

The Economic and Social Commission for
Western Asia (ESCWA)

Expert Group Meeting to Review the Draft Unified Arab Report On the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action after Thirty Years

3–4 September 2024
Fairmont Hotel – Amman, Jordan



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



The Economic and Social Commission for
Western Asia (ESCWA)

Session 4: Progress Made Across the 12 Critical Areas of Concern

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Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



Introduction

The report presents the regional trend in progress made over the past five years in empowering women and girls in Arab countries across the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the Beijing Platform, which are grouped into six comprehensive dimensions, highlighting the convergences between the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The report does not aim to compile national reports and list the achievements of countries, but rather aims to shed light on developments at the regional level as a whole and to monitor general regional trends in the field of gender equality.

The national reports of Arab countries revealed substantial achievements in certain areas, while other areas continue to require further attention in the coming years. The reports also revealed disparities between countries in the extent of progress achieved, with challenges faced by conflict-affected countries casting a particularly acute shadow on women and girls.

Progress Made in Empowering Women in the Arab Region

First : Comprehensive development, shared prosperity and decent work.

Second : Eradicating poverty, social protection and social.

Third : Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes.

Fourth : Participation , accountability and gender-responsive institutions.

Fifth: Peaceful communities in which no one is marginalized.

Sixth: Environmental conservation, protection and restoration.

Compilation of the critical areas of concern outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action

Critical Areas of Concern	1	2	3	4	5	6
Women and Poverty	✓	✓				
Education and Training of Women		✓				
Women and Health		✓				
Violence against Women			✓			
Women and Armed Conflict					✓	
Women and the Economy	✓					
Women In power and Decision-Making				✓		
Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women				✓		
Human Rights of women	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Women and the Media			✓	✓		
Women and the Environment						✓
The female Child	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

1	Comprehensive development, shared prosperity and decent work.	4	Participation , accountability and gender-responsive institutions.
2	Eradicating poverty, social protection and social.	5	Peaceful communities in which no one is marginalized.
3	Freedom from violence , stigma and stereotypes.	6	Environmental conservation,protection and restoration

First : Comprehensive development , Shared Prosperity and Decent work

Promoting gender equality in the workplace over the past five years.

Unpaid care and domestic work, promoting work-life balance and enhancing the rights of paid care workers.

Bridging the digital gender divide .

Macroeconomic policies to support a more gender-equal economy .

Promoting Gender Equality in the Workplace over the Past Five Years.

- * Arab countries have taken a series of measures over the past five years to promote gender equality in the workplace. In terms of work, most Arab countries have come together in recent years around common legislative priorities aimed at enhancing the protection of women's participation in the labor force, most notably: prohibiting gender-based discrimination, equal pay, removing and amending restrictions on women's work, increasing paid maternity leave, granting paternity/parental leave, and criminalizing sexual harassment in the workplace.
- * A number of Arab countries have taken steps to enshrine the prohibition of gender-based discrimination in the workplace, which would affect equal opportunities in their laws, such as Jordan in 2023 , the UAE in 2022 , Kuwait in 2021 , and Saudi Arabia in 2020. In 2023, both Sultanate of Oman and the UAE amended their Labor Law, prohibiting the employer from terminating the employment relationship for several reasons, including gender, pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding. The UAE and Algeria in 2022 , Bahrain in 2021 , Egypt and Saudi Arabia- in 2020 , and Jordan in 2019 enshrined the principle of pay equity, ensuring equal pay for work of equal value.
- * Some Arab countries have amended their Labor Laws to remove restrictions on women working night shifts or in certain industries and professions. For example, Bahrain and Jordan introduced such changes in 2023, followed by Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt in 2021, and Saudi Arabia in 2020. These reforms aim to foster greater gender equality in the workplace.

