

PILLAR 4:

PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP



OVERVIEW AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Women's participation and leadership in the MENA and Arab States region have historically been obfuscated, despite decades of community involvement, activism at the national and international levels, and formal and informal political engagement. During the past decade, however, women's formal engagement has gained greater focus and traction, often transgressing the invisible barrier between the public and private spheres. Despite this momentum, challenges remain, none the least of which is the COVID-19 pandemic that has widened gaps between men and women in terms of employment, care work, perceived family obligations and, in some cases, actively curbed women's access to the public sphere.

This chapter focuses on women's agency at the household level as well as in public life, including engagement in civic society, activism, government, politics, and peace and security. From a legal perspective, inequality at the household level is codified through personal status laws. Additionally, household decision-making is often beholden to conservative socio-cultural norms and expectations resulting in women exerting less autonomy and power within the family, though this is not an absolute.

Community and national level civil society participation remains an important avenue for women to engage in leadership, however entry points, such as female youth's ability to participate in civic engagement, is limited by both conservative social norms and lack of opportunities to participate. Since the uprisings over a decade ago, women and girls' prominence in protests movements is now better documented, as is their formal political engagement (despite globally low rates of participation in the region). However, this has not translated into substantial and sustainable engagement. Notably, this increasing visibility has also resulted in increasing violence and harassment.

In a region overwhelmed by conflict and occupation, women continue to lead efforts related to peace and security. While the acceptance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda has been gaining prominence at the grassroots and institutional levels in the MENA and Arab States region, women's main venue for influencing policy, peace processes and transitional justice processes continues to be through civil society and work at either the community level or at the international level, with serious omissions at the national level.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Moving forward, key recommendations include:

- Adopt legislation and policies that facilitate women's political participation, including gender-based quota systems for seats in national parliament and local government level or gender-based quota systems for candidate lists for national parliament that meet the international standard of 50 per cent.
- Adopt and enforce legislation explicitly outlawing violence against women in politics and/or elections.
- Remove legal and financial restrictions on the work of civil society organizations and enforce protection of all women's human rights defenders.
- Enhance partnerships with civil society organizations and other non-governmental actors and ensure adequate funding for services provided by civil society organizations.
- Develop and implement policies and programmes, including in schools, to engage youth and provide safe physical and online spaces for young women to participate in volunteerism and local communities.
- Review school curricula and textbook contents to eliminate socio-cultural gender stereotypes and to stimulate a culture of equality between women and men by presenting progressive and affirmative images of women to reflect their dynamic positions, multiple roles and identities in the household and in public life.
- Ensure transparent and complete reporting of women's participation in all areas of public life, including in the public service, in line with international standards and methodologies developed by Sustainable Development Goal indicators (women in local governance).
- Ensure regular data collection of national statistics on women's participation in decision making at the household level and in the public sphere.
- Initiate qualitative research to understand household decision-making dynamics, as well as research into women's participation in activism and politics at the local and national levels, in order to better understand and address barriers to leadership.
- Introduce policies and programmes and allocate adequate resources that address the unequal division of labour and gender stereotypes within households.
- Increase resource allocation to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and the development of National Action Plans.
- Fund local civil society organizations to implement identified activities within Women, Peace, and Security National Action Plans in order to increase the oversight capacity of relevant ministries (often the Ministry of Women's Affairs).
- Create a safe environment for women to participate and actively engage in peace processes.
- Mainstream gender into all transitional justice processes at all levels.

Situational Analysis of Women and Girls in the MENA and Arab States Region: Pillar 4 Participation and Leadership

Key messages and Recommendations

OVERVIEW

Women's participation and leadership in the MENA and Arab States region have historically been obfuscated, despite decades of community involvement, activism at the national and international levels, and formal and informal political engagement. Despite improvement in women's formal engagement during the past decade, challenges remain, none the least of which is the COVID-19 pandemic that has widened gaps between men and women in terms of employment, care work, perceived family obligations and, in some cases, actively curbed women's access to the public sphere.

POLICY GAPS

Whilst many countries in the region have lifted reservations made to paragraph 4 of article 15 of CEDAW related to equal rights to choosing one's residence, as well as lifted any legal restrictions on women's mobility, some countries of the region still have legal provisions within the personal status law which may limit women's ability to travel as compared to a man. Space for participation is limited by laws that have restricted the freedoms of assembly, association and expression in some countries. As such, women's rights activists and organizations have experienced backlashes resulting in increased insecurity and a narrowing of human rights.



Adopt legislation and policies that facilitate women's political participation, including gender-based quota systems for seats in national parliament and local government level or gender-based quota systems for candidate lists for national parliament that meet the international standard of 50 per cent

SYSTEM BARRIERS

Across the region, women have yet to reach parity with men at any level of government. Besides gender bias and stereotypes which informs such decisions, evidence shows an overall poor levels of transparency and lack of fairness in appointments. In many countries, women are appointed into ministries dedicated to issues of women and children. Although there are some occasional outliers, often women are assigned as ministers in NWMs, social development or what is termed as "soft ministries", which is further disempowering. The lower proportion of ministerial-level positions held by women may be interpreted as women holding less political power. In many countries in the region, disproportionate power is held in the executive (including the ministries) and, as such, fewer women ministers means less voice for women where decisions are being made.



Ensure transparent and complete reporting of women's participation in all areas of public life, including in the public service, in line with international standards and methodologies developed by Sustainable Development Goal indicators (women in local governance)

NORMS

Gender bias is significantly more prevalent in the region among males and females than the worldwide average; 75% women and 90% of men in the region versus global level of 53% of women and 64% of men. This exacerbates traditional gender roles, with homemaking and caretaking being held in high regard. Perceptions of women as leaders, and especially political leaders, are significantly more negative in the region as compared to global statistics. Low civic engagement is caused by traditional age-based hierarchies, disillusionment in engagement with civic action, a lack of safe spaces, and/or a wariness of foreign sponsored programming.



Introduce policies and programmes and allocate adequate resources that address the unequal division of labour and gender stereotypes within households.

EMERGENCY SETTINGS

Female-headed households are more prevalent in conflict zones or displacement settings, where families have been forced to flee, often without a male figure who may or not be involved in the conflict. Since COVID-19, NWMs have been positively engaged in pandemic responses concerning economic relief. For women's NGO, the pandemic led to worsen working conditions, mobility restrictions, decrease in resources and increased surveillance



Create a safe environment for women to participate and actively engage in peace processes.

HOUSEHOLD DECISION-MAKING

Issues at the household level often influence the most basic and most important decisions that families make, such as decisions to start a family, health care, child and elder care, employment, spending habits, residency, and migration. There are still many barriers preventing women from exercising full autonomy. More than half of the married respondents in the region believes that a husband should always have the final say on family decisions. Young people feel left out from public life, for many girls, this sense of disempowerment begins at home, where decision-making power is often severely restricted.



Initiate qualitative research to understand household decision-making dynamics, as well as research into women's participation in activism and politics at the local and national levels, in order to better understand and address barriers to leadership.

LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADOLESCENT ENGAGEMENT

There is limited data on children engagement in extracurricular activities within schools, however country based anecdotal reports indicate limited opportunities. Data from National Scout Organization for the Arab countries refer to around 150,000 scouts with girl participation ranging from zero percentages in several countries to more around 30% in Qatar, Palestine to around 40% in Algeria, Lebanon, Oman and 50% in Iraq and Libya. Based on data collected through NGO and UN partners data systems, approximately 1 million adolescents and youth in in the MENA region, lead and/or involved in civic and economic engagement programmes.



Develop and implement policies and programmes, including in schools, to engage youth and provide safe physical and online spaces for young women to participate in volunteerism and local communities.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement among young people – both men and women – in the region is the lowest in the world. Only 15% of girls and 22% of boys volunteered in their communities. A larger percentage of youth are a member of a civic organization, however the gap between women and men is relatively large: an average of 13% of women and 22% of men are members of civic organizations. Female youth's ability to participate in any type of civic engagement is limited by both traditional norms around gender, age and lack of opportunities to participate. The shrinking civic space is hampering women's effective participation in civil society.



Enhance partnerships with civil society organizations and other non-governmental actors and ensure adequate funding for services provided by civil society organizations.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Women play an influential role in public life outside formal public institutions through their involvement in women's organizations and feminist movements, as well as in other civic engagement, including the media, labour unions and academia. Through these channels, women and gender equality advocates successfully promote legislation and mechanisms to advance gender equality and to eliminate laws that are discriminatory against women. They play a critical role in requiring decision makers to be accountable for upholding the human rights of women and girls. The Arab uprisings provided an environment in which women challenged stereotypes and broke cultural norms by participating in public, data records over 370 women-led protests in the MENA and Arab States region since 2015.



Remove legal and financial restrictions on the work of civil society organizations and enforce protection of all women's human rights defenders

PEACE AND SECURITY

Through peace processes around the world, it has been shown that the inclusion of women is central to creating meaningful and lasting peace. As of 2019, only seven country-level action plans for Women, Peace and Security have been passed: Iraq, the State of Palestine, Jordan, Tunisia, Lebanon, Sudan and Yemen. Women's civil society in the region also has a significant role in WPS agenda. Additional efforts need to be made in the implementation of the WPS agenda, primarily through the empowerment of responsible institutions, such as NWMs, including through funding. More efforts are also needed to engage younger women groups in the process.



Fund local civil society organizations to implement identified activities within Women, Peace, and Security National Action Plans in order to increase the oversight capacity of relevant ministries (often the Ministry of Women's Affairs).

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Only a handful of impacted States have managed to use transitional justice processes to increase stability and reform legislation and institutions. Several states reformed their constitutions as part of transitional processes, often with input from women's organizations and activists; this was seen in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen.



Mainstream gender into all transitional justice processes at all levels.

