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Conference report

Women in the private sector in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Monday 24 – Thursday 27 March 2014 | WP1321

In partnership with:

With support from:



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Cátedra UNESCO de Resolución de Conflictos
UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA





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Executive summary

In partnership with the Swedish Institute in Alexandria and Casa Árabe in Cordoba, this conference identified the opportunities and constraints around women's economic involvement and economic empowerment in the private sector in the MENA region. It brought together academics, practitioners, policy makers, including from international organisations, diplomats and senior business and civil society leaders, most female, from Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Iraq, the Palestinian Occupied Territories and the United Arab Emirates.

Strategies to encourage women's economic participation in the regional labour market, as entrepreneurs or employees, were put forward, commensurate with the fact that women make up 50% of the population.

Consideration was also given to the increasingly important role women play in the global supply chains and labour market, situating the MENA-specific discussions in an international framework. Insights that emerged during the conference focused on the following:

The Micro-economic Perspective:

Individual women having the skill, will and tools to grasp opportunities that are made available in order to create greater financial security for themselves, their families and communities, such as through education, awareness, technology and family support.

The Macro-economic Perspective:

The big picture of government, private sector and civil society stakeholders having a unified and inclusive vision, with public policy able to harness full social and economic participation of women in order to benefit society and the economy, to include sound infrastructure supporting inclusion, relevant education and a robust legal framework as well as availability of jobs.

Key outcomes and findings

1. Recommendations focused on how to create unrestrictive pathways to economic independence for women through education, whilst promoting inclusive, gender-responsive development of the private sector through supportive infrastructure and legislation. This included ways to best promote equal access to finance for entrepreneurs and using technology to facilitate growth and support education and dissemination.
2. Raising overall awareness of the benefits of women's employment and education, as well as the negative impact of gender discrimination, are considered to be crucial. Finding and even creating the right media to communicate and disseminate this, including sharing information and strong role models, is critical. It is important to ensure both messaging and methodology are adapted to different needs, for example, of urban versus rural, and educated versus illiterate sectors of the population. As awareness is the start of promoting critical and creative thinking, an enabling environment for women starts with support from the immediate family and at grass-roots, community level. In terms of changing the mind-sets of both men and women, creating an approach that links 'top down' and 'bottom up' is key.
3. To do this, there is a need to work together to tackle cultural barriers to growth, such as politicized Islam, through a research and data-driven approach. Historical precedents showing Muslim women being fully engaged in all spheres of society are very powerful in combating growing cultural sensitivities around women in the workplace. Other effective methodologies are quantifying and communicating the cost of women's engagement or non-engagement. For example, measuring the negative impact recent political upheaval in the region has had on women's economic empowerment in fiscal terms, and being able to communicate the knock-on effect of this on GDP growth.
4. Political empowerment and engagement are also necessary to achieve the required economic emancipation. For this reason, in order to create equal access for women to political as well as labour market opportunity, policy makers, the private sector and civil society organisations need to work together in their respective roles for enabling overall social change and driving economic opportunity. The recommendations below are listed to reflect this. While there is inevitably considerable overlap, recommendations have been categorised so as to offer the best chance of successfully driving the required change.

For policy makers

5. Fostering understanding of the importance of a tripartite approach, with government as strategic stakeholder, building policy around encouraging private sector support and investment in conjunction with civil society.
6. Supporting women's political and economic engagement and inclusion on the basis of global and regional research, showing that investing in women is considered to offer the world's highest return investment in terms of both national and regional development.
7. Supporting policy recommendations outlined in the Cairo Declaration on The Post-2015 Development Agenda for Arab Women, adopted on 23 February 2014, for national implementation. This includes issues around violence/harassment against women and matters of pay and social rights.¹
8. Creating a fund dedicated to women's entrepreneurship to cover the entire Arab region, directing assets to financing women-led enterprises.

For the private sector

9. Ensuring greater telecommunications investment in deprived areas to support connectivity and thus foster opportunities for flexible working and entrepreneurship.
10. Generating the will to create a supportive infrastructure which would encourage

implementation of internal policies that reconcile work and family. Considerations would include childcare support, more flexible working hours and recognition of rights for maternity provision and equal pay.

11. Development of particular products which would facilitate women-led enterprise and inclusion in the supply chain.
12. Creating, when necessary, and sustaining, media that facilitates positive communication around women's economic empowerment issues.

