



# UN WOMEN



ADAMUN'26

**ADAMUN'26**

UNWOMEN

STUDY GUIDE

UNDER SECRETARY GENERALS

ASYA ÖKSÜZ

AYBIKE ASLAN

# **Table of Context**

**1. Letters from Secretaries Generals**

**2. Letter from Committee Board**

**3. Key Terms**

**4. Introduction to UNWOMEN Committee**

**Topic: Women's Rights in MENA**

**5. Introduction to Agenda Item A: Women's Participation in Political, Social, and Economic Life in MENA**

**a. Effects of wars on women in MENA**

**b. Effects of social media on women crisis in MENA**

## **5.1. Political Life**

*Historical Background*

*Structural and Cultural Barriers*

## **5.2. Social Life**

*The Impact of Cultural and Social Structures on Women's Social Life*

*Family Structure and Women's Everyday Social Life*

*The Influence of Religion and Belief Systems on Social Life*

*Education, Employment, and Women in the Public Sphere*

*The Impact of Conflict, Migration, and Crisis on Women's Social Life*

*The Impact of Civil Society Organizations on Women's Social Life*

## **5.3. Economic Life**

*Economic Structure & Women's Role*

*Gender Inequality in Labor Force Participation Rate*

*Gendered Income Inequality and Poverty*

## **6. Introduction to the Agenda Item B: Feminist Movements and Women's Resistance in MENA**

### **6.1 Feminist Movements in MENA**

#### *Historical Background*

#### **1. Early Feminist Movements (Late 19th – Early 20th Century)**

#### **2. Nationalism and State-led Reform (1920s–1960s)**

#### **3. New Forms of Feminism and Political Change (1980s–2000s)**

#### **4. Feminism in MENA since the 2000s**

### **6.2 UNWOMEN's Legal and Institutional Actions in MENA**

#### **CEDAW**

#### **Quota Systems and Political Representation**

#### **Questions to be Asked**

#### **Sources**

## Letters from Secretaries Generals

Dear Esteemed Participants,

It is with great honor and sincere appreciation that we welcome you all to ADAMUN'26.

Bringing individuals together in an environment where ideas and perspectives can be shared carries a value that extends beyond the moment itself. In a world where communication often takes place at a distance, creating such a space allows for more direct, thoughtful, and meaningful interaction. It is within this setting that understanding can grow, shaped by the contributions and viewpoints each of you brings.

Your presence at ADAMUN is what gives this experience its true significance. The willingness to engage, to listen, and to actively participate reflects a shared commitment to making the most of this opportunity. Each of you plays a role in shaping the discussions and in contributing to an atmosphere where ideas can be exchanged with both respect and purpose.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to you for being here and for the effort you have dedicated to taking part in this conference. What makes this experience meaningful is not only the structure of the program, but the exchange of ideas and the connections formed throughout the process.

We hope that your time at ADAMUN will be both engaging and enriching, and that it provides you with the opportunity to explore new perspectives and to take part in meaningful discussions.

Once again, we are honored to welcome you, and we wish you a productive and rewarding experience.

Sincerely

Secretary-General Deniz ÖZKUBAT & Su AĞBAL

ADAMUN'26

## **Letter from Committee Board**

Dear Delegates,

We are thrilled to welcome you to ADAMUN'26! We are Asya Öksüz and Aybike Aslan, serving as the Under-Secretary-Generals of the UNWOMEN committee. In this committee, we will discuss the essential roles of women in the MENA region. We encourage you to participate as actively as possible in the committee. We've all been there, and we know how valuable your participation is. We believe in your potential to make a positive impact. You will find innovative solutions for women. Hope you all enjoy this conference and come away with incredible experiences. See you there!

Best Regards,

Aybike Aslan/Asya Öksüz

***Key Terms:***

**MENA:** This term stands for Middle East and North Africa. It is a term used to describe a region that includes countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The term is commonly used in politics, economics, international relations, and academic studies.

**Labor force:** Labor force refers to the total number of people who are able and willing to work. It includes employed people and unemployed people who are actively looking for a job.

**Gender -Based Violence (GBV):** This term refers to violence directed at a person because of their gender or gender identity. It includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic harm. GBV disproportionately affects women and girls, but it can also affect men and gender-diverse individuals. Common examples include domestic violence, sexual harassment, forced marriage, and human trafficking.

**Digital activism:** This term refers to the use of digital platforms and technologies, such as social media, websites, and online campaigns, to promote social, political, or human rights causes. It allows individuals and groups to raise awareness, mobilize communities, and advocate for change on a global scale.

**Misinformation:** Misinformation is false or inaccurate information that is spread, often without the intention to deceive. It can mislead the public, distort facts, and negatively affect decision-making, especially during elections, crises, or social movements.

**Civil Society Organizations:** Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are non-governmental, non-profit groups formed by citizens to represent interests, provide services, or advocate for social, political, and humanitarian issues. They operate independently from the state and the private sector and play a key role in promoting democracy, human rights, and social development.

#### 4. Introduction to UNWOMEN committee

UN Women, formally known as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, was established in 2010 to accelerate progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women worldwide. As a key UN body, UN Women works closely with Member States, civil society organizations, and other UN agencies to promote women's rights, ensure equal opportunities, and support women's full participation in political, social, and economic life.



#### Purposes of UNWOMEN

UN Women is aiming to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women worldwide. The organization is in collaboration with UN Member States to set global standards for achieving gender equality, working with governments and civil society to design and implement the laws, policies, programs, and services that ensure these standards effectively benefit women and girls. By considering the Sustainable Development Goals, the entity supports initiatives that promote women's equal participation in all fields of social life. Its work is centred on ensuring that women lead, participate in, and benefit equally from governance systems; that women have income

security, decent jobs, and economic autonomy; that all women and girls live lives free from violence, and that women and girls contribute to and have a greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, while also benefiting equally from the prevention of natural disasters, conflicts, and humanitarian action.