WOMEN IN MINISTRIES

No country has enacted a quota for women ministers, and the percent of women ministers varies from zero to 50%. At the executive level, in cabinet or ministerial level positions, women have been making gains. However, women have yet to reach parity with men at any level of government. Most countries in the region have less than 15% of ministerial level positions filled by women; fewer women ministers mean less voice for women where decisions are being made. Often women are assigned as ministers in NWMs, social development or what is termed as 'soft ministries', further disempowering them. The overall rate for the region of women in judiciary is the lowest in the world. While there are no laws in the region that prohibit women from becoming judges or lawyers, social norms in many countries discourage women from working and/or pursuing a career in the legal field. In some settings, however, significant gains have been made in women's representation in the legal/justice sector due to targeted efforts to support legal education and establish quotas for females in the legal/justice sector. At the same time, several initiatives at the regional level helped to develop networks of women judges, led by organizations such as Arab Women's Legal Network, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research, the International Commission of Jurists, and the International Development Law Organization.



POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

In all countries, women have been granted the right to vote. However, women are between 6-18% less likely than men to vote. In some countries, the process of registration and identification can cause issues for women. The social and cultural norms surrounding women in politics are largely similar throughout the region and play a crucial role in impacting decisions women make with regards to participating in the political process. Perceptions of women as leaders, and especially political leaders, are significantly more negative in the region as compared to global statistics. More than 90% of men in the region believe that men make better leaders and do not agree that women's rights are essential, as compared to a global average of 64%. Violence against women in politics is another reason for limited participation, around 80% of women parliamentarians in the Arab region were exposed to one or more forms of violence, and 32% reported experiencing harassment on the internet or social media. The implementation of quotas has been a significant way that Arab States have been able to ensure women's participation in the electoral process. 33% of countries in the region have legally mandated candidate quotas and 58% have reserved seats in the legislative body.



Adopt legislation and policies that facilitate women's political participation, including gender-based quota systems for seats in national parliament and local government level or gender-based quota systems for candidate lists for national parliament that meet the international standard of 50 per cent.

Situation of Leadership and Participation – Key Highlights

Implementation of quotas to ensure women's participation in the electoral process.

Women need permission from a guardian to marry

In 14 countries, married women are restricted from freely traveling within their country

Only 7 countries comply with NAP for WPS

Space for participation is limited by laws that have restricted the freedoms of assembly, association and expression in some countries

POLICIES/ LEGISLATIVE

No gender parity at any level of government

Women's civil society in the region has actively engaged with the WPS agenda

Limited funding for NAP for WPS specially in emergency

National Women's Machineryes experience inadequate funding

Poor levels of transparency and lack of fairness in appointments

SYSTEMS/ INSTITUTIONS

Marriage brings sociocultural norms, leading women more often than men to choose not to work outside the home

Male perceptions of women as leaders are significantly more negative in MENA as compared to global statistics (90% versus 64%)

50% of married population believes a husband should always have the final say on family decisions (10% more likely in rural areas)

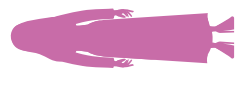
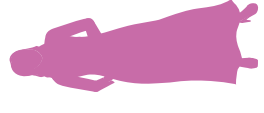
Female youth's ability to participate in civic engagement is limited by traditional gender norms and lack of opportunities

Gender bias in the region is at 75% of women and 90% of men, in comparison to global level of 53% of women and 64% of men

NORMS

EMERGENCY SETTINGS

Conflict is amplifying the quality of learning crisis and reinforcing already-existing inequalities within the formal education system. Marginalized groups of children, including girls and young women, are disproportionately disadvantaged. Access to education in emergency remains a challenge; including damaged or destroyed schools.



ISSUES

Around 60% engaged in ECD activities at household level

Limited evidence on opportunities and utilization of extra curricula activities

Girls disempowerment and feeling of being outside of public life begins at home, where decision-making power is often severely restricted

Civic engagement among youth is the lowest in the world with volunteerism at 9% and member of civil society 13%

Education level increases opportunity for equitable partnerships that share domestic duties

Limited opportunity to get transferable skills

Limited autonomy and decision-making power at household level

Women in the region are between 6-18% less likely than men to vote

On average, women feel less safe in their cities than men (increased in emergency)

Women in judiciary is the lowest in the world (range from 55% in Bahrain to 13 % in Morocco)

Marriage can reinforce stereotyped gender roles which impacts women's decisions regarding work and public life

Increased income correlates with freedom to make decisions in life

The burden on women of unpaid care work and domestic work is a barrier to participation in the labour force

3 in 5 satisfied with freedom of choice

→ Introduction

This pillar addresses women's and girls' participation and leadership in home life and in public life, covering a wide-range of topics, from household dynamics to community engagement to public office to conflict negotiations and peace making. While this chapter aimed to provide a far-ranging analysis of women's participation, several limitations emerged. Little data has been gathered on women at the local level, including participation in municipal bodies, tribal or community boards and governing councils, at the mayoral level, or other local boards. Additionally, literature has not explored the resources, or lack thereof, available to women seeking to participate in political processes. The role of women in peace and security is also explored in this pillar; however, there are few resources that address the explicit ways that women have participated in such efforts in the region (especially as military or law enforcement personnel). Several specific negotiations and reconciliation processes are on-going in the region, and as such, the role of women in resolving those conflicts is yet to be seen.

This pillar, in particular, also struggles with the varied systems of governance in the region, with varying levels of public participation. This wide spectrum of governing styles and available opportunities for women in public life make regional analyses difficult. Despite these challenges, this chapter provides a regional snapshot of the role of women and girls in public life. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, the region has on average closed the gap between men and women by nearly 6 per cent, measured by four categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.⁹⁰²

Table 4.1 outlines the ranks and scores of countries in the region according to gaps between men and women in the four categories listed above. The region saw some progress towards closing the gender gap, however no country in the region ranked higher than 120 out of the 153 countries included in the report. Poor scoring in all four categories, in addition to ongoing conflict and lower health outcomes contribute to its low ranking. For a more detailed exploration of women and girls in the workforce, see Pillar 2.

⁹⁰² World Economic Forum, 'Global Gender Gap Report 2020.'

Table 4.1:
World Economic Forum – Global Gender Gap Report

ESCWA Category	Country	2006 Rank	2006 score	2020 Rank	2020 score	per cent increase
GCC	Bahrain	102	0.589	133	0.629	6.79 per cent
	Kuwait	86	0.634	122	0.65	2.52 per cent
	Oman			144	0.602	
	Qatar			135	0.629	
	Saudi Arabia	114	0.524	146	0.599	14.31 per cent
	UAE	101	0.592	120	0.655	10.64 per cent
<i>Sub-Regional Average</i>			<i>0.585</i>		<i>0.627</i>	<i>8.57 per cent</i>
LDC	Djibouti			no data		
	Somalia			no data		
	Sudan			no data		
	Yemen	115	0.459	153	0.494	7.63 per cent
<i>Sub-Regional Average</i>			<i>0.459</i>		<i>0.494</i>	<i>7.63 per cent</i>
Maghreb	Algeria	97	0.602	120	0.634	5.32 per cent
	Libya			no data		
	Morocco	107	0.583	143	0.605	3.77 per cent
	Tunisia	90	0.629	124	0.644	2.38 per cent
<i>Sub-Regional Average</i>			<i>0.605</i>		<i>0.628</i>	<i>3.82 per cent</i>
Mashreq	Egypt	109	0.579	134	0.629	8.64 per cent
	Iran	108	0.58	148	0.584	0.69 per cent
	Iraq			152	0.53	
	Jordan	93	0.611	138	0.623	1.96 per cent
	Lebanon			145	0.599	
	State of Palestine			no data		
	Syria			150	0.567	
<i>Sub-Regional Average</i>			<i>0.59</i>		<i>0.589</i>	<i>0.001 per cent</i>

Household-level Participation, Leadership, and Autonomy

In discussing household-level participation and leadership, it is first important to define the parameters of what is meant by household-level. In general use, this means that a household includes the people who live in a single residence, co-mingle resources and food, and generally accept a common head-of-household.⁹⁰³ Given the varying dynamics of family structure impacted by the legality of plural marriage in many countries as well as migration and refugee movements throughout the region, definitions of households may vary greatly, making statistics and study at the household level quite difficult. The information presented at the household level, therefore, is based on best estimates for the region and as reliable statistics as are possible, and on qualitative data gathered throughout the region that represents the varied experiences of women and girls.

It is also important to highlight the presence of female-headed households, which may include rates of widow-headed households, divorced households, or other households in which there

is no existing male head of family (such as due to migration). It is often thought that females heading households have more decision-making powers or are more empowered. However, this may not be true as it should be contextualised and read with other trends such as migration or conflict.

Female-headed households tend to be more prevalent in conflict zones or displacement settings, where families have been forced to flee, often without a male figure who may or not be involved in the conflict. While data is still sparse on this, indications from Lebanon show that areas with large numbers of Syrian refugees do have a larger percentage of female headed households: the Baalbek-Hermel region (near the Syrian border) has a rate of 32 per cent female-headed households, as compared to Beirut at 7.3 per cent.⁹⁰⁴ In the case of Egypt and Jordan, while the high number maybe due to the inclusion of Syrian women refugees but it may also be related to the high number of husbands migrating for work opportunities. The structure of

Table 4.3:
Percentage of female-headed households

Country	per cent female-headed households (%)
Egypt	13
Jordan	13
Yemen	8

Source: Yemen DHS (2013), Egypt DHS (2014), Jordan DHS (2018)

903 Beaman and Dillon, 'Do Household Definitions Matter in Survey Design?'

904 IPSOS Group SA, 'Unpacking Gendered Realities in Displacement: The Status of Syrian Refugee Women in Lebanon.'

the household and its relationship with the wider extended family may influence women's ability to take decisions relating to welfare of her immediate family.

The following explores the laws, policies, and norms around women's participation and leadership at the

→ Marriage and Family

In many respects, marriage is one of the most consequential decisions that women face. Marital status can change the dynamics of choice in a woman's life, and will often change how she is seen before the law. Marriage also brings socio-cultural norms and expectations, leading women more often than men to choose not to work outside the home. In addition, the dynamics of starting a family and expectations regarding childcare will further impact her decisions regarding work and public life.

From a legal perspective, global norms have coalesced around 18 as the age of legal consent for marriage. While in the region this is largely the case, many countries provide judicial consent options that allow females, and in some cases males, the ability to marry at a younger age with parental and/or judicial approval. For more information on the important issue of child marriage, please refer to Pillar 3. For a discussion of how marriage impacts women and girls in the workforce, please refer to Pillar 2.

