CAPABILITIES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTICIPATION

Gender Equality and Development in the Middle East and North Africa Region

OVERVIEW


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This is an overview of a larger report, which is a companion to the World Development Report 2012. The report will be released by the end of the calendar year following a series of consultations with stakeholders in the Middle East and North Africa region.

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Introduction

Many countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are undergoing a profound transformation. From Tunisia to Yemen, popular movements are calling for reforms to make government more inclusive and more accountable, extend social and economic freedoms, and boost employment opportunities. Young men and women have been at the forefront of these calls for change, reflecting their desire to participate actively in the political sphere.

How the region’s societies will change in the wake of the Arab Spring remains an open question. Facing popular pressure to be more open and inclusive, transition governments in Tunisia and Egypt are already considering electoral and constitutional reforms to deepen democracy. These reforms present an opportunity to enhance women’s economic, social and political inclusion. However, the outlook remains uncertain. There is a concern that efforts to advance women’s rights may be halted, and even reversed, if traditional conservative parties gain the upper hand in the new governments.

Across the region, young men and women are full of aspirations (Box 1). Education is seen as a pathway to a meaningful career, through which young people can contribute to their communities and build an identity. Through work, young men and women alike aspire to achieve great things and in turn inspire their peers. But these stories also demonstrate that success in economic and political life does not need to come at the cost of family life and traditional values.

With higher levels of education and lower fertility rates, women are increasingly looking for work. However, job creation in the private sector has so far been too limited on its own to absorb the large and growing number of young job-seekers. Moreover, expanding public sector employment is increasingly fiscally unsustainable, especially in the labor abundant, oil-poor countries. This has resulted in higher levels of unemployment and lower productivity for the region as a whole.

This report complements the 2012 World Development Report (WDR) on Gender Equality and Development, focusing on challenges and reform priorities for gender equality in the MENA region. Following the approach of the WDR 2012, we analyze these issues by drawing on economic analysis of quantitative data from countries in the region, qualitative research and other international evidence.

Worldwide, women remain disadvantaged relative to men. In developing countries women typically have higher mortality rates, particularly in infancy, early childhood and in the reproductive ages (the ‘missing women’ syndrome), lower levels of education and literacy, and lower pay in formal employment. Women are also underrepresented in politics and often lack the same legal rights as men. While women in developed countries largely
do not experience discrimination in the areas of education and health, they continue to be paid less than men and have lower levels of representation in politics and senior management. Policymakers must pay special attention to closing these ‘gender gaps’, since development does not automatically guarantee equality of outcomes.

Gender gaps are of concern for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons. First, gender equality is intrinsically important in its own right. Freedom from absolute deprivation—in education and healthcare, for instance—is a basic human right that applies equally to both men and women. Second, gender equality is an instrument for development: it can enhance economic efficiency and improve development outcomes. As the WDR 2012 argues, providing men and women with equal access to education, economic opportunities and assets has the potential to boost productivity. Furthermore, gender equality benefits the welfare of future generations. Improved education and employment opportunities for women have been shown to increase women’s bargaining power, resulting in greater investment in children’s health and education. Finally, development is only fully inclusive and representative when men and women have an equal opportunity to participate in society and politics, making decisions and influencing policy.

This report will argue that there is a paradox in gender equality in the MENA region: while, for the most part, MENA countries have made admirable progress in closing gender gaps in education and health outcomes, these investments in human development have not yet translated into commensurately higher rates of female participation in economic and political life. Women in the region continue to face significant restrictions on mobility and individual agency. To some extent, this pattern is present across the world, but it is particularly pronounced in MENA.

In explaining this paradox, this report will place primacy on the incentives and constraints generated by the economic and institutional structures that prevail in these countries. Institutional structures include the legal framework, social and cultural norms, and regulations covering work and political participation. By constraining mobility, flexibility and choice, these structures circumscribe women’s economic opportunities and agency. In the economic realm, limited industrial diversification, large public sectors, generous subsidies and a sluggish private sector also

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**BOX 1: The Younger Generation is Full of Aspirations**

Rahma * comes from a region of Yemen where it is often said that “to educate a woman is wrong because she has no place but her husband’s house”. But over the objections of her neighbors and community leaders, Rahma became the first female in her town to complete high school. She was also the first to take a job at a private medical clinic, and the first to participate in a one-year healthcare training program in Sana’a. Rahma has since returned to her town, married, and now delivers babies from a special room added to her house. The community has grown to admire and respect her, and other girls are following in her footsteps. Rahma’s younger sister is now attending the Health Institute in nearby Ibb City.

Very few women currently work for pay in Rahma’s mountainside town. Yet, when asked in a focus group what they hoped to be doing when they were 25 years old, adolescent girls declared: “A teacher. A lawyer. An engineer. A broadcaster.” The girls also plan to marry and raise families, but many aspired to work in a professional setting where they can apply their “hard work, diligence, excellence [and] morals, with confidence and with education and responsibility.” Similarly, in their focus group, the boys hoped to “get married, make my wife happy, and find a good job,” and they also expected to have to “work hard and persevere” to realize their dreams.

In a neighborhood in Gaza, a 24 year-old who graduated from university says she wants to continue on for “a Master’s degree and then open a private enterprise with my friend,” while a young man from that community reports, “I want to be an architect.”

In January 2011, nearly 500 adolescents, youths, and adults from Yemen and West Bank and Gaza participated in small discussion groups on a wide range of gender issues as part of a 20-country rapid assessment conducted as background for the World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development. *a pseudonym*
limit the scope for women to participate outside the home.

