



OIC WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2021

*Progress towards the Implementation of the OIC Plan of
Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW)*



ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION
STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH
AND TRAINING CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES





Organization of Islamic Cooperation
Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training
Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)



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Progress towards the Implementation of the **OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW)**



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Kudüs Cad. No: 9, Diplomatik Site, 06450 Oran, Ankara –Turkey

Telephone +90–312–468 6172

Internet www.sesric.org

E-mail pubs@sesric.org

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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS.....	I
FOREWORD	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1. INTRODUCTION	5
2. STATE OF WOMEN’S DEVELOPMENT	7
2.1. Participation in Decision-Making	8
2.2. Education	14
2.3. Health	18
2.4. Economic Empowerment.....	22
2.5. Social Protection	26
2.6. Protecting Women from Violence	29
2.7. Women in Crisis Situations	34
2.8. Concluding Remarks.....	37
3. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OIC PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (OPAAW).....	39
3.1. Implementation Status of the Objectives of OPAAW	40
3.1.1. Objective No. 1 – Women’s Participation in Decision Making	41
3.1.2. Objective No. 2 – Women’s Education	43
3.1.3. Objective No. 3 – Women’s Health.....	45
3.1.4. Objective No. 4 – Women’s Economic Empowerment	48
3.1.5. Objective No. 5 – Social Protection for Women	52

3.1.6.	Objective No. 6 – Protecting Women from Violence	55
3.1.7.	Objective No. 7 – Women in Crises	58
3.2.	Major Challenges to the Implementation of OPAAW	62
3.3.	National Best-Practices Contributing to the Implementation of OPAAW	65
4.	THE PATH TO WOMEN’S DEVELOPMENT	70
APPENDIX	APPENDIX	76
REFERENCES	REFERENCES	79

ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COMCEC	Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the OIC
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ESALA	East and South Asia and Latin America
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GS	General Secretariat
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDI	Human Development Index
ICCIA	Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture
ICCIABIN	ICCIA Businesswomen Information Network
ICDT	Islamic Centre for Development of Trade
ICYF	Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
ISAS	Integrated Social Assistance Service Information System
IRCICA	Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LEB	Life Expectancy at Birth
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MMR	Maternal Mortality Ratio
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations



OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OPAAW	OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SESRIC	Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TYPO	OIC Ten Year Programme of Action
UDB	Unified Database
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHLP	UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WB	World Bank
WBL	Women, Business and the Law
WEF	World Economic Forum
WEFI	Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative
WHO	World Health Organization



FOREWORD

There are currently around 940 million females living in OIC member countries – constituting 49.3% of the OIC total population. However, their role in and contribution to the socio-economic development of their societies are often suboptimal in many OIC countries. This is largely due to various social, cultural, and political norms and practices that limit women’s participation in society and render their needs invisible. Addressing the needs of women and ensuring their fair representation in society is, therefore, of the foremost importance if OIC member countries are to eliminate gender disparities and maximize women’s contribution to socio-economic development under the purview of the OIC-2025 Programme of Action and the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW).

This latest edition of the *OIC Women and Development Report (2021)* measures the progress made by OIC member countries in improving the status of women in seven important socio-economic dimensions (decision-making, education, health, economic empowerment, social protection, protection from violence, and women in crises). A distinguishing feature of the 2021 report is the simultaneous use of primary and secondary data. The report utilizes datasets collected from international sources as well as responses received from 27 OIC member countries to the OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 administered by SESRIC.

The major findings of this report highlight the remarkable progress achieved by many OIC member countries in adopting policies and programmes for the advancement of women. For instance, 36 member countries improved their Gender Development Index scores by reducing gender disparities in education, health, and income between 2010 and 2018. Over the past decade, the female literacy rate in OIC countries has increased from 66.9% to 72.8% and the maternal mortality rate has been reduced by 16%. Similarly, OPAAW survey responses also indicate substantial progress recorded in the domain of women’s health; 77% of member countries implemented measures on the relevant health indicators listed in the OPAAW. Progress was also recorded in the domains of education (75%), decision-making (72%), social protection (69%), protection from violence (69%), economic empowerment (63%), and lastly, the status of women in crises (60%). Clearly, the recommendations listed in the OPAAW have played an important role in improving the performance of OIC member states, especially in areas such as raising awareness about the challenges faced by women and facilitating multi-stakeholder cooperation in launching initiatives for women’s betterment.

Yet, despite the wide-ranging progress, many social, economic, and political challenges to women’s empowerment persist in OIC member countries. For example, in 2019, 58% of women did not participate in the labour force and the unemployment rate among women



was 11.1% in OIC member countries, as compared to 5.6% in the world. Women also remained underrepresented in decision-making processes and policy areas. The average proportion of seats held by women in parliaments of OIC countries merely stood at 18.4% in 2019. Moreover, millions of women continue to face various forms of violence and discrimination at home and outside. Women often do not have proper access to social protection programmes or institutional support systems. Most importantly, there is a wide disparity across OIC member countries and geographical regions when it comes to the intensity of these challenges and the scope of interventions aimed at resolving them. As the survey responses indicate, improved statistical capacities and more financial resources are required to better monitor and improve the status of women in OIC member countries.

Finally, the findings of this report also revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities for women and girls across many sectors – from health and the economy to decision-making and social protection. This calls for urgent policy interventions to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 on women and girls living in OIC member countries and preserve the gains made in addressing gender inequalities.

To this end, furthering intra-OIC cooperation and utilizing programmes offered by relevant OIC institutions including SESRIC can be helpful. Such programs can facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and the best practices among OIC member countries, which can aid them in addressing barriers to the advancement of women during such difficult times. I firmly believe that the findings of this report will guide readers and policymakers in this direction.

Nebil DABUR
Director General
SESRIC



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A research team at SESRIC comprising of Cem Tintin and Tazeen Qureshi has prepared this report. Mazhar Hussain, Director of Economic and Social Research Department coordinated the research process under the supervision of H.E. Nebil Dabur, Director General of SESRIC.

The contributions of the authors to specific chapters of the report are as follows: Cem Tintin prepared the Introduction and Chapter 2 on the State of Women in OIC Member countries. Tazeen Qureshi prepared Chapter 3 on Progress towards the Implementation of the OPAAW. Cem Tintin and Tazeen Qureshi jointly contributed to Chapter 4 on the Path to Women's Development.

The research team at SESRIC would like to thank the focal points in OIC member countries who responded to the 'OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019' for their time and effort. We would like to extend a special thanks to the OIC General Secretariat for their efforts towards the coordination and collaboration during the implementation of the Survey.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Challenges faced by women in social and economic life affect their wellbeing, prevent them from reaching their full potential, and reduce their contribution to development, which thus exacerbate the existing gender inequalities. This report highlights the role of women in the development of OIC member countries and gives an account of existing gender disparities in seven sectors of society: decision-making, education, health, economic empowerment, social protection, protection of women from violence, and women in crises. The report also measures the performance of OIC member countries in the implementation of the OPAAW and evaluates their efforts to address gender inequalities by using data collected from international data sources and the OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019. Lastly, the report identifies key challenges faced by OIC member countries and proposes policy recommendations to address these challenges.

State of Women's Development

Women represent approximately half of the total population in the world and in OIC member countries. This essentially means that societies cannot achieve their developmental goals by ignoring or not addressing the problems faced by half of their population. As reflected in the findings of this report, OIC member countries have managed to effectively address the challenges to women's development in a variety of sectors. For example, according to the Gender Development Index (GDI) that measures the gender gaps in health, education, and living standards, 36 OIC member countries reduced gender inequalities between 2010 and 2018.

In the domain of women's participation in decision-making, OIC member countries improved the number of women in parliaments by 4.6 percentage points between 2010 and 2019. In the domain of education, OIC member countries, as a group, recorded progress over the past decade in female literacy rate that increased from 66.9% to 72.8%. Yet, in some OIC sub-regions, like Sub-Saharan Africa, female literacy rates remain quite low (46.9%), implying the existence of persistent challenges in women's access to formal and informal education.

Similarly, there has been an improvement in women's access to health systems in OIC member countries, resulting in positive changes in women's health. For instance, female life expectancy at birth improved from 68.1 years in 2010 to 70.7 years in 2018 in the OIC group. Efforts of various OIC member countries also paid off in reducing maternal mortalities that went down, on average, from 304 in 2010 to 254 in 2017 (per 100,000 live births), indicating a 16% reduction in that period. Despite this progress, women residing in OIC member countries, on average, were expected to live 4.2 years less as compared to the world average in 2018.



Gender disparities in economic and entrepreneurial sectors continue to be a critical concern for OIC member countries. Although OIC member countries witnessed a slight increase in the female labour force participation rate, from 41.6% in 2010 to 42.3% in 2019, women are less likely to participate in the labour market due to various obstacles. In terms of reducing unemployment rates for the female population, OIC member countries were unable to record notable progress. This is partly due to the persistence of obstacles such as gender stereotypes, social norms, and weak social protection mechanisms that affect women disproportionately.

Inclusive and effective social protection systems are key to supporting women's attempts at improving their lives and the lives of their households. The increase in the number of OIC member countries providing 14 weeks of paid maternal leave indicates their willingness to support new mothers in this regard. Lack of support systems, combined with social norms, weak legislation, and biased attitudes contribute to the exacerbation of violence against women. In 2019, 36% of women residing in OIC member countries experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime while this ratio averaged at 29% at the global level. Similarly, child marriages were also more prevalent in OIC member countries (16.6%) as compared to the world average (11.8%) in 2019.

The lack of proper legal mechanisms is particularly detrimental to women belonging to marginalized groups such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. Due to a number of ongoing conflicts and crises across the OIC region, the share of IDPs in the total population increased from 0.9% in 2010 to 1.5% in 2019. At least half of these people were female, implying a significant increase in the number of women in crises who are in need of assistance and protection.

Lastly, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has also had several adverse effects on women in OIC member countries. Many women have lost their income or jobs, are experiencing increased incidents of violence at home, and suffering from increased responsibilities at home and mobility restrictions due to containment measures. These factors aggravate existing gender inequalities in many member countries, marking a need for additional measures to protect women during the pandemic. Effective initiatives in several OIC member countries (e.g. centralized social protection systems in Indonesia and Turkey) have highlighted the importance of having support systems for effectively responding to shocks like COVID-19.

Progress towards the Implementation of OPAAW

Between October 2019 and June 2020, SESRIC administered the OPAAW implementation survey to OIC countries. The survey was conducted in abidance of Resolution No. 7/7-W of the 7th Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of OIC Member States, held in 2018. The Survey was designed to gather information on the



implementation of OPAAW in OIC countries in seven distinct domains: women's participation in decision-making, status of women's education, women's health, economic empowerment, social protection, protection of women from violence, and women in crises. As of June 2020, 27 OIC countries from all OIC sub-regions (47% of member countries) responded to the survey.

In regards to improving the status of women across all sectors of society, respondent countries have implemented a considerable number of measures that vary in nature and scope. These measures include specific interventions for human development, enhancing institutional capacities, prescriptive laws and national regulations, strategies and frameworks for national, regional, international – and multi-sectoral – cooperation, and building inclusive and equitable societies. A summary review of the findings shows that respondent countries have implemented the most comprehensive measures in the domain of health, followed by protection from violence, social protection, participation in decision-making, women in crises, education, and women's economic empowerment. All of these measures are also in line with OPAAW objectives in each area.

When it comes to the progress respondent countries have made towards the implementation of OPAAW, an analysis of responses demonstrates that the level of progress was highest in the area of women's health, followed by education, participation in decision-making, social protection, protection from violence, women's economic empowerment, and lastly, status of women in crises. Programs and policies that facilitated this progress included generic strategies and laws, concentrated initiatives for reforming and strengthening institutions, and efforts to develop human capacities.