Polygyny, the practice of a man marrying more than one woman, is legal in the region, except for Tunisia. Statistics on plural marriage are limited, however surveys indicate that the practice is rare, occurring in 2 per cent of households in Iraq and Yemen and less than 1 per cent in Algeria, Tunisia, and Djibouti.⁹⁰⁵ When deciding to marry, in most countries, women need permission from a guardian in order to marry (usually their father, sometimes a brother or other

household level. This includes marriage and family more generally, as well as decision-making about household duties and spending, employment, and nationality. All of these issues are crucial to understanding the role of women at the household level and have an impact on women's ability to fully contribute to her community and country.

living male relative).⁹⁰⁶ Once a woman has married, divorce may be an option if she chooses to leave her marriage, however, this is often limited by legislation, particularly personal status laws. In some cases, men are able to obtain divorce by simply repudiating their wife and requesting the divorce. Women, on the other hand, must take their case to court and must be granted the divorce by legal authorities based on the case presented to the court; the request may not be approved.⁹⁰⁷

Survey data published by the Arab Barometer indicates that a majority of the respondent supports women having equal rights in making the decision for divorce. The exception to this rule is Sudan, where only 45 per cent of the population believes that women should have equal rights to divorce. Urban residents in the MENA and Arab States region support equal rights to divorce at a rate roughly 10 per cent higher than rural residents.

In the region, guardianship, including legal representation and overseeing child assets, remains largely the responsibility of the father during marriage and after divorce, regardless of who has custody rights, except for Libya, where both parents have guardianship over their children. Custody, on the other hand, which relates to child upbringing and providing care, is either shared during marriage or granted to the mother. Custody of any children in the event of divorce, or even death, is often not outright granted to the mother. While in recent

⁹⁰⁵ Kramer, 'Polygamy Is Rare around the World and Mostly Confined to a Few Regions.'

⁹⁰⁶ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 'Women in Public Life: Gender, Law, and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa.'

⁹⁰⁷ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 'Women in Public Life: Gender, Law, and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa.'

years, many countries in the region have amended laws relating to women's custody in relation to the prescribed age of children, women often lose their right to custody if they remarry. In addition, some laws grant women custody rights until a certain age of the child, which differs according to their sex. For example, in Somalia, women are granted custody of their children until the age of 10 for boys and 15 for girls. In Egypt, women maintain custody over children until the age of 15 for both boys and girls at which time the custody of the children shifts to their

father. In many instances, laws were amended to ensure that after the children reach the prescribed age, they could either decide where they want to live (e.g., Bahrain) or the judge could extend the custody to the age of 18 or until the girl marries based on the best interest of the child (e.g., Iraq). However, even when women are granted custody, often guardianship of the children will remain with the father, or the father's family in case of death.⁹⁰⁸ Such rights may be related to school enrolment and other official documentation of children.

➔ Household Decision-making

Often, women's decision-making at the household level is seen as a basic indicator of women's empowerment. Issues at the household level often influence the most basic and most important decisions that families make, such as decisions to start a family, health care, child and elder care, employment, spending habits, residency, and migration. Women's ability to equally participate in, or lead, these decision processes indicates an ability to contribute to the decisions that most intimately impact an individual and a family and serves as the core of an individual's ability to contribute to their overall development.⁹⁰⁹

This section will address general decision-making within the household. In Pillar 1, decisions related to health and well-being are explored in great length. In Pillar 2, reasons influencing the rate at which women and girls participate in education and employment are addressed.

Data from household surveys, while not comprehensive across the region, provide insights into women's roles in household decision-making. According to results published from the Arab Barometer Wave V, in all countries except Morocco more than half of the married respondents believes that a husband should always have the final say

on family decisions. Interestingly, a majority of respondent women in Sudan, Iraq, Algeria, Egypt, and Yemen agree with the statement that husbands should have the final say in household decisions. As a region, respondents from rural areas were around 10 percentage points more likely than their urban counterparts to believe that husbands should make final decisions.⁹¹⁰

Additional data from the DHS in Jordan and Egypt provide further insight into a woman's ability to make autonomous decisions about her own health care, large purchases, and visiting family and friends. According to this data, 58 per cent of currently married women aged 15-49 in Egypt (2014) and 77.8 per cent in Jordan (2018) report 'that they alone or jointly have the final say in all of the three decisions (own health care, large purchases and visits to family, relatives, and friends).'⁹¹¹

908 Ibid.

909 Demographic and Health Survey Indicators, as accessed through the WB API

910 Arab Barometer, 'Arab Barometer Wave V'

911 USAID, 'DHS Model Questionnaire - Phase 8'

Table 4.2:

Percent of the married population who believe that husbands should have the final say in all family decisions

ESCWA Category	Country	Men who agree (%)	Women who agree (%)
GCC	Kuwait	83	43
	Algeria	78	63
Maghreb	Libya	76	50
	Morocco	59	34
	Egypt	83	55
Mashreq	Iraq	75	65
	Jordan	61	41
	Lebanon	58	42
	State of Palestine	60	46
LDC	Yemen	66	51
	Sudan	80	67

Source: Arab Barometer, Wave V

	Person who decides how the wife's cash earnings are used			Person who decides how the husband's cash earnings are used		
	Mainly wife (%)	Wife and husband jointly (%)	Mainly husband (%)	Mainly wife (%)	Wife and husband jointly (%)	Mainly husband (%)
Egypt Urban	33.7	60.9	4.2	6.9	73.8	18.6
Egypt Rural	25.8	64.7	7.5	6.4	65.9	24.9
Jordan Urban	14.9	78.1	7	2.3	50.4	47.2
Jordan Rural	12.2	81	6.7	1.3	68.7	29.9

Egypt DHS 2014 (p. 217-218) and Jordan DHS 2017 (p. 241-242). Data titled 'other' or 'missing' was not included in the table

➔ Women's Autonomy

Women's ability to financially contribute at the household level is driven by many different factors. While the statistics show a narrowing gap in women's financial contributions (see Pillar 2, Livelihoods section for an analysis of women in the economy), other gaps in the region are still persistent and often driven by social and cultural norms. Traditional gender roles are still common, with homemaking and caretaking being held in high regard. However, these expectations can often

create pressures on women to abandon graduate study or careers in favour of marriage and child-rearing. Studies have shown that unpaid domestic work falls squarely on women at every stage of life, however these gaps become more apparent after marriage and again after childbirth.⁹¹² These gaps also widen in rural communities versus urban ones, as well as in poorer communities. However, the gap narrows as both parties' level of education increases, showing that as women (and men)

912 Rubiano-Matulevich and Violaz, 'Gender Differences in Time Use.'

receive more education, they tend to engage in more equitable (though not equal) partnerships that share domestic duties.⁹¹³ For additional discussion regarding women's employment and unpaid labour, please see Pillar 2.

In addition to decisions on household responsibilities, results from the DHS in Jordan shows that even when women are engaged in income generating activities, their ability to control their cash earnings is somewhat different than men.

Part of women's ability to engage in their home and community in the way that they choose is also about having the freedom to make those decisions. According to UNDP Human Development Indicators, women and men show similar levels of satisfaction with freedom of choice in the Arab region (women's regional average is 57 per cent, men's regional average is 61 per cent).

Overall satisfaction with the freedom to choose also seems to be largely correlated with income levels, as both men and women in the GCC (and wealthier) countries show higher levels of satisfaction than lower income countries. This may indicate that access to additional resources, from income to infrastructure, plays a role in how women (and men) make decisions about their future.

While women have increasingly seen growing opportunities outside the home, such as joining the workforce in greater numbers and increasing

educational attainment (see Pillar 2), there are still many barriers preventing women from exercising full autonomy. Although many countries in the region have lifted reservations made to paragraph 4 of article 15 of CEDAW related to equal rights to choosing one's residence, as well as lifting any legal restrictions on women's mobility, in some countries of the region some legal provisions within the personal status law may limit their ability to travel as compared to a man. In 14 countries in the region, married women are restricted from freely traveling within their country, while only two countries limit unmarried women's ability to travel.⁹¹⁴ Issues of harassment and safety are also important for women to feel safe in their communities. Women feel, on average, less safe in their cities than men, with the largest gaps occurring in Syria and Yemen. In Yemen in particular, the vast majority of men, roughly 70 per cent, feel safe walking by themselves at night, while only 38 per cent of women feel safe. In Syria, a majority of both men and women feel unsafe, however the gap is similarly large, with 48 per cent of men and 17 per cent of women feeling safe walking alone at night. In Tunisia, 54 per cent of women feel safe compared to 70 per cent of men, a gap of only 17 percentage points, compared to 31 in Syria and 32 in Yemen. On average, 59 per cent of women and 74 per cent of men feel safe walking alone at night. This again emphasizes the disparate experiences of women in conflict zones versus the rest of the region, in addition to already existent gender gaps (see Figure 4.2, below).⁹¹⁵ For an in-depth discussion of VAWG, see Pillar 3.