The time for change is now. Given the growing labor, demographic and fiscal constraints, and the changing aspirations in the region, policy reforms are urgently needed to boost job creation for all. At the same time, reforms are needed to promote women’s participation in the political and economic sphere, secure women’s equality under the law, and address the remaining human development challenges. The countries of the MENA region cannot afford to miss this opportunity to improve productivity and social cohesion by giving women the chance to participate fully in the public sphere.
Impressive Achievements in Human Development

Over the past four decades, MENA countries have made impressive strides in achieving gender parity in education and health outcomes. Since 1970, countries in the region have recorded the fastest progress in the world in human development (United Nations, 2010). Five MENA countries (Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) were among the top 10 fastest movers over this period. During the same period, growth rates of key indicators—such as female literacy rate, infant mortality and life expectancy—on average exceeded those of most other developing regions. The region as a whole is close to achieving gender parity in primary and secondary enrollment rates, comparing favorably to Low and Middle Income (LMI) countries worldwide. Maternal mortality in the region is half the world average and fertility rates have declined rapidly in the past decade. Although gender gaps remain in some dimensions of human development—in particular, school completion rates—and gender differences in educational specialization remain significant, most MENA countries are well on their way to achieving gender parity in terms of key human development indicators. Indeed, more girls than boys now enroll in tertiary education; this ‘reverse gender gap’ is also evident in learning outcomes. Contrary to patterns around the world, girls in the MENA region outperform boys in mathematics in grade 4, and this trend continues in some countries through grade 8 (Fryer and Levitt, 2009).

As is true across the world, higher per capita incomes have been accompanied by progress in human development and MENA is no exception. For instance, MENA countries on average have a female life expectancy at birth 9.1 percentage points higher than other non-OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, a difference that is primarily explained by wealth. This relationship between human development outcomes and per capita incomes is evident even within MENA. Yemen and Djibouti, with relatively lower per capita incomes, have correspondingly lower human development outcomes.

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**Box 2: The Importance of Education for a Girl**

“Education is very important because it builds the future. It's the best weapon for a girl these days. Education develops the girl and the society as a whole. It also makes the girl able to take a decision. And school is the ladder that leads a girl to higher positions in society after ... finishing [university].”

—Young women’s focus group, farming village of the West Bank
FIGURE 1  MENA's Progress in Women’s Health and Education
(Average Annual Growth Rates in Key Indicators: 1985–2010)

Source: Staff calculations based on World Development Indicators, 2011.
In MENA, paradoxically, these considerable investments in human capital have not been matched by increases in women’s economic participation. While gaps in economic opportunities for women persist in all countries, more than 50 percent of the female population aged 15 and above participates in the labor market in Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. In contrast, the corresponding figure in MENA is only 25.2 percent. Rates of female labor force participation are low throughout the region; almost all MENA countries have participation rates below the LMI average (Figure 2). Not surprisingly, the lowest participation rates are in fragile or conflict-affected countries such as Yemen, Iraq and the West Bank and Gaza. However, for the region as a whole, female labor force participation has increased by only 0.17 percentage points annually over the last thirty years. At this rate, MENA would take 150 years to catch up to the current world average.

Women across the world, especially young mothers, face difficulties balancing work and family life. This is equally true in MENA, and may be one of the explanations for the low rates of female labor force participation. The decision to work is clearly one for the individual and her

**FIGURE 2** Female and Male Labor Force Participation across MENA

![Bar chart showing male and female labor force participation in various MENA countries](chart.png)

Source: Household Surveys.

* Official estimates for national non-immigrant population.
household to make. But the observed high rates of female unemployment in the region are indicative of the challenges faced by women who want to work. Young entrants into the labor force, particularly women, face extremely high rates of unemployment in the region. While unemployment rates are higher for women across the world, the gap between female and male unemployment rates is particularly wide in MENA. Moreover, this gap has doubled over the last 25 years, from 5.5 percentage points in 1985 to more than 10 percentage points in 2010. In many countries in the region, unemployment rates among young women are now close to 50 percent (Figure 3).

These high rates of unemployment underestimate the true degree to which women in the region lack economic opportunities. Jobs in the informal sector may mask significant underemployment and often involve few benefits and limited job security. Moreover, these may underutilize the skills of educated women who were unsuccessful in securing formal sector work. Finally, opportunities for self-employment are also limited. As in the rest of the world, women entrepreneurs are a minority in MENA. Out of the 5887 firms in ten MENA countries surveyed by the World Bank between 2003 and 2010, only 15 percent were female-owned (World Bank, 2007).

Finally, while the rest of the world has witnessed an expansion in female participation in civil society and politics in the last half century, this trend has until recently not been observed in MENA countries. Women remain heavily underrepresented in politics, holding only about 7 percent of the seats in parliament.

In the last decade, some progress has been made in extending the rights of women to vote and run for political office. In 2005, women in Kuwait were granted the same political rights as men, while in other countries in the GCC, including Oman, Bahrain and the UAE, women are now being appointed or elected to political office.\footnote{Freedom House, 2010.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{gender_gap_unemployment.png}
\caption{Gender Gap in Unemployment for Young Women}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source: World Development Indicators, 2011.}
and Jordan have now introduced electoral quotas for women in parliamentary and municipal elections (Figure 4). Saudi Arabia remains the only country where women do not have the right to vote or to run for elected office.

**FIGURE 4** Percentage of Women in Legislatures *(Lower or Single Houses)*

What Explains the MENA Paradox?

Considering the great strides MENA countries have made in human development, the extremely low levels of female participation in the workplace, in business and in politics across the region are paradoxical. Neither religion, nor oil is sufficient to explain this pattern.

Religion is not the Main Explanation

Along measurable dimensions of gender equality such as human development, MENA countries perform better than most developing countries, both Muslim and non-Muslim. On the other hand, the rate of female participation in MENA countries falls well below rates in other Muslim majority countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Bangladesh (Figure 5). Female unemployment rates in MENA are also far above those in other Muslim-majority countries. Participation rates of women in parliament lag behind all other regions in the world, including Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Some commentators argue that the low levels of female participation outside the home have their roots in Islamic values and norms. While religion has unquestionably played a significant role in the evolution of customs, social norms and laws in the region, it is too simplistic to directly attribute gender outcomes to Islam. For one, the data do not support this conjecture, but rather point to a great diversity of outcomes for women in the Muslim world. In part, this diversity can be attributed to the interpretation of religious law and its interaction with local cultures and legal history, factors that vary considerably across Muslim countries.

