1. Background and Key Issues

General


- Algeria made notable progress in gender equality in education and health outcomes. In 2003/2004, 95.3 percent of girls completed primary school\(^\text{155}\). The number of girls enrolled in secondary school was higher than boys\(^\text{156}\) and 61 percent of total graduates in tertiary education were women.\(^\text{157}\) The average fertility rate among Algerian women dropped significantly in twenty years to 2 children per woman in 2004\(^\text{158}\).

- Despite advancement in women’s labor force and political participation much remains to be done. Female labor force participation has been increasing at 5 percent per year over the past decade. However, in 2004, women constituted only 30% of the labor force. Women’s political participation also increased progressively with 25 women in parliament and five women in senior government posts as well as increased representation in political parties. However, greater representation is necessary to achieve gender equality.

- The legal status of Algerian women remains an issue. Despite the parliament’s approval in 2005 of a presidential decree to amend the 1984 Family Law, the amendments do not give equal rights to women in all aspects. The family law treats women as minors under the legal guardianship of a husband or male relative and polygamy remains legally recognized. Divorce is difficult to obtain while women suffer from discrimination in inheritance claims.

\(^\text{155}\) Algeria, national report on MDGs, 2005
\(^\text{156}\) IBID. The data is disaggregated in two echelons for the secondary. In the first cycle, the girl/boy parity ratio was 0.95 in 2003 whereas in the second cycle, the parity ratio reached 1.34.
\(^\text{157}\) IBID
\(^\text{158}\) World Bank Central Database 2006
2. Development Issues

Education and Training

By 2015, Algeria will have met the targets of education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. In 2004, the total number of students at all levels of education represented 27 percent of the total population. Since 1990, the government has been investing about 5.8 percent of its GDP in education. As a result, the levels of education are comparable to those in developed countries. In 2003/2004, 95.3 percent of girls completed primary school whereas the number of girls enrolled in secondary school was slightly higher than boys. Similarly, 61 percent of total graduates in tertiary education are women.

The investment in education resulted in a decrease in illiteracy rates for women between 1990 and 2002, declining from 59 percent to 40 percent. Significant progress can also be seen in women’s youth literacy which increased from 68 percent in 1990 to 86 percent in 2004.

Since 2000, specific measures have been adopted to integrate students who are facing educational difficulties including those who have not attended schools or not completed their education. The programs (job placement and practical training) implemented by the Ministries of Professional Training and National Education target young adults aged 16 and older, focusing specifically on disadvantaged groups.

In addition to universities, a number of state institutes provide specialized technical, agricultural, vocational, and teacher training. Some function under the direct jurisdiction of appropriate ministries and provide one to five years of technical training and job experience for trainees. The Ministry of Energy and Petrochemical Industries and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing each have a number of institutes. Algeria in the early 1990s had more than thirty institutes of higher learning, including technical studies, teacher-training colleges, and Islamic institutes. Women represent 53 percent of those enrolled in universities. They tend to be concentrated in traditional fields such as education, but they seem to be breaking through in some non-traditional areas such as medicine.

The challenge faced by the Government as stated in the national report is to improve the quality and content of the education system and professional training programs with the purpose of promoting gender equality.

Health

Notable progress was accomplished in access to reproductive and health services with 96 percent of births attended by skilled health staff in 2002. The average fertility rate among Algerian women dropped significantly in twenty years to 2 children/woman in 2004.

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159 World Bank Education Statistics
160 Algeria, national report on MDGs, 2005
161 IBID. The data is disaggregated in two echelons for the secondary. In the first cycle, the girl/boy parity ratio was 0.95 in 2003 whereas in the second cycle, the parity ratio reached 1.34.
162 IBID
163 Algeria, Country Brief, The World Bank, 2005
164 World Bank Central Database 2006
165 World Bank Central Database 2006
166 World Bank Central Database 2006
Maternal mortality remains a notable phenomenon with large disparities between different areas. A Child and Mother’s Health survey conducted nationally reported 215 deaths per 100,000 live births\textsuperscript{167} in 1992 and a rate of 117 in 1999. According to the Ministry of Health and Population, maternal mortality rates were cut in half in ten years. The maternal mortality ratio of 75.5 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1995 had decreased to 37 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2004\textsuperscript{168}.

Despite \textbf{continuous efforts undertaken by the State} to improve health services (through massive training and construction of health infrastructures), the government has underlined several areas in which the following action is necessary:

- Provide greater emergency obstetrical services and equip health structures with adequate equipment and necessary products to make deliveries safer, particularly in the regions of the south and the high Plateaux.
- Invest additional resources to improve the delivery quality of specific services in the areas of reproductive health, family planning, cancer tests, HIV and AIDS tests and treatment, as well as violence against women.
- Reinforce the statistical database in terms of production and dissemination of data on reproductive health.

\textbf{Economic participation}

\textbf{The unemployment rate in Algeria decreased} from 28 percent in 1995 to 27 percent in 2004.\textsuperscript{169} Female activity rates progressed slowly due to a limited social acceptance of female labor outside the realm of the household. Nonetheless, the younger generation experiences less of these social constraints. In 2000, 45 percent of active females were under the age of 30. Between 1997 and 2004, female labor force participation increased annually by over 5 percent in contrast to half this rate for males. In 2004, 30 percent of the labor force consisted of women.\textsuperscript{170} Women are mainly concentrated in the tertiary sector (small trade, services and administration). Agriculture and industries occupy 22 percent and 27 percent respectively.

While \textbf{60 percent of women are employed in the private sector}, only half have a salaried status, the other half being independent workers and 13.5 percent being family helpers.\textsuperscript{171} In other words, the majority of women do not benefit from employment stability. Public administration remains the main employer of women. By the end of 2001, 26.8 percent of government employees were women with half of them in the education sector.\textsuperscript{172}

\textbf{Social Government programs} were implemented in the 1990s to integrate recent university graduates into the labor force. The first six years of the “Pre emploi” contract program witnessed majority female candidates (61 percent).\textsuperscript{173}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{167} Hospital statistics reported 78 deaths per 100,000 live births for the same period (Algeria, national report on MDGs, 2005)
\item \textsuperscript{168} The national report on the MDGs conveys different data for 1999 (117 deaths per 100,000 live births) based on a Child and Mother’s Health survey conducted nationally. World Bank data for 2000 is 140 deaths per 100,000 live births.
\item \textsuperscript{169} World Bank Central Database 2006
\item \textsuperscript{170} World Bank Central Database 2006
\item \textsuperscript{171} Algeria, National report on MDGs, 2005
\item \textsuperscript{172} IBID
\item \textsuperscript{173} IBID
\end{itemize}
Public Participation and Representation

Legal texts and the constitution guarantees equality of access to political positions and employment within the government. Notwithstanding their equality by law, Algerian women are underrepresented in the political arena.

There are four woman ministers in Algeria, one overseeing the culture department and three being ministerial delegates (two in social issues, education and family and women’s affairs and one overseeing the expatriates). In addition to the Cabinet, women are present in other governmental positions. They include two ambassadors, one general secretary of a ministry, three Walis, and three general secretaries of Wilayas (geographical departments).174

During the 2002 local and legislative elections, the participation of women progressed noticeably, multiplying by three times in comparison to the 1997 elections (3679 in contrast to 1281 for the communal assemblies and 2684 candidates in contrast to 905 in 1997). The number of parliament candidates doubled between the two elections. The number of elected women was however insignificant - 1.09 percent in the communal assembly and 6.2 percent in the parliament. On the other hand, Algerian women are increasingly active in the Judiciary system composing about one third of instruction judges and magistrates. Six are ‘section’ presidents at the Supreme Court.

Women’s Rights

Algeria signed the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1996, albeit with reservations to provisions on ending discrimination against women within marriage and the family. While Algeria respects Article 9 (1) of CEDAW, which protects women’s right to their own nationality, it does not provide equal rights with regard to passing nationality on to children in case of marriage to a foreigner, or to the foreign spouse himself.175

There is a schism between the personal status law, which is grounded in interpretations of Islamic law, and other laws such as the commercial codes, which draw on secular premises. Algeria’s Family Code provisions are contested by human rights associations on issues such as the legal recognition of polygamy and the daughter's obligation to seek permission for her first marriage.

The Code has been under review by a national commission responsible for la refonte et la codification des codes civils et des procédures civiles. The commission proposed 52 amendments, which were recently adopted by the Council of Ministers. According to the revisions, the age of marriage for both women and men is fixed at 19 years; the couple to be married is obliged to have a notarized marriage contract and present a medical certificate; parental responsibilities are to be shared; and the necessity of a male relative’s consent to the marriage of a woman has been removed. The bill subjects polygamy to the authorization of either of the spouses and with the permission of the Court. With regard to divorce, the bill introduces the principle of custody for both parents.

One of the most serious issues regarding the labor law is that it does not provide sufficient protection for areas of work in which women are heavily engaged, particularly seasonal

\[174\] IBID

\[175\] Nationality can be acquired by the child of a national mother and a foreign father who was himself born in Algeria.
agricultural work, domestic service, and work without pay in family firms. Generally, Algerian women are not sufficiently aware of their rights.
1. Background and Key Issues

General

- The 2002 Parliamentary elections was a landmark election for Bahraini women. For the first time in Bahrain’s history, women were allowed to run for national office and to vote in a parliamentary race. Unfortunately, no women were elected in these elections.

- King Hamad appointed six women to the Upper House of Parliament, the Shoura Council. In 2004 and 2005, two women were appointed Minister of Health and Minister for Social Affairs.

- Despite the great improvement in women’s public participation, some women’s associations and activists argue that a quota system would better ensure women’s representation in the next Parliament.

- Women’s share of the total labor force increased from 17 percent in 1990 to 19 percent in 2004. This rate is still low considering that women account for about 70 percent of Bahrain’s university students.

- Another issue confronting many women is the lack of a clear and unified personal status law. In 2005, the Supreme Council for Women together with other women’s rights activists began a campaign for change. Their demands have been strongly resisted by the leading Shia Islamist Party.

2. Development Issues

Education and Training

The first girl’s primary school in Bahrain was established in 1892. Free and compulsory primary education applies to both boys and girls, and includes free school necessities and transportation to and from school. Though primary education is compulsory, this is not enforced.

Female adult illiteracy rates (15 years and above) decreased from 41 percent in 1980 to 16 percent in 2002. By 2004, female adult literacy rate among those aged 15 and above was 84 percent, compared to 89 percent for males. In 2004, female youth literacy (ages 15-24) was equal to male youth literacy at 97 percent.

Women account for about 70 percent of Bahrain’s university students. Women in higher education are enrolled largely in ‘traditional faculties’ (education, arts/humanities, and more recently business administration). However, one-third of students in the Engineering Faculty are female.

In vocational education, women account for 30 percent of all trainees enrolled in courses provided by the Bahrain Training Institute, including accounting, information technology, business, retailing, garment technology and goldsmith craft. Female civil servants constitute around one third of those trained by Civil Service Bureau. Women have also benefited from training courses offered by the Bahrain Institute for Banking and Finance.

A proportion of private sector companies’ contribution to training is being allocated to needy families; some 49 percent of beneficiaries of this scheme have been women.

Health

In 2000, the maternal mortality rate was 28 per 100,000 live births. About 98 percent of pregnant women receive prenatal care but 40 percent of pregnant women ages 15-49 are reported to suffer from anemia.

The fertility rate decreased from 6 children per woman in 1975 to 2 in 2004. Contraceptive prevalence, according to a 1995 Family Health Study, is reported at 62 percent among women in the 15-49 year old group.

Economic Participation

The percentage of women in the labor force increased from 17 percent in 1990 to 19 percent in 2004. The female economic activity rate increased more drastically in certain age groups. For example, the female economic activity rate of those ages 20-24 increased from 10.1 percent in 1970 to 44.7 percent in 2000 and the rate for the 25-44 year old age group increased from 4.5 percent in 1970 to 47.1 percent in 2000.

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176 World Bank Central Database 2006
177 World Bank Central Database 2006
178 World Bank Central Database 2006
180 World Bank Central Database 2006
181 World Bank Central Database 2006
Female economic activity in services has slightly decreased from 96 percent in 1970 to 93 percent in 1990. The rate in the industrial sector has increased from 4 percent in 1970 to 6.9 percent in 1990, and remains unchanged in agriculture at 0.2 percent.

By 1998, women in the public sector made up 36 percent of all employees. These women worked mainly in the Ministries of Education and Health. In 1998, 20 percent of employees in the private sector were women, up from 18 percent in 1997. The highest rate of private sector female employment is in the finance and business sectors (31 percent).

In spite of the ‘Bahrainization’ policy – which aims to gradually replace expatriate workers with local people - unemployment rates for women are twice that of men (11 percent female versus 5 percent male). According to UN/ESCWA, since the May 2001 launch of the ‘Program for Training and Employment’, the percentage of women registered as unemployed has risen from 24 percent to 66 percent.

Bahrain did not ratify ILO Convention C100 on equal pay, and the Labor laws do not explicitly mention equal pay for work of equal value. Men and women employees generally receive the same pay for the same grade, though in various cases women are paid less than men. Estimated earned income of women in 2000 was PPP US$ 7,010 compared with PPP US$ 21,059 for men.

The Bahraini Labor Law states that no employer is permitted to terminate a woman’s services upon marriage, although the labor ministry can specify occupations that can be offered as an alternative upon marriage. There are prohibitions on night work for women, but exceptions are made for certain occupations.

The legal minimum age for entry to the labor market is 14 years, although the age for completing basic education is 15 years. The minimum age does not apply to family enterprises, but there are special provisions regulating employment of juveniles between ages 14-16 years.

**Public Participation and Representation**

The October 2002 parliamentary elections was a landmark election not only for Bahrain, but the entire Gulf region, where women have been denied suffrage. For the first time in Bahrain’s history, women were allowed to run for national office and vote in a parliamentary race. Although several Bahraini women had announced their nomination for the 2002 parliamentary elections, no woman was elected to the 40- member lower house. The 40-member Upper House (the Shoura Council) which is appointed by the King, however, includes 6 women.

More than 30 women ran for seats in the civic election in May 2002 and made up 10 percent of the contestants. However, not a single woman won despite the fact that women represented over 50 percent of all voters. These municipal elections were the first time women appeared on the ballot and the first elections in Bahrain in which women were formally allowed to vote.

Six of the forty-six members of the Committee that drafted the National Charter of Action (which established Bahrain as a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral legislature) were female. Women turned out to vote in the referendum on the National Charter in February 2001 in almost the same numbers as men: 49 percent of the voters in the referendum were women.