For civil society organisations

13. Driving cohesion among all sectors of society, in particular connecting individual need to public policy. This ensures building capacity provides more opportunities for women as a whole not solely in the private sector.
14. Driving awareness through media and education as well as faith-based institutions.
15. Leading on the development of e-learning facilities for financial and general education.
16. Creating research and data that could be used for lobbying, particularly on the return on investment for advancing women's economic empowerment at national level, and historical precedents for this.

The context

17. There is a growing regional awareness of the need to create an inclusive and gender-responsive private sector in the MENA region, one that is able to support a desired average national gross domestic product (GDP) growth of around 6%.
18. Global evidence abounds: figures from a number of official sources show that countries with greater equality are more competitive and grow faster. Data released by the World Bank Groupⁱⁱ demonstrates that closing the gap between male and female employment rates would have huge implications for the global economy, boosting Eurozone GDP by 13% and Japanese GDP by 16%. Globally women represent 49.6% of the total population, but only 40.8% of the total workforce in the formal sector.
19. In the Middle East, OECD figures are much starker.ⁱⁱⁱ Only 26% of women join the labour force compared with 78% of men. Thirty-one per cent of women live in poverty (globally 19%). The OECD also estimates that by further enabling and fostering women's economic empowerment, the MENA region could increase its GDP growth per capita by as much as 25%. Only 1.2% of managers in the MENA region are female, compared to an 18.6% average worldwide, and one in eight women in the region lead their own business, compared to one in three men. Other comparative data shows that at 15.9% MENA women have the lowest political participation rates in the world, which is directly linked to low rates of women's education, particularly at secondary level. The global wage gap between men and women is around 23%; in the MENA region it can be as high as 35%.
20. Within these figures it is also important to recognise the disparities that exist between different geographical and socio-economic groups, including urban and rural, educated and illiterate. Women as carers within the informal economy or female agricultural workers, make up a significant part of the regional labour force, albeit one that has no status and is thus unrecognised and silent. These figures become even more compelling when one considers that in post-revolution Egypt, for example, it was discovered that over 5 million women were not registered to vote; they were in possession of a birth certificate but have no formal identity documents.
21. At present, women's level of employment is much higher in the public sector across the MENA region. The Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) reports that this is related to the educated, urban women's preference for the better opportunities the public sector offers for a work-life balance.
22. Finally, women's rights, both cultural and legal, have in some countries been worsening

in recent decades. In fact, during the upheaval in the region in the last three years many women's rights and opportunities that have been in place for decades have come under significant pressure. In Tunisia, for example, women have been fighting just to maintain the current status quo. There is a need to protect women's rights in societies in transition, where constitutional and political changes are taking place. Indeed, the opportunity of social and political engagement must be taken to drive positive reform.

Examining the key issues

Barriers and opportunities

23. There are a variety of considerations affecting women's ability to access opportunities as either entrepreneurs or employees in the MENA region. These include:
24. Mental barriers are seen to perpetuate the vicious circle of a subsistence existence. The origins of these lie in lack of confidence linked to cultural barriers, social norms and patriarchal values, limiting opportunity and access to finance and entrepreneurial know-how.
25. Polarization of rich and poor in the MENA region, with opportunities for a few only. Creating greater inclusion is not just about gender, but it is also about closing the socio-economic divide.
26. Poverty is the enemy of democracy. Demonstrated by recent political turmoil, (particularly shown by how political power was hijacked and then lost by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt) the promises of 'food on the table' and greater rights for the many failed to materialise within an agenda that was ideologically, rather than practically, driven.
27. Political Islam positions women as 'protected pearls' who stay in the home, because that is where they should be. It is a cornerstone of Islamists' ideology. However, historical academic research demonstrates that there are very few religious or historical precedents to back this positioning.
28. Lack of access to land, and property rights, restricts access to finance. Land is often used as collateral. Inheritance laws mean that women very often do not own land; hence they have no collateral to get loans to support a business.
29. Social protection is also a major issue. Maternity provision, for example, is not adequately recognised in law in much of the MENA region, although some countries, such as Morocco, have ratified and seek to implement international standards. Currently, maternity leave in the region averages around 10 weeks, with no provision for the father.
 - At the same time, the question arises when maternity protection is applied whether it can be a double-edged sword, acting as a barrier between women and access to work. In Egypt, for example, women can take 18 weeks' maternity leave and then return to the same job. Turkey was cited as another example. There is a cultural impetus to keep women in the home, so campaigning for longer maternity leave may make them less attractive as employees.
 - Protective laws for women can be used against them, for example in some MENA countries this applies to legislation about women working at night.
30. Sexual harassment, often classified as violence against women, is a key barrier to working in the private sector, occurring both within the workplace but also during travel to and from the workplace.
31. Education is a primary means of progression and development. Women, and society as a whole, are not sufficiently 'upskilled' to meet modern needs. Yet there are significant barriers to using education to support women's economic empowerment, including:
 - Although women are passionate about education as a way to progress, they often focus more strongly on their families rather than themselves and on boys rather than

their daughters. This is particularly evident in families from more challenging socio-economic backgrounds.