- ✧ Some Arab countries have sought to amend their legislation to align more closely with the International Labor Organization(ILO) standards for paid maternity leave, which amount to 14 weeks (98 days) . For example:
 - Sultanate of Oman (2023): Maternity leave for 98 days instead of 50 days.
 - Palestine (2022): Amended the Labor Law to extend maternity leave to 90 days.
- ✧ Several countries have adopted a relatively new legislative trend towards recognizing the father's role in child care.
 - ✧ Sultanate of Oman (2023): Approval of granting paternity/parental leave in the private sector (7 days) in 2023, UAE (5 days) in 2020, and Jordan (3 days) in 2019.
 - ✧ In the public sector, some countries have approved amendments granting paternity leave for a few days. For example, Morocco approved (15 days) in 2022, Jordan approved(4 days) in 2020, Palestine granted (3 days) in 2022, UAE approved (5 days) in 2022.
- ✧ Regarding sexual harassment in the workplace, in Lebanon, a law on sexual harassment and the rehabilitation of its victims was passed in 2020, which addressed sexual harassment in the workplace. In Kuwait, the Minister of Commerce issued a decision in 2021 prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace and referring its criminalization to the Penal Code under the provisions of crimes against morals.

- ✧ Regarding domestic workers, Tunisia issued a law on domestic work in 2021, guaranteeing the right to decent work without discrimination. Similarly, Saudi Arabia also adopted a domestic workers' regulation in 2023, which includes specifying working hours, rest days, vacations, and health care, in addition to protection from verbal or physical assault and sexual harassment. In 2019, the UAE introduced guarantees for migrant workers and domestic workers, including women, and removed some restrictions previously imposed on their work.
- ✧ To promote active labor market policies and create gender-sensitive jobs through education, training, skills development, and subsidies, several countries have implemented measures to build capacities that provide women with greater opportunities in the labor market. The Sultanate of Oman launched the National Digital Competencies Initiative “Maken” in 2021. The initiative aims at qualifying national competencies with modern digital skills in high market demand to open new job opportunities and provide the labor market with national competencies that are compatible with the rapid evolving of the business environment. In Saudi Arabia, programs have been launched to train and qualify women in digital and future skills to bridge the gap in the labor market by launching training programs in several modern, traditional, and emerging technical fields in various regions of the Kingdom. Syria implemented the “Masarati” program to establish training centers for young women on the basic skills necessary for the labor market.

- ✧ To increase the role of women in the private sector, several Arab countries have implemented mandatory quotas for women on the boards of directors of companies listed on the stock market. Morocco has set ambitious mandatory quotas to reach 40% by 2027, and the UAE has obligated companies listed on the stock markets to ensure opportunities for women to be represented on boards of directors. To enhance women's access to leadership positions in public institutions, Morocco has applied the principle of gender parity to the boards of directors of public institutions, and Kuwait has launched the “Kuwaiti Women Leaders For Change” platform, which is dedicated to compiling a database that highlights the capabilities of female leaders, helping decision-makers in various sectors increase the number of leadership positions held by women.
- ✧ In addition to the aforementioned measures, several countries have taken significant measures to break the glass ceiling that prevented women from entering certain political and administrative positions. For example, a woman in Tunisia assumed the position of Prime Minister, and the percentage of women in the cabinets and parliaments of a large number of countries has increased. Women also headed leadership positions in public institutions. A notable shift has been the growing representation of women in the judiciary. In several countries, the percentage of female judges has risen, and in others, women were permitted to serve as judges for the first time—a significant step toward gender equality. National reports highlight numerous details of these advancements. One of the prominent models in the Arab world is the formulation of advanced policies and legislation in Saudi Arabia over the past five years, which resulted in integrated practical measures to empower women and achieve gender balance. Similarly, The Sultanate of Oman launched the “Tasmu” initiative to foster the leadership competencies of Omani women in 2024. The initiative targets women who hold supervisory positions across the public and private sectors and civil society institutions.

- ✧ In the field of motivating private companies to achieve gender equality in the work environment, some countries, including Jordan and Egypt, apply the UNDP Gender Equality Seal Program to recognize the good performance of both private and public organizations and achieve transformative results in gender equality. Morocco organizes an award for professional equality that aims to promote best practices in professional equality within companies, combat gender-based stereotypes, and reward companies excelling in gender parity. Saudi Arabia also launched the Awareness Project, which seeks to enhance the social responsibility of the private sector to achieve gender balance, with a particular focus on building awareness and marketing campaigns, policies, and strategies that enable and help the private sector to promote gender balance.

- ✧ In the field of governance, Iraq launched the economic empowerment plan for Iraqi women with the aim of removing obstacles and creating more economic opportunities for them, in addition to increasing women's participation in the private sector labor market. Jordan adopted the national composite indicator to monitor and follow up on women's economic participation, which takes into account women with disabilities.