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182 In elections for the previous parliament disbanded in 1975, only men had the franchise.
In April 2004, Nada Haffadh, a doctor and a member of Bahrain's Upper House of Parliament, was appointed Minister of Health on the orders of King Hamad. This makes her the first woman in Bahrain to join a government's Executive, and the first woman in the Arab world to head a health ministry. In 2005, Fatima Al-Baloushi was appointed Minister for Social Affairs. The head of Bahrain’s Supreme Council for Women (established in October 2001 with a mandate to improve gender equality and with an independent budget) has a rank equivalent to minister without portfolio.

Despite the improvements in women’s public representation, some women’s associations and activists have suggested that a quota system be introduced to ensure a number of seats for women in the next Parliament. The next parliamentary elections will be held in October 2006.

Over the last two years, several new women's associations have been formed. The Union of Bahraini Women was formed in 2001 as an umbrella organization to coordinate the activities of existing women's and families' groups. In October 2001, the Bahraini Chamber of Commerce and Industry selected its first women board members and also established a special businesswomen committee within the Chamber. The Bahrain Women's Society is a campaigning body that aims to increase awareness of women's legal rights and other issues that affect women such as globalization, information technology, the environment, healthcare, culture, the family, and living in a multicultural society. The Bahrain Businesswomen Society, established in 2000, supports businesswomen’s roles and aims to raise their professional status. It also launched the new business portal entitled “Women Gateway” in 2003. The Bahrain Young Ladies Association has worked to educate women on their roles both as candidates and voters in their country.

Recently, Bahrain's first female diplomat Haya Rashed al-Khalifa was elected president of the UN General Assembly. Also, in June 2006, Mona Jassem Al Kawari was appointed as Bahrain’s and the Gulf region’s first female judge.

Women's Rights

Bahrain signed CEDAW in June 2002, though with reservations to provisions dealing with change in national law and nationality of children.

In spite of pertinent articles in the Constitution and National Charter, in practice Shari’a Law governs legal rights of Bahraini women and specific rights may vary according to Shi’a or Sunni interpretation. There is no codified personal status law, but there are two de facto legal systems based on traditional Shari’a. Sunnis follow the Maliki School and Shi’as follow the Ja’afari School.

The lack of a unified personal status law is a serious issue for many Bahraini women because it leaves important decisions to the discretion of Sharia judges who have been criticized for basing sentences on personal interpretations. In November 2005, the Supreme Council for Women, in alliance with other women’s rights activists, began a campaign for change. Their demand for a unified law has been resisted by Al Wefaq, the leading Shia Islamist party.

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184 Over 4,000 women are said to be members of non-government organizations and many have taken leading roles.
In terms of **freedom of movement**, women can obtain their passport and travel without a male guardian’s permission. However, a Bahraini woman must live in her husband’s house or lose the right to maintenance. There is no **legal minimum age of marriage**.

Divorced women, whether Sunni or Shi’a, gain custody of daughters until age nine and sons until seven, when they come under the father’s **custody**. Regardless of custody, fathers retain the sole right to decide on legal matters for their children until they reach the legal age. A non-Bahraini woman automatically loses custody of her children when divorcing a Bahraini husband.

Children of Bahraini women legally married to non-Bahrainis do not have the right to Bahraini **nationality**. While foreign wives can acquire Bahraini **nationality**, foreign husbands of Bahraini women are not entitled to Bahraini nationality.

**Polygamy** is legal and each co-wife has the right to a separate dwelling of equal quality. According to Ja’afari interpretation, co-wives from different levels of society receive different levels of maintenance. Similarly, in the Maliki interpretation, the standard of living of each co-wife affects the amount to which she is entitled.

There is no law prohibiting women from **driving**. Since the 1950s, Bahraini women have been free to drive without male escort.
1. Background and Key Issues

General

- **Poverty reduction** remains Djibouti’s most compelling development challenge. Despite its relatively high average income per person of $970 (compared to an average of $510 for Sub-Saharan Africa), approximately 75 percent of the population is poor, and 42 percent is extremely poor.

- Despite **minor improvements in the 1990s**, Djibouti shows poor social indicators. Life expectancy (at birth) is one of the lowest in the region. A high number of mothers still die while giving birth (730 per 100,000 live births).

- As of 2004, **gross primary school enrollment stood at 39 percent**, less than half the average for Sub-Saharan Africa (93%). In 2004, only 35% (gross) of school-aged girls compared to 44% of boys enrolled in primary school, illustrating that access to equal education remains a momentous challenge. Contrary to countries of similar income, male and female illiteracy rates dropped respectively from 33 percent to 24 percent and from 60 percent to 45 percent. Consequently, in 2001, 35 percent of the adult population was still illiterate among which 44 percent were women.

- Unemployment in 2001 was officially estimated at about 60 percent and has a high incidence among the poor (66 percent) and the extremely poor (72 percent). In addition, income distribution in Djibouti is highly skewed, with the lower 80 percent of the population earning less than one-third of income.

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186 World Bank Edstats
187 The government reports higher figures. 56.3% of women are considered illiterate in contrast to 91% in rural areas
188 World Bank

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**Figure 1: Social Indicators 1990 - 2004**

School enrollment data for 1990 is from 1991

**Figure 2: MDG Goal # 3 – Promote gender equality & women’s empowerment**

School enrollment data is for 2004 (LMI for 2003)
Youth literacy data for Djibouti is for 2000-2004
2. Development Issues

Education and Training

Primary school enrollment rates (gross), though improving, remain exceptionally low (35 percent for girls compared to 44 percent for boys). Though primary and secondary school enrollment rates did not increase substantially, there were slight improvements in the literacy level despite the persistence of large rural-urban differences. The ratio of enrolled girls to boys is about 0.77 in urban areas compared to only 0.50 in rural areas.

Nearly 61 percent of girls either repeat grades and/or drop out of school altogether. Girls’ low school enrollment rates are correlated with levels of poverty. School dropout rates for girls at age 8-9 are also related to practice of FGM, after which many girls do not return to school after longer periods of sick leave. Most schools do not provide appropriate sanitary arrangements for girls and boys, contributing to girls’ high dropout rates at ages 10-11.

Out of every 100 boys and 100 girls entering grade 1, 90 boys and 85 girls reach grade 6 (the end of primary cycle\textsuperscript{189}), 23 boys and 26 girls reach grade 10, and only 7 boys and 11 girls are able to reach the final year of secondary cycle.\textsuperscript{190}

Regarding post-secondary education (in absence of a fully-developed university program), it should be noted that women comprise 45 percent of the student body in technical schools (Ali-Sabieh Professional High School and the Industrial and Business School). They concentrate mainly on commercial studies. The United Nations reported that the girls to boys ratio at the tertiary level was 0.80\textsuperscript{191}.

Health

Health indicators in Djibouti are not remarkable. High fertility rates (5.2 children per woman), lack of women’s health services, persistent Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), malnutrition and anemia are the main factors for high maternal mortality rates\textsuperscript{192}. In 2003, only 61% of the births were recorded to be assisted by skilled health practitioners.

Child mortality rates remain high with a rate of 138 for the under five years old group and 97 per one thousand for infants (thus double the rate of the MENA region).

FGM affects more than 95 percent of young girls between 6 and 9 years of age, although the practice has been illegal since 1995 and is punishable with five years of prison and a one million Francs fee. FGM is mainly administered by grandmothers and mothers and is deeply rooted in the cultural tradition. According to a recent survey, 50 percent of men are against the practice of FGM.

HIV/AIDS is one of the main public health problems, yet little information on the situation in Djibouti is available. The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is estimated at 2.9 percent (6 percent for the age group 15-35), and 95 percent of the infected cases are transmitted heterosexually. Women’s prevalence rate was estimated to be slightly higher (3.1 percent) than that of men. Since 1995,

\textsuperscript{189} Summary gender profile
\textsuperscript{190} World Bank, Djibouti Public Expenditure Review, 2004.
\textsuperscript{191} Millennium Development Goals
\textsuperscript{192} World Bank data note 740 deaths per 100,000 in 2003 births whereas the government data state 546.
prostitution has been illegal, yet it remains a major issue due to the adverse economic situation. It is all the more concerning given the recent increase in foreign military presence in the country.

**Violence against women** is not well studied in Djibouti, but it is believed that men’s consumption of qat (which consumes more than 30 percent of household expenditure) contributes to domestic violence. Female vendors of qat are also exposed to aggression from their mainly male customers.

**Economic Participation**

Women’s labor force participation is one of the highest in the MENA region, estimated at 39 percent of the total labor force in 2004. Of those women who are working, 18.8 percent work in the public sector (compared to 54.4 percent of men) and 12.6% work in the private sector. In the public sector, women work mostly in the health and education sectors where they mainly occupy lower paid positions.

Most working women are either self-employed (27.8 percent) or work in the informal sector (31.7 percent). While the importance of the informal sector is undeniable (especially as a source of income for the poor), a lack of statistics makes it difficult to assert the informal sector’s full economic potential. At the same time, it should be noted that almost 40 percent of the economically active women are illiterate and that 49 percent attended primary school without any professional training. Those with a secondary school degree represent only 4 percent of working women.

The female unemployment rate is 66.3 percent whereas male unemployment is 52.5 percent. Unemployment especially affects young women (26.9 percent for the 15-19 age group and 51.3 percent for the 20-39 age group) regardless of their socio-economic background. It should also be noted that 33.7 percent of married men and 60.1 percent of married women are unemployed. The unequal access to formal employment can be explained by limited employment opportunities, a high national unemployment rate.

**Public Participation and Representation**

Adopted by the National Assembly as law in 2002, 10 percent of all elected and administrative positions are to be occupied by women. The quota law stipulates that every party has to present at least 10 percent women among candidates. Thus, the results of the 2003 elections saw the unprecedented arrival of 7 women in Parliament, accounting 11 percent of the newly elected parliamentarians.

There are two female minister delegates, respectively in charge of women’s affairs and international cooperation. Three women are technical advisors to ministers in the Prime Minister’s Office, the Youth Ministry, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There are no female diplomats.

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193 Chewing of qat leaves is a traditional practice in Djibouti. Qat is a natural stimulant with the qualities of a mild amphetamine.
194 World bank Central database 2006
195 National report on MDGs
**Women’s Rights**

Djibouti ratified **CEDAW** without reservations in December 1998. However, Djibouti has yet to submit to the United Nations a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures that they have adopted to implement the Convention. This was supposed to have been submitted within a year after its entry into force.

In January 2002, the **Family Code** replaced a 1995 law that governed matters of marriage and divorce according to Islamic Law. The new law grants better protection for women and children. However, women’s rights are not the same as those of men either during or after marriage.

Although the new law did not abolish **polygamy**, the practice now requires the agreement of the first wife, an assessment of the husband’s economic position, and an authorization by a judge.

**Child custody** is decided by a tribunal. Children of a foreign parent can receive Djiboutian nationality regardless of whether the father or the mother is a foreign national.

The **Labor Code** has been under revision. The draft of October 2003 includes many improvements, such as allowing women to work at night and enabling the father of a newborn child to take time off to be with his family.
Egypt

1. Background and Key Issues

General

- The Egyptian Government is at an important junction regarding the inclusion of Gender issues in its policies. The Government is reviewing and reforming a host of laws, regulations and institutions to ensure gender mainstreaming. It has taken an important step to include Gender across its social and economic policies. To this end, the following areas are important:

- Illiteracy among young women (15-24 years of age) in 2004 was 21%. On the curricula side, textbook content needs to be updated and improved to ensure timeliness, and relevance, as well as to remove educational gender disparities.

- Total female labor participation rate remains low, and women’s unemployment rate is much higher than that for men. This is especially striking for the young and educated women in rural areas.

- Although the legal age of marriage for girls is 16, the phenomena of early marriage persevere, as does the practice of female genital mutilation, which attracts much international attention. Enforcement of the existing law is, however, rather difficult for girls without birth certificates. Early marriage and in turn early pregnancy remain important factors affecting women’s health conditions, and maternal mortality, especially among rural uneducated women.

- Limited availability of gender disaggregated data remains a generic problem.

Significant progress in social indicators but slow economic and political empowerment for women

Figure 1: Social Indicators 1990 - 2004

* 1990 School enrollment data is from 1991

* 2004 school enrollment data is from 2003

Figure 2: MDG Goal # 3 – Promote gender equality & women’s empowerment


School enrollment data are for 2003 (MENA for 2004)
2. **Development Issues**

**Education and Training**

Although gender-gaps in literacy persist, nevertheless women have made substantial gains (from 34% in 1990 to 59% in 2004).\(^{197}\) Rural-urban discrepancies remain high.

Gender inequalities in educational enrollment (where a slight gap between boys and girls persists) are affected largely by socio-economic status.

At the university level, the female share of students enrolled in almost all universities increased (at the undergraduate level from 35.4% in 1991/2 to 43.9% in 1998/9).

**Health**

DHS (2000) estimates that 11.2% of currently married women have unmet family planning needs (as high as 18.7% in rural Upper Egypt). Egypt has one of the largest populations in the regions, with a growth rate of 2.3% per year (2000-2004) and a respective fertility rate of 3.4 births per woman. Despite a significant decrease in fertility rates, short spacing of births is still prevalent putting women at increased health risks.

Reductions in maternal mortality rates in Egypt have been impressive, and government-led campaigns have paid off. Maternal mortality rate (2000-2004) was 165 per 100,000 live births. With the exception of HIV/AIDS, knowledge of sexual transmitted infections (STIs) is low among youth, with girls particularly being ignorant.

**Economic Participation**

Total female labor participation rate has increased from 22% in 2004 to 24% in 2005. Women’s unemployment rate continue to increase, reaching as high at 24% in 2005 compared to 6% for men, the highest being among young and educated women in rural areas, despite the fact that women’s participation in the labor force grew five times faster than that of men.

Women constitute a large share in the informal sector, accounting for 67% in 2005 of the informal sector, suffering from lack of social security coverage.

Women’s share in the managerial and decision making position has significantly increased from 23% in 2003 to 35% in 2005.

Women are also largely employed by the public sector, accounting for almost one-third of Government employees (35%), and in the private sector, making up one-sixth (18%) of employees as of 2005, which indicates the need to consider the gender impact of any reforms,

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\(^{197}\) World Bank Edstats
including privatization. **Women entrepreneurs’ access to credit** has increased from 25% in 2004 to 32% in 2005.