- A key educational barrier is an outdated and irrelevant curriculum as well as discriminatory practices by teachers focusing more strongly on boys.
- Educational technology is measurable, transparent and scalable, allowing even marginalized girls and women to participate in an education tailored to them. However, significant barriers in terms of infrastructure, in particular connectivity and cultural perception, need to be overcome to implement this. Effective use of technology is recognised though as a tool to help overcome gender as well as geographical and social barriers.
- Current education is based on old fashioned principles of rote-learning. Changing the paradigm to create a positive dialogue between students and teachers, based on a shared platform of communication using relevant gender-sensitive and generally inclusive material, is essential.
- At grass roots level and in schools there is a fear of change. This has led to strong resistance against practices more in tune with modern needs, and so genuine structural reform has been very difficult.
- Women are often not trained as comprehensively as men; this impacts promotion and career progression.
- Education does not automatically equal employment: In Palestine there are low literacy rates, but only 17% of women are employed in the labour market, with unemployment highest among women with at least 13 years' schooling. This is due to the lack of jobs as well as difficulties in accessing the work place.

32. The legal framework may pose a serious impediment. Personal status laws in some countries, based on patriarchal and traditional images of the family, and principles of obedience for women, are seen as key obstacles. Yet most countries have constitutional provisions for equality, despite restrictions caused by personal status laws. Some are actively working towards legislative equality: Morocco has under its Constitution adopted in November 2011 established an authority to create parity and fight discrimination; Tunisia's 2013 Constitution reaffirms equality between women and men, despite some initial resistance to this provision. However, key implementation tools for enforcing constitutional rights are often missing, such as a Constitutional Court.

33. Interpretation and implementation of the law is critical. There also needs to be a better understanding of why some laws are poorly implemented, and what is needed to improve this.

34. Entrepreneurship in the region is generally under-developed. Yet because there are so many barriers to employment, women often go into entrepreneurship, but without experience of the labour market. They have had no exposure to market forces and do not possess the right skills-set. However, when women are given the right tools to participate and develop, studies have shown that results are extremely positive. Currently only 13% of entrepreneurs in the region are women but the return on investment (ROI) when empowering women is shown to be significant in microeconomic terms, such as contributing to family welfare. In macroeconomic terms, women often spend in ways which positively contribute to productivity and growth.

35. Examples of good practice in entrepreneurship and self-employment include:

- The regional Goldman Sachs entrepreneurship and leadership programme with its base at the American University in Cairo aims to teach women business and management education, linking creation of a business plan, family support, ethics of business, networking, access to finance and mentoring in a holistic programme designed to support entrepreneurs from start up to small and medium sized

enterprises (SME).^{iv}

- In Iraq, the Women's Empowerment Organisation (WEO) runs a business incubator/centre for women entrepreneurs.^v
- A recent pilot project by Mowgli, ABA and Silatech in Egypt, linking personal growth to the Egyptian microfinance ecosystem by upskilling loan officers through specialised mentorship training, has shown encouraging results.^{vi}