## **Topic: Women's Rights in MENA**

### **5. Introduction to the Agenda Item A: Women's Participation in Political, Social and Economic Life in MENA**

Across the Middle East and North Africa, girls and women continue to face significant social, political, and economic challenges due to ongoing conflicts, restrictive legal frameworks, and deeply rooted gender norms. Women's participation in the workforce remains among the lowest globally, while unemployment rates for young women are disproportionately high. Politically, women are underrepresented in decision-making bodies and peace processes, limiting their ability to influence policies that affect their lives. Social barriers, including limited access to education, healthcare, and protection from gender-based violence, further hinder women's empowerment. These challenges highlight the urgent need for inclusive policies that promote women's rights and active participation across all sectors of society.

#### **a. Effects of wars on women in MENA**

Conflicts across the MENA, such as the Yemen War, tensions involving Iran, and the Israel–Palestine conflict, have had a negative impact on women's participation in political, social and economic life. For example, in Yemen; prolonged war has weakened state institutions and excluded women from peace negotiations, despite their active roles in humanitarian and local mediation efforts. In Iran, periods of political repression and instability have restricted women's civic space, limiting their ability to participate freely in political processes and public life. Similarly, the Israel–Palestine conflict has reduced women's representation in formal decision-making while increasing social and economic burdens on women due to displacement and insecurity. These examples show how conflict and political instability systematically marginalize women from political, social and economic participation across the region.

## **b. Effects of social media on women crisis in MENA**

Social media has become a crucial tool for women in MENA to make their voices heard during times of crisis and conflict. In countries such as Algeria, platforms like Twitter and Instagram were widely used during the protests, with related hashtags generating millions of posts globally, drawing international attention to women's rights violations. In Palestine, women activists use social media to document daily realities of conflict and share testimonies, often reaching audiences far beyond traditional media. Similarly, in Yemen, women-led humanitarian and advocacy groups rely on social media to raise awareness about the impact of war, displacement, and gender-based violence. Even during the recent events in Iran, social media provided a great deal of help to women. These platforms allow women to bypass restricted political spaces, mobilize support, and participate in social and political discourse, demonstrating that social media is a powerful tool for raising women's voices in the MENA region. However, the misinformation spread by social media contributes to the emergence of events whose accuracy is uncertain. Some people take advantage of this situation and trick those who want to help under the guise of "support/donations for women."

### **5.1. Political Life**

The Middle East is a region characterized by deep historical, cultural, and political complexity. This complexity has directly shaped the position of women in social and political life. For many years, patriarchal structures, authoritarian regimes, post-colonial political systems, and conservative interpretations of religion have acted as major constraints on women's participation in politics. Despite these limitations, women in the Middle East have continuously engaged in political struggles and have increasingly made their presence visible in the political sphere.

#### ***Historical Background***

Women's participation in political life in the Middle East has largely developed in parallel with the formation of modern nation-states. In the early twentieth century, women in countries such as Egypt, Iran, Turkey, and Lebanon took part in independence and modernization movements, leading to the emergence of women's organizations and early feminist activism. In Egypt, for example, the women's movement led by Huda Shaarawi was closely linked to both women's rights and the national independence struggle. Similarly, in Iran, women's suffrage in the 1960s was introduced as part of state-led modernization policies.

However, these achievements have often been fragile. Revolutions, coups, and regime changes have sometimes expanded women's political rights, while at other times severely restricted them. The limitations imposed on women's public and political freedoms following the 1979 Iranian Revolution represent a significant example of such regression.

### ***Structural and Cultural Barriers***

One of the main obstacles to women's political participation in the Middle East is the persistence of patriarchal social structures. Politics is frequently perceived as a male domain, reinforced by widespread beliefs that women are unsuited for leadership roles. In many countries, political systems are shaped by tribal affiliations, sectarian networks, or patronage systems, all of which tend to be male-dominated and difficult for women to access.

Legal barriers also play a significant role. Although women's rights to vote and run for office are formally recognized in many states, restrictions related to family law, citizenship rights, and freedom of expression often undermine women's ability to act as independent political agents. Furthermore, armed conflicts and ongoing political instability further limit women's access to public and political spaces.

## **5.2. Social Life**

### ***The Impact of Cultural and Social Structures on Women's Social Life***

In Middle Eastern societies, culture and tradition are among the main factors shaping women's social lives. Social structures are largely collectivist, where family, tribe, or community take precedence over the individual. As a result, women's identities are often defined through their families rather than personal choices. Women's behavior is closely linked to family reputation, and social participation is frequently shaped by concepts such as "appropriateness," "honor," and tradition. In regions where traditional values are strong, women's social spaces may be limited to the home, close relatives, and women-only environments. In contrast, in culturally diverse societies with multiple ethnic and religious groups, women's social roles tend to be more flexible.

### ***Family Structure and Women's Everyday Social Life***

The family plays a central role in women's social lives in the Middle East. Women are often seen as the unifying element of the family, and most social relationships are built around kinship ties. Family visits, weddings, religious holidays, and shared meals are key spaces for women's social interaction. The heavy burden of domestic responsibilities can limit the time women devote to social activities. However, this does not necessarily lead to social isolation. Many women build strong social networks through neighborhood relations and extended family ties, with women's solidarity forming an important part of daily life.

### ***The Influence of Religion and Belief Systems on Social Life***

Religion is a significant factor in shaping social life in the Middle East and strongly influences women's social roles. Dress codes, behavior in public spaces, gender interactions, and participation in social activities are often shaped by religious interpretations. While religious norms restrict women's public visibility in some societies, in others religion provides women with social respect and a strong sense of identity. Religious gatherings, charitable activities, and women-focused religious events serve as important spaces for social engagement.

### ***Education, Employment, and Women in the Public Sphere***

Rising levels of education have had a direct impact on women's social lives. Educated women gain access to broader social networks through schools, universities, and workplaces. Participation in the workforce strengthens women's presence in the public sphere. However, these opportunities are not equally available to all women. Women living in rural areas or facing economic limitations often have more restricted social lives. Despite this, many women engage in social and economic life through local initiatives and community-based networks.