In respect to major challenges, the respondent countries identified the following factors as 'mostly and very challenging' for the implementation of OPAAW in their countries: lack of statistical capacity to monitor and implement at the national level (41%), lack of financing for successful implementation at the national level (41%), limited engagement with the OIC and its institutions (19%), limited political willingness and leadership at the national level (11%), and low awareness among public authorities at the national level (7%). They also identified an 'extreme need' for support and/or assistance in reaching the objectives of OPAAW in the following areas: economic empowerment (48%), protection from violence (44%), health (41%), women in crises (37%), social protection (33%), education (33%), and participation in decision-making (22%).

In respect to capacity building needs, a number of respondent countries (41%) chose 'SESRIC's Capacity Building and Training Programmes' as the leading mechanism through which they can facilitate the implementation of OPAAW. Another 22% of the respondent countries said IDB Funds could facilitate the implementation of OPAAW in their countries. Yet, only 19% and 15% said they have benefited from SESRIC's Capacity Building and Training Programmes and IDB Funds, respectively. More than 60% of the respondent



countries reported having national best practices –that facilitate the achievement of OPAAW objectives– to improve women’s participation in decision-making. More than half of the respondent countries also had best practices that they were willing to share in the domains of education, economic empowerment, social protection, and protection from violence. Lastly, the respondent countries also had similar best practices in the domain of health (44%) and women in crises (37%). Similar to the measures that respondent countries have implemented to achieve OPAAW objectives and the progress they made in the implementation of OPAAW, best practices of the respondent countries varied as well, ranging from a number of strategic interventions to concentrated efforts to improve the lives of women.

The Path to Women’s Development

The findings of this report indicate that the path to women’s development involves a consideration for sustainable development of societies, i.e. making societies more gender-responsive, reducing gender inequalities, and promoting inclusivity. In this context, OIC member countries have taken several policy actions at the national, regional, and international levels. The adoption of the OPAAW is a reflection of the commitment and willingness of member countries in developing a joint action plan to advance women’s social and economic participation in their societies. However, there is room for further improvements that can facilitate the elimination of gender inequalities and empower women. At the policy level, investing in human capital; increasing investments into infrastructure; reviewing legislations from a gender lens approach; investing in gender-disaggregated data; addressing gender stereotypes, social norms and cultural barriers; including civil society into policy dialogue; furthering cooperation with international and regional institutions; and enhancing intra-OIC cooperation can all be conducive to empowering women in OIC member countries. Additionally, facilitating intra-OIC cooperation through sharing of experiences, knowledge, skills, and resources amongst OIC member countries can develop pathways for member countries to replicate each other’s successes in empowering women.



1. Introduction

Since its emergence in the 1970s, the notion that women are “*passive beneficiaries of development*” has evolved to encapsulate a diverse range of discourses on gender equality, social relations, women’s socio-economic contributions to societies, the mainstreaming of gender in policies, programs, and institutions, and more (Boserup, 1970). To the merit of such discourses, governments and institutions today are better equipped to understand challenges that are unique to women’s participation in society. They are also acutely aware of the fact that achieving sustainable growth and peaceful societies is next to impossible without women’s contributions. These realizations allow states to adopt prescriptive policies and programs that are conducive to improving women’s participation by empowering them in distinct ways.

Yet, at the core of such discourses is the persisting need to eradicate gender disparities that hinder sustainable development efforts and weaken social cohesion. Such disparities are notably prevalent in developing countries, including several OIC member countries, due to a number of factors that affect women’s participation and empowerment. These factors, ranging from inadequate institutional support to restrictive social norms, play an important role in determining whether women can find or access opportunities to reach their full potential in various domains such as education, health, or economy. This is also a reason why the eradication of gender disparities to empower women is a central theme in various global developmental agenda. For instance, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) sought women’s full participation in every aspect of society and their invaluable contributions to the socio-economic development of states and the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 targets the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

Similarly, the biennial OIC Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in Development is dedicated to reducing gender disparities and empowering women in OIC member countries in line with Pillar 13 of the OIC-2025 Programme of Action on the empowerment of women and the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW). The OPAAW which was adopted in 2008 and underwent amendments in 2016, is a comprehensive strategic document that includes concentrated objectives for women’s participation in decision-making, education, health, economic empowerment, social protection, protection from violence, and women in crises. Since its adoption, various OIC member countries have taken a range of measures and designed initiatives towards its implementation.



Against this background, the second edition of the OIC Women and Development Report aims to present a comparative analysis of the status of women in OIC member countries in seven domains addressed in the OPAAW (Chapter 2) and the performance of OIC member countries towards the implementation of OPAAW (Chapter 3). This performance evaluation is based on member countries' responses to the 'OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019'. A series of success stories and best practices distributed throughout the report highlight the policy experiences of selected OIC member countries. The report concludes with a set of policy recommendations on how to address persisting challenges to women's advancement, effectively implement OPAAW in each distinct domain, and enhance intra-OIC cooperation to address issues pertaining to women's empowerment in OIC member countries.

Box 1.1: A Snapshot of Key Achievements of the OIC in Empowering Women and Enhancing their Role in Development

- a. Sectoral conference on women: Seven sessions of the Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in Development in the Member States have taken place so far.
- b. Adoption of the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW): This document was adopted in 2008. The amended version was prepared and adopted in 2016 to align it with the United Nations Development Agenda and the OIC- 2025 Programme of Action.
- c. Adoption of the National Progress Report Preparation Guidelines on the implementation of OPAAW: During the 7th Ministerial Conference on Women, the guideline was adopted and a training course on the use of the guidelines and preparing national reports was organized by SESRIC and the OIC General Secretariat (GS) in 2019 for national institutions working in the area of women's empowerment.
- d. Establishment of the OIC Women Development Organization: The objective is to have a specialized OIC organization concerned with the development of women and the advancement of their status in the member countries, based in the Arab Republic of Egypt. After the adoption of its statute, the OIC GS has deployed great efforts to ensure its ratification by member countries and kick-start henceforth its operation.
- e. Launching the OIC Award for Women Achievements: The first edition was organized during the 7th Ministerial Conference on Women in Burkina Faso. The OIC GS has started preparations to organize the second edition during the 8th Ministerial Conference on Women that will be hosted by the Arab Republic of Egypt.
- f. Establishment of the OIC Women Advisory Council: It acts as a consultative mechanism and provides recommendations in the field of women empowerment.



2. State of Women's Development

This chapter analyses the state of women's development in OIC member countries using a holistic approach by combining policy literature with statistical datasets. It is sub-divided into seven sections in parallel with the domains addressed in the OPAAW: participation in decision-making, education, health, economic status, social protection, protection of women from violence, and women in crises. It uses a combination of indices and indicators for a comparative assessment of the state of women and gender equality in OIC member countries, non-OIC developing countries, developed countries, and the world. The rationale is to identify areas that require further attention from policy makers, to inform policy makers of the challenges faced by women in member countries, and to guide their efforts to develop new and effective policies to counter the said challenges.

Setting the Stage

According to UNDP (2019), understanding the sources and causes of a gender gap in human development can better inform the designing of policy tools required to close this gap. The Gender Development Index (GDI) is one tool that furthers the understanding of why women lag behind their male counterparts when it comes to human development and the severity of gender disparity that needs to be remedied in the areas of health, knowledge, and living standards. A higher GDI score corresponds to lower gender inequalities. Analysing the change in GDI scores over time can indicate the extent to which OIC member countries managed to reduce gender inequalities. Figure 2.1 shows that, in eight of 51 OIC member countries for which data is available, GDI scores stayed unchanged in 2018 as compared to 2010. Only in seven OIC member countries, there was a regression in their GDI scores. In particular, Yemen witnessed the highest regression by 0.21 points, partly due to the ongoing conflict in the country.

Figure 2.1: Change in Gender Development Index (GDI) Scores of OIC Countries, 2010-2018 (number of countries)



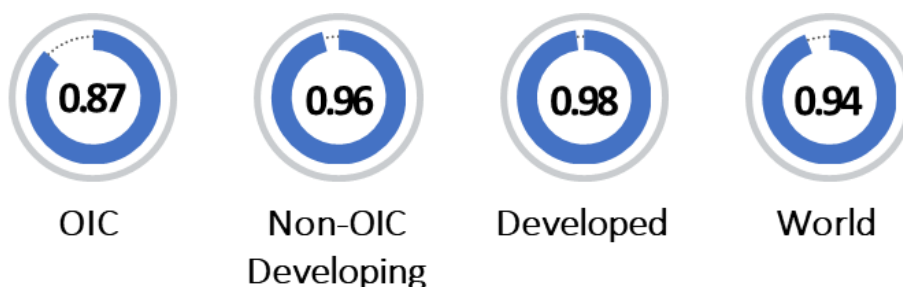
Source: UNDP dataset on GDI



On a positive note, 36 OIC member countries recorded improvements in their GDI scores in the same period. This was a result of efforts aimed at eradicating gender disparities in education, health, and income. Overall, more than 70% of OIC countries (with available data) from distinct geographical regions recorded progress in the state of women in their societies over the period 2010-2018. For instance, Qatar from the MENA region topped the list with the highest improvement, followed by Benin from the SSA region and Bangladesh from the ESALA region. At the same time, the world average also improved slightly (by 0.01 points) between 2010 and 2018.

The improvement in GDI scores and reduction of gender disparity in OIC member countries can be attributed to pro-active national level policies, regional initiatives such as the adoption and implementation of OPAAW, and international efforts of multiple stakeholders. Yet, there is room for further improvement, given that the average GDI score of OIC member countries (0.87) lags behind the world average (0.94) and other country groups (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Gender Development Index (GDI) Scores in 2018



Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the UNDP dataset on GDI. Note: GDI values are in the range of 0 to 1, where 1 = highest.

This highlights the need for OIC member countries to exert further efforts in improving their GDI scores. One method to do so would be to ensure the implementation of a wide range of measures listed in the OPAAW that are pivotal to guiding the adoption of gender-specific policies and practices in OIC member countries. The programmes and events organized by the OIC and its relevant organs could also boost the exchange of knowledge, experiences, skills, and resources amongst OIC member countries on how to address gender disparities and improve the wellbeing of women in their respective societies.

2.1. Participation in Decision-Making

Enhancing women's participation in decision-making processes is widely recognized as a key condition for women's empowerment. When women participate actively in their communities, they can contribute to the development of their families and societies. This,



in turn, can enhance human and societal development and promote good governance and accountability of governments. The inclusion of women in decision-making processes is also conducive to the creation of gender-sensitive policies and institutions, peace-building, and socio-economic development (SESRIC, 2018). Therefore, women's participation in decision-making has a positive impact on achieving gender equality and vice versa.

Box 2.1: Gender Equality in the Wake of COVID-19

The impacts of crises are never gender neutral and the COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. With the pandemic, the concern today is for the women in OIC member countries who live under tough conditions, suffering more now because of the added economic and social stresses caused by the radical and rapid shift away from normal life. While men reportedly have a higher fatality rate, women and girls are especially harmed by the economic and social fallout from the pandemic. According to a new analysis commissioned by UN Women and UNDP, by 2021, around 435 million women and girls will be living on less than \$1.90 a day — including 47 million pushed into poverty as a result of COVID-19. The impacts are not just economic. The shift of funds to pandemic response is hampering women's access to sexual and reproductive health. Reports of violence against women have increased around the world, as widespread stay-at-home orders force women to reside in the same accommodation as their abusers, often with tragic consequences. Overall, the pandemic has the potential to undermine the gains made towards reducing gender inequalities over the last decade across the globe, including OIC member countries.