- ✧ Jordan also launched an initiative to transfer working women from the informal sector to the formal sector through incentives, the most important of which is bearing part of the cost of social security contributions for a specific period of time. This is in addition to the women in manufacturing industries initiative, the initiative to establish institutional nurseries, and the development of a national framework for nurseries in cooperation with relevant ministries and civil society.

* Some countries have paid special attention to financial inclusion as an effective tool for women's economic empowerment. Morocco has placed women and girls within the main directions of financial inclusion strategies through financial education, providing new products and services that adapt to women's needs, and developing gender-responsive indicators to monitor achievements in this area. Egypt has also implemented several measures that have led to a significant increase in the rate of financial inclusion among women.

Unpaid care and domestic work, promoting work-life balance and enhancing the rights of paid care workers.

Most countries have stated that they expanded childcare services or provided existing services at more affordable prices. Following this, support has been extended to older people, individuals with disabilities and others who require intensive forms of care. The next step involved providing or enhancing maternity, paternity or paternal leave, as well as other types of family leave. Notably, however, no country has mentioned among the measures taken introducing legal changes concerning the division of marital assets or post-divorce pension benefits that would recognize a woman's unpaid contribution to the household during the marriage.

Bridging the Digital Gender Divide .

Ten countries reported that they have mainstreamed gender equality into national digital transformation policies. Following this, they introduced or enhanced programs aimed at increasing women and girls' digital knowledge and skills (nine countries). Several countries have also employed Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to accelerate economic empowerment efforts for women.

For example, Jordan's initiative for women's online stores includes access to the app, store design, integration with electronic payment methods, and delivery applications, with the option to add marketing features in specific locations both inside and outside Jordan.

Measures to Bridge the Digital Divide by Country

Measures to Bridge the Digital Divide	Countries that have adopted the measure
Mainstreaming gender equality into national digital transformation policies.	Oman - UAE - Lebanon - Egypt - Iraq - Algeria - Jordan - Saudi Arabia - Palestine - Tunisia
Developing or enhancing programs to bring comprehensive and meaningful connectivity for women and girls, particularly in under-privileged areas.	UAE - Algeria - Morocco - Palestine
Taking measures to eliminate discriminatory barriers faced by women and girls in accessing, using and designing digital tools	Egypt - Jordan - Tunisia
Taking measures to support the design and expansion of safe, affordable, accessible, relevant and inclusive public and private digital tools and services	Bahrain - Iraq - Syria

Measures to Bridge the Digital Divide by Country

Measures to Bridge the Digital Divide	Countries that have adopted the measure
Taking measures to create conditions for gender-responsive digital learning environments	Oman - Lebanon - Bahrain - Algeria - Palestine - Tunisia
Implementing gender-sensitive and human rights-based standards for all aspects of data management, including collection, use, sharing, retention and deletion.	Lebanon - Iraq - Syria - Tunisia - Sudan

Macroeconomic policies adopted to support a more gender-equitable economy.

Several Arab countries have witnessed remarkable progress in empowering women economically and enhancing their participation in the financial and business sectors, for example: banks, financial Institutions and exchange companies are required to ensure Gender equality and non-discrimination in banking transactions and credit access for their customers [UAE - Bahrain].

Representation of women on corporate boards [Jordan - UAE - Morocco - Egypt]

Recognizing women's economic independence from men and protecting their rights, by separating the financial liability of an insolvent husband from that of a solvent wife, as well as acknowledging the ownership of women's assets [Lebanon].

Second : Eradicating poverty, social protection and social services

Reducing/Eliminating poverty among women and girls .

Improving access to social protection for women and girls

Improving health outcomes for women and girls

Improving educational outcomes and skills for women and girls

Reducing/Eliminating Poverty among Women and Girls .

1. A number of Arab countries have implemented conditional cash transfer programs (CCT) aimed at linking financial support for low-income families to their commitment to educating their daughters and attending health care programs. For example, the Takaful and Karama program in Egypt, the cash support program in Jordan, the cash support program in Bahrain, and the Citizen Account program in Saudi Arabia.
2. Some Arab countries have sought to achieve gender equality and enhance women's effective role in community development. For example, in 2021, the Sultanate of Oman amended the Land Law, granting women equal rights with men to own government residential land. Similarly, Morocco passed a law in 2019 stipulating the principle of equality between women and men in benefiting from the properties of the tribal groups to which they belong. With the aim of enhancing women's legal capacity, Syria amended the Personal Status Law in 2021, granting women the right to apply for a passport and a national ID card without any special conditions or restrictions, ensuring equality with men.