### ***The Impact of Conflict, Migration, and Crisis on Women's Social Life***

Wars, political instability, migration, and economic crises in the Middle East deeply affect women's social relationships. Displacement weakens existing social networks and forces women to adapt to new and uncertain social environments. During times of crisis,

women often assume additional responsibilities within the family and community. These conditions reshape women's social roles and influence how they participate in social life.

### ***The Impact of Civil Society Organizations on Women's Social Life***

Civil society organizations play a vital role in supporting women and girls across the Middle East, particularly in conflict-affected and restrictive environments. These organizations also create safe spaces for women, support girls' education, and promote community-based initiatives that empower women socially. By working at the grassroots level, civil society organizations help amplify women's voices, address immediate needs, and foster long-term social resilience in the region. The UN also provides access to education, healthcare, psychosocial support, and protection from gender-based violence, especially in conflict-affected areas. These programs strengthen local NGOs, support girls' education, and create safe spaces for women, helping them remain active in social life despite instability. By coordinating humanitarian aid and long-term development efforts, the United Nations contributes to empowering women and promoting social resilience in the region.

## **5.3. Economic Life**

### ***Economic Structure & Women's Role***

Many Middle Eastern nations have undertaken efforts to diversify their economic bases in recent decades, investing in infrastructure, education, renewable energy, and knowledge-based industries. While natural resources continue to play a significant role in some states, others increasingly rely on trade, services, and industrial production as drivers of growth. The economic landscape is thus shaped by both historical resource endowments and contemporary policies aimed at reducing dependency on any single sector. Even though the economies of most countries in the MENA region have grown over the years, women's roles in the economy are still limited due to several factors. Such as social protection. Women are less likely to access social protection. Gender inequalities in employment and job quality lead to gaps in access to social protection acquired through employment, such as pensions, unemployment benefits, or maternity protection. Women's coverage is 8% lower than men's (34.3% and 26.5% respectively). Globally, an estimated 73.5% of women in paid employment lack access to social protection. Another influencing factor is whether or not

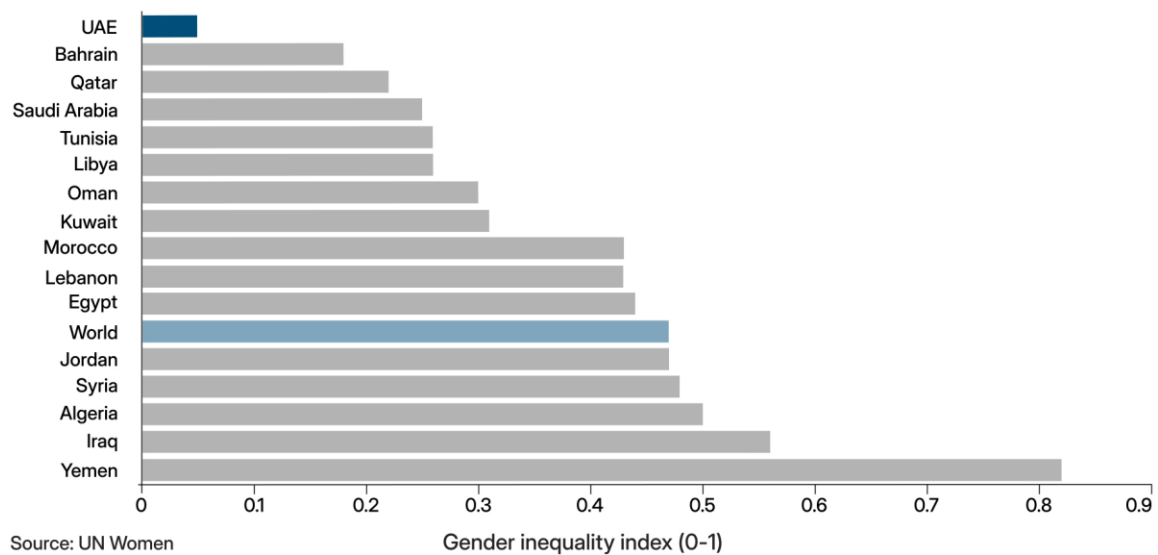
women have access to financial institutions or bank accounts. Women are less likely than men to have access to financial institutions or own a bank account. The gender gap in bank account ownership decreased in 2021 following years of recession, but rates vary across economies. The gender gap is 6 percent in developing economies, compared to 4 percent globally, with 78 percent of men reporting having an account at a formal financial institution compared to 74 percent of women. On the other hand, in developing MENA economies, only 42% of women have access to a financial account, compared to 54% of men—marking the widest disparity in the world and twice the average gap seen in other developing regions.

### ***Gender Inequality in Labor Force Participation Rate***

In MENA, difficult political transitions, security problems, falling oil prices, and prolonged regional conflicts are severely impacting the region's economy. Women's labor force participation rate is significantly lower than men's. According to ILOSTAT in MENA region only 20.5 per cent of women participate in the labor force. In 2017, the region ranked last in the Global Gender Inequality Index. The long-standing low female labor force participation rates in the region are rooted in a variety of interconnected factors. These include discriminatory legal and regulatory frameworks, limited access to relevant education, unrecognized unpaid care work (high cost of childcare, housework), poor working conditions including low wages (often coupled with a lack of social security coverage), socially and culturally discriminatory norms, limited access to and control over resources (land, property, finance, etc.), and the inability of labor markets to create decent work.

## Gender inequality among Middle East and North African nations

The UAE scores highest in the region for gender equality according to UN measurement



There are several factors that affect women's participation in the workforce in the economy. For example, in Saudi Arabia, women were not allowed to drive until a decree issued in September 2017; this decree effectively allowed women to drive from June 2018 onwards. Another example is in Bahrain, where women participated in the country's elections for the first time in 2002 (either as candidates or by voting). According to Al-Tamimi (2014), there is no legal minimum age limit for marriage in Yemen, and approximately 65% of underage girls in the country are married. Child marriage ruins girls' futures because it prevents them from living normal lives, continuing their education, or even working and developing their skills; it also increases their likelihood of experiencing serious health problems that can lead to premature death in some cases.