**Public Participation and Representation**

**Women’s political participation** is still very low in Egypt. The parliamentary quota of 30 seats for women was cancelled in 1986. Currently, there are 7 elected and 4 appointed women in parliament. This downward trend of women’s representation can also be observed at the **local council election** level, which is as low as 1.2%. In general, there is a lack of commitment among **political parties** to support women candidates for legislative and local councils. In the **Shura Council**, the upper house, female membership is 1.9% in 2004.

In terms of **decision making positions**, there are two women in the 35-member **Cabinet**: (i) Minister of Insurance & Social Affairs, and (ii) Minister of International Cooperation. Women’s participation in **syndicates** constitutes 17% (accounting to around one sixth of male participation). Women’s representation in **trade unions** is also low (accounting for 3%) were elected to trade union committees in all governorates, while one woman succeeded in being elected to the General Federation of Trade Unions in the last elections. Even in **NGOs**, where women’s membership is close to 35%, women’s participation on boards remains in the range of 15 to 18 percent (with a high of 42% in family planning associations, and a low of 8% in scientific and religious associations). The first Egyptian woman judge was appointed by a Presidential Decree in early 2003.

**Women’s Rights**

On **personal status law**, there has been some issues of discrimination in terms of divorce, custody, alimony, however, the **new divorce law** issued on January 2000, enables Egyptian women for the first time to initiate divorce “khula” but they must renounce all financial claims and return money given at the time of marriage.

The Government has been very active in supporting girls and women in obtaining birth certificates and ID cards for women as it gives them access to various **services and rights**.

A **Nationality Law** was issued in 2004 that gives the mother the right to give her children from a non-Egyptian father the Egyptian nationality.

The **Family Court Law** was issued in early 2005, allowing for specialized courts for custody, divorce and all family related cases, as well as, providing trained judges that are qualified for such cases. Accordingly, a **Family Fund** was established in order to financially support divorced women until the court rules.
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

1. Background and Key Issues

   General

   - Gender issues in Iran are at a visibly critical stage and impact the political, social and economic development of the country.
   - Gender equality and empowerment of women took a step back after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. In general, laws that ensured women’s increased rights in the public and private spheres were reversed to comply with the post revolutionary interpretation of the Sharia.
   - Despite the reversal in laws and social attitudes, the progress of the Islamic Republic on gender-based social indicators has been remarkable. Iran has one of the fastest progress on health and education indicators in the region. This is not only in terms of quantity but also quality.
   - The progress on the social front has resulted in women’s capability to assume a role in all spheres of life, even in male-dominated fields, despite social norms and other legally based barriers.
   - Nonetheless, the existing barriers are a major impediment in utilizing the significant investment that has been made. Iran’s human capital endowment today is nearly equally distributed between its men and women. Hence, this low utilization has a substantial economic cost and significant social repercussions.
   - During Mr. Khatami’s presidency, there was a marked expansion in women’s social freedoms and a slow reversal of some of the imposed barriers. Effective in this process was the election of 14 female Parliamentarians – the highest number in the Islamic Republic’s history. The vision 2020 of the country and the 5-year development plan have specific targets for gender inclusion, such as increasing women in the work force from 16% to 48%-- which is ambitious.
   - The actions of the newly elected government, under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, are difficult to read in this respect. The President has appointed two women to his Cabinet, one holding the vice-presidency position and the other being Advisoron Women’s Affairs. At the same time, there have been crackdowns on women’s rights gatherings.

Progress in Human Development

Figure 1: Social Indicators 1990 -2004

![Graph showing social indicators 1990-2004](image)

* School Enrollment Data for 1990 is from 1991

Source: World Bank Central Database 2006

The gender gap slowly closing

Figure 2: MDG Goal # 3 – Promote gender equality & women’s empowerment

![Graph showing MDG Goal # 3](image)


School enrollment data is for 2004 (LMI for 2003)
Youth Literacy data is for 2004 (Iran for 2000-2004)
2. Development Issues

Education and Training

Female enrollment rates have improved dramatically. At the primary level, girls’ enrollment rate reached 108 percent (gross) in 2004 versus 98 percent for boys. At the university level, women comprise around 65 percent of university entrants.

Gender stereotyping in textbooks poses a problem as does the explicit or implicit guiding of women towards “feminine” specializations – even within fields. For instance, in the sciences, a woman may be directed toward studying chemistry, suitable for teaching, while her male counterpart may be directed into chemical engineering. At the same time, the number of women enrolling in engineering, sciences and medical fields has been rising. Also, women have recently started joining traditionally male-dominated fields such as the police force and the fire services.

Health

Life expectancy increased from 66 years in 1990 to 72 in 2004 and the maternal mortality rate declined from 91 per 100,000 live births in 1989 to 76 in 2000. Iran, the most populous country in the region, has one of the highest contraceptive use rates (74 percent in 2000). This has helped reduce fertility rates from 6.7 births per woman in 1980 to 2 in 2004, curbing population growth and contributing to women’s increasing participation in the economy and public life.

One critical area for women’s health and education remains the legal minimum age of marriage, which in 2003 was raised from 9 to 13 years for girls and from 14 to 15 years for boys. Though few marriages occur during that age, those that do fall into this group are likely to be among the most marginal, poorer and less educated social groups.

A scientific study conducted by two independent experts found that 71 percent of teenagers in Iran suffer from depression. Teenage girls in Iran are twice as likely as boys to suffer from depression. A separate study conducted by the Psychological Welfare Unit of the Ministry of Health found that more than 15 percent of housewives in Iran suffer from psychological disorders.

According to a social welfare official, referring to a national survey, two thirds of Iranian women have suffered domestic violence and a quarter are unhappy with their gender. In February 2005, the UN's top official on women's rights, Yakin Erturk, chastised Iran over what she said were abuses and discrimination built into the Islamic republic's laws. Iran's laws "do not provide protection for victims of domestic violence and make it difficult to escape violence through divorce", she said, adding that suffering wives also faced "time-consuming judicial procedures and stigmatization".

198 World Bank Central Database 2006.
200 World Bank Central Database 2006.
201 World Bank Central Database 2006.
203 World Bank Central Database 2006.
**Economic Participation**

Women’s labor force participation out of the total labor force was 33 percent in 2004. This rate is higher than the regional average of 27 percent but still low considering that 65 percent of university entrants are women. Two main factors contribute to this low rate. First, the belief that men are the primary breadwinners of the family and should be hired first reduces the demand for women. Second, the availability of services to support women’s work outside the home significantly affects the supply of women to the labor force. For instance, female participation rates in rural and smaller towns, where women can depend on extended family, is higher than in metropolitan areas.

The combination of lower demand, and shortage of support systems, which increases the cost of working outside the home, is more binding for women in urban areas. The higher participation rate in non-urban areas can also be explained by women’s prevalence in traditional sectors – in fact there is a feminization of agriculture in Iran. Also, entire industries, such as the rug weaving industry, are supported by women, but these women work outside the formal labor market. Eighty percent of employed women (in 1996) were in the public sector, though this number has been decreasing as emerging numbers of women set up their own businesses.

**Figure 3: Female Economic Activity by age, 2000**

[Graph showing female economic activity by age, 2000.]

Women’s labor force participation is lower in Iran at every age group than its peers in MENA and other middle income countries.


One issue is that married women need their husbands’ permission to work outside the home.

**Public Participation and Representation**

During Mr. Khatami’s presidency, a growing proportion of women were elected in parliamentary elections, reflecting women’s increased participation in legislative and decision-making bodies. Women were also gaining some ground at local and municipal levels. During this time, Iran saw its first female vice-president Masoumeh Ebtekar. Yet, the number of women authorized to run in the Parliamentary elections of 2003 were limited and mostly from the conservative side.

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206 World Bank Central Database 2006.
207 World Bank, Gender and Development in the MENA; Women in the Public Sphere, 2004.
Women could not run in the 2005 presidential elections. There is no female representation in Iran’s most powerful political body, the 12-member Council of Guardians. The Council of Guardians approves parliamentary candidates and has the power to veto any bill passed by the Parliament. Furthermore, it approves the Assembly of Experts, which is in turn in charge of appointing the country’s Supreme Leader and has the sole power to dismiss him. Constitutionally, the assembly is open to anyone, including women, as long as they have achieved the required level of learning in Islamic jurisprudence and social and political issues. Women’s activists point out that women have not been able to run for president or serve as judges.210

It is yet too early to analyze issues concerning women under the new government. Some women’s rights advocates are concerned about President Ahmadinejad’s conservative approach. Under his government, for example, the Centre for Women's Participation has been renamed the Centre for Women and Family Affairs in order “to pay more attention to the institution of family.”211 Furthermore, in 2006, there was a crackdown on the peaceful International Women’s Day gathering and on the June 12 women’s rights gathering in Tehran. The participants of both these gatherings had demanded freedom and equal rights under the law.

However, some positive developments have occurred as well. Under the current President, Fatemeh Javadi was appointed Vice-President and Head of Department of the Environment. Replacing Masoumeh Ebtekar, Javadi is one of two women in the Iranian cabinet. The other woman is Nasrin Soltankhah, Presidential Advisor on Women’s Affairs and Head of the Center for Women and Family Affairs.

Women's Rights

The Iranian constitution does not explicitly provide for equality of rights between men and women, as does CEDAW. Rather, Article 20 of the constitution says that men and women "enjoy equal protection of the law...in conformity with Islamic criteria" while Article 21 stipulates that "the government must ensure the rights of women in all respects, in conformity with Islamic criteria." Most of the personal status laws that discriminate against women in marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody derive their legitimacy from the clause effectively subordinating women's rights to the state's interpretation of Islamic law.212

In October 2003, Iranian human rights activist Shirin Ebadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Having become Iran’s first female judge in 1969, she was removed from office after the Islamic revolution in 1979. Since then, she has been active as a human rights advocate providing legal representation for victims of political persecution and has fought for the rights of women and children in Iran. Ebadi played a major role in the fight for Iranian ratification of CEDAW, a battle which was lost due to opposition from the Guardian Council and various religious leaders.

In early August 2003, the reformist-dominated Parliament ratified a bill proposing that the Islamic Republic of Iran join CEDAW. Dozens of clerics held rallies in the holy city of Qom to protest against the Parliament's decision, and the Guardian Council, which vets all legislation in accordance with Islamic Shari’a law, defied Parliament and rejected the United Nations treaty.

Similarly, the Guardian Council rejected a bill approved by Parliament that would have allowed abortion during the first four months of pregnancy if the fetus was proved to be mentally or physically handicapped.

211 Embassy of Iran in Denmark (http://www.iran-embassy.dk/fa/culteral/women%20en.pdf)
Discrimination in such areas as marriage, child custody, divorce, right to work, right to travel, inheritance, bearing legal witness, etc., are among the many legal issues facing women. There is also marked discrimination in the Penal Code as girls legally come of age at age 9 while the age for boys is 15.

The issue of “blood money” is much debated in the country. The Penal Code, based on Islamic law, dictates that if a man kills a woman, he faces the death penalty only if the victim’s family pays the difference between the value of his life and that of his victim. As a woman’s life is valued as half that of a man (about US$11,000 versus US$22,000), victims’ families are faced with huge bills before sentences can be carried out. This regulation is much more important when it concerns compensation due to loss and dismemberment, workers’ compensation, and impunities that are calculated on the basis of blood money. In practice, there are cases where the government has compensated families in order to carry out social justice.

Some women’s rights advocates say that they have not seen the rollback of women's rights they expected under President Ahmadinejad but they do not either foresee radical change for the better under his Presidency. There were some debates in spring 2006 about tighter enforcement of the Islamic dress code. Reports indicated that the police of greater Tehran would crack down on women who don't observe what the Islamic Republic considers proper Islamic clothing. The President, however, responded with a statement supporting women's right to wear clothing of their choosing.

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213 Some aspects can be corrected by stipulating the aforementioned in the marriage contract.
214 BBC, Women’s Rights on Iranian Agenda,” 9 March 2006
215 http://www.worldpress.org/Mideast/2334.cfm
IRAQ

1. Background and Key Issues

General

A key and visible success factor of Iraq’s reconstruction will be how Iraqi women will fare especially in terms of empowerment. According to reports from NGOs, there is significant concern with regards to the ability of Iraqi women to retain the rights that they enjoyed in the past.

Similar concerns are voiced by women advocates with regards to putting Islamic law as the main source of legislation. The fear is that it will allow for various interpretations of the Shar’ia which can potentially set back legal equality and status women enjoyed especially in personal matters like marriage, divorce, and family inheritance. In addition, different applications of the law risks increasing inequality between women based on their religious and ethnic affiliation which can undermine the unified status and development of Iraqi women at the national level.

Lack of gender awareness in public policy and Labor laws is a challenge in the reconstruction efforts. The rapid turn-over within the ministries and NGOs is partly to blame for the weak capacity on gender mainstreaming. Many NGOs and activists believe that it is not enough to raise awareness among technical staff but that efforts to address gender issues in development and projects should be pushed by higher management and decision-makers who lack gender awareness and training.

Availability of gender disaggregated data is crucial in providing accurate policy advice and in designing projects. There is little capacity to monitor and evaluate the impact of policies on women in a systematic way. Analysis is left to rely on anecdotal evidence here and there.


Social Development is at Risk

Figure 1: Social Indicators 1990–2004


Figure 2 MDG Goal # 3 – Promote Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment - 2004


LMI = Lower-middle-income countries
* Data for LMI is for 2003. Data for MENA and Iraq is for 2004.
2. Development Issues

**Education and Training**

Iraq’s Interim Constitution guarantees the right to education and access to health for all and protects individuals specifically women and children from illiteracy. However, access to education and health facilities is significantly impaired due to the current security situation. It has also impacted women’s development more than men which is evident in the significant male/female gaps in social indicators.

Low education and illiteracy are highly linked to poverty. Most recent data (2004) shows adult female literacy at 56 percent compared to male literacy of 74 percent.\(^\text{217}\) However, the ratio of young literate females to males (15 -24 years) looks promising reaching 91 percent in 2004, better than the MENA average of 89 percent. In addition, reports by the Ministry of Education indicate that female secondary school enrollment has increased in the past two years.

Literacy is a significant problem for rural women where illiteracy rates are 50 percent compared to 30 percent for urban women. Fourteen percent of girls have never attended school compared to 6 percent of boys. According to the UN/World Bank Joint Iraq Needs Assessment, approximately half of all girls in rural areas were not going to school.

At the technical and vocational education level, women make up less than 20 percent of student enrollments\(^\text{218}\).

**Health**

Health indicators have worsened over the past several decades. Child mortality rates have increased from 50 in 1990 to 125 in 2003.

