

## **Background Note: Briefing to the Executive Board, Second Regular Session 2023**

### **“UN-Women’s operational response in the Arab States”**

#### **The Arab States - Rich diversity in close proximity**

The Arab States region shows a profoundly diverse landscape, hidden under common characteristics such as language, cultural and social traits. In reality though, it is a region of rich diversities that coexist in close proximity. Some of the world’s wealthiest nations, share borders with some of the poorest countries. Pockets of conservatism are surprisingly close to progressive streaks. Within families and communities, perceptions can differ greatly, with generations influenced by varied political canons; from colonialism to pan-Arabism, conservatism to globalism, influencing the outlooks on society and gender norms. Yet despite the multifaceted realities, the regional narrative has leaned towards a simplistic, unnuanced tone. The dominant narrative too often reinforces the challenges underpinning inequalities, omitting the many differences that bear significant opportunities for gender equality to thrive.

#### **Gender equality in the Arab States – regional aspirations and national variations**

The political recognition of gender equality and women empowerment, is reflected in a number of global and regional commitments. Twenty (out of 22) Arab countries, have ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). At the regional level, the Arab Charter on Human Rights (2004) is an important legal document to protect Arab women from all forms of violence. Under the Charter, States parties must respect the principle of de facto equality of women and men in rights and freedoms. The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam stresses that all are equal “without any discrimination on the basis of race, color, language, belief, sex, religion, political affiliation, social status or other considerations”, it contains principles that prohibits violence against human beings and obligates the State and society to protect fundamental human rights. Between 2019 and 2022, seventeen (17) countries<sup>1</sup> have amended laws pertaining to women’s legal capacity. In the same period, sixteen (16) countries<sup>2</sup> have amended laws in the area of equal pay for equal work. Eight (8) countries have amended laws in the respective areas sexual harassment at work and protection from domestic violence<sup>3</sup>.

These rights have translated to important gains. Overall, the Arab States region has achieved most progress in the area of women’s health (with the region subindex at 0.969 compared to global average 0.958). The region also fares very well in female education (subindex 0.950 compared to global average 0.957). Importantly, the Arab States have embarked on an impressive string of legal amendments recently. On women political participation the Arab states region has seen the fastest increase globally from 4% in 1990 to 18% 2020 in parliamentary representation. Four countries have a form of quota at 30% or more<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, in 2020, economies in the Middle East and North Africa have been the global leader in implementing reforms to ease doing business for domestic small and medium-sized enterprises<sup>5</sup> and hosted four of the countries that improved the most world-wide<sup>6</sup>, with one country ranking amongst the top 20 performers across the globe.<sup>7</sup> Improving the overall business climate is also reflected in regulations affecting women, as the Middle East and North Africa and Organization together with Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) high-income economies were the two regions with most improving laws related to women doing business in 2019/2020.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these achievements, the region overall struggles with very low indices on gender equality, in global comparisons, despite national outliers.<sup>9</sup> The most pronounced challenges the region is facing includes female labor

<sup>1</sup> Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar, Palestine. Oman, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, Morocco, Kuwait, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, KSA, Bahrain, UAE, Jordan

<sup>2</sup> Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar, Palestine. Oman, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, Morocco, Kuwait, Iraq, Somalia, KSA, Bahrain, UAE, Jordan

<sup>3</sup> Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Iraq, Kuwait, KSA, Bahrain, UAE, (sexual harassment at work) and Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Kuwait, KSA,, Bahrain, UAE

<sup>4</sup> AE, Tunisia, Sudan & Somalia

<sup>5</sup> Doing Business 2020: Comparing Business Regulation in 190 Economies, the World Bank Group

<sup>6</sup> Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, and Kuwait

<sup>7</sup> UAE

<sup>8</sup> Women, Business and the Law, the World Bank Group 2019/2020.

<sup>9</sup> Global Gender Gap Report 2022, Twin Indicators on Women Empowerment and Gender Equality UN-Women and UNDP 2023

force participation (which ranks exceptionally low given the high educational level of women (with subindex 0.425 compared to global average 0.582) and violence against women.<sup>10</sup> There is a growing recognition that these areas, alongside other key priorities on gender equality, would optimally be addressed through a multi-disciplinary approach, addressing legal amendments in conjunction with root causes such as social norms pertaining to gender roles. For example, norms that still sanction early marriage, drive up fertility rates which, in turn, impact women's education, employment and decision-making. These factors consequently impact women's full participation in public life ranging from economic to political representation. Furthermore, national laws pertaining to nationality rights, personal status issues, and laws defining parental leave still need to be addressed given the significant impact of these laws on the overall status of women across the Arab States region.

