

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 2022. Next issue will be circulated early September 2022.

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



## IRAQ

- With MGF support, the Central Bank of Iraq issued a new **Circular to prohibit gender-based discrimination in access to financial services** including credit and loans (no 23/422, March 10, 2022) as a step towards enhancing women's access to finance. To facilitate implementation, draft gender-disaggregated indicators on women's access to finance were discussed with the CBI for adoption to be mandated to commercial banks and financial institutions.
- As a collaboration between the MGF and the IFC, the IFC signed a **Training Service Agreement with Baghdad Chamber of Commerce to provide business management skills training** for 450 women entrepreneurs who own and/or manage SMEs.
- To support GoI efforts to make the **budget more gender responsive**, technical discussions with the ministries of Planning and Finance and the Women Empowerment Directorate at COMSEC, were held on key concepts and international best practices, and to identify entry points for implementing gender responsive budgeting in federal Iraq and in KRG.
- Partnership with the Iraqi Bank's League was established to sponsor **awareness campaigns on the value of women's economic participation** and families' support, which will be produced and broadcasted by the Iraqi Media Network.



## JORDAN

- The MGF launched the **Leaders for Equality (L4E)** program, implemented by IFC, pairing ten Jordanian private sector firms to receive assistance in developing diversity and inclusion tools that speak to their needs, including a policy on family friendly workplace, equal recruitment, retention and promotion policy, and diversity and inclusion communication plan. The L4E includes training twenty aspiring female talents from the ten companies in leadership skills.
- Building on recommendation from an MGF assessment for **expansion of satellite factories** to employ women in the food manufacturing sector, a ministerial event was held to facilitate private sector participation in the government-led incentive program. A follow up survey revealed that out of the thirty firms, one third expressed interest in exploring expansion to other governorates, and creating job opportunities, especially for women.
- A **coordination meeting on the childcare agenda** was held with MoSD, NCFA and JNCW, after the cabinet approved the Children's Rights Law, to discuss linkages with different ongoing activities supported by the MGF (and beyond). Three main areas of support were identified including advocacy, policy prioritization and inter-governmental coordination.



## LEBANON

- The different assessments of the childcare sector in Lebanon - demand, supply, mapping, legal- have been finalized. The **employer assessment** shows, for example, that only 5 out of 100 companies provide childcare support and around 2/3 offer some paternity leave.
- 45 women owned businesses and 25 business advisors were selected into the **Access2Markets Booster program** aimed at building the capacity of women entrepreneurs to export and expand their businesses.
- **Leaders4Equality was launched** with the 10 companies and their aspiring leaders. Findings of needs assessment were used to pair companies and to develop the curricula for the training for developing diversity and inclusion tools. Some companies will develop communications strategy and awareness campaigns, others will define tracking policy and metrics. Based on the needs assessment of the aspiring leaders, capacity building sessions include self-leadership, leading others as well as communication and leadership
- As part of a **behavioral science informed communications campaign**, the production of three videos that aims at influencing norms and attitudes towards women being economically active is under way, targeting women, men, and employers.

Since he started as the World Bank’s Director for the Mashreq department in 2017, Saroj Kumar Jha has seen a strengthened focus on gender issues and in particular on women’s economic opportunities across the Bank portfolio. As he is about to leave this position, he reflects on the role of the Mashreq Gender Facility: “The MGF has become the main vehicle for the Bank’s engagement on gender in the region, and as such it helps us address constraints to women’s economic activity in a more deliberate and systematic way, putting all our instruments to use – analytical, technical assistance and lending.” Leveraging its knowledge and networks, the MGF team provides advice to all WBG project teams and associated government clients to help identify how they can contribute to closing gender gaps in their respective sectors or influence of work. As a result, all projects approved in 2021 being considered gender tagged (combined total amount of US\$ 1,138 billion). The Gender Tag is the World Bank’s methodology to assess if lending projects are designed in a way that clearly lays out a theory of change for addressing gender gaps, as part of a greater effort to improve conditions and development outcomes for women around the world.



However, important challenges remain. Kumar Jha presents a sense of urgency in what needs to happen to move the needle: “If the Mashreq countries cannot increase their female labor force participation, they will not be able to realize their full potential in cornerstone development sectors across the green, blue and digital economies. As part of the development community, we all have a responsibility to ensure that women really are at the center of economic growth and development.” He continues, “The MGF continues to be relevant as there is still a need for more analysis, more advocacy, and more engagement sector by sector – in all Mashreq countries, but also within the World Bank itself.”

## MGF Budget Report

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

### Received to Date

Donor	Amount Received
Canada	10,662,540.00
Norway	2,894,460.00
<b>Total received</b>	<b>13,557,000.00</b>

### 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
<b>Total committed</b>	<b>10,100,000.00</b>

### Available Funds

<b>Available balance</b>	<b>3,457,000.00</b>
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### Iraq Work Plan

<b>Total budget allocation to date</b>	<b>\$ 2,350,000.00</b>
<b>Total disbursements to date</b>	<b>\$ 1,333,225.91</b>
<b>Available balance</b>	<b>\$ 1,016,774.09</b>

### Jordan Work Plan

<b>Total budget allocation to date</b>	<b>\$ 2,650,000.00</b>
<b>Total disbursements to date</b>	<b>\$ 1,713,802.05</b>
<b>Available balance</b>	<b>\$ 936,197.95</b>

### Lebanon Work Plan

<b>Total budget allocation to date</b>	<b>\$ 2,500,000.00</b>
<b>Total disbursements to date</b>	<b>\$ 1,411,118.52</b>
<b>Available balance</b>	<b>\$ 1,088,881.48</b>

### Regional Work Plan

<b>Total budget allocation to date</b>	<b>\$ 2,600,000.00</b>
<b>Total disbursements to date</b>	<b>\$ 1,670,765.62</b>
<b>Available balance</b>	<b>\$ 929,234.38</b>

*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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