



# **GENDER EQUALITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

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**General overview and focus on the agricultural sector and rural areas**

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**CIHEAM**

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# Foreword by the CIHEAM

Established in 1962, the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) is an intergovernmental organization devoted to sustainable agriculture, food, and nutritional security and the development of rural and coastal areas. Composed of 13 Member States (Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey), the CIHEAM operates through its 4 Institutes based in Bari (Italy), Chania (Greece), Montpellier (France) and Zaragoza (Spain) and the General Secretariat in Paris.

The CIHEAM is a major actor in multilateral cooperation in the fields of agriculture, food, fisheries, and rural development. Its missions revolve around 4 main objectives:

1. Protection of the planet by combating all forms of waste (natural resources, food, knowledge, and know-how...).
2. Food and nutritional security by enhancing sustainable agriculture and food system
3. Inclusive development by investing in new generations and fragile territories.
4. Prevention of crises and resilience of territories

In order to achieve these objectives, the CIHEAM supports the place of women in agriculture, fisheries, and rural activities. Their role is crucial for food security and it represents an essential resource in family farming, sustainable agriculture, and water management. However, the contribution of women to the sustainability of Mediterranean food systems remains poorly assessed, especially in its economic, social, and legal dimensions.

At a time when we are going through an unprecedented health crisis that is likely to worsen the living conditions of the most fragile populations and exacerbate existing socio-economic tensions in the Mediterranean region, it is becoming urgent to make significant efforts toward gender inclusion and to strengthen the place of women and girls in sustainable agricultural and rural development. In this perspective, through its gender and women empowerment strategy, the CIHEAM is developing concrete actions based on training, capacity building, producing and sharing knowledge, and promoting institutional synergies within the framework of regional dialogue mechanisms.

Intending to contribute to a better understanding of these issues, this document draws up a non-exhaustive assessment of the situation of Mediterranean women, by highlighting specificities in the agricultural sector and rural areas, and presenting the main instruments and levers that can be mobilized for more equality and inclusion.

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# INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is one of the most widespread activities in the world and plays a crucial role in food production, environmental protection, landscape conservation, rural employment, and food security. According to the FAO[1], today, 815 million people are hungry, and one in three people suffers from malnutrition. Distress migration reached unprecedented levels in 70 years, as the social cohesion and cultural traditions of rural populations are threatened by a combination of limited access to land and resources and rising numbers of crises, conflicts, and disasters, mostly due to climate change. According to IFAD[2], over 70% of the world's poor people live in rural areas and most rural women and men rely on agriculture to meet their needs.

Gender relations are important determinants of agriculture food security at the micro-level, as access to resources is not distributed evenly within households, with women and girls being most disadvantaged. While the roles of men and women in agriculture are extremely context-specific, some overall patterns can be observed across most countries that relate particularly to women's double burden of productive and "care" work; gender-based cropping and marketing patterns; and gender-specific patterns of employment and discrimination in rural labor markets[3].

Women play a key role in ensuring food security as they represent 43% of the global agricultural workforce. They fill many crucial roles, as farmers, wage laborers, and small-scale entrepreneurs, and also as caretakers of children and the elderly. Rural women have the potential to lift their households and communities out of poverty. Unfortunately, while women are active in rural communities, their multiple roles and responsibilities are not well recognized.

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[1] Transforming food and agriculture to achieve the SDGs, FAO, 2018

[2] <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/latest/photo/asset/39019147>

[3] Gender-based Patterns and Constraints in Rural Development, UNCTAD/LDC/2015.



They often receive lower remuneration for their work than their male colleagues. Women represent a significant share of the farming labour force, but mostly in the lowest-paid, most insecure jobs. The time burden of unpaid household activities can significantly limit the involvement of women in the labour market. They generally have more limited access than men to inputs, services, rural organisations, productive infrastructure and technologies.

Official statistics based on censuses and surveys often underestimate women's work and its contribution to national wealth. Problems persist in the collection of reliable and comprehensive data on rural women's work in agriculture and other productive sectors because of: 1) Invisibility of women's work; 2) The seasonal and part-time nature of women's work, and 3) Unremunerated family (mostly women and children) labour[4].

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), agriculture is central to national economies where nearly 80% of agricultural production comes from small-scale farming. Despite the importance of agricultural activities that are not represented in national statistics due to their unpaid and informal characteristics, the female share of the agricultural labour force in the MENA has greatly increased, from 34% during the period 1990-1995 to almost 45% in 2011, while male contribution has considerably decreased from 66 to 55% during the same period. There are disparities between the countries, and the trend is more important in countries that greatly rely on agriculture such as Algeria, Jordan, Syria, Libya, Palestine, and Egypt[5]. In MENA countries, women are farmers, house workers and waged workers but lack control over most resources and other opportunities. Their contribution to agricultural development and the broader economic and social development, therefore, remains limited.

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[4] Lastarria-Cornhiel, S., *Feminization of agriculture: trends and driving forces: background paper for the World Development Report 2008*, World Bank, Washington DC, 2006,

[https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/9104/WDR2008\\_0020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/9104/WDR2008_0020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

[5] Malika Abdelali-Martini, *Empowering Women in the Rural Labor Force with a Focus on Agricultural*

*Employment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)*, 2011, UN Women in cooperation with FAO, IFAD and WFP

Within the EU, the participation of women in formal economic activities in rural areas still lags behind that of men<sup>[6]</sup> with only 28.4% of farms managed by women (Eurostat, 2018). On the other hand, the work carried out on farms by women (spouses and other female family members) is often invisible and not recognized, thus preventing women from accessing social rights and benefiting from aid and financial schemes. Gender equality and women's empowerment are a prerequisite for sustainable development, as recognized by the Sustainable Development Goals.

With the growing feminization of agriculture around the world, the specific problems faced by women farmers (e.g., insecure rights in the land they cultivate, scarce access to fertilizers, etc.) may put food security at risk in many countries. Aggregate data shows that women comprise about 43% of the agricultural labor force globally and in developing countries<sup>[7]</sup>. Evidence<sup>[8]</sup> shows that when women are given equal access to resources, income opportunities, education, and social protection, agricultural output and food availability increase, and poverty and hunger decline.

This is why, improving women's rights to land and tenure, their participation in rural labor markets and decision-making, providing access to labor-saving technologies to provide women with more time for more productive activities, investing in women's nutrition, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture are crucial for ensuring food security and economic development in the Mediterranean.

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[6] European Commission, A view on employment, growth and innovation in rural areas (SWD(2012) 44 final), 7 March 2012, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2012,

file:///C:/Users/Fatiha%20Hassouni/Downloads/KF0213226ENN.en.pdf

[7] FAO "The Role of Women in Agriculture", ESA Working Paper No. 11-02, report prepared by the SOFA Team and Cheryl Doss, March 2011 <https://www.fao.org/3/am307e/am307e00.pdf>

[8] FAO, "Gender, Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises: Women and Girls as Agents of Resilience", 2016 <https://www.fao.org/3/i6630e/i6630e.pdf>

# **GENDER EQUALITY**

## **IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a keystone of a prosperous economy that fosters sustainable and inclusive growth. It promotes equal rights and the sharing of resources and responsibilities between women and men. In the rural areas of most countries, although the contribution of women remains very significant, they are particularly disadvantaged compared to men.

Even if the Mediterranean region is not a homogeneous space in terms of gender equality, the construction of inclusive and egalitarian societies remains a common high priority for governments. The cultural context is diverse and the opportunities for women and girls, men and boys are highly influenced by the social composition and the power dynamics that exist in each country, and by differences between urban and rural areas. Nonetheless, over the last decade, significant progress has been made in promoting gender equality and advancing women's rights.

Yet, gender equality remains a big issue in the region as inequalities persist at social, economic, and political levels. Conflicts, instability and security issues, and the financial and human crises of the past years, have limited efforts to promote gender equality and human rights – and in some cases, have led to the loss of rights and freedom and disruption of actions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has layered additional challenges to existing conditions. It has also had negative impacts on societies as a whole, including some effects that are unique to, or worse for women.

# The Middle East and North Africa (MENA)[9]

Over the past decades, countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have made significant progress in reducing the gap between girls and boys in areas such as access to education and health care. Maternal mortality declined by 60%, the largest decrease in the world. Women in MENA are more educated than ever before. Literacy rates in the region for females jumped from 61% in 2000 to 72% in 2011, almost all young girls in the region attend school, and more women than men are enrolled in university. More women have been able to redefine their role and attain more access to resources, and their participation in the political and economic spheres has also been increasing[10].

MENA countries have ratified the CEDAW and ILO conventions that promote gender equality and non-discrimination between women and men, despite some reservations introduced by the countries to CEDAW. In addition, after the 2011 uprisings, most governments[11] have amended or adopted new constitutions that recognize the principles of gender equality or non-discrimination. At the time, this recognition at the constitutional level has sent a strong and encouraging signal to the population and to the region about potential progress regarding gender equality in the region.

However, these achievements have not yet translated into a more equal role for women in political, social, and economic life[12]. The qualitative literature on gender in the MENA Region shows the diverse social and cultural norms that influence women in many dimensions of their lives.

Despite the countries' policy and legal commitment to gender equality, the dichotomy between equality and tradition undermines the positions of constitutions in relation to domestic laws. This is evidenced by the reservations made by all countries to the CEDAW (except for Tunisia, which lifted all reservations), which reveal the areas where securing equal rights for women is most problematic – marriage and the family, nationality, social security and freedom of movement.