### ***Gendered Income Inequality and Poverty***

Gendered income inequality refers to the systematic differences in earnings between men and women. These disparities arise from structural factors such as wage gaps, occupational segregation, unequal access to high-paying and stable jobs, and discrimination in labor markets. Additionally, these inequalities are perpetuated by institutional practices, social norms, and the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, to systematic differences in earnings between men and women that arise from structural factors such as wage gaps, occupational segregation, unequal access to high-paying and secure employment,

and discrimination in labor markets. These disparities are sustained by institutional practices, social norms, and unequal distributions of unpaid care and domestic work.

Women's labor force participation rate is considerably less than men. The data between 1990 and 2017 is as follows in the table below.

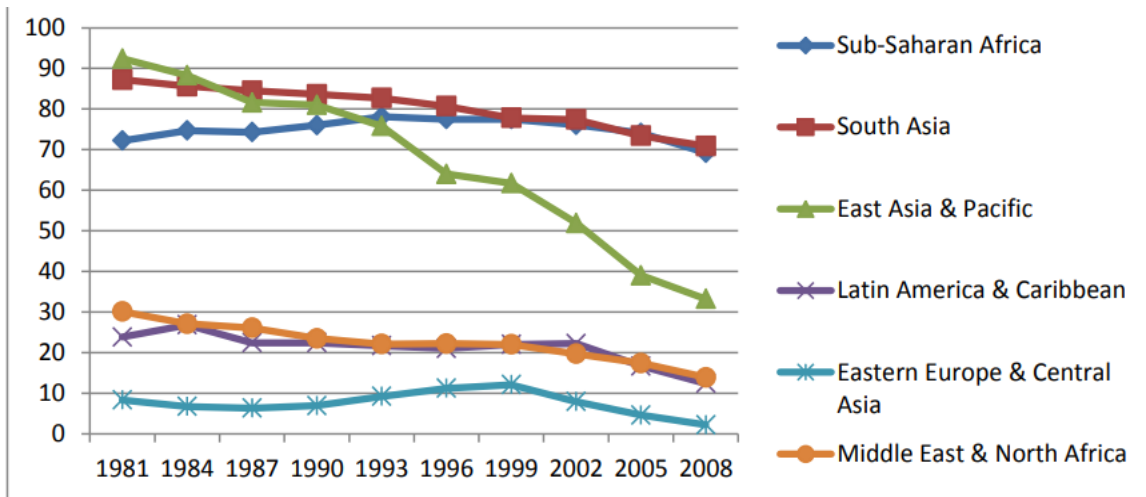
Female labor force participation (%)	1990	2000	2010	2017
United Arab Emirates	11.13	12.02	11.43	12.39
Bahrain	17.44	21.27	21.07	20.98
Algeria	12.94	13.52	16.88	18.28
Egypt, Arab Rep.	23.17	21.71	23.08	23.07
Iran, Islamic Rep.	10.44	15.60	18.33	19.04
Iraq	9.65	12.63	19.31	20.12
Jordan	12.30	14.47	17.87	17.65
Kuwait	24.24	25.57	27.64	28.17
Lebanon	22.48	23.54	23.69	24.45
Libya	18.97	23.12	26.73	24.55
Morocco	23.96	25.40	26.44	26.05
Malta	28.36	30.26	34.37	38.74
Oman	14.47	17.49	16.98	12.89
West Bank and Gaza	12.99	13.30	17.99	21.08
Qatar	13.48	15.95	12.05	14.06
Saudi Arabia	10.62	13.93	14.82	16.18
Syrian Arab Republic	20.67	19.88	15.35	14.42
Tunisia	23.01	24.82	26.68	26.45
Turkey	30.70	27.70	29.19	32.21
Yemen, Rep.	19.73	22.03	12.67	7.88
Middle East & North Africa	17.76	19.48	20.40	20.49

In the 90s, Turkey had the highest rate of female labor force participation in MENA. However, some social effects and conditions of the time caused this rate to decrease.

Another major factor influencing gender-based income inequality is wage and earnings inequality. Women who work often earn significantly less than men. This disparity is greater in the MENA region than globally. For instance, in Jordan, despite women having higher levels of education than men, the wage gap is still higher; women's labor is undervalued. Reasons for this situation include the private sector viewing female employment as "costly," the limited number of strong oversight mechanisms in the country that explicitly enforce the principle of equal pay, and gender norms.

The main reason for gender-based income inequality is the structural and social barriers that still exist. Women have faced challenges in a society dominated by patriarchal values for many years. In some countries in the MENA region, oppressive governments make these challenges even worse. This context helps explain why income inequality between men and women persists today. For example, under Article 1117 of the Iranian Civil Code, husbands have the right to prevent their wives from working.

When it comes to poverty, the MENA region is among the lowest in the world. For example, in 2008, the headcount index for the international poverty line of US\$1.25 a day in MENA was just 2.7% as against 47.5% in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). At the US\$ 2.00 a day international poverty line, MENA's figures stood at 13.9% against 69.2% in SSA.



Source: Authors, using World Bank (2012) Data.

Some research indicates that income inequality levels indeed significantly increase poverty. We find that a one percentage change in income inequality would translate into a 0.78% increase in poverty levels. In addition to income inequality, other factors fueling poverty in the MENA region are foreign direct investment, population growth, inflation rate, and the attainment of only primary education. Foreign direct investment as a percentage of GDP is negatively and significantly related to poverty in the MENA region. This supports the proposition that the inflow of foreign direct investment enhances economic growth through the provision of foreign exchange and foreign capital investment as well as local employment creation.

## 6. Introduction to the Agenda Item B: Feminist Movements and Womens's Resistance in MENA

### 6.1 Feminist Movements in MENA

Feminism has been based on various ideologies, social movements and mass organizations aimed at eliminating inequality in order to recognize the rights of women and protect these rights. The main goals of feminism are; These range from the right to legal abortion to advances in women's health, from the prevention of harassment and rape to lesbian rights.

