

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 to May 2020. Next issue will be circulated early September 2020.

الله أكبر

IRAQ

The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to adaptations and some programmatic delays. This has affected, among other, the mobility within and between cities; work hours for government employees thereby limiting discussions and access to documentation; and some shifts in priorities to address the immediate health crisis.

- Training content development on **gender sensitization of incubators and accelerators**, and another on **investment readiness** for female-led startups and SMEs underway.
- Initial proposals for the **peer learning platforms** shared with Chambers of Commerce in Baghdad and Erbil modified to include trainings in response to the pandemic and its impact on women's employment. Delivery model of trainings has shifted from face-to-face to virtual.
- Diagnostic review for **women's agricultural training** underway to identify challenges and priorities of current training programs.
- Draft pilot intervention design for **content and teacher training** to promote young women's economic empowerment, under review by the MOE in Iraq and KRI.

The MGF team, under the National Coordinator, is also in continuous engagement with the new Secretary General of the High Council for Women's Affairs.



JORDAN

- Methodology for assessing **the socio-economic impact of microlending on women** in Jordan, considering impact of COVID19 on payment defaults, under validation with relevant government stakeholders to ensure alignment with GoJ response to the pandemic.
- Kickoff meeting for developing a **national plan for digital payments for wage protection** held with MoDEE, CBJ and JOPACC. Approach considers relevant GoJ response to COVID-19, namely through requiring salary transfers via e-wallets to workers in private sector. Barriers to opening and use of e-wallets, especially by female workers, will be examined.
- Kickoff meeting held with Ministry of Transport to discuss the inception report and plan for **operationalizing the Code of Conduct in public transport**, including the development of a user mobile app.
- MOU signed between IFC and Int@j – the ICT Business Association – and is exploring partnership with JNCW to launch a **peer learning platform** for raising capacity of private sector companies in increasing workforce gender diversity through a series of demand-driven webinars.
- MGF is supporting JNCW in the design of **behavioral-science informed communication campaigns** addressing norms associated with low female labor force participation. Part of coordination efforts to streamline GoJ commitments to women's economic empowerment.
- Private sector focused knowledge products underway: Identification of economic impact of **gender diversity on corporate boards** of publicly listed companies (in partnership with Amman Stock Exchange); Studies on business case for (i) addressing **violence and sexual harassment** in the workplace; (ii) **family friendly policies**; and (iii) women in **non-traditional jobs**.



LEBANON

To address the structural difficulties facing women's economic empowerment exasperated by the challenges the dual crises Lebanon is going through (COVID-19 lockdown and the economic crisis), some activities have been revised.

- **Crisis Management Training for Women Led Entrepreneurs and Training of Trainers** is commissioned and will include training to women-led businesses on managing the impact of the dual crises. Virtual delivery.
- The development of **communication strategy and action plan** to support positive social norms related to women's the Government's WEEAP initiatives has been initiated.
- Signed memorandum of understanding with The Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Beirut and Mount Lebanon and the IFC for a partnership for **peer learning platform** with the private sector to raise their capacity to recruit, retain and promote more women in their workforce. Webinar training series will cover workforce gender diversity.
- Revision of legal outputs with a lens of the challenges women face with COVID-19, such as the Labor Code and the **National Security Social Fund (NSSF) Law amendments**, with NCLW, Ministry of Labor.
- **Recommendations** provided to support women's economic empowerment related to **financial regulations, micro-finance, legislation** (consumer protection and insolvency law) of the reform through the GoL Recovery Plan, April 2020.

MGF Regional Work Program

DIALOGUE & PARTICIPATION

MGF Secretariat – Support to country teams has been focused on a series of operational processes to procure technical assistance services. Planning of a virtual childcare clinic for relevant stakeholders across the three countries underway. In addition, technical assistance to WBG project teams provided to identify and address gender-differentiated issues through all operations, including those specifically focusing on COVID-19 preparedness and response.

Mashreq Conference on Women’s Economic Empowerment II – The Conference has been put on hold due to COVID-19, but several virtual knowledge events will be planned.

DATA & KNOWLEDGE

State of the Mashreq Women report – The Report provides an overall, data-driven picture of women’s access to economic opportunities in the region. It calls for action in the following areas: stronger economic growth, effective policy action to close legal gaps, promotion of more egalitarian attitudes, access to quality childcare, and the provision of safe transportation. The report notes significant opportunities in the digital economy; however, without action to close the digital gender gap, those opportunities could become another barrier. The Report will be launched at a virtual event chaired by the WB Global Director for Gender, Caren Grown, with panelists from academia, government, private sector.

INNOVATING 4 RESULTS

Enhancing forcibly displaced women's access to economic opportunities – Implementation has been challenged by COVID-19, including cancelled mission to Jordan, and changes in the collaboration with the Refugee Investment & Matchmaking Platform, which unexpectedly will close by December 2020. Since March, the work has therefore focused on: (i) Virtual consultations with firms, NGOs, UN and WBG teams to further assess the needs and key stakeholders, (ii) development of social norms campaign with WB teams and external partners, (iii) development of policy notes on economic inclusion of refugee/IDPs, and (iv) preparations of next steps, including preparing call for proposal for training and job placing of 200 refugee women in Jordan focusing on homebased businesses, IT and agriculture, and exploring opportunities for roll-out in Iraq and Lebanon in phase 2.

MGF Budget Report

MGF TOTAL BUDGET. *Aggregate totals, to date.*

Received to Date

Donor	Amount Received
Canada	7,458,697.00
Norway	2,101,972.47
Total received	9,560,669.47

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	3,560,669.47
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Reporting Period: June 1, 2019 – June 1, 2020

Iraq Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	177,473.17
Available balance	\$	1,322,526.83

Jordan Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	277,413.15
Available balance	\$	1,222,586.85

Lebanon Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	124,769.56
Available balance	\$	1,375,230.44

Regional Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	497,027.61
Available balance	\$	1,002,972.39

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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