[9] In this overview, the analysis will be focused on the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Turkey.

[10] Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries – OECD 2017 –

<https://www.oecd.org/countries/libya/women-s-economic-empowerment-in-selected-mena-countries-9789264279322-en.htm>

[11] Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.

[12] Opening Doors: Gender Equality and Development in MENA, © 2013 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank.



In many countries of the MENA region, family laws have been witnessing a trend of reform, particularly with the rise of women's rights groups and activists from the modern middle-class educated and employed women. However, personal status laws, which regulate relations within the family, are not always gender-neutral. Under these laws, women do not have the same rights as men to pursue a profession, engage in travel or head a family. This affects the application of egalitarian provisions in economic, social, and political spheres.

Laws application and practices vary by social class, between urban and rural areas, and, to some extent, by family income level. The existing data shows that the extent of challenges faced by rural women and girls is higher. Illiteracy among rural women persists in MENA countries. Among some rural and poor families, where all members of the family need to work and where girls contribute significantly to household activities, the school can be seen as an unwarranted and costly distraction. In addition, rural people in most countries have less access to health services than their urban counterparts, but rural women have even greater access problems due to undeveloped roads, distance, few female medical practitioners, and lack of privacy in certain facilities like school toilets for example. The last two factors are even more important in more tradition-bound rural societies.

## **Women's economic participation**

### ***Education and employability***

Despite the substantial narrowing of the gender gap in access to education, women's labor force participation assessed in MENA countries remains persistently low and shows signs of a recent decline in some countries.

Recent data illustrates that the MENA region continues to rank the lowest in the world in terms of women's participation in the labor force (Global Gender Gap Index 2020[13]).

The female-to-male labor force participation ratio in MENA countries[14] ranges from 21.2% in Algeria to 39.3% in Libya compared with the world average of 47.1% [15]. In the region, the public sector has traditionally employed the majority of women as it is considered more socially acceptable (Sayre and Hendy, 2013). In 2013, the percentage of working women employed in the public sector was 91% in Libya, 61% in Algeria, and more than 50% in Egypt.

In the MENA region, women are more concentrated in the agriculture sector than men. The female share of the agricultural labor force in the MENA has greatly increased, from 34% during the period 1990-1995 to almost 45% in 2011[16], while men's contribution has considerably decreased from 66 to 55% during the same period. Around 27% of women and 18% of men work in the agricultural sector and up to two-thirds of women work in agriculture in countries with a large rural economy, such as Morocco and Tunisia[17]. In Tunisia, 70% of the agricultural workforce is female.

A minority of MENA countries have legislation that prohibits discrimination in hiring practices, but the majority of MENA countries have constitutions or laws that mandate equal pay for equal work[18]. However, in practice, the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws is uneven. Equal pay provisions are undermined by inequalities in nonwage benefits, such as child and family allowances, which are paid usually to the husband. The gender pay gap in the non-agricultural formal sector ranges from 0 in Turkey to 11% in Jordan, 14% in Egypt, and 28% in Tunisia. The gap is larger in the private sector (17% in Jordan, 35% in Tunisia). It is also larger in the informal sector (30 to 35% in Tunisia).

[13] [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf)

[14] Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia

[15] Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries – OECD 2017

<https://www.oecd.org/countries/libya/women-s-economic-empowerment-in-selected-mena-countries-9789264279322-en.htm>

[16] Source: FAO Statistical Database 2011

[17] CHANGING LAWS AND BREAKING BARRIERS FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN EGYPT, JORDAN, MOROCCO AND TUNISIA © OECD/ILO/CAWTAR 2020

[18] WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2019, World Bank

In rural areas, whether performing paid or unpaid work, classified as informal workers due to their casual and seasonal characteristics, women are vulnerable because of employment that lacks safety and decent work conditions. Rural women in the region typically work long hours, are engaged mainly in non-mechanized, labor-intensive, non-capital-intensive activities, and have primary responsibility for the husbandry of small animals and ruminants. Their activities also include collecting water in difficult conditions, especially in mountainous areas of Algeria<sup>[19]</sup> and Morocco. Despite their important role in agriculture, women own and hold less land than men, and their land is often not as fertile. Women also hold smaller land plots than men, often impeding mechanization and the development of infrastructure

#### **Women's access to land in Egypt**

Before the law, Egyptian women and men have equal rights to land tenure and property ownership. In reality, however, the proportion of women owning land is very low. It is estimated by the NGOs' CEDAW shadow report (Alliance for Arab Women, 2009) to be around 5.8% (women hold about 6% of the cultivated area in Lower Egypt and 4% in Upper Egypt). Customary traditional practices play a significant role in limiting women's ownership of land and property. It is considered more appropriate for property to be registered under a man's name, whether a husband or father.

In rural areas, such as Upper Egypt, women will rarely collect their rightful inheritance shares. This may be for reasons relating to the control of assets and land by male family members who are unwilling to divide the inheritance or to share it with their sisters or mothers. It may also be because women tend to waive their share in favor of their brothers (Qansah, 2012).

Source: Enhancing women's voice, agency, and participation in the economy, EBRD, 2015

In the region, all countries mandate some form of maternity leave, and some countries have provisions for childcare to enable married women to re-enter the workplace after maternity. Paradoxically, laws that require firms to pay for maternity leave and child-care facilities also can function as disincentives to hiring women. Meanwhile, pension laws that mandate a retirement age earlier for women than for men effectively reduce the amount of pension that a woman receives and can disincentive women by limiting their expected career progression<sup>[21]</sup>. In rural areas, household and caring chores are not considered economic activities, even if they remain essential for the livelihoods and well-being of family members.

[19] Abdelali-Martini, Malika and Naima Ait-Hamlet, 2005. Gender and Livelihoods in Four Villages of Ighil Ali Community – Algeria". SDC Mountains Project Research report, ICARDA, Aleppo, Syria. ICARDA Report, 29 p.

[20] FAO's commitment to empowering rural women in the Near East and North Africa region – Watch-Letter N°40 "Strengthening the role of women in rural and agricultural areas Obstacles and opportunities", CIHEAM, UfM, 2018

[21] Opening Doors: Gender Equality and Development in the Middle East and North Africa, World Bank, 2013

The share of women in positions of high responsibility is low in both the public and private sectors. In 2015, the average share of executive positions held by women in the public and private sectors combined was 14.8% in Tunisia, 12.8% in Morocco, 9.7% in Egypt, 5.1% in Jordan, and 4.9% in Algeria[22]. In rural areas, women face several constraints in accessing credit and other financial services needed to build up capital and start an enterprise and acquire equipment or the skilled labor required in the production process. This virtually cuts them off from related decision-making processes, support systems, new technologies, rural services, and training.

## **Employment**

MENA region also witnesses high levels of unemployment, in particular among young, educated women. Unemployment rates among young women are nearly 50% higher than among young men. Female youth unemployment rates reach levels as high as 69.2% in Libya. In Egypt and Libya, female youth unemployment increased by more than 15% from 2010 to 2013, in Jordan it increased by 7%, whereas it remained constant in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco[23]. Data shows that unemployed women are also better educated than unemployed men. In some countries, women's unemployment rates are systematically higher than those for men among tertiary graduates (as in Turkey and Tunisia). In Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco, women with tertiary education are more likely to be unemployed than those with lower education levels. In Algeria and Jordan, 52% and 65% of unemployed women respectively are university graduates, compared to only 11% and 21% among men[24]. In many countries of the region, young women in rural areas have a higher probability of being unemployed than young males. Unemployment rates among young women aged 15–24 approach 50%, compared to 10–20% for males.

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[22] ILO, 2015, quoted in 2007 by OECD in their publication "Women's economic empowerment in selected MENA Countries: the impact of legal frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia".

[23] ILOSTAT database, <http://www.ilo.org/ilostat>

[24] Women in Business & Management: Gaining Momentum in the Middle East & North Africa, International Labour Organisation Regional Office for Arab States, [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_446101.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_446101.pdf), ILO, 2016

The main factors hindering the female labor force in the region are weak support systems (such as public transportation and childcare services), educational disadvantages, and discrimination in recruitment and wage. Vulnerable or informal employment<sup>[25]</sup> is particularly high among women in MENA countries, particularly in rural and agricultural areas resulting in poor earnings and low-quality jobs. Women's work in agriculture and in the informal sector continues to be ill-captured and underestimated in surveys<sup>[26]</sup>. The main reason is that they are mainly conducted at home or from home, and as such are considered "domestic" and not "economic". Available data shows that vulnerable employment is higher among women than men in Egypt and Morocco. In Egypt, 24% of working women worked fewer than 35 hours a week in 2012, compared with only 4% of working men. Women work mostly in the agricultural sector (60%) and manufacturing jobs (17%). In Morocco, a potential explanation for the high rate of vulnerable employment among women is their extensive participation in the agricultural sector in rural areas. In urban areas, women are more concentrated than men in small businesses, which tend to have more precarious work conditions – 45% and 40%, respectively<sup>[27]</sup>.