Worldwide, the proportion of Muslims in a country’s population is only weakly associated with

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2 For example, there are differences as to what extent Muslim majority countries in the world follow Sharia or religious law. In some secular states, such as Mali and Turkey, Sharia is restricted to personal or family matters, while in others, laws are based wholly on Sharia rather than constitutions (for instance, in Saudi Arabia).
lower female labor force participation (see Technical Appendix). Indeed, the overall negative relation is mostly driven by countries in the MENA region, which have both disproportionately low levels of female labor force participation and a large majority of Muslims. This implies that there are other factors common to most MENA countries—for example, geography, culture, and history—that explain low female labor force participation in the region. This analysis echoes the findings of Rauch and Kostyshak (2009), who argued that differences in female economic participation between the Arab world and the rest of the world are not due to Islam. Indeed, as reported in an extensive review undertaken by the US Library of Congress (2005),

“[m]ost current scholarship rejects the idea that the Islamic religion is the primary determinant of the status and conditions of Muslim women. Because of the wide variation in Muslim women’s status and conditions, researchers typically attribute more causal salience to determining factors that themselves vary across nations and regions... for example, variations in the economic structures and strategies of nations, or variations in the preexisting cultural value patterns of a given locale.... Most scholars now see Islam as no more inherently misogynist than the other major monotheistic traditions.”

Religious norms have undoubtedly influenced the legal frameworks of MENA countries. There is, however, significant diversity in how religious laws are interpreted across the region, and this manifests itself in different regulations and norms regarding women’s rights and opportunities. Whether a woman is able to inherit land, and whether she is able to directly contract a marriage without the need of a male guardian, depends on the theological school of thought prevailing in the country. § Even within particular schools of thought, there is space for ongoing interpretation. For centuries, women in Iran could not inherit land under Ja’fari doctrine, but this legal restriction was removed in 2009 with the endorsement of the clerics. In Morocco, the family law reforms of 2004 (affecting issues such as divorce, custody, the limitation of polygamy) were all achieved in consultation with, and with the endorsement of, the religious institutions. Historically, reforms that have enhanced women’s participation have been crafted to suit the existing legal framework, recognizing local customs and norms.

Oil Alone Cannot Explain Low Rates of Participation

The economic structure, social norms and institutions characteristic of oil-rich economies discourage women from formal sector work (Moghadam, 2004a). Ross (2008) argues that oil production “reduces the number of women in the labor force, which in turn reduces their political influence.” § Oil-rich countries tend to have undiversified private sectors, in which employment is male-dominated, and large public sectors; consequently, employment opportunities for women are often highly concentrated in the public sector.

With more than half the world’s proven oil reserves concentrated in only 5 countries in the region (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates), MENA’s low rates of female labor force participation are often attributed to oil. With high per capita oil reserves, these oil-rich economies create relatively few jobs that could be potentially filled by women. But while oil is a significant source of income for some MENA countries, and has unquestionably limited the

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§ There are five major Islamic schools of thought in the region: Hanafi (Arab Middle East), Maliki (North Africa), Shafi (Southern Arabia), Hanbali (Saudi Arabia) and Ja’fari (Iran).

§ The “natural resource curse” argument, as it is often referred to, is not new. For a review of the current knowledge on that issue, see Frankel (2010). Whether and the extent to which it is relevant for MENA is still subject to debate (see for example Grow and Rothschild, 2011).
What Explains the MENA Paradox?

growth of non-oil sectors, it is important to note that many countries in the region are in fact net oil importers. These oil-poor countries generate a relatively high potential demand for female labor (Do, Levchenko and Raddatz, 2011).\(^5\)

On average across the world, a 10 percent increase in the potential demand for female labor increases female labor force participation by at least 3 percent (Figure 6 – left panel).\(^6\) However, extrapolating this association to countries in the MENA region is problematic. The MENA countries are clearly outliers, lying well below the predicted relationship (solid line) for the world as a whole. The same observation can be made when looking at the overall relationship between oil endowments and female labor force participation (Figure 6, right panel). While oil has a dampening effect on female labor force participation on average across the world, rates of female labor force participation in MENA countries are well below what their oil endowments alone would imply.

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\(^5\) The “potential demand for female-labor” measure is constructed combining industry-level information on female employment and country-level export data. Information on the share of female workers in the total employment in each sector is obtained from the UNIDO Industrial Statistics Database. Taking a weighted average of this measure across all industries for each country and time period—weights being the share of exports of a given industry—allows constructing a measure of the “potential demand for female-labor”, which in effect measures the gender composition of exports for a given country in a given time period.

\(^6\) See Do, Levchenko and Raddatz (2011), Table 7, page 28.
Thus, the drivers behind the MENA puzzle must lie elsewhere, and are more complex than oil or religion. Compare Egypt and Indonesia, for instance. The two countries are strikingly similar in terms of oil reserves, degree of export diversification, and potential for employing female labor. But Egypt’s female labor force participation rate is only half that of Indonesia. Historically, norms and attitudes surrounding women and work differ in important ways in Egypt and Indonesia. Accordingly, there may be MENA-specific cultural factors that are potentially more important in explaining gender outcomes in the region.

Social Norms and the Legal Framework Limit Women’s Agency

Agency, broadly defined, is the capacity and authority to act, and underpins an individual’s ability to shape one’s own life—the freedom of choice, expression and decision making. In the absence of equality of agency, gender parity in other dimensions, such as human development, will not translate into equality of opportunity in other domains. Certain social and cultural norms and legal frameworks in MENA countries circumscribe women’s capacity to exercise agency in the economic and political spheres, and thereby limit their access to economic opportunities.