The Middle East, where the changing dynamics of imperialists, political transformations and upheavals, wars and occupations occur one after another, is not an "easy" geography in terms of women's position in society, their rights and struggles. This distress situation also reveals itself in some current superficial readings about women's rights.

The struggles of women, who constitute 49.7% of the world's population, against the social pressures and general status they experience in society, which began in the 1800s, continue to this day. This topic focuses on women in the Middle East, specifically those in Egypt and Iran, and their social actions. Women's resistance to discrimination and inequality in economic, political, and cultural spheres is examined in the literature under the leadership of feminism. Feminist movements are the manifestations of this resistance through organized actions by women. The emergence of feminist movements coincided with the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century and the British Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. Feminist movements were supported, and sometimes directed, by men. The most prominent early example of solidarity between women and men in the history of the feminist movement is the associations founded by women in England in 1851 and 1867 to elect John Stuart Mill, who advocated for women's rights, to Parliament. Intellectuals and politicians such as Qasim Amin and Husain Haykal in Egypt, and Mirza Aqua Khan Kermani in Iran, have become leaders of women's liberation movements.

### ***Historical Background***

#### **1. Early Feminist Movements (Late 19th – Early 20th Century)**

In this period, first-wave feminism was a period of feminist activity and thought that occurred during the 19th and early 20th century throughout the Western world. It focused on legal issues, primarily on securing women's right to vote. The term is often used synonymously with the kind of feminism espoused by the liberal women's rights movement with roots in the first wave, with organizations such as the International Alliance of Women and its affiliates. This feminist movement still focuses on equality from a mainly legal perspective. There are some countries affected by this wave of feminism:

- ***Egypt:*** Egypt played a central role in the emergence of early feminist thought in the region. In the late nineteenth century, intellectuals such as Qasim Amin argued that women's education and social participation were essential for national advancement.

Although these early arguments were often framed through a male reformist lens, they opened space for women's voices. By the early twentieth century, women such as Malak Hifni Nasif began writing publicly about women's rights, education, and marriage reform. Around 1900, female literacy rates in Egypt were estimated at below 2%, and formal schooling for girls was extremely limited. However, by 1914, the number of girls' schools in urban centers such as Cairo and Alexandria had increased significantly, marking the beginning of institutional education for women.



*Huda Sha'arawi(1879-1947)*

*Egyptian nationalist-feminist leader and founder of the Egyptian Feminist Union.*

- ***Ottoman Empire / Turkey:*** In the late Ottoman period, early feminist ideas emerged through women's journals, literary circles, and reformist movements. Publications such as "Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete" (1895) addressed women's education, employment, and family life. Women writers and intellectuals increasingly questioned traditional gender roles while remaining within an Islamic-modernist framework. By the early 1900s, women had begun to enter professions such as teaching and nursing. Female literacy rates in the Ottoman Empire remained low, estimated at around 5% or less, but urban areas showed gradual improvement. These early debates laid the intellectual groundwork for the more radical legal reforms that would be implemented in Turkey after 1923.

- **Iran:** In Iran, early feminist activity developed through education and print culture during the late Qajar period. Women's associations and informal study circles emerged in major cities such as Tehran. One of the most significant developments was the establishment of girls' schools in the early 1900s, often founded by female activists despite strong conservative opposition. During the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, women participated indirectly by organizing protests, fundraising, and spreading political ideas. Around 1900, female literacy rates in Iran were estimated at below 1–2%, reflecting limited educational access. Nevertheless, by the 1910s, women's publications began to circulate, signaling the rise of a female public voice.

## **2.Nationalism and State-led Reform (1920s–1960s)**

Between 1920 and 1960, feminist movements in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) began to emerge as organized and visible social forces. Unlike Western feminist movements, which largely focused on individual rights and suffrage from the outset, feminism in the MENA region developed in close connection with nation-building processes, modernization efforts, and anti-colonial struggles. Women's rights were often framed as a symbol of progress and modernity, and female education, legal reforms, and public participation were seen as essential components of building strong, independent states. As a result, early feminist movements were frequently led by urban, educated women and were closely tied to political elites and state-led reforms.

- **Tunisia:** Tunisia represents one of the most significant examples of legal reform in the Arab world. In 1956, shortly after independence, the government introduced the Code of Personal Status, which prohibited polygamy and granted women the right to initiate divorce. These reforms laid the foundation for greater female participation in education and the workforce. Following the reforms, girls' primary school enrollment

increased from approximately 15% to 35% by the mid-1960s, while women's labor force participation reached about 20% by 1960.

- **Turkey:** Feminism in Turkey, largely developed thanks to reforms spearheaded by the great leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk during the early Republican period. The Turkish Civil Code, adopted in 1926, abolished polygamy and established legal equality between men and women in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance. In 1934, Turkish women gained full voting rights, earlier than women in many European countries. By 1935, women constituted 4.5% of parliament, a remarkably high figure for the time. Female literacy rates rose from approximately 10% in 1927 to 32% in 1960, while women's participation in universities reached approximately 15% in the 1930s. These reforms positioned women as central symbols of Turkey's modernization project.
- **Egypt and Iraq:** Women participated in anti-colonial activism and began to enter universities and the workforce in larger numbers.

### **3. New Forms of Feminism and Political Change (1980s–2000s)**

The rise of political Islam, economic crises, and regional conflicts reshaped feminist activism. This era saw the development of both secular feminism and Islamic feminism, which interpreted religious texts to support women's rights.