Forty percent of women in Iraq were married before the age of 18 which has led to a high incidence of anemia due to early pregnancy (about 50 -70 percent of pregnant women are estimated to be anemic).

Maternal mortality increased from 117 deaths for every 100,000 births before 1990, to 294 in 2000\(^\text{219}\). Fertility rates were at 6 births per woman in 1990 and are now at 5.\(^\text{220}\)

Health clinics and medication need to be made more accessible to women who find it difficult to seek medical care alone. According to Human Rights Watch, there remain incidents of hospital personnel turning away victims of sexual attack, saying it is not their responsibility.

**Economic Participation**

The Constitution stipulates the rights of all citizens to work and labor laws are generally supportive of working women. However, female headed households (FHH) are increasing, poverty is high, and women’s paid employment is very low. Women’s share of the total labor

\(^\text{217}\) National Statistic/UNDP Household survey, 2005
\(^\text{218}\) World Bank, UN/World Bank Joint Iraq Needs Assessment, October 2003.
\(^\text{220}\) National Statistic/UNDP Household survey, 2005
force (between the ages 25-45) was only 20 percent in 2004\textsuperscript{221}. Labor force participation for women with more than secondary education is the highest (42 percent)\textsuperscript{222}.

The agricultural sector has the largest amount of female labor, 90 percent, double that of men, followed by education (68 percent of all teachers are females) and public administration. Since it is considered as part of their domestic chores, the majority of rural women, 98 percent, work for no wages versus 47 percent for rural men\textsuperscript{223}.

Figure 3: Female economic activity rates by age – 2000

![Figure 3: Female economic activity rates by age – 2000](image)

Official estimates show that there were approximately 150,000 female headed households in Iraq in 1995. By the end of 2000, that number was estimated to have increased to 300,000. (Report submitted by the government of Iraq at the UNESCWA, Arab Regional Conference Beijing+10, July 2004)

Source: ILO
LMI= Lower-middle-income countries

Laws and practices that require women to get official permission from a male guardian to travel, work, or continue their education, will severely constrict women’s economic advancement, particularly widows, divorcees, and those with estranged husbands. It also provides a mechanism for males who want to pressure or threaten their female kin. The lack of security is a significant barrier preventing most women from working, seeking medical care or continuing their education.

**Public Participation and Representation**

Iraq’s Constitution is specific in guaranteeing women the right to public participation, voting and running for public office. The interim constitution guarantees (under transitional guidelines) a minimum of 25 percent parliamentary seats to women.

More recently, one-third of the 140 winning candidates on the Shiite parliamentary list were women. Thirty two percent of Iraq’s newly elected 275 parliamentarians are women.

In April 2005, six new Cabinet Ministers approved by the National Assembly were women, out of a total of 36, heading the ministries of: Migration and Displacement; Communications; Municipalities and Public Works; Environment; Women’s Affairs; and Science and Technology. The new Cabinet put in place by the new government in 2006 includes 4 women heading the ministries of, Environment, Housing and Construction, Human Rights and Ministry of State for Women’s Affairs.

\textsuperscript{221} UNDP, Study by Khalid M. Khalid, 2004.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid
Currently, women make up only one percent of judges (6 out of 744 total judge positions), and they are located only in Baghdad (smaller cities and towns still find the concept of a female judge unacceptable).

**Women’s Rights:**

Iraq has made social investments in women, and its legislation gives them equal rights to education, and employment. Iraq’s constitution and labor law guaranteed the right of work of every citizen regardless of sex. Iraq ratified the ILO Convention C100 on equal pay and its labor laws explicitly mention equal pay for work of equal value.

In 1986, Iraq signed CEDAW, though with reservations to Articles 2, 9, 29, which deal with change in national law, nationality of children, and arbitration.

The Iraqi new Constitution accords equal status to men and women, including equal rights to education, literacy, and employment and ensures women’s right to vote and run for public office. It specifies that no discrimination can be based on sex. The interim Constitution also guarantees the physical protection of women and forbids violence within the family. However, reports of honor killings and forced marriages exist.
1. Background and Key Issues

General

The status of women in Jordan is unique even within the context of MENA. Jordan has achieved high levels of female literacy and improved health conditions. Jordan benefits from a proactive state leadership, and enjoys a high degree of women’s advocacy and activism. These ingredients normally result in a higher rate of participation of women in the economic and political sphere but this has not been the case in Jordan.

Social attitudes based in Jordan’s traditions and tribal background manifest themselves in deep-rooted attitudes. Factors such as the attitude that men are the sole breadwinners, the importance of women’s safety and honor, and laws and regulations continue to limit women’s access to equal opportunities in the public sphere.

An example of this is the 2002 parliamentary refusal to approve amendments to laws that affect women and their personal status, despite the strong backing of the Government. Laws regarding higher minimum age of marriage, and granting women their own ID cards (daftar) that provide access to public services, remain as interim laws until parliament agrees to vote on them again. Amendments for stricter penalty for honor killings and women’s right to divorce were rejected by parliament.

Based on estimates for all MENA countries and other world regions, the actual level of female labor force participation in Jordan is only about half of its potential - among the lowest in the region\(^{224}\). Total fertility, a predictor of women’s empowerment, remains higher than the MENA regional average of 3.

Private sector opportunities are limited – only 3.9 percent of entrepreneurs are women. Promoting women in the private sector, as employees and entrepreneurs is an important step in advancing gender issues in Jordan.

\(^{224}\) Jordan CGA May 2005.
2. Development Issues

Education and Training

Jordan has made significant progress in extending universal access to education. Primary school completion rates are 100 percent. Female enrollment accounts for 68 percent of community college enrollments and 47 percent of university undergraduate enrollments. However, female tertiary completion rate is 31 percent of the male completion rate and is the lowest in the MENA region.

Ongoing efforts to improve the image of women and to eliminate the associated stereotypes in textbooks need to be strengthened further and the government is making an effort to address this issue in its ERfKE project.

Health

Fertility is 3.4 births per woman (bpw) compared to 3 bpw for the MENA region (2004). Data for 2002 show that women with no education had the highest fertility rates - 6.9 bpw. Maternal deaths per 100,000 live births were 41 in 2000.

Six percent of women compared to two percent of males have married between the ages of 15 and 19. Jordan’s minimum legal age of marriage is fifteen for girls and sixteen for boys.

Economic Participation

Estimates of women’s labor force participation in Jordan vary widely, from 12 to 28 percent. Around 6 percent of women work in agriculture. Forty five percent of the female labor force is employed in the public sector.

Women’s unemployment rates are significantly higher than men’s – 21 percent compared to 12 percent respectively (data for year 2000 - ILO, KILM 3rd edition).

Unlike women in other comparable countries Jordanian women exit the labor market upon marriage. In figure 3, the rise in the 30-35 age group, may be an indication that some women go back to work when they have children and household expenses increase.

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225 Public universities and public community colleges.
226 Ibid.
227 Educational Reform for the Knowledge Economy project (ERfKE)
228 PRB World’s Youth 2006 Data – Note: data refers to year prior to 1997 or earlier than the year listed.
230 The Ministries of Health, Education, Planning, Social Development, and Post and Telecommunications employ the largest proportions of women in their civil service, totaling 45,829, or approximately around 86 percent of all female civil service employees.
Males and females with post secondary and vocational education are the most likely to be employed. However, while unemployment for males decreases with subsequent levels of education, it remains consistently high for females. In the private sector, women constitute only 4 percent of employees in the highest paid managerial jobs.\textsuperscript{231}

Underemployment for women is also high. World Bank estimates show that the average female wage earner in Jordan is likely to have 12.3 years of education, compared to 9.3 years for a man doing similar work.

Income levels of female-headed households (FHH) in Jordan based on earnings are among the lowest in the MNA region, at a little over 10 percent of total household income. They rely heavily on transfers and family help.

**Public Participation and Representation**

In 2003, the Jordanian electoral law was amended to reserve 6 seats in the Lower House of Parliament (the Majlis) for women. Although 54 women had registered to run in the last elections, compared to 750 male candidates, none of them was elected to the parliament. Given the quota, 6 female parliamentarians were appointed and have made up 5.5 percent of the 110-seat Majlis since August 2003. In the same year, King Abdullah dissolved the Upper House of Parliament and appointed seven women to a new 55-member body.\textsuperscript{232} This brought the number of female members in both houses of Parliament to 13.\textsuperscript{233}

Today, female voice and representation in decision-making remains low (around 6%) by world standards (around 16%). Government reshuffling of the Cabinet in November 2005 reduced the number of Women Ministers from 3 to 1.

**Women’s Rights:**

Jordan became a signatory to CEDAW in 1980 and ratified it in 1992, but it has registered reservations to articles 9, 15 and 16, regarding nationality rights of children, mobility, parents’ equal rights, and personal rights to choose family name, and professional occupation.

The Jordanian Constitution embodies the principle of equality before the law although it does not specify protection against gender discrimination.

The penal law incorporates leniency provisions to men who commit violence or crimes against their female relatives whom they suspect of dubious behavior.

Jordanian women have limited rights to divorce. Unlike men, and consistent with Shari’a laws, women must specifically request a special clause in their marriage contract to obtain the right to divorce. The majority of women do not include this request for fear of losing prospective grooms and men who accept this clause are looked down upon by society. The law requires men to pay support to divorced wives for only one year. A guardian is required to administer a bride’s marriage contract.

\textsuperscript{231} International Women’s Rights Action Watch (IWRAW). http://iwraw.igc.org/publications/countries

\textsuperscript{232} Previously, it included three women.

\textsuperscript{233} Three female senators are serving for the first time: former Minister Rowaida Maaitah, Secretary-General of the Jordanian National Forum for Women, Mai Abul Samen, and President of the Jordanian Business Women Forum, Wijdan Saket.
According to Jordanian Nationality Law No. 6 of 1986, “Jordanian women married to non-Jordanians have the right to keep their Jordanian nationality.” However, the child of a Jordanian woman married to a non-Jordanian is not automatically considered a citizen of Jordan. A Jordanian mother cannot transfer her nationality to her child except if he or she is born in Jordan to a mother with Jordanian citizenship and a father of unknown foreign nationality or whose paternity has not been legally established.

Under law No. 2 of 1969 a woman is required to seek permission from her male guardian or husband in order to renew or obtain a passport. In several recent cases mothers reportedly could not depart abroad with their children because authorities complied with requests from fathers to prevent their children (without a court order) from leaving the country. Social norms continue to play a major role in maintaining restrictive measures on women's freedom of movement.

Women’s advocates and NGOs worked collectively to push amendments to many laws that would provide more empowerment to women. These amendments were approved by the Cabinet and became provisional laws in 2001. However, Jordan has made little progress in making these amendments permanent. In a highly publicized session Parliament voted against two of them: 1) giving women the right to Divorce (Khul'a); and 2) removing sanctions in the penal law that allowed leniency to perpetrators of honor crimes. All other provisional laws remain in temporary status until Parliament agrees to vote on them.
LEBANON

1. Background and Key Issues

**General**

- Lebanon is one of the few countries in the region that enjoys high social indicators, and progressive laws. Female labor force participation however has always been low relative to other middle income countries and women’s inclusion in political office remains weak even by MENA standards.

- Prior to the recent conflict, higher educated Lebanese were already migrating to neighboring GCC countries that are seeing strong surges of economic growth and construction. This “brain drain” was predominantly male creating a shortage of highly educated male labor thereby contributing to an increased employment of women especially in banks, law firms, and the hospitality industry. The civil war of the 1970’s played a significant role in pushing Lebanese women into the workforce and similar outcomes are expected after this crisis. However, prospects for women in the medium term do not look good and the long term socio-economic impact is uncertain. As Lebanon reverts back to rebuilding infrastructure (a male dominant industry) job opportunities for women are likely to decrease leaving many women facing unemployment.

- Poverty is a looming prospect and risks becoming highly feminized. After the civil war many women were left to assume sole responsibility of the household. There are fears of an increase in female headed households as males migrate to seek work elsewhere. The recent conflict will also see Lebanon suffering setbacks in its human development and social indicators. Evidence suggests that when families are faced with restricted resources they usually cutback on the education of daughters. Similarly, youth males will have their education interrupted as they face the need of having to leave school in order to work and help support their families.

- Lack of adequate health infrastructure and medicine will contribute to increased maternal and infant mortality. Women’s mobility will also be more severely hampered than men’s by lack of infrastructure and roads.

**Figure 1: Social indicators 1990 -2004**

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<td>2004</td>
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Source: World Bank Central Data Base 2006

*Literacy data for 2004 is from 2002

**Figure 2: MDG Goal # 3 – Promote gender equality & women’s empowerment - 2004**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Lebanon</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>UMI</th>
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<tr>
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<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of parliamentary seats held by women (2005)</td>
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UMI = Upper-middle-income countries

* Lebanon data is for 2002 .MENA and UMI data is for 2004
2. Development Issues

**Education and Training**

Recent accurate data on education is lacking. But according to 2002 World Bank data, girls’ enrollment rates have increased over the past thirty years, with female enrollment rates exceeding that of males’ in higher education, likely due to boys leaving school at an earlier age to enter the labor market. The gross primary female enrollment rate reached 102 percent compared to 105 percent for males. In addition gross secondary school enrollment was 83 percent for females and 76 percent for males, while enrollment in tertiary education was 48 percent for females and 40 percent for males (gross)\(^{234}\).

Adult literacy was 84 percent for females and 92.8 percent for males in 2000\(^{235}\). Youth literacy rates (ages 15 -24) were 93 percent and 97 percent respectively\(^{236}\).

Enrollment rates of females in vocational education reached 40 percent in 2000.\(^{237}\) There is also a sense that higher education for women is regarded as a means to obtain a “personal education” meaning that getting a university degree paves the way for marriage rather than preparing women for a professional career.\(^{238}\) Nevertheless, there is no university program or field of specialization that does not have female students in it.

**Health**

Data on health indicators is equally weak with most of what is available refers to the nineties. Most recent 2003 World Bank data indicate that the overall fertility rate for women declined to 2.2 births per woman, down from 3.2 in 1990.\(^{239}\) Life expectancy reached 75 years for women and 70 for men in 2004 and maternal mortality rate is estimated at 150 for every 100,000 live births in 2005\(^{240}\).

According to the 1994-97 Lebanon Maternal and Child Health Survey, fertility rates among women decreased with increasing educational level, with an average of 5.7 babies for illiterate women, 3.5 for those with elementary education, and an average of 2.2 babies for women with secondary education or more. Fertility rates also differed by region, being as high as 3.4 children per woman in the North district and as low as 1.7 children per woman in Beirut. The survey also shows that 99.4 percent of the women surveyed knew about a method of family planning. According to the 1997 “Survey on Living Conditions,” 61 percent of married women use contraceptives. About 88 percent of deliveries took place in public or private health institutions.