The majority of countries reported that they started to enhance poor women's access to decent work through active labor market policies (such as job training, skills development, employment subsidies, etc.). A large number of measures have been implemented in Arab countries over the past five years to reduce poverty among women and girls. Below are some examples of the measures implemented by Algeria:

- 1) Launching a national program aimed at encouraging productive women, particularly housewives and rural women, to actively participate in the national production process.
- 2) Supporting innovative projects, start-ups and incubators within the fishing industry, while encouraging women to invest in this field by establishing technical support mechanisms and financing tools aimed at creating women-led projects to enhance their role in economic life. Moreover, five women's associations have been established to promote the fishing profession.
- 3) Completion of the project "Enhancing the Capacities of Rural Women in Agriculture and Processing of Fruit Tree Products in Vulnerable areas" aimed at promoting the use of small-scale renewable energy applications in rural areas.

In Palestine, a website, "oilinitiatives.ps," was developed to attract economic initiatives, along with an e-commerce platform, E-SOUQ. Additionally awareness programs were launched for female farmers, providing training in the use of technology for organic farming, safe agriculture, and conservation practices.

Bahrain has launched the "Bahraini Women Export Initiative" to support women-owned businesses in Bahrain, in accessing export opportunities and enhancing their participation in the global economy.

In the field of preserving women's rights, Palestine has issued a decision to expedite women's inheritance procedures, while Egypt has issued a law criminalizing the prevention of inheritance from women.

In relation to supporting women's entrepreneurship development activities in the field of business and projects and access to markets, Bahrain launched the second edition of the **Bahraini Women's Business Development Portfolio** – "Riyadat", where the scope of the portfolio's solutions was expanded to cover the needs of institutions and projects of various sizes through flexible financing solutions, with a focus on supporting promising and innovative economic sectors. It also provides multiple support paths for both new and existing businesses. The portfolio includes financial support of up to 50% of the loan profits to assist with cash flow management, in addition to providing a consulting service to improve the quality and efficiency of institutions, with an extension of the support repayment period of up to seven years, depending on the type of support.

This was followed by the introduction or strengthening of social protection programs for women and girls (such as cash transfers for women with children, public works/employment guarantee schemes for women of working age, and pensions for elderly women) . For example, Morocco aims to strengthen social protection programmes for women and girls through the "Social Protection and Social Cohesion Support Fund" which finances the Medical Assistance Scheme, the Support Programme for Persons with Special Needs, and the Direct Support Programme for Widows in Vulnerable Situations.

Improving access to social protection for women and girls

In terms of social protection: Saudi Arabia has approved two laws, the first related to the system of rights of persons with disabilities (2023), and the second related to the system of rights and care of the elderly for the year 2022. Lebanon: cancelling the condition linking maternity benefits to an insured person's enrollment in social security. Additionally, maternity compensation has been increased to cover the full wage of the insured person during the ten weeks of childbirth leave, instead of two-thirds of the wage, as of 2023. Sultanate of Oman: Women's rights are specifically addressed in most social protection benefits stipulated by the law (widow, divorcee, women with disabilities) and in all social insurance programs (elderly insurance, disability and death insurance, maternity leave insurance, job security insurance, etc.) in 2023. UAE: Amendment of the law regulating labor relations in 2023 in a way that now stipulates maternity protection, ensuring that women are entitled to maternity leave and additional leaves in the event of any pregnancy or childbirth-related illness.

Female workers in the agricultural sector : In 2021, Jordan issued the Agricultural Workers System, which now refers agricultural workers to the Labor Law for any provisions not covered in the system, particularly concerning their social protection. As a result, the Labor Law now extends to cover these workers.

Efforts to reduce gender discrimination in terms of retirement age have been made, particularly in Bahrain, where the provisions related to the retirement age in the public sector were amended in 2022, granting now both men and women the right to continue working until the age of 65 after reaching the regular retirement age.

Equality between women and men in granting pensions: Palestine amended the Law of Public Retirement in 2022 , allowing women to bequeath their retirement salary to their heirs, just like men. Kuwait amended the public assistance law in 2021 to guarantee the right of women in difficult circumstances who are unable to work and are disabled in society to receive financial assistance.