Source: UN Women (2020a) and SESRIC (2020)

As women make up almost half of the total population in the world, it essential to include them in decision-making processes in both public and private spheres, including home, work, politics, business, and civil society. In recognition of this, various international development strategies have set targets and objectives to empower women and improve their inclusion in the decision-making processes. For instance, UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution in 1990 recommended targets for increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions: 30% by 1995 and 50% by 2000 (UN ECOSOC, 1990). Among other major examples are the Millennium Development Goals (Goal 3), Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5, particularly Target 5.5), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (article 7), and OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (sub-objective 1) (OIC, 2016). Moreover, the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 reported that little progress had been made in achieving the ECOSOC target and adopted the Platform for Action (UN, 1995), which identified 'women in power and decision-making' as one of 12 critical areas



of concern with a strategic objective to take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making".

Generally, women's participation in decision-making is contingent upon the achievement of several basic inclusions, which could be outlined in the following inter-related areas (Ilesanmi, 2018):

- **Political participation:** Development of political agendas and operational planning, detailing activities such as discussion, debate, lobbying, and activism that will engender women's equal participation in politics;
- **Numerical representation:** Utilization of gender quotas for women's representation in decision-making based on a variety of dimensions;
- **Political Leadership:** Women's participation and representation in appointive and elective party leadership;
- **Political accountability and commitment to gender equality and women empowerment issues:** Visible implementation of gender equity and women's empowerment issues clearly stated in political parties' manifestoes;
- **Participation in economic decision-making:** Women's participation in domestic or institutional financial decision-making; and
- **Participation in organizational decision-making:** Women's participation in formulating and executing decisions concerning organizations.

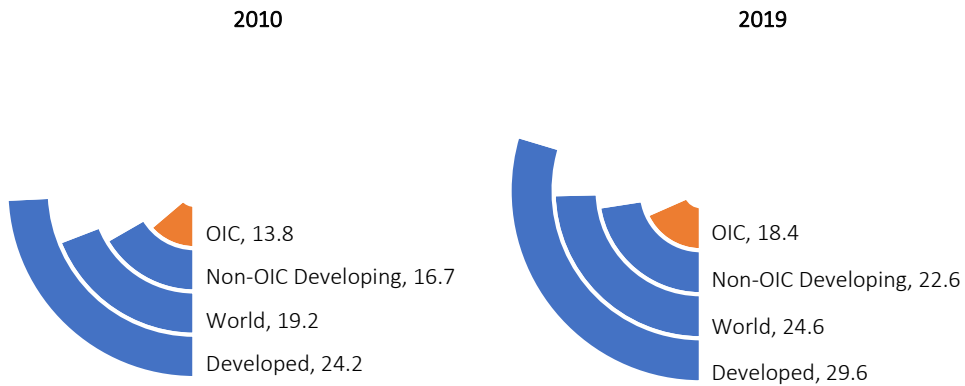
Achieving gender equity in decision-making should ideally include the development of "political agenda and operational planning, designing, and implementation of activities to improve women's participation in politics" (Stokes, 2005). Such activities can be in the form of discussions, debates, lobbying, and activism (Stokes, 2005). Women's contribution to the private and public spheres can influence political and developmental priorities that affect societies and the global community. For instance, women politicians tend to be more sensitive to the veridical concerns of citizens, give more attention to social welfare and legal protections, and improve trust amongst societal factions (Miranda, 2005). They also play an important role in mainstreaming gender by influencing legislative bodies like national parliaments.

Recent data indicate that women's participation in national politics has increased between 2010 and 2019. The global average for the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments increased from 19.2% in 2010 to 24.6% in 2019. OIC member countries, just like developed and non-OIC developing countries, also improved the participation of women in their national parliaments by raising this ratio from 13.8% to



18.4% in the same period. However, despite this improvement, they still lag behind other country groups on average terms (Figure 2.3).

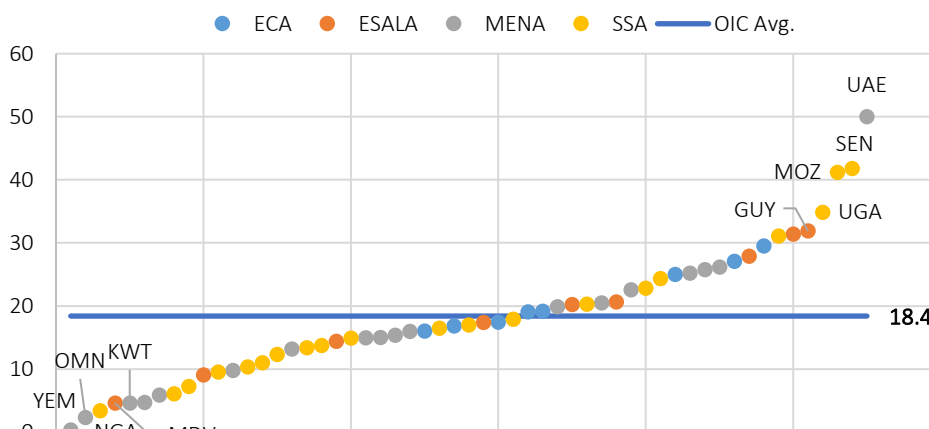
Figure 2.3: Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (%)



Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parline Database

There is also a persistence in regional and country level disparities. For instance, on one hand, the proportion of seats held by women was highest in the ECA sub region of the OIC at 21.3%. On the other hand, the lowest share was recorded in the MENA sub-region at 16.2%. One reason for this stark disparity could be the relatively higher education levels and literacy rates in OIC countries located in the ECA sub-region. Similarly, at the individual country level, there are substantial disparities across OIC member countries. Data for 2019 show that in three OIC member countries the proportion of women representatives exceeded 40% in the national parliaments. These member countries are namely the United Arab Emirates (50%), Senegal (41.8%), and Mozambique (41.2%). On the other side of the spectrum, there were six OIC countries where the proportion of women representatives was lower than 5%; Yemen (0.3%), Oman (2.3%), Nigeria (3.4%), Maldives (4.6%), Kuwait (4.6%) and Lebanon (4.7%) (Figure 2.4). A relatively lower proportion of women in parliaments in some countries and regions can be attributed to a set of local and regional norms and practices concerning the participation of women in politics (SESRIC, 2018). For example, Salcedo La Vina and Morarji (2016) explain that, in various countries, sectors such as politics and defence are traditionally viewed as male-centric, thus obstructing women's participation in these sectors.

Figure 2.4: Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments of OIC Countries (%), 2019



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parline Database

Many OIC member countries are still far from achieving the ECOSOC’s initial target of 30% women in positions at decision-making. In fact, only seven OIC member countries have reached the 30% target at present, which are the UAE, Senegal, Mozambique, Uganda, Guyana, Suriname, and Cameroon. These member countries have managed to achieve the target by introducing a number of pro-active and affirmative policies such as determining gender quotas and organizing campaigns to encourage women’s political participation. A number of these policies and programs are also in line with the objectives of OPAAW. However, given that 50 member countries have yet to achieve the 30% target, it is important to ramp up national efforts aimed at increasing women’s participation in politics and legislatures.

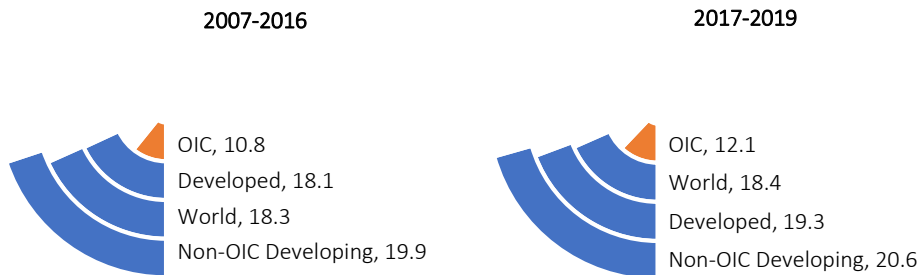
Besides women’s participation in politics, empowering women as legal, economic, and social actors can also make institutions more representative. Across the globe, women have been increasingly active in high-level decision-making positions in the private sector. Women leaders have an enormous potential to influence the way companies work by promoting fairer management practices, promoting policies that support work-life balance, and reducing gender disparities in the workplace.

The percentage of women assuming the role of top managers rose from 10.8% in 2007-2016 to 12.1% in 2017-2019 in OIC member countries (Figure 2.5). In the same period, the world average merely increased from 18.3% to 18.4%. The averages of developed countries and non-OIC developing countries exceeded 19% in the 2017-2019 period. Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, and Benin are the only OIC countries where more than 25% of firms are run by female CEOs. In Palestine (0.9%), Yemen (1.6%), and Azerbaijan



(2.6%), a combination of economic and regulatory factors resulted in a limited representation of women in top-management of companies in the 2017-2019 period.

Figure 2.5: Firms with Female Top Manager (% of firms)



Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the World Bank, Gender Statistics Database

Over the past decade, several OIC member countries have implemented measures to advance the representation of women from different walks of life in politics and business. As a result, the average share of women in national parliaments and women managing firms has improved. However, despite this positive trend, women are still under-represented in decision-making – particularly in politics and managerial positions. To this end, OIC member countries need to take additional measures to achieve equal representation of women in positions of power and leadership, whether in corporate boardrooms or national parliaments.

These measures should consider the correlation between women's education and their participation in decision-making. Generally, literate and well-educated women have been able to overcome barriers and become part of various decision-making processes in their societies (Jan, 2008; Nampedo, 2017). Therefore, encouraging women's education is a more holistic approach to improving women's participation in decision-making, while simultaneously addressing the root causes of women's absence from decision-making. It is important for OIC member countries to adopt policies and practices that go beyond quota schemes or incentives and one way to do so would be through the implementation of OPAAW.

The OPAAW identifies five central measures to be implemented in order to increase women's participation in decision-making in OIC member countries. These measures range from promoting women's participation and raising awareness about its benefits to reviewing relevant legislations. In this context, OIC member countries can benefit from implementing the OPAAW in their journey towards full and effective participation of women in decision-making. In particular, lessons from OIC member countries that have already implemented the OPAAW in this domain can inform the policies and experiences

of other OIC member countries. Box 2.2, for instance, presents a success story on legislative developments that Senegal has undertaken to improve women's participation in decision-making.

Box 2.2: Increasing Political Participation of Senegalese Women

Senegal has made important strides towards increasing the political participation of women through the adoption of the Gender Parity Law (2010). As a result of this law, which demands parity on electoral lists, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament went up remarkably from 22.7% in 2010 to 41.8% in 2019. This marks a major step forward in the struggle for gender equality and the promotion of women's rights and makes Senegal a leader in women's political participation in Africa.

Source: UN Women (2020b)

2.2. Education

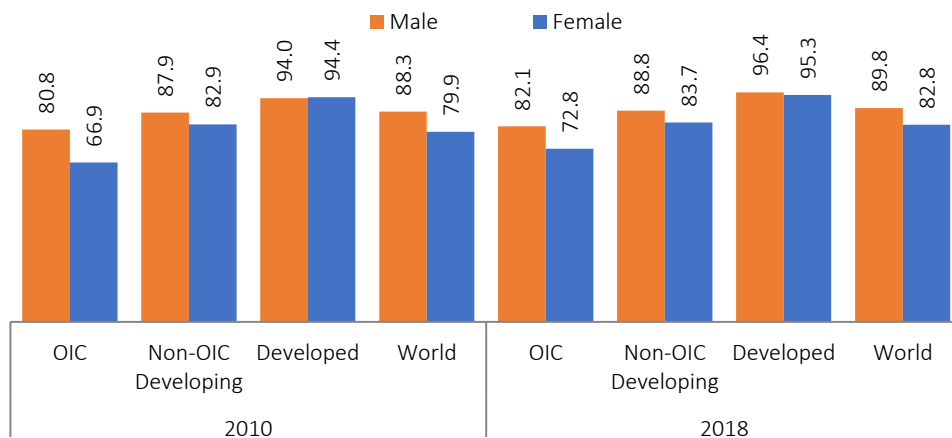
Education is a key determinant of the social and economic development of a country (UNDP, 2019). This finding is supported by a vast amount of literature on the nexus of women's education and development. For instance, WEF (2017) finds that countries that have achieved gender parity in education benefit from better overall health, equality, and job creation. Equal Measures Hub (2020) finds that one additional school year can increase a woman's earnings by 10% to 20%; each year of secondary education reduces the likelihood of marrying as a child by five percentage points or more; and a child whose mother can read is 50% more likely to survive and past the age of five. Women who receive higher education are conducive to development because a stronger skillset can make them more adaptable to newer technologies and changing work environments.