**Economic Participation**

In addition to other social impacts lower female education will also impact the structure of female employment. This is due to the fact that education tends to be a prerequisite for women entering

\(^{234}\) World Bank, Development Data Platform Central Databases, Global Development Finance & World Development Indicators August 2005.
\(^{235}\) Ibid.
\(^{238}\) UNDP, Program on Governance in the Arab Region.
\(^{239}\) World Bank, Development Data Platform Central Databases, Global Development Finance & World Development Indicators August 2005.
\(^{240}\) Population Reference Bureau, 2005 Women of our World.
the labor force in Lebanon more so than for men. This is especially the case in higher paying positions where women are more highly educated than their male counterparts in similar jobs\textsuperscript{241}. The female labor force participation rate of 32.3 percent in 2000\textsuperscript{242} is much lower than in comparable upper-middle-income countries. Women are paid less than men for doing similar work; however, this trend was changing in some sectors such as commerce and industry.

Unemployment in year 2000 reached 9.9 percent, 8 percent for females and 15.2 percent for males\textsuperscript{243}.

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**Figure 3: Female economic activity by age - 2000**

\[\text{Source: ILO}\]

\text{UMI= Upper Middle Income Countries}

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“Lebanese women tended to leave their work after marriage – and are allowed to cash their indemnities (as stipulated by Lebanese law) – or leave work after the birth of their first child.” (UNIFEM 2003)

Women’s economic activity patterns flowed in the opposite direction than patterns observed in countries of comparable income (Fig.3).

It remains to be seen to what extent these trends will change after the recent conflict.

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Women have found opportunities in government, medicine, law, academia, business, and the arts. Unfortunately, few women have achieved senior positions in their fields. In 2000, women constituted 63.3 percent of paid employees in health and social services, 62.2 percent in education, 35.5 percent in services, 17 percent in trade, 16.6 percent in agriculture, 16.1 percent in industry, and 8.5 percent in public enterprises. More than 50 percent of those working in charitable organizations are women\textsuperscript{244}.

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**Public Participation and Representation**

Lebanese women received the right to vote and run for public office in 1953 but it took close to four decades for a woman to be elected to parliament in her own right. From 1953 to 1972, nine women ran for parliamentary elections, but none of them succeeded. The first Lebanese woman to become a Member of Parliament was in 1963. She was appointed to complete the term of her father who had died in a tragic accident. Similarly, in 1991, Nayla Mouawad was appointed to Parliament after her husband died during his term. Only in 1992, 1996, and 2000 respectively, did three women finally get elected on their own merit.

In October 2004, for the first time, women were appointed to the Lebanese Cabinet. Layla Solh, daughter of former Prime Minister Riad Solh, was named Minister of Industry. Wafaa Hamza was appointed Minister of State. Since the August 2000 parliamentary elections, there have been three women in the 128 member Parliament (2.3 percent of Parliament). Out of 108 heads of

\textsuperscript{241} UNDP, Program on Governance in the Arab Region.

\textsuperscript{242} World Bank, Gender and Development in MENA: Women in the Public Sphere, Statistical Appendix, 2003.

\textsuperscript{243} UN/ESCWA, Arab Regional Conference 10 Years After Beijing - Report submitted by Lebanon, July 2004.

\textsuperscript{244} ibid.
municipalities, only 3 are women. In the South, female representation is relatively weaker than in the North.

Men dominate the leadership of all political parties and the introduction of a parliamentary quota system for women continues to be discussed. Only 4 out of the 53 ambassadors representing the Lebanese government abroad are women and at the director-general level, there are 3 women out of a total of 22 director-general positions.

Women's entry into the professional field has grown rapidly, with the most remarkable advances being in the legal profession: 50 percent of lawyers and 27.5 percent of judges are now women. The last graduating class of judges had more women than men. Data for 2004 show that 124 out of 434 judges are women at Judicial Courts, while 19.5 percent are judges at the State Consultative Council.

Women’s Rights

Lebanon’s sectarian system undermines the advancement of women’s national rights especially in the areas pertaining to marriage, divorce and inheritance. Lebanon recognizes 19 different groups that are each accorded their own religious law and these laws apply different personal status to men and women. This is in contradiction to the Constitution which stipulates equality for all citizens. The introduction of an optional civil marriage in lieu of a religious marriage was proposed in 1998 by President Elias Hraoui. This proposal was sharply resisted by religious leaders (both Christian and Muslim), and the Parliament has blocked it from consideration.

Some areas of women’s rights in Lebanon are dictated by common civil code such as those that guarantee women the right to own businesses and accord their testimony in court equal weight as that of men. A report by the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) in 2000 stated that the Penal Code continues to discriminate against women in terms of honor killings, adultery, and rape. The report also indicated that several labor laws and regulations discriminate against female employees.

Lebanese women cannot give Lebanese citizenship to a non-Lebanese husband or to their children born from a non-Lebanese father, whereas, Lebanese men can give citizenship to their foreign spouse and children.

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246 Ibid
1. Background and Key Issues

General

- Morocco enjoys the highest level of female labor force participation and political inclusion in MENA. Since 2001, Morocco has made major reforms to integrate women in its political system and women now have the largest parliamentary representation in the region.

- Gender issues have taken center stage in Morocco in the past few years marked by the landmark reforms in the family code the Moudawana initiated by King Mohammed VI in 2004 which granted women greater equality and justice in their rights concerning marriage, divorce, and their status in the family. The King’s commitment to improving women’s development through several initiatives to integrate women in the country’s development has strong backing from women activists and NGOs.

- However, implementation of these reforms remains to be a challenge. There is no coherent strategy or action plan to implement these reforms. Recently, there has been an attempt to develop a national strategy for gender equality and consultations are currently on-going.

- Morocco is a front runner in the area of gender budgeting. A large proportion of the Government has been trained (mainly by UNIFEM) in Gender budgeting and the new finance law foresees the integration of gender issues across all sectors. The latest Budget report included for the first time a chapter on gender budgets.

- Despite notable progress, the challenge remains for Morocco to expand women’s access to public resources and wider economic opportunities as well as to better social services. Gender gaps in education and health require greater improvement, and the constraints to economic opportunities need to be addressed.
2. Development Issues

**Education and Training**

With school enrollments improving, female illiteracy rates declined from 75 percent in 1990 to 60 percent in 2004. However, the gender gap remains high whereby illiteracy among women is 1.5 times more than among men. Moreover, about 40% of female youth are illiterate compared to 20% of male youth. However, the gender gap has narrowed significantly during the past decade.

Significant progress was made in girls’ schooling. The gross enrollment rate for girls in primary school almost doubled between 1990 and 2004 increasing from 52 percent to 100 percent. For boys, the gross primary enrollment rate increased from 76 percent to 111 percent during the same period. Enrollments for girls also increased in secondary education from a gross secondary school enrollment rate of 29 percent in 1990 to 43 percent in 2004 (41 percent and 51 percent for boys, respectively). In tertiary education, girls gross enrollment ratio increased from 8 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 2004. While the gender gap in tertiary enrollments declined significantly during this period from 5.6 percent to 1.5 percent, it was mainly due to a decline in boys gross enrollment rates (from 13 percent in 1990 to 11 percent in 2004) rather than a rapid increase in girls enrollments. While the gender gap declined significantly, the ratio of girls to boys in school enrollment at all levels of education in Morocco remains the lowest among middle-income countries in the region.

School programs and textbook content have been subject to critique from women’s rights activists over the last decade. However, despite the Ministry of National Education’s purported engagement and the preparatory work done with the Ministry of Human Rights, few changes have taken place. This is problematic given progress in enrollment, which - if not accompanied by a change in the culture of inequality - will continue to propagate and reinforce gender stereotypes and biases.

**Health**

There has been some progress in women’s health and the fertility rate has declined. But this progress is not sufficient. The fertility rate among Moroccan women decreased from 4.1 births per woman in 1991 to 2.5 in 2004. Maternal mortality decreased from a rate of 332 per 100,000 live births in 1991 to 227 in 2003. However, there are large discrepancies between urban and rural areas whereby the maternal mortality rate in rural areas is at 267 per 100,000 live births as opposed to 187 in urban areas in 2003. This is still one of the highest rates in the region. The rate of prenatal consultations is 68 percent (48 percent in rural areas).

Available statistics on STDs are alarming as they are also an indication of HIV/AIDS prevalence rates and women’s vulnerability to the HIV virus. According to the last CEDAW Shadow report, 78 percent of STD cases were women. Measures related to the prevention of illegal abortions, improving medical care for sterility as well as for menopause - as outlined in the National Plan of Action to integrate women in development - have yet to be implemented.

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248 World Bank, Edstats, 2006
249 World Bank, SIMA, 2003 database.
Economic Participation

Despite slow and volatile economic growth, and a conservative social and cultural environment, Moroccan women have made major strides in labor force participation in Morocco, in comparison both to men in Morocco and to women in neighboring countries. Women’s participation rate has risen considerably, from 21.1 percent in 1980 and peaked at 30.4 percent in 1999. However, in the past five years, female labor force participation declined reaching 28.4 percent in 2004.

Patterns of employment differ significantly along gender lines, with women mainly engaged in unpaid work and men in paid work. Of the employed women, 56 percent are unpaid family helpers, 31 percent are wage workers, and 11.7 percent are self-employed.

Though jobs for women increased in the service sector, a decline in women’s employment in industry led to an overall drop in women’s employment in Morocco between 1999 and 2004. The decline in industrial activity was mainly due to the decline in the textile and garment industries, associated with the phasing out of the Multi-fiber Arrangement.

In Morocco, the feminization of the labor force is associated with the feminization of unemployment rather than employment. Between 1999 and 2004 the share of women in unemployment increased in both urban and rural areas, constituting 29 percent in 2004. Despite their relatively lower shares in labor force participation and employment, at 11.4 percent, women’s unemployment rate is higher than the rate for men (10.6 percent).

Morocco has formulated policies and established programs for job rehabilitation and training targeting unemployed youth. However, inadequate attention is given to gender specific issues.

A comprehensive new labor law went into effect on June 8, 2004. As amended, the labor law stipulates for the penalization of gender-based discrimination and for equal pay for equal work. However, certain gender-specific mandates appeared to result in additional costs and restrictions to employers which can constrain women’s employment opportunities.

Public Participation and Representation

Since September 2002, 35 female parliamentarians have made up 11 percent of Parliament. Successful advocacy by activists and civil society resulted in an implicit 20 percent quota system applied voluntarily by political parties at the last parliamentary elections.

Some political parties also supported a 'charter of honor' at the local elections in September 2003 announcing that 20 percent of their candidates to the local elections would be women. Despite these efforts, only 127 of 6024 female candidates were elected, representing 0.55 percent of all elected local representatives. It needs to be noted that the number of female candidates running for elections more than tripled since the last local elections in 1997, in which 83 women succeeded.

There is only one woman among the 270 members in the upper chamber, Majlis al-Mustacharin, which has 270 members who are appointed for 9 years.

Since November 2002, the Cabinet includes two women, but not at the ministerial level. One is a Minister delegate and one is State Secretary (to the Minister of Social Development, Family and Solidarity and is in charge of family, children and the disabled).
Morocco’s *judiciary* remains a difficult area for women to penetrate. While there have been female judges for a long time in Morocco, women judges are not yet permitted to serve in courts applying the *Shari’a* Law. Women represent 18% of the 3082 judges in Morocco.\(^\text{250}\)

Women’s membership in *trade unions* is weak. However, it is not uncommon to see professional associations headed by women.

**Women's Rights**

In an unprecedented move, King Mohammed VI announced in October 2003 a **landmark reform**, granting women new rights in marriage and divorce. According to the new legislation, which passed Parliament in January 2004, the family is placed under the joint responsibility of husband and wife. The new law no longer stipulates women’s submission to the guardianship of a male family member and calls for equality with respect to rights and obligations.

Protecting the wife against possible misuse by the husband of his right to **divorce**, the new legislation protects the woman’s rights by making repudiation conditional upon the court’s prior authorization. It further enhances the chances for reconciliation, both through the family and the judge. It requires that all monies owed to the wife and children be paid in full by the husband before divorce can be duly restricted. Verbal repudiation by the husband is no longer valid as divorce is subject to a court ruling.

While Morocco protects women's right to their own **nationality**, it does not provide equal rights with regard to passing nationality to a foreign spouse or common children. A proposal to grant Moroccan nationality to children born to a Moroccan mother and foreign father does not seem to be confronting any political problems, but still has not passed in Parliament.

In terms of **child custody**, initially, a woman could not be the legal guardian of her own children except in case of the father’s death or loss of his legal capacity. The new legislation makes (for the first time in Moroccan history) reference to the International Agreements on Children’s Rights and gives the woman the possibility to retain custody of her child under certain conditions, even upon remarrying or moving out of the area where her husband lives.

**Inheritance** is also governed by Islamic law, which defines the shares that go to each family member. The proposed new law provides grandchildren on the daughter’s side the ability to inherit from their grandfather just as the grandchildren on the son’s side do.

Despite notable reforms of the Family Code, the legal system continues to have major weaknesses related to the code of contract obligations, the civil procedures code, the labor code, penal legislation, and the nationality code.

1. Background and Key Issues

General

- Since the 1960s, Saudi Arabia has made substantial gains in the education of women. The Kingdom is well on its way to completely eliminating gender disparities in all levels of education: the girls to boys ratio in net enrollment had reached 1, 1, and 2 at the primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels, respectively in 2004.\(^\text{251}\)

- There are no women members of the Majlis Al-Shoura, a 120-member national consultative council appointed by the King.\(^\text{252}\) Shoura Council President Dr. Saleh Bin-Humaid in February 2005 ruled out the appointment of women to the consultative body during the upcoming Shoura reshuffle, when the number of its members increased from 120 to 150.\(^\text{253}\)

- In a landmark achievement in 2005, two women were elected to the Board of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Two additional women were subsequently appointed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

\(^{251}\) World Bank Central Database
\(^{252}\) UNDP, Programme on Governance in the Arab Region.
\(^{253}\) Arab News, 10 February 2005.
2. Development Issues

Education and Training

Since the 1960s, Saudi Arabia has made substantial gains in the education of women. The Kingdom is well on its way to completely eliminating gender disparities in all levels of education: the girls to boys’ ratio in net enrollment had in 2004 reached 1, 1, and 2 at the primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels, respectively.254

Girls’ enrollment across all educational levels grew at an average annual rate of 8.3 percent, compared to 4.2 percent for boys over the 1975-2000 period.255 However, women are still restricted from taking some subjects, such as engineering, journalism, and architecture.