Arab country reports indicate that most countries have provided cash transfers to families with children that prioritize women as beneficiaries (such as child support allowances, family allowances, conditional or unconditional cash transfers), and the majority of countries have provided or strengthened social protection for women of working age (such as unemployment benefits, public works programs, and social assistance); and improved access to social protection for marginalized women. In reviewing the measures taken by countries, we note what Lebanon did by launching the National Social Protection Strategy in 2024, which aims to establish a sustainable, rights-based system that responds to shocks, provides financial access to services, enhances social care, provides social assistance and insurance, and promotes economic integration, while ensuring justice and gender equality without any discrimination. In order to ensure the protection of women and girls in the public sphere, Egypt issued a code to promote safe mobility for women.

Improving Health Outcomes for Women and Girls

Most countries have improved women's access to health services by expanding universal health coverage or public health services, and/or by expanding specific health services for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health services, maternal health services, and HIV services. Most Arab countries have made significant progress in achieving many health-related goals, and a number of Arab countries have been able to provide health services at a high level of quality. During the last five years, several measures have been taken to improve the healthcare system, both in terms of prevention or treatment.

Saudi Arabia (2024) Issued a Bill of Rights that guarantees women's right to health and provides legal guidance on reproductive planning and contraceptive services. The UAE (2019) Passed a Public Health Law ensuring women's right to health, with a particular focus on senior citizens. Jordan introduced an Elderly Care System aimed at providing comprehensive care for older women. In Syria, the "National Strategy for Women's, Adolescents' and Children's Health for the Years 2022-2025" was launched . This strategy includes Providing advice and psychological counseling to girls preparing for marriage, with a focus on genetic diseases, reproductive and sexual health, etc. Additionally, the UAE and Oman are among the countries that prioritize premarital examinations.

several countries have implemented projects aimed at increasing the fairness of the health system. In Iraq, the Health Insurance Law enacted in 2020, exempts non-employed women, retirees over the age of 55, and women with special needs from paying subscription fees. Meanwhile, Egypt launched the "100 Million Health" Preventive Health Program, which provides early detection of diseases and maternal and child health services.

Economic Recovery Measures from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Arab countries have implemented measures to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on both the healthcare system and the economy. The responses have varied across countries, with some adopting gender-responsive policies . Best practices include the implementation of remote work systems. In Bahrain, a work-from-home system has been introduced for working mothers in government ministries, agencies and institutions. A joint committee has also been established to monitor the implementation of this system for working mothers. The pandemic has contributed to the establishment of flexible work patterns during the post-pandemic recovery phase, which supports effort toward women's economic empowerment. In Jordan, the Council of Ministers approved in 2024, the rationale for a flexible work system aimed at facilitating women's entry into the labor market and ensuring their continued participation, thereby contributing to an increase in women's economic involvement.

Improving Educational Outcomes and Skills for Women and Girls

The fourth set of measures focuses on improving the educational outcomes and skills of women and girls. National reports indicate that the most commonly adopted measures in this area include efforts to increase girls' access to primary and secondary education, as well as to support their continued education and completion of studies. Additionally, many countries have worked to address the obstacles that prevent women and girls from successfully transitioning from school to work. This also includes efforts to enhance educational curricula by incorporating a gender equality perspective and eliminating bias at all levels of education.

Third: Freedom from Violence, Stigma and Stereotypes.

Actions and Strategies to Combat Violence against Women and Girls

Actions and Strategies to Combat Technology-facilitated Violence against Women and Girls

Measures to Provide Resources for Women's Organizations working to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women and Girls

Addressing Gender Bias in the Media

Actions and Strategies to Combat Violence against Marginalized Women and Girls

Priority Areas of Violence against Women and Girls

- 1) Domestic violence perpetrated by family or household members.
- 2) Sexual harassment and violence in public spaces, educational environments and workplaces.
- 3) Technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, Child marriage and forced marriage.
- 4) Trafficking of women and girls.