### **Regional aspirations to accelerate progress on GEEW, in partnership with UN-Women**

With a solid evidence base on the correlation between gender equality and sustainable development, UN-Women's Arab States Regional Strategic Note (2022-2025), developed in close collaboration with national and regional partners embarks on a regional collective endeavor to drive forward gender equality, with a focus on three strategic priorities: 1) Governance and Women's Political Participation, 2) Women Peace and Security and Humanitarian Assistance and 3) Women's Economic Empowerment. Across these, building opportunities for women's income-generation is a specific regional priority due to its criticality for the Sustainable Development Goal 5 and thus has a distinctive focus within UN-Women's Regional Strategic Note (see below).

## Women Employment in the Arab States

### **A striking paradox – educated women yet low labor force participation**

In the area of women's employment, the Arab States region is home to a unique paradox: of women's education attainment not translating concomitantly to women's employment. While the region scores well on the Gender Gap sub-index on educational attainment<sup>11</sup>, these scores remain in sharp contrast to scores under the economic participation and opportunity sub-index<sup>12</sup>, leading to the Arab States women labor force participation (WLFP) rate hovering around 21%<sup>13</sup> consistently for the past three decades. Female unemployment is 19.7% (compared to 7.7% for men). Female youth unemployment stands at 38.5% which is the highest in the world.<sup>14</sup> This paradox is rarely seen in countries outside the region. In fact, the MENA region is the only region besides Western Europe that has seen an improvement in the education sub-index ranking between 2020 and 2021<sup>15</sup>, and a near stagnation since the 1990's in women employment.

Traditionally, there has been a tendency of analyzing this paradox through a singular or siloed perspective. UN-Women's analysis, based on multi-disciplinary coverage and grounded in our triple mandate, reveals a combination of several structural/systemic challenges, that together hinder women from working, namely; 1) limited investments in building a affordable and quality care economy<sup>16</sup>, 2) extended care responsibilities on women, with women in the Arab States undertaking more than 4.7 times more unpaid care work than men<sup>17</sup>, limiting not only their employment, but also career development and leadership<sup>18</sup>, 3) limited maternity and paternity leave provisions (averaging at 8 weeks for women and 5 days for men<sup>19</sup>), which in turn affects and is affected by 4) social norms with strong expectations on women caring for domestic chores, as nearly 60% of men and women across the Arab States still perceive women's main domain to be the household<sup>20</sup>, linked to heavy expectations on men as traditional 'breadwinners'<sup>21</sup>. These social

<sup>10</sup> <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures-0>

<sup>11</sup> Global Gender Gap Report 2022, Insights Report, July 2022, World Economic Forum.

<sup>12</sup> Global Gender Gap Report 2022, Insights Report, July 2022, World Economic Forum. (accessed 8 August 2023)

<sup>13</sup> Labor force, female (% of total labor force)- Egypt, Arab Rep. World Bank, World Development Indicators database. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=EG> (accessed 8 August 2023)

<sup>14</sup> Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022 Report, Investing in transforming futures for young people. ILO 2022 (accessed 8 August 2023)

<sup>15</sup> Global Gender Gap Report 2021, Insight Report March 2021. World Economic Forum. (accessed 8 August 2023)

<sup>16</sup> Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment: Recognizing and Investment in the CARE Economy, Issue Paper, UN-Women. May 2018

<sup>17</sup> The Role of the Care Economy in promoting Gender Equality, Report, UN-Women. 2020 (accessed 8 August 2023)

<sup>18</sup> Towards a Productive and Inclusive Path: Job Creation in the Arab Region. ILO, August 2021 (accessed December 2021)

<sup>19</sup> Maternity and Paternity at Work: Law and Practice across the World. ILO, 2014 (accessed 8 August 2023)

<sup>20</sup> Understanding Masculinities/International Men and Gender Equality Survey - Middle East and North Africa, UN-Women, Promundo 2017

<sup>21</sup> Adrienne Frech and Sarah Damaske, Men's Income Trajectories and Physical and Mental Health at Midlife. National Library of Medicine, National Centre for Biotechnology Information. March 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8231310/> (accessed 8 August 2023)

norms have traditionally been reinforced by 5) media, yet with some promising changes lately including in television and social media. And finally, these factors all affect public “patience/tolerance” to 6) discrimination in the public space<sup>22</sup> such as transportation, hampering women’s access to and from work and 7) workplace discrimination, including sexual harassment or non-meritocratic recruitment and career development structures<sup>23</sup>. Acknowledging this means recognizing that addressing one of these challenges alone will not produce the transformational impact needed to move the needle on women employment in the Arab States.