### ***Access to finance***

In entrepreneurship, the gender gap in the Middle East-North Africa region is the greatest in the world, with around 12% of adult women and 31% of adult men working as entrepreneurs<sup>[28]</sup>. Legislation on the establishment and management of businesses in the six countries of the Mediterranean does not distinguish between men and women. However, women entrepreneurs face gender-specific difficulties that may hinder them from establishing, managing, or developing a business. For instance, although laws regulating enterprise development are gender-neutral, personal status laws make distinctions between men and women that create barriers to women's access to finance.

[25] Defined as work performed without any labour contract, job security or social benefits (Assaad and Barsoum, 2007)

[26] Enhancing Women's Voice, Agency and Participation in the Economy, EBRD, 2015

[27] High Commission of Planning, Morocco dataset, 2013

[28] MENA Regional Report, GEM, 2012



Social norms embedded in the personal status laws have an impact on women's overall economic independence, assertiveness, and the assessment of their capacities for entrepreneurship. In rural areas, discriminatory inheritance laws and social customs can drastically limit women's ownership of land and other assets. These laws can be a particular hindrance to women with entrepreneurial aspirations and to those who seek both autonomy and influence in this context. Rural women also face difficulties in obtaining information about and accessing specialized entrepreneurship training. While such training is increasingly available in the region, courses on offer are often concentrated in a few urban areas. Moreover, sexual harassment and the protective role of the husband significantly limit the geographical mobility of women. Due to these factors, combined with the burden of household responsibilities, limited infrastructures and transportation, and the lack of awareness about available programs, only a small share of women entrepreneurs benefit from advisory or business development services and access to different kinds of information and services that are important for starting and growing a business. Such issues serve as barriers to formality for more women than does the prospect of having to pay taxes[29].

On the other hand, available financial instruments often fail to meet the expectations and specific requirements of women in terms of reasonable interest rates, collateral requirements, adequate loan amounts, and repayment terms. Consequently, almost all businesswomen in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria, regardless of age, report credit constraints as the most severe barrier to starting and growing a business[30]. Women have little experience with formal banking, especially in rural areas, where formal financial institutions rarely have an established presence[31].

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[29] ILO, 2017d : « Women's Entrepreneurship Development Assessment, Egypt (Geneva) » :

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---emp\\_ent/---ifp\\_seed/documents/publication/wcms\\_551168.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---ifp_seed/documents/publication/wcms_551168.pdf) ,

2017f : « Évaluation nationale du développement de l'entrepreneuriat féminin, Tunisie » :

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---emp\\_ent/---ifp\\_seed/documents/publication/wcms\\_551170.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---ifp_seed/documents/publication/wcms_551170.pdf)

[30] ILO, 2017d : « Women's Entrepreneurship Development Assessment, Egypt (Geneva) », 2017e : « Évaluation nationale du développement de l'entrepreneuriat féminin en Algérie », 2017f : « Évaluation nationale du développement de l'entrepreneuriat féminin, Tunisie »

[31] Women in Business and Management: Gaining Momentum in the Middle East and North Africa: Regional Report (Beirut, ILO Regional Office), 2016

Micro-credit possibilities, the only formal loan products to which many rural women in MENA have access[32], provide resources that are too small to ensure sustainable business growth and job creation. Such loans are better considered as instruments for poverty reduction rather than entrepreneurship promotion.

### ***Access to technology***

The availability and use of information and communication technology (ICT) that could facilitate access to state-of-the-art knowledge and technology lag far behind, especially in rural areas. Many businesswomen are not aware of programs and technologies that would enable them to move up value chains, especially in rural regions, both inside and outside agriculture, and do not know how to use ICT. The untapped potential of ICT to improve knowledge and skills, foster new market development, and increase the productivity of small and micro-enterprises, therefore, remains very significant. In rural Egypt for example, only 2.5% of women entrepreneurs use smartphones and mobile Internet compared to 78% in the Greater Cairo area. Likewise, only 4.1% of women entrepreneurs in rural areas use computers in their businesses compared to 15.5% in urban areas[33].

### **Women's political participation**

Across the MENA region, the participation of women in representative bodies shows improvements, although it is still uneven, rising from a regional average of only 3.3% in 1997 to 18.2% in 2017. Most countries guarantee constitutional equality for women and men. The representation of women in parliaments varies between countries but is still significantly lower than men. The total proportion of women holding national parliament seats in the MENA is estimated at 16 %, which is lower than the global percentage (23%). Nonetheless, the gap between countries is relatively high: in Algeria and Tunisia, more than 30% of seats are held by women, which is higher than the 28% average for OECD countries.

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32] ILO, 2017d : « Women's Entrepreneurship Development Assessment, Egypt (Geneva) », 2017f : « Évaluation nationale du développement de l'entrepreneuriat féminin, Tunisie »

[33] ILO, 2017d : « Women's Entrepreneurship Development Assessment, Egypt (Geneva) », 2017e : « Évaluation nationale du développement de l'entrepreneuriat féminin en Algérie », 2017f : « Évaluation nationale du développement de l'entrepreneuriat féminin, Tunisie »

Some countries demonstrate clear progress in the access of women to top positions in the executive branch of power. MENA countries have appointed several female ministers (the Palestinian Authority, Morocco, Algeria, and Jordan), female ambassadors (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia), and some have elected female mayors (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority). Still, the proportion of female ministers remains low in most MENA countries. When women serve as ministers, they are often responsible for "soft" matters focusing on social policy issues.

The influence of women in other decision-making institutions remains low throughout the region. Few women hold leadership positions in workers' unions, and the participation of women in trade unions is almost always limited to women's issues such as the Social Committee and the Education Committee[34]. In rural areas, even if there are no legal obstacles to political participation and leadership of women, they continue to be a minority in political organizations and trade unions.

## **Gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women and girls (VAWG)**

Gender-based violence and violence against women are significant issues in the MENA region. All countries have a high prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) both in private and public spaces. According to UN Women[35], 37% of Arab women have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime and there are indicators that the percentage might be higher in rural areas.

Data on GBV prevalence rates are still relatively limited across the region. However, considerable efforts have been by countries to increase the number of household surveys[36] to estimate the magnitude of this problem. The prevalence of violence from Intimate Partner (IPV) ranges from 32% in Egypt to 55% in Morocco. Prevalence of workplace sexual harassment is 70% in Egypt, 58% in Tunisia, 23% in West Bank/Gaza, and 14% in Morocco.

[34] "Women's Political Participation", OECD, 2018

[35] <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

[36] Household Gender-Based Violence surveys have been conducted by governmental statistics agencies in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and West Bank/Gaza

The highest prevalence of early marriage was found in West Bank/Gaza (at 24%), followed by Egypt (17%), Morocco (16%), Lebanon (11%), and Jordan (8%)[37]. In Egypt, 92% of women and girls aged between 15 and 49 have experienced Female Genital Mutilation[38]. On the other hand, the different conflicts in the region have led to an increase in the level of violence and violations of women's rights. Early marriages have increased among refugees and communities, and reports of violence against women have also increased.

Few countries have developed national policies, strategies, or plans explicitly focused on GBV in all its forms. The exceptions include laws on FGM and sexual harassment in public spaces (Egypt); policies establishing centers for the protection of survivors (West Bank/Gaza); and policies in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia addressing sexual harassment in the workplace. In addition, Morocco and Tunisia have adopted laws incriminating GBV while Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia have endorsed laws prohibiting child/early or forced marriage.

The social context in MENA countries continues to provide justification and tolerance for many forms of GBV. Across the region, however, a social shift is beginning to take hold, driven by the regime changes resulting from the "Arab Spring" as well as by local and national civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are pioneers in putting GBV at the center of the public debate.

## European Union

Policies on gender equality have been drawn up since the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, with the Treaty of Rome. Following the establishment of the founding treaty, this basic principle was gradually clarified and developed by several Council directives, which dealt mostly with economic perspectives including pay, employment, health and safety, maternity, and parental leave, as well as other issues pertinent to work-life balance.

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[37] Countering Gender-Based Violence Initiative – MENA, Context Analysis, USAID,2016

[38] UN Women - Global Database on Violence Against Women?

None of these legal measures, dealt specifically with the principle of gender equality[39]. However, EU gender policies are insufficiently implemented at the national level, since gender equality and gender mainstreaming are often a rhetorical reference rather than an integral part of (national) programs. Researchers suggest that gender issues should be integrated into rural policies at various levels (EU, national and local) and there is a need to intensify research on rural governance structures and processes from a gender equality perspective[40].

### **Promoting literacy among women in Cyprus**

In order to empower groups of women in vulnerable situations, the Cypriot Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, and Youth mapped the needs and aspirations of women coming from multiple ethnic backgrounds and provides them with Greek language lessons and vocational/professional guidance.

The initiative also raises awareness of multicultural issues, encourages respect for diversity in schools, and promotes computer literacy among women and in rural areas. It includes specific measures for schoolgirls in vulnerable situations, such as free of charge access to all-day school, including participating in extracurricular sports and academic activities. Free lunch is also provided for vulnerable students.

*Source: 2021 Report on Gender Equality in the EU*

## **Women's Economic participation**

Within the EU, the participation of women in formal economic activities in rural areas still lags behind that of men. Unemployment among women is generally higher in rural areas, and over the last 15 years, there has been no conspicuous progress in reducing existing gaps between female and male unemployment. Evidence from the latest report on agricultural statistics published in 2018, shows that women in rural areas of the EU make up below 50% of the total rural population, they represent 45% of the economically active population, and about 40% of them work on family farms[41].