Globally, a number of major developmental frameworks recognize the benefits of women's education and promote inclusive education. Sustainable Development Goal 4, for example, aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". SDG 4 adopts a gendered perspective in recognising the links between girls' education and social and economic development, including poverty reduction. Female education is especially advantageous to societies undergoing development, such as those in OIC member countries. Thus, acknowledging the link between education and development from a gendered perspective is also important for OIC member countries. In this respect, as in the SDG 4, the OPAAW puts a special emphasis on the education of women, and objective 2 of the OPAAW focuses on "providing equal opportunity for all women and girls; to have access to quality education at all levels, in addition to vocational and skills training as well as literacy programmes" (OIC, 2016).



Ensuring literacy amongst girls and women has a 'positive ripple effect on all developmental indicators' such as child and maternal health, economic self-reliance, poverty reduction, and civic as well as political engagement (SESRIC, 2018). As a universal indicator for education outcomes, the literacy rate is used to measure the progress on gender equality in education (UNDP, 2019). According to recent datasets, global male and female literacy rates improved between 2010 and 2018. In OIC member countries, the male literacy rate increased from 80.8% in 2010 to 82.1% in 2018 while female literacy rates also improved from 66.9% to 72.8% in the same period (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6: Adult Literacy Rate in the World (%)

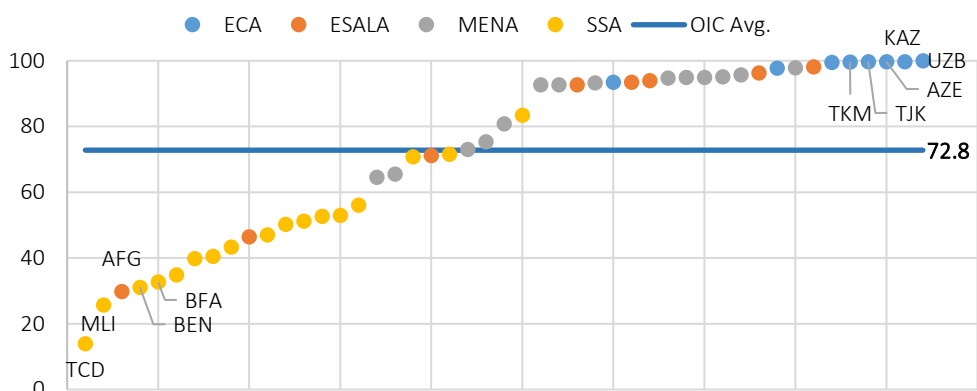


Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the World Bank, World Development Indicators

In other words, the discrepancy between male and female literacy rates in OIC member countries diminished during the period 2010-2018 from 13.9 to 9.3 percentage points. During the same period, the global gender gap in literacy rate also declined from 8.5 to 7.1 percentage points. However, even though the overall trends in literacy were positive, the gap between female and male literacy rates persisted across all country groups – highlighting inequality in access to basic education for women across the world. This inequality was the highest in the OIC group in both 2010 and 2018.

Furthermore, many individual OIC member countries have achieved commendable levels of literacy rates for women; yet, wide discrepancies persist at the country level as well as regional level. For instance, OIC member countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (46.9%), on average, had the lowest female literacy rates in 2018. This implies the existence of persistent challenges in girls and women's access to education in this region. In Chad and Mali, this rate was as low as 14.0% and 25.7% respectively in the same year (Figure 2.7). Afghanistan, in the ESALA region, also had a relatively low rate of female literacy (29.8%) in 2018. On the other side of the spectrum, Uzbekistan (100%), Kazakhstan (99.7%), Azerbaijan (99.7%), Tajikistan (99.7%) and Turkmenistan (99.6%) in the ECA region reported the highest adult female literacy rates amongst all OIC member countries.

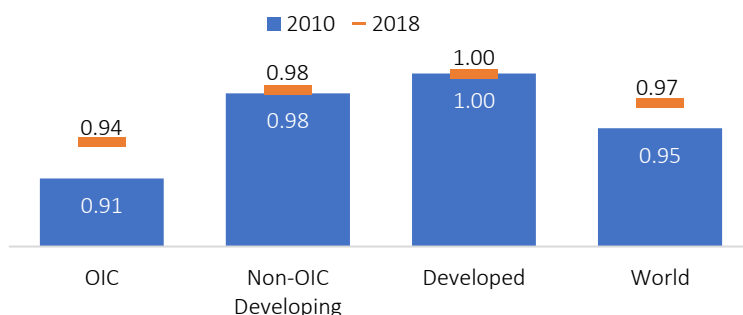
Figure 2.7: Adult Female Literacy Rates in OIC Countries (%), 2018



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators

With respect to youth's education, gender disparities in literacy rates were evident in developing countries, including many OIC member countries. Only developed countries successfully eradicated gender disparity in youth's education and obtained a score of 1 in the Gender Parity Index (GPI) (Figure 2.8). Between 2010 and 2018, the global GPI increased from 0.95 to 0.97 and the average GPI of OIC member countries increased from 0.91 to 0.94. This is partly due to the increase in school enrolment rates of girls. Yet, admission to primary schools does not guarantee completion of school – especially for girls. A high dropout rate amongst girls is a major factor for higher gender inequality in education. A high dropout rate amongst girls is also associated with high illiteracy rates in developing countries, including many OIC member countries, which stems from a combination of economic factors, inadequate infrastructure, and restrictive social norms and traditions (SESRIC, 2018).

Figure 2.8: Gender Parity Index (GPI) on Literacy Rate (Youth Population, ages 15-24)



Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the World Bank, Gender Statistics Database. A higher score indicates more gender equality



As a group, OIC member countries have experienced progress in reducing the gender gap in education since 2010. However, they have not been able to eliminate gender disparities in education for various reasons. As highlighted in the OPAAW, OIC member countries can address the gender gap in education by implementing a combination of policies, programs, and practices that make education and vocational courses affordable and accessible for girls and women. In this context, the OPAAW provides a list of nine policies ranging from ensuring equal access for women to education to developing (national) plans to eradicate illiteracy among women.

It is worth noting that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and containment measures have introduced an unprecedented set of barriers in women's access to education especially in developing countries (UN Women, 2020a). To alleviate these hurdles, OIC member countries should introduce measures such as the provision of IT equipment and internet to poor families and (conditional) cash transfers (SESRIC, 2020). Enhancing intra-OIC cooperation by enabling the transfer of knowledge and sharing experiences among OIC member countries is another policy option that can improve education outcomes for girls and women. As illustrated in Box 2.3, OIC member countries are rich in terms of national level best practices and success stories.

Box 2.3: Cash Transfer Programme for Children (Tayssir) of Morocco

Over the past decade, Morocco has made great strides in improving education. Near gender parity has been achieved for primary education. However, things are not perfect as evidenced by high dropout rates among girls in secondary education. In 2008, the Government of Morocco decided to launch a cash transfer programme (Tayssir) to encourage poor families to keep their girls and boys in school. Thanks to the successful results of the pilot phase of the programme that reduced the dropout rate remarkably, the Government of Morocco expanded the programme geographically and included additional grades. Today, the national poverty reduction programme covers 690,000 students in 434 rural communities. Furthermore, the Strategic 2015 – 2030 vision for reform in Morocco also emphasizes the importance of the Tayssir programme. The programme has helped many girls living in rural areas to continue their studies and, therefore, has contributed to furthering gender equality in education.

Source: World Bank (2020a)



2.3. Health

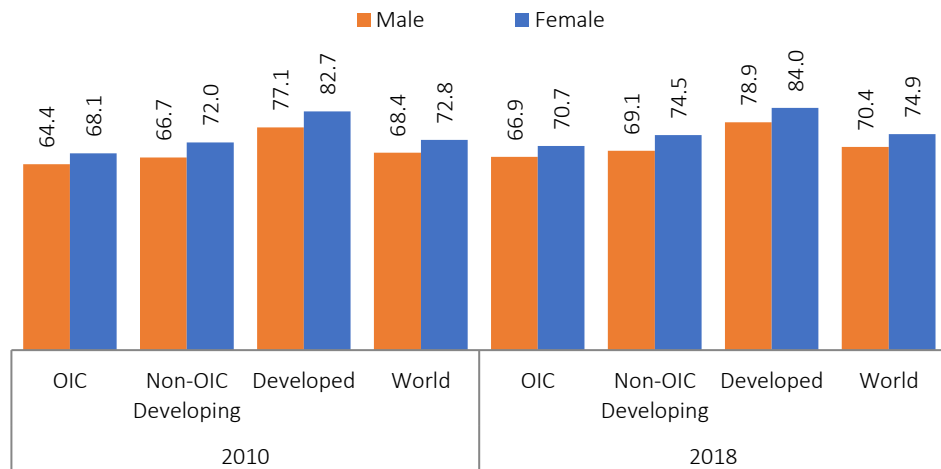
Healthy people, regardless of their gender, contribute to economic progress and development to a higher extent because they tend to live longer and are productive over a longer period. Both men and women have an equal right to live healthy lives but they have distinct health care needs. In particular, the health status of women has effects on social development because healthy women are more productive, educated women are aware of their health care needs and interventions, and healthy mothers raise healthy children and households (Bloom et al., 2014). Yet, in the developing world, social conditions and cultural norms tend to limit women's access to health services and their mobility. Fewer financial resources, constraints on infrastructure, inadequate number of health professionals are also among key factors that affect health outcomes in many developing countries (SESRIC, 2019). The prevalence of gender-based violence such as domestic violence is another concealed determinant of women's health status in developing countries. Moreover, in many countries laws protecting women from violence at home and outside are absent or inadequate.

Improving women's access to healthcare and the quality of women's health services is enshrined in various developmental agenda. SDG 3, for instance, focuses on the reduction of maternal mortality and improving access of women to reproductive health care services. The OIC Strategic Health Programme of Action (OIC-SHPA) 2014-2023 incorporates various thematic areas targeting the improvement of women's health. Similarly, the OPAAW lists health amongst its nine main objectives and puts forth a range of specific objectives for building a more inclusive health system and improving health capacities.

To assess the current state of female health care in OIC member countries and analyse their relative performances, indicators such as life expectancy at birth and maternal mortality ratio are important. Life expectancy at birth (LEB) is a key indicator that sheds light on the state of social and human development in a country. This is because LEB is determined by a variety of socio-economic factors such as poverty, undernourishment, access to clean water and sanitation, availability of primary health care services, and immunization coverage in a country. This measure provides an estimate of the number of years that men and women can expect to live in good health by taking into account the years lost to violence, disease, malnutrition, or other relevant factors.

Across the world, LEB increased from 68.4 years in 2010 to 70.4 years in 2018 for males and from 72.8 years in 2010 to 74.9 years in 2018 for females (Figure 2.9). Similarly, the average LEB in OIC member countries for males rose from 64.4 years in 2010 to 66.9 years in 2018. The female life expectancy at birth also increased from 68.1 in 2010 to 70.7 in 2018 in OIC member countries.