### **How the Paradox impacts economic progress and human development**

The forgone GDP due to countries not achieving their nationally set goals for Female Labor Force Participation (FLFP) in the Arab States was estimated by UN-Women to be between 4.4% and 12%<sup>24</sup>. For the region, estimates point at an annual regional GDP loss of 575 billion<sup>25</sup>, an unnecessary and preventable economic loss for the Arab States.

## **Progress on SDG 5 across the Arab States – Advancements on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment –Country Examples of UN-Women’s Triple Mandate in the area of Women’s Economic Empowerment**

During the past decade, the Arab region has seen witnessed a number of *large scale* programs towards SDG 5, where UN-Women has provided multi-disciplinary support through its indivisible normative, coordination and operational mandate.

### ***Egypt – Women’s Financial Inclusion in rural areas***

Since 2020, UN-Women has partnered within the Government of Egypt’s national programme on women’s digital financial inclusion entitled *Tahweesha* (“Savings”). UN-Women’s contributions to the Government’s national programme will eventually reach **160,000 women across 10 governorates in Upper Egypt by 2023**. The goal of the nationally-led programme is to enable rural women – through their participation in women-led digital savings groups - to open bank accounts, access personal savings and micro-loans, increase their financial and digital literacy, advance greater economic engagement, and be integrated into the formal economy.

Supporting these digital savings groups will be hundreds of rural women who have been trained as formal banking agents under the Agricultural Bank of Egypt. These digital Savings Groups enable rural women to individually and collectively onboard (or “be banked”) and track their personal savings and individual and group loans through the *Tahweesha* mobile phone application developed in 2021. *Tahweesha* builds on the simplified Know Your Client (KYC) regulations introduced by the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE), and rural women’s access to national ID cards and subsequently to national e-payment cards, provided through the programme, to enable the opening of a bank account for each women member of a Savings Group. Keeping the outcomes of CSW 2023 in mind, this form of digital technology – and the adapted regulatory frameworks allowing this technology – is clearly geared towards social inclusion. The banking mobile technology was developed firstly for rural women, and yet its application will go beyond this group.

The program builds on a previous partnership between UN-Women, the National Council for Women and the Central Bank of Egypt (2013-2017), in which by the end of the project, rural women had ***increased their personal savings by no less than 3 - 4 times and reported use of such savings as a buffer against hardships, such as illness and family loss of income***. In addition, some women also started their microbusiness with the accumulated savings.

<sup>22</sup> Fay Patel, Mingsheng Li, and Prahalad Sooknaran, *Intercultural Communication: Building a Global Community*, January 2011. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292519169\\_Intercultural\\_communication\\_Building\\_a\\_global\\_community](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292519169_Intercultural_communication_Building_a_global_community) (accessed 8 August 2023)

<sup>23</sup> Cailin S.Stamarski and Leanne S. Son Hing. Gender inequalities in the workplace: the effects of organizational structure, processes, practices, and decision makers’ sexism. September 2015. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01400/full%20> accessed 8 August 2023)

<sup>24</sup> UN-Women (2021:22), “Assessing macroeconomic response policies to COVID-19 in the Arab region: what implications for women’s economic empowerment?” [https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20arab%20states/attachments/publications/2021/10/macroeconomic%20paper\\_english.pdf?la=en&vs=1148](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20arab%20states/attachments/publications/2021/10/macroeconomic%20paper_english.pdf?la=en&vs=1148) (accessed December 2021)

<sup>25</sup> Source Ferrant and Kolev (2016), cited by OECD: [https://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/SIGI\\_cost\\_final.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/SIGI_cost_final.pdf)

The opportunities for UN-Women’s work to directly strengthen women’s economic empowerment across Egypt are significant: from 2016 to 2022 women’s financial inclusion achieved a growth rate of 210% (increasing from 19% in 2016 to 57% in 2022). This will support Egypt’s Vision 2030, its National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, which has as its target a women’s labour force participation rate of 35% by 2030.