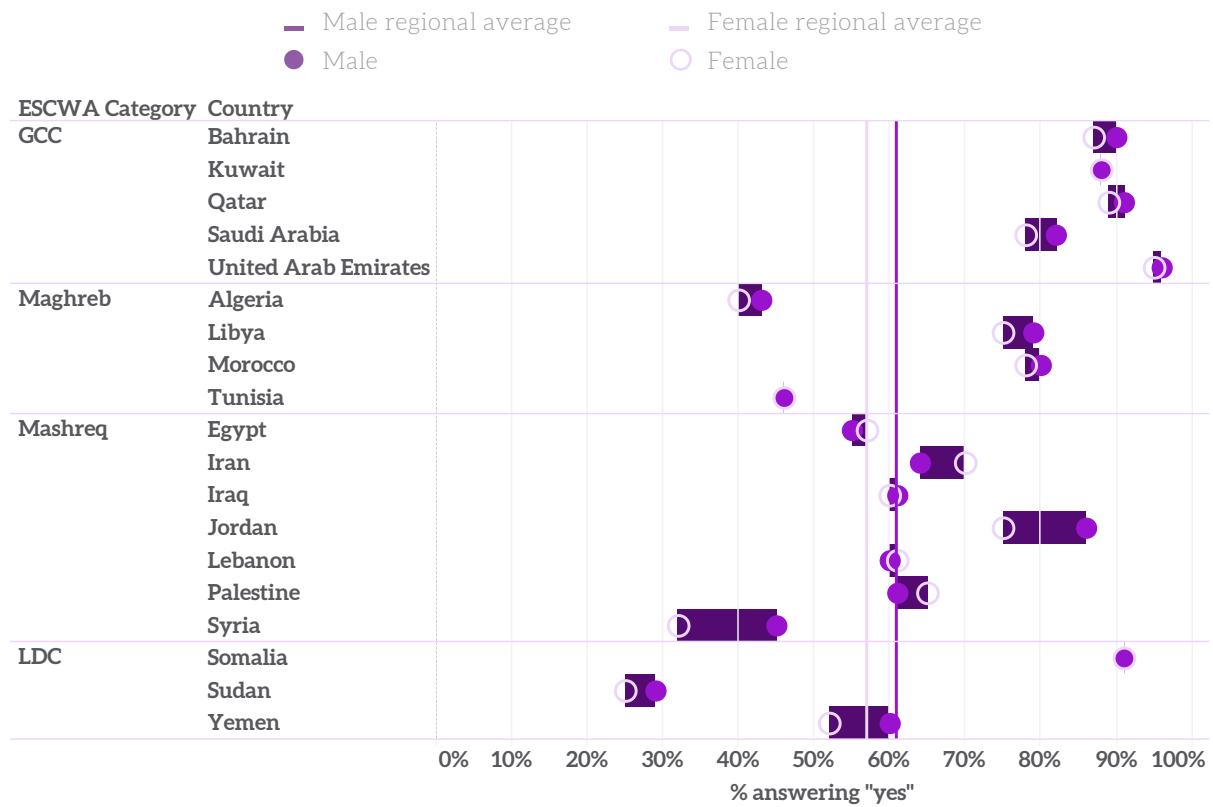
⁹¹³ Ibid.

⁹¹⁴ The World Bank, 'Women, Business, and the Law 2020.' The report notes specifically that restrictions may include: '...if permission, additional documentation, or the presence of her husband or guardian is required for a woman to travel domestically... [or] if a woman must justify her reasons for leaving the home, or leaving the home without a valid reason is considered disobedience with legal consequences—for example, loss of her right to maintenance.'

⁹¹⁵ United Nations Development Program, 'Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update.'

Figure 4.1:
Satisfaction with Freedom of Choices

Percentage of respondents who answered "satisfied" to the Gallup World Poll question, "In this country are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?"

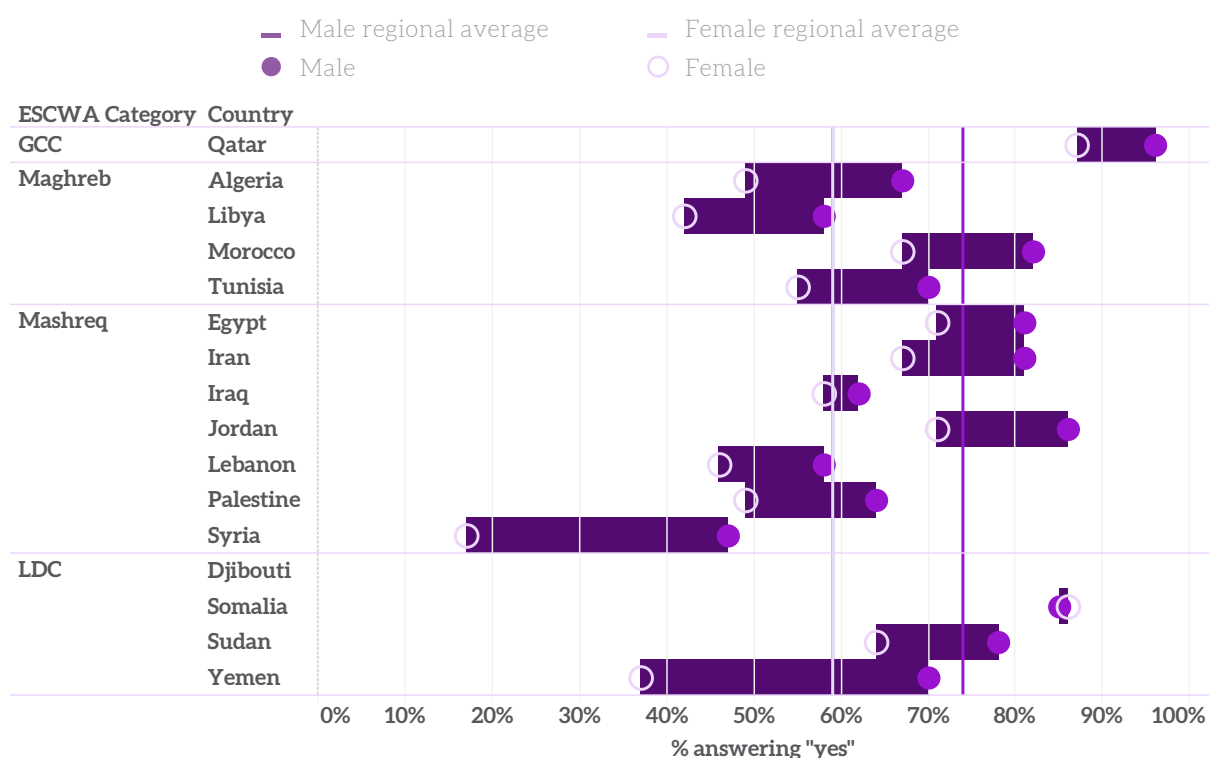


Source: UNDP Human Development Indices and Indicators, 2018 Statistical Update

Figure 4.2:

Perceptions of Safety

Percentage of respondents who answered "yes" to the Gallup World Poll question, "Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live?"



Source: UNDP Human Development Indices and Indicators, 2018 Statistical Update

→ Community and National Level Civil Society Participation and Leadership

The ability of women to participate in the political process is not only a function of gender roles but is also dependent on the structure of the country in which they live. These considerations are central to women's ability to participate in politics at all levels. The region faces vast differences in the current political circumstances facing each country. Several countries (Syria, Yemen, Libya, Iraq) are engaged in protracted violent conflicts, Tunisia has transitioned to full democracy, Lebanon is a confessional

democracy facing significant challenges, the State of Palestine faces military occupation, and the rest of the region is largely governed by non-democratic governments with varying degrees of public participation.⁹¹⁶ Each of these cases offer significantly different mechanisms for public participation.

Engagement in civil society and volunteerism provides participants with an opportunity to be

916 Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World 2020: A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy.'

closer to their communities, learn how to voice their demands and appreciate collective work. For young girls in particular, the ability to engage in local organizations through volunteer work is key to expanding their horizons and helping them to develop skills and networks. For adult women, engagement in civil society has been a key part of activism in the region for many years. The Arab uprisings and their aftermath saw increases in participation by both men and women, and women played crucial roles in organizing and mobilizing efforts.

In the sections that follow, we consider the ability of women to participate in civil society, politics, and government at the local and national levels and explore the opportunities and barriers to women's participation and leadership.

SOCIO-CULTURAL NORMS, VOLUNTEERISM, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civil society groups have long been important in the region, and participation in local and regional groups has expanded in the past decade.

Civic engagement among young people – both men and women – in the region is the lowest in the world, with a median of only 9 per cent of youth across the region volunteering with a civic organization in a given month compared with 14 per cent in the next lowest region, sub-Saharan Africa.⁹¹⁷ A larger percentage of youth are a member of a civic organization, however the gap between women and men is relatively large: an average of 13 per cent of women and 22 per cent of men are members of civic organizations. (See Figure 4.3, below.)

However recent studies have shown that female youth's ability to participate in any type of civic engagement is limited by both traditional norms

around gender, age and lack of opportunities to participate; only 12 per cent of the population indicated volunteering in their community and, amongst youth, only 15 per cent of girls and 22 per cent of boys volunteered in their communities.⁹¹⁸ There is some disagreement as to why youth engagement numbers are so low, ranging from traditional age-based hierarchies, disillusionment in engagement with civic action, a lack of safe spaces, and/or a wariness of foreign-sponsored programming.⁹¹⁹

WOMEN ACTIVISM AND THE SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE

Women play an influential role in public life outside formal public institutions through their involvement in women's organizations and feminist movements, as well as in other civic engagement, including the media, labour unions and academia. Through these channels, women and gender equality advocates successfully promote legislation and mechanisms to advance gender equality and to eliminate laws that are discriminatory against women. They play a critical role in requiring decision makers to be accountable for upholding the human rights of women and girls.⁹²⁰

In some contexts, the shrinking civic space is hampering women's effective participation in civil society.⁹²¹ Space for participation is limited by laws that have restricted the freedoms of assembly, association and expression in some countries. Legal and administrative measures are creating obstacles for women's organizations to register, engage in advocacy, receive external funding and report on rights issues in some contexts. Since 2008, civil society repression has deepened in 26 countries, while conditions have improved in only 17.⁹²²

Women's organizations are active in COVID-19 responses, supporting those most affected

917 Evidence Symposium on Adolescents and Youth in MENA, 'Adolescents and Youth Participation and Civic Engagement in the MENA Region.'