- **Iran:** The 1979 Islamic Revolution marked a turning point for the women's movement in Iran. Many legal safeguards achieved through state-sponsored reforms before the revolution were abolished, and the positions of women in both public and private spheres were redefined. However, this process did not lead to the complete disappearance of Iranian feminism, but rather to its reorganization through transformation. In the 80s, with the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the Family Protection Act (1967/1975) was repealed. Sharia-based family law was reinstated. Women were prohibited from serving as judges. Compulsory headscarves were introduced in public spaces. In this way, open feminist organizations were almost completely suppressed. Resistance continued mostly through everyday life practices,

forms of veiling, and education. In the 1990s, Iranian feminists developed "Islamic feminism," which reinterpreted Islam and questioned patriarchal religious discourses; The main platform for this process was the *Zanan* magazine, founded in 1992. Although Shirin Ebadi's legal struggle during the 1997–2005 reform period gained international visibility, the legal framework remained unchanged, and this limitation triggered a shift towards a more grassroots feminist activism with the One Million Signatures Campaign in 2006.



#### **4. Feminism in MENA since the 2000s**

From the early 2000s to the present, feminist movements in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have undergone significant transformation, shaped by globalization, digital activism, legal reform efforts, and political upheavals such as the Arab Spring. Unlike earlier periods dominated by elite-led or state-driven feminism, contemporary feminist movements are more diverse, decentralized, and grassroots-oriented. Activism increasingly addresses issues such as gender-based violence, political representation, economic inequality, bodily autonomy, and digital rights, while also intersecting with debates on religion, identity, and authoritarian governance. Social media has played a crucial role in amplifying women's voices and mobilizing transnational feminist networks across the region. For instance, in Iran, a woman named Jina (Mahsa) Amini died after being detained by the morality police. Feminist supporters in Iran have organized a group called *Feminists4Jina* to raise their voices

against to this case. People from neighboring countries-such as Turkey-who wanted to help reached out to them through social media and publicized this case. As a result, although injustices against women continue, the ease provided by technology allows women to better resist and challenge these wrongs.

## **6.2 UNWOMEN's Legal and Institutional Actions in MENA**

UNWOMEN has developed several conventions and laws aimed at protecting women in MENA. Some of these are CEDAW, quota systems and political representation.

### **CEDAW**

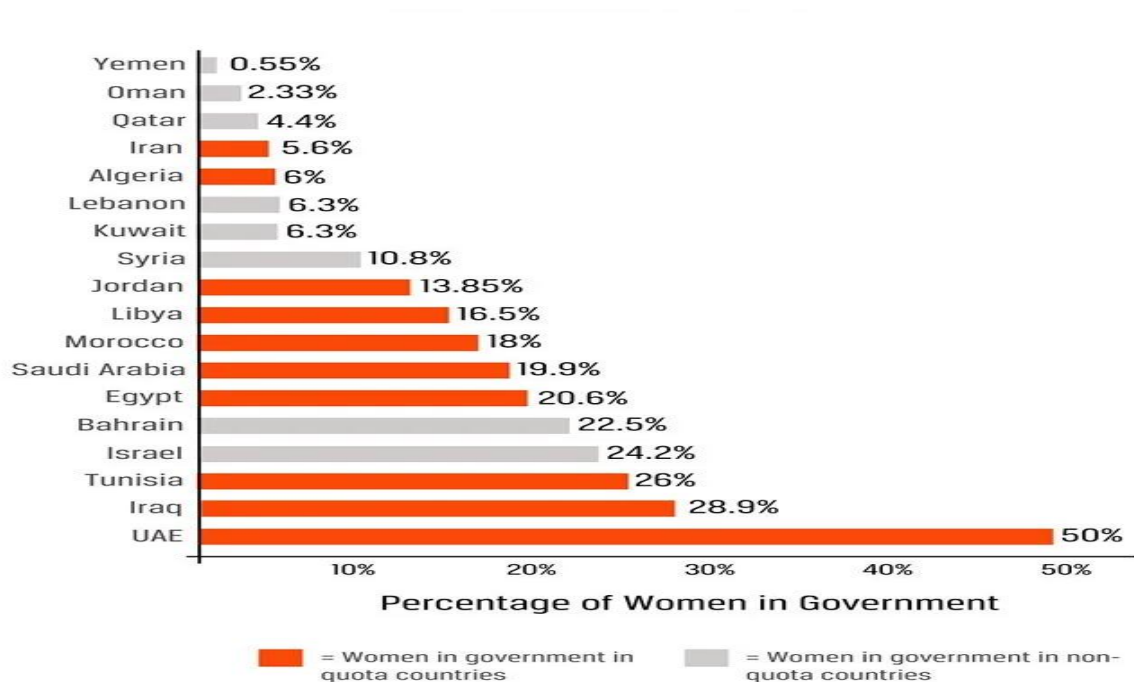
CEDAW, which stands for Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and entered into force in 1981. It is the most comprehensive legal document dedicated to women's rights. The main purpose of the convention is for signatory states to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of public and private life, including education, health, political participation, and family law. Although all countries in the MENA region have ratified the agreement, most have expressed reservations about its most critical clauses. This situation has had a very negative impact on the practical implementation of the agreement. Some countries have the following reservations:

- Egypt:** It has placed reservations on articles 2 and 16. Article 2 is about discrimination against women. Egypt has objected to this article, citing Sharia law. And for Article 16, which is about equality within marriage and family, the same reasoning as given in Article 2.
- Jordan:** Jordan has placed a reservation on Article 15. Article 15 concerns equality before the law, which should be one of the most fundamental rights of women. It includes the right of women to choose their own residence, to enter into contracts, etc. There was a reservation concerning the place of residence; however, in 2009, it was withdrawn.
- Saudi Arabia:** It raised objections to several clauses in the agreement. Due to the reservations, it made regarding Article 11 (equality in employment), which is one of the most important aspects, a woman's guardian can still decide whether she will work.

## Quota Systems and Political Representation

Quota systems were developed to address the problem of the underrepresentation of women in politics. To solve this problem, they mandate a certain percentage of women in parliaments or on candidate lists. UN Women contributes to the creation of legal regulations in countries to support quota systems, guides political parties, and offers training and support programs for women candidates. As a result of these policies, the numerical representation of women in parliament has seen significant growth in numerous countries. For instance, in the UAE (United Arab Emirates), while there were no women in parliament until 2006, a presidential decree in 2019 made female representation mandatory by introducing a 50% quota.