#### ***Jordan – The Oasis: Humanitarian Assistance through a multi service package***

The Oasis programme was initiated by UN-Women in 2012 in partnership with the Government of Jordan, with one Oasis center responding to the urgent needs of around 300 vulnerable Syrian refugee women and girls in camp settings. The programme has grown steadily, and UN-Women currently manages **four Oasis centres in Za’atari and Azraq refugee camps, and eighteen Oasis centers in host communities** in Ajloun, East Amman, Jerash, Karak, Ma’an, Madaba, Salt, Tafila, Wadi Seer and Zarqa governorates, which provide integrated services to women both Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities. Between 2015 and 2022 alone, the program supported close to **70,000 direct beneficiaries and 90,000 indirect beneficiaries** through a variety of inter-connected services, including cash for work, leveraging the innovative blockchain and OneCard platform technology, in collaboration with WFP.

The Oasis centers reach the most marginalized women, by holistically providing a number of complementary services at once: livelihood services, including mentoring and job placements - integrated coherently with education services and technical and vocational training, coupled with entrepreneurial support that align with labour market needs, as well as day care, alongside pre and after-school care for children. In partnership with UNHCR and ILO, UN-Women operationally provides services to transition from cash-for-work to employment through work permits, awareness-raising, capacity-building, and job fairs connecting women to the private sector. The Oasis Centers addresses key barriers that women face, through community-based childcare and transport solutions, while working with men and boys as allies to support women’s participation, civic engagement and leadership. 98% of refugee women benefitting from the cash for work programme reported that it had a positive effect on their sense of self-empowerment and confidence, with 78% reporting on increased decision-making at household level.

The Oasis Centres in Jordan has been successfully rolled out as a regional LEAP Programme across Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq – starting with hundreds of beneficiaries and ultimately reaching **100,000 beneficiaries** throughout the four countries. The model from Jordan gives a solid country example of the multi-disciplinary WEE approach and how delivers results at scale through multiple, complementary livelihood and education services, aligned with labor market needs. This work, combined with UN-Women’s work on the Women’s Empowerment Principles in Jordan which counts a regional record of 158 private sector signatory companies representing over 60,000 employees, is one of the ways that UN-Women contributes to the realization of the government’s “Economic Modernization Vision” which aims to create 1 million jobs and double women’s labor force participation by 2033.

#### ***Morocco – Gender Responsive Budgeting***

In 2002 Morocco’s Ministry of Economy and Finance has introduced Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) with the technical support provided by UN-Women. This solid and historic partnership culminated in the creation of a **Center of Excellence for GRB in 2013**, the institutional entity housed within the Ministry of Economy and Finance leading GRB implementation. The adoption of a revised Organic Finance Law in 2015 formalized the performance-based public financial reform linking public expenditure to policy results, requiring ministerial departments to define gender sensitive objectives and indicators and to present their efforts to reduce gender inequalities in the annual Gender Budget Report, one of the twelve mandatory reports accompanying the budget bill in Parliament. GRB aims to reduce gender inequalities through the planning and budgeting processes. Through the introduction of gender equality principles enabling transparency and traceability of government budgets, GRB strengthens planning and budgeting systems in terms of efficiency and targeted policy objectives in support of gender equality, ensuring dedicated budget allocations.

In Morocco, UN-Women continues to strengthen the GRB framework in close collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Finance by (i) operationally supporting the institutional knowledge and capacities on GRB (ii) normatively ensuring convergence between existing WEE policies and the annual budget programming, and facilitating the institutional coordination between the Women’s Machinery and the Ministry of Finance (i.e., during the formulation of the annual Budget Circular) (iii) operationally by providing technical support to line ministries on



gender mainstreaming in budgetary programming processes in preparation of the annual budget bill, (iv) supporting sectoral gender analyses to better inform the planning and budgeting processes of line ministries, and the development of gender action plans (v) developing and applying a gender marker methodology to quantify and track public budgets dedicated or contributing to gender equality, (vi) supporting the gender analysis of Morocco’s fiscal and customs system and advocating for the implementation of its recommendations, (vii) supporting gender and macro-economic studies on Morocco’s FLFP and the fiscal space for investment in the care economy and by (vi) institutionalizing GRB at national and territorial levels.

This work supports the Government’s accelerated efforts towards gender equality and women economic participation and contributes to Morocco’s national programme for women’s economic empowerment “Attamkine wa Arriyada” (مغرب التمكين والريادة) which translates the country’s vision to increase WLFP to 30 (%) by 2026 (year).