[39] Beijing + 25: The Fifth Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States, European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 2020

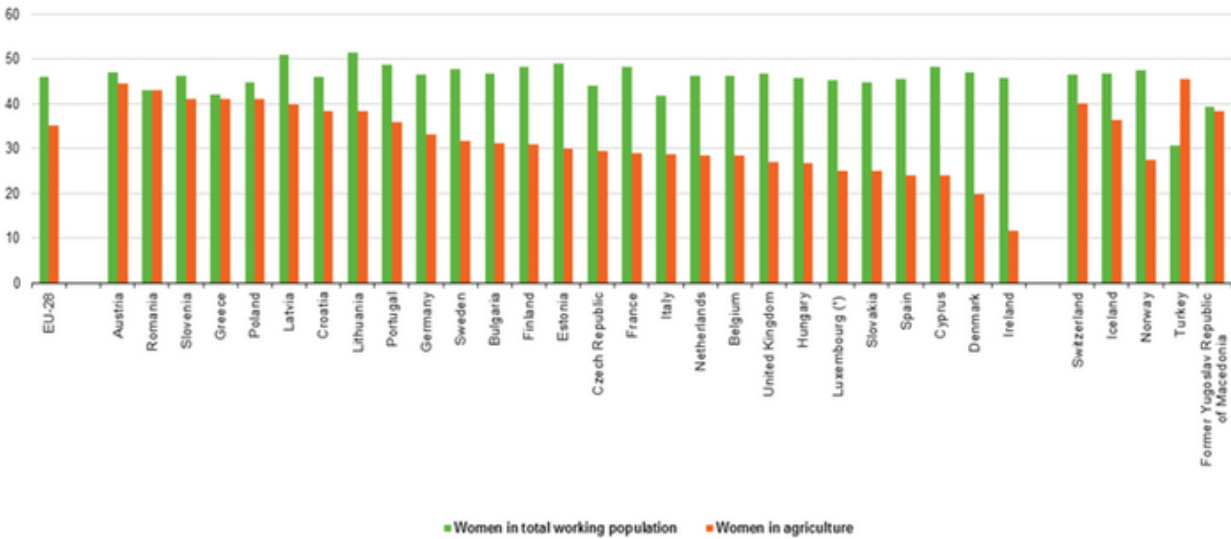
[40] Wiest, K. (ed.), Women and Migration in Rural Europe: Labour Markets, Representations and Policies, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016

[41] The Professional Status of Rural Women in the EU, European Union, 2019



Their contribution to the rural economy is even greater since their participation in the informal rural economy is often invisible and is not statistically recognized [42], preventing women from accessing social security services and benefiting from agricultural aid schemes and development programs. Furthermore, rural women often do not benefit from family-care support provided by public services. A gender gap is also evident in the agricultural sector, where women lack equal access to resources and specific training and tend to manage smaller farms; meanwhile, the great majority of women in farming are officially categorized as working on farms as 'family members', even when the daily routine of running the farm is equally shared with their partners.

**Figure 1: Women in the total working population and in agriculture, 2016**



Note: Malta not represented due to low reliability.  
 (\*) women working in agriculture: low reliability.

Source: Eurostat

At the EU level, women are still less likely to be employed than men, and the gender pay gap persists at around 16%. Employment rates since 2005 (before the outbreak of the pandemic) have remained systematically higher for men than women. In 2019, 79% of men were employed compared to only 67.3% of women. This resulted in a gender employment gap for the EU27 of 11.7%[43]. Women in rural areas have more difficulties accessing the labor market: the differences in the employment gap between rural women and women in cities amounts to 2%[44] (Figure 1).

[42] By definition of WIEGO (available at: [www.wiego.org/informal-economy/about-informal-economy](http://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/about-informal-economy))  
 [43] Eurostat, Employment and Activity by Sex and Age - Annual Data, 2020. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfsi\\_emp\\_a/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfsi_emp_a/default/table?lang=en)  
 [44] [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/product/page/LFST\\_R\\_ERGAU\\_\\_custom\\_443889](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/product/page/LFST_R_ERGAU__custom_443889)

While the gender employment gap narrowed by 4.6% between 2005 and 2019, the rate of this improvement has slowed down and stagnated since 2015. Taking part-time work into account, more prevalent amongst women, the gender gap for full-time equivalent employment in 2019 amounts to 17.4%[45]. On the other hand, women perform an average of 13 hours more unpaid work each week than men, and care responsibilities keep 7.7 million women out of the labor market. Once in the labor market, women are more likely to have jobs that are precarious and part-time. This became particularly visible in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008-2009, which led to reductions in the number of public-sector jobs (mostly performed by women) and worrying deregulation of working conditions in private-sector job alternatives. Lower salaries, a higher likelihood of working part-time, and career breaks to take care of dependants all lead to women receiving 37% less in pensions than men. This is reflected in a greater risk of old-age poverty among women in the many EU Member States[46],[47].

The rate of self-employed women in rural areas is about 38%. Women are more affected by unemployment than men (7.1% vs. 7.6% respectively)[48]. The biggest rate of women's unemployment is registered in rural regions of Greece. Around 30% of farms across the EU are managed by women. Member States with the highest share of women as farm managers are Latvia and Lithuania, while in some Member States (Germany, Denmark, Malta, and The Netherlands) the proportion of female farm managers is below the EU average (30%). Women's gross hourly earnings are on average 16.2% lower than those of men. The gender pension gap is 37.6% in the 65 and over age group and is 10% higher in rural areas.

**Table 1: The gender gap on EU farms**

	Male	Female
Working on the farm on a regular basis	58 %	42 %
Working as a farm holder	70 %	30 %
Working as a family member	42 %	58 %

[45] EUROSTAT 2021

[46] Beijing + 25: The Fifth Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States, European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 2020

[47] The EU Gender Report 2021

[48] EUROSTA : Data for the period 2013-2017 –

Farm manager with full agricultural training	83 %	17 %
Average farm size in hectares (ha)	20 ha	8 ha
Average livestock units per farm (LU)	26 LU	8 LU

Source: Eurostat, Farm Structure Survey 2013

Given that the participation of women in the labour market in a long-term perspective depends on the availability of long-term care services, an assessment report[49] commissioned by the European Commission on the impact of demographic ageing on the EU social systems, concludes that infrastructure for long-term care is insufficient to meet the rising needs of an ageing population. This is exacerbated for some remote and rural regions that typically face challenges in terms of quality and scale of social services provided. Adopted in January 2021, the Commission Green Paper on Ageing, therefore, called for an increase in investment in long-term care services infrastructure and for the improvement of working conditions for professionals in the sector to cover the expected increase in service users in the coming decades[50]. It launched a public consultation about the long-term impacts of demographic ageing on our societies, including in the area of long-term care[51].

## **Women's political participation**

Progress towards gender balance in decision-making processes is slow and uneven. Women continue to be under-represented in most fields of decision-making, including politics, economics, business, health, research and innovation, armed conflict, environment, media, science and sports. The extent of the under-representation of women varies between and within sectors and Member States. Particularly poor levels of representation of women (around 20 % or fewer) are seen in many economic and business decision-making positions, in sports, in the diplomatic sector and in the European Court of Justice.

[49] Report on the Impact of Demographic Change, COM (2020) 241 final of 17.6.2020, European Commission. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/demography\\_report\\_2020\\_n.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/demography_report_2020_n.pdf)

[50] COM (2021) 50 final. Green Paper on Ageing. Fostering Solidarity and Responsibility Between Generations, 2021, p.16. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/1\\_en\\_act\\_part1\\_v8\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/1_en_act_part1_v8_0.pdf)

[51] <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12722-Green-Paper-on-Ageing>

20 % or fewer) are seen in many economic and business decision-making positions, in sports, in the diplomatic sector, and in the European Court of Justice. In contrast, representation is better (35 % to 41 %) among science decision-making bodies of funding organizations, representatives elected to the European Parliament, national public administrations and supreme courts, regional political executives, and the boards of public broadcasting organizations, including TV, radio and news agencies[52]. Although women continue to be under-represented in political and economic decision-making, there have been some signs of improvement. For example, the percentage of women on the boards of large companies across the EU has visibly increased since 2013 (from 16.6 % to 27.7 % in 2019). The proportion of women in national parliaments has also increased, albeit at a slower pace (by about 4 percentage points since 2013).

Such improvements did not take place by chance; legislation and other government actions have helped stimulate change. The most significant improvements in the proportion of women on the boards of large companies (+18.3 percentage points since 2013) were seen in the Member States that have adopted binding quotas in this area (France, Italy). Similarly, in the last decade, countries with legislative electoral quotas (Greece, France, Spain, Italy, Portugal) have on average achieved almost twice as much improvement in the proportion of women in parliament as those without quotas, even if much of this difference is a result of pre-2013 developments.

## **Gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women and girls (VAWG)**

It is not yet possible to know the full extent of violence against women, largely because of differences in national legal and monitoring systems and under-reporting of violence. Despite these limitations, it is clear that gender-based violence continues to be a daily reality for millions of women and girls living in the EU. An estimated 13 million women in the EU have experienced physical violence in the course of the year 2014[53].

