



Comprehensive Arab report on progress in implementing Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action thirty years on

Summary



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Summary

of the Comprehensive Arab Report on Progress in Implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Thirty Years On



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Regional Review

The draft report was reviewed by 31 participants representing national machineries concerned with women's affairs in 21 Arab countries (Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, State of Palestine, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen), in addition to six participants from regional civil society actors, at an expert meeting held on September 3 and 4, 2024.

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Introduction

Gender equality and women's empowerment comprise essential aspects of human rights and sustainable development. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, launched more than thirty years ago, serves as a guiding framework for countries to enhance the well-being of women and girls. In its 69th session in March 2025, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women shall appraise the global progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration. The said appraisal will build on national reviews conducted by countries, as well as regional reviews by regional commissions. In the Arab region, the regional review is being conducted by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the League of Arab States and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

The “Comprehensive Arab Report on Progress in Implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Thirty Years On” addresses the regional review based on the findings of reviewing reports available to 18 Arab countries on their implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action during 2019-2024. The report also encompasses quantitative and qualitative analyses of progress and obstacles to gender equality. Moreover, it points to the trends adopted by countries in the previous period and addresses the future priorities identified by the Arab countries in terms of gender equality within the framework of the strategic areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment.

This summary is an encapsulation of the components of the report and the findings it listed. Additionally, the summary and the original report review the achievements made by countries during the periodic review period (2019–2024). Hence, the various sections do not touch on many of the achievements made prior to this period, whether at the level of legislation or the policies and procedures implemented. However, these achievements can be found in the reports submitted by countries in the context of their previous revisions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

1. Progress in Implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Thirty Years On: A Regional View

This section comprehensively showcases where gender equality in the Arab region stands compared with the previous periodic review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2019. It focuses on the social, political and cultural contexts that have contributed to bolstering achievements in some countries on the one hand, while, on the other, they have given rise to a number of challenges that have prevented attaining the desired results from other countries' initiatives.

A. Context

The regional review shows that several developments have occurred in the area of gender equality despite the political, social and economic challenges facing the countries of the region, such as the persisting armed conflicts and exacerbating economic crises, as well as the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. Added to this are the consequences of global conflicts, which have contributed to raising food and energy costs by up to 30 per cent in some Arab countries. The above factors have increased poverty and jeopardized food security, thus particularly affecting women, especially given the limited targeted social protection programmes. Despite these challenges, Arab countries have made several achievements, including legislative amendments to promote women's rights and the launch of national strategies focused on empowering women and advancing their role in the economy.

Moreover, concrete steps have recently been taken towards amending laws to promote gender equality. In some countries, such steps included applying constitutional amendments, reforming anti-violence laws and establishing executive mechanisms to ensure their implementation, as well as developing personal status laws to raise the age of marriage to 18 years and revising custody and alimony laws to protect women's rights after divorce. Lastly, several countries have introduced amendments to labour laws.

Sex-disaggregated statistics are key to development policymaking. However, international reports indicate that many Arab countries lack a robust statistical system for collecting reliable data. This resulted in information gaps and weakened the capacity for sustainable planning and progress follow-up in programmes aimed at promoting gender equality. Moreover, a strong need still exists to strengthen cooperation between governments and non-governmental organizations to improve data quality and use.

B. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Thirty Years On

1. Attaining comprehensive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Women continue to face challenges that impair their participation in the economy and labour market. According to available data, the rate of women's participation in the labour market fell from 20.7 per cent in 2017 to 19.9 per cent in 2022, which is low compared to the rest of the world. International reports also indicate that unemployment among women in 2023 reached 19.5 per cent, compared to 8.6 per cent among men. Moreover, ongoing conflicts in certain countries have exacerbated the situation of women, who face increasing restrictions on movement and work, and who bear additional household-care responsibilities.

2. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

Over the past five years, the Arab region has witnessed an increase in poverty rates as a result of ongoing economic crises and conflicts. According to ESCWA studies, extreme poverty accounted for 18.3 per cent of the population. Eighty-four per cent of extreme poverty is concentrated in conflict-affected countries, such as the Sudan and Yemen. In contrast, the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) recorded zero extreme poverty owing to their economic stability. The Multidimensional Poverty Index indicates that half of the population in countries such as the Sudan and Mauritania suffer from high levels of deprivation in terms of health, education, livelihood, and others. Moreover, the gender gap in national income has worsened, with the average share of males reaching U\$29,000 annually compared to U\$11,000 for females. However, significant increases were recorded in some countries.