Figure 2.9: Life Expectancy at Birth (Years)

Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the World Bank, World Development Indicators

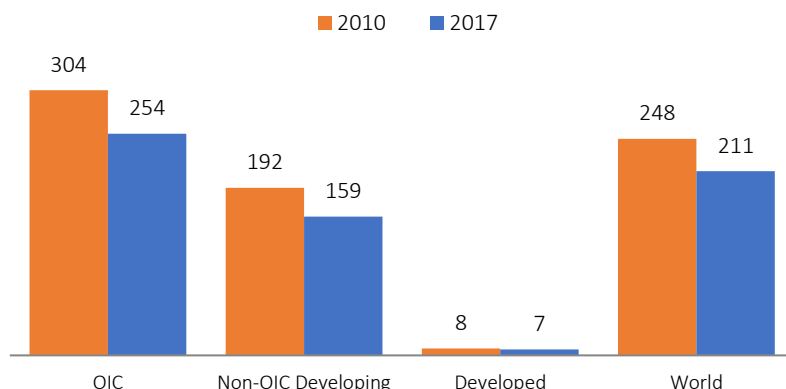
Nevertheless, despite the progress observed in OIC member countries, a woman residing in OIC member countries, on average, had a 4.2 years shorter life expectancy than the global average in 2018. This implies that OIC member countries need to increase the scope and intensity of efforts and investments in women's health and need to improve women's access to health facilities and services in rural and urban areas.

In keeping with global trends, the country level differences also persist among individual OIC member countries in terms of female life expectancy at birth. As of 2018, the highest LEB for females was observed in Qatar at 81.9 years while the lowest was recorded in Sierra Leone at merely 55.1 years. Of the OIC sub-regions, SSA had the lowest average LEB for females (62 years).

Pregnancy and childbirth related complications continued to be the leading causes of death and disability for women of reproductive age (15-49 years) in developing countries. According to WHO (2019), approximately 295 thousand women died during pregnancy or following childbirth in 2017 and 94% of all these maternal deaths occurred in low and lower middle-income countries. This indicates that maternal mortality is still unacceptably high, particularly in developing countries, despite the improvement achieved in recent years. The global maternal mortality ratio (MMR) decreased from 248 (per 100,000 live births) in 2010 to 211 in 2017 thanks to various national, regional and international efforts (Figure 2.10). In non-OIC developing countries, MMR fell from 192 to 159, while it declined significantly from 304 to 254 (a 16% reduction) in OIC member countries in the same period.



Figure 2.10: Maternal Mortality Ratio in the World (per 100,000 live births)

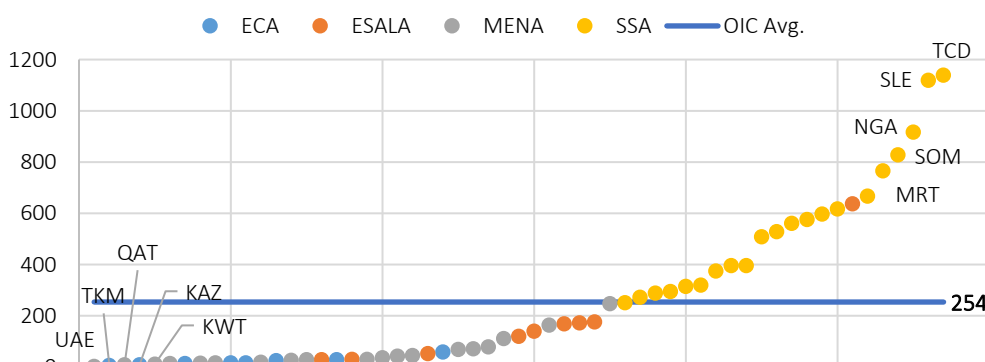


Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the World Bank, World Development Indicators

According to these figures, there is still a wide gap between OIC member countries and developed countries in terms of maternal mortality. As of 2017, on average, 254 mothers (per 100,000 live births) died during pregnancy or following childbirth in OIC member countries. In contrast, only 7 women died of the same causes in developed countries. This unfavourable situation signals a need for OIC member countries to undertake substantial efforts to provide universal coverage for maternal health.

Amongst OIC member countries, the UAE (3) and Turkmenistan (7) had the lowest MMR in 2017. OIC member countries in the SSA sub-region suffered from the highest maternal mortality, with an average of 559 maternal deaths. In fact, MMR exceeded 1000 in Chad and Sierra Leone in 2017 (Figure 2.11). These statistics reveal the existence of a wide disparity among OIC member countries at regional and country levels.

Figure 2.11: Maternal Mortality Ratio in OIC Countries, 2017, (per 100,000 live births)



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators



Overall, OIC member countries have recorded noteworthy progress in women's health over the past decade, even though this progress is not uniform or homogenous. In fact, on one hand, many OIC member countries are on the track for achieving the objectives of the OPAAW in the domain of health. These countries have made great strides to reduce inequality between men and women in access to health services and improve the wellbeing of women. On the other hand, the relative performance of several member countries indicates that there are still important challenges that remain unaddressed. In order to overcome these challenges, it is of importance to implement efforts such as investing in maternal and new-born health services, training more health professionals, and improving access to services in rural settings (SESRIC, 2019). Investments in the health sector should focus both on improving the quantity and quality of services.

It is also important for OIC member countries to share best practices, knowledge, experiences, skills, and resources in the area of women's health. For instance, the experiences of Bangladesh (see SESRIC, 2018) and Maldives (see Box 2.4) in reducing high maternal mortality rates can guide policies in other member countries struggling with this problem. It is also critical that OIC member countries benefit from existing strategic documents including the OIC Strategic Health Programme of Action and the OPAAW. In particular, the OPAAW presents five key measures to improve women's health status with interventions ranging from providing perinatal health education services to raising awareness on the importance of mothers' and new-borns' health.

Box 2.4: The Success of Maldives in Reducing Maternal Mortality

Maldives has faced enormous hurdles in delivering maternal health care to its residents that are spread across its 187 islands. Only four islands have more than 5,000 inhabitants. The Ministry of Health of Maldives, in cooperation with the UNFPA, developed a series of intervention programs to reduce the maternal mortality rate. In this respect, the Ministry initiated in-depth reviews of all maternal deaths, helping health officials understand why women were dying. Health workers received additional training and were deployed within the atolls to provide home visits. Close monitoring proved essential, particularly for women with high-risk pregnancies. They offered specialized intervention rooms at health centres on 12 islands and made specialist services available at four regional hospitals. The Ministry worked to educate women about the importance of reproductive health care. As a reflection of these efforts, between 2006 and 2017, the maternal mortality rate declined by 34 percent, from 71 to 53, out of every 100,000 live births.

Source: UNFPA (2016) and World Bank Gender Statistics (2020)

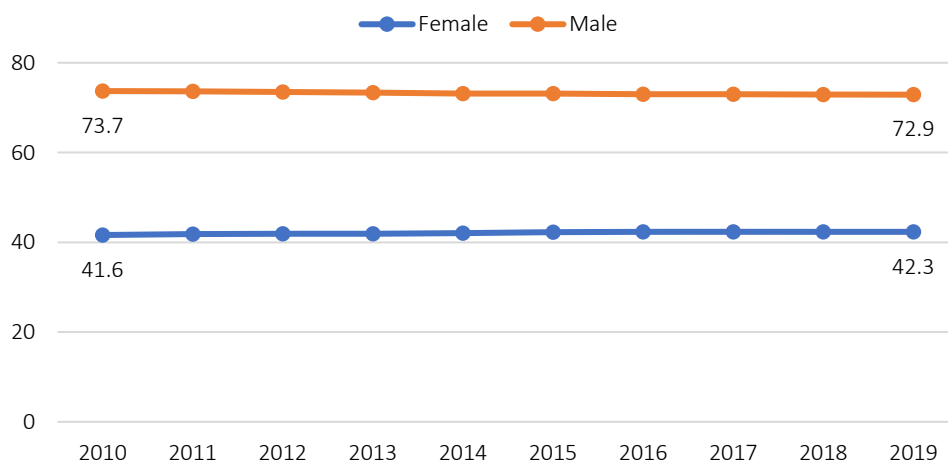


2.4. Economic Empowerment

Women's economic empowerment promotes economic growth, reduces poverty, decreases income inequality, enhances societal well-being, balances fertility rates, increases business performance and innovation, and fosters sustainable development (OECD, 2008). It brings prosperity not only to women themselves, but also to their families and their societies. This is because women have a higher tendency to invest their income in their households, thereby the spending on children's education and health increases with their participation in economic life (SESRIC, 2018). Women's economic empowerment has been a central focus for international and regional institutions like the UN, World Bank, OECD, and OIC. For instance, the Sustainable Development Agenda of the UN includes targets on empowering women in SDG 8. In a similar manner, the OPAAW identifies fifteen specific sub-objectives under objective 4 on "women's economic empowerment".

Even though gender inequality is a recognized obstructor of economic growth and constitutes a barrier for development, it continues to affect women's economic participation across the globe. According to gender-disaggregated data, labour force participation rate (LFPR) of women increased slightly from 41.6% in 2010 to 42.3% in 2019 in the OIC group (Figure 2.12). Considering the decline in LFPR for men in the same period, gender disparity in labour force participation decreased from 32.1 percentage points to 30.6 percentage points. Overall, OIC member countries have recorded some progress in advancing women's participation in labour force and reducing gender disparities in labour markets over the past decade.

Figure 2.12: Trends in Labour Force Participation Rate (%) in the OIC Group, by Gender

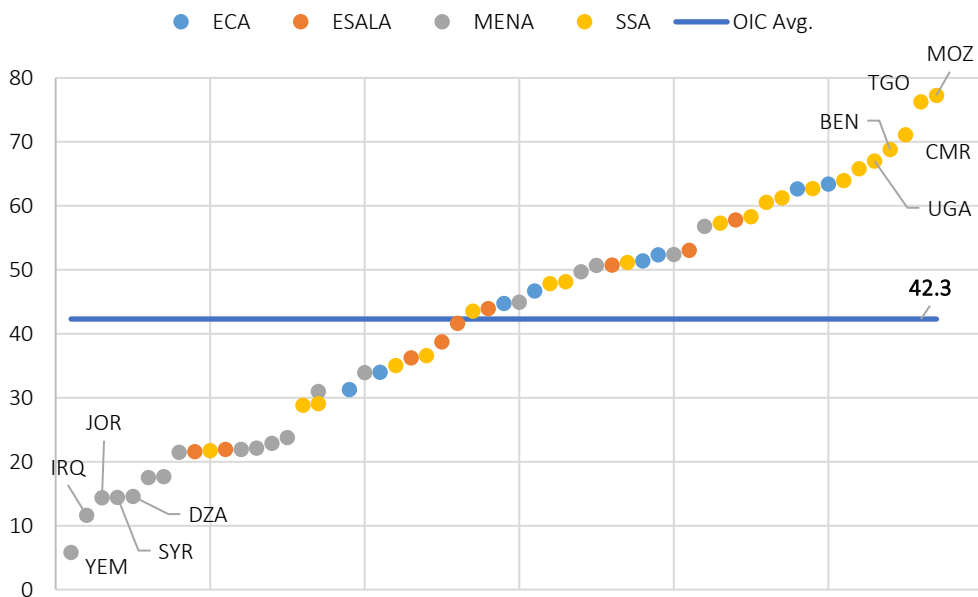


Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the World Bank, Gender Statistics and ILO estimates. Note: Persons Aged 15 Years or Over



Compared to the world average LFPR for females (47.2% in 2019), OIC member countries, as a group, still lag behind with their respective average of 42.3%. In particular, the average female LFPR in MENA sub-region is as low as 27.8% due to a set of region-specific factors and social norms such as the presence of social safety nets for families. At the individual country level, Mozambique has the highest female LFPR (77.3%), followed by Togo (76.3%); whereas Yemen has the lowest LFPR at only 5.8% (Figure 2.13).

