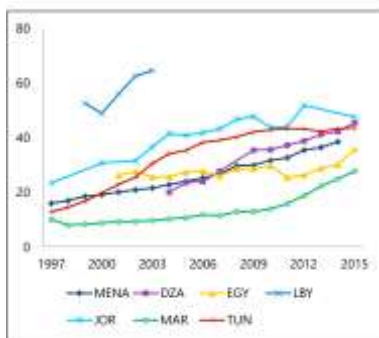




WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FORUM (WEEF)

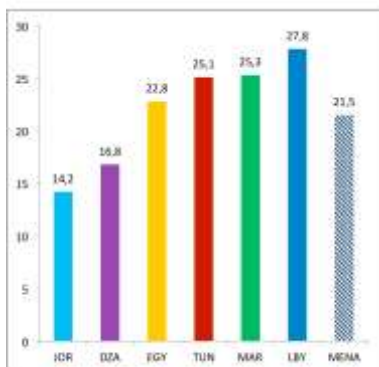
Gender parity is not only a fundamental human right but also a critical economic opportunity for countries. Equating worldwide labour force participation rates of women to their male counterparts could increase global GDP by +26% by 2025. It is estimated that gender-based discrimination in social institutions represents a cost of USD 575 billion for the MENA region.

Female tertiary enrollment ratios (% gross)



Source: UNESCO

Female labour force participation rates (%)



Source: ILO Estimates

Seizing MENA's high growth potential by addressing women's key economic challenges

MENA women are increasingly better educated and skilled: the gender gap in youth literacy has been closed, while the gap for adults continues to shrink. Girls tend to outnumber boys enrolled in tertiary education in almost all MENA countries.

Yet this progress has not translated into equal participation in or access to opportunities in employment, entrepreneurship and public life:

- ◆ **MENA women's participation rates in the labour force are the lowest** in the world, varying among countries and averaging around 24%, as compared to more than 60% in OECD countries.
- ◆ **Women's unemployment rates** are among the highest worldwide – over 10% of economically active females are jobless, much higher than for men.
- ◆ Women tend to be well or even over-represented in the public sector but rates of female enterprise creation and development are very low. **Women's businesses are often informal, home-based enterprises** in traditional sectors with limited capacity for growth.
- ◆ Few women hold senior and executive positions in the private or public sector and women educated to levels comparable to men are employed in jobs that require lower qualifications.

A new international initiative to drive forward MENA women's economic empowerment

Better understanding the full range of challenges facing women in the region and identifying the right policy measures to empower them to contribute fully to MENA economies and societies has become an increasing priority.

To support MENA countries in tapping the considerable potential of women to generate strong and inclusive growth, the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme launched a new **Women's Economic Empowerment Forum** on 7 October 2017 in Cairo, Egypt, under the aegis of H.E. Sahar Nasr, Minister of Investment and International Co-operation of Egypt and H.E. Marie-Claire Swärd Capra, Ambassador of Sweden to Algeria. The Forum was held in conjunction with the release of a groundbreaking OECD publication on *Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries: The impact of legal frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia*.



The Co-chairs of the Women's Economic Empowerment Forum: H.E. Sahar Nasr, Minister of Investment and International Co-operation, Egypt (left) and H.E. Marie-Claire Swärd Capra, Ambassador of Sweden to Algeria (right).



“The OECD has made women’s economic and social empowerment a core pillar of its work. We are fundamentally convinced that gender equality is a pre-condition for building happier, healthier and more prosperous societies.”

Gabriela Ramos, OECD Chief of Staff and Sherpa to the G20

Objectives and priorities

Provide a regional network among government and non-government representatives from OECD and MENA economies to foster discussions on advocacy and exchanges of good practices regarding methods and actions that further enable economic equality among men and women.

Monitor countries’ policy actions and regulatory developments, taking account of policy recommendations and standards to advance equality, non-discrimination and women’s economic and social inclusion.

Identify strategic data collection needs to assess women’s economic empowerment and provide support for strategic gender data development and collection.

Building on the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme, ensure gender mainstreaming in critical policy areas such as investment, trade, employment, skills, entrepreneurship or support to conflict affected economies.

Collaborate with regional instances advocating for gender equality, most notably: the Union for the Mediterranean, UN Women, and the League of Arab Banks (CAWTAR).



The Tunisian Consultation on the WEEF brought together high level participants including (left to right) Fayçal Sahraoui, General Director of the Programme for Gender Equality; Nicola Ehlermann, Head of the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme; H.E. Neziha Labidi, Tunisian Minister of Women, Family and Children and Kalthoum Hamzaoui, General Director for Multilateral Cooperation.



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Learn more about our work on Gender in the MENA region:

www.oecd.org/mena/competitiveness/womenempowerment.htm