On the social protection front, some Arab countries have devised strategies to support vulnerable groups, including older persons, whose number is expected to increase to 71 millions by 2050. However, many older persons, especially women, suffer from poor pension coverage and health-care services. In the area of health, data showed significant disparities in female life expectancy between countries; life expectancy amounted to more than 80 years in GCC countries, whereas in conflict-affected countries, it was below 60 years. Maternal mortality also remains high in six Arab countries, reflecting the urgent need to improve reproductive health services. While females are attaining a higher level of education, social and economic discrimination continues to limit their participation in the labour market and expose them to violence in the public sphere and the workplace.

3. Freedom from violence, stigmatization and stereotypes

Despite progress in legislation, violence against women remains a serious challenge. United Nations reports indicate that four out of ten women in the Arab region have experienced physical or sexual violence by their spouses. Child marriage rates remain high in a few countries, with armed conflict exacerbating this phenomenon, increasing girls' vulnerability to violence and forced marriage. However, there has been progress in combating social stereotyping, and this is bound to curb violence in the long run.

4. Participation, accountability and gender-sensitive institutions

Regarding women's political empowerment and their role in decision-making, recent years have witnessed advances in women's representation in leadership positions; the proportion of women serving in parliamentary and government positions has increased. Women have also held leadership positions in governments, including as prime ministers and ministers. This marks a step towards breaking down traditional barriers. Moreover, reports indicate that countries that apply the quota system have made progress in women's representation.

5. Peaceful and inclusive societies

Some Arab countries have witnessed conflicts and crises that have severely affected citizens' quality of life, thus deteriorating economic growth, undermining human rights and disrupting development paths. In Palestine, ongoing Israeli violations have exacerbated violence against women. Moreover, the war on Gaza has increased the population's suffering, and spilled over into the West Bank. In the Sudan, the armed conflict has caused internal displacement and forced migration to neighbouring countries. There, refugee and displaced women face work restrictions and increased responsibilities in unpaid care work, all while child and forced marriages worsen.

Arab countries seek to promote peace through implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, consistent with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Security Council Resolution 1325. In 2023, the League of Arab States adopted a new regional strategy to protect women and promote peace and security. The said strategy constitutes a reference for Arab governments. Moreover, many countries have devised national action plans to incorporate this agenda into national policies, so as to combat violence against women and increase the efficiency of security institutions. Such efforts help support gender equality and advance the role of women in peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts.

6. Environment conservation, protection and restoration

The Arab region is one of the regions most affected by climate change, exacerbating the economic and social challenges women face. Many women working in agriculture suffer from a decline in production due to droughts and land degradation. Moreover, desertification and higher temperatures are increasing migration from rural areas to cities, posing additional burdens on women in terms of caring for their households. Despite efforts, such as launching renewable energy and waste recycling projects, there is still an urgent need to mainstream gender in environmental and disaster response plans.

2. Priorities, Achievements, Challenges, and Obstacles

This section showcases developments in terms of women's empowerment and gender equality in the Arab region over the past five years. Founded in national State reports, this section points a spotlight on achievements, challenges, priorities, and actions required to prevent discrimination.

A. Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Achievements and Challenges

1. Achievements

Over the past five years, Arab countries have witnessed legislative reforms to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including increasing women's representation in political office and devising legislation to protect their rights at work. Some countries have adopted the principle of positive discrimination to ensure women's participation and competitiveness.

Moreover, legislation to protect women's rights at work has advanced, contributing to equal pay and promoting work-life balance, in addition to passing laws against domestic violence. These transformations have empowered women economically through increasing investments for small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs), enhancing financial inclusion, and appointing women in leadership positions in companies.

At the regional level, the League of Arab States adopted the Women's Development Agenda and established a regional network of women peace mediators.

2. Challenges

Despite achievements, women continue to face challenges that lead to a decline in their economic contribution. Such challenges result from the impact of crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and wars, and they affect women's economic participation. In some cases, social traditions and cultural practices prevent women's empowerment, in light of a lack of childcare facilities and widespread violence against women in conflict zones.

B. Priorities of Accelerating the Progress in the Situation of Women and Girls Over the Past Five Years

State reports indicate that priorities included supporting women's entrepreneurship, eliminating violence against women, and achieving legal equality with men. Some countries have focused on enhancing agricultural productivity and food security. However, most countries have failed to focus on unpaid care work.