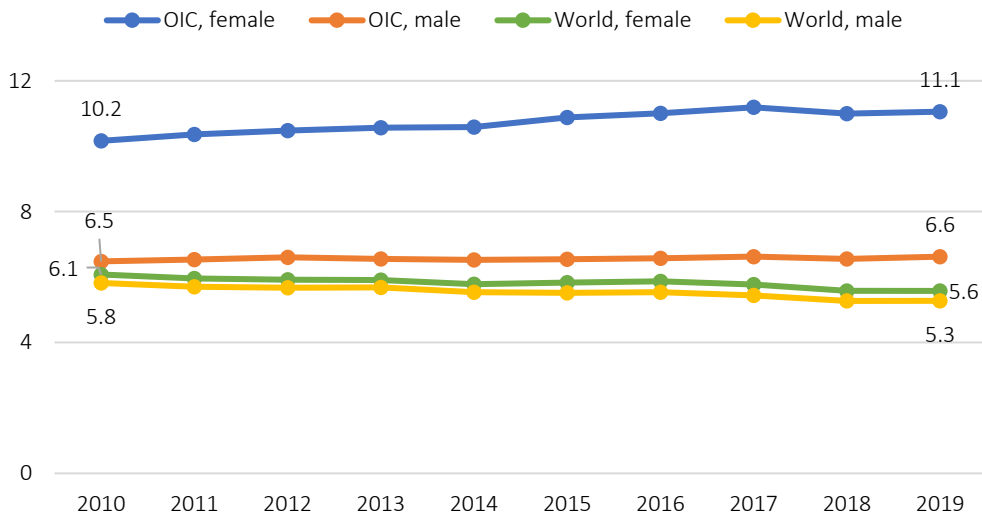
Figure 2.13: Female Labour Force Participation Rate (%) in OIC Countries, 2019



Source: World Bank, Gender Statistics and ILO estimates

Women are less likely to participate in the labour market due to fewer opportunities available to them as compared to men. Even when they do participate, they face a higher risk of unemployment due to gender stereotypes, social norms, and weak social protection mechanisms (UNHLP, 2016). The prevailing disparities between the unemployment rates of the male and female population are in line with this fact. Between 2010 and 2019, female unemployment rates in OIC member countries were consistently higher than male unemployment rates. The average unemployment rate for females in OIC member countries increased from 10.2% in 2010 to 11.1% in 2019 (Figure 2.14). In the same period, the average unemployment rate of males increased slightly from 6.5% to 6.6% in OIC countries.

Figure 2.14: Unemployment Rates (%), by Gender

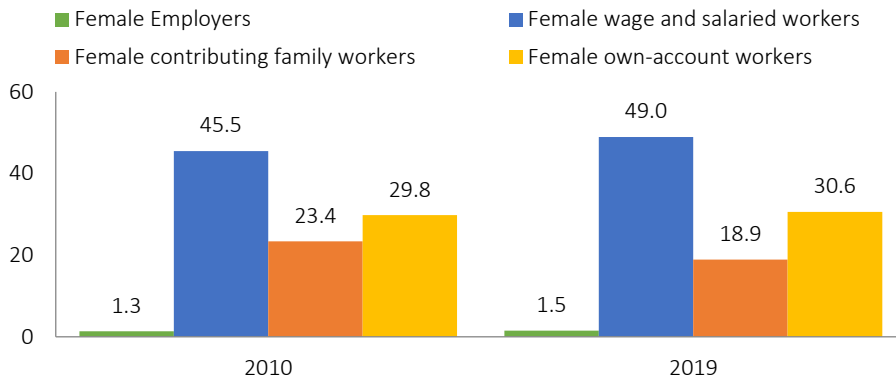


Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the World Bank, Gender Statistics and ILO

Furthermore, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to exacerbate gender disparities in the labour market for women in employment and women entrepreneurs all across the globe. This is because women often work in economic sectors that are uniquely vulnerable to the pandemic due to informality, lack of regulations, lack of social nets, etc. (ILO, 2020; see Box 2.5). In this context, OIC member countries should undertake special measures to prevent and mitigate the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on women and households by developing inclusive policies towards improving the economic status of women.

The promotion of women's participation in the economy and entrepreneurship is a daunting task that requires inter-dimensional policy interventions involving multi-stakeholder collaboration in sectors including, but not limited to, education, health care, social protection, and protection from violence. However, in order to successfully formulate and implement such policies, OIC member countries should closely monitor labour market trends such as the status of employment of the female population. As shown in Figure 2.15, the share of female wage and salaried workers increased from 45.5% in 2010 to 49% in 2019 whereas the share of female contributing family workers decreased from 23.4% to 18.9% in this period. There were only some small improvements in the shares of female own-account workers and female employers. In other words, a growing number of females in OIC member countries have started to work in wage and salaried jobs that present better opportunities and social (security) protection for them.



Figure 2.15: Status of Female Employment in OIC Countries, (% of Female Employment)

Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the World Bank, Gender Statistics and ILO

As stipulated in the OPAAW, in order to enhance women's economic participation, OIC member countries need to review labour market policies to create a more enabling environment for women employers and employees. In particular, tax incentives and quota schemes are instrumental for increasing the labour force participation of women. Moreover, social security programmes and safety nets for working women allow women to be more economically active. It is essential to review legislations and regulations in order to remove existing legal barriers that hinder women's economic empowerment. Similarly, member countries can facilitate the empowerment of women entrepreneurs and encourage women to undertake entrepreneurial activities by providing an enabling environment such as by easing the access of women entrepreneurs to credit lines.

Box 2.5: The COVID-19 Crisis and Women Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship is central to the economic empowerment of women, especially in developing economies. Many women-led SMEs are disproportionately affected by the economic disruptions of the COVID-19 crisis and many more women are losing their jobs. According to the World Bank, globally, women-owned SMEs are about 6 percentage points more likely to close as compared to male-owned businesses due to the pandemic. In several Sub-Saharan countries, about 60% of women-led small businesses have lost their sources of income, thrice more than the number of businesses owned by men. In Uganda, 61% of women-led small businesses are failing to generate income compared to 22% men-led businesses during the pandemic. As a result, some portion of the gains made towards the economic empowerment of women over the last decade is under threat.

Source: WEFI (2020)



2.5. Social Protection

Inclusive and effective social protection is key to addressing gender inequality and improve the well-being of women. Social protection systems mitigate risks throughout an individual's life cycle and provide support to individuals and families suffering from poverty, vulnerability, marginalization, or crises. Equal access to gender-sensitive social protection systems has a significant impact on women's empowerment and opportunities (SPIAC-B, 2019). Social protection systems that are not gender-responsive may worsen the multiple interrelated factors that obstruct women's advancement and empowerment.

According to SPIAC-B (2019), well-designed social protection systems pre-emptively address the unique challenges women face at distinct life stages and risks associated with multiple forms of gender discrimination at home and at work. For example, young girls may face barriers to education because of domestic responsibilities; adolescent girls are at the risk of early marriage, under-age pregnancies, and high school dropout rates; and women are more likely to face discrimination and violence in informal or unregulated employment, suffer from unequal wages or unpaid labour, and prohibitions in mobility or decision-making. Social protection systems adjusted for life-stages can ensure women are protected against a diverse and multi-dimensional set of risks and threats throughout their lives.

At the same time, social protection systems can improve women's access to basic services that can have a positive spill over effect on other areas of their lives. For example, better access to water and sanitation can improve their education and health. More importantly, gender-responsive social protection systems can improve women's agency and their representation by giving them control over their resources (income, assets, health, education, and more). This can improve their participation and visibility at home, in the economy, in society, and in politics (SPIAC-B, 2019).

Yet, according to ILO (2019) estimates, 73% of the world population lacks adequate social protection. Even when social protection exists, some segments of society such as rural populations and women are at a disadvantage due to the lack of awareness about application procedures, mobility restrictions, and lack of decision-making power in a household, etc. This again highlights a need for gender-responsive frameworks that consider the distinct obstacles that women face in accessing social protection.

Given the importance of social protection, the Sustainable Development Agenda of the UN includes it in several developmental targets: SDG 1.3 (social protection floors), SDG 3.8 (health coverage), SDG 8.5 (social protection systems), and SDG 10.4 (inequality). SDG 5.4, in particular, approaches social protection for its impacts on gender equality and anti-discrimination. As in the SDG Agenda, the OPAAW also lists "women's social protection"

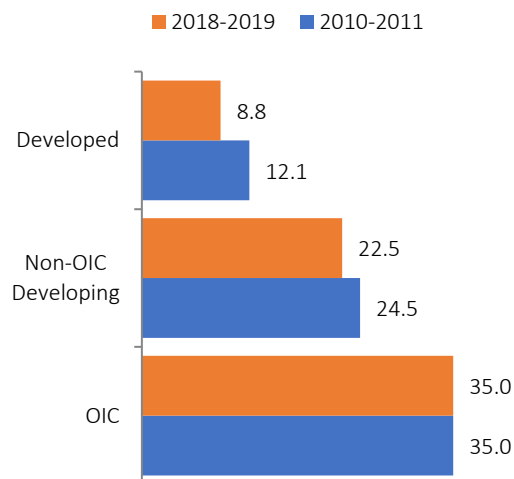


as one of its nine main objectives and identifies eight sub-objectives for OIC member countries in this domain.

Moreover, the on-going COVID-19 pandemic has boldly reminded the world about the importance of having effective social protection systems for both men and women. As a response to the COVID-19 crisis, more than 151 countries across the globe, including several OIC member countries, were able to quickly develop new cash transfer programmes or safety nets in order to reduce the impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable groups including unemployed, poor households, and vulnerable women (Gentilini, 2020).

However, according to SESRIC (2020), several OIC member countries do not currently have any safety measures for disadvantaged and vulnerable populations including millions of women and girls. For instance, in OIC member countries, the share of female youth not in education, employment, or training was around 35% in 2010-2019, a rate higher than other country groups (Figure 2.16). Large parts of these female youth or their families need social protection mechanisms to survive. The lack of safety nets discourages girls from pursuing education and vocational training. This in turn increases gender inequality in education as well as in many economic sectors. Thus, the lack or limited availability of social protection systems have the ability to foster a vicious cycle of marginalization and disadvantage for girls and women.

Figure 2.16: Share of Female Youth Not In Education, Employment or Training, (% of Female Youth Population)

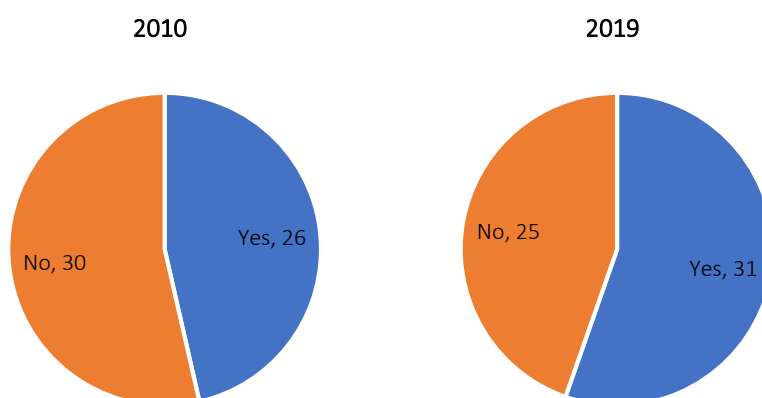


Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the World Bank, Gender Statistics Database

In economic sectors, social security systems that provide health care services to mothers and new-borns are critical to encourage women's active participation in the labour market. In order to achieve this, it is essential to ensure the maintenance of wages and

benefits during maternity, prevention of dismissal or termination during pregnancy, allowing for maternity leave, etc. (UN, 2010). The international standard for the duration of maternity leave, as provided in the ILO Maternity Protection Convention 2000 (No. 183), is 14 weeks. The presence of this standard and its implementation are critical from a gender equality perspective. While 30 OIC member countries did not meet this standard in 2010, this number decreased to 25 in 2019. In parallel, the number of OIC member countries that provided 14 weeks of paid leave for new mothers increased from 26 in 2010 to 31 in 2019 (Figure 2.17). This depicts that a growing number of OIC member countries are willing to facilitate women's participation in the labour market by providing them with maternal benefits.