Actions and Strategies to Address Violence against Women and Girls

According to country reports, Arab countries have committed to address violence against women and girls through a legislative approach by introducing or strengthening anti-violence against women laws, implementing them, and ensuring their enforcement. This aligns with the analysis of the legal environment in Arab countries detailed in the first section of the report. In addition to the legislative approach, Arab countries, over the past five years, have worked to introduce, update or expand national action plans to end violence against women and girls, and to provide or strengthen services for survivors of violence (including shelters, helplines, specialized health services, legal services, justice services, counselling, housing, and social and economic rehabilitation). In response to a question about specific actions taken by countries, “empowering women and girls to enhance their economic independence and access to resources, and promoting equality in relationships within families, communities and society” topped the list of actions taken in Arab countries, followed by “alleviating poverty through interventions targeting women or families”, and then “creating safe environments, including schools, workplaces and public spaces.

Reports from Arab countries indicate that addressing violence against women and girls has received significant attention with diverse interventions implemented over the past five years. In terms of legislation, several Arab countries have enacted national laws and legislation to create an enabling environment for the advancement of women's status. For example, laws to combat domestic violence were passed in Kuwait (2020) and the United Arab Emirates (2019) . In Tunisia (2021) , a law was issued on domestic work that guarantees decent work without discrimination. In Algeria (2020) , a law was passed to prevent and combat discrimination and hate speech, which also includes the establishment of a national observatory for the prevention of discrimination and hate speech. Syria (2021) issued a law on the protection of children's rights, emphasizing the principle of the best interests of the child and non-discrimination in law and treatment between male and female children. Additionally, countries have repealed a number of articles related to so-called honor crimes, or articles that allow impunity by permitting the marriage of victims of sexual assault, as seen in Bahrain, the Emirates and Syria.

Arab countries have placed special emphasis on the issue of protection from violence, and have enacted or amended laws to protect women from such violence. Two primary approaches have been adopted in this regard: some countries have chosen to amend the penal code to combat violence against women, while others have issued specific laws to address domestic or family violence. In 2019, the UAE, and in 2020, Kuwait and Lebanon enacted laws to combat domestic violence. Similarly, Djibouti passed a law in 2020 to protect women and children. In Jordan, with the aim of increasing the reporting of domestic violence, according to the report, the penal code was amended in 2022, to expand the range of alternatives to prison sentences for minor offenses (misdemeanors) within the family. These alternatives include community service, electronic monitoring, and prohibiting the convict from visiting specific places, all governed by a defined system and execution mechanisms. In 2021, Kuwait introduced amendments to the law on assistance for unmarried girls, adding a new category for abused women and girls in need assistance, including those who are unmarried or suffering from family breakdowns, such as the death of the father or family disintegration. In a significant step, the UAE abolished provisions in the Crimes and Penalties Law in 2021 that stipulated corporal punishments such as flogging and stoning.

Regarding sexual harassment, Lebanon passed a law in 2020 criminalizing sexual harassment and providing rehabilitation for its victims. In the UAE, amendments to the Penal Code were approved in 2019 and 2021, making sexual harassment a criminal offense. Additionally, the amendments introduced general punishments for any form of bodily harm or violence. In Iraq, the Yazidi Survivors Law was approved in 2021 to compensate survivors both financially and emotionally, and to address crimes of sexual violence committed during the conflict. In Egypt, an article was added to the Criminal Procedure Code in 2020, stipulating the confidentiality of the victim's personal information in sexual crimes, such as harassment.

In order to enhance the protection of women from violence, reduce impunity and establish accountability, Bahrain in 2023 and the UAE in 2020 abolished provisions in the Penal Code that previously exempted rapists from punishment if they married their victim. Similarly, Syria in 2020 abolished the provision in the Penal Code that granted a mitigating excuse to the perpetrator of an honor crime, meaning they are now subject to the full penalty for murder. For its part, Sudan increased the penalty for rape in 2020, stipulating life imprisonment under the Penal Code.

Regarding the prevention of human trafficking, Jordan amended the Anti-Human Trafficking Law in 2021, to provide legal protection for victims and increase penalties for perpetrators of these crimes, particularly if the victim is a woman or a child. Additionally, a specialized court was established to hear human trafficking cases. In addition, Jordan passed the Child Rights Law in 2022, which prohibits subjecting children to violence, abuse, or exploitation in any form (economic or sexual) or any form of human trafficking. In a similar move, Palestine amended the Child Law in 2022, criminalizing both the sexual exploitation of children and economic exploitation. Algeria, for its part, passed the Law On the Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking. Sudan, in 2021, increased the penalty for trafficking involving women and children, to the maximum penalty of death. For its part, Syria passed the Child Rights Law in 2021, which affirms the child's right to protection and personal security to combat recruitment and trafficking.