Table 1. Priorities of accelerating the progress in the situation of women and girls through laws, policies or programmes over the past five years

	Kuwait	Oman	United Arab Emirates	Lebanon	Egypt	Bahrain	Iraq	Algeria	Jordan	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic	Saudi Arabia	State of Palestine	Tunisia	Sudan	Yemen	Somalia
Women's entrepreneurship in business and women's projects	●	●	●	●	●			●		●	●	●		●	●		
Eliminating violence against women and girls	●			●	●		●		●	●	●		●	●	●		●
Legal equality and non-discrimination and access to justice	●	●	●	●		●			●	●			●				●
Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security	●		●				●	●			●			●	●	●	
Political participation and representation				●		●	●	●	●				●				●
Gender-responsive					●		●	●	●	●					●	●	

	Kuwait	Oman	United Arab Emirates	Lebanon	Egypt	Bahrain	Iraq	Algeria	Jordan	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic	Saudi Arabia	State of Palestine	Tunisia	Sudan	Yemen	Somalia
social protection																	
Quality and lifelong education, training and learning for women and girls	●	●	●			●					●	●					●
Access to health care at affordable cost, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights			●			●	●				●	●				●	●
Right to work and rights at work									●			●	●				
Enhancing women's participation in ensuring environmental sustainability		●												●	●		
Preparing gender-responsive budgets						●				●				●			
Altering discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes				●								●					

	Kuwait	Oman	United Arab Emirates	Lebanon	Egypt	Bahrain	Iraq	Algeria	Jordan	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic	Saudi Arabia	State of Palestine	Tunisia	Sudan	Yemen	Somalia
Unpaid care and domestic work/family-work reconciliation		●															
Basic services and infrastructure								●								●	
Integrating women into areas of digital technology and financial services					●												
Gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction and resilience building																	

Source: The data in the table were collected based on the submitted national reports.

C. Action to Prevent Discrimination and Promote Rights of Marginalized Groups of Women and Girls

Countries have taken action to support marginalized women, such as women with disabilities, women in remote areas and older women. Moreover, programmes have been implemented to protect women and provide them with social and economic support.

D. Impact of Crises on the Beijing Platform for Action Implementation and Countermeasures Taken

In their reports, Arab countries concurred that the COVID-19 pandemic was the largest crisis that affected the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Countries showcased their response

to this challenge through implementing flexible work systems and financial support, from which working women benefitted.

E. Priorities of Accelerating Progress in the Situation of Women and Girls Over the Next Five Years

Arab country reports indicate that key priorities include eliminating violence against women, supporting entrepreneurship, promoting women's political participation, and enhancing women's representation in digital technology and financial services.

Table 2. Priorities of accelerating the progress in the situation of women and girls through laws, policies or programmes over the next five years

	Kuwait	Oman	United Arab Emirates	Lebanon	Egypt	Bahrain	Iraq	Algeria	Jordan	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic	Saudi Arabia	State of Palestine	Tunisia	Sudan	Yemen	Somalia
Eliminating violence against women and girls		●		●	●		●		●	●	●		●	●			●
Women's entrepreneurship in business and women's projects			●		●			●		●	●	●	●	●			●
Legal equality and non-discrimination and access to justice				●		●			●	●	●		●		●		
Political participation and representation	●	●		●			●	●					●		●		●
Integrating women into the areas of digital technology and financial services		●			●	●		●				●			●		
Access to affordable quality health care, sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights	●		●			●					●	●					

	Kuwait	Oman	United Arab Emirates	Lebanon	Egypt	Bahrain	Iraq	Algeria	Jordan	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic	Saudi Arabia	State of Palestine	Tunisia	Sudan	Yemen	Somalia
Right to work and rights at work	●		●						●		●	●					
Gender-responsive social protection							●	●	●	●					●	●	
Preparing gender-responsive budgets		●				●			●	●				●			
Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security				●			●							●		●	
Altering discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes	●	●		●													●
Promoting gender equality as part of environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies					●									●		●	●
Quality and lifelong education, training and learning for women and girls												●				●	
Unpaid care and domestic work/family-work reconciliation	●																
Basic services and infrastructure								●								●	
Gender mainstreaming in disaster risk prevention and resilience building																	

Source: The data in the table were collected based on the submitted national reports.

Upon comparing Arab countries' priorities over the past five years and their priorities over the next five, it is evident that governmental strategies on gender equality and women's empowerment have evolved. The three most prominent priorities over the past five years – the elimination of violence against women and girls, women's entrepreneurship, legal equality and access to justice – remain central in the future, although their ranking has changed in some countries. In contrast, priorities pertaining to poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security have slimmed down to be named by just four countries in the future instead of eight previously, despite higher poverty rates in the region.

3. Progress in 12 Critical Areas of Concern

This section previews progress in the 12 critical areas of concern. It organizes these areas in six cross-cutting dimensions aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). The section is based on the information contained in 15 Arab countries' reports on their periodic review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 30 years on. It addresses the progress made during the past five years only and does not include previous achievements that can be found in previous reports.

A. Comprehensive Development for All, Shared Prosperity and Decent Work

With regard to enhancing gender equality in employment over the past five years, countries have enacted legislation to prevent discrimination in employment, achieve equal pay and provide maternity and paternity leaves. Arab countries' measures to enhance the role of women include launching the TASMU initiative to develop women's leadership competencies in the Sultanate of Oman, and implementing the JISR Tamkine programme in Morocco to increase women's employment. Moreover, countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Morocco have taken steps to promote financial inclusion among women, with the aim of slimming the gender gap.

