OECD-MENA Women’s Business Forum: A Platform for Empowering Women in Business

Briefing at OECD Washington Center
28 April 2010, Paris, France
• Over **90%** female-to-male enrolment rate in almost all MENA countries*

• Over **100%** female-to-male enrolment rate in tertiary education in Kuwait, Tunisia, UAE, Bahrain & Qatar

• In some countries, such as **Morocco and Tunisia**, a higher proportion of women than men is participating in mathematics or engineering programmes

*Primary, secondary, and tertiary schools

... but economic participation is still low


Ministers committed to support women’s economic participation at the MENA-OECD Ministerial Conferences.

1. In 2007, they agreed that a “targeted and integrated support approach is required to accelerate the rate at which women in the MENA region are starting new businesses” (2007 Ministerial Declaration on Fostering Women’s Entrepreneurship in the MENA Region).

2. In 2009 they:
   - endorsed the Action Plan on Fostering Women’s Entrepreneurship and Employment in the MENA Region and
   - Supported the Action Plan’s implementation by the OECD-MENA Women’s Business Forum (WBF).
To foster the expansion of women-led businesses and women’s employment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the OECD-MENA WBF leverages the collective expertise of the private sector, governments, the OECD and experts.
OECD-MENA WBF Action Plan

The Action Plan – developed in collaboration with businesswomen from the MENA and OECD regions – identifies four priority areas of action for the WBF:

1. Encourage women’s entrepreneurship and employment by creating a business enabling environment.
2. Facilitate business registration and growth through enhanced access to finance, in particular for women-owned businesses.
3. Improve economic policy through better gender-disaggregated statistics and indicators.
### OECD-MENA WBF Approach

#### Action Plan implementation

| Making it Happen | • Interactive web platform  
|                  | • Regional and sub-regional workshops  
|                  | • Mainstreaming at MENA-OECD meetings |

| Training and Coaching | • Capacity-building training and coaching for businesswomen’s associations, entrepreneurs, business support agencies, and other relevant institutions using OECD and international expertise |

| Assessments & Recommendations | • Inventory and gap assessment of countries’ policies and programmes  
|                                | • Recommendations to support women in business |
Making it Happen

- **Permanent interactive web platform**
  - Information collection and dissemination
  - Online training materials
  - Prepare business plan competition (MENA 100)
  - Networking and business coaching
    - Interactive Q & A
    - Business coaching between aspiring women entrepreneurs and experienced managers
- **Training workshops** and materials to build capacity for supporting the expansion of women-led businesses
- **Peer-review meetings** to assess progress and identify gaps
- **Mainstreaming** in MENA-OECD Working Group & Steering Group meetings
Interactive Web Platform

OECD-MENA Women’s Business Forum Platform

About the OECD-MENA Women’s Business Forum

The WBF is a unique network which brings together over 120 women entrepreneurs, experts, representatives of businesswomen’s associations, civil society, and governments from both Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and OECD countries. By leveraging the collective expertise of its members, the WBF develops and communicates policy recommendations to MENA governments and the private sector to drive reform in support of women’s entrepreneurship and employment in the region.

Key Documents

- Action Plan and Ministerial Declaration on Fostering Women’s Entrepreneurship and Employment in the MENA Region (Arabic, English, French)

Business Coaching Q&A

- How can my businesswomen's association be most effective in advocating for policy reform?  
  27 avr. 2010 10:58

- I’d like to start my own business in Tunisia. Is there a business support agency that I can turn to?  
  27 avr. 2010 10:51

- How can we measure progress in improving access to finance for women entrepreneurs in the MENA region?  
  10 févr. 2010 18:48

- Business incubators: how can they respond to the needs of women entrepreneurs?
The interactive web platform facilitates networking and business coaching between MENA and OECD entrepreneurs.

Training workshops link up women business leaders from MENA and OECD countries to share experiences and build mutual capacity.
Training and Coaching

A series of training workshops for women in business will:

- Address women entrepreneurs’ specific needs
- Leverage existing expertise of the OECD, the World Bank and other partners
- Measure impact through adapted indicators

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<tr>
<th>EXAMPLES OF TRAINING</th>
<th>IMPACT MEASUREMENT</th>
<th>POTENTIAL TRAINING PARTNERS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Writing a business plan: training for women entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Track women’s participation in the annual MENA 100 Business Plan Competition</td>
<td>International Finance Corporation (IFC), MENA Centre for Investment</td>
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<td>Financing for growth: how to pitch your business idea</td>
<td>Workshop participation and evaluation</td>
<td>Union of Arab Banks, World Bank</td>
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<td>Adapting support services to women’s needs: training for staff in business incubators, SME support agencies, and other relevant institutions</td>
<td>Support agencies in collecting gender-disaggregated data on the clients they serve</td>
<td>International Labour Organization (ILO), Fédération Pionnières, Association des Femmes Chefs d’Entreprises du Maroc (AFEM)</td>
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<td>Developing competencies in advocacy: training for businesswomen’s associations on lobbying for policy reform</td>
<td>Assess the impact of advocacy campaigns launched at the country level</td>
<td>Council of Arab Businesswomen, MENA Businesswomen’s Network</td>
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Some progress in selected MENA countries

- Inclusion of women as a target group in some national development strategies & creation of national councils for women to ensure institutional co-ordination and follow-through
- Gender-neutral business laws & stronger property rights
- Educational access & increased business-related training for women
- Greater number of businesswomen’s associations

Remaining challenges

- Gender-specific personal status laws, labour laws which reflect cultural barriers limiting women’s economic involvement
- Insufficient access to business support services, information, networks & financing
- Input of businesswomen’s associations and national councils for women insufficiently mainstreamed in the policy-making process
- Need for more targeted training and coaching for women entrepreneurs on business creation and growth, lobbying for policy reform, marketing products to international clients, etc.
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<th>2009 Progress Report</th>
<th>Proposed expansion of assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Geographical scope</strong></td>
<td>10 countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian National Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>All 18 MENA countries, including Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Syria, Yemen</td>
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<td><strong>Policy scope</strong></td>
<td>• Identifies key gender-related barriers to women’s entrepreneurship and employment</td>
<td>• Country-level inventory providing:</td>
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<td>• Provides initial scoping of targeted policies and programmes in some MENA countries</td>
<td>i. policies to support the expansion of women-led businesses and women’s employment</td>
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<td>• Identifies need to produce a more systematic and operative assessment of policy &amp; programme support for businesswomen</td>
<td>ii. Government agencies providing business support services to women</td>
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<td>iii. Business association support services to women</td>
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<td>iv. Available gender-disaggregated data</td>
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Project Overview 2010

**Inventory**
Targeted policies & business support services for women in 18 MENA countries

**Gap Assessment**
Submit inventory to peer review workshops on sub-regional level & develop policy recommendations

**MAY** | **JUNE** | **JULY** | **AUG** | **SEPT** | **OCT** | **NOV**
---|---|---|---|---|---|---

**Interactive web platform**
To provide online training material & facilitate networking & business coaching between MENA and OECD women

**Training Workshops**
Capacity-building training workshops for women entrepreneurs, businesswomen’s associations, & other relevant institutions