**Introduction**

Gender is a range of characteristics that distinguishes one human being from another. It can never be disaggregated. It is the attributes and roles achieved, assigned or ascribed to people by the society. These attributes define the roles of individuals in a society interlinked and shaped by behaviors, rights and obligations. Gender also differs from one social context to another within the same boundaries, and it changes over time. Gender, therefore, is a multidimensional construct that refers to the different roles, responsibilities, limitations, and experiences provided to individuals based on their present sex. Gender builds on biological sex to give meaning to sex differences, categorizing individuals with labels such as woman and man.

Peoples’ rights are often violated in many societies with varying degree of development. This is particularly true when the socio-economic structures in that society are not sensitized to account for gender differences, and when peoples’ rights, liberty and freedom are undermined. In such cases segregation and discrimination becomes a norm and a phenomenon, leading to the perpetuation of injustice and inequality. Gender differences are most apparent between the two sexes; women and men, girls and boys, and heavily burdened, however, when tagged with vulnerabilities, including disabilities.

The publication provides important information related to gender equality and empowerment of women in the Arab region. It includes sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators needed for gender analysis. The facts and figures along with national policies and practices in various interlinked areas are compiled from international and comparable national sources. It is the first seed to be followed in the future by further statistics and information to reveal the discrepancies, the reasons behind these inequalities and its impact on our lives.
Chapter One, presents country commitments to *Human Rights* including those conventions on women’s rights and gender equality. It further provides a numeric scale of commitment or non commitment of each country on the level of its national social institutions.

Chapter Two is on the *Population Demographics*, in its youth, adolescent and its elderly, along with gender related demographic and vital trends, including family planning and migration.

Chapter Three, provides information on *poverty and inequality* in the Arab countries and related gender issues such as dietary intake, hunger, illiteracy, and unemployment. It includes gender-sensitive indicators reflecting access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation facilities, in addition to use of solid fuel and death it causes.

Education and learning is presented in Chapter Four. It provides information on country commitment to enlarging people’s choices to acquire knowledge, and commitment through compulsory education, monitoring the literacy of its population. It focuses on sex-disaggregated data in the different levels of education, and presents information on repeaters of both sexes in both the primary and secondary level. It also provides information on type of tertiary programmes and the enrolment of female students.

*Power, Influence and Decision Making* information is presented in Chapter Five. It includes country level data on decision making of women in parliaments, women in political parties and high level positions, including those in judiciary, law enforcement, and in diplomacy. It also shows role of women in decisions making within their own households.

High on the international agenda is the issue of *Violence against Women* which is presented in Chapter Six. It tackles information on types of violence, early marriage, and female genital mutilation. It also includes information on women’s attitudes towards intimate partners’ violence.
It is followed by Chapter Seven on *Health*. It covers data and information on expenditure on health, quality of health services, living with HIV/AIDS and smoking. Gender sensitive information relating to women’s reproductive care is presented in this chapter including those related to abortion. Diseases such as malaria that adversely affect pregnant women and the toll of maternal mortality and death by reproductive cancers continue to be of concern in many countries. Children diseases and mortality are also presented by sex in this chapter.

Another main concern to this region is the displaced persons and refugees. Chapter Eight is on *Refugees*, the outcome of conflict and wars that take heavy toll on both sexes, women and men, including children. The demographic composition of refugee population, their origins and accommodation are presented in this chapter from available information.

*Paid and Unpaid work* is an important issue in the Arab region and presented in Chapter Nine. Information are made available on work-gender related conventions and policies, the labor force; adult, youth and children employment, in private and public sectors, including information on wages and earned income. Data on informal employment and unpaid work particularly of women working in the agriculture sector is also made available.

Finally, Chapter 10 of this publication explores new areas, such as research and development, and science and technology. It presents sex-disaggregated data on researchers in science and their employment, wages in science and technology, degrees and quality of tertiary education.

This is the third issue of the e-publication with an added feature of analytical charts and graphs to the second issue data of 2013. It is an ongoing endeavor. It will be updated and expanded regularly on the
Statistics Division’s Home page. It will provide researchers and those responsible for data compilation with gender-related information.