918 MENA RMT, 'Adolescents Empowerment, Engagement, and Employability with Specific Attention to the Adolescent Girl.'

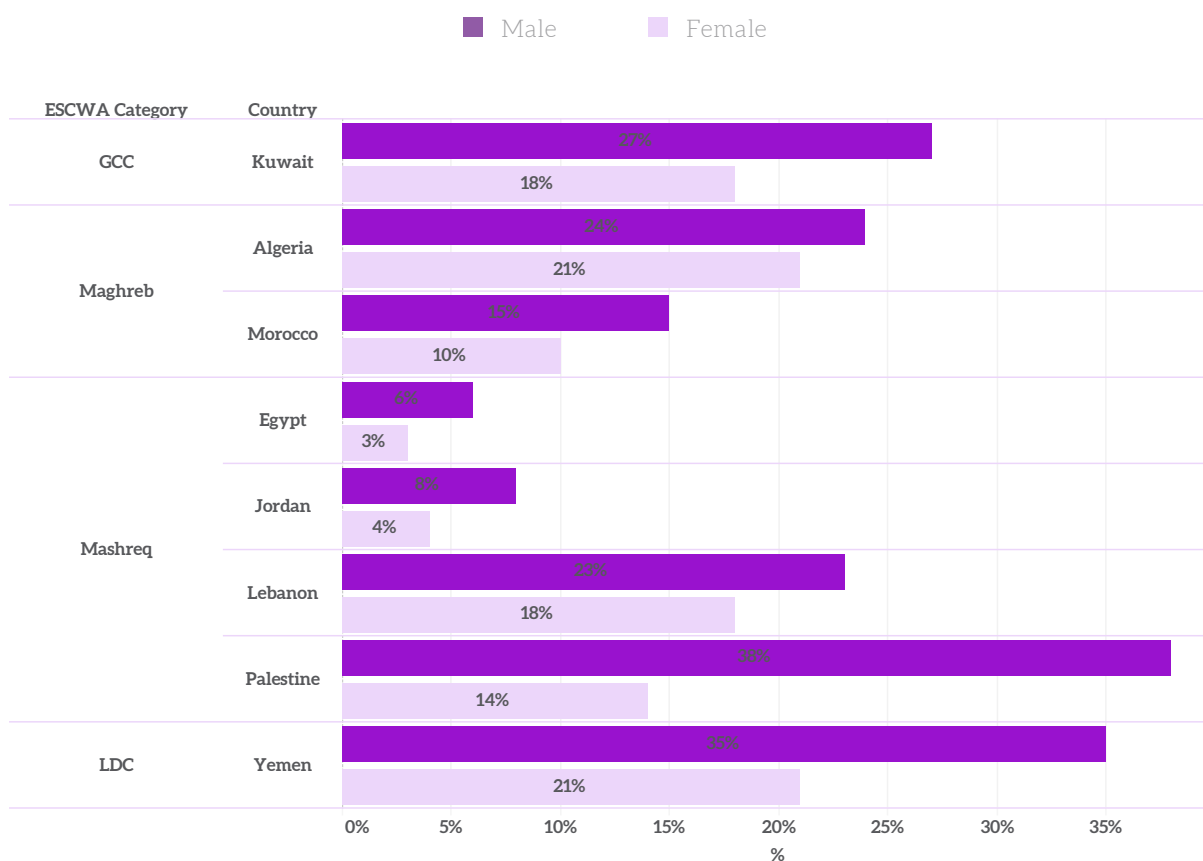
919 Evidence Symposium on Adolescents and Youth in MENA, 'Adolescents and Youth Participation and Civic Engagement in the MENA Region.'

920 United Nations Economic and Social Commission, 'Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, Report of the Secretary-General, E/CN.6/2021/3, February 2021, available at: <https://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2021/3> (CSW65 SG Report), para. 30

921 CSW65 SG Report, citing Weldon and others, 'Women's informal participation'.

922 E/CN.6/2020/3, para. 194

Figure 4.3:
Percentage of Youth Who are Members of Civic Groups, By Sex



Source: Arab Barometer, Wave V

economically, ensuring that shelters remain open for domestic violence survivors and disseminating public health messages to communities.⁹²³ At the same time, consultations and rapid assessments conducted by the United Nations show that the pandemic has created new challenges for women's rights organizations and exacerbated pre-existing

ones. For many women's organizations, COVID-19 has led to mobility restrictions, while increased surveillance has further reduced organizing space, exacerbated poor working conditions and led to a decrease in resources at a time when demands have increased.⁹²⁴

923 CSW65 SG Report, citing United Nations, 'Shared responsibility, global solidarity: responding to the socio-economic aspects of COVID-19', March 2020.

924 CSW65 SG Report, citing UN-Women, 'COVID-19 and women's rights organizations', policy brief (forthcoming)

Despite obstacles placed against civil society groups and relative gender gaps, women have led the way in social movements. The mobilization of civil society in the region during Arab uprisings that began in 2010 involved unprecedented levels of political participation by women-led groups, organizations, and individuals.

The Arab uprisings provided an environment in which women challenged stereotypes and broke cultural norms by participating in public

demonstrations. Movements in Egypt, the State of Palestine, Tunisia, and Sudan led by women called for an expansion of human rights and democracy, building on decades of activism that continues to this day.

The Armed Conflict Location and Events Data Project (ACLED) data records over 370 women-led protests in the MENA and Arab States region since 2015, examples of which include:⁹²⁵

- **Yemen:** The Abductees' Mothers Association is comprised of wives and mothers who hold regular protests outside of prisons and army barracks, demanding information about forcibly disappeared and arbitrarily arrested persons. Over 100 protest events have been organized by the association since 2015.
- **State of Palestine:** In September 2019, Palestinian women led a three-day demonstration denouncing the killing of 29 women due to domestic violence since the beginning of 2019. The demonstrations were organized by the Talat movement, a group of independent Palestinian women.
- **Sudan:** On 2 January 2020, hundreds of female demonstrators marched in Khartoum in an event organized by around 60 women's CSOs and political movements, calling for the government to accede to CEDAW.
- **Tunisia:** On 30 November 2019, in Tunis, the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (AFDT) organized a protest to denounce violence against women as part of a nationwide campaign on the subject.

Given the complicated picture in the region with regards to activism and civil liberties, the impact on women is often particularly acute. While sometimes bearing the brunt of regime and social upheaval, women have also emerged as symbols of revolution, as has recently been the case in Sudan.⁹²⁶ For women, the risk of speaking out is often a complicated one. It means speaking out against

and in defiance of the norms that traditionally restrict women to private activities. In some cases, activism may challenge long-held identities of both individual women and groups. In addition, activism requires pushing against long-standing institutions, regardless of gender. For many women, these layers of complications make participation in any sort of political process difficult.

⁹²⁵ ACLED, 'The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.'

⁹²⁶ Reilly, 'After Fueling Sudan's Revolution, Women Are Being Sidelined.'

→ Political Representation, Participation, and Leadership

There is a long history of civil society advocacy for the inclusion of women in politics and for the integration of women's rights and empowerment in legal and political frameworks. Yet, with a range of types of governments, the experience of women in politics is highly dependent on the type of government in place. However, commonalities exist even between democracies and non-democracies. The social and cultural norms surrounding women in politics are largely similar throughout the region and play a crucial role in impacting decisions women make with regards to participating in the political process. This section will explore the issues faced by women in politics in terms of both the normative barriers to their participation as well as the legal and policy challenges that women in politics face.

WOMEN VOTERS

Since the broader introductions of elections to the region following the Arab uprisings, women as a voting constituency have been studied more seriously. Initial reports regarding voter turnout, however, paint a somewhat disappointing picture. In a study done following the first post-transition elections in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, women were shown to be participating between 10 and 25 percentage points less than men.⁹²⁷

According to survey data published by the Arab Barometer, women in the MENA and Arab States region are between 6-18 per cent less likely than men to vote. In 2018 elections in Egypt, for example, approximately 30 per cent of women reported voting compared to 47 per cent of males.⁹²⁸ Political participation varies across the region and voting turnout practices are difficult to measure given the different types of political systems and constraints to participation. In some countries, the process of registration and identification can cause issues for

women. For instance, in Lebanon, all voters are required to register in their ancestral village/town and married women are required to register in their husband's village, reducing their voice in their own communities.⁹²⁹ In Kuwait, women have been allowed to participate in elections (as voters and candidates) only since 2005, and in some cases, their votes are perceived as being simply an extension of their husband's, or family's, preferences.⁹³⁰ In Saudi Arabia, women voted and stood for election for the first time in 2015.⁹³¹ However, as in the example of Kuwait, a more thorough discussion is needed to understand women's autonomy in voting without the influence of male family members.

WOMEN IN NATIONAL/ LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES

Regardless of the political system employed in each of the countries studied, each country has regulated voting, participation in the legislative branch of government, and the appointment of ministerial-level positions in the government. In all countries surveyed, women have been granted the right to vote. However, participation in legislative bodies and ministerial-level positions is highly dependent on both the structure of the government and the laws and policies in place.

One way that many countries in the region have sought to ensure women's participation in the legislature is through the use of quotas. The implementation of quotas has been a significant way that Arab States have been able to ensure women's participation in the electoral process (where it exists). Thirty-three per cent of countries in the region have legally mandated candidate quotas and 58 per cent have reserved seats in the legislative body. Quotas have been enacted in several ways, with 36.4 per cent of countries having

927 Benstead and Lust, 'The Gender Gap in Political Participation in North Africa.'

928 Arab Barometer, 'Arab Barometer Wave V.'

929 Wang, 'Voter Registration in the Middle East and North Africa: Select Case Studies.'

930 Ibid.

931 Sadek, 'FALQs.'

quotas included in the constitution, and 81.1 per cent using electoral law to mandate quotas.⁹³²

At the State level, nearly 25 per cent of the Parliament in Tunisia is women, based on a candidate quota required for party lists.⁹³³ In Algeria, Law 12-03 of 2012 required political parties to include female candidates on their party lists. As of 2017, women comprise 27 per cent of the National People's Assembly.⁹³⁴ In Morocco, Law 59-11 of 2011 resulted in 21 per cent of seats (81 of 395

in the House of Representatives) held by women in 2016.⁹³⁵ Interestingly, most of LDCs seem, on average, to perform better in women's political participation. This may partially be because the three well-performing LDCs – Sudan (31 per cent women in parliament),⁹³⁶ Djibouti (26 per cent),⁹³⁷ and Somalia (24 per cent)⁹³⁸ – have all implemented women's quotas. Iraq (26 per cent), also performing relatively well, has implemented quotas in their electoral processes.⁹³⁹

Table 4.4:

Gender Quotas in Political Systems in the Middle East/North Africa Region, by Parliament Type

ESCWA Category	Country	Parliament type	Voluntary political party quotas	Quota type	Constitutional quota details	Electoral law quota details
GCC	Saudi Arabia	Unicameral	-	Reserved seats		
	Algeria	Bicameral	No	Legislated Candidate Quotas		
Maghreb	Libya	Unicameral	No	Legislated Candidate Quotas		
	Morocco	Bicameral	No	Reserved seats		
	Tunisia	Unicameral	No	Legislated Candidate Quotas		
	Egypt	Unicameral	No	No legislated		
Mashreq	Iraq	Unicameral	No	Reserved seats		
	Jordan	Bicameral	No	Reserved seats		
	State of Palestine	Unicameral	No	Legislated Candidate Quotas		
	Djibouti	Unicameral	No	Reserved seats		
LDC	Somalia	Bicameral	No	Reserved seats		
	Sudan	Bicameral	No	Reserved seats		

Source: Institute for Democracy Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

932 International IDEA, 'Gender Quotas Database.'

933 Ibid. See <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/284/35>

934 Ibid. See <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/97/35>

935 Ibid. See <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/200/35>

936 Ibid. See <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/260/35>

937 Ibid. See <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/93/35>

938 Ibid. See <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/270/35>

939 Ibid. See <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/148/35>

These policies require a certain number of seats to be set aside for women candidates and can be structured in a number of ways. The next section will explore these policies in detail. While quotas have been shown to be effective in increasing the numbers of women in legislative bodies, there is little evidence that this results in outcomes that are beneficial to women in a practical sense. Little research has been done to study the effects of increases in women's political representation on developmental outcomes for women. However, given the mixed results seen in previous chapters of this report, it does seem that increasing numbers of women legislators do not necessarily correspond to better developmental outcomes for women. Social and cultural biases, legal and political barriers, and financial and employment issues continue to prove to be challenges that women must continue to address.