Knowledge and awareness

36. Lack of collective knowledge and information-sharing leads to areas of misinformation and discrimination. In particular lack of awareness, or neglect, by policymakers results in inaction or indeed misinformed action that has a negative impact on women's economic empowerment. Addressing these information gaps effectively, using a variety of media, is also an opportunity. Positive awareness can be created by publishing strong stories of women in the media, raising issues around gender and social divides and judicious use of social media. For the illiterate, TV stories such as the Turkish soap opera *Fatma*, and cartoons, an example being a 'supergirl' cartoon fighting for women's rights in her hijab in Egypt, can have an impact. The publication of a new magazine dealing specifically with women's economic empowerment in Iraq, *Nina*, and corporate communication initiatives for the region, such as Microsoft's Aspire Woman portal, also respond to this need.
37. Key knowledge gaps that need to be addressed include:
38. There is global, regional and national data showing the impact economically engaged women can have on a nation's development. Indeed statistics show that men and women's prosperity is interdependent. This is not appropriately presented and sufficiently shared in a way that is understood by society as a whole. In particular, policy-makers are not reading these reports. Adopting a comprehensive and inclusive approach to economic prosperity is key. The role of women in the economy is often given insufficient attention when preparing national development plans.
39. Women's roles within the family must be changed by women themselves being encouraged and supported to act, taking permission rather than waiting for it to be given. This is a change in conception and impacts not just the mind-set of women themselves, but also affects what they teach the next generation, their children.
40. SMEs often constitute the 'missing middle' in Arab economies due to the difficulties they face in obtaining financial capital. They can play a vital, though often unrecognised, role in economic growth and a thriving public sector.
41. There is a lack of awareness in terms of both violence against women and sexual harassment. Concerns around lack of safety in the workplace, as well as on journeys to and from work, are issues regularly not recognized, and are often internalised by women who blame themselves for inciting any harassment they experience.^{vii} There is a clear need to create awareness in the region of what harassment actually is. The cost to the economy of the absence of women from the workplace due to sexual harassment or violence against women, or HIV Aids, has not been collated and quantified. In order to impact policy change and population mind-set this has to be a priority.
42. There is a need to create a shared understanding of the importance of wage equity. Currently women and men are not getting paid the same for doing the same job. This is unspoken and yet people know. This gives the impression that women's work is of less value. In the MENA region, where only one out of four women work in the formal economy, there are sizeable pay gaps. In Jordan, for example, this may currently reach 24.5% between men and women doing the same job in teaching. In the informal economy, and in particular for agricultural workers, it is much worse. Women's work as carers is mostly not recognised as it is not qualified as work. Awareness must also be

created for the fact that increasingly women are becoming sole breadwinners

43. Women do not know their rights and without this knowledge they do not know what protection they do or do not have. Knowledge around the full implications of Shari'a law for women is patchy. For example, in a marriage contract a woman has significant scope to negotiate rights and status. However, most women are not aware of this and so agree to whatever is presented as they do not want to offend their husbands.
44. The role of Islam and women's economic empowerment, including awareness of Shari'a and its practice throughout history, as opposed to more recent politicized Islamic interpretations, is not properly understood or given sufficient prominence. For example:
 - There are no rules against women's work in Islam, indeed the Koran promotes work in all forms and even facilitates it. Research shows that in earlier periods women were working in all areas of society: as scholars, physicians even running credit/saving associations and investment projects. Women were involved at the heart of civil society as leaders. This included widows and divorcees.
 - The situation today has been caused by a variety of factors, including the influence of Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia. In colonial times too Western Victorian cultural mores, which saw women as supreme in the home, were imported through British occupation. Later cultural exports from the West sought to emphasise the difference between women and men, creating the impression that due to biological differences women are not stable and so cannot make decisions.
45. Entrepreneurship and employability programmes for women such as the Goldman Sachs funded programme at the American University in Cairo have shown that a woman who is employed in work she truly enjoys can create a happy household around her. These perspectives, shared by their husbands, need to be communicated across the region.
46. Access to finance for women must be linked to access to ideas and opportunities as well as to entrepreneurial know-how.
 - Successful female entrepreneurship is based on the understanding of risk and linked to a holistic approach that includes tools such as supporting marketing and product/ service development.
 - Finance on its own is not enough to move from subsistence borrowing to growth. To obtain growth, societies need to be competitive; most countries in the MENA region are not competitive.
47. There is potential to build understanding from other cultures and economies which have produced positive change for women. For example in India, a co-operative of rubbish pickers created by the SEWA project, supported by Weconnect International and Accenture, has transformed the lives of many women by creating supply chain inclusion. India also leads the way in encouraging female co-operatives and exports, particularly of handicrafts which have been designated a protected industry. This approach was mirrored in Egypt in 2013, and is considered to have great value.

Recommendations for positive action

48. Key recommendations for promoting women's economic advancement in the Arab region include:
49. Across the region women should be recognised as full citizens. Women should be encouraged and supported to be more active in politics and have a stronger presence in the public sphere, in representation in parliament and local communities, engagement with political parties and lobbying. This requires affirmative action and temporary measures. The Cairo Declaration, covering both women's political

participation and economic empowerment, provides an excellent basis for gender advocacy and concrete action. Reforming personal status laws in countries where Shari'a is the main source of legislation according to the constitution is difficult and contentious since it challenges the role and interpretation of Islam. In the long term it requires support from Islamic authorities.