Female literacy rates have reached 94 percent for those between 15 and 24 years of age, and 69 percent for those ages 15 and above (2004).256 According to the World Bank, the ratio of literate females to males, ages 15-24, decreased from 86 percent in 1990 to 96 percent in 2004.257

It is estimated that between 2004 and 2020, there will be twice as many female college graduates as male graduates.258 According to 2003 statistics, at 52 percent, women form more than half of all college graduates in the Kingdom.

There are thousands of female professors throughout the Kingdom, reflecting the high general level of female education in the country. Saudi Arabia funds one of the world’s largest scholarship programs for women, and thousands of women have earned doctorates from Western universities.259

Health

Saudi Arabia’s population growth rate remains among the highest in the world at 3 percent in 2003 (surpassing national economic growth rates). Fertility rates have decreased from 6 births/woman in 1990 but remained relatively high at 4 births per woman in 2004,260 corresponding to low contraceptive prevalence rates, which are just above 30 percent (1995-2002).261

Despite Saudi Arabia having a high level of public spending on health (4.2 percent of GDP), it has not been able to reduce its child mortality rates to numbers below those in upper-middle-income countries. Child mortality rates remain the highest in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).262 And while Saudi Arabia, like all other GCC countries, has achieved lower male mortality rates than average male mortality in upper-middle-income countries, its female mortality rates remain above those in upper-middle-income countries.263

Improved access to general health services and specialized maternal health services has helped to reduce the incidence of maternal mortality considerably (to 23 per 100,000 live births in 2000).

254 World Bank Central Database
256 World Bank Central Database
257 World Bank Central Database
260 World Bank Central Database- April 2006
263 Ibid.
The percentage of **births attended by skilled health professionals** was 91 percent in 2000 – a significant increase from 78 percent in 1985.264

**Female life expectancy** increased from 70 years in 1990 to 74 in 2004. Life expectancy for males was 70 years in 2004.265

**Economic Participation**

**Women's participation in total employment** was estimated at 15 percent in 2004.266 Out of the total number of employed women, an estimated 30 percent are nationals, while the rest are expatriate female workers.267 Currently, many expatriate men and women are employed in jobs that Saudi women could perform. These expatriates are **remitting millions of riyals outside the country**.268

The female labor force participation rate does not reflect the actual employment status of women as it does not include women’s traditional work such as herding and farming.269

Women in the workforce are mainly concentrated in the education and health sectors. Saudi women account for 82.7 percent of the total female workforce in the education sector, and 7.5 percent in the health and social sectors.270

**Female participation in the labor force** is highest in the 25-34 age group, followed by those of all ages with tertiary education. Female participation rates are directly affected by educational attainment and marital status.271 In Saudi Arabia, there are incentives for married women to quit their jobs. For example, a woman who resigns because of marriage receives a benefit equal to 11 percent of her average annual salary over the years she has served.

The Kingdom has taken the issue of women’s labor force participation and business activity seriously in the past couple of years. A new labor law has been drafted based on recommendations from the Shoura Council that aims to enhance women’s economic and employment opportunities. However, barriers that can impact women’s economic activity still exist.

Strict segregation laws and requirements attached to women employees can make it very costly for employers to hire females especially in the private sector. For example, employers have to provide separate premises for female employees, they sometimes have to provide transportation, and the new labor law now requires employers to subsidize childcare by requiring firms with fifty or more female employees to have childcare facilities.

Under the new labor law opportunities have been opened for women to be employed in retail outlets selling exclusive female intimate clothing and make-up. Shops and businesses have yet to comply with the stated requirements to ensure the strict code of segregation. Many complain that closing off their shops and blacking out display windows will hurt business.

265 World Bank Central Database
266 World Bank Central Database
269 Saudi Arabia Human Development Report 2003
270 Saudi Arabia Human Development Report 2003
271 Ibid.
The new retirement age for women has been reduced to age 55 years from 60 years (which was the same as the male retirement age). This will reduce women’s benefits and retirement compensation.

In Saudi Arabia, it is prohibited - under any circumstances--to integrate women with men in places of work or facilities attached to those sites. This prohibition effectively bars women from most sectors and from attaining higher levels of management other than in female units.

Women may own businesses, but until recently, they were only allowed to run them through an appointed male agent. According to Amnesty International, approximately 16,390 businesses are owned by women and women own 40 percent of the nation’s private wealth. Aggregate investments made by women in Saudi Arabia in 2002 included US$ 1 million in industrial projects and US$ 1.77 million in service projects. Nevertheless, most women allow male relatives to control their economic interests rather than accept public responsibilities.

In November 2002, Saudi women's bank accounts contained an estimated $26.6 billion in idle funds as a result of laws that prohibit women from opening businesses of their own. In fact, Saudi Arabia has large numbers of women business owners who have inherited family-owned businesses. Many of these are among the country's largest enterprises. The report blames the flight of at least SR 21 billion to foreign countries on regulations that prevent women from conducting business.

However, the number of women registered in local chambers of commerce and industry is on the increase. The Jeddah chamber, for example, has more than 2000 women members out of a total membership of 50,000. In Riyadh, the figure is over 2,400 out of a total of 35,000 members. This represents a fourfold increase in just ten years. Businesswomen registered with the Eastern Province chamber number more than 1,000 out of a total of 14,000.

Banks estimate that 30 percent of new accounts are opened by women, and investment managers say that 60 percent of new investors in the stock market are women. Furthermore, experts say that 35 percent to 40 percent of investors in real estate are women. Despite this, women face difficulty in accessing information concerning investment opportunities and in consultations concerning the options available, especially in the stock market.

According to a survey conducted by a London-based research firm (Synovate), 32 percent of wives in Saudi Arabia keep their assets or part of their earnings as well as their assets secret from their husbands. Their assets are in bank accounts, stocks and shares, or property other than real estate.

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272 The country's Labor Minister announced in May 2004 that women may carry out business activities without the need for a wakil (representative). The impact of this announcement is, however, not yet clear.

273 There are 40,320 commercial registrations by Saudi women in Saudi Arabia. These businesses focus on wholesaling, retailing and services, and are typically of small size and low technology use. There are 3,193 businesses in Riyadh that are owned by women. In 2003, there were 2,500 businesswomen members of the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In 2002, the Saudi Arabian General Investment Agency licensed 27 projects by female investors (representing 2.1 percent of total licenses).


275 UNDP, Programme on Governance in the Arab Region.


280 Arab News, 8 February 2005.
Public Participation and Representation

There are no women members of the **Majlis Al-Shoura**, a 120-member national consultative council appointed by the King.\(^{281}\) However, female academics and thinkers have in the past been consulted by the Shoura Council on issues relating to women. Despite a lively public discussion on the subject matter, Shoura Council President Dr. Saleh Bin-Humaid in February 2005 ruled out the appointment of women to the consultative body during the upcoming Shoura reshuffle, when the number of its members increased from 120 to 150.\(^{282}\)

While the **electoral law** published in August 2004 did not explicitly banish women from participating in the 2005 municipal elections, municipal bylaws did not encourage women either. In January 2005, however, the Interior Minister announced that women would not be allowed to vote in the **municipal elections**. Saudi election officials were quoted as having given administrative reasons for this decision, such as there not being enough female electoral staff to run women-only voter registration entries and that only a fraction of women in Saudi Arabia has photo identity cards. The announcement put an end to plans by some professional women to stand as candidates. However, high officials have publicly announced that they endorse women’s participation in the next elections scheduled for 2009.

While no female has yet occupied a **ministerial or legislative post** in Saudi Arabia, many women hold sub-cabinet and senior government positions, mainly in the education, health or social service sector. Furthermore, a number of Saudi women hold executive positions in private sector firms, businesses, and international organizations (for example, Thoraya Obaid, UNFPA’s Executive Director)\(^{283}\). The Riyadh Chamber of Commerce and Industry - after having established a women’s wing in March 2004 –has also recently allowed women members to vote. This only occurred after numerous debates.

In a landmark achievement in 2005, two women were elected to the Board of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Two additional women were subsequently appointed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

In 2003, women were appointed to the newly formed **National Human Rights Commission**\(^{284}\) and the **Journalists' Syndicate** (where women also have voting power). Women also took part in a series of national dialogues on challenges facing the nation. The discussions were at the heart of Saudi Arabia’s reform program.\(^{285}\)

In the summer of 2000, Princess Al-Jawhara Fahad bin Mohammed bin Abdel Rahman al-Saud was appointed **Assistant Undersecretary for Education Affairs**—the highest position ever held by a woman in the Saudi government.\(^{286}\) **Businesswoman Lubna Al-Oyalan** was recently elected to the board of directors of a major Saudi Bank (Saudi Hollandi Bank), making her the first female in the kingdom to occupy such a position.

\(^{281}\) UNDP, Programme on Governance in the Arab Region.

\(^{282}\) Arab News, 10 February 2005.


\(^{284}\) This is a nongovernmental organization, which aims to promote women’s rights and contribute to social justice.

\(^{285}\) “Citizens’ civil rights in addition to the right of men and women to participate in public affairs were among the recommendations made by the First National Dialogue Forum held in Makkah in December 2003. At the second dialogue, participants adopted recommendations combating extremism, calling for public involvement in the decision-making process and establishing civic institutions. The third dialogue held in Madinah in June gathered 70 male and female thinkers and researchers to discuss women’s rights and duties in the Kingdom. The meeting lifted a virtual ban or taboo that has existed for years about discussing women’s issues. It initiated a social dialogue and triggered and renewed interest in women’s rights and women’s roles in the future of Saudi Arabia. The dialogue reflected the Saudi leadership’s opinion that women are an integral part of the reform process. It conveyed the message very clearly that both men and women are partners in reform.” Arab View by Samar Fatany, 2003.

\(^{286}\) UNDP, Programme on Governance in the Arab Region.
In the media, Saudi women journalists and writers have been prominent in voicing their opinions concerning incorrect attitudes, traditions and ideas that are not based in Islam but which are responsible for many problems women face in Saudi Arabia. The media has also been instrumental in promoting and projecting a positive image of today’s professional women.287

**Women's Rights**

The exclusion of women in the 2005 municipal elections goes against Saudi Arabia’s ratification of the [CEDAW](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/what-we-do/commitments), which took place in October 2000, without reservations to Article 7 on political participation.288

According to an independent survey of more than 15,000 Saudi men and women conducted over six months across Saudi Arabia, more than 90 percent of the population wants to grant women more rights.289

Islam gives a woman the right to economic independence and prohibits men from illegally exploiting their wealth. However, in practice, local banks handling public offerings often refuse to sell women shares unless they produce a written consent from their husbands. In practice, husbands are also able to buy shares in the name of their wives without their wives’ prior knowledge.290

Recently, women have been able to obtain identity cards, but only 6 percent of Saudi women requested them.291 However, IDs cannot be obtained without the approval of a male guardian. The lifting of such a requirement would be the first step towards women’s legal independence by giving them an identity distinct from that of their husbands or fathers. This could then serve as the basis for granting passports, offering bank loans, and other means of increasing a woman’s autonomy.

Legal matters pertaining to women are usually the purview of Islamic courts that use religious law as the basis for decisions. The Council of Senior Ulama makes the final interpretation of Islamic law in Saudi Arabia with the consent of the king. A man’s testimony is equal to that of two women in court. A man may receive a divorce simply upon request, while a woman must win a legal decision (and written approval by the husband) to separate. Even when granted a divorce by the judge a women still requires the husband to sign the divorce papers.

Discrimination against women includes limitations on freedom of movement, allowing for effective imprisonment within the home, and preventing recourse to protection or redress from human rights abuses. Additionally, women are required to remain segregated from all males who are not members of their household. Women cannot receive driver’s licenses or drive.292 In addition, a woman must obtain the written consent of a male family member to travel outside the country, and even to receive medical treatment.293

Equal educational and vocational opportunities continue to be denied to girls and women. Physical education is banned in girls’ schools. Women abused by private individuals such as husbands or employers continue to be denied access to adequate protection or redress by the

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292 Women used to be able to obtain international drivers-licenses in Saudi Arabia.
293 UNDP, Programme on Governance in the Arab Region.
government. However, there has been significant reporting and highlighting of domestic abuse cases in the local media and the Human Rights Association and other NGOs have begun helping victims and raising awareness on this issue. Female domestic workers remain at particular risk of human rights abuses, including physical abuse.

The practice of forced marriage was recently banned, as the Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al Sheikh, Saudi Arabia’s top religious authority, denounced the practice as un-Islamic.
1. Background and Key Issues

**General**

- Tunisian legislation has helped to promote women and to ensure the durability and irreversibility of their acquired rights. These rights are constantly evolving and being adapted to the social changes taking place in the country.

- The different amendments, firstly to the **personal status code** promulgated in 1956 and modified in 1993, and to the other codes such as the nationality code, the labour code and the penal code\(^{294}\) aim to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

- To better integrate women into the development process, Tunisia has set up a number of structures to develop policies that promote women, to monitor the implementation of these policies, and to ensure reduction of gender disparities.

- Several institutional support mechanisms, which take into account the specifics of the rural world, have been set up for rural women. For example, the task of the National Commission for Rural Women, set up in 2001, is to define a national strategy for the promotion of rural women and to ensure coordination between the different operators of the 1998 national plan for the promotion of rural women.

- Tunisian President Ben Ali has always advocated “a larger presence for women in decision-making and responsibility positions” and called for a transition for women “from equality to effective partnership”\(^{295}\)

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\(^{294}\) Other amendments pertained to legislation dealing with social, civil and economic transactions. The most recent amendments pertained to the joint estate of husband and wife and the abrogation of all discrimination against women with reference to contracts and commitments.

\(^{295}\) Tunisia National Government website
2. Development Issues

Education and Training

Tunisia has made a lot of progress in terms of reducing female illiteracy rates. Yet, the female illiteracy rate is still higher than that for men. Illiteracy rates of older women in rural areas remain problematic: one of two women was illiterate (compared to one in four in urban areas) in 1999.

Over the last decade, female school enrollment rates have progressed significantly to attain equality at primary and secondary school by 2002, and a 0.96 ratio at the tertiary level. In the 2000/01 academic year, slightly more than half of all university students were women. School performance of girls is also higher than that of boys. This is in sharp contrast to the mid-1950s, when women were practically excluded from the education system.