Actions that countries have taken in terms of unpaid care and domestic work include providing child and elderly care services. However, none of the countries has acted in terms of the division of marital assets or pensions after divorce.

As for measures to reduce the digital gender divide, several countries have implemented programmes to enhance women's digital skills, such as the *Maksab* platform implemented by the Sultanate of Oman. Table 3 breaks down the said measures by country.

Table 3. Measures to bridge the digital divide, by country

Measures to bridge the digital divide	Countries that have implemented the measure
Mainstreaming gender equality in national digital transformation policies	Oman – United Arab Emirates – Lebanon – Egypt – Iraq – Algeria – Jordan – Saudi Arabia – State of Palestine – Tunisia – Somalia
Developing or enhancing programmes to connect women and girls to digital services in an inclusive and meaningful manner, particularly in disadvantaged areas	United Arab Emirates – Algeria – Morocco – State of Palestine

Measures to bridge the digital divide	Countries that have implemented the measure
Taking measures to eliminate discriminatory barriers women and girls face to access, use and design digital tools	Egypt – Jordan – Tunisia
Taking measures to support the design and scaling up of secure, affordable, accessible, relevant, and comprehensive public and private digital tools and services	Bahrain – Iraq – Syrian Arab Republic
Developing or enhancing programmes to increase women and girls' level of digital literacy and digital skills	United Arab Emirates – Lebanon – Egypt – Bahrain – Jordan – Saudi Arabia – State of Palestine – Tunisia – Sudan – Somalia
Taking measures to promote gender-sensitive science, technology, engineering, and math education	Oman – United Arab Emirates – Algeria – Somalia
Taking measures to do the groundwork for gender-responsive digital learning environments	Oman – Lebanon – Bahrain – Algeria – State of Palestine – Tunisia – Somalia
Applying gender-sensitive and human rights-based standards for data collection, use, sharing, archiving, and deletion	Lebanon – Iraq – Syrian Arab Republic – Tunisia – Sudan

Source: The data in the table were collected based on the submitted national reports.

B. Poverty Eradication, Social Protection and Social Services

This section examines the actions taken by Arab countries to eradicate poverty and improve protection and social services for women and girls.

To reduce and eradicate poverty among women and girls, some Arab countries have implemented conditional cash support programmes to prop girls' education and health care, such as Takaful and Karama in Egypt and the Citizen Account in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, some countries, such as Oman and Morocco, have amended laws to enshrine equal land tenure and access to justice. Countries such as Algeria, Bahrain and the State of Palestine have also supported women's economic projects through development programmes.

Additionally, in terms of improving women and girls' access to social protection, some countries have focused on strengthening social protection for women, including maternity rights and enhancing protection for women with disabilities. For example, Lebanon launched a national social protection strategy in 2024, and Oman has provided benefits to children and orphans, including girls. In Egypt, safe movement has been enhanced for women.

In terms of improving health outcomes for women and girls, Arab countries have improved health services for women, including reproductive health services, as well as prevention and treatment services. Moreover, Oman has received certification from the World Health Organization for

eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. Several countries have launched strategies to improve women's health, such as Saudi Arabia's Mother and Child Health Passport.

Economic recovery measures from COVID-19 pandemic

Arab countries have taken gender-sensitive measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health system and economic situation. The best practices included implementing remote work, as in Bahrain, which adopted this system for the benefit of mothers working in governmental institutions and formed a committee to follow up on its implementation. The pandemic also contributed to enhancing flexible work to support women's economic empowerment. In Jordan, the Cabinet approved in 2024 the implementation of the flexible work system to facilitate women's entry into the labour market and increase their economic participation.

Lastly, in terms of honing women and girls' skills and improving their education outcomes, several countries have taken measures to increase girls' access to and retention in education, with a focus on overcoming obstacles to the transition from education to work. Moreover, curricula have been developed to promote gender equality and eliminate bias in education at all levels.

C. Freedom from Violence, Stigmatization and Stereotypes

Reports indicate that priority forms of violence against women and girls over the past five years in Arab countries have included domestic or family violence; sexual harassment and violence in public places, including workplaces; digital violence; child and forced marriage; and trafficking in women and girls. Half of the countries reported taking action to address these issues during that period.

Moreover, countries have implemented several actions and strategies to address violence against women and girls. Some have taken a legislative approach to enhance laws to combat violence against women, while others have updated national action plans and provided services to harassment survivors, such as shelters, helplines and legal support. Actions also focused on women's economic empowerment, poverty alleviation and the creation of safe environments.

