

Economic and Social Commission for  
Western Asia

# Expert Group Meeting to Review the Joint Arab Report Draft on the Implementation of Beijing +30

3–4 September 2024  
Fairmont Hotel – Amman, Jordan



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



## Fourth Session: Progress Made Across the 12 Critical Areas of Concern -2

Dr. Maged Othman  
Senior Advisor for the Arab Report Preparation



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



# Introduction

The report presents the regional trend of progress in empowering women and girls in the Arab States over the past five years on each of the twelve critical areas of concern of the BPfA, which are grouped into six overarching dimensions that highlight the intersections between the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The report is not intended as a compilation of national reports and an inventory of countries' achievements, but rather to shed light on developments at the regional level as a whole and to monitor overall regional trends in gender equality.

The national reports of Arab countries revealed substantial achievements in some areas, while other areas remain in need of more attention in the coming years. The reports also revealed disparities between countries in the degree of progress made, and the challenge for countries suffering from conflicts casts a sharper shadow on women and girls.

# Progress in Women's Empowerment in the Arab Region

First: Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Second: Poverty eradication, social protection, and social services

Third: Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

Fourth: Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

Fifth: Peaceful and inclusive societies

Sixth: Environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation

## **Fourth: Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions**

**Promoting women's participation in public life and decision-making**

**National Mechanism for Gender Equality**

## Promoting women's participation in public life and decision-making

In terms of political participation, the Arab region has made significant progress towards supporting women's political participation. Some Arab countries have adopted legislative amendments in this area, but in varying proportions, as most of them are still far from achieving international standards in this area. For example:

- 1) In 2022, Jordan increased the number of seats reserved for women to 18, in addition to guaranteeing women's representation on party lists and lowering the age of candidacy to 25 years to promote the participation of youth and women in parliamentary elections. Jordan's rules of procedure for the House of Representatives were amended in 2023 to promote women's representation in the permanent office of the House of Representatives, and in the 2021 Local Administration Act, women were allocated 25 percent of the number of elected members of the provincial council.
- 2) In 2019, the UAE raised the percentage of women's representation in the Federal National Council to 50 percent.
- 3) In Algeria, the 2021 election law enshrined the principle of parity in the formation of election lists submitted for candidacy in national, state, and municipal legislative elections.
- 4) In Egypt, the 2019 constitutional amendment allocated a quarter of the seats in the House of Representatives to women, and two laws were issued in 2020, one permanently allocating a minimum of 25 percent of parliamentary seats to women, and the other allocating a minimum of 10 percent in the Senate.

- 5) In 2021, Morocco has allocated a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 12 seats for each entity in the House of Representatives.
- 6) Somalia amended its election law in 2020, establishing a 30 percent quota for women in parliament.
- 7) In Iraq, the 2020 election law states that women must represent at least 25 percent of the number of members of the House of Representatives in each governorate.
- 8) In Palestine, the Elections Law amended in 2021 imposed a quota for women's representation in lists of candidates for parliament; each list of election lists nominated for elections must include at least one woman among each of the first three names on the list, the next four names, and each of the next five names. According to this amendment, the percentage of seats reserved for women is now 26% instead of the previous 20%.
- 9) In Algeria, the principle of parity is stated in the composition of election lists submitted for candidacy in national and local ( state and municipal) legislative elections.



As for political party laws:

- 1) The Political Parties Law of 2022 in Jordan stipulated that the percentage of women in the constituent body of parties should not be less than 20% of the number of founders.
- 2) In Morocco, the 2021 organizational law for political parties required them to achieve a one-third percentage of women in their national and regional structures.
- 3) In Sudan, the Political Parties Law was amended in 2020, now requiring a 40 percent quota for women's representation in political parties.

Arab states have taken complementary approaches to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making. Some have provided capacity-building and skills development opportunities, such as guidance, training on leadership, decision-making, public speaking, self-esteem, and/or political campaigning for elected or appointed women candidates and politicians, parliamentary groups, and/or gender equality advocates. While several states have collected and analyzed data on women's political participation, including in appointed and elected positions.

It is worth noting that few Arab countries have passed gender equality laws or policies at the whole government or cabinet level stipulating that women occupy approximately half of decision-making positions; or have taken actions to prevent, investigate, prosecute and penalize violence against women in the political sphere and public life.