The legal framework grants men and women rights, sets the rules of the game, and defines the environment within which individuals can exercise agency. Social norms can also shape the legislative framework and influence the enforcement of laws. By formalizing unequal rights for men and women, the legal framework can in turn reinforce restrictive gender norms. On the other hand, social norms can be resilient even in the face of legal reform, as the costs of deviating from the norm are high when the community as a whole sanctions those who deviate and those who do not enforce these norms.

Social and Cultural Norms Constrain Women’s Roles Outside the Home

Social and cultural norms dictate the “do’s” and “don’ts” of individual everyday conduct (Portes, 2011). In the MENA region, these norms place a high value on women’s role within the home and family. These norms reflect elements of a patriarchal society in which women’s primary sphere of influence is within the home (Moghadam, 2004b), while men are the breadwinners and decision-makers in the political and economic spheres (US Library of Congress, 2005). These elements are not unique to MENA society, but are perhaps more pronounced there than in other regions. These norms are also changing with time, as education increases and the demographic balance shifts.

The value placed on women’s role within the household is evident in data from five countries (Morocco, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, and Jordan) from the World Values Surveys (2005). Perceptions on women’s roles in the home, education, employment and politics are distinctly more traditional than the global average. In these countries, nevertheless, women are more likely than men to disagree with statements like “when jobs are scarce, priority should be given to men”. Those respondents who were more educated and younger also tended to be more supportive of women’s involvement. Compared with the rest of world, MENA citizens hold less favorable views about women in leadership positions, as business executives, or as politicians.

The region’s qualitative literature on gender brings to life the diverse social and cultural norms that disadvantage women in many dimensions of their lives. Focus group research by Miles (2002) reveals how gender norms surrounding women’s restricted mobility, household care burdens, occupational segregation and son preference constrain women’s economic participation in communities in and around Amman, Jordan. She reports, for example, how families more often reserve their scarce wasla (special connections) for helping their educated
sons, as opposed to their educated daughters, to secure good jobs. In their report on the major challenges related to youth employment in Egypt, Assaud and Barsoum (2007) draw on evidence to illustrate the increased occupational segregation along gender lines since the oil boom (and the dampening effects this has had on female wages), and how fears of workplace harassment, especially in smaller workplaces, discourage many women from working in less traditional jobs. (Also see Box 3.)

In spite of restrictive gender norms in the MENA region, women aspire to be employed, irrespective of marital status. In a 2010 World Bank survey of Jordanian female community college graduates entering the workforce (Jordan New Work Opportunities for Women pilot), 92 percent said they planned to work after graduation and 76 percent said they expect to be working full time. This is consistent with attitudes reflected in the World Values Surveys where 80 percent of women in Egypt and Jordan disagreed with the statements that “A woman with a full time job cannot be a good mother” and that “Having a full-time job interferes with a woman’s ability to have a good life with her husband.”

A follow up survey of the same graduates in 2011 found that although there was no change in the desire to work by marital status, employment outcomes were strikingly different: compared to 21 percent of single women and 14 percent of engaged women, only 7 percent of married women reported being employed. These results are consistent with labor force participation rates by marital status across the region.

The ‘marital-status gap’ in labor force participation (i.e. the ratio of participation rates between married and never married women) ranges from 30 percent in Egypt to 70 percent in Morocco. That same statistic is a mere 9 percent in the US and 14 percent in France. Thus, although women wish to fully participate in the economic sphere and manage both family duties and a job, the invisible hand of marriage seems to alter women’s opportunities.

In an environment where these constraints are more muted, women are better able to translate their aspirations into reality. Analysis of labor market outcomes for immigrants shows that labor force participation rates of MENA women who migrate to the United States are much higher than those of non-migrants, and fall by less after marriage. Furthermore, women of MENA origin who migrated to France as youngsters have participation rates more similar to their male counterparts than do women who migrated as adults. This finding points to the important influence of deep-rooted social and cultural norms in explaining low rates of participation in the region.

**Box 3: Little Mercy for Working Women**

It was widely agreed by women and men in focus group discussions in the West Bank and Gaza that it would be quite unlikely for a woman to take any kind of work requiring a distant commute. The travel interfered with women’s household duties and exposed them to risks of harassment unless chaperoned. Yet, in the men’s focus group in an urban community of the West Bank, a 39 year-old trader confided how other important pressures having to do with men maintaining a dominant status and the low priority accorded to women’s economic roles may also be keeping women from entering the labor force:

“A man can go anywhere to work and ... gets jealous of his sister if she goes to a nearby place to work. So how do you think it will happen that she can go to a faraway place? ... But the man’s responsibilities are different. He has to work otherwise he will never build his home or get married. But for the girl it is different ...”

A man from another urban neighborhood of the West Bank argued that the lack of public safety for women is a troubling consequence of the transition underway in gender norms: “Women have just started entering society, so the man is still trying to maintain his control.” A young men’s group from this same neighborhood similarly posited that a woman encounters ongoing harassment and low wages because she is “not able to speak up and defend herself because she is weak.” “And as you know,” added a 21 year-old university student, “our customs and traditions don’t have mercy.”
Equality Under the Law and its Enforcement is Critical for Women’s Agency

Laws institutionalize social norms and in turn reinforce them. When the institutional framework formalizes unequal rights for women, the state condones male authority over women’s everyday decisions, actions and movements, limiting their choices and participation in society.

Almost all MENA countries have constitutional clauses setting out the equality of citizens, and many have ratified international conventions affirming gender equality, yet laws often differentiate between the sexes to reinforce traditional gender roles within the household and in the wider community. Reforms to these laws have often been piecemeal, with progress in certain areas and stagnation (or even regression) in others.

Legal systems within the region differ widely and derive from a multitude of sources—religious law and customary law, colonial legislation (French Napoleonic codes, English statutes and common law), constitutional law, international conventions and regional treaties. This plurality extends to the implementation and enforcement of laws as well. And these legal constraints are not unique to the MENA region. For instance, spousal permission for a wife to work continued to be a condition until 1979 in Spain and 1984 in Switzerland. In MENA, Tunisia rescinded spousal permission to work in 1959 and Morocco in 2004 (Box 4).