Figure 2.17: Is Paid Leave of at least 14 Weeks Available to Mothers? (number of OIC Countries), 2010 vs. 2019



Source: World Bank, Women, Business and the Law 2020 dataset

Without having effective and inclusive social protection systems, it is likely that millions of women will continue to live or work under difficult conditions. As an outcome, they are marginalized and unable to reach their full potential as beneficiaries of socio-economic development. Therefore, providing effective social protection for women is an essential method to empower women and address gender inequalities.

From a policy perspective, OIC countries should consider implementing the seven measures listed in the OPAAW under this dimension ranging from changing established mind-sets to improving coordination among national stakeholders on social policies with a view to providing better and more inclusive social protection for women. In this context, intra-OIC cooperation could also play an important role in facilitating knowledge and experience sharing on effective social protection systems such as those in Indonesia and Turkey (see Box 2.6).



Box 2.6: Having a Centralized Online Database for Social Assistance Increased Access of Women to Social Protection in Indonesia and Turkey

The share of women employed in the informal sector is relatively higher in Indonesia. The unpredictability and irregularities associated with such employment often result in millions of women being trapped in poverty and needing social protection and assistance. To address the needs of such women, multiple social assistance programmes in Indonesia are implemented by a number of different ministries, including the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Ministry of Health. Social protection programs need to focus on two important criteria: (i) the scope and variety of the coverage and (ii) ease of access to the programs. In Indonesia, eligibility for these social programmes is determined by a single mechanism: the Unified Database (UDB), which was developed in 2005 as a centralized mechanism for social assistance. This unique mechanism has enabled many women to access a wide range of social protection and assistance programmes in the country. Since its establishment, millions of vulnerable women in rural and urban areas have successfully accessed social programmes provided by public authorities.

In a similar vein, the development of Integrated Social Assistance Service Information System (ISAS) in Turkey standardized, integrated, and converted its previously paper-based social assistance procedures into an electronic system. Since 2010, ISAS has processed 25 million citizens' applications for social assistance and completed 311 million assistance transactions totalling US\$ 13 billion. The social assistance service system in Turkey offers several services for women. For instance, there is a special programme targeting "widowed women". Each year more than 300 thousand women benefit from this programme. The ISAS eased women's access to social protection and assistance by reducing the time and energy required to access available services.

Source: OECD (2019) and Ministry of Family and Social Policies of Turkey and the World Bank (2017)

2.6. Protecting Women from Violence

Violence against women includes several harmful practices such as discrimination, child marriage, harassment, and female genital mutilation –practices that impair the well-being of girls and women. Violence against women stems from various reasons such as low levels of education, exposure to child maltreatment during childhood, witnessing family violence (especially against mother), personality disorders, harmful use of alcohol, infidelity, attitudes, social norms, marital discontent, lack of communication between partners, non-deterrent laws on violence against women and the like (WHO, 2017).

Gender-based violence (GBV) affects women's physical and mental health (SESRIC, 2018). It has implications for social and economic development because of its association with poverty, lack of education, maternal and child health, and more. Gender-based violence



is also a persisting practice that goes beyond geography, culture, and religion to affect women in almost all societies around the world. More importantly, gender-based violence can occur in peaceful settings as well as in conflicts. This is partly why it also has a humanitarian impact. For example, human trafficking and victimization or demonization of migrants and refugees are both acts of gender-based violence that occur in conflict or post-conflict zones.

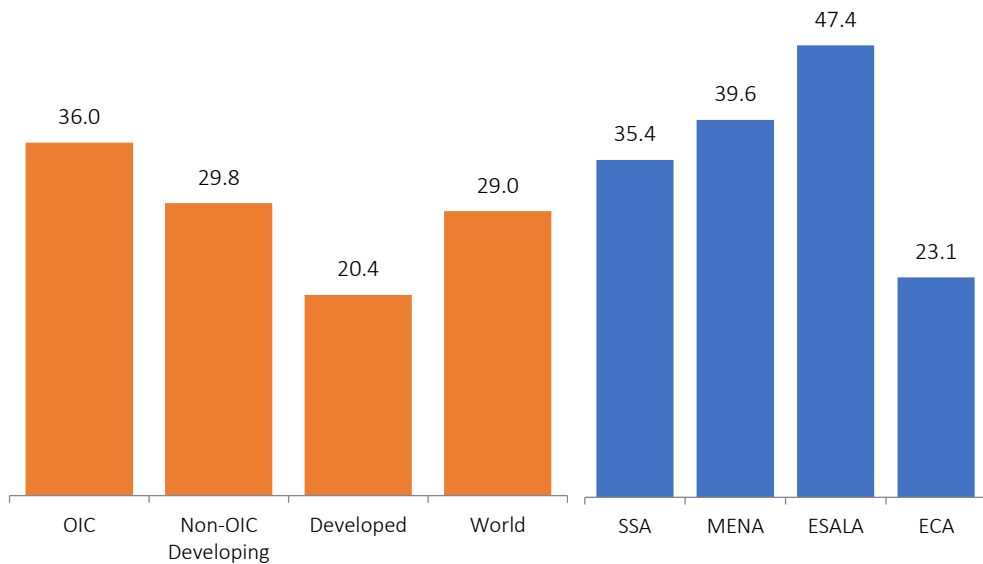
It is due to the grievousness of gender-based violence that the Sustainable Development Agenda includes it in several development targets. For example, Target 5.1 on “ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere”; Target 5.2 on “eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”; and Target 5.3 on “eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation”. Similarly, the OPAAW includes the “protection of women from violence” as one of its main objectives and identifies nine sub-objectives from preventing child and forced marriage to improve gender disaggregated data collection on violence.

According to the latest estimates shown in Figure 2.18, the prevalence of violence against women was at 29% in the world in 2019. This prevalence was the highest at 36% in OIC member countries and the lowest at 20.4% in developed countries. Among OIC sub-regions, the highest prevalence of violence against women was observed in ESALA (47.4%) (Figure 2.18, right). Cultural norms and traditions, combined with a weak implementation of protection mechanisms, result in a relatively high prevalence of violence against women in ESALA.

According to a World Bank dataset for the year 2017, 28.2% of women in OIC member countries believe that a husband can beat his wife when she argues with him. It is therefore essential to equip women with knowledge about their rights to change misbeliefs. Changing mind-sets can have significant impacts on the formulation, implementation, and enforcement of protective legislation. This is important because, at present, 27 OIC member countries do not have any legislation on domestic violence (SESRIC, 2018). Without proper legal protection, it is difficult for any woman to report cases, receive adequate protection from future incidents, and have access to effective support systems. At the same time, it is important to highlight that various OIC member countries like the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Malaysia have taken some progressive steps in recent years to fight against violence faced by women (see Box 2.7 on Malaysia).



Figure 2.18: Prevalence of Violence against Women in the World (left) and OIC Sub-regions (right), 2019, (%)

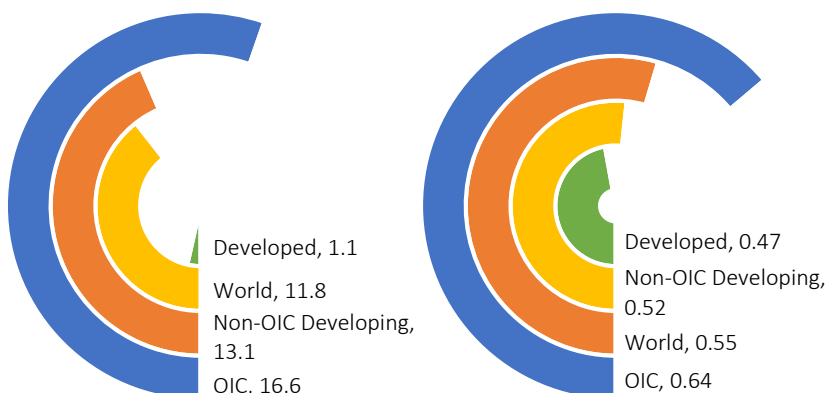


Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the SIGI 2019 dataset of the OECD. Note: Violence refers to percentage of ever-partnered women who ever suffered intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence.

Another dominant violent practice that affects numerous girls in OIC member countries is child marriage (before 18 years old). Child marriage negatively affects the wellbeing and self-development of girls and is globally considered a form of gender-based violence. Yet, this practice is prevalent in several OIC member countries. For example, as shown in Figure 2.19 (left), in 2019 the average prevalence of child marriages was at 16.6% in OIC member countries and 11.8% in the world. It is relatively more prevalent in the SSA sub-region (27.6%) and followed by ESALA (15.4%).

The causes of child marriage are not limited to cultural traditions, norms, and practices. A high prevalence of child marriage can also be attributed to weak legislation and laws. A number of OIC member countries do not have strong laws prohibiting child marriage. The OECD's index on the child marriage law shows that OIC member countries, on average, obtained the highest score of 0.64, as compared to the world average of 0.55, implying the prevalence of relatively weaker laws regulating child marriages (Figure 2.19, right). In this context, OIC member countries need to enact laws that are restrictive and deter the practice of child marriage by providing strong legal protection for girls. This is also a stipulation in the OPAAW.

Figure 2.19: Prevalence of Child Marriage Practice (%) (left) and Child Marriage Law Index Scores (right), 2019



Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the SIGI 2019 dataset of the OECD. Note: Child marriage law index (0: restrictive laws and 1: weak laws)

Box 2.7: Domestic Violence Act of Malaysia

Malaysia enacted a progressive Act on Domestic Violence (Amendment) in 2017 in response to a growing number of incidents of domestic violence. The new law has expanded the definition of “domestic violence” in Section 2 of the Domestic Violence Act 1994 (the principal act of Malaysia in this domain) by inserting three new paragraphs. This legislation enables many women and men to easily access law enforcement mechanisms including online service and provides a comprehensive protection umbrella for victims of domestic violence. Under the new act, the following services are available to victims: Safe Place Application, Emergency Protection Order (EPO) Application, Interim Protection Order (IPO) Application, Protection Order (PO) Application, Counselling, and Conciliatory Body. The Online Application Procedure is available for applicants/victims to submit a complaint/ application after first registering as a new user. Under the purview of this Act, people can report incidents of domestic violence to a Social Welfare Officer or a Police Officer.