Most Arab countries have taken actions to strengthen women's participation in the public field and in policy and decision-making, and several countries have introduced legislative amendments to support these measures.

Developments in the Arab region have had tangible results such as:

Tunisia appointed its first female prime minister, in an unprecedented move for the country and the Arab region. In the United Arab Emirates, a woman holds the position of Parliament Head while another heads five political parties in Algeria. Also, the rate of women holding ministerial portfolios has increased in various countries, including Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Not to mention, a woman was appointed President of the National Council for Human Rights in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, while 13 were appointed on the Board of the Human Rights Commission in Saudi Arabia, representing 50% of the total Board's membership. Finally, a parliamentary committee on women's affairs was established in Iraq.

A number of Arab countries have adopted the School of Political Participation (Jordan) to build women's capacities in the field of political and partisan work.

To further empower women's expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technology (ICT), most Arab States have promoted the provision of formal and technical vocational education and training (TVET) in media and ICT, including in the areas of management and leadership. In addition, a limited number of countries have taken measures to promote access, affordability and empowerment of ICTs for women and girls (e.g., free Wi-Fi hotspots, community technology centers). There are a number of actions that have received the attention of only a limited number of countries, including: introducing regulations to promote equal remuneration, retention and advancement of women in the media and ICT industry; collaborating with media and ICT employers to improve internal policies and employment practices on a voluntary basis; and providing support to women's media networks and organizations.

## National Mechanism for Gender Equality

1. There is no standard institutional framework for the national mechanism for gender equality. However, there are various structures implemented in Arab countries:
  - 1) A ministry specialized in women's affairs, with an explicit reference to this in the name of the ministry, and the mechanism is at the ministerial level or equivalent, and its head enjoys full participation in the Cabinet, as is the case in six countries, which are: Algeria, Somalia, Tunisia, Comoros, Djibouti, and Palestine.
  - 2) A national mechanism within one of the ministries without explicitly mentioning this in the name of the ministry, and the national mechanism is a body within a sectoral ministry, and there are five Arab countries that follow this pattern: Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Iraq, Libya and Sudan.
  - 3) A higher council that is sometimes directly attributed to the head of the executive authority, and includes representatives of relevant sectors, and may sometimes include representation of non-governmental organizations, which is the prevailing pattern in the rest of the Arab countries, which are: Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Qatar, Lebanon, and Egypt

Analysis of country reports data indicates that in most states, the budget allocated to national mechanisms has increased as a proportion of total government spending, reflecting an interest in women and girls' empowerment and gender equality. However, in a number of countries, these budgets have not increased.

## **Fifth: Peaceful and Inclusive Communities**

Actions on enhancing judicial and non-judicial accountability for international humanitarian law violations and human rights violations related to women and girls in armed conflict, along with other humanitarian or crisis-response actions

Actions on increasing women's leadership, representation and participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response at decision-making levels during armed and unarmed conflicts and in fragile or crisis-hit areas

Actions on realizing and maintaining peace and promoting peaceful and inclusive communities to achieve sustainable development and implement the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda

Actions on eliminating discrimination against and violations of girl children rights

## Actions on enhancing judicial and non-judicial accountability for international humanitarian law violations and human rights violations related to women and girls in armed conflict, along with other humanitarian or crisis-response actions

In terms of actions relevant to this dimension, analysis of State reports uncovered that the most common action is taking measures to combat women and child trafficking, followed by increasing access to violence prevention and protection services for conflict-affected women, female refugees or displaced women.

However, the number of States taking the actions below is limited:

- 1) Implementing legal and political reforms to address and prevent violations of women and girls' rights
- 2) Strengthening institutional capacities, including the justice system and transitional justice mechanisms as appropriate, during conflict and crisis response
- 3) Enhancing the institutional capacities of the security sector with respect to human rights and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
- 4) Taking measures to combat the production, use and trafficking of illicit drugs

In addition, all State reports include no mention of taking any measures necessary to combat illicit arms trade.