Regarding the criminalization of female genital mutilation (FGM), Sudan passed provisions in 2021 criminalizing the practice under its penal code. In 2019, the Sultanate of Oman issued executive regulations for the Child Law that define and criminalize practices harmful to the health of children, including genital mutilation in any way. In 2019, Egypt amended certain provisions of the Penal Code related to female genital mutilation with the aim of increasing the penalty, and removed any reference to the use of medical justification.

The UAE Ministry of Health recently issued a decision in 2024 allowing abortion in specific cases, including the following: if the pregnancy resulted from rape or non-consensual intercourse, if the person responsible for the pregnancy is from the woman's family or a close relative, and based on the request of the couple, following approval by a specialized committee. The first two cases must be proven by an official report issued by the competent public prosecutor's office in the country. As for Iraq, it has permitted abortion in the event that the fetus is afflicted with a serious disease that poses a threat to the life of the pregnant woman, provided that the husband's consent and the decision of the specialized committee are obtained.

Arab countries' efforts in the field of cybercrime violence are still limited. For example, Jordan issued a cybercrime law in 2023 and the UAE in 2021. They penalize all acts committed in relation to human trafficking, prostitution and debauchery. However, these are general laws that do not specifically focus on violence against women and girls in the digital or virtual world. Similarly, Syria issued a law to combat cybercrime in 2022. However, it overlaps with provisions and crimes contained in other laws, specifically the Penal Code, and adds ambiguity to the application of the laws, thus leading to further suppression of freedom of expression that may affect women.

Bahrain has established the Family and Child Protection Office to adopt an independent course of legal measures and procedures in cases related to family and child incidents. The office provides immediate protection for them, reassurance and a sense of psychological security by providing an environment suitable to the nature of the family and child while they visit the security directorates. It also carries out evidence-based interventions to effectively address family and child-related issues effectively.

Jordan conducted a national study to estimate the economic cost of violence against women. The study aimed to estimate both the cost to survivors of violence and the cost of services provided by governmental and non-governmental institutions related to health care, social services, law enforcement and prosecution in cases of violence against women. This study is intended to support policies aimed at responding to and preventing the phenomenon of violence against women, enabling more effective resources allocation with a focus on prevention, ultimately contributing to reducing cases of violence. Tunisia established the National Observatory to Combat Violence Against Women in 2020, while Egypt set up the Integrated Unit for the Protection of Women from Violence in 2019, which is affiliated with the Council of Ministers and is responsible for receiving complaints related to cases of violence against women.

Hotlines for reporting violence against women and girls have been established in most Arab countries. However, one of the best practices in this regard is the UAE's electronic "Sawn system", which goes beyond addressing incidents of violence after they occur, but rather seeks to protect the family and society from their occurrence, as this electronic system aims at detecting early signs of potential abuse within families, especially women and children. This system aims to support the quality of life for all by raising awareness, preventing violence and providing treatment at the same time. It operates through four key components : 1) Detection of potential abuse against a person, as the system uses the technical analysis processes included in it, notifies the person of his/her condition, based on three colors (green - orange - red), each of which gives an indication of the level of risk. 2) Legislation and laws related to family affairs. 3) Awareness videos that provide important information related to avoiding domestic violence . 4) Family Protection Guide.

Among the best practices for protecting women and children in the event of divorce , Algeria established an alimony fund and passed a law in 2024 to ensure that divorced women and children receive the prescribed alimony, with the establishment of an office within the judicial authorities responsible for receiving alimony requests and overseeing the implementation of the relevant rulings. Tunisia also launched the national program, Samida for the Economic Empowerment of Women Victims of Marital Violence and Those Threatened with It. This programs aims to combine economic empowerment with protection for women victims of violence. It provides livelihood resources for women and girls who have experienced violence helping them achieve financial independence and increasing their opportunities to reintegrate into active economic and social life.

To promote the culture of rejecting violence against women and girls, most Arab countries celebrate the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign. The initiatives vary from one country to another and take various forms, including cultural, artistic and sports events. They target different segments of society, especially young people, with the aim of bringing about change in the prevailing social norms that tolerate the practice of violence against women and girls in all its forms.