[52] Beijing + 25: The Fifth Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States, European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 2020

[53] Violence Against Women: An EU-Wide Survey 2014 Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey>

This corresponds to 7% of women aged 18–74 years in the EU. As many as one in two women in the EU have experienced sexual harassment and one in three have been affected by physical and/or sexual violence. Women and girls account for more than two-thirds of victims of trafficking in human beings and they are overwhelmingly trafficked for sexual exploitation. Certain life circumstances, including living with a disability, being a refugee or asylum seeker, or being economically dependent on a partner, can further increase women’s vulnerability to various forms of gender-based violence. Rural women still face serious disadvantages[54], compared not only to rural men but also to urban women. Despite policy efforts to reduce these differences, results of recent studies and reports show that progress remains insufficient.

## Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in at least 208 million COVID-19 cases and over 4 million deaths worldwide[55]. Despite their enormous contributions to mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis is threatening to erase decades of progress for women and girls[56]. Overall, the region’s gender response has been uneven across countries, and challenges have been compounded by low rates of testing, vaccinating, and reporting, high levels of extreme poverty, ongoing regional conflicts, and unmet COVID-19 funding needs. From job losses and reduced working hours to spikes in domestic violence and overwhelmed counselors, the effects of the pandemic have hit women the hardest.

Like women all around the globe, Mediterranean women are at the frontline of the COVID-19 response and also suffer from expanding unpaid care burdens and gender-based violence. Mediterranean women are at the core of the health emergency response as they make up the majority of workers in the healthcare and social care services sector across the region, thus exposing them to greater risks of contracting the virus.

[54] The Professional Status of Rural Women in the EU, European Union, 2019

[55] As of 3pm CEST on 18 August 2021. WHO Weekly Epidemiological Update. <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situationreports/20200907-weekly-epi-update-4.pdf?sfvrsn=f5f607>

[56] COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, Factsheet: Northern Africa and Western Asia, UNDP, September 28, 2020 <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>



On the other hand, due to regional-specific structural barriers related to unequal economic opportunities, women's jobs, businesses, and incomes are likely to be more exposed than men's to the economic fallout from the crisis. These risks are particularly acute for certain categories of informal workers who lack jobs, income, and social security, including domestic workers, agricultural workers, and small traders, among whom women and refugees are over-represented.

Lockdowns and curfew measures are likely to exacerbate the already high rates of domestic violence across the region, not only due to factors such as mounting concerns over job insecurity, cramped living spaces for large families, reduced services, and difficulty to report violence in conditions of lockdown but also due to restrictive social norms that see men as heads of household and responsible for the family income. Vulnerable women, including rural women, are most likely to be exposed to sexual exploitation due to their generally weaker financial status. Findings from the Ebola outbreak in West Africa suggest that female-headed households are at additional risk of gender-based violence<sup>[57]</sup>. UN Women warns that sexual harassment in the public space may also increase as streets and public transportation are more deserted due to lockdowns (UN Women, 2020).

While governments have stepped up their efforts to provide effective remote learning conditions, significant gaps remain in terms of availability of and access to online learning tools, especially in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries and in remote and rural areas. On the other hand, rural women generally lack access to social protection and have very limited access to quality healthcare facilities, making them particularly vulnerable in the context of COVID-19.

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[57] POLICY BRIEF : Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and COVID-19: The complexities of responding to "The Shadow Pandemic", Care International, 2020

### **Protecting measures during COVID19 pandemic – the case of France**

Faced with the dramatic rise in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of the Interior and the National Council of Pharmacists (Conseil national de l'Ordre des pharmaciens) adopted a common strategy to address the difficulties of victims to access support services during the lockdowns.

A code word was set in place for victims to signal pharmacy staff to contact help securely. Following the established procedure, staff would collect the victims' information discreetly and confidentially and provide a safe space whilst contacting support organizations. If needed, staff could also call the police to the premises. In order to take care of the victims as quickly as possible, the police and the gendarmerie had been instructed to intervene urgently for calls from pharmacies.

**Source: 2021 Report on Gender Equality in the EU**

In MENA countries, an estimated 110 million school-aged students are not in school[58] due to temporary school closures occurring across the region. While MENA governments have stepped up their efforts to provide effective remote learning conditions, significant gaps remain in terms of availability of and access to online learning tools, especially in remote and rural areas. Girls faced disproportionate difficulties in accessing ICT-based learning due to their overall lower levels of digital inclusion. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the internet penetration rates for MENA women stand at 44.2%, compared to 58.5% for their male counterparts. In this context, the shift to remote learning during the COVID-19 crisis may exacerbate learning inequalities for girls.

On the other hand, the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) estimates that women in the Arab World lost approximately 700,000 jobs as a result of the outbreak[59]. Young women face a double challenge, as the economic slowdown resulting from the crisis will further exacerbate the vulnerability of youth in the labor market. In rural areas, as women are more concentrated in the agriculture sector than men, despite some promising initiatives to facilitate the social protection coverage of rural women, they still generally lack access to social protection and have very limited access to quality healthcare facilities, making them particularly vulnerable in the context of COVID-19.

As MENA governments are putting together important economic and social programs to counteract the impact of the pandemic and preparing for their post-crisis relaunch, the COVID-19 pandemic represents also an opportunity for MENA countries to address the structural issues

[58] As of June 2020. Source: UNICEF, 2020 – depuis juin 2020? Ce n'est pas très clair : les données au mois de juin 2020.

[59] UN Women, 2020

faced by women and girls in the region, which have been exacerbated by the crisis. Several MENA governments<sup>[60]</sup> have been taking important steps to integrate a gender perspective in the elaboration of their COVID-19 immediate responses, working closely with national women's organizations and international organizations. These efforts could pave the way for the systematic adoption of gender mainstreaming in social and economic policies across the region in the long term. This is important not only for furthering women's economic empowerment but can also greatly benefit MENA economies.

In the European countries, the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated economic crisis have impacted women differently than men. The effects of the COVID-19 crisis jeopardize the progress achieved in the past decades in terms of the reduction of gender inequalities in the European Member States. The effects have also served to highlight the need for the Member States to develop proactive – rather than reactive – gender-mainstreaming policies<sup>[61]</sup>.

Overall, in Europe, women tended to be overrepresented in the frontline of the pandemic and also in the services sector, which has been particularly affected by the current crisis. During the first wave of the pandemic, employment for women reduced by 2.2 million across the EU<sup>[62]</sup>. Women working in retail, accommodation, residential care, domestic work, and clothing manufacturing suffered heavy job losses. They make up the bulk of the workforce in these sectors, and 40% of all jobs lost by women during the crisis were in these professions. This has translated into an increase in female unemployment rates and thus a higher likelihood of poverty for women in the EU. Women also tended to partake in a disproportionate amount of uncompensated childcare work, even if enforced lockdowns have meant that men increased their household participation in comparison to the years prior to the pandemic. This re-arrangement of family relations represents an opportunity for change in the future in which household and childcare tasks could become more equally divided and thus allow women to increase their participation in the labor market. In some EU countries, due to the urban-rural differential, women working in rural areas have more difficulties in accessing the labor market.

[60] In particular, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. Source: OECD

[61] COVID-19 and its Economic Impact on Women and Women's Poverty, Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament, May 2021

[62] The EU Gender Report 2021

They usually live in remote areas with limited transportation access, so they were much more likely to be hit by the pandemic[63]. The pandemic has shown the potential of a digital workforce, but teleworking has also heightened work-life balance conflicts, especially for women with young children aged 0-5 years. Despite men taking on more care responsibilities than before, the women's share of unpaid work has increased. Online schooling represents a new form of unpaid care for parents, especially for women who are more involved in the virtual classroom with children. Studies show that mothers have to deal with interruptions by children more often than fathers when teleworking. Constant distractions and extra care responsibilities for women lower their productivity and could reduce their career progression and pay. The pandemic has also seen a rise in reports of domestic violence against women. During the first wave of lockdowns across Europe, shelter and counseling staff were overwhelmed due to increased demand. Staff often felt inexperienced to provide remote support and were worried about victim confidentiality. EU Member States implemented changes or established new measures to support and protect women victims of intimate partner violence and their children in response to COVID-19. However, comprehensive action plans specifically addressing the issue of intimate partner violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic or detailed guidance on emergency action were identified in a few EU Member States. In addition, all these national policies and action plans were reactive responses that were developed and implemented after the Covid-19 outbreak, rarely accompanied by additional funding[64].

#### **VAW in time of COVID 19 pandemic: the case of Italy**

In Italy, like in other Member States, the pandemic has served to highlight structural issues in targeting VAW and the protection of victims. During the first lockdown, already in the months of March and April 2020, calls to the violence reporting hotline 1522 increased by 73%, compared to the same period in 2019[65]. This trend continued and reached a peak in June 2020, with a percentage increase in hotline calls of 120% compared to the same period in 2019. The situation for women who already lived in violent households worsened in Italy too. In fact, in 2020 over two-thirds of calls to the anti-violence centres were made by women who had already called in the past. Contrastingly, in the years prior to the pandemic this group merely accounted for less than one-third of the calls. Seeking to remedy the situation and with the collaboration of the Italian government, anti-violent centres engaged in media campaigning in order for victims to be informed on how to report their abusers[66]. However, this is usually difficult for women to do when they are in constant company of their perpetrator during a lockdown period. The Italian government also released – ahead of schedule – extra funds to be allocated for the fight against VAW, yet work remains in structurally improving the situation for victims. No further measures have been implemented since the first lockdown in 2020, and further statistics better clarifying the situation of VAW are yet to be released.

