

MENA-OECD Women's Business Forum

Research and data collection in MENA: gaps, needs and priorities

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Data and policy making

“Stylised facts” of data availability in MENA countries:

Plenty of official data – but driven by security/surveillance concerns, often not available/useable by researchers and analysts

Relatively small research community in MENA - partly because lack of data (raw material)

Banks, treasuries, investors (local and foreign), ratings agencies, donors etc. need economic information, so collect their own on commercial terms....consultants paradise...secrecy and duplication

Data (information and analysis) is needed for evidence-based policy making; for interlocuteurs in policy dialogue to be well informed; and to support a culture of policy evaluation and adjustment

Patchy data on enterprises and entrepreneurship in MENA*

Too little data on small firms and unregistered enterprises and inconsistent definitions, within as well as between countries (see Stevenson 2010). For all firm data see Atiyas (2011)

- WB enterprise surveys ongoing (formal enterprises, more than 5 workers) and an ERF survey of informal businesses in four MENA countries (studies and datasets available at www.eri.org/er)
- Data on entrepreneurship much improved (12 MENA countries over last few years) but needs to be maintained – cost about 80,000 USD pa (see IDRC GEM-MENA Regional Report 2009, IDRC 2010, available in English, French and Arabic; online at www.idrc.ca)

Relatively low rates of women's entrepreneurship hold back growth in all MENA countries:

- World Bank/Chamlou (using WB enterprise data), Stevenson (2010) (overview of evidence and policies), IDRC GEM-MENA Regional Report 2009 (entrepreneurship data) and Hattab (forthcoming) on entrepreneurship

To justify public expenditure for SME support (in general and for women's business in particular) more needs to be known about:

- contribution of SMEs (registered and unregistered) to output, incomes, growth and employment creation,
- bottlenecks to small firm growth at different lifecycle stages
- determinants and impact of high performance SMEs
- barriers to entry of registered firms (low entry rates in MENA compared to other regions)
- level and causes of differences in productivity among small firms
- nature of production links and rivalry or cooperation among small firms (clustering) and between small and larger firms,

**The main MENA data sources are itemised at the end of this presentation*

Data and research priorities

Sustain GEM data collection and fine tuning to specific needs (e.g. more on WED) to track entrepreneurial behaviour and orient policy recommendations

Establish a multi-country “SME observatory” to collate and harmonise data, fund complementary data collection (and release into the public domain), sponsor research, and enable policy analysis, policy recommendations and monitoring and evaluation of interventions

In the short term, set up a “knowledge management” portal on SMEs and entrepreneurship in MENA to bring together and make publically available information on data sources and research findings on SMEs, including women’s business activities and policy recommendations

IDRC stands ready to co-fund research including data collection in this field in accordance with the thematic priorities of the Supporting Inclusive Growth program (contact sjoekes@idrc.org.eg; adehaan@idrc.ca)

Main data sources

Atiyas, I., Firm level data in the ERF region: research questions, data requirements and possibilities, ERF Working Paper 589, June 2011

Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (including women's entrepreneurship) knowledge portal at <http://www.enterprise-development.org/page/knowledge-about-psd>

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor project website: www.gemconsortium.org

International Council for Small Business (MENA hub is the Middle East Council for Small Business, Cairo) www.icsb.org and knowledge portal at <http://icsb.org/knowledge.asp>

International Growth Centre firm capabilities research program at <http://www.theigc.org/research/firm%20capabilities>

MENA-OECD Investment Programme, MENA at a Glance: regional overview, OECD, Paris, n.d.

Stevenson, L., Private Sector and Enterprise Development: Fostering growth in the MENA region, IDRC and Edward Elgar, 2010

World Bank, The Environment for Women's Entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa Region, The World Bank, n.d., (main author: Nadereh Chamlou).

World Bank, The Little Data Book on Private Sector Development, The World Bank 2010.

World Bank Enterprise Surveys data and research at <http://www.enterprisesurveys.org/>