Actions and Strategies to Address Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls

Arab countries have committed to addressing technology-facilitated violence against women and girls by introducing or strengthening legislation and regulations. A large number of countries have also implemented awareness-raising initiatives targeting the general public and educational environments to educate young people, caregivers and teachers about ethical and responsible online behaviour. Tunisia has established a cybercrime investigation unit to specifically investigate ICT crimes committed against children, adults and women. Spaces have been prepared, the quality of services provided has been improved, and four teams specialised in investigating crimes of violence against women and children have been equipped to meet international specifications and standards, with a rate of 75% of them receiving private transportation means. Efforts are underway to equip the remaining teams and all specialized teams have been provided with audio-visual equipment to hear child victims of sexual violence, in accordance with the provisions of Article 29 of the relevant law. In Palestine, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, in coordination with partners, launched the ***National Electronic Observatory On Violence Against Women***. Similarly, Morocco launched the national campaign to stop violence against women and girls focusing on the risks of digital violence on women and girls under the slogan "All for a responsible and safe digital space for women and girls" to highlight the scale of the phenomenon and ways to prevent it and enhance opportunities for coexistence and upbringing based on equality and cooperation between the sexes. This was accompanied by Morocco launching the "We Are All With You" platform to listen, support and guide women and girls in vulnerable situations. It is a telephone platform to receive calls from women who are victims of violence. The platform aims to receive requests for support and guidance in the field of employment, vocational training and income-generating projects at the local and regional levels for all women.

Resource Measures for Women's Organizations Working to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Women and Girls

Some countries have referred to partnerships between governments and women's organizations to combat violence against women and girls. In Morocco, government sectors allocate funds within their annual budgets for a partnership program with associations, through which support is provided to associations that carry projects and work in various areas of their intervention, including the promotion of women's rights, gender equality, and the fight against all forms of violence and discrimination against women. In the area of enhancing the services for women victims of violence, financial support is provided to projects that aim to create or develop listening and guidance centers for women victims of violence, with a particular focus on providing these services in rural areas. The partnership with associations working in the field of combating violence against women is characterized by a commitment to multi-year support, typically extending over three years rather than just one year, to ensure the sustainability of services provided by these centers to women victims of violence. In Lebanon, the Ministry of Social Affairs contributes by signing annual contracts with associations concerned with receiving, sheltering, monitoring, and rehabilitating abused and at-risk women. During the past four years (from 2019 to 2023), the budget allocated to these associations ranged from 20% to 23% of the total budget of the Specialized Social Welfare Department.

Addressing Gender Bias in the Media

To address gender bias in the media, most Arab countries have implemented training programs for journalists and media professionals, encouraging the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced and diverse portrayals of women and girls in the media, including social media. Additionally, most countries have promoted the participation and leadership of women in the media. The majority have enacted, strengthened and enforced legal reforms to combat discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media. To a lesser extent, Arab countries have introduced binding media regulations, including those for advertising; supported the media industry in developing voluntary codes of conduct; and strengthened consumer protection services to receive and review complaints related to media content or gender-based discrimination/bias in the media. Regarding the portrayal of women in the media, Algeria passed a media law in 2023 that prohibits the publication or broadcast of any hate speech, discrimination, or any violation of children's rights or harm to the image, honor, and dignity of women.

Actions and Strategies to Address Violence Against Marginalized Women and Girls

A large number of countries have taken measures in this regard , for example :

- 1) Algeria has established “Vulnerable Persons Protection Teams” to address violence against women and girls. For women with disabilities,
- 2) Saudi Arabia has launched the “Mowaamah Program”, in line with the Kingdom’s Disability Rights strategy. It aims to enable people with disabilities to access appropriate job opportunities, providing them with all the necessary facilities and tools that help them to succeed. Additionally, to motivate establishments in the private sector to provide a suitable work environment for people with disabilities.
- 3) In implementation of the National Multi-Sectoral Strategy for the Elderly, Tunisia established a free green line in 2023, coinciding with... World Elder Abuse Awareness Day aims to help older people aged 60 years and over, by receiving notifications regarding cases of violence and various forms of threats that affect them and working to provide guidance and advice on the services provided to their benefit.
- 4) Iraq has formed a high committee to monitor the conditions of women in prisons, develop programmes to train female prisoners and detainees, and prepare a code of conduct for employees and workers in correctional departments.
- 5) Sudan has amended the law to replace detention with community service for pregnant and lactating women or those with children.

Thank You