

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 September to November 2020. Next issue will be circulated early March 2021.

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

الله أكبر

IRAQ

- **Access to finance:** Partnership established with Commercial Banks' League to deliver tailored training courses for women on business and finance (in collaboration with IFC). A **\$500,000 loan initiative** has been launched by the League in collaboration with the MGF providing no-collateral loans.
- Regulation on **preferential treatment in public procurement** for businesses owned by women or that employ women drafted by the Ministry of Planning, Baghdad. Similar regulation in process in KRI.
- Assessment of existing **digital mentorship and knowledge exchange platforms** conducted to inform the design of such a platform for Iraq/KRI.
- **MOU signed between IFC and the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce** to launch **peer learning platform** for raising the capacity of firms to increase workforce gender diversity through a series of demand-driven webinars.

The scope of technical assistance for several activities has been defined and will be contracted, such as: **content of educational curriculum and teacher training** to promote young women's economic empowerment with a pilot intervention; trainings on **gender sensitization of incubators and accelerators, and investment readiness for female-led startups.**



JORDAN

- First webinar under the **peer learning platform** for private sector companies was held, focusing on business benefits of implementing a flexible workplace environment benefiting both male and female employees. 83 participants from 51 Jordanian companies attended.
- The first finalized **business case study on gender diversity in the workplace** focuses on women in non-conventional roles, with the ICT firm Estarta. To be published shortly.
- Through a guided process based on behavioral economics, **social norms campaign topics** were identified with the JNCW to address barriers to women's economic participation: gender roles, childcare and safety and protection of women in public spaces.
- Several ongoing research products:
 - >To promote women's employment through **satellite (remote) work** units, the impact of satellite garment factories was assessed, and a methodology for sector assessment developed.
 - > For the **wage protection through digital payments** roadmap, qualitative research is uncovering drivers, challenges, opportunities in wage digitization from regulatory, employer, employee, government systems perspectives.
 - >The methodology to assess **socio-economic impact of microlending on women** in Jordan was validated by national stakeholders, considering impact of COVID19 on payment defaults. The study will inform policy decisions in the microfinance sector.



LEBANON

- The **law criminalizing sexual harassment** was adopted by the Parliamentary Commission for Administration and Justice in Nov. 2020. The MGF provided technical assistance revising legal outputs.
- The **comprehensive assessment of childcare services provision** is underway. The mapping is developed in collaboration with concerned ministries. The review of laws & regulations was finalized.
- An **inter-ministerial meeting** with gender focal points from Ministries of Public Health; Education and Higher Education; Social Affairs; Labor; Economy and Trade; and Agriculture, discussed progress of activities, synergies and cross-sectoral collaboration.
- The **Crisis Management Training Program for Women Led Businesses and Business Advisors** was launched to provide tools for firm resilience. To date, 62 business advisors and 55 women-led businesses have been trained.
- The **behavior science informed communication strategy** and action plan is ongoing. Target behaviors for women, men and employers have been defined, focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders to validate the approach.
- The first webinar under the **Peer Learning Platform** was delivered in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. The webinar focused on Mental Health and Well-being with attendees from 32 companies.

MGF Regional Work Program



SPOTLIGHT ON: DATA & KNOWLEDGE

Thematic deep dives - A virtual Childcare Clinic was held in Oct–Nov 2020 with around 150 participants representing mainly government, private sector and civil society from Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. The main objective of the clinic was to increase participants’ understanding of the childcare ecosystem and its role in facilitating female labor force participation. Evidence, technical resources and tools to support the implementation of childcare activities were presented and discussed. The clinic took participants on a journey starting with an introduction to childcare, followed by private sector perspectives and then policy response based on experiences of government counterparts in Mexico and Colombia. Country sessions honed in on specific pain points for the expansion of childcare policies (and services), providing an opportunity for the participants to build on and apply the learning from the previous three sessions, and the results of these discussions were presented by government representatives in a final session. Several challenges presented are common across and provide opportunities for further discussion and support in this iterative process, such as: improved regulations and implementation; coordination and clearer roles & responsibilities (including with private sector); quality standards and its trade-off with cost; data & evidence to understand and address gaps; awareness and targeted discourse related to motivation behind expanded childcare.



State of the Mashreq Women report – based on the findings of the report, a blog was published: [“What gets in their way? A closer look into why so few women work in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon”](#)

MGF Budget Report

Reporting Period: June 1, 2019 – December 1, 2020

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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Iraq Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	388,925.26
Available balance	\$	1,111,074.74

Jordan Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	852,453.55
Available balance	\$	647,546.45

Lebanon Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	728,345.11
Available balance	\$	771,654.89

Regional Work Plan

Total budget allocation to date	\$	1,500,000.00
Total disbursements to date	\$	718,354.18
Available balance	\$	781,645.82

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.

For more information contact the **MGF Secretariat** at:

Jonna Lundwall
jlundwall@worldbank.org
mgf@worldbankgroup.org