Additionally, countries, such as Bahrain, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates established systems for the early detection of violence, while Tunisia established the Fund for the Guarantee of Alimony in favour of divorced women and their children. Additionally, most countries implement the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence campaign to raise awareness and change social norms.

Arab countries have also collaborated to promote legislation that protects women and girls from technology-facilitated violence, by launching awareness campaigns on the media, such as in Tunisia and Palestine.

Iraq has passed the law on survivors to compensate women and girls who have been subjected to violence. Countries have allocated resources to support women's organizations working to prevent violence. These include Morocco, which has allocated annual budgets for partnership programmes

with women's associations, and Lebanon, which provides financial support to associations involved in sheltering women victims of violence.

Some countries have focused on addressing gender bias in the media through legislation and training media professionals. Among these are Algeria, which passed a law banning hate in the media, and Iraq, which adopted a media code of conduct to protect women's rights.

As part of actions and strategies to address violence against women and girls in vulnerable situations, Arab countries have established special programmes to protect women with disabilities and older women, such as toll-free lines in Tunisia to report abuse of older women, as well as rehabilitation and employment programmes in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

D. Participation, Accountability and Gender-sensitive Institutions

Within the framework of promoting women's participation in public life and decision-making, Arab countries have advanced gradually, owing to the introduction of legislative amendments. Examples are as follows:

- In Iraq: Women's participation in parliament increased from 25 to 29.3 per cent (96 seats).
- In Jordan: The number of parliament seats going to women increased to 18, and a quota system was implemented in local councils.
- In the United Arab Emirates: The women's representation in the Federal National Council increased to 50 per cent.
- In Algeria and Egypt: The principle of parity in electoral lists was applied, and 25 per cent of parliamentary seats were allocated to women.
- In countries such as Djibouti, Iraq, Morocco, and Somalia, women's quotas in parliaments have been applied.
- In Oman: Quotas were allocated for women in municipal councils and the board of directors of the General Federation of Oman Trade Unions.

Moreover, party laws have been amended in favour of women. In Jordan, the 2022 Political Parties Law was passed, stipulating that women represent no less than 20 per cent of the party founders. In Morocco and the Sudan, party laws were amended to ensure that women were represented by one third and 40 per cent, respectively.

Additionally, Arab countries provided opportunities for women's participation, training and capacity-building in leadership. In Tunisia, a woman was appointed as head of government for the first time. In Lebanon, a woman was appointed as deputy prime minister and minister of defence for the first time as well. In Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates, women were appointed in parliamentary leadership positions, and a woman was appointed as President of the Federal National Council in the United Arab Emirates. Moreover, women have also been appointed as heads of national human rights institutions in Comoros, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Qatar.

As for women's empowerment in media and information technology, Arab countries have provided vocational education and training for women in the fields of media and technology, enhanced Internet access, and provided free Wi-Fi hubs.

E. Peaceful and Inclusive Societies

To assess what has been achieved over the past five years, the country reports accounted for the following four dimensions:

1. Actions to establish peace and promote peaceful societies in accordance with the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.
2. Actions to increase women's representation in peace processes and crisis response.
3. Actions to increase judicial accountability for violations of the human rights of women and girls in conflict.
4. Measures to eliminate the discrimination against girls.

Within the framework of actions to establish and maintain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and implement the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, the majority of countries have enacted national plans to implement the Agenda. Iraq has established a network of women peace mediators. Jordan devised a national plan to enhance women's participation in security and diplomacy, and Kuwait and Lebanon established national committees to implement Resolution 1325. However, actions to reduce military spending or allocate funds for social development remained limited.

As part of actions to enhance women's leadership, representation and participation in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action, and crisis response at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflict, as well as in fragile or crisis-affected areas, countries supported women's participation in peace operations and humanitarian negotiations. Countries also enacted plans to implement Resolution 1325 so as to enhance women's role in conflict and crisis resolution.

Moreover, most countries have applied measures to combat trafficking in women and children and to provide protection to refugee and displaced women. The said measures came as part of enhancing judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of the International Humanitarian Law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed conflict and other humanitarian action or crisis-response contexts. However, only a few countries have enacted legal reforms to promote women's rights in conflict zones.

Lastly, with regard to the elimination of discrimination against girls and the violation of their rights, Arab countries have taken various measures to address discrimination against girls in terms of education and health, as well as to protect girls from exploitation. Arab countries have also devised legislation against forced marriage.

F. Environment Conservation, Protection and Restoration

This section showcases the mainstreaming of gender equality in environmental policies. Most Arab countries have supported women's participation in the management of the environment and natural resources. However, only a limited number of countries have raised awareness about environmental risks related to gender discrimination. Only a few countries have enhanced women's access to land, water and energy; supported women's and girls' education in environmental science and engineering; and developed tools to monitor the impact of environmental policies on women and girls. Only Lebanon and Saudi Arabia have taken steps to ensure women's equal participation in green economy-related jobs.