- In the shorter term, to support women in obtaining their rights, tools such as marriage contracts based on principles of Islamic law, can be used to ensure the right to continuing education and the right to work, although such contracts then need to be enforced. The LAS or Organisation of Islamic Cooperation could be encouraged to draw up a model contract.
- To support longer term legislative change and implementation of the law, gender advocacy needs to be backed with relevant statistics and informed research, as well as effective dissemination. It is important to understand why laws are not implemented to be able to improve the process of their implementation.

50. Recognising the right for women to work in the region. The UNDP's recently launched Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017^{viii} fits well the MENA region and strongly recommends the need formally to recognize unpaid care work and unpaid labour in general

51. International and regional cross-fertilisation and knowledge sharing in order to draw up a roadmap, and share best practice, for supporting female labour force participation and entrepreneurship. For example exploring:

- Why the number of female employees as well as entrepreneurs in Morocco is double that of Egypt.
- Why Muslim societies such as the Malaysia have a much higher proportion of successful female entrepreneurs.
- Very practical solutions that are not immediately obvious; for example in Morocco wells were provided in villages which meant girls did not have to walk miles to get water and could thus spend more time on their education.

52. Turn needs into opportunity. For example, in southern Egypt, a programme supports the creation of day care centres and pre-school kindergartens run by women, thereby turning the care economy into small business.. This has several impacts:

- Working within the MDG of equal access to quality education in early years, thus creating equal opportunities for children, but also creating jobs.
- Addressing mobility, transport and security for women, as generally this day care can be in the village or local community.

At the same time, governments, and the private sector, should play a role in creating supportive infrastructure to reconcile work and family. Governments can do this through gender-responsive budgets.

53. Using technology to create new global markets and unite a critical mass of voices, developing clusters of expertise and excellence and co-operatives that can create security and solidarity. Other recommendations around the use of information technology include:

- Encouragement of E-learning for all ages.
- Encouraging women to contribute to the lack of Arabic content of the www.
- Ensuring that creating connectivity is considered on a par with other areas of infrastructure such as electricity and water.
- Enabling different kinds of access to the workplace, technology provides flexible working and homeworking.

54. Governments should create concrete support for women business owners. To do this they should work with the private sector in order to:
- Facilitate funnelling the financial liquidity in Arab countries directly into women's enterprises, including through microenterprise/credit and banks.
 - Develop equity products, particularly venture capital and micro-equity.
 - Support financial education for women, using methodologies from other parts of the world, and disseminating via radio, TV and cartoons as well as the more traditional methods. The LAS could play a role in producing gender-sensitive materials.
 - Create sustainable SME support, including through government promotion of trade and export activities.

Governments could also encourage companies to adopt positive employment policies towards women's employment by providing tax incentives.

55. Harnessing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), for example under the entrepreneurship programme for Women at the American University in Cairo, funded by Goldman Sachs, which supports female entrepreneurship in the entire region. Microsoft's Aspire Woman portal is also an example of this, as are projects such as Mowgli Mentoring and Education for Employment supported by many international and regional corporations. Mentoring, to create confidence for women entrepreneurs, is of huge significance.
56. Entrepreneurial success and the supply chain needs attention. Rooting the value of women owned businesses within the supply chain is also important.
- By linking national and international corporate values, governance and procurement budgets to women owned businesses of all sizes it is possible to create sustainability able to support the regional economy from the grass roots up.
 - It is important to continually monitor data and growth transition of micro to small, to growth enterprise.
 - Equally important is the need to communicate this progress and best practice across the region, which would encourage growth among businesses and potential entrepreneurs to come forward.
57. Creating educational relevance and access to quality education for all is crucial.
- Linking the private sector into this dialogue, using CSR and capacity building to facilitate participation.
 - The considered use of educational technology to create scale and ensure quality is important.
 - Ensuring the creative and innovative nation builders of the future get the support they need in terms of modern educational practice is key. This not only supports economic growth, but also embeds the principles of a civil society.^{ix}
58. Disseminating the correct narrative around women's roles through historical study of Islam and the Koran, to be able to demonstrate that the principles of Shari'a do not impede women's economic engagement, only current restrictive interpretation of these principles. As demonstrated successfully by Iraqi NGOs, using Imans to correct perceptions and promote awareness is a powerful tool.
59. NGOs in the MENA region can provide an important training ground for entrepreneurship and a stepping stone towards it, promoting social enterprise and profitability in an ethical environment. They should be encouraged to work with the private sector in this. Working in partnership, may help address some of the challenges women's entrepreneurship faces in access to land or property, which could be provided by the private sector.