In determining women’s participation outside the home, certain aspects of the letter, interpretation and implementation of the law are particularly salient. Some laws directly affect and limit women’s agency within the household. In several countries in MENA, the legal minimum age of marriage is lower for girls (Bahrain: 13; Iran: 13; Kuwait: 15; Lebanon: 17 for Sunni Muslim and Druze, puberty for Shia Muslim, 14 for Catholic; Qatar: 16; West Bank: 15; Gaza: 17) than boys and in some countries does not exist at all (Saudi Arabia, Yemen). Delaying marriage can potentially improve a woman’s decision-making power within the household, especially with respect to education, choice of partner and the decision to work. While some progress has been made in Egypt, Jordan and Morocco to protect women from domestic violence, implementation remains

Box 4: The Political Economy of Reform in Tunisia and Morocco: The Momentum for Change

While Tunisia still faces gender disparities in terms of outcomes, it is recognized for its early legal reforms to further gender equality in the Arab world. The first phase of reforms came immediately on independence in 1956 and was seen as government-driven. The Personal Code was overhauled, allowing women the right to file for divorce, establishing the principle of alimony and allowing married women to travel and work without the permission of their husbands. In the second wave of reforms in 1993, women's organizations played an active role. The main focus of the campaign was discriminatory citizenship laws, which were successfully reformed. The first, top-down phase of reform empowered women and enabled them to contest and refine outstanding discriminatory legislation. While it may not have achieved all of its objectives, it did generate a new climate for the next round of debate, by creating enabling conditions for new networks of women to emerge.

The Morocco family law reform of 2004 came after two decades of relentless campaigning by women's groups. The old 1957 version Mudawana or family code was modified partially in 1993 in relation to polygamy and guardianship but discriminatory provisions remained. Key to the ultimate success of the campaign was the political support given by King Mohammed VI and his predecessors, senior political leaders and the endorsement of religious leaders who provided theological backing for the changes.

What Explains the MENA Paradox?

The majority of countries in the MENA region have laws against discrimination in the workplace and legislation guaranteeing equal work for equal pay. All countries in the region mandate some form of maternity leave, and some countries have provisions for childcare to enable married women to re-enter the workplace after maternity. In practice, the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws is uneven, while equal pay provisions are undermined by inequalities in non-wage benefits (which are usually paid to the husband). Mandatory provision of maternity leave and child care facilities can also act as a disincentive to employers to hire women. Meanwhile, pension laws which mandate an earlier retirement age for women in effect reduce the amount of pension a woman receives, and can serve as a disincentive for women by limiting their expected career progression.

Labor laws can also limit opportunities for women. Women are banned from working in certain industries that are deemed dangerous, hazardous or morally harmful to their reputation. Women are also barred from working at night, in some cases from as early as 7pm. Such provisions were ostensibly designed to protect women, and are rooted in articles of International Labor Organization conventions, but have been made more stringent in keeping with social norms regarding segregation. Their ultimate effect, however, is to prevent women from participating in substantial sectors of the economy, and to limit the flexibility of work arrangements.

These laws can also have a profound influence on a woman’s ability to participate outside the home by restricting mobility and access to capital. Other laws directly limit mobility and choice of work. Guardianship laws in many countries restrict women’s mobility and occupational choice. Women in these countries require permission from their husband or a male relative to obtain a passport, travel outside the country, apply for a job, and get married. These laws make work and travel more difficult for women than for men, and thereby constitute a major barrier to their full participation in political and economic life. The laws also limit women’s access to capital for business purposes. MENA is not unique in this regard (see Box 5), but in no other region do so many countries restrict women’s agency in this manner.

**BOX 5: MENA is Not Unique: Women Elsewhere Face Constraints Too**

Women are regarded as legal minors in Swaziland due to the supremacy of customary personal law. Francophone colonies in sub-Saharan Africa such as Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Côte d’Ivoire all currently have head of household laws and legal restrictions on the wife’s ability to work based on a 1950s version of the French Civil Code (Hallward-Driemeier, 2011). In Latin America, Chile and Peru reformed their laws requiring spousal permission to work in the mid 1980s and 1990 whereas Switzerland and Greece were late reformers in Europe with laws regarding permission only being repealed in the 1980s.

9 Iran, Oman and Saudi Arabia require male permission for women to apply for a passport, while Iran, Saudi Arabia and Yemen require male permission to travel outside the country.

10 Night work restrictions are primarily based on ILO convention C89 Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised) 1948; Restrictions on industry include ILO convention C45 Underground Work (Women Convention) 1935.
Economic Incentives Dampen Participation in the Workforce

A Social Contract Underpinned by a Generous But Costly Welfare State

In addition to social norms and legal restrictions, women’s labor force participation is directly influenced by the social contract, by which MENA governments have provided public employment, generous benefits and subsidies to citizens in exchange for their tacit support. Over time, governments have repeatedly extended these policies in order to deal with economic shocks and social unrest. Such policies have been especially popular among countries with oil and gas endowments, but the non-oil-producing countries have largely followed suit. The heavy involvement of the state under the social contract has led to economic distortions and increasing levels of public debt in the non-oil countries. Recognizing this, some countries (especially in North Africa) have made efforts to rein in government spending and subsidies in the past two decades, but in the wake of the Arab Spring protests many governments have responded by increasing spending on subsidies and public sector wages.

The social contract has boosted public sector employment and compensation at the expense of private sector job creation. The public sector on average accounts for 45 percent of total employment in the region. Public employees are offered higher pay, subsidies, pensions, and relatively more generous working conditions than similarly qualified workers in the private sector (Figure 7). Despite the considerable investment governments have made in education, private sector employers also complain that the education system does not equip young graduates with the skills they need. As a result, the returns to education are higher in the public sector. These factors have made it more costly for private sector firms to hire skilled workers, reducing the amount of jobs they can offer. Together with the dwindling number of public sector jobs, this has contributed to the extremely high rates of unemployment among educated youth.