**Source: The European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021**

[63] Iga Magda, Institute for Structural Research (IBS, Warsaw) & IZA Institute of Labour Economics – Quoted in the publication "COVID-19 and its economic impact on women and women's poverty" published by the the European Parliament's Committee on Women's rights and Gender Equality, 2021 : [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/693183/IPOL\\_STU\(2021\)693183\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/693183/IPOL_STU(2021)693183_EN.pdf)

[64] The Covid-19 Pandemic and Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the EU, the European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021

[65] ISTAT 2021.

[66] Gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic response in Italy, Lundin et al. 2020. – <https://www.jogh.org/documents/issue202002/jogh-10-020359.pdf>

# THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

## The Global Gender Equality Agenda

Internationally agreed development goals, norms and instruments provide a comprehensive framework that outlines the necessary conditions and key actions required for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. These frameworks include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the outcome documents of its reviews, including the Political Declaration adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the occasion of its 20-year review and appraisal, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 and gender-sensitive targets in the other SDGs. The Beijing Platform for Action<sup>[67]</sup> identifies twelve critical and interrelated areas of concern as high priorities for action. They represent the key thematic components of a theory of change for gender equality and women empowerment.

Furthermore, making progress for women and girls is crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs, with a dedicated goal (SDG 5), which includes a broad plea to end discrimination between women and men, as well as references to gender-specific concerns in numerous SDG targets. Adopted in September 2015, the Agenda tackles a broad range of global challenges, aiming to eradicate poverty, reduce multiple and intersecting inequalities, address climate change, end conflict and sustain peace. The commitment to gender equality is clear and cross-cutting, building on the commitments and norms contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action<sup>[67]</sup> and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The SDGs <sup>[68]</sup> are also a universal call for action to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture and gender equality in rural areas.

[67]<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw59/feature-stories#:~:text=The%201995%20Beijing%20Platform%20for,countries%20to%20bring%20about%20change>.

[68] In particular, SDG 5 (Gender equality and Women and girls empowerment), SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 13 (Climate action), SDG 15 (Life on Land)



Despite these strong normative frameworks and significant achievements in some areas, progress for women and girls remains slow, uneven and subject to regression. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021[69], another generation of women will have to wait for gender parity. As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be felt, closing the global gender gap has increased by a generation from 99.5 years to 135.6 years. The 2030 Agenda follow-up framework provides voluntary national reviews as the main instruments for both tracking progress at the national level and reporting it at the regional and global levels. On the other hand, the framework stresses that regional processes are also important for ensuring that global and regional agendas are aligned with the 2030 Agenda in order to avoid duplication or fragmentation in the pursuit of gender equality and sustainable development.

## **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)**

The UfM strategy to promote gender equality and women empowerment has been progressively built and structured over the past years in close coordination with the UfM countries and key stakeholders operating in the region. It aims to enhance regional cooperation as women's empowerment constitutes a common and shared value and priority between countries on both shores of the Mediterranean.

The UfM gender strategy is implemented through an integrated approach articulated around 3 Pillars:

1. Developing a regional policy framework for gender equality and women empowerment, through UfM Ministerial meetings, Ministerial declaration, and policy dialogue between countries.
2. Providing a regional multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and cooperation. The UfM approach promotes and allows the building of strategic and complementary partnerships and cooperation between public bodies and international organizations, civil society, women networks, the private sector, and local authorities which contribute to increasing the impact on women and girls.

3. Supporting regional concrete projects that directly contribute to women's empowerment and advance gender equality.

The UfM Gender Work Plan (GWP) aims to consolidate the results achieved up to now by the UfM and to work in a more structured way over the coming years. This is achieved by targeting specific and limited priorities for actions, focusing on strategic partnerships, and strengthening the cooperation and coordination with key stakeholders in the region, in order to enhance the coherence between actions and increase their impact.

The GWP capitalizes on the lessons learned from UfM actions during the past years and provides a vision for the coming years in which women and men in the Mediterranean have the same rights and opportunities to access economic, social, and political life and to contribute equally to the region's development.

The GWP provides four specific priority objectives identified as such by UfM countries and regional stakeholders, and confirmed by the fourth Ministerial Declaration<sup>[70]</sup> on strengthening the role of women in society adopted on 27 November 2017 in Cairo:

- Increase economic participation of women by fostering their labour skills and promoting equal access to the labour market and by creating an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs.
- Strengthening access of women to leadership positions in the public and private sectors.
- Combating violence against women and girls including in conflict and post-conflict contexts.
- Combating gender stereotypes and fighting against social norms that hinder the full participation of women.

In these priority areas, countries and stakeholders agreed to give particular attention to women and girls in specific contexts: women migrants and refugees, women in conflict and post-conflict contexts, women in rural areas and women with disability. Attention will also be given to the development of knowledge, research and data production on gender equality and women empowerment in the Mediterranean region.

The GWP seeks to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG16); to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (SDG5); to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all girls and boys, women and men and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG4); to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (SDG3), to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, and equal pay for work of equal value, as well as to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants (SDG8).

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[70] <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/womenfinaldeclaration.pdf>

# The League of Arab States

Through the Arab Women Organisation [71] (AWO), the League of Arab States (LAS) sets its priority to promote the empowerment of women in the following areas:

- Education: especially eradication of ' illiteracy.
- Health and Environment: especially strengthening healthcare and promoting women's awareness of environmental hazards.
- Media: especially changing the negative image of Arab women.
- Social Development: especially promoting gender awareness in strategic and action planning.
- Economy: especially poverty alleviation for women.
- Politics: especially enhancing women's political participation.
- Legal Sphere: especially amending laws discriminating against women or preventing them from undertaking an active role in society.

On the other hand, the AWO Platform for Action to implement the SDGs for Women in the Arab Region fixed the following lines for action, considered the most important steps to be taken in order to mainstream the gender dimension of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab context:

- Establishing an SDG regional technical support & coordination committee.
- Establishing an SDG regional expert Think tank on gender equality & women's empowerment.
- Convening an Annual SDG forum.
- Establishing a regional center of excellence for Training on gender-responsive budgeting.
- Development of responsive indicators.

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[71] <http://english.arabwomenorg.org/Default.aspx>

# The OECD Gender Initiative

In the framework of the OECD Gender Initiative, the OECD frameworks are the 2013 Recommendation on Gender Equality<sup>[72]</sup>, adopted by the OECD Council on 29 May 2013 and 2015 Gender Recommendation<sup>[73]</sup> in Public Life adopted on 14 December 2015. The 2013 Gender Recommendation addresses gender inequalities in education, employment, and entrepreneurship while the 2015 Gender Recommendation addresses gender inequalities in public life. The 2015 Recommendation promotes a government-wide strategy for gender equality reform, sound mechanisms to ensure accountability and sustainability of gender initiatives, and tools and evidence to inform inclusive policy decisions. It also promotes a “whole-of-society” approach to reducing gender stereotypes, encouraging women to participate in politics, and removing implicit and explicit barriers to gender equality. The OECD actively promotes policy measures embedded in the 2013 and 2015 OECD Recommendations on Gender Equality in Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, and Public Life. For example, measures to ensure access to good quality education for boys and girls, policies to improve the gender balance in leadership in the public sector, and providing fathers and mothers equally with financial incentives to use parental leave and flexible work options. The OECD was also instrumental in defining the target adopted by G20 Leaders at their 2014 Brisbane Summit to reduce the gender gap in labor force participation by 25% by 2025. The OECD continues to work closely with the G20 and G7 presidencies on monitoring progress in reducing gender gaps. To ensure the follow-up, the OECD developed the OECD Gender Data Portal<sup>[74]</sup>, which is updated annually. The dataset has been extended and now includes about 85 indicators<sup>[75]</sup> on Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Health and Development, and Public Life.

[72]<https://www.oecd.org/els/2013-oecd-recommendation-of-the-council-on-gender-equality-in-education-employment-and-entrepreneurship-9789264279391-en.htm#:~:text=The%202013%20OECD%20Recommendation%20of,working%20hours%20and%20their%20family>

[73] <https://www.oecd.org/gov/2015-oecd-recommendation-of-the-council-on-gender-equality-in-public-life-9789264252820-en.htm>

[74] <http://www.oecd.org/gender/>

[75] <http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/>

In addition to these indicators, progress reporting draws on the wide range of ongoing OECD gender work, which covers analysis of education, employment, and work-life balance, entrepreneurship, public governance, OECD Regional Initiatives on Governance and Competitiveness (including on MENA countries), the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Network on Gender Equality, GENDERNET, the OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), financial education, health, science, access to justice and equality before the law, taxation and work on the OECD Better Life Index.

On the other hand, the OECD's work in support of the 2030 Agenda includes the updating and further development of the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI). The SIGI is used as an official source for data on legal frameworks and non-discrimination on the basis of gender, collected in partnership with the World Bank Group and UN Women (SDG5.1.1). Together with the ILO and UN Women, the OECD is also one of the constituting International Organisations of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) – a multi-stakeholder coalition that was launched in September 2017 and aims to contribute to progress on SDG 8.5, which calls for equal pay for work of equal value by 2030.

## **The EU Framework**

### **The EU Gender Balance Strategy 2020-2025**

The EU is engaged toward a Gender Equal Europe. Through the funding of actions and support for awareness campaigns, it aims to increase the participation of women in the labor market, fight the gender pay gap, promote work-life balance and equality in decision-making, and to eliminate gender-based violence in the EU.