## Actions on increasing women's leadership, representation and participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response at decision-making levels, during armed and unarmed conflicts and in fragile or crisis-hit areas

Actions on increasing women's leadership, representation and participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response at decision-making levels, during armed and unarmed conflicts and in fragile or crisis-hit areas were analysed.

The analysis indicates that various States have promoted and supported women's meaningful participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace conventions at all levels. It also highlights that several States have promoted women's equal participation in humanitarian and crisis-response activities at all levels, particularly at the decision-making level, and have developed, adopted and/or implemented a high-impact national action plan on the implementation of Resolution 1325.

## Actions on realizing and maintaining peace and promoting peaceful and inclusive communities to achieve sustainable development and implement the WPS Agenda

Most States have adopted and/or implemented a national WPS action plan or have integrated WPS commitments into key national and inter-ministerial policy, planning and monitoring frameworks. However, few States took interest in implementing the following actions:

- 1) Using communication strategies to raise awareness on the WPS Agenda
- 2) Increasing budgetary allocations to implement the WPS Agenda
- 3) Supporting comprehensive and gender-sensitive analysis, along with early warning and prevention mechanisms

No Arab State has reported taking action to reduce excessive military spending and/or control the arms accessibility. Also, no Arab State has worked on reallocating funds from military spending to social and economic development, including gender equality and women empowerment actions.



State reports highlight various actions taken to establish and maintain peace and promote peaceful inclusive communities with the aim of achieving sustainable development and implementing the WPS Agenda. For example:

Iraq enhanced women's effective participation and influence in peacemaking processes at all levels and activated their important and effective role in resolving conflict and making peace. Iraq achieved this desired goal through an unprecedented initiative that forms a network of national peace mediators to enhance women's role in making and maintaining peace and security.

Jordan ratified the second national plan to implement Security Council Resolution 1325 which encompasses women's participation in decision-making frameworks for crisis prevention and response, climate change and emergencies, including natural disasters, epidemics and armed conflicts. This plan also ensures that the different needs of both sexes are considered. The diplomatic sector, security sector and the army were also included to the sectors working on enhancing women participation and taking steps to ensure women's integration into these sectors.

Palestine formed a permanent National Committee to monitor the practices, violations and crimes of the occupation against women. This Committee will be tasked with collecting WPS data.

Kuwait established the National Committee for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security". This Committee is responsible for formulating, developing and drawing up policies, programs and strategic plans to implement the WPS Agenda. It is also tasked with drafting voluntary national periodic reports on the implementation status of the Resolution.

In Lebanon, the National Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was implemented.

# Actions on eliminating discrimination against and violations of girl children rights

There were different actions taken by Arab countries to eliminate discrimination against and violations of girl children rights, which included the following:

- 1) Taking measures to combat discriminatory social norms and practices and raising awareness on girls' needs and potentials
- 2) Promoting girls' access to quality education, skills development and training
- 3) Addressing adverse health impacts caused by malnutrition, early pregnancy (e.g., anemia), and other consequences, including exposure to HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)
- 4) Implementing policies and programmes to eliminate violence against girls, including physical and sexual violence, and eradicate harmful practices, including girls, early and forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- 5) Implementing policies and programmes to eliminate child labour and recognise, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work carried out by girls
- 6) Promoting girls' awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life
- 7) Integrating STEM education/ bridging the digital gender gap in girls' access to digital tools and digital skills acquisition

National reports include various actions taken to eliminate discrimination against and violation of girl children rights, including female adolescents. For example:

- 1) Jordan has enacted a law on preventing human trafficking and has provided protection for the victims through an integrated services system, including social, psychological, police, medical, legal, and judicial and hosting services. It has also provided and implemented therapeutic and preventive programmes as well as rehabilitation programs aimed at helping, protecting, supporting, and empowering human trafficking victims to reintegrate them into society, such as vocational training.
- 2) Sudan has maximized the human trafficking penalty to the death sentence.
- 3) Algeria has issued a law on preventing and combating all forms of human trafficking. It also imposed severe penalties on perpetrators.
- 4) Oman's anti-human trafficking law guarantees victims' access to free medical care as well as legal and social assistance. It has also established a women's shelter for victims of trafficking, prostitution, and domestic work. In addition, the law ensures arresting and prosecuting the offenders while providing legal support by informing victims of the cases status and details.
- 5) In Palestine, all forms of servile marriage have been criminalized under the Child Rights Act of 2022, which included forms of servile marriage within the definition of "slavery-like norms and practices". The Act also deemed these types of marriage contracts as felonies punishable by no less than 5 years.