Women’s employment outcomes have been affected by the social contract in three main ways. First, women tend to study humanities and the arts, partly reflecting traditional gender ideals, and partly in the hope of getting public sector jobs in ‘female-friendly’ fields like teaching and administration. Second, the public-private pay gap is greater for women than for men, in part because women in the public sector have higher levels of education on average. These two factors make educated women relatively less attractive to private-sector employers, who predominantly seek graduates with scientific and technical skills. Finally, families are offered a plethora of subsidies and benefits that increase household income levels and thereby decrease the incentive for women to work. Discouraged by the lack of suitable public sector jobs, and the difficulty of finding private employment, many women decide not to enter the workforce after graduation. This has serious consequences for the economy as a whole, since potential productivity gains and economic growth are sacrificed by discouraging a large part of the educated labor force from working.

Source: Selected household surveys.
Three convergent factors have rendered the old social contract unsustainable, heralding a need for serious economic reform. First, the recent social unrest observed across the region reflects a shift in aspirations. Young people, including women, are calling for a greater role in society and access to better economic opportunities (Box 6). Second, an unstoppable demographic trend is taking place in the region, with people under 30 now comprising 60.5 percent of the population. That unemployment rates among this generation are so high, in spite of their increasing levels of education, is one of the primary sources of instability and unrest. Finally, the social contract is no longer fiscally sustainable, especially in the labor abundant, oil-poor economies of the region. Governments that once sought to quell unrest by creating public sector jobs cannot continue to do so in light of the growing number of jobseekers and worsening fiscal situation.

The profound demographic trends in MENA have been influenced by, and in turn influence, women’s education and employment decisions. Women are staying in school longer, delaying marriage and bearing fewer children. Education also opens doors to work opportunities for women, raising income and the opportunity cost of childbearing. Reflecting the strong increase in years of schooling among women (Figure 8), fertility rates in the region have been declining consistently since the late 1980s (Figure 9). While the choice to work depends on individual and household preferences and social norms, trends observed in countries across the world suggest that with fewer children and higher levels of education, more and more MENA women will choose to work outside the home in coming years. This trend is depicted in Figure 10, which projects the working-age and employed populations of men and women over the next century.

BOX 6: Women’s Voices on the Arab Spring

“Our demands are somehow similar to men, starting with freedom, equal citizenship, and giving women a greater role in society,” she says. “Women smell freedom at Change Square where they feel more welcomed than ever before. Their fellow (male) freedom fighters are showing unconventional acceptance to their participation and they are actually for the first time letting women be, and say, what they really want.”

—Faizah Sulimiani, A 29 year-old female protest leader of Yemen (Rice et al., 2011)

“I grew up in a world where we believed we could not do anything. Generations believed we could do nothing, and now, in a matter of weeks; we know that we can.”

—Mariam Abu Adas, 32, an online activist in Jordan who helped create a company to train young people to use social media.

“We want women from today to begin exercising their rights. Today on the roads is just the opening in a long campaign. We will not go back.”

—Wajeha al-Huwaider, Saudi female activist speaking out on a campaign to secure women’s rights to drive.
In order to prevent unemployment rates from rising further, by 2050 the region will need to create almost 200 million more jobs, three-quarters of them for women.

The traditional response of MENA governments has been to absorb growth in the labor force by creating new public sector jobs. Given the massive growth of the workforce projected over the next 50 years, this is no longer a plausible policy option. Many non-oil MENA countries run persistent fiscal deficits, and are in no position to pay for or subsidize large increases in public employment. Even in the oil-rich MENA countries, which are currently enjoying a revenue boost from higher oil prices, government spending and non-oil deficits have risen persistently (Figure 11). In Saudi Arabia, the oil price per barrel required to finance government spending has risen from $30 in 2005 to $80 in 2011, illustrat-
ing how increases in revenues from higher oil prices are not necessarily easing the fiscal situation. The new jobs required will therefore need to come from the private sector, highlighting the importance of encouraging private sector investment and growth.

**FIGURE 10** The Need for Job Creation for Men and Women


**FIGURE 11** GCC Primary Non-Oil Balance (% of GDP)

The majority of countries in the region have already made marked progress on human development issues, closing gaps in access to healthcare, mortality rates and educational attainment. Yemen and Djibouti still have work to do in these dimensions, and must prioritize these.

Across the region, the two major priorities for reform are job creation for all, and legal reform to improve women’s agency. Given the lack of scope for significant increases in public spending, future job creation must be led by the private sector. In the absence of adequate job creation, efforts to promote female employment can only come at the expense of male employment. This makes it essential that governments focus on reforms that support economic diversification, private sector investment and growth, and boost the employability of the growing class of educated young men and women (World Bank, 2009). Reforms are needed to remove bottlenecks in terms of skills shortages and mismatches, overregulation of labor markets and limited support for entrepreneurship.

Giving women the capacity to create their own businesses can boost innovation, growth and employment. This is especially important as an avenue for self-employment that is compatible with prevailing social norms in the region. Women entrepreneurs face significant barriers in accessing credit. For example, most business loan application rejections in Egypt are based on lack of acceptable collateral, which is a major constraint for female entrepreneurs. To address this issue, post office branches will be used as outlets to offer microenterprise loans to disadvantaged women in some of the poorest 1,000 villages. A randomized impact evaluation—the first such initiative for a government run microfinance program in the world—has been designed to understand the effectiveness of this program. But access to credit is not enough in itself.11 Many countries are now experimenting with micro-credit ‘plus’ models, combining it with training in business skills and efforts to facilitate access to markets.

