

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 2024. Next issue will be circulated in September 2024.

الله أكبر


IRAQ

- A **guidance manual on the implementation of Budget that Supports Women's Programs**, including and a monitoring and evaluation framework, has been drafted and shared with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and with COMSEC, upon completion of a series of capacity building workshops for these entities.
- Together with COMSEC, Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Agriculture, the scope of the work to **pilot training for the productive inclusion of women in agriculture and their access to markets** was agreed upon. Implementation of this activity is expected to commence in June and will include an impact assessment that aims to inform future investments in the sector related to the most effective combination of technical and in-kind support to enhance rural women's livelihood.
- Building on the report findings and discussions related to **integrating women in public procurement in KRI**, recommendations to the Procurement Regulation in KRI were drafted and shared with the KRG procurement task force. The suggestions provided reflect women's empowerment objectives and related procedures, aligned with the KRG Vision 2030. These will be discussed with KRG Ministry of Planning and the High Council for Women and Development in the coming months.


JORDAN

- The MoL officially approved the **Guideline for Employers Towards a Safe and Healthy Work Environment** in April. This was developed with support from the MGF and included a review of national legal framework and systems, global best practices, and a series of validation sessions with private and public sector stakeholders. The finalized version will be uploaded on the ministry's website and disseminated to the private sector.
- The MGF has initiated the **eco-system mapping for interventions supporting women's economic participation** that will be part of the forthcoming Jordan Women's Observatory of the JNCW. Key government stakeholders were interviewed and an initial matrix of results has been compiled, with findings mostly focusing on entrepreneurship and employment/skilling support.
- The MGF launched the **assessment of the Social Security Corporation's Reaya program**, which supports working mothers in covering costs of childcare. As an initial step, a 11111review of the program's governance, including policies and procedures, as well as beneficiary characteristics analysis, were developed for revision of the SSC.


LEBANON

- **"The Comprehensive Assessment of the Childcare Landscape in Lebanon: A Mixed Method Study"** was launched at the Lebanese American University in Beirut on March 27. Attended by over 80 participants, the event aimed at elevating the dialogue on childcare, emphasizing its multi-sectoral nature. Among others, the launch featured MP Dr. Inaya Ezzeddine, the President of LAU and the Ambassador of Canada to Lebanon. It included discussion on the role of Ministries of Public Health; Social Affairs; Labor; and, Education and Higher Education, and ignite talks from academia, private sector and private nurseries syndicate. The report serves as a foundational tool for informed, evidence-based discussions to support the GoL's work on childcare as a strategic priority contributing to women's employment and child development.
- Two **legal workshops** were organized with the Beirut Bar Association (BBA), in partnership with NCLW. The first built the capacity of 30 trainee lawyers on drafting gender-sensitive internal policies for private and public sector workplaces (such as provisions related to paternity & maternity leaves, childcare, flexible work, and sexual harassment prevention). The second was conducted with 20 lawyers from BBA's Women's Committee on the Law criminalizing sexual harassment and rehabilitation of victims.
- A draft of the **gender-conscious media toolkit for advertising agencies** in Lebanon was finalized, aiming to guide advertising practices towards empowering women economically and challenging societal norms. It will serve as a training resource for agencies to create content that breaks traditional gender roles and fosters positive narratives.

KNOWLEDGE BRIEF: **[Leveraging Social and Behavior Change Communication to Transform Gender Attitudes and Norms in Mashreq Countries](#)** highlights lessons from the MGF work to use Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) to transform gender attitudes hindering women's inclusion in local economies and presents details four steps for ensuring effective SBCC. Available on MGF website.



MGF Regional Work Program

SPOTLIGHT ON: SCALING UP FOR IMPACT IN JORDAN

The lending operation **Jordan Enhancing Women’s Economic Opportunities (P180508)** was approved by the World Bank Board in March, and signed by the Government of Jordan in April 2024. Directly informed by the analytical work and capitalizing on the technical assistance and multisectoral engagement under the Mashreq Gender Facility, the US\$ 226M operation aims to contribute to Jordan’s ambition to double the female labor force participation rate by 2033 as identified in the Jordan Economic Modernization Vision.

Similar to the MGF, the project takes a multi-sectoral approach to address constraints that women face to enter and stay in the labor force related to **(i) better and more adaptive workplace conditions for women**, including the and sexual harassment, as well as the launch of a National Gender Equality Seal for the private sector; **(ii) increased financial inclusion and entrepreneurship** among women, aligned with the National Financial Inclusion Strategy; **(iii) improved safety for women in and around public transportation**; and **(iv) increased access to affordable quality childcare** through the adoption of a National Childcare Policy, improving the quality of childcare workers and expanding the supply and demand of nurseries. Key expected outcomes include: (i) 100 private sector firms awarded the National Gender Equality Seal; (ii) 142,000 additional women with financial account or eWallets; (iii) action plan for safer transport launched with modernized bus stop standards piloted; and (iv) 700 new nurseries registered or licensed, and 8,500 mothers receiving childcare subsidies.

The multifaceted response to a larger development problem is highly innovative, and the operation marks the **first time a government in the MENA region borrows for a project focused on women**. It was presented to the Board together with the World Bank’s Country Partnership Framework for Jordan, that incorporates a high level objective on women’s labor market participation – also this a first in the region, as globally only Mozambique has included standalone objective on women in a partnership strategy.

Objective: To address constraints women face to enter and stay in the labor market

- Better & more adaptive workplace conditions for women:** flexible work, National Gender Equality Seal, sexual harassment
- Women’s increased financial inclusion & entrepreneurship:** account ownership & control, women-owned businesses
- Safe public transportation:** access & use implementation plan, safe bus stops
- Expanded access to affordable, quality childcare:** national policy, worker certification, nursery expansion, subsidies

MGF Budget Report

Reporting Period: June 1, 2019 – June 1, 2024

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	3,450,000.00
Jordan Work Plan	3,450,000.00
Lebanon Work Plan	3,450,000.00
Regional Work Plan	3,207,000.00
Total committed	13,557,000.00

Available Funds

Available balance	-
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disbursements = actual expenditures & committed budget

Iraq Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	2,929,037.87
Available balance	\$	520,962.13

Jordan Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	2,889,956.61
Available balance	\$	560,043.39

Lebanon Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,450,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	2,662,702.50
Available balance	\$	787,297.50

Regional Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	3,207,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	2,742,594.90
Available balance	\$	464,405.10

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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