In its report, the Secretary General, stresses that quotas have significantly contributed to the progress of women's participation. In MENA, countries with quotas have more women in government and increased representation.⁹⁴⁰ There is some evidence that the type of quota, as well as the type of government, has an impact on women's participation: countries with reserved seats tend to not perform as well as those with candidate or optional quotas.⁹⁴¹ Scholars seem to agree that quotas are effective for increasing representation, but more research needs to be done about the long-term impact of that representation.

WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

Participation for women at the ministerial and judicial levels is a bit more varied. In some cases, countries have enacted quotas for women in the judiciary. At the time of writing, no country studied has enacted a quota for women ministers, and the percent of women ministers varies from zero to 50 per cent.

At the executive level, in cabinet or ministerial level positions, women have also been making gains. However, women have yet to reach parity with men at any level of government. The exception to this is the UAE, where 50 per cent of the national parliament, the Federal National Council, is comprised of women. This level of representation is an outlier in the region and does not translate to ministerial-level positions. As of January 2020, Lebanon had the highest proportion of women at the ministerial level with 32 per cent, followed by Egypt at 24 per cent. The majority of countries in the region have less than 15 per cent of ministerial-level positions filled by women (see infographic below).

Interestingly, Tunisia, one of the highest-achieving countries in terms of women in the national parliament, has only 7 per cent of their ministerial level positions held by women. Here one can see the effect of the legislative quota: when mandated by law, women have been able to make drastic gains in representation. However, when such quotas do not exist, levels of participation have been seen to decrease.

The lower proportion of ministerial-level positions held by women may be interpreted as women holding less political power. In many countries in the region, disproportionate power is held in the executive (including the ministries) and, as such, fewer women ministers means less voice for women where decisions are being made. In many countries, women are appointed into ministries dedicated to issues of women and children. Although there are some occasional outliers, often women are assigned as ministers in NWMs, social development or what is termed as 'soft ministries', further disempowering them. The Lebanese cabinet that was formed in January 2020 had women as ministers of defence, justice, and labour, which were historically assigned to men. Previously, the Lebanese cabinet also included a women minister of interior.

⁹⁴⁰ United Nations Digital Library, Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls : report of the Secretary-General , 2020.

⁹⁴¹ Schramm, 'Do Quotas Actually Help Women in Politics?'

Notably, since the COVID-19 pandemic, NWMs have been engaged in COVID-19 pandemic responses concerning economic relief. In Algeria, a national crisis committee was set up that included representatives from the Ministry of National Solidarity, the Family and Women's Affairs. The Tunisian Ministry of Women, the Family, Children and Seniors partnered with the Ministry of Finance in the crisis response targeting women and other groups. The National Council for Women (NCW) in Egypt was actively involved in designing measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis on informal sector workers. The NCW was further involved in mainstreaming gender into other policy measures, and the head of the Council is also part of the government's emergency committee. Lastly, in Jordan, the Jordanian National Committee for Women, in partnership with UN Women, has issued a policy brief with recommendations on how to provide a gender-sensitive response to the pandemic.⁹⁴²

WOMEN IN THE JUSTICE SECTOR

While there are no laws in the region that prohibit women from becoming judges or lawyers, social norms in many countries discourage women from working and/or pursuing a career in the legal field. In some settings, however, significant gains have been made in women's representation in the legal/justice sector due to targeted efforts to support legal education and establish quotas for females in the legal/justice sector.

The success of some countries in scaling up representation of women in the justice sector is attributable, in part, to governmental efforts. For example, Jordan's National Strategy for Women 2013-2017 defined a target of 20 per cent of women

in the judiciary, which was achieved in 2015, such that the Judicial Council set a new target to raise representation to 25 per cent.⁹⁴³ Jordan has also seen a steady increase in women's representation, from 48 female judges in 2009 to 211 in 2018.⁹⁴⁴ Kuwait opened up positions for women in its Ministry of Justice.⁹⁴⁵ Lebanon has effectively achieved gender parity with 49 per cent of judges being women, some of whom have recently been appointed to top judicial positions. Tunisia (at 43 per cent) and Algeria (at 42 per cent) are close behind. Djibouti (at 38 per cent), Morocco (at 23 per cent) and Jordan (at 22 per cent) have also made considerable progress in recent years.⁹⁴⁶ In 2019, in Sudan, a woman was appointed to head of the judiciary, and in Djibouti, a woman is the head of the Supreme Court.⁹⁴⁷ These drastic movements in a relatively short period of time demonstrate the progress made in the region, as well as the success of advocacy for women's inclusion.

Furthermore, there have been several initiatives at the regional level to develop networks of women judges, led by organizations such as Arab Women's Legal Network, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research, the International Commission of Jurists, and the International Development Law Organization.⁹⁴⁸

In many countries, however, there are still no female judges. The overall rate for the region of women in judiciary is the lowest in the world.⁹⁴⁹ Examples of factors that contribute to women's low level of participation include⁹⁵⁰:

- weak commitments to gender equality in national legislation and policy frameworks;
- conservative religious doctrines;

942 OECD, COVID-19 crisis in the MENA region: impact on gender equality and policy responses, 2020.

943 ESCWA, *Against Wind and Tides: A Review of the Status of Women and Gender Equality in the Arab Region* (Beijing +20), 2016.

944 ESCWA, *Women in the Judiciary in the Arab States: Removing Barriers, Increasing Numbers*, 2019, p. 28. s

945 ESCWA, *Against Wind and Tides: A Review of the Status of Women and Gender Equality in the Arab Region* (Beijing +20), 2016.

946 ESCWA, *Women in the Judiciary in the Arab States: Removing Barriers, Increasing Numbers*, 2019.

947 UNFPA, UNDP, UNWomen, ESCWA, *Gender Justice & Equality Before the Law, Analysis of Progress and Challenges in the Arab States region*, 2019

948 Ibid.

949 ESCWA, *Against Wind and Tides: A Review of the Status of Women and Gender Equality in the Arab Region* (Beijing +20), 2016.

950 Excerpted from OECD, 2014. *Women in Public Life—Gender, Law and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa*; UNFPA, UNDP, UNWomen, ESCWA, 2019. *Gender Justice & Equality Before the Law, Analysis of Progress and Challenges in the Arab States region*.

Women in Politics 2020: Middle East & North Africa⁹⁵¹

Women in Ministerial Positions			
The countries are ranked according to the percentage of women in ministerial positions, reflecting appointments up to 1 January 2020			
	% Women	Women	Total Ministers
30 to 35%			
Lebanon	32%	6	19
20 to 25%			
Egypt	24%	8	33
Kuwait	21%	3	14
Sudan	20%	4	20
15 to 19%			
Somalia	19%	5	27
U.A.E.	17%	4	24
Morocco	16%	3	19
Algeria	15%	5	33
10 to 14%			
Jordan	14%	4	29
Syria	13%	4	30
Palestine	13%	3	23
Djibouti	13%	3	23
Oman	11%	3	27
5 to 9%			
Qatar	7%	1	14
Tunisia	7%	2	29
Iran	7%	2	31
Yemen	6%	2	32
Iraq	5%	1	22
0 to 4%			
Bahrain	4%	1	23
Saudi Arabia	0%	0	22
Libya	-	-	-

Source: The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

Women in Parliament				
The countries are ranked and colour-coded according to the percentage of women in unicameral parliaments or the lower house of parliament, reflecting elections/appointments up to 1 January 2020				
	Lower or Single House		Upper House or Senate	
	% Women	Women/Seat	% Women	Women/Seat
50%				
U.A.E.	50.0%	20/40	-	-
25 to 49%				
Iraq	26.4%	87/329	-	-
Djibouti	26.2%	17/65	-	-
Algeria	25.8%	119/460	6.8%	9/32
20 to 24%				
Tunisia	24.9%	54/217	-	-
Somalia	24.4%	67/275	24.1%	13/54
Morocco	20.5%	81/395	11.7%	14/120
15 to 19%				
Saudi Arabia	19.9%	30/151	-	-
Libya	16.0%	30/188	-	-
Jordan	15.4%	20/130	15.4%	10/065
Egypt	15.1%	90/596	-	-
Bahrain	15.0%	6/40	23	9/40
10 to 14%				
Syria	12.4%	31/250	-	-
5 to 9%				
Qatar	9.8%	4/41	-	-
Kuwait	6.3%	4/63	-	-
Iran	5.9%	17/289	-	-
0 to 4%				
Lebanon	4.7%	6/128	-	-
Oman	2.3%	2/86	27	15/86
Yemen	0.3%	1/301	32	3/111
Palestine	-	-	-	-
Sudan	-	-	-	-

Source: The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

World and Regional Averages of Women in Parliament			
	Lower or Single House	Upper House or Senate	Both houses combined
World average	24.9%	24.7%	24.9%
Middle east & North Africa	17.5%	10.8%	16.6%

Source: The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

- poor levels of transparency and lack of fairness in appointments;
- the burden on women of unpaid care work and domestic work;
- persistent gender stereotypes, including that judicial work is not appropriate for women;
- fragmented support from national women's machineries and civil society.