In light of the findings of the 27th and 28th sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, some countries launched several initiatives, namely the State of Palestine prepared a report on integrating gender equality into the climate roadmap, Morocco ensured women's representation in environmental councils, Saudi Arabia developed an index for women's participation in environmental and climate issues, and Tunisia ratified the Plan on Women and Climate Change in 2022.

4. National Institutions and Applied Actions

This section previews the different types of national mechanisms aimed at empowering women and girls and improving their situation. The section focuses on the evolution of these mechanisms over the past five years, highlighting the relationship between women's empowerment strategies and sustainable development plans.

A. National Mechanism for Gender Equality

There is no unified institutional framework for gender equality national machineries, as countries have adopted different approaches, as follows:

- Ministries concerned with women's affairs whose names explicitly indicate that they are concerned with women (as in Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Somalia, the State of Palestine, Tunisia, and Libya).
- Entities within other ministries, but where the name of the ministry does not explicitly indicate that it is concerned with women (as in Mauritania, Morocco, Oman and the Sudan).
- National councils, commissions or committees comprising relevant sector representatives, sometimes including non-governmental institutions. These mechanisms are often directly attributed to the head of the executive power, as is the case in the rest of the Arab countries, namely, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. In some cases, the national mechanism is reported back to the head of State, as in Bahrain and Egypt.

According to the reports submitted by countries, most countries have increased the budget allocated to national mechanisms.

B. Strategies and Plans

National reports indicate that Arab countries have devised national strategies or action plans to achieve gender equality. Some countries either devised strategies from scratch or updated their strategies during the five years preceding the periodic review. These include Iraq (whose updated strategy covers the political, economic and social empowerment of women and their protection from violence), Jordan (whose strategy defines targets to combat violence and enable women to access their rights), Lebanon (whose National Strategy 2022-2030 includes the elimination of violence and the empowerment of women), Morocco (which launched the 2023-2026 Plan for Equality that promotes women's empowerment, protection and rights), and Saudi Arabia.

C. Formal Mechanisms Employed in the Implementation and Monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda

All Arab countries have participatory mechanisms in place to implement and monitor the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the SDGs. These mechanisms include civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector, academia, and United Nations organizations (table 4).¹

Table 4. Parties involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

	Kuwait	Oman	United Arab Emirates	Lebanon	Egypt	Bahrain	Iraq	Algeria	Jordan	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic	Saudi Arabia	State of Palestine	Tunisia	Sudan	Yemen	Somalia
CSOs	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Private sector	●	●		●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		●	●		
Academia and research institutions	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
United Nations system	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Parliaments/parliamentary committees	●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●		●	●			
Religious organizations					●				●		●				●		

Source: The data in the table were collected based on the submitted national reports.

D. Action Plans to Implement Recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

Most Arab countries have devised action plans to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review. Over the past five years, 18 Arab countries have reported on the implementation of these recommendations, while 12 countries have reported on progress in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

1. Women's rights and youth-led organizations have been integrated into civil society organizations.

5. Data and Statistics

This section previews progress in the provision of sex-disaggregated data, which highlight gender gaps and are key to the empowerment of women and girls. In their reports, countries rely on United Nations studies on gender equality statistics.

Additionally, gender equality indicators are essential for planning, monitoring and evaluating. The said indicators also measure differences between the positions of women and men in different spheres of life and often reflect de facto gender equality.

A. Assessing the Status of Gender Equality Statistics in the Arab Region

Arab countries are assessed based on data availability to monitor the 125 SDG-related indicators.² The percentage of available data in Arab countries ranges from 74 per cent to 100 per cent, exceeding 95 per cent in eight countries. However, six Arab countries scored less than 85 per cent.

The statistical capacity indicator³ shows a wide disparity between Arab countries, with values ranging from 24 per cent to 80 per cent. Fourteen countries are below the global average (figure below), highlighting the need to improve data quality. According to UN Women, gender equality data in the Arab countries cover between 30 and 39 per cent of the SDG indicators in six countries. Only one Arab country provides data for 60 per cent or more of these indicators. Table 5 provides a comparison between the world and Arab region countries in terms of the availability of these data.

2. Sachs, J.D., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G. (2024). The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future. Sustainable Development Report 2024. Paris: SDSN, Dublin: Dublin University Press.

3. Ibid.

SDG Monitoring Statistical Capacity Indicator 2022



Source: Open Data Inventory by Open Data Watch on <https://odin.opendatawatch.com/Report/rankings>.