The Gender Balance strategy consists of a road map of actions and policies to help achieve a Union where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead the European society[76].

With Horizon Europe, the EU also reaffirms its commitment to gender equality in research and innovation. The legal base sets gender equality as a cross-cutting priority and introduces

strengthened provisions for it. In particular, integrating the gender dimension into research and innovation content is a requirement. Gender equality plans are becoming part of the eligibility criteria for public bodies, research organizations, and higher education establishments applying to the program. In addition, specific funding will be dedicated to gender and intersectional research, in support of the priority 4 of the European Research Area: Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research focusing on translating national equality legislation into effective action to address gender imbalances in research institutions and decision making bodies and integrating the gender dimension better into R&D policies, programs and projects, and empowering women innovators.

### **The EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III) 2021–2025**

On the other hand, the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III) 2021–2025 places gender equality at the heart of EU external action and set out a political and operational roadmap toward a gender-equal world. GAP III aims to create long-term change through concrete actions that also address social norms and the stereotypes lying at the root of inequalities. GAP III makes the promotion of gender equality a priority of all external policies and actions. The EU has declared that at least 85% of all new external actions will have gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a significant objective or as a principal objective by 2025.

[76] [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en)

[77] [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research\\_and\\_innovation/funding/presentations/ec\\_rtd\\_he-investing-to-shape-our-future.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/funding/presentations/ec_rtd_he-investing-to-shape-our-future.pdf)

The plan recognizes the need to reach out to women and girls in rural and remote areas, but also the key role that women should play in the green transition as well as the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. It also recognizes that boosting synergies between regional and country levels has yielded positive results in EU regional cooperation in the Southern Neighbourhood and committed itself to continue strengthening the link between the national and regional dimensions. It also promotes gender equality in research and innovation as part of GAP III.

Being the regional organization specializing in agriculture, rural areas, and food security, the CIHEAM could play a key and unique role in this regard, by promoting gender equality for rural women. The GAP III sets objectives and action in six key thematic policy areas:

- **Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence:** focusing on: i) increasing protection; ii) promoting prevention; iii) combatting women trafficking; iv) increasing protection of survivors; v) supporting access to psycho-social support services and participation in the economic and social life of victims; vi) safe and quality humanitarian actions and vii) strengthening women's rights organizations and social movements as well as civil society organizations (CSOs).
- **Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights:** focusing on: i) an enabling legal, political and societal environment that protects the women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights; ii) the elimination of harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation and gender-biased sex selection, by supporting country, regional and global initiatives; iii) increasing services in humanitarian settings, including obstetric care, the provision of the minimum initial service package, HIV/AIDS prevention, reproductive, maternal and new-borns health, family planning, addressing specific nutrition needs and vulnerabilities.

- **Strengthening economic rights:** focusing on: i) promoting decent work, equal pay, and labor rights, and women's transition to the formal economy; ii) creating an enabling environment for women's economic activities and access to productive resources and eco-system services, including women's access to land, seas, and oceans activities; iii) supporting universal social protection systems, and recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work and iv) supporting women entrepreneurship and women-led businesses.
- **Promoting gender equality in education:** focusing on: i) promoting gender equality in and through quality, affordable and inclusive education at all levels by maintaining funding for education in emergencies at 10% of the humanitarian aid budget and by increasing overall funding for education; ii) building stronger gender-responsive education systems; iii) increasing investment in girls' education; iv) improving access to comprehensive sexuality education for in-school and out-of-school adolescents and v) adopting robust measures to combat gender stereotypes, discriminatory social norms and school-related gender-based violence in and through education.
- **Promoting universal access to health:** focusing on: i) promoting universal health coverage taking into account the disruption to access to care that was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; ii) ensuring availability and equal access for women to diagnosis, vaccines, and treatments for COVID-19; iii) increasing access to water and decent sanitation facilities; iv) nutrition programs, including in humanitarian settings, in particular for pregnant and lactating women and for children under five years of age.
- **Advancing equal participation and leadership:** via i) support for democracy and governance programs and public administration reforms; ii) enhancing women's capacity as political leaders in governments and parliaments through training; iii) encouraging the civic engagement of young women and adolescent girls;

iv) reducing gender stereotypes in media content; v) enhancing equal legal capacity and access for women to justice; vi) strengthen protection mechanisms and to support women's leadership roles will include global and regional hubs and advocacy and actions that document violations against defenders of women's human rights.

- **Integrating the women, peace, and security agenda:** under this objective, the EU should enhance the role of women as rights-holders, peacebuilders, and decision-makers for peace and security. In addition, a new capacity-building program for military personnel supporting development and security (CBSD) will be implemented in African countries and will incorporate the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. The EU objectives should also be achieved, among others, through the political and diplomatic engagement of EU leadership and by integrating a gender perspective and ensuring women's participation and leadership in all peace and security-related contexts.
- **Promoting a fair and inclusive green transition:** focusing on: i) promoting girls' and women's participation and leadership to ensure gender-responsive strategies to climate mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and the inclusive and sustainable management of natural resources; ii) supporting women networks in green transition sectors such as sustainable forest management, agriculture and energy; iii) capacity-building, financing and support for investment in gender-responsive national climate, environment and disaster risk reduction strategies and action plans; iv) supporting women's entrepreneurship and employment in the green, blue and circular economy, including clean cooking and sustainable energy, sustainable fishing activities, by promoting a gender-transformative approach to agriculture, fishing and aquaculture and food systems, based on (a) capacity building for rural women; (b) policy reforms to regulate more fairly land tenure and to manage natural resources and (c) economic empowerment and access to finance; v) improving data collection on the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change and environmental degradation to inform gender-responsive policies and action.

- **Grasp opportunities for women empowerment through digitalization:** focusing on i) promoting policy and regulatory reform in partner countries; ii) improving access of girls and women to affordable, accessible, safe, and secure digital connectivity, reaching out to rural and remote areas; iii) promoting digital literacy for girls in education, as well as digital skills for jobs and entrepreneurship; iv) supporting women digital innovators and entrepreneurs across multiple industrial ecosystems to build an inclusive digital economy; v) supporting the provision of public and private services through gender-responsive digital channels, technologies, and services that will enhance women and girls' inclusion and participation in the society.

## The African Union (AU) Framework

The Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP)[78] is one of the continental frameworks under Agenda 2063 and it aims to help African countries eliminate hunger and reduce poverty by raising economic growth through agriculture-led development as well as promoting increased national budget provision to the agriculture sector. Through the program, African governments are expected to increase investment levels in agriculture by allocating at least 10% of national budgets to agriculture and rural development and to achieve agricultural growth rates of at least 6% per year. The framework includes the commitments of countries to promote women's participation and inclusion[79] as follows:

- Ensure, through deliberate and targeted public support, that all population segments, particularly women, youth, and other disadvantaged groups participate and directly benefit from the growth and transformation opportunities to improve their lives and livelihoods.
- Ensure, by 2025, that the agricultural growth and transformation process is inclusive and contributes at least 50% to the overall poverty reduction target, through measures to ensure (...) engagement of the youth and women.
- Increase the proportion of rural women that are empowered in agriculture to 20% by 2025, against a milestone of 10% for 2018.

[78] <https://au.int/en/caadp>

[79] [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/31247-doc-malabo\\_declaration\\_2014\\_11\\_26.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/31247-doc-malabo_declaration_2014_11_26.pdf)

- Support and facilitate preferential entry and participation for women and youth in gainful and attractive agri-business opportunities.

In 2012, the AU launched the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition<sup>[80]</sup>, a partnership framework involving governments, the private sector, development partners and civil society organizations, in which stakeholders commit to specific policy reforms and investments, with the objective to accelerate the implementation of African country food security strategies, including the CAADP.

## **CORPORATE SECTOR**

In addition to the public and cooperation development frameworks, there are increasing initiatives supported by corporate and financial sectors to promote and support gender equality. Here are some good examples that illustrate the important role of the private sector:

### **The UN Global Compact**

Created in 2005 by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the UN Global Compact <sup>[81]</sup> is a voluntary initiative that mobilizes a global movement of companies and stakeholders to implement sustainability and to take steps to support UN Goals. The initiative encourages companies to:

- Do business responsibly by aligning their strategies and operations with Ten Principles on human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption.

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[80] <https://newalliance.travelvisabookings.com/>

[81] <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/>



- Take strategic actions to advance broader societal goals, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with an emphasis on collaboration and innovation.

More than 14,600 companies are engaged to implement and respect the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact<sup>[82]</sup>. Principle number 1 under the “Human Rights” section and principle number 6 under the “Labour” section, provide respectively that “Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights” and “the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation”.

With regard to gender equality, in particular, the Initiative has developed a gender equality accelerator program called “Target Gender Equality<sup>[83]</sup>” to support the participating companies<sup>[84]</sup> in setting and reaching ambitious corporate targets for women’s representation and leadership, starting with the Board and Executive Management levels, through facilitated performance analysis, capacity building workshops, peer-to-peer learning and multi-stakeholder dialogue at the country-level. Companies are also equipped with the latest data and research supporting the business case for gender equality and gain insights from UN partners and experts on how to accelerate progress on gender equality.