Despite these results, there are still some regional disparities. A number of specific measures were set up to offset these shortcomings, such as the program for priority education areas and the national adult education program which in particular targets the young, women, and rural areas.

At both secondary and tertiary levels, women continue to be enrolled in traditional fields of study and are less visible in the scientific and technical fields (for example, in mathematics, female students represent less than 20 percent).

Women are under-represented in school administration bodies despite gender parity among teachers at the primary and secondary school levels. This reinforces the perception that higher-level positions are reserved for men.

Health

Tunisia has allocated considerable resources to the health sector and to improving the health of the population. A women-oriented policy was aimed at women of child-bearing age in particular and took into account the economic and social changes which were taking place as well as the new requirements in the sphere of women’s health. This policy was initially based on the concept of family planning, then evolved towards the concept of mother-and-child health care, and finally, included the aspect of reproductive health based on the promotion, prevention and management of women’s health, in particular the health of the mother.

Tunisia has witnessed considerable progress on health and family planning indicators. The ratio of midwives per 10,000 women at reproductive age has increased from one in 1964 to 14.5 in 2000. But only 71 percent of pregnant women received prenatal care in 2001. In 2003, 90 percent of pregnancies and deliveries were attended by health care staff.

These health achievements and the prevalence of contraception led to a drop in maternal mortality and to a reduction in the fertility rate. The contraceptive prevalence rate increased from 9 percent in 1965 to 65 percent in 2000 and is among the highest in the MNA region. The rate of maternal mortality was estimated at 120 per 100,000 births in 2000. At this rate, however, it will not be possible to attain the goal which is to reduce maternal mortality by three quarters between 1990 and 2015.

296 Tunisia, National report on MDGs
297 World Bank Data, 2003
298 IBID
299 World Bank Central Database 2006
Infant mortality dropped from 30.5 per thousand in 1995 to 19 per thousand in 2003 and child mortality decreased fourfold between 1970 and 2003 reaching a rate of 24 per thousand. Disparities continue to persist between rural and urban areas.

**Economic Participation**

The different strategies adopted by Tunisia in the sphere of employment aimed to create the maximum number of jobs with no gender distinction between job applicants. However, the increased number of educated females and the progress made in acceding to their reproductive rights have not translated into an equally massive participation of women in the labor force which progressed slowly to reach 27 percent of the total labor force in 2004 against 25 percent in 2000.

Unlike male economic activity rates, women’s economic participation rates vary largely between governorates. While they represent 50 percent of the labor force in Mahdia, they compose only 12 percent in Tataouine. In Tunis, the Northeastern governorate and the Central-Eastern governorate, female economic participation rates tend to be above average.

There has been a feminization of the textile industry. Since 1975, women have been mainly employed in the industrial sector. The service sector has since become increasingly more favorable. Women are also more active in agriculture than men. This has been reinforced by men’s rural-urban migration. **Seasonal employment** affects one in five women, as compared to one in four men.

**Public Participation and Representation**

Women’s advancement in the public and political sphere has been reinforced over the past decade. Women won an unprecedented 22.7 percent of the seats in the Tunisian Chamber of Deputies in the 2004 elections accounting for 43 representatives out of the 189 newly-elected members. This achievement was facilitated by a decision of President Ben Ali earmarking 25 percent of the slots on the governing party's legislative slates to women.

The percentage of women in the new Tunisian legislature is the highest since the country's independence and one of the highest in the world. According to the most recent figures put out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, it is above the 15 percent average for women in parliaments around the world and higher than the averages in all regions of the world with the exception of the Nordic countries.

At the local government level, women are more active than at the national level. Here, they composed 20.6 percent of local government representatives in 2000, a significant increase from 1.7 percent in 1972. In 2000, only four women occupied the position of Local Council President (conseil municipal). In other spheres, they constitute 27 percent of judges, 31 percent of lawyers, 40 percent of higher education teachers and 34.4 percent of journalists.

Women’s low national and local representation reflects their low representation in political parties. In 1992, the Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique created the position of Permanent Secretary for Women’s Affairs as part of an effort to promote women within the Party. The central committee of the party (which did not comprise more than 3 percent women in 1957) included 21 percent women in 1998.

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300 World Bank Central Database 2006
Whereas the previous government was composed of two female ministers and three state secretaries, the current one is comprised of seven female members (two ministers and five state secretaries) equally in charge of social issues and technical departments.

The Ministry of Women’s and Family Affairs became a full-fledged ministry in 1993 (out of the State Secretariat of Women’s and Family Affairs, which was established in 1992). Since 1999, a woman has held the position of Ombudsman (médiateur administratif).

Several complementary agencies were set up in support of the Ministry to help it fulfill its mission. The most important of these is the National Council for Women and the Family, the Commission on “Women and Development” and the Research, Study, Documentation and Information Centre on women known as CREDIF. The national council basically constitutes a framework for discussions on women’s issues. The commission meets during the preparation of Development Plans and their monitoring constitutes a place for reflection and for the orientation of policies. CREDIF is furthermore a scientific body responsible for developing studies and research work on women.

Women constitute about 37 percent of the civil service (especially in the fields of health, education, and social affairs). Tunisian women have also been fairly well represented at the international level, including a Tunisian representative to CEDAW for a third consecutive term, high-ranking representatives in the Economic Commission for Africa, and the position of Secretary-General of the Arab Organization for the Family.

Women’s representation in unions remains very low, and unions such as the Union General des Travailleurs are male dominated. While the quality and independence of NGOs is difficult to judge, it should be noted that the number of women’s associations has increased from one in 1956 to 21 in 2001.

**Women's Rights**

Tunisia ratified CEDAW in 1985, but reserved the provisions that contradict the Tunisian Constitution, the Personal Status Code, or the Tunisian Nationality Code.

Tunisia is most notable in the region for its women’s legal status. The first accomplishment after Tunisia's independence was the 1956 adoption of the Personal Status Code, which laid the foundations for a new organization of the family, based on legal equality of men and women. Under the leadership of the former socialist president, Habib Bourguiba, polygamy and divorce by renunciation were outlawed. Bourguiba also placed limits on the tradition of arranging marriages, setting a minimum nuptial age of 17 for girls.

In 1992, the Personal Status Code was amended with a goal to further advance women’s rights in the family. A Tunisian woman may now transmit her nationality to her children. In addition, the government recently introduced a new law that would make it possible for a Tunisian mother to register her child as a citizen in the presence of a foreign father. Some legal discrimination against women continues to exist especially in the property and inheritance law governed by Shari’a. Property acquired during the marriage, regardless of who actually previously owned or obtained it, is in the name of the husband.

However, women’s legal literacy remains problematic. According to International Women’s Rights Action Watch, as of 1991 some 70 percent of illiterate women did not know that the provisions of the Personal Status Code granted them rights.
The wearing of *hijab* was outlawed under Bourguiba in 1986. When Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali became president in 1987, he lifted the ban on the wearing of hijab for two years. Currently, the wearing of hijab is forbidden in government offices, although it is more tolerated in general.

In an attempt to fight discrimination in employment, the government has made *equal opportunity* a mandatory part of investigation within audits of governmental institutions and state-owned enterprises. However, these standards have only limited impact as these requirements do not apply to the private sector.

Tunisia’s current *abortion* law dates to 1973 when the new Penal Code was enacted. Article 214 of the Penal Code authorizes the performance of abortions on request during the first three months of pregnancy. The Government subsidizes abortion and those entitled to receive free health care can obtain an abortion free of charge in public hospitals.
1. Background and Key Issues

**General**

- The victory of Hamas in the January elections will have a major impact on the country, not only politically, but also socially and economically. Whether or not such effect will be positive depends on Hamas’s political agenda, and how the International community deals with the outcome of the elections.

- The United States and Europe consider Hamas to be a terrorist organization. Therefore, they have threatened to cut financial aid to the government. If the international community stops financial aid, essential services could collapse in the Palestinian territories. This will acutely affect women. Even though international donors have stated that they will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, it is not always possible to separate humanitarian aid from assistance to the government.

- There are concerns that the newly elected government will undermine Palestinian women’s rights and hinder their participation. Some of the elected women parliamentarians, who are part of the Hamas party, hold very extremist views. An elected legislator, on Hamas’ electoral list, Miriam Farahat stated that she will advocate for making Hijab compulsory. In addition, Palestinian women activists fear that women-related legislations, which were submitted by former parliamentarians but have not yet been approved, will be rejected by the new government.

- On the other end, some women candidates, such as Jamila al-Shanti, talk of proper interpretation of Islam to push back boundaries for women. Jamila al-Shanti will be the voice that will add the gender dimension to Hamas’s agenda.

- The status of women under a Hamas-led government is hard to predict. Even though Hamas is for women’s education, and opposes early marriage and honor killings, hardliners within the party may hamper the approval of women-related legislations and hinder the empowerment of Palestinian women. The main concern is that an atmosphere will be created under Hamas that will undermine the freedoms currently enjoyed by more secular women. Predictions at this point are very hard.
2. Development Issues

Education and Training

Hamas has previously highlighted the importance of women’s education. Now that they are the ruling party, hopes are that they will continue to promote education for women.

The gender gap at the primary education level is almost non-existent, but increases at the secondary level, between grades 9 and 11, where female enrollment is 63 percent compared to that of male at 67.4 percent. The gender gap increases at the secondary level, mainly because of early marriage. According to the 1996 Palestinian Beijing Platform of Action document, about 40 percent of female teenagers, mostly in rural areas, become wives and mothers before they complete their education or learn an occupation. The legal age of marriage for girls is 16 in the West Bank and 9 in Gaza. This compares to the male legal ages of marriage, which are 16 and 12 respectively. In the West Bank and Gaza, according to a 1992 study quoted by the Parliamentary Research Unit, the ratio of girls marrying between 12 and 17 was about 35 percent.

Vocational training of girls is still limited and traditional. Girls constitute only 13 percent of students enrolled in vocational schools. The 1995/96 school year statistics show that girls in the vocational secondary schools continue to select traditional occupations like commerce and nursing.

The National Strategy points out that one shortcoming of the current generation of job schemes is that they mainly benefit unskilled adult males. This can be modified through a greater mix of construction with non-construction schemes and by designing projects that cater specifically to the young, the skilled, and women.

Health

Eighty percent of hospitals and clinics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are state-run. If the International community does not deliver Aid to the Palestinians, the government will not be able to pay the salaries of doctors, nurses and other civil servants. This could present a major hindrance to the provision of health services.

Moreover, checkpoints and curfews have resulted in food insecurity. It has affected the quality and quantity of food delivered to the Palestinian Territories. An ILO report stated that 52.5 per cent of households referred to the closure measures, 53.6 percent cited military checkpoints and 16 per cent of households cited the wall/fence as impediments to accessing health services.

Because of delays at checkpoints, pregnant women deliver their babies while waiting in the streets. This has led to maternal and infant deaths. Other women are not able to reach medical facilities for pre- and post-natal care, and thus, are unable to benefit from health services.

301 Women’s Learning Partnership.
303 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Palestine document.
304 International Labour Organization, "Report of the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories" (Geneva, 2005) para. 31
The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, states that "refugee camps are among the most vulnerable of all".\textsuperscript{305} A survey conducted by the Institute of Development Studies, University of Geneva demonstrated that the percentage of refugees depending on food assistance was threefold the percentage of non-refugees.\textsuperscript{306} Not having any land or work to depend on, refugee women are severely malnourished.

Palestinian women suffer massively from malnutrition, especially when pregnant and nursing. During a Home visit program in 2003-2004, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) states that “69.7 per cent of 1,768 expectant women, within one month of delivery, were found to be anemic.”\textsuperscript{307}

Furthermore, a study by the GAZA Community Mental Health on the prevalence of post trauma stress disorder (PTSD) among children found that 57.9 per cent of girls and 42.1 per cent of boys developed the symptoms of this disorder.\textsuperscript{308}

In 1999, the fertility rate was 5.6 per 1,000 in the West Bank, 6.7 per 1,000 in Gaza, and 6.1 per 1,000 in the Palestinian territories.\textsuperscript{309} Fertility rates decreased to 5 births per woman in 2004, indicating increased awareness of family planning and provision of related services. Ninety-eight percent of women are aware of contraceptive methods which are actually applied by 66.7 percent (71 percent in the West Bank and 39 percent in Gaza). Forty-five percent of married women use contraceptives. Modern methods are used by 52.5 percent of the women who use contraceptives.

**Economic Participation**

Participation of Palestinian women in the labor force remains low. Only 1 in 10 women of working age is employed. ILO has stated that the situation requires urgent attention. They noted that women need significant assistance in business development, employment orientation, and vocational training. Furthermore, the percentage of women working in part-time jobs is higher than that of men.

As a result of military closures and curfews, the average income of Palestinian homes has declined. Blockades and stringent restriction of movement have increased unemployment for women. In addition, Palestinian women who work in agriculture and other work places have been hindered from gaining access to their land and workplaces and have therefore lost their jobs.

Palestinian women still face impediments emanating from cultural conservatism and old traditions. Such traditions prevent women from taking an active part of the work force as, for example, it is considered bad for women’s reputation to work at night, or travel alone.

However, there has been an increased awareness of the importance of participation of women in the workforce. The share of women citing “home duties” as a reason to stay outside the labor force has declined from 52 percent in 2002 to 50.8 percent in 2003. The decline in women

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\textsuperscript{305} UNRWA, Emergency Appeal, March-May 2001, Second Emergency Appeal to Provide Emergency Humanitarian Assistance to Palestine Refugees in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank


\textsuperscript{307} Kofi Annan's report to the Economic and Social Council's (ECOSOC) Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

\textsuperscript{308} UNRWA, Annual Report of the Department of Health 2003, p.5

\textsuperscript{309} Follow-up Report to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1999.
reporting “home duties” added some 28,000 women to the labor force – equivalent to a 30 percent increase.\textsuperscript{310}

The Palestinian labor law provides for \textbf{protection of women} as regards hazardous, underground and \textbf{night work}. In the Palestinian Labor law, the Council of Ministers has the responsibility to set the night work limitations. Article 103 of the new labor law provides for \textbf{maternity leave} of 10 paid weeks after 180 days of services, and breast-feeding breaks of 1 hour per day for one year. The new Civil Service Law (article 107), which had already been in effect before the ratification of the new Labor law, was thus amended, adjusting the maternity leave from 3 months to 10 paid weeks.