Table 5. Availability of data on the empowerment of women and girls and gender equality used to measure the SDGs, 2022

Percentage of availability	World countries	Arab countries
	Number of countries	Number of countries
Less than 30	33 (17 per cent)	7 (33 per cent)
30-39	39 (20 per cent)	8 (38 per cent)
40-49	55 (29 per cent)	6 (29 per cent)
50 or more	66 (34 per cent)	0 (0 per cent)
Gross	193 (100 per cent)	21 (100 per cent)

Source: <https://data.unwomen.org/features/it-will-take-22-years-close-sdg-gender-data-gaps>.

B. Progress in Gender Equality Data and Information

All Arab countries have developed databases of statistics that monitor gender equality issues, and these data have been made available through websites. Moreover, most countries have established statistical units dedicated to these issues. The Arab countries have made progress in using gender equality data in policies and in passing laws that support the development of sex-disaggregated statistics. Table 6 shows the areas of progress as indicated by the countries in their reports.

Table 6. Progress in gender-responsive statistics over the past five years, by country

	Kuwait	Oman	United Arab Emirates	Lebanon	Egypt	Bahrain	Iraq	Algeria	Jordan	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic	Saudi Arabia	State of Palestine	Tunisia	Sudan	Yemen	Somalia
Promulgating laws, regulations or statistical/strategic programmes that indicate the development of sex-disaggregated statistics	*	*	*			*			*			*		*			
Establishing an inter-agency coordination mechanism for gender-sensitive statistics (e.g. technical working group and inter-agency committee)			*				*			*		*					
Using data that is more gender-sensitive in policy formulation and programme and project implementation			*	*	*		*		*		*			*	*		*
Reprocessing existing data (e.g. censuses and surveys) to produce new and/or more sex-disaggregated statistics					*			*			*	*			*		
Conducting new surveys to produce national basic information on specialised topics (e.g. time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, and disability)					*		*			*			*		*	*	
Improving administrative or													*			*	

	Kuwait	Oman	United Arab Emirates	Lebanon	Egypt	Bahrain	Iraq	Algeria	Jordan	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic	Saudi Arabia	State of Palestine	Tunisia	Sudan	Yemen	Somalia
alternative data sources to address gaps in the provision of sex-disaggregated data																	
Producing knowledge products related to sex-disaggregated statistics (e.g., user-friendly reports, policy briefs and research papers)				*				*					*				
Developing a central web-based database and/or dashboard on sex-disaggregated statistics		*		*					*	*							*
Participating in capacity-building to promote the use of sex-disaggregated statistics (e.g., training courses and statistical estimation seminars)	*							*			*					*	

Source: The data in the table were collected based on the submitted national reports.

In their reports, the countries provided examples of actions they had taken to develop gender-sensitive statistics. Jordan established a technical team to integrate statistics on gender equality into policies. It also updated its National Strategy for the Development of the Statistical System in line with women's empowerment policies. Egypt conducted a national review of gender equality statistics to improve data production. In the Sudan, an integrated national statistical system was put in place and the Statistics Act was enacted. Algeria established the Ministry of Digitization and Statistics and the National Office of Statistics. Morocco launched the Performance Efficiency project at the Ministry of Justice and adopted gender equality indicators. Iraq sought to calculate "women's multidimensional poverty" and develop indicators on the impact of climate change on women, including those in the informal private sector. Some countries also conducted specialized national surveys. Jordan and Morocco focused on surveys on violence and harassment in the workplace. In

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, surveys were conducted on time use, older men and women, financial inclusion, and social and health conditions.

Table 7 sets out the priorities the countries identified for the next five years. They include proposals to draft laws and regulations that improve statistics on gender equality issues, the establishment of inter-agency coordination mechanisms, and the increased production and use of sex-disaggregated data.

Table 7. Gender-responsive statistics priorities over the next five years, by country

	Kuwait	Oman	United Arab Emirates	Lebanon	Egypt	Bahrain	Iraq	Algeria	Jordan	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic	Saudi Arabia	State of Palestine	Tunisia	Sudan	Yemen	Somalia
Designing laws, regulations or statistical/strategic programmes that promote the development of sex-disaggregated statistics	*	*	*			*			*				*			*	*
Establishing an inter-agency coordination mechanism for the harmonization of gender-sensitive statistics (e.g. technical working group and inter-agency committee)			*			*			*	*		*			*	*	
Using data that is more gender-sensitive in policy formulation and programme and project implementation			*	*							*		*	*		*	
Reprocessing existing data (e.g. censuses and surveys) to produce new and/or more specific sex-disaggregated statistics				*	*	*						*					
Conducting new surveys to produce national basic information on							*			*		*			*		*

	Kuwait	Oman	United Arab Emirates	Lebanon	Egypt	Bahrain	Iraq	Algeria	Jordan	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic	Saudi Arabia	State of Palestine	Tunisia	Sudan	Yemen	Somalia
specialised topics (e.g. time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, and disability)																	
Increasing and/or improving the use of managerial or alternative data sources to address gaps in gender-sensitive data					*			*					*	*			
Producing knowledge products on gender-sensitive statistics (e.g. user-friendly reports, policy briefs and research papers)		*						*									
Developing a central web-based database and/or dashboard on sex-disaggregated statistics		*			*		*			*							*
Institutionalizing dialogue mechanisms between data producers and users											*						
Building user capacity in terms of statistics to increase statistical estimation and use of sex-disaggregated statistics (through the organization of training courses and seminars on statistical estimation)	*			*			*	*	*		*						

Source: The data in the table were collected based on the submitted national reports.