Additional efforts are needed to address constraints to women’s participation and increase their employability. Policies to encourage women to work and increase their attractiveness to employers go hand in hand. For example, evidence from the US Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program suggests that tax and benefits systems can be reformed so that they do not penalize women for choosing to work, or penalize firms for employing them. Such reforms have been shown to promote women’s labor force participation.12 In addition, policies like internships and scholarships can change employers’ attitudes

11 In Sri Lanka, grants had no effect on the incomes of women, even though women did not invest less in their businesses than men (De Mel, McKenzie and Woodruff, 2007).
12 Several rigorous studies have found the EITC to have had a large positive effect on the labor supply of women. For example, Meyer and Rosenbaum (2001) found that the employment of single mothers in 1996 was 7 percentage points higher because of the EITC.
about women workers, and give women the skills needed in the modern workplace. In Jordan, for instance, an ongoing pilot provides employability skills training and a short-term incentive for firms who employ young women, and early results suggest that such incentives do work.

Surveys in MENA countries identify the lack of safe, reliable transportation and affordable housing as significant constraints on women’s ability to work. Addressing these deficiencies is relatively inexpensive and could greatly increase the work opportunities available to women. Gender-segregated public transport, such as recently implemented on buses in Mexico and long prevalent on trains and metros in India, could be an option as well. The private sector can also ease mobility constraints for women directly. For example, some Indian firms provide buses to take women from their homes directly to the workplace, allowing them to work safely.

Legal reforms are urgently needed to give women freedom of mobility, ensure their safety in the workplace, relax restrictive regulations on their employment, encourage their entrepreneurship, and advance their participation in the legal profession and politics. Without reforms in this area, the impact of economic reforms on women’s employment and agency will be limited. While countries in the Maghreb, including Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, have generally advanced the cause of women’s agency and made reforms to legal systems, the rest of the region has lagged behind.

Region-wide, there is a paucity of relevant data on women’s issues and evidence on the effectiveness of policies to address them. There have been very few rigorously-evaluated policy interventions in the region, although a few are now taking place in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. Reforms to enable public access to data and promote evidence-based policy making will aid the design and implementation of policies that improve women’s capabilities and opportunities.


Murphy, Brian. “Saudi women tap road rage against driving ban.” AP News. Filed May 24, 2011


Rice, Xan, Katherine Marsh, Tom Finn, et. al., “Women have emerged as key players in the Arab spring.” The Guardian, April 22, 2011. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/22/women-arab-spring


Technical Appendix

Figure 1 Page 2: MENA’s Progress in Women’s Health and Education
(Average annual growth rates in key indicators: 1985–2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>World Development Indicators, 2011.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regions</td>
<td>World Bank’s country classification (except MENA – see Data Appendix)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>• Female literacy rate;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Female life expectancy;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ratio of female to male primary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data construction methodology

Data in year 1985 is the average of available data from 1981 to 1985.
Data in year 2010 is the average of available data from 2006 to 2010.
Regional data (MENA, EAP, LAC, SA, SSA, and ECA) were aggregated using population-weighted average methodology.
Calculation of annual growth rate for female life expectancy and ratio of female to male primary enrollment:

\[
\text{Annual growth rate} = \exp \left( \frac{\log(\text{data}_{2010}) - \log(\text{data}_{1985})}{25} \right) - 1
\]

Calculation of annual percentage point change for female literacy rate:

\[
\text{Annual percentage point change} = \frac{\text{data}_{2010} - \text{data}_{1985}}{25}
\]
**Figure 2 Page 3:** Female and Male Labor Force Participation Across MENA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Djibouti Governance Survey 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt Labor Market Panel Survey (ELMPS) 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey 2007 (IHSES-2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yemen Household Budget Survey (HBS) 2005–06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morocco Household and Youth Survey (MHYS) 2009–2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labor Force Survey 2006, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bahrain labor statistics, 2011 – LMRA for national population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oman labor statistics, 2009 – official estimates for national population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qatar labor statistics, 2010 Census – estimates for national population.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Labor Force participation rates for men and women (ages 15–64)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Data construction methodology | Labor Force participation rate is the sum of employed and unemployed individuals, as a percentage of the total economically active population, in this case defined as the population ages 15–64. |
**Figure 3 Page 4:** Gender Gap in Unemployment for Young Women

**Data sources:** World Development Indicators, 2011.

**Variables:**
- Unemployment, youth male;
- Unemployment, youth female;

**Data construction methodology:** Latest data available. Specifically:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Available year</th>
<th>Unemployment, youth male</th>
<th>Unemployment, youth female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bank &amp; Gaza</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4 Page 5:** Percentage of Women in Legislatures (Lower or Single Houses)

**Data sources:** International Parliamentary Union, 2011
http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm

**Variables:**
- Women in national parliaments (lower of single houses)

**Data construction methodology:** Countries’ data.
**Figure 5 Page 7:** MENA has Relatively Low Rates of Female Labor Force Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>World Development Indicators, 2011.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Variables   | • Female labor force participation (% of female population ages 15+)
              • Male labor force participation (% of male population ages 15+)
| Data construction methodology | Regional data (MENA, Rest of the World, Muslim majority countries) were aggregated using population-weighted average. Latest data available are used. |
| Available year | Female labor force participation Male labor force participation |
| Bangladesh   | 2009      | 2009      |
| Indonesia    | 2009      | 2009      |
| Malaysia     | 2009      | 2009      |
| Pakistan     | 2009      | 2009      |
| Turkey       | 2009      | 2009      |

**Page 8:** Religion is Only a Weak Predictor of Low Female Labor Force Participation in MENA

| Data sources | World Development Indicators 2011
The Pew Forum of Religion and Public Life |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Variables   | • Female labor force participation 2011
              • 2009 estimates of Muslim population in the world |
| Data construction methodology | Solid line depicts fitted values; dashed lines are the bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval obtained from the following regression:

**Ordinary Least Square regression**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female labor force participation rate (log)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Percentage of Muslims in population (log)  | $-0.152^{***}$
| Constant                                   | $4.229^{***}$
| Number of observations                     | 136
| Adjusted R squared                         | 0.334

Robust standard errors in parentheses. $^{***}$, $^{**}$ and $^*$ indicate statistical significance at the 1, 5 and 10 percent level, respectively.