Moreover, while quotas have been effective in increasing the numbers of women in legislative bodies, there is little evidence that this results in outcomes that are beneficial to women in a practical sense. Due to patriarchal socio-cultural norms, women still face discrimination in the judiciary; for example, women in Lebanon who seek to be judges are often met with discriminatory assignments and face the challenge of having to 'overachieve' in order to prove their capabilities.⁹⁵²

BIASES AND PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

Entry into politics is mostly secured through two mechanisms: appointments and elections. Most of the countries in the region have some form of legislative body that is either fully or partially elected through public vote, and in all countries studied, women legally have the right to vote.⁹⁵³ However, perception bias does tend to limit women's participation in politics.

Perceptions of women as leaders, and especially political leaders, are significantly more negative in

the region as compared to global statistics. More than 90 per cent of men in the region believe that men make better leaders and do not agree that women's rights are essential, as compared to a global average of 64 per cent (see Figure 4.5). These statistics underline an important social and/or cultural norm in the region – that women are not seen as public leaders.

While biases are difficult to measure using survey instruments and can be impacted by the type and style of questions asked, as well as the respondents' reaction to the surveyor, data consistently show persistent biases against women as leaders. Available data published by UNDP evidence that gender bias is significantly more prevalent in the region among males and females than the worldwide average: 53 per cent of women globally versus 75 per cent in the MENA and Arab States region and 64 per cent of men globally versus 90 per cent of men in the region.⁹⁵⁴ UNDP's measurement of political bias is based on two indicators - men make better political leaders than women (agree/disagree) and women have the same rights as men (Likert scale),⁹⁵⁵ political bias against women in the region is significant. As demonstrated in the table below, the majority of men and women have bias against women in politics.⁹⁵⁶ These biases are also manifested through direct perceptions of men being better at politics than women, as demonstrated in Table 4.6.⁹⁵⁷ Women consistently receive poorer marks in terms of their readiness or ability to be political leaders.

951 Source: The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

952 ESCWA, Women in the Judiciary in Lebanon. 2018. p. 22-23.

953 Women's Suffrage and Beyond, 'Middle East.'

954 United Nations Development Program, 'Tackling Social Norms: A Game Changer for Gender Inequalities.'

955 Ibid

956 United Nations Development Program, 'Tackling Social Norms: A Game Changer for Gender Inequalities.'

957 Arab Barometer, 'Arab Barometer Wave V.'

Table 4.5:

Women in the Judiciary (2019)

ESCWA Category	Country	Percentage of Female Judges	Data Year	Notes
GCC	Bahrain	9	2016	7 out of 49 (14.2 per cent of public prosecutors are female)
	Kuwait	-	2017	No female judges but there are 22 female deputy prosecutors. Women are also serving in the commercial arbitration structure, but it is not considered within the judiciary
	Oman	-	2017	No female judges, but women account for 20 per cent of public prosecutors.
	Qatar	1	2011	
	Saudi Arabia	<1	2018	There is one female arbitrator in commercial court, considered as a quasi-judicial position.
	UAE	<1	2015	Only four female judges, but there are also female public prosecutors.
Maghreb	Algeria	42	2017	
	Libya	14	Unknown	The figure excludes the Litigation Authority and Public Defence department, which fall under the umbrella of the judiciary but do not comprise judgeship positions. Women are well represented in both institutions, amounting to 61 per cent and 68 per cent of staff, respectively.
	Morocco	23.5	2018	Women account for 16 per cent of public prosecutors.
	Tunisia		2018	
Mashreq	Egypt	<1	2018	
	Iraq	7	2018	
	Jordan	22	2018	Women account for 2.7 per cent of public prosecutors.
	Lebanon	49.3	2018	Women represent 30 per cent of public prosecutors
	State of Palestine	17.8	2018	
LDC	Syria	17.5	2018	
	Djibouti	38.6	2009	
	Somalia	-	2018	
	Sudan	12.6	2018	
	Yemen	1.8	2006	
	Arab States	14		

Source: ESCWA, 2019. Women in the Judiciary in the Arab States: Removing Barriers, Increasing Numbers.

Notes: The public availability of data on the presence of women in the judiciary in Arab States is generally inconsistent. Only a handful of Arab States (such as Morocco, State of Palestine, and Tunisia) monitor the presence of women in the judiciary and regularly make available the relevant data to stakeholders, constituting a positive practice to be emulated. The figure provided in the table is the total percentage of female judges at all court levels within the state's judicial system (therefore excluding religious courts in states where such courts are separate entities not under the authority of the state). For states where separate data were not available, or where the two types' roles are not clearly separated, the figure also includes public prosecutors (or their equivalent). The average for Arab States is provided for indicative purposes only, owing to the limitations highlighted above.

Figure 4.5:

Perceptions of Women Political Leaders

Based on survey data from Arab Barometer Wave V, this figure shows the percent of respondents by sex who agree with the statement "In general, men are better at political leadership than women"

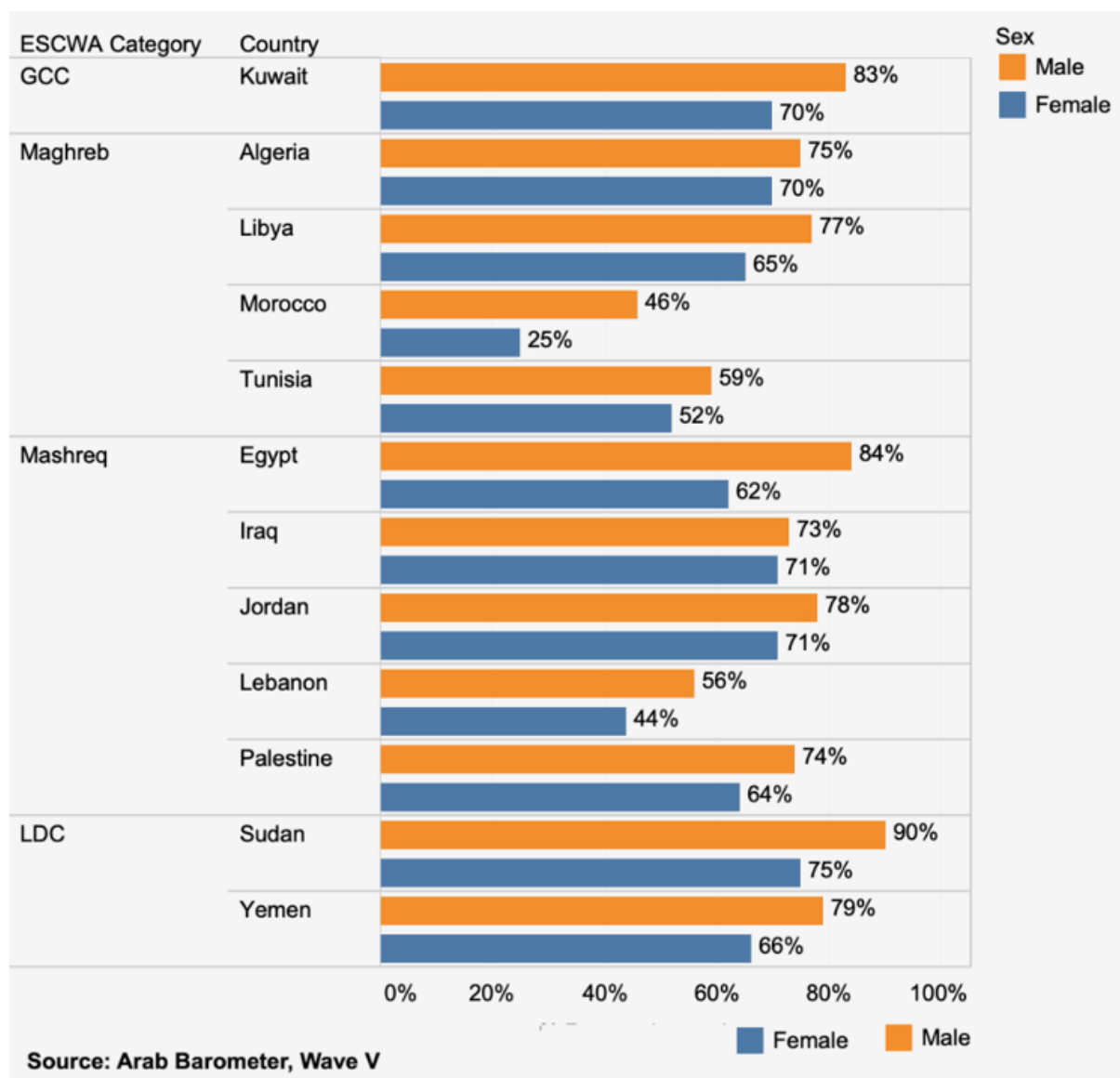


Table 4.6:
Measuring Political Bias

Country	per cent of women	per cent of men
Algeria	70.44	89.47
Iran	79.48	89.71
Iraq	80.21	95.71
Jordan	90.83	91.5
Kuwait	78.34	93.88
Lebanon	69.61	81.46
Libya	72.25	93.07
Morocco	55.63	82.55
State of Palestine	85.35	93.44
Qatar	89.95	93.46
Tunisia	67.25	88.49
Yemen	79.88	94.98
<i>MENA and Arab States</i>	<i>74.75</i>	<i>90.17</i>
<i>World Average</i>	<i>53.03</i>	<i>64.01</i>

Source: United Nations Development Program, 'Tackling Social Norms: A Game Changer for Gender Inequalities.'