## **The Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs)**

The Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs)<sup>[85]</sup> are a set of Principles offering guidance to businesses on how to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace, marketplace, and community. Established by UN Global Compact and UN Women, the WEPs are informed by international labor and human rights standards and grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and responsibility for, gender equality and women’s empowerment. WEPs are a primary vehicle for corporate delivery on gender equality dimensions of the 2030 agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

<sup>[82]</sup> <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles>

<sup>[83]</sup> <https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/target-gender-equality>

<sup>[84]</sup> <https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/target-gender-equality/participation>

<sup>[85]</sup> <https://www.weps.org/about>

By joining the WEPs community, the CEO signals a commitment to this agenda at the highest levels of the company and to work collaboratively in multistakeholder networks to foster business practices that empower women. These include equal pay for work of equal value, gender-responsive supply chain practices, and zero tolerance against sexual harassment in the workplace.

- Principle 1: High-Level Corporate Leadership
- Principle 2: Treat all Women and Men Fairly at Work without Discrimination
- Principle 3: Employee Health, Well-Being and Safety
- Principle 4: Education and training for career advancement
- Principle 5: Enterprise development, supply chain, and marketing practices
- Principle 6: Community initiatives and advocacy
- Principle 7: Measurement and Reporting

## The World Economic Forum Gender Initiative

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has been measuring the gender gaps in all countries since 2006 and has published since then the Annual Global Gender Gap Report [86] which has become the main reference in assessing gender progress at the global level. The WEF has recently launched a new initiative "The Closing the Gender Gap Accelerators[87]", a national-level public-private collaboration platform, generally Ministers and CEOs, that aims to address the current gender gaps and reshape gender parity post-COVID-19, by generating local insight, developing and implementing local needs-based action plans. Accelerators have already been convened in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, and Panama in partnership with the InterAmerican Development Bank. Egypt and Jordan host the accelerators in the Middle East and North Africa region.

[86] <https://www.weforum.org/reports/ab6795a1-960c-42b2-b3d5-587eccda6023>

[87] [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Closing\\_the\\_Gender\\_Gap\\_Accelerator\\_1pager.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Closing_the_Gender_Gap_Accelerator_1pager.pdf)

# Inclusive Finance

Women form a disproportionately large share of the world's unbanked population. Gender inequalities in employment and earnings mean that women have lower incomes, making them less able to open accounts in formal financial institutions. Moreover, women frequently do not have the collateral necessary to seek loans from the formal financial sector. These factors combined with discrimination against women in financial markets mean that women are far less likely than men to have checking or savings accounts in their own names<sup>[88]</sup>.

The financial inclusion gender gap in developing countries remained at 9% in 2017, unchanged since 2011<sup>[89]</sup>.

There are increasing commitments by governments, international agencies, the private sector, and other stakeholders to support financial inclusion. Since 2010, more than 50 countries have launched and started to implement (or are currently developing) a national financial inclusion strategy (NFIS). Policymakers and regulators are increasingly working toward promoting regulations that take advantage of new technologies to expand access and usage to underserved population segments including women. Mobile phones, digital finance, and fintech are offering many exciting and promising innovations to enable positive change for the underserved.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda<sup>[90]</sup> commitments bring the financial inclusion and regulatory agendas together, by acknowledging the implication of regulations on access to financial services, while also noting the importance of robust risk-based regulatory frameworks for all financial intermediations.

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<sup>88]</sup> UN Women, 2015 "Gender and Financial Inclusion Through the Post"

<sup>[89]</sup> <https://developmentfinance.un.org/achieving-financial-inclusion>

<sup>[90]</sup> [https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA\\_Outcome.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf)

# CONCLUSION

While the roles of men and women in agriculture are extremely context-specific, some overall patterns can be observed across most Mediterranean countries that relate particularly to women's double burden of productive and "care" work; and gender-specific patterns of access to education and employment and discrimination in rural labor markets[91].

Across the region, rural women still face major gender-based constraints that limit their potential as economic agents and their capacity to reap the full benefits of their work. Discriminatory sociocultural norms affect the formulation and implementation of policies and legal frameworks; who participates in decision-making processes and governance mechanisms; how rural institutions are managed; how service providers target their clients and prioritize their needs; and, ultimately, how resources are allocated and decisions are taken within households and communities. As food insecurity and hunger resurface and the COVID-19 crisis threatens the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Mediterranean region, especially in rural areas which are already suffering from climate change and dwindling natural resources, urgent investment in women empowerment is needed, through training and capacity building activities (education, research, governance, business leadership...). Indeed, crises do emphasize inequalities, and women often pay the higher price, they remain insufficiently mobilized /targeted in recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Nonetheless, it is possible to take advantage of crises to rethink production and consumption patterns towards models that are more respectful of the planet and its inhabitants, more responsible for future generations, and more inclusive so that no one is left behind, especially women. Supporting sustainable and inclusive food systems in the Mediterranean region could be an opportunity for this. There are mechanisms for dialogue and co-construction involving public and private actors who are committed to these objectives for women in the region, and they need to be supported and strengthened.

## Key concepts[92]

**COVID-19:** disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2

**Gender:** is defined as the socially constructed differences between males and females, and the social roles and relationships between them. Although gender is about the roles and relationships of women and men, the term “gender” is typically associated with women. This is because once you analyse the situation of women and men in relationship to each other, you often see that women are disadvantaged and unequal in comparison to men.

**Gender analysis:** is the study of the different roles of women and men in order to understand what they do, what resources they have, and what their needs and priorities are in a specific context.

Gender audit: considers whether internal practices and related support systems for gender mainstreaming of institutions are effective and reinforce each other.

**Gender blind:** refers to a study, project or approach that lacks attention to the differential roles, responsibilities, resources, or experiences of men and women.

**Gender-Country-Profile:** is the result of a comprehensive gender analysis of the situation of women and men in a country, which should be used to guide cooperation programming. A Country Gender Profile provides data and analysis on differences between women and men in their assigned gender roles: in their socio-economic position, needs, participation rates, access to resources, control of assets, decision making powers, individual freedoms and human right conditions.

**Gender equality:** refers to the state in which women and men [having] equal conditions and opportunities for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development.

**Gender equity:** refers to an approach where measures are put in place to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from operating on a level playing field.

**Gender Mainstreaming:** involves assessing the implications, for men, women, and other social groups, of any action, policy, programme or legislation, in all areas and at all levels.

Gender responsive budget: It includes an analysis of public spending on men and women and an analysis of whether revenues accruing to the government affect women and men differently and how.

**Gender roles:** are social and behavioural norms that, within a specific culture, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex. These often determine differences in the responsibilities and tasks assigned to women, men, girls and boys within and outside the private sphere of their household.

**Gender-sensitive indicators:** measure gender-related changes over time. They can refer to quantitative indicators based on sex disaggregated data - which provides separate measures for men and women, [and they] can also capture qualitative changes - for example, increases in women’s empowerment.

**Gender-sensitive-research:** takes into account the differences between men and women in all aspects of the research, from an initial idea, formulating research questions, objectives and methodologies to the outcomes and presentation of results.

**Gender sensitivity:** is an awareness of the ways in which men and women will be differentially impacted by policies, programmes, and so on.

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### [92] Sources:

- Gender Analysis, Assessment, and Audit Manual & Toolkit, ACIDI-VOCA, August 2012
- FAO, 2016
- UNStats. Gender Statistics Manual.

**Gender statistics:** are statistics that adequately reflect differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men in all areas of life.

**Sex/Gender Bias in data collection:** refers to the underreporting or misreporting of demographic, social or economic characteristics associated with one of the sexes.

**Sex-disaggregated data:** Sex-disaggregated data is quantitative statistical information, separated by sex, on differences and inequalities between women and men.

**Value chain:** Products pass through a chain of activities and at each activity the product gains some value. The chain of activities gives the products more added value than the sum of added values of all activities.

**Women's empowerment:** is defined by its core components: (1) women's sense of self-worth; (2) their right to have and to determine choices; (3) their right to have access to opportunities and resources; (4) their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and (5) their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

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[92] Sources:

- Agriculture and Women - Agriculture and Growth Evidence Paper Series, DFID, June 2014
  - Women's Empowerment in a Changing Agricultural and Rural Context- DFID, January 2015
- Toolkit for Integrating Gender Sensitive Approach into Research and Teaching - GARCIA WORKING PAPERS,





Established in 1962, the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) is a Mediterranean intergovernmental organization composed of 13 Member States (Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey). It operates through its 4 Institutes based in Bari (Italy), Chania (Greece), Montpellier (France), and Zaragoza (Spain), and the Headquarters based in Paris. As a key player in multilateral cooperation in the fields of sustainable agriculture and fisheries, food systems, and coastal and rural development, its missions revolve around four main objectives:

-  **Protection of the planet by combating all forms of waste (Natural resources, Food, Knowledge, and Know-how...)**
-  **Food and nutrition security by boosting sustainable agriculture and food systems**
-  **Inclusive development by investing in new generations and fragile territories**
-  **Prevention of crises by working for the resilience of communities and territories**

The CIHEAM strives to achieve these objectives through education and capacity building, networked research, cooperation and technical assistance, and political dialogue. Cooperation is essential for the CIHEAM, which collaborates with more than 50 countries, several regional and intergovernmental organizations, and more than 600 universities and research centers.

[www.ciheam.org](http://www.ciheam.org)