According to the World Bank, "the Palestinian recession is among the worst in modern history. Average personal incomes have declined by more than a third since September 2000".\textsuperscript{311} 62 per cent of Palestinians live \textbf{below the poverty line}. The daily suffering is felt most severely by Palestinian women within the household, because of the death, \textbf{imprisonment}, or \textbf{unemployment of male members}. Because of such circumstances, Palestinian women carry the burden of responsibility in the household. To substitute for the loss of male income, women work overnights, while women who cannot work face severe poverty.

A May 2004 Report by the ILO suggests that development strategies for the Palestinian economy should "aim to realize the full productive capacity of women, given their high educational qualifications" and recommends the establishment of an inter-ministerial working group to develop a \textbf{national women's employment strategy} that would be integrated into the overall employment strategy of the Palestinian Authority.\textsuperscript{312}

\textbf{Public Participation and Representation}

Palestinian women were granted voting rights in 1945. Women in the West Bank and Gaza have always played an active role politically being involved in campaigning, organizing rallies, demonstrations etc.

Women played a crucial role in the recent elections held on January 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2006. Hamas used women as \textbf{grass-roots campaign workers}. Interestingly, studies on the municipal elections show that women support the group in higher numbers than men. This is mainly because Hamas's social programs have attracted the loyalty of women.

Women hold sixteen \textbf{parliamentarian} seats. Six of which are part of Hamas - granting women who are part of Hamas an unaccustomed public role.

In November 2003, the Women's Department was upgraded to the \textbf{Ministry for Women Affairs} which is headed by Zuhaira Kamal. Hence, the \textbf{Palestinian Cabinet} for the second time includes two female ministers.\textsuperscript{313}  Intisar al-Wazir has held the position of Minister of Social Affairs since the 1995 Beijing Conference.\textsuperscript{314}  The ministry of women’s affairs has taken measures to increase the economic, social, and political empowerment of women, through establishing good relations with other ministries, and helping to add the gender dimension to various departments.

\textsuperscript{310}World Bank, Four Years: Intifada, Closures, and Palestinian Economic Crisis – An Assessment, October 2004.
\textsuperscript{311}"Disengagement, the Palestinian Economy and the Settlements", World Bank, 23 October 2004, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{312}ILO, The Situation of Workers of the Occupied Arab Territories, May 2004.
\textsuperscript{313}Dr. Hanan Mikhail-Ashrawi served as Minister of Higher Education from 1996-98.
\textsuperscript{314}Al-Wazir is one of the most prominent women in Palestine. She is known as “Umm Jihad” (her husband Abu Jihad was the PLO’s second-in-command when murdered in1988).
There were eight Palestinian women, nominated for the Noble Peace Prize as part of the Project 1000 Women for the Noble Peace Prize 2005. Among these women were Zuhaira Kamal, minister of women’s affairs, and Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, former minister of higher education and an elected-member to the new parliament.

Six female judges have been appointed in addition to a number of female district attorneys. One female judge was appointed in the High Court, another in the Supreme Court. However, with the establishment of the new government, the judiciary system may change.

According to the 1999 Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, women in the Palestine National Authority (PNA) have been appointed to leading positions at grades which enable them to share the various levels of decision making in 13 ministries. However, women’s participation in decision-making positions in the PNA institutions is still limited at 10 percent. All heads of public structures and authorities are men. Women do not hold leadership positions in certain ministries such as Ministries of Agriculture, Industry and Public works.

There have been three female ambassadors, and three women also participated in the negotiations of the Peace Process. In 1999, 65 (or 8.7 percent) of the elected members of the Palestinian National Council (the Parliament “in-exile”) were women. Three appointed women of the 100-member Palestinian Central Council were also women.

The General Union of Palestinian Women, together with an Inter-ministerial Committee, works at the national level to improve the status of women. In addition, a committee of non-governmental organizations has been formed through the General Union of Palestinian Women, in which women’s centers, organizations, and notable personalities participate to promote the status of Palestinian women.

**Women's Rights**

Since the Palestinian Authority does not have state status, it is not eligible to ratify CEDAW, but both governmental and non-governmental organizations have taken the initiative of reporting to the United Nations CEDAW Committee that monitors implementation of the Convention. A commitment to the advancement of the role of women is explicit in the Declaration of Palestinian Independence in which women’s entitlement to equal rights is stated.

On January 18, 2006, the Palestine Women’s Research and Document Center (PWRDC) was inaugurated under the support of the former Prime Minister, Ahmed Qureia’ (Abu ‘Ala), and Zahira Kamal, minister of Women’s Affairs. This center is the first of its kind in an Arab country, outside North Africa. It will serve as both a documentation and resource center and as an observatory, giving a voice to Palestinian women at the regional and international levels.

Some of the elected women on the Hamas ticket plan to challenge gender discrimination. They argue that discrimination against women is derived from cultural tradition, and is not based on Islam. Huda Naeem, a social worker and newly-elected member of the Palestinian Parliament stated, “A lot of things need to change. Women in Gaza and the West Bank should be given complete rights. Some women and girls are made to marry someone they don't want to marry. This is not in our religion, it's our tradition. In our religion, a woman has a right to choose.”

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Palestinian women, unlike women in most Arab countries, are able to give their **nationality** to their husbands and children. Regarding **mobility**, passports can be obtained without the permission of a guardian.
REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

1. Background and Key Issues

General

- Yemen witnessed significant achievements in education and health over the last decades; yet, gender disparities persist.

- Between 1995 and 2004, female gross enrollment rates increased by 73% in primary level (41.5% to 72%) and more than doubled to 31% in secondary education. Female enrollment in the tertiary level remains low with a rate of 5.1%, a third of the male enrollment rate of 13.5%.

- Life expectancy has also improved significantly for both sexes over the last several decades.

- Despite declining fertility rates, Yemen’s continuous high rates of population growth dilute potential progress in reducing poverty. As a result of high fertility rates, Yemen has the highest dependency ratio in the region, which in turn puts immense strains on social services provision.

- Yemen has one of the highest average rates of early age marriage in the world (especially in rural areas), which further contributes to girls’ lower school enrollment as well as high infant and child mortality rates.

- Although Yemen’s female labor participation rate is relatively high for the region, it is lower than what it should be given the country’s level of female education, fertility rates and age structure. Women’s economic activity is mainly unpaid and in agriculture.

- In contrast to other MENA countries, where women work predominantly in the public sector as teachers and health providers, in Yemen women’s participation in the public sector is low. This can be an important constraint toward improving key social indicators in girl’s literacy and access of women to health services.

Improving Health and Education Indicators

Figure 1: Social Indicators 1990 - 2004

1990

- Literacy Rate, adult (% age 15+) F:13, M:55
- School Enrollment, Primary (% gross) F:34, M:96
- Life Expectancy at Birth (Years) F:65, M:54

2004

- Literacy Rate, adult (% age 15+) F:29, M:70
- School Enrollment, Primary (% gross) F:72, M:102
- Life Expectancy at Birth (Years) F:83, M:80

Sources: World Bank Central Database, World Bank Edstats

Literacy data in 2004 chart is taken from 2005 Human development report (data is for 2002)

The gender gap persists

Figure 2: MDG Goal # 3 – Promote gender equality & women’s empowerment

School enrollment is for 2004 (LIC for 2003)
Youth literacy is for 2004 (Yemen is for 2000-2004)
2. Development Issues

Education and Training

Yemen has one of the lowest literacy rates for women in the region at 29 percent it is almost half the MENA average female literacy rate at 54.8 percent. The gender gap is also one of the highest where men’s literacy rate is more than double that of women’s. The gender gap in literacy among younger age cohorts, though still wide, is closing. However, a large urban-rural illiteracy discrepancy still exists, especially among women.

Gender disparities are also wide in primary enrollments. The net enrolment rate among girls (6-14 years) was 44.7% in 2003 in comparison with 72.2% for boys. The disparity is higher between rural and urban areas. The primary enrolment rate among urban girls is 73.2%, as opposed to 29.5% in rural areas.

The lack of female teachers, especially in rural areas constitutes a barrier to female education. In urban areas, the percentage of female teachers is only 52 percent of male teachers, while in urban areas; it is as low as 8.6 percent. Fortunately, the percentage of females becoming trained teachers has been increasing dramatically between 1990 and 2000, rising from 25 to 45.8 percent.

In absence of a minimum legal age of marriage, girls' secondary school enrollment rates are also negatively affected - especially in the rural areas. The gender gap in vocational training has not changed significantly over the last decade. In all vocational training programs following primary school, women made up 4.6 percent of all vocational trainees in 2000. Most female trainees specialized in health, education and administration programs, while few enrolled in technical programs. Of the students who graduated from universities in 2000, 27 percent were female. In 2001, 44 percent of female students enrolled in the faculty of medicine, followed by 41 percent in the faculty of sciences.

Health

Female life expectancy increased significantly from 55 in 1990 to 63 in 2004 (54 to 60 for men). This falls well below the average of 63 years for developing countries and the MENA average of 71.

One major factor contributing to the recent rapid rise in women’s life expectancy is improvement in maternal health. Yemen has by far the highest maternal mortality rate in MENA and one of the highest in the world. It is estimated that about 87 percent of rural women deliver at home, with only 27 percent of women nationwide receiving trained assistance during delivery. At the

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317 According to the Women’s National Committee’s MDG Draft Needs Assessment Report, 46% of the population above ten years of age is married. Of those in the 10-19 married age group, 75% are women, and 25% are men, suggesting that a much larger proportion of women are married off early. Moreover, the 1999 Poverty Phenomenon Survey in the Yemeni Society indicates that one of the major reasons for girls dropping out of school at the primary level (both poor and non-poor families) is marriage.
318 Moreover, biological advantages suggest that under ideal circumstances women will live five years longer than men. When this difference is smaller than five years, as it is in Yemen, it suggests inadequate maternal health care and that women may generally have less access to medical care and nutritious food than men.
same time, maternal mortality rates have significantly dropped from 1,400 per 100,000 live births in 1990 by more than half to 570 per 100,000 live births in 2001.\footnote{Various sources cite different figures: 351 per 100,000 live births in 1997 according to the 2003 Yemen National MDG report, 350 in 2003 according to the 2005 Human Development Report and an estimate of 370 between 1990-2004 according to the 2006 World Development Indicators} \footnote{World Bank Central Database.}

**Infant mortality** is higher among boys than girls, particularly in the neonatal period, keeping with the biologically expected pattern. The pattern reverses itself, however, during the ages one to five years, when the mortality rate for girls at 47 percent is 12 percent higher than that for boys.

Yemen has the lowest rate of modern **contraceptive use** in all of MENA and is well below the world average. According to 2004 estimates, only 23 percent of women in Yemen used modern contraceptives. Total **fertility rate** in Yemen is the highest in the region, although it has decreased from 7.9 live births per woman in 1980 to 5.9 in 2004.

**Economic Participation**

Yemen’s female labor force participation rate is one of the highest in MENA, which has been explained by the large rural population. Women’s **percentage of total labor force** rose from 27 percent in 1994 to 28 in 2004, reflecting an overall increase in employment and income for women.\footnote{Labor Survey 1999, 1994 Population Census, World Bank Central Database 2006} Depending on sector, women’s employment growth from 1994 to 1999 was more than four times higher than that of men (8.9 percent compared to 2.1 percent respectively). In 2003, the ratio of female to male labor force participation stood at 0.39 with an annual growth rate of 64 percent. At the same time, the share of women in the agricultural sector compared to the **non-agricultural sector** remained almost constant, indicating overall constraints for women to access employment in the non-agricultural sector.

![Figure 3: Female economic activity rates by age and selected regions– 2000](image)


**Public Participation and Representation**

The number of women in parliament declined from 11 in 1990 [in the parliament of former South Yemen], to a single woman in the current 301-seat assembly in 2004, reducing the proportion of women in parliament from 4 percent in 1990 to 0.3 percent in 2004.

In March 2005, the Cabinet passed a quota system calling for 30 percent women representation in Parliament, the Shura Council, and government decision-making positions. The quota system
needs to be approved by the Parliament. This is an important breakthrough for women’s political participation.

A parliament statement reported that 93.7 percent of applicants, including three women, are running as independent candidates in the presidential ballot slated also for September 2006. However, most candidates face a major obstacle where their candidature must have the endorsement of at least 5 percent of the members of parliament and Consultative Council.

Currently, there are only two women in the cabinet, with one heading the ministry of human rights and the other fronting the ministry of Social Development and Work Affairs.

Women are also not able to find their way into important positions in the judiciary, such as the Supreme Court. In 2001, there were 25 female judges (who tend to be from the south of Yemen) of a total of 1037 (or 2.5 percent). This is a significant decrease from 13.5 percent in 1995. The Shura Council (a 101-member consultative council appointed by the President), formed in 1990, did not include any women until 2001, when the President appointed two women. Women only make up 0.6 percent of the 6,035 members in the local council.

Women’s Rights

One of the first serious acknowledgements of the need to address gender inequality in Yemen occurred when the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen signed CEDAW, with reservations, in 1984. The Constitution of the unified Republic of Yemen contains a number of important articles related to women's rights.

Various Yemeni laws issued after unification are in direct conflict with the CEDAW Convention and the Constitution. In particular, the personal status laws often conflict with these two documents. For example, it gives men the right to consent to the wife’s work outside the home, which has consequences for women’s ability to participate in the economy independently. Concerning the right of movement, Yemeni men have the right to restrict their dependents' movements, including their wives and adult unmarried daughters.

The absence of a minimum legal age of marriage in Yemen remains an issue, as this translates to young women getting married earlier, having more children, and potentially discontinuing their education. This phenomenon affects urban areas more than rural areas, despite the fact that the age of marriage is higher in urban areas (16.9 years on average, compared to 15.9 years in rural areas).

Yemen’s Minister of Human Rights, Amat al-Aleem al-Suswah, recently attacked opposition parties for their bias against women. The minister blamed the weak political improvement in their work on their superficial representation of women in the parties and suggested that the presence of women is crucial to any growing nation.

322 The Speaker of Parliament, Sheik Abdullah Bin Hussein al-Ahmar expressed the Parliament’s reservations on the implementation of the quota system, regardless of the Cabinet’s approval. Yemen Times, “Women quota system is imposed on Yemen, and women involved in election management,” 14 June 2005.

323 Article 19 guarantees the right of equality of opportunity to all citizens in the political, economic, social and cultural domains. Article 27 states that there should be no discrimination on the basis of sex. Article 38 states that Yemenis are free to move around the country without restrictions. In addition, Article 42 of the Labor law states that women have equal rights vis-à-vis employment, wages, training, rehabilitation and social insurance.