→ Violence against Women in Politics

Violence against Women in Politics (VAWP) is a global phenomenon that falls between the gap of GBV and political violence.⁹⁵⁸ Types of VAWP range from psychological, semiotic, economic, sexual, and physical, and, more recently, cyber acts of violence.⁹⁵⁹ Assassinations, physical violence, including rape and sexual harassment, sexist remarks, verbal abuse, and threats of reprisal are used as tools to intimidate, humiliate and put an end to a woman's political career. A study by the Network of Arab Women Parliamentarians for Equality (Ra'edat) on the scale of violence against women parliamentarians in the Arab region found that 79.6 per cent were exposed to one or more forms of violence, and that 32 per cent reported experiencing harassment on the internet or social media.⁹⁶⁰ After the Arab uprisings, several female leaders and women's human rights defenders were targeted and, in some cases, killed as was seen in Libya⁹⁶¹ and Iraq.⁹⁶²

958 According to UNDP and UN Women, 'Violence against women in political life is any act of, or threat of, gender-based violence, resulting in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women, that prevents them from exercising and realizing their political rights, whether in public or private spaces, including the right to vote and hold public office, to vote in secret and to freely campaign, to associate and assemble, and to enjoy freedom of opinion and expression. Such violence can be perpetrated by a family member, community member and or by the State...' Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections, A Programming Guide, UN Women/UNDP, 2017.

959 Inter-Parliamentary Union, Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians, 2016.

960 The Study on Violence against Women in Politics: Parliamentarians in the Arab World; A Model, issued by the Arab Female parliamentarians for Equality Network ('Ra'edat'), 2019

961 Amnesty International, Libya: Women human rights defenders still under attack, four years after activist's assassination, 2018.

962 Minority Rights Group International, Civilian Activist under Threat, in Iraq, 2018.

Table 4.7:

Proportion of negotiator roles held by women during peace talks

ESCWA Category	Country	per cent women	Year
Mashreq	State of Palestine	25 per cent	2013
	Syria	16 per cent	2017
LDC	Yemen	4 per cent	2018
	Sudan	15 per cent	2018

Source: Council on Foreign Relations

→ Participation and Leadership in Peace and Security

Through peace processes around the world, it has been shown that the inclusion of women is central to creating meaningful and lasting peace, though women's participation in peace and security has only recently become a priority of the international community. Efforts to include women in peace negotiations and security efforts have increased since the passage of United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000 and 2242 in 2015, which established the importance of developing Women, Peace and Security (WPS) National Action Plan (NAP).

The NAPs adopted by individual countries to implement Security Council resolution 1325 and ensuing resolutions, constitute the WPS agenda. They are central to engaging women, civil society, and government in ensuring that States are active in their commitment towards the prevention of violence, protection of women, and the participation of women and relief and reconstruction, which may include negotiating peace settlements and solving protracted problems. In the 20 years since the initial adoption of UNSCR 1325, developing and adopting NAPs at a national level still faces substantive challenges. This section will explore national and regional efforts in place, and the challenges facing the implementation of NAPs in the region.

UNSCR 1325 AND THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN PROCESS

In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). The first of its kind, the resolution affirmed the importance of including women in peace processes and negotiations and set forth an agenda to increase the inclusion of women in peace and security efforts around the globe.⁹⁶³ In 2005, the United Nations Security Council asked member countries to develop NAPs on WPS – as of 2019, only seven country-level action plans have been passed: Iraq, the State of Palestine, Jordan, Tunisia, Lebanon, the Sudan and Yemen.⁹⁶⁴

In addition to these country-level plans, the League of Arab States adopted a regional strategy for WPS in 2012, aimed at supporting efforts to advance the WPS agenda at a regional level.⁹⁶⁵ The NAP process has also been undertaken at various levels throughout the region, with Libya's country-level planning being stalled since the conflict in 2014.⁹⁶⁶

These efforts have shown a great commitment to inclusion and the consideration of women's roles in peace and security. The initial three NAPs – Iraq, the State of Palestine, and Jordan – included important advancements in providing a level of accountability

⁹⁶³ UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) [on women and peace and security], 31 October 2000

⁹⁶⁴ Parke, Farr, and Alodaat, 'Eighteen Years On: Assessing the Implementation of the UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Arab States Region.'

⁹⁶⁵ General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, Arab Women Organization, and UNWomen, 'Regional Strategy Protection of Arab Women Peace and Security.'

⁹⁶⁶ Parke, Farr, and Alodaat, 'Eighteen Years On: Assessing the Implementation of the UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Arab States Region.'

for leadership in addressing challenges facing women in times of peace and conflict. Based on these achievements, efforts are still underway to ensure that current and future NAPs take into consideration women as more than victims of violence and to address the practical needs of women and girls in conflict areas.⁹⁶⁷

Although the region is witnessing more engagement of Ministries of Foreign Affairs in the WPS agenda, particularly in Egypt, Morocco and Syria,⁹⁶⁸ additional efforts need to be made in the implementation of the WPS agenda, primarily through the empowerment of responsible institutions, such as NWMs. A recent analysis of the WPS response in the region showed that NWMs often lack the resources to fully undertake their NAP agenda, that there often is insufficient communication with NAP entities and law enforcement and military personnel, and that often these institutions (such as NWMs) suffer during conflict, the very time which they are often needed most.⁹⁶⁹ A national study in Iraq showed limited engagement of young women in the national peace and security agenda, highlighting the need of greater youth participation in terms of the WPS.

Women's civil society in the region has actively engaged with the WPS agenda at the international level. For example, the annual United Nations Security Council Open Debate on 'Women and Peace and Security' and Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict have provided venues for activists to educate the international community on the status of women and girls in occupied and conflict-affected contexts. Notably, activists from the State of Palestine,⁹⁷⁰ Sudan,⁹⁷¹ Libya,⁹⁷² and Iraq⁹⁷³ have all testified in front of the Security Council to highlight the gender impact of conflict and occupation on the lives of women and girls in

the region, and the need to simultaneously protect women and girls from conflict-related gender-based violence, the threats to women human rights defenders, the increasing militarization and insecurity in the region, and the need to better engage women in peace making and peacebuilding processes. These interventions, while providing a gendered perspective to conflict, occupation and transition in the region, continue to indicate that women and girls bear a unique burden in these contexts and that more needs to be done nationally and internationally to support protection and engagement.

WOMEN IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE REGION

While the WPS agenda has made progress, globally women only constitute 4 per cent of signatories on peace negotiations and less than 10 per cent of peace negotiators.⁹⁷⁴ On the 15th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, the Security Council passed a follow-on resolution (UNSCR 2242) that re-affirmed the United Nations' commitment to women's inclusion in peace processes, as well as establishing an Informal Expert Group whose responsibility it would be to gather information on peace strategies of member countries, provide information, and advise on the inclusion of women in peace and security strategies and talks.⁹⁷⁵

As demonstrated in Table 4.7, there is still much that can be done to ensure women participate in peace processes at a higher level.

In a review of the last 20 years of efforts by women as part of official NAP processes as well as civil society activism, three key challenges have been identified: militarization of efforts, politicization of peace processes, and lack of accountability for the

967 Swaine, 'Balancing Priorities: Lessons and Good Practices from Iraq, Jordan and Palestine for NAP-1325 Drafting Teams.'

968 For more information please see the High-Level Meeting available on <https://www.unescwa.org/events/high-level-virtual-meeting-occasion-20th-anniversary-unscr-1325>

969 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 'Women, Peace and Security: The Role of Institutions in Times of Peace and War in the Arab Region.'

970 Siniora, 2018.

971 Salah, 2019.

972 Megheirbi, 2012; Miloud, 2019.

973 Allami, 2014; Mohammed 2015.

974 OXFAM, 'Factsheet: Women, Peace and Security in the Middle East and North Africa Region.'

975 Oyarzun and Rycroft, 'Guidelines for the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security.'

NAP/WPS process.⁹⁷⁶ Both militarization – in terms of actual combat and fighting as well as military management of negotiations – and politicization are exclusionary to women in large part. As explored earlier in this chapter, women still remain the minority in governments in the region, and do not often serve in ministries central to conflict, such as Foreign Affairs or Defence. Additionally, NAP processes are often under-funded and not provided the resources needed to ensure the process is fully executed.⁹⁷⁷ As a result, despite massive efforts by women on the ground, the mobilization of resources and implementation often fall short.

WOMEN AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROCESSES

Over the past ten years, the MENA and Arab States region has seen devastating conflict and political upheaval. Only a handful of impacted States have managed to use transitional justice processes to increase stability and reform legislation and institutions. Despite the critiques of the effectiveness of transitional justice as a process and outcome, particularly for women and other marginalized populations,⁹⁷⁸ several human rights organizations and women's civil society in the region managed to engage in such processes with varying degrees of success. In some parts of the region, women's rights activists and organizations contended with severe backlashes resulting in increased insecurity and a narrowing of human rights.⁹⁷⁹

The most prominent example of women's involvement in transitional justice processes after the uprisings occurred in Tunisia where the Truth and Dignity Commission (Instance Vérité et Dignité or IVD) was established in 2014 to investigate human rights violations committed by the Government and other States actors between 1955-2013. During the four-year mandate, the IVD was led by a female president, with three out of eight female commissioners and involved women in the technical committees and national consultations, as well as women's civil society.⁹⁸⁰ A Women's Committee was responsible for mainstreaming gender across the Commission's work and responding to female victims.⁹⁸¹ Yemen also initiated a transitional justice process in 2011; from March 2013 to January 2014, the National Dialogue Conference was comprised of over a quarter of women and continued with reconciliation efforts, with women comprising about 30 per cent of its 565 members.⁹⁸² However, the process was eventually halted as the country endured greater insecurity and instability.

Several States reformed their constitutions as part of transitional processes, often with input from women's organizations and activists; this was seen in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen.⁹⁸³ In addition, many States, urged on by women's organizations and activists, also engaged in legal reform targeting VAWG with varying degrees of success and sustainability, particularly given that very few states succeeded in their transitional justice endeavors and that conflict continues to impact the region.

976 Kaptan, 'UNSCR 1325 at 20 Years: Perspectives from Feminist Peace Activists and Civil Society.'

977 Ibid.

978 Bell and O'Rourke, 2007.

979 Chaban, 2018; Cooke, 2016.

980 ESCWA, Policy Brief: Employing a gendered approach to transitional justice in the Arab region potential role of national women's machineries, This was the second truth commission in the region; Morocco held the first in 2004.

981 El Gantri, 2015.

982 ESCWA, Policy Brief: Employing a gendered approach to transitional justice in the Arab region potential role of national women's machineries, 2019.

983 See: Elsadda, 2013–2014; McKanders, 2014; Nair, 2013–2014; Charrad and Zarrugh, 2014; Chaban, 2018.