; and (iii) an enabling environment for efficient provision of quality childcare services.



Directly following the launch, a closed-door side event, moderated by the MGF, took place with a select group of policymakers and businesses to discuss practical solutions for both families and companies, generating impassioned exchanges from companies about the challenges they face to maintain affordability and quality benchmarks during times of crises. The discussions resonated with the findings of the report, which highlights the need to better align national care policies with shared objectives to increase FLFP. According to the report, there is a clear untapped demand and willingness by mothers with children ages 0-5 to engage in the workforce if formal quality and affordable childcare is available. Doing so can reap tangible results, leading to an increase of up to 7 percentage points in FLFP (depending on the cost and context). As a follow up to the regional report, country level supply-demand assessments are being finalized in coordination with respective government counterparts and will be disseminated accordingly.

MGF Budget Report

Reporting Period: June 1, 2019 – June 1, 2023

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	\$ 2,348,823.63
Available balance	\$ 1,176.37

Jordan Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 2,650,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 2,376,168.61
Available balance	\$ 273,831.39

Lebanon Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 2,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 2,396,713.50
Available balance	\$ 103,286.50

Regional Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$ 2,600,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$ 2,452,228.90
Available balance	\$ 147,771.10

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** 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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