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.

**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.
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.

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Jonna Lundwall
jlundwall@worldbank.org
mgf@worldbankgroup.org