



STEERING COMMITTEE Terms of Reference

I. BACKGROUND

Gender equality is smart economics, contributing to poverty reduction, strengthening resilience and boosting shared prosperity. Empowering women and girls has an intrinsic value and is instrumental to achieve more inclusive institutions, sound policies, and effective development outcomes.

In the Mashreq countries of Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon important gains have been made in women's access to education and health, but persistent challenges remain in women's economic opportunities. In the Mashreq countries, around 1 in 5 women work and less than 5% of firms are led by a woman. Legally, there are certain restrictions related to areas and tasks in which women can work in all three countries. Women also have less access to formal financial services. Furthermore, countries are faced with context-specific problems, especially in the face of fragility and conflict.

Increased female economic participation would contribute to inclusive growth, and to help grow the middle class. Closing the gender gap in labor force participation rates by 25 percent can boost GDP (PPP terms) by 9 percent in Lebanon, 10 percent in Jordan and 11 percent in Iraq (ILO 2018).

The Mashreq Gender Facility will provide technical assistance to the Mashreq countries to enhance women's economic opportunities as a catalyst towards more inclusive, sustainable, and peaceful societies, where economic growth benefits all. Through collaboration with private sector, civil society and development partners, the Facility will support government-led efforts, country level priorities and strategic regional activities that: (i) Strengthen the enabling environment for relevant stakeholders to effectively identify and address constraints to women's economic participation; and, (b) Improve women's access to economic opportunities.

The Facility will support country level activities guided by government developed Action Plans. The Facility will also support Regional activities to take advantage of economies of scale and to support activities that effect all three countries. Activities of the 5-year Facility (2019-2024) will be identified under three, interconnected, pillars:

- i. **Dialogue & Participation**: building capacity and awareness at all levels, convening stakeholders across sectors and segments
- ii. **Data & Knowledge**: country and regional data and analytics for evidence-based policies
- iii. **Innovating for Results**: testing and assessing interventions to identify solutions and provide support to catalytic initiatives that boost women's economic opportunities

In addition, an effective communications strategy, and the harnessing of new technologies will be key cross-cutting enablers to ensure maximum engagement and outreach and continuous, adaptive learning; to encourage participation of young women and men and non-traditional partners; to build a broader in-country and cross-country dialogue and learning; and to generate innovative solutions.

The MGF was launched on January 19, 2019 in Beirut, Lebanon.

II. OBJECTIVES AND MANDATE OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The MGF Steering Committee is a high-level advisory group that will be responsible for providing overall strategic direction and guidance for the MGF implementation and outreach.

The key objectives and functions of the Steering Committee are:

- **Contribute to elevating the dialogue and level of commitment to women's economic opportunities.** Enable a coordinated, more holistic identification and response to key constraints, and engage decision-makers from Finance and line Ministries to work alongside country level authorities responsible for women's affairs based on actionable commitments. Champion and serve as advocates for the Facility within their constituencies. Support fund-raising activities.
- **Provide strategic guidance to maximize effectiveness of MGF activities in reaching the targets set out.** Share and discuss the country-level Women's Economic Empowerment Action Plans. Advise on the focus areas and priorities set out in country level and regional annual work plans developed under the auspices of the MGF as they relate to reaching the overall targets set out in the Action Plans. Recommend overall funding allocations for the work plans. Monitor progress by reviewing country level and regional annual status and financial reports. Provide recommendations for dealing with important risks or issues that come up during implementation. Based on evidence and practical solutions stemming from the MGF activities, discuss and disseminate progress and solutions that close key gaps between males and females in economic opportunities and empowerment.
- **Promote collaboration and partnerships.** Foster partnerships across stakeholders on projects and initiatives that promotes women's economic empowerment at the country and regional level by identifying relevant events, activities, projects and policies that represent an opportunity to collaborate with the MGF and/or to disseminate results. Support the identification and invitation of experts for the Technical Advisory Roster.

Steering Committee members will manage with confidentiality any information received while fulfilling their mandate as SC members.

The Steering Committee mandate expires at the end of the implementation of the MGF in 2024. In case the current Facility term is shortened or extended, the World Bank Group will consider amending these Terms of Reference.

III. MEMBERSHIP AND GOVERNING STRUCTURE

The initial SC is constituted by representatives from the following institutions:

- Government of Iraq
- Government of Jordan
- Government of Lebanon
- World Bank
- IFC
- Canada
- Norway
- UN Women

It is recommended that MGF benefiting governments assign two representatives as SC members: the Minister of Finance, Planning or Economy and the representative of the government entity responsible for women's/gender affairs. Other institutions will appoint their Regional Director level representatives as the SC member. In addition, development partners and private sector donors who demonstrate strong commitment and a record of supporting women's economic opportunities in the Mashreq region will be invited to join the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee members will determine the basis for assessing the commitment required for SC membership through meeting minutes. The World Bank will assess potential members, and invite those who meet the criteria to join the SC.

Members serve until the end of the term of the MGF, and in the event a member is not able to complete their term, the institution the member is representing should communicate the change in representing member to the MGF Secretariat.

In addition, the Steering Committee will identify and invite representatives from the following institutions as observers in an extended SC group:

- One United Nations representative per country: SRSGs of Iraq and Lebanon, and the UNRC of Jordan
- One Civil Society Organization per country
- One representative of a regional entity for women's advancement

The SC chairs, in consultation with the core SC, will decide on what meetings merit the participation of the extended SC group, depending on issues to be discussed.

The SC will be supported by the MGF Secretariat housed at the WBG. The Secretariat will be responsible for the coordination of the SC meetings and activities, including the preparation and sharing of documents, logistical arrangements and writing up the minutes.

IV. STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Steering Committee will meet at least twice a year. Meetings can be held virtually.

The SC will be co-chaired and convened by the World Bank Regional Director and one of the Governments benefiting from the Facility, to be identified on a rolling, annual basis to coincide with the country that will host the next annual conference.¹ Meetings will be held when there is a quorum of at least 75 percent of the members. Decisions will be taken by consensus among participating members in each respective meeting.

To minimize conflict of interest, members that have a vested interest in the discussion of a particular issue, will recuse themselves from participating in the same unless it is for clarification purposes.

An email distribution list will be created and used for communications with and within the Steering Committee.

¹ The Government of Lebanon will be the co-chair from January 19, 2019 until September 30, 2019; the Government of Jordan will be the co-chair October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020; the Government of Iraq will co-chair from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021; and so on.