6. Conclusions and Next Steps: Towards Beijing+35

This section showcases a roadmap that accelerates achieving of gender equality. It also highlights the lessons learned from the experience of the past five years. Additionally, this section previews Arab countries' priorities for the next five years.

A. Lessons Learned

Over the past five years, Arab countries have learned various lessons in promoting gender equality, namely, the paramount importance of political will to achieve the desired change in the gender equality landscape, the importance of reviewing legislation to ensure that women's needs are integrated and to achieve gender balance, the importance of coordination between governmental and non-governmental institutions, and the importance of addressing negative social norms, as well as others. Moreover, countries' reports concurred that women's economic empowerment is an essential step to promote development and protect women from violence and discrimination. Additionally, the reports noted the importance of having up-to-date data to back up policies with evidence-based information. The reports also pointed out the importance of integrating mental health indicators into health policies, particularly in post-conflict societies.

B. Regional and National Priorities

The next five years' priorities in terms of achieving gender equality come within the following six axes:

1. At the legislative level, the Arab countries affirmed their commitment to enhancing national legislation that protects women's rights and eliminates discrimination against them. These countries seek to improve access to justice and provide legal support to marginalized women, so as to attain inclusive justice for all.
2. Priorities at the level of gender-responsive policies and programmes focus on promoting women's economic empowerment and increasing financial inclusion to encourage their participation in economic activity. The said priorities also underscore reducing the impact of climate change on women, especially in the agricultural sector, while capitalizing on green economy opportunities. Moreover, they advocate for developing education policies to keep pace with technological transformations, while also calling for confronting negative norms that prevent women's advancement. Moreover, these priorities emphasize the importance of

enhancing women's political representation and supporting their participation in leadership positions.

3. With regard to protecting women and girls from all forms of violence, most of the submitted national reports unanimously committed to the priorities of providing humanitarian assistance to affected women in Gaza and Lebanon, as well as protecting displaced Sudanese women and providing them with a safe environment. Moreover, the reports stressed enhancing legal protection against all forms of violence, especially political and public violence.
4. The reports accentuated the importance of achieving the priorities defined in terms of the governance of the gender equality system, by advancing the role of national mechanisms concerned with women's empowerment and supporting civil society efforts to achieve the SDGs. The reports also recommended ensuring adequate funding for women's empowerment initiatives from programme budgets and improving coordination of international efforts to avoid project fragmentation.
5. Moreover, the reports underscored the importance of achieving the "leaving no one behind" priority, by ensuring the continuity of programmes targeting women with disabilities and older women and lending special support for rural women in remote areas, to ensure more inclusive development.
6. In terms of data and statistics monitoring gender equality issues, the countries have indicated in their reports the need to assess progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by bridging information gaps and collecting data on violence against women and on unpaid work. The countries also called for conducting field surveys to monitor the needs of women in crisis-affected areas, as well as for increasing the use of gender-disaggregated administrative data. Additionally, the reports noted the need for national capacity-building at the level of gender equality statistics and applying technology to obtain statistics of a better quality, at a lower cost.



The summary of the Arab report on the periodic review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 30 years reviews advancements in gender equality and women's empowerment across 18 Arab countries during the period 2019–2024. The report centres on a regional assessment conducted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the League of Arab States and UN Women.

The summary outlines achievements in six key areas aligned with the strategic goals of the Beijing Platform for Action: inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work; poverty eradication, social protection and social services; freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes; participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions; peaceful and inclusive societies; and environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation.

It highlights regional accomplishments, including legislative reforms, policy development and the launch of national strategies aimed at enhancing women's roles in economic, social and political spheres. It also brings attention to the significant challenges facing the region, such as economic instability, armed conflicts and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbate gender inequalities, particularly in conflict-affected areas.

Drawing on national reports submitted as part of the periodic review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 30 years, the summary examines measures adopted by countries in legislation, policies and programmes to achieve progress in these areas.

It concludes with a roadmap to accelerate progress toward gender equality in the region, underscoring the importance of improving data collection on gender equality issues, supporting marginalized groups, and mainstreaming gender perspectives in national policies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