### ***Lebanon – Building Women’s Engagement in National Productive Sectors***

In Lebanon, UN-Women is working under a joint programme titled, ‘Productive Sector Development Programme’, with UNIDO, FAO, UNDP, ILO and UNICEF **to support job creation and economic opportunities, especially for the most vulnerable in the most disadvantaged areas**, a top priority to support Lebanon’s recovery. The programme seeks to achieve this aim by, 1) improving an enabling policy environment for women’s economic empowerment and participation in the productive sector (Macro level); (2) improving the access of women and men-led Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to markets in the productive sector (Meso level), and 3) improving the capacity of women and men farmers, women-led cooperatives, women-led MSME’s, as well as male-led entities, in creating and sustaining gender equality job opportunities and adopting environmentally sustainable practices (Micro-level). In this programme, UN-Women provides the technical assistance to the Government and UN partners on gender equality and economic empowerment – including through leading the production of data and analysis, as well as normative and Coordination work for legislative reform, and operational work around supporting Access to markets.

### ***Regional Program: Working with Men and Boys for Gender Equality***

#### ***Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco***

Shifting social norms, which is perceived as one of the most difficult areas of work on has proven achievable through UN-Women’s regional program “Men and Women for Gender Equality”. This program documents that a baseline of 62% of men and women with negative attitudes to gender equality, has through a 24 months regional program, shifted to an end-line of 42%, through a positive dividends model in 5 countries across the Arab States: Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco and 100,000 people. **This means the programme was able to reduce negative gendered attitudes across programme populations by 20%.**

Through this programme, UN-Women worked with 5 academic institutions to collate an evidence base on perceptions and norms of gender equality (through the IMAGES studies in each of the 5 countries). This evidence base was complemented by UN-Women’s direct work with CSOs on the ground at the family and community level, and at the same time with national institutions to advocate for amendment of laws, and provide technical expertise to actually amend the law. Due to the success of the program, the second generation will be rolled out in 2023 in direct support of the overall objective to increase WLFP, aiming to seek not only changes in attitudes, but also changes in time distributed on household chores.

### ***Regional Program: “Decent Work for Women” – joint programing with ILO***

#### ***Egypt, Palestine and Jordan***

Capitalizing on the two organizations respective comparative edge UN-Women Arab States and ILO Regional Office for the Arab States joined hands to jointly support WLFP. The multi-dimensional program rolled out in Egypt, Palestine and Jordan works in parallel on a number of critical “enablers” for women employment, ranging from amending laws that facilitate women entering the job market and being retained to promoting change in the private sector.

Examples of results include the **amendment of 17 Labor Laws by 2021, and 20 laws by 2022**. UN-Women’s work led to more than **520 private sector companies signing the Women Empowerment Principles**. UN-Women works closely with the companies by training them to 1) establish frameworks and regulations towards a more meritocratic recruitment that enables more women to enter their labour force, 2) market their products through unstereotyped marketing modalities and 3) share experiences amongst each other for peer learning and replication/adaptation.

## UN-Women Arab States and Partners – Accelerating WEE Programming Achieving Nine Milestones in 2022/2023

Given the achievements in countries and across the region on addressing elements of gender equality through programs at scale, UN-Women and strategic partners (including the private sector, media, NGOs, IFIs and Regional Banks) are partnering on a collective journey towards surging women employment, in order to advance sustainable impact at scale. During 2022-2023, UN-Women embarked on the first part of the journey towards a 5% increase in women employment. Capitalizing on its normative and coordination mandate, UN-Women has made concrete advancements towards 9 significant regional milestones, namely:

1. ***Regional Political Commitment of 22 Member States to Prioritize Women Economic Empowerment:*** In January 2022, 22 Member States from the Arab Region, agreed through the League of Arab States (LAS) Convention on the Status of Women (CSW) to “enhancing women’s economic empowerment and resilience in the context of climate change response ... including through the possibility of the Arab League’s adoption of a joint regional initiative with UN-Women”. The “Green Economy” therefore became the first pillar of the regional initiative, followed by the STEM economy which was defined in CSW 2023.
2. ***Arab Media Powerhouse Committed, CNN Arabic and ITP Media Group - 90 million viewers:*** By May 2022, UN-Women had secured the commitment of 2 regional media powerhouses through MOUs, to support women’s economic empowerment in an unprecedented way for UN-media partnerships, as the collaboration focuses on collectively achieving a surge of women employment. Reaching 90 million viewers these regional partnerships complement the partnerships established with *national media entities*, through which national journalists are supported to cover WEE, through the latest statistics, data and trends.
3. ***Regional United Nations Cohesion amongst 22 UN Agencies:*** By June 2023, and through the United Nations Regional Collaborative Platform’s Issue Based Coalition (IBC), co-chaired with UNFPA – the two agencies secured an agreement amongst 22 UN agencies to focus distinctively on data cohesion, advocacy and unified policy-support provision to Resident Coordinators in the Arab States, on WEE and EVAW.
4. ***Four Agencies joining hands for Gender Justice in the Arab States:*** In March 2023, the “*Arab States Gender Justice and the Law 2022*”, was launched by UN-Women, ESCWA, UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women regional offices. The Arab States Gender Justice Report 2022, examines six areas of legislation, including “employment and economic benefits”.
5. ***Commitment of 520 Private Companies in the Arab region:*** By March 2023, UN-Women has succeeded in garnering the commitment of no less than 520 private companies throughout the region on the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs). Beyond signatures, the implementation phase will focus particularly on building the proportion of women’s employment and retention and addressing gender stereotyping in marketing.
6. ***Building a Coalition of National Banks and Regional Banks for Financing and Partnerships:*** By March 2023, three countries had established partnerships with national banks in support of women economic empowerment: Morocco through the National Association of Moroccan Banks (GPBM); Jordan, through the Amman Stock Exchange, and the Central Bank of Egypt which is supporting a large-scale women financial inclusion program in partnership with the National Council for Women (see above). Additionally, 2 regional Banks, the IsDB and the EBRD are strongly engaged in the area of WEE in the Arab States.
7. ***Building a coalition of donors:*** In Q3 2022, UN-Women engaged with 8 donors, all with a strong track record in the Arab States, and with particular interest in sustainable impact at scale, and hence supporting distinct “disciplines” out of the multi-disciplinary set up of this program.
8. ***Establishing the first Regional Statistics and Data Platform on GEWE for Transparent Monitoring of Women Employment in the Arab States:*** In March 2023, UN-Women Arab States launched the first ever

Arab States regional data platform with multi sectoral data on WEE, through 144 indicators in 17 Arab States countries, and

9. ***Sharpening and deepening partnerships with Academia – through a regional Consortium of 18 Universities.*** These partnerships include the University of Jordan’s Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), the Information and Research Center at King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF) and Morocco’s l’Institut Arabe des Droits de l’Homme (IADH). UN-Women is also partnering with Cairo University, leading to the establishment the first Gender and Development Course in a public University in Egypt, and with the American University of Cairo, leading to the “Women Economic Empowerment Program – Entrepreneurship support”, and with the American University of Beirut, in developing a course for women in Women Peace and Security. In 2023, the first regional *consortium of universities in the Arab States for addressing social norms through engaging men and boys* is being established to support the Women Employment Program – through a partnership between 18 Universities and UN-Women Regional Office for Arab States and in partnership with the *Arab Women Organization (AWO)*.

### The Comprehensive Program Design: Surging women employment at scale and speed

UN-Women has designed a Multi-Disciplinary Model for Women’s Employment building from evidence across contexts that have seen successful increases in surging WLFP. UN-Women’s regional analysis shows that ***two Enablers*** are foundational to increasing WLFP: firstly, high level political leadership for gender equality and women empowerment, and secondly, sustainable financing, as neither scale nor speed can be achieved through ODA alone.

Building on this foundation, UN-Women’s ***Multi-Disciplinary Model*** is delivered through ***four Accelerators***:

- Firstly, unblocking of distinct legal impediments that prevent women from entering the work force and/or from women being retained or able to advance.
- Secondly, addressing deeply rooted gender norms
- Thirdly, engaging the general public en mass through media and communication campaigns; and
- Finally, deploying a robust private sector engagement strategy to address lagging structures for meritocratic and fair recruitment, retention and development opportunities for women.

To ensure scale, UN-Women is currently working with Member States and the private sector towards public-private partnerships that would lead to blended financing in three economies with both potential for growth and where women have a strong educational edge. These are the ***three Amplifiers*** for women’s employment.

Current projections from the first three countries that have been supported to develop *National Business Plans* show strong potential for the employment of 300,000 women by 2030, through the methodology of Care Incubators (in the Care Economy), Vertical Mini Farms (Green Economy) and Gender Responsive STEM Employment Agencies (STEM Economy). This number (300,000) would equate to the 5% increase in Women Labor Force Participation, with direct impact on the economic prosperity and gender equality of women, communities and nations across the Arab States.