Although some countries have made significant progress, there are still many countries that do not implement a quota system, like Oman, Yemen, and Lebanon, as you can see in the table below



## **Questions to be Asked**

1. How do ongoing conflicts in the MENA region affect women's participation in political decision-making processes? What measures can be taken to ensure women's meaningful inclusion in peace negotiations and post-conflict governance?
2. Is social media primarily a tool for amplifying women's voices, or has it become a new space for misinformation and digital violence? How should governments balance freedom of expression with the need to protect women online?
3. Which economic policies should be prioritized to increase women's participation in the workforce (e.g., childcare support, flexible working arrangements, equal pay legislation)?
4. How does gender-based violence restrict women's participation in public life? How effective are current state prevention and protection mechanisms?
5. How can UN Women strengthen cooperation with local governments to support better women's political and economic empowerment in the MENA region?
6. In what ways do feminist movements in the MENA region differ from Western feminist movements? Why is regional context so influential in shaping feminist agendas?
7. What risks do women's rights defenders face under authoritarian regimes, and how can the international community provide effective protection and support?
8. How has social media and digital activism transformed feminist movements in the MENA region? What measures are needed to ensure digital safety for women activists?
9. How can the relationship between feminist movements and broader struggles for human rights, democracy, and freedom of expression be strengthened?

## **Sources**

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_the\\_Arab\\_Spring&usg=AOvVaw3BhXDZjZvyfdyEEUj9FZ0K](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Arab_Spring&usg=AOvVaw3BhXDZjZvyfdyEEUj9FZ0K)

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.amelproject.org/new-blog/2020/10/28/history-of-gender-equality-in-mena&usg=AOvVaw3DRB5qDASrnCPy-LgrQ9m->

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://demokratikmodernite.org/ortadoguda-kadin-devrimi/&usg=AOvVaw1lFkP1TUhfz0ASAwZvssNv>

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://teoriveeylem.net/tr/2024/09/06/ortadoguda-kadin-hareketleri-ve-dinamikleri/&usg=AOvVaw3RAd-Ty\\_0Apgb-YbnR88SP](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://teoriveeylem.net/tr/2024/09/06/ortadoguda-kadin-hareketleri-ve-dinamikleri/&usg=AOvVaw3RAd-Ty_0Apgb-YbnR88SP)

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second-wave\\_feminism&usg=AOvVaw33yOQyEw4\\_vrI8yoL0TfbD](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second-wave_feminism&usg=AOvVaw33yOQyEw4_vrI8yoL0TfbD)

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.wochikochi.jp/english/relayessay/2013/07/feminism-middle-east.php&usg=AOvVaw3-wX9CCuDY\\_yW2HvbtXCvT](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.wochikochi.jp/english/relayessay/2013/07/feminism-middle-east.php&usg=AOvVaw3-wX9CCuDY_yW2HvbtXCvT)

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/publications/feminist-movements-and-climate-justice-in-middle-east-and-north-africa/&usg=AOvVaw2ktYFrcBaAkbRdWqhb\\_5-t](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/publications/feminist-movements-and-climate-justice-in-middle-east-and-north-africa/&usg=AOvVaw2ktYFrcBaAkbRdWqhb_5-t)

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.history.com/articles/feminism-four-waves&usg=AOvVaw23CvVSUdMppG\\_\\_L0F90d1y](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.history.com/articles/feminism-four-waves&usg=AOvVaw23CvVSUdMppG__L0F90d1y)

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/feminism-first-wave-0&usg=AOvVaw0-hF6XYjM6vAbc7RL9OW9n>

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First-wave\\_feminism&usg=AOvVaw0y0L1G8IV7HPA16gpAXB0-](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First-wave_feminism&usg=AOvVaw0y0L1G8IV7HPA16gpAXB0-)

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.amelproject.org/new-blog/2020/10/28/history-of-gender-equality-in-mena&usg=AOvVaw3DRB5qDASrnCPy-LgrQ9m->

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/publications/feminist-movements-and-climate-justice-in-middle-east-and-north-africa/&usg=AOvVaw2ktYFrcBaAkbRdWqhb\\_5-t](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/publications/feminist-movements-and-climate-justice-in-middle-east-and-north-africa/&usg=AOvVaw2ktYFrcBaAkbRdWqhb_5-t)

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.wochikochi.jp/english/relayessay/2013/07/feminism-middle-east.php&usg=AOvVaw3-wX9CCuDY\\_yW2HvbtXCvT](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.wochikochi.jp/english/relayessay/2013/07/feminism-middle-east.php&usg=AOvVaw3-wX9CCuDY_yW2HvbtXCvT)

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://journals.ust.edu/index.php/JSS/article/download/2042/1688/4875&usg=AOvVaw05NI9j0cLdeUwmZCbMX915>

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.fes.de/en/themenportal-gender-jugend/gender/the-future-is-feminist/middle-east-and-north-africa&usg=AOvVaw1pS009SK2ssIG\\_8pdjaVru](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.fes.de/en/themenportal-gender-jugend/gender/the-future-is-feminist/middle-east-and-north-africa&usg=AOvVaw1pS009SK2ssIG_8pdjaVru)

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.aiepeditore.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Afriche\\_1-16\\_Intr\\_ENG.pdf&usg=AOvVaw27kHijRWq-TZ7kx3-8ETio](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.aiepeditore.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Afriche_1-16_Intr_ENG.pdf&usg=AOvVaw27kHijRWq-TZ7kx3-8ETio)

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://catlakzemin.com/iranda-feminist-bir-devrim-yasaniyor/&usg=AOvVaw3T3JO-Y1ShJ7nJpn9PSUMO>

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357358776\\_Iran%2527da\\_Kadin\\_Hareketleri\\_Beyaz\\_Carsamba\\_Hareketi\\_Ornegi&usg=AOvVaw0DSILQIg33g4wuJMzhsSzk](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357358776_Iran%2527da_Kadin_Hareketleri_Beyaz_Carsamba_Hareketi_Ornegi&usg=AOvVaw0DSILQIg33g4wuJMzhsSzk)