# **Sixth: Environmental Conservation, Protection, and Rehabilitation**

**Integrating gender perspective into environmental policies**

**Integrating gender perspective into disaster risk reduction and environmental adaptation policies**

## Integrating gender perspective into environmental policies

Most Arab States have supported women's participation and leadership in the management and governance of the environment and natural resources, but the following actions have only been implemented in few States:

- 1) Strengthening manuals and/or raising awareness on gender-specific environmental and health risks
- 2) Increasing women's access to and control over land, water, energy and other natural resources
- 3) Promoting women and girls' STEM education and other natural environment-related fields
- 4) Promoting women's access to sustainable, time- and labor-saving infrastructure (such as access to clean water and energy) and climate-adaptive agricultural technology
- 5) Monitoring and evaluating the impacts of environmental policies and sustainable infrastructure projects on women and girls.

It should be noted that only two States took steps to ensure women's access to equal benefits from decent jobs in the green economy; a field that requires more attention to increase women's future participation in economic activities.

The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in its 27th session (COP27) was held in Sharm El-Sheikh, while the 28th session (COP28) was held in Dubai, which contributed to promoting climate change issues in the Arab region. Both sessions included an international day on women and climate change issues. Various initiatives revolving around the gender perspective on climate change issues were launched, which raised awareness on climate change risks, especially for the women and girls most affected by the climate change impacts.

This was accompanied by various actions implemented by various Arab States, for instance:

- 1) A report was developed to link gender equality to climate change in Palestine. This report was among the outputs of the climate technology roadmap development project to implement climate action plans. The report provides an analysis from a gender perspective for the following areas: laws and policies, social norms, climate change, labor force, energy, agriculture, transportation, water, waste, and wastewater, along with general recommendations to integrate gender equality into the technology roadmap while implementing climate action plans.
- 2) In Iraq, the National Women's Energy Support Team was formed. The Team was headed by the National Department for Iraqi Women and included directors of women's affairs from all ministries, agencies and governorates. It is responsible for developing a plan to combat the climate change challenges, conserve the environment and water, and activate women's role in protecting the environment and addressing climate change.

3) In Lebanon, the Ministry of Environment and The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) have developed "Standard Operating Procedures" to assist ministries in integrating the gender perspective into environmental policies and strategies. These procedures provide clear steps for integrating gender perspective in climate planning and reporting, including the collection of relevant data and information.

4) The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is developing a local index to measure women's participation in environmental and climate fields, ensuring the availability of accurate relevant statistics. The index also monitors women's participation in environmental and climate issues.

5) Tunisia ratified the national plan "Women and Climate Change" in 2022, which will complement and support the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## Integrating gender perspective into disaster risk reduction and environmental adaptation policies

In their efforts to reduce disaster risks and build their environmental and climate adaptation, States have focused on various actions to integrate the gender perspective, namely:

- 1) Supporting women's participation and leadership, including disaster-affected women, in disaster risk reduction as well as climate and environmental adaptation policies, programmes and projects
- 2) Strengthening manuals and raising awareness on the greater vulnerability of women and girls to climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters impacts
- 3) Enhancing women's access to services in disasters, such as relief payments, disaster insurance, and compensation
- 4) Introducing/ strengthening/ implementing gender-responsive laws and policies on disaster risk reduction as well as climate and environmental adaptation.

Arab States have taken actions to integrate the gender perspective into policies and programmes on disaster risk reduction as well as environmental and climate adaptation. In this regard, Morocco has launched a national strategy on natural disaster risks management. The strategy includes an approach to effectively integrate women into the risk management system. Taking vulnerable groups of women, children and the elderly into account requires adopting a different approach to learn about and understand the risks, then determine preventive measures to build resilience. The strategy has adopted an integrated programme to integrate a gender approach. In Lebanon, the gender perspective has been applied in the disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategy, ensuring women's representation in disaster response structures, decision-making processes, and disaster-response programmes implementation.



**Thank You**