

LEBANON

Women in Lebanon want to work however only around a fourth of women participate in the work force. While the share of women in Lebanon's labor force exceeds the MENA average of 22 percent, it is still much lower than the share of men in Lebanon (26 vs 76 percent, respectively). Unemployment rates are also twice as high for women (10 percent) compared to men (5 percent). Only 17 percent of women are self-employed compared to 43 percent of men, and only four percent of companies in Lebanon has a woman as top manager.

A combination of barriers contributes to the low levels of labor force participation and entrepreneurship. Constraints around access to safe transportation, affordable and quality childcare, and finance or collateral as well as concerns around harassment in the workplace and norms surrounding gender roles at home keep women out of or hold them back in the workplace and from starting their own business. Lebanese women also cite flexible hours, work security and long-term career prospects as important factors they consider when deciding to work.



To respond to these challenges, the **Government of Lebanon** aims to increase the Female Labor Force Participation Rate by **5 percentage points** in the next 5 years, and developed a Women's Economic Empowerment Action Plan that identifies the way to achieve this. The **Mashreq Gender Facility** is supporting the implementation of the Action Plan based on a government-led 18-month country work plan that adopts a "dual-track approach", balancing national-level strategic interventions with selective activity-level pilots. The building blocks for change are created by focusing on building the evidence base on issues such as labor market and care economy; instituting coordination mechanisms for increased collaboration on women's economic empowerment; initiating legal reforms; and developing capacity among relevant public and private sector stakeholders. Communications and outreach activities aim to address cultural barriers and promote rights to incentivize behavioral change.

In sum, the Lebanon Work Plan focuses on four pillars of work:

- ⇒ Enabling environment
- ⇒ Understanding constraints to economic activity
- ⇒ Entrepreneurship and private sector employment
- ⇒ Communication and behavior change



Data source: WDI latest available

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. Through collaboration with the private sector, civil society organizations and development partners, the Facility supports government-led efforts, country level priorities and strategic regional activities that:

1. **Strengthen the enabling environment** for women's economic participation;
2. **Improve women's access** to economic opportunities.

The MGF is a **World Bank Group**-facilitated inter-agency initiative that works in partnership with units across the WBG, aid agencies and donors, governments, NGOs, private sector firms, and researchers. The MGF is supported through the WBG's **Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality (UFGE)**.

At the regional level, the **MGF Steering Committee** is a high-level advisory group that provides overall strategic direction and guidance. It counts on two government representatives per country, regional directors of the World Bank and the IFC and selected development partners and private sector donors with strong commitment to women's economic opportunities in the Mashreq.

Mashreq Gender Facility Country Work Plan Pillars

Enabling environment

To create favorable conditions for women’s access to economic opportunities, the project will provide:

- * Technical legal support with the overall objective of **lifting legal constraints** restricting women’s access to the work force.
- * Identify **gender-based inequalities in human resource policies and practices** regulated by the Civil Service Council for public sector employees, and provide recommendations for potential adjustments.
- * Review of **existing key national strategies** (e.g. TVET, Agriculture) to identify specific actions and targets to close gender gaps.



Understanding constraints to economic activity

For the first period of implementation of the MGF work plan in Lebanon, two major areas of work will contribute to the evidence base related to women’s constraints to being economically active.

- * A **comprehensive report of the labor market outcomes** of Lebanon’s workforce, with analysis disaggregated by sex. This work will leverage the recently completed Living Condition Survey undertaken by Central Agency for Statistics as well as existing qualitative research.
- * Extensive **assessment of the demand and supply of child care** to form the basis of a subsequent framework for enhancing access, quality and affordability to childcare facilities in Lebanon to all parents.

Entrepreneurship & private sector employment

Given the need to broaden the economic activities available to women, several activities will work directly with the private sector related to, *inter alia*, leadership, technology and overall adoption of family friendly practices.

- * To raise awareness and incentivize the private sector to adopt family friendly policies and support working parents, the MGF will build the capacity of the sector by partnering with a business association and establishing the **business case for workforce gender diversity** through the development and dissemination of case studies.
- * Support **early stage women entrepreneurs’ access to training, knowledge, and market** by partnering with investment funds, small investors, incubators and/or accelerators to create a peer-learning platform.

Communication & behavioral change

A comprehensive multi-sectoral communication and outreach campaign will be designed and implemented to **promote the rights of women in the workplace** and highlight the **positive impact of working women**. Specific sub-themes will also be addressed, such as women as drivers of innovation and the potential impact of family-friendly work policies on retention, etc.



The campaign will include a strong **behavioral focus** to contribute to influencing **social norms and gender stereotypes**.

The MGF is a WBG initiative in collaboration with the governments of Canada and Norway. It is supported by the **Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality (UFGE)** with generous 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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