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/tocd/issue/82950/1373760&usg=AOvVaw2QMKH1R2F6E6GUeXNn3d2U>

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://teoriveeylem.net/tr/2024/09/06/ortadoguda-kadin-hareketleri-ve-dinamikleri/&usg=AOvVaw3RAd-Ty\\_0Apgb-YbnR88SP](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://teoriveeylem.net/tr/2024/09/06/ortadoguda-kadin-hareketleri-ve-dinamikleri/&usg=AOvVaw3RAd-Ty_0Apgb-YbnR88SP)

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://journals.ust.edu/index.php/JSS/article/download/2042/1688/4875&usg=AOvVaw05NI9j0cLdeUwmZCbMX915>

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.fes.de/en/themenportal-gender-jugend/gender/the-future-is-feminist/middle-east-and-north-africa&usg=AOvVaw1pS009SK2ssIG\\_8pdjaVru](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.fes.de/en/themenportal-gender-jugend/gender/the-future-is-feminist/middle-east-and-north-africa&usg=AOvVaw1pS009SK2ssIG_8pdjaVru)

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.wochikochi.jp/english/relayessay/2013/07/feminism-middle-east.php&usg=AOvVaw3-wX9CCuDY\\_yW2HvbtXCvT](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.wochikochi.jp/english/relayessay/2013/07/feminism-middle-east.php&usg=AOvVaw3-wX9CCuDY_yW2HvbtXCvT)

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://acikders.ankara.edu.tr/pluginfile.php/129557/mod\\_resource/content/0/ortado%25C4%259Fuda%2520kad%25C4%25B1n%2520hareketleri-Aksu%2520Bora.pdf&usg=AOvVaw3vGU7\\_tkDYgPADH7NG6Xx5](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://acikders.ankara.edu.tr/pluginfile.php/129557/mod_resource/content/0/ortado%25C4%259Fuda%2520kad%25C4%25B1n%2520hareketleri-Aksu%2520Bora.pdf&usg=AOvVaw3vGU7_tkDYgPADH7NG6Xx5)

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-unwomen&usg=AOvVaw1LFYZk4cS7keurU98wtuRp>

[https://books.google.com.tr/books?hl=tr&lr=&id=k28cDAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&dq=public+finance+in+mena&ots=f29ad2Tgi8&sig=HqjE33vV6BSxzo0n3jEhduGcWAo&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=public%20finance%20in%20mena&f=false](https://books.google.com.tr/books?hl=tr&lr=&id=k28cDAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&dq=public+finance+in+mena&ots=f29ad2Tgi8&sig=HqjE33vV6BSxzo0n3jEhduGcWAo&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=public%20finance%20in%20mena&f=false)

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/POWW-2015-FactSheet-MiddleEastNorthAfrica-en.pdf>

<https://www.usc.es/economet/reviews/aeid1916.pdf>

<https://scholarworks.aub.edu.lb/server/api/core/bitstreams/d776ec3f-be25-4b23-a843-c66378c72fac/content>

[file:///C:/Users/acer/Downloads/9798400200038-9798400200038%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/acer/Downloads/9798400200038-9798400200038%20(1).pdf)

<https://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1181&context=meea>

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Yasemin-Dildar/publication/350165644\\_Gendered\\_patterns\\_of\\_industrialization\\_in\\_MENA/links/62acdd9ce1193368](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Yasemin-Dildar/publication/350165644_Gendered_patterns_of_industrialization_in_MENA/links/62acdd9ce1193368)

[https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/47620861/Working\\_Paper\\_195\\_-\\_Inequality\\_Economic\\_Growth\\_and\\_Poverty\\_in\\_the\\_Middle\\_East\\_and\\_North\\_Africa\\_MENA-libre.pdf?1469799265=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DInequality\\_Economic\\_Growth\\_and\\_Poverty\\_i.pdf&Expires=1769781839&Signature=UUBIOIOAc2M8Nh23XzfVL~dafpAroutgh-KJq2VmlApF0BxYCNvvYdw8hwwDNWEQfzAy6777tXks9PVfYlqloQgtlNQJ6f6NLbVQhVg6J6nH2rVER4nmbYRcVgCYeyK9UJrpdfQhdirwkNqAIHWXW0xYdRHuPFrgWBUflDeCez4-jgUbdeKw~-GC3Oov3g0EqDim~tf5deTB92ZdBblMQEoPVPP-tCbukYgMI3b43S14tFiEIh7h1753akzMjpLK8a8KrpQ7Ghh4JM6TU2X0tJHV1BYfe6pCcO](https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/47620861/Working_Paper_195_-_Inequality_Economic_Growth_and_Poverty_in_the_Middle_East_and_North_Africa_MENA-libre.pdf?1469799265=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DInequality_Economic_Growth_and_Poverty_i.pdf&Expires=1769781839&Signature=UUBIOIOAc2M8Nh23XzfVL~dafpAroutgh-KJq2VmlApF0BxYCNvvYdw8hwwDNWEQfzAy6777tXks9PVfYlqloQgtlNQJ6f6NLbVQhVg6J6nH2rVER4nmbYRcVgCYeyK9UJrpdfQhdirwkNqAIHWXW0xYdRHuPFrgWBUflDeCez4-jgUbdeKw~-GC3Oov3g0EqDim~tf5deTB92ZdBblMQEoPVPP-tCbukYgMI3b43S14tFiEIh7h1753akzMjpLK8a8KrpQ7Ghh4JM6TU2X0tJHV1BYfe6pCcO)

[bV5y728omaJEMjIJNIgFuc2YDqw1n0rvq~vWo6EBDz0OJmvL2Pw\\_\\_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures)

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

<https://resdojournals.com/index.php/JEPO/article/view/294>

<https://www.cawtarclearinghouse.org/storage/AttachementGender/FinancingforGenderEquality.pdf>

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17938120.2021.1898188>

<https://sur.conectas.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/7-sur-24-ing-nayereh-tohidi.pdf>