- In Egypt for example, there is a real move now towards empowering the individual within a sustainable framework, such women as entrepreneurs, turning typical household skills and chores into the basis of a formal business.
- Seed-funding linked to data and expertise could create long term sustainability by linking into wider ecosystems able to offer support as well as return on investment. This shift could be driven by NGOs.
- NGOs should also focus on fostering growth and development of the family unit as a whole.

60. There is a need in the MENA region to create a social security schemes for a range of social protections, including maternity and old age. Such schemes need to be based on partnership between employers, governments and workers. While the private sector has a clear role to play in providing infrastructure for reconciling work and family, it also the state responsibility.

61. There has been an important growth in women's professional business associations, nationally and regionally, in recent years. These organisations need to work collaboratively together for greatest effect. Women also need to reach out to work in partnership with other actors, to mobilise supportive sectors and create allies, such as parliamentarians and trade unions. There is also an important role for 'male champions' to play.

Conclusion

It is in the region's best interests for women to have equal opportunities in terms of participating in their national economy, either as entrepreneurs or employees. The result of this engagement would drive short term gains, whilst heralding long term regional, economic transformation.

A strong private sector is a crucial factor in terms of achieving this transformational paradigm. By providing an independent framework that aligns cultural and personal strengths to wider economic considerations, it presents real relevance to local need, as well as the global value chain.

Essentially macroeconomic stability requires a stable political landscape. This supports, and is in turn supported by, a thriving private sector and a people that are sufficiently engaged in the political and economic process. Women and men working together through the common motivation of improving their own lives creates an entrepreneurial workforce that is not just working towards stabilising their own 'micro economy' but supports public policy broadly also .

Tackling gender and inclusion as part of accepted business practices that will support profitability will therefore bear significant fruit in this region. By creating jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities the private sector can engage with the many. If everyone is a stakeholder, in their own and in a collective future, the motivation is there to nation-build together. From micro to macro, from the individual to the corporate, harnessing the power and the passion of everyone to do good business for the sake of a better future will directly result in national growth. If gender inclusion is seen as a determining factor at the beginning, national growth will result in a virtuous circle which encourages women's economic empowerment because it makes business sense.

Postscript: creation of the Positive Voices network

Participants at the "Women in the Private Sector in the MENA Region Forum" held on 25 and 26 March 2014 in Cordoba Spain, organized by Wilton Park and the Swedish Institute Alexandria and hosted by Casa Árabe resolved to form the "Positive Voices Network".

The Positive Voices Network (PVN) is a not-for-profit, non-political group of MENA men and women with a mission to promote solidarity and cooperation among members of the network to advance women's full economic empowerment and broader welfare. Positive

Voices' first action has been to draw international attention to the situation of Syrian women and girls in Zaatari refugee camp, and other camps in Jordan. It will progress to other issues following the publication of PVN's Cordoba Declaration (a website, www.positivevoices.org is currently construction).

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ⁱ The Cairo Declaration was adopted by representatives of member states of the League of Arab States (LAS) and will be submitted to the 2015 LAS summit meeting in Tunisia. For the text of the Declaration, see <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/58/CSW58-declaration-cairo-en%20pdf.pdf>

ⁱⁱ See World Bank, *Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa: Women in the Public Sphere*, 2003.

ⁱⁱⁱ See OECD, *MENA-OECD Investment Programme - Promoting women's economic opportunity in the Middle East and North Africa*, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/188525227/Promoting-women's-economic-opportunity-in-the-Middle-East-and-North-Africa>

^{iv} See <http://www.aucegypt.edu/Business/WEL/Pages/default.aspx>

^v See <http://www.weoiraq.org/daspec.html>

^{vi} See <http://www.slideshare.net/mowglifoundation/silatech-mowgli-provide-training-to-support-egyptian-microenterprise>

^{vii} For example, in recent studies 90% of women reported sexual harassment, however shockingly 60% of educated women and 75% of less educated women considered that harassment is the fault of the woman not the man.

^{viii} <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/gender-equality-strategy-2014-2017>

^{ix} A conference in May 2014 organised by the LAS will examine 'Teaching for Employability'. Education needs radical reform and women have to play a role in this.