All variables are in logarithmic scale so that coefficients are elasticities, standard errors (in parentheses) account for heteroskedasticity and results are robust to adding control variables (such as population, wealth, etc.) and to the removal of potential outliers.
**Figure 6 Page 9: Oil Reserves, Industrial Structure and Female Labor Participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>COMTRADE.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNIDO Industrial Statistics Database.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>World CIA Factbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>World Development Indicators, 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>• Export driven potential demand for female labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Per capita proven oil reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Female labor force participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data construction</td>
<td>The construction of the export-driven potential demand for female labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>methodology</td>
<td>follows Do, Levchenko and Raddatz (2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proven oil reserves per capita divides proven oil reserves levels (in million barrels) by 2011 population. All variables are in logarithmic scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel A:</td>
<td>Solid line depicts fitted values; dashed lines are the bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval obtained from the following regression:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All variables are in logarithmic scale so that coefficients are elasticities, standard errors (in parentheses) account for heteroskedasticity and results are robust to adding control variables (such as population, wealth, etc.) and to the removal of potential outliers. More controls and robustness checks performed in Do, Levchenko and Raddatz (2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel B:</td>
<td>Solid line depicts fitted values; dashed lines are the bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval obtained from the following regression:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ordinary Least Square regression**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female labor force participation rate (log)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Muslims in population (log)</td>
<td>$-0.152^{***}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.229***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.116)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of observations</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R squared</td>
<td>0.334</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses. $^{***}$, $^{**}$ and * indicate statistical significance at the 1, 5 and 10 percent level, respectively.

All variables are in logarithmic scale so that coefficients are elasticities, standard errors (in parentheses) account for heteroskedasticity and results are robust to adding control variables (such as population, wealth, etc.) and to the removal of potential outliers.
**Figure 7 Page 14:** Public Sector Wage Gap: Difference in Average Hourly Earnings for Salaried Workers in the Public and Private Sectors

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.  
Yemen Household Budget Survey (HBS), 2005–06. |
| --- | --- |
| Variables | • Hourly earnings for salaried public workers  
• Hourly earnings for salaried private workers |
| Data construction methodology | By country and gender, it is the difference between the average hourly earnings of the public and private salaried workers divided by the private average. |

**Figure 8 Page 16:** Average Years of Total Schooling for Females, Age 15 and Above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>• Average years of total schooling, 15+, total is the average years of education completed among people over age 15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data construction methodology</td>
<td>Countries’ data over time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 9 Page 16:** Fertility Rates (Births per Women)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>World Development Indicators (2011).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>• Fertility rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data construction methodology</td>
<td>Countries’ data over time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10 Page 17:** The Need for Job Creation for Men and Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>UN Population and World Development Indicators, 2011.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Variables | • Employed female population  
• Employed male population  
• Female working-age population (ages 15–64)  
• Male working-age population (ages 15–64) |
| Data construction methodology | Regional data (MENA) were aggregated using population-weighted average method.  
\[
\text{Employment Population} = (1 - \text{Employment Rate}) \times \text{Labor Force Participation Rate} 
\]
\[
\text{Employment Population} = (1 - \text{Employment Rate}) \times \text{Labor Force Participation Rate} 
\]
| Assumptions | • Female working-age population and male working-age population grows as the UN predicts.  
• Female and male unemployment rates and labor force participation rates continue to stay at the 2010 levels. |
Figure 11 Page 17: GCC Non-Oil Primary Balance (% of non-oil GDP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>International Monetary Fund</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>• Non-oil primary balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data construction methodology</td>
<td>GCC data over time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


## Data Appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Source Details</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain labor statistics</td>
<td>LMRA for national population. Available at: <a href="http://blmi.lmra.bh/2011/03/MI_data.xml">http://blmi.lmra.bh/2011/03/MI_data.xml</a></td>
<td>Central Informatics Organisation (CIO) Kingdom of Bahrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMTRADE</td>
<td>Available at: <a href="http://comtrade.un.org/">http://comtrade.un.org/</a></td>
<td>International trade flows are used to construct measures of industrial structure for each country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country classification</td>
<td>Available at: <a href="http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups">http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups</a></td>
<td>We follow the World Bank’s country classification based on geographic locations and/or income level (2010 gross national income per capita). One exception is our classification of Middle East &amp; North Africa region (see below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edstats</td>
<td>Available at: <a href="http://go.worldbank.org/TABCOGIV1">http://go.worldbank.org/TABCOGIV1</a></td>
<td>Data averaged over 5 year intervals over the period 1960–2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Parliamentary Union, 2011</td>
<td>Available at: <a href="http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm">http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Description</td>
<td>Available at</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East &amp; North Africa region</td>
<td>Available at: <a href="http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups">http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups</a></td>
<td>MENA countries defined in the report includes 19 countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn World Tables 7.0 – Heston, Summers and Aten (2011)*</td>
<td>Available at: <a href="http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/php_site/pwt_index.php">http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/php_site/pwt_index.php</a></td>
<td>Other macroeconomic variables not available in World Development Indicators or Barro Lee (2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pew Forum of Religion and Public Life</td>
<td>Available at: <a href="http://pewforum.org/uploadfiles/Orphan_Migrated_Content/Muslimpopulation.pdf">http://pewforum.org/uploadfiles/Orphan_Migrated_Content/Muslimpopulation.pdf</a></td>
<td>2009 estimates of Muslim population in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World CIA Factbook</td>
<td>Available at: <a href="https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2178/2178rank.html">https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2178/2178rank.html</a></td>
<td>2010 estimates of proven oil reserves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Alan Heston, Robert Summers and Bettina Aten, Penn World Table Version 7.0, Center for International Comparisons of Production, Income and Prices at the University of Pennsylvania, May 2011.
CAPABILITIES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTICIPATION

Gender Equality and Development in the Middle East and North Africa Region