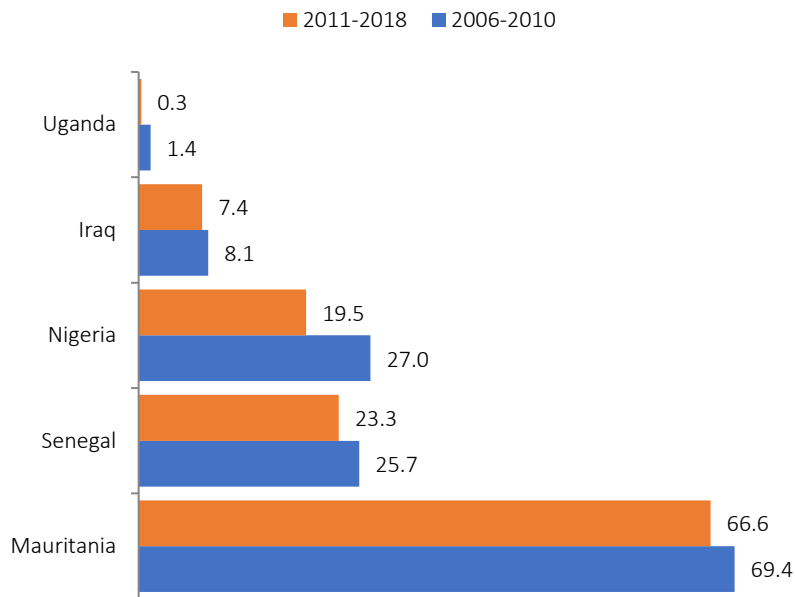
Source: My Government Portal of Malaysia (2020) and Buang (2017)

Much like child marriages, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – that occurs in several developing countries – is recognized as a form of GBV, in addition to being a violation of human rights of girls and women and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women (WHO, 2013). The Sustainable Development Agenda includes the FGM in



the SDGs under Target 5.3, which calls for the elimination of all harmful practices towards women. Analysing a dataset of five OIC countries with available data, the prevalence of FGM is on the decline in Mauritania, Senegal, Nigeria, Iraq, and Uganda (Figure 2.20). Those OIC countries recorded considerable progress towards eliminating this harmful practice. However, additional measures and interventions are required to eliminate this practice in OIC member countries.

Figure 2.20: Female Genital Mutilation Prevalence (%) in Selected OIC Countries



Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the World Bank, Gender Statistics Database

An analysis of indicators makes it evident that women in OIC member countries, on average, suffer from various types of violence and harmful practices to a higher extent as compared to their counterparts living in developed countries. It is also important to highlight that OIC member countries have noted some progress in combatting GBV over the last decade. In order to fully eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls and protect them, OIC member countries need to consider implementing the six measures listed in the OPAAW.

In the fight against gender-based violence, it is essential to devise effective policies and enact laws and legislations that deter GBV by involving relevant national stakeholders. Training of law enforcement officers who handle cases of violence against women, developing successful monitoring mechanisms, and allocating adequate human and financial resources may eliminate some of the problems faced in the implementation of such legislations. It is also critical to raise awareness among women about discrimination and violence at home and equip them with the necessary information and knowledge on

ways and means to cope with risk factors. More importantly, the inclusion of civil society organizations and religious leaders in response mechanisms such as information sharing programmes can help in reaching women, especially in rural areas. Intra-OIC cooperation could also bring additional momentum to such efforts through the creation of a platform to share successful practices and policies of OIC member countries in this domain.

2.7. Women in Crisis Situations

Humanitarian emergencies, natural disasters, conflicts, and artificial (economic) crises have disproportionate impacts on girls and women. These impacts range from physical threats to their safety to their inability to respond to or recover from conflicts. Women are disproportionately affected due to their “relatively disadvantaged situation in society, distinct and often restrictive social obligations and responsibilities, and the high prevalence of gender-based violence” (UNDP, 2020a). On one hand, women make up for more than half of the world’s refugees and internally displaced persons; on the other hand, women are often crucial to responding to crises (at the grassroots level) by serving as “vital first responders, rebuilders, and peacebuilders” (UNDP, 2020a). This is why women occupy an important position in the developmental agenda on effectively preparing for and responding to crises and building peaceful and inclusive societies. This includes the SDG Goal 16 and OPAAW Objectives 7, 8, and 9.

In fact, the thinking that women are merely the victims of crises is remiss. Women play an important role in responding to crises and rebuilding post-crisis societies. For instance, evidence shows that peacebuilding and reconciliation processes have higher rates of success, and more likely to last, when women are meaningfully involved (Community of Democracies, 2019). In various OIC member countries like Morocco, Indonesia, and Kyrgyzstan, women have played a critical role in negotiations, prevention of conflicts, and combatting extremism (SESRIC, 2019a).

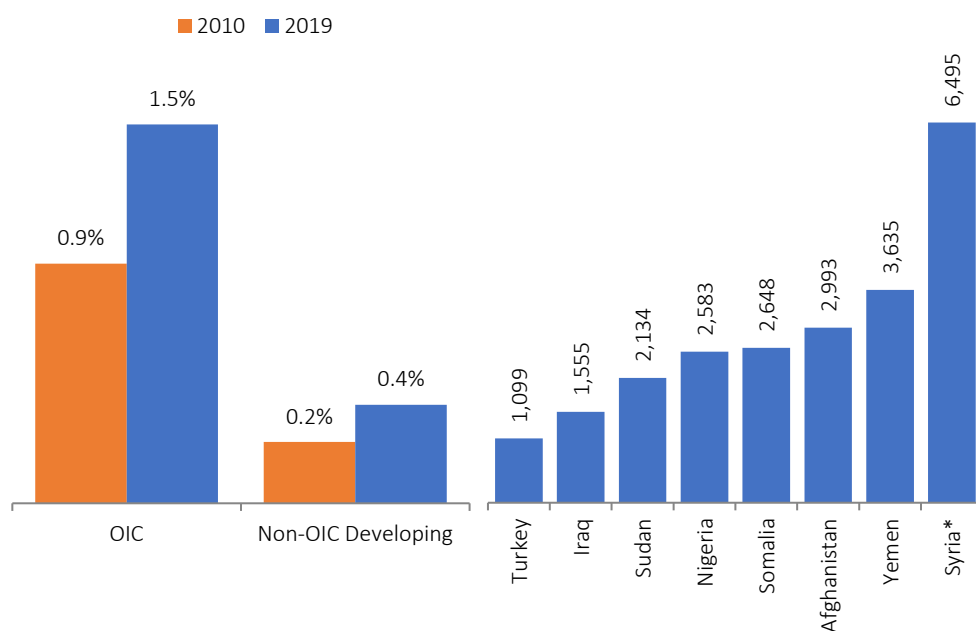
Moreover, when analysing the number of crises and conflicts in OIC member countries, it becomes clear why the OPAAW has such detailed objectives dedicated to women in crises, disasters, and armed conflicts. More than 60% of all conflicts in the world occur in OIC member countries, of which the majority are internal conflicts (SESRIC, 2019a). These conflicts are directly responsible for the mass displacement of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), illustrated by the fact that the number of IDPs in OIC member countries more than doubled between 2010 (12.9 million) and 2019 (27.4 million), as shown in Figure 2.21 (left).

These IDPs were concentrated in OIC member countries that either are experiencing a crisis or are near a crisis hotspot. Figure 2.21 (right) shows that eight OIC countries located



in different sub-regions host more than 1 million IDPs each. In total, the number of IDPs in those eight countries made up for 84.3% of all IDPs in the OIC group in 2019. Assuming that at least half of those IDPs are female¹, OIC member countries need to provide basic services to those girls and women in order for them to survive.

Figure 2.21: Share of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Total Population (%) (left) and OIC Countries with More than 1 Million IDPs, 2019 (right, in thousands)



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators. *Syria suspended OIC membership

The women in crises in OIC member countries are not limited to refugees and IDPs. Palestine, for example, has been subject to an oppressive occupation for more than five decades. Women living under occupation face multiple challenges (see Box 2.8). They often cannot reach basic services freely and experience various forms of violence and harassment. In this regard, it is essential to develop specific policies to reduce suffering of these women and raise awareness about their plight internationally to garner global support.

¹ It is difficult to provide the exact number of female refugees and IDPs due to the lack of gender-disaggregated data on refugees and IDPs.

When it comes to natural disasters, OIC member countries experience a wide range of climatic emergencies including, but not limited to, earthquakes, droughts, and tornadoes. This is because OIC member countries are located in distinct geographical and climatic zones. SESRIC (2019b) estimates that, since 1970 more than 800 million people in OIC member countries have been affected by natural disasters. At least half of these people were women. A resilient disaster preparedness and management system can help in reducing casualties and mitigating the impacts of climate change, yet many OIC member countries are unable to develop such systems due to the lack of financial resources, institutional expertise, and human capital. It is also important that emergency preparedness and disaster response mechanisms should be gender-sensitive and gender-responsive. This is because the needs of women in crises are distinct from those of men.

Women affected by conflicts and disasters face a dual predicament. The crisis exacerbates their food security, livelihoods, social cohesion, and security. This can “undermine developmental progress, escalate violence, and disrupt peace” (UNDP, 2020b). This is especially true for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic – an unprecedented global health crisis. Women face dual predicament because of marginalization, gendered expectations and traditions that limit their economic potential, and changes in the demographic composition of societies. In turn, these factors adversely affect women’s ability to respond to and recover from crises. Studies by UNDP (2020b) present several examples from OIC member countries. For instance, in Chad, gender-based violence and gender inequality limit their ability to adapt to climate change. In Sudan, scarcity of fertile land and droughts lead to an increase in men migrating to other cities/villages in search of livelihoods, leaving women with greater economic responsibility. In Pakistan and Sierra Leone, water shortages and extreme heat can create the risk of gender-based violence and exacerbate inequalities. Therefore, it is clear that gender-responsive policies and programs to tackle crises are important not only for mitigating the impact of crises on women but also for helping them realize their potential in making communities more resilient.

In this context, the OPAAW provides a comprehensive list of measures on how to improve the situation of women in crises, disasters, and armed conflicts ranging from engagement with women’s civil society organizations to developing gender based responses. However, to implement these measures and interventions, it is critical for policy makers to have access to gender disaggregated data on crises, conflicts, and disasters. Therefore, it is essential to improve the capacities of OIC countries to collect and collate gender-disaggregated datasets with a view to developing gender-sensitive and effective policies and measures.



Box 2.8: Palestinian Women Pay the Heaviest Cost Under Occupation

Israeli Occupation of Palestine has distinct effects on different demographic and regional groups. It is particularly damaging to vulnerable groups including women and youth. Among other social groups, the occupation in Palestine has affected Palestinian girls and women in multiple ways such as by limiting their education prospects and access to social services. Under occupation, the agricultural sector has also diminished because of the continuous loss of land and water. Its share in GDP declined from 35% in 1972 to 4% in recent years. In this respect, Palestinian women have paid the heaviest cost, as the decline of the agricultural sector has deprived them of economic opportunities in their traditional sector of employment. Furthermore, women are also affected by several oppressive practices such as house demolitions and barriers to movement, which limit their participation in education and the labour market. In some regions of Palestine, parents also hesitate to send their girls to school due to routine security threats. This results in low attendance and high dropout rates amongst girls. The cumulative effects of the occupation place Palestinian women at an increased risk of poverty.

Source: UNCTAD (2020)

2.8. Concluding Remarks

The main findings of this chapter highlight that many OIC member countries have made considerable progress towards the empowerment of women. An analysis of several key indicators confirms progress in areas ranging from education to decision-making. As a result, gender disparities, on average, have decreased in many OIC member countries. Nevertheless, as compared to global averages for the same indicators, the OIC group continues to lag in various developmental areas. This marks a need for OIC member countries to persist in their efforts towards the eradication of gender disparities and empowerment of women. One established approach to doing so is by integrating a gendered perspective in preparing, designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating policies, legislations, and programmes (referred to as gender mainstreaming). While this approach has garnered global praise for its effectiveness, it is relatively under-utilized in OIC member countries.

Furthermore, the findings of this chapter provide three lessons when it comes to women and their role in development. First, challenges that hinder women's full participation in society tend to be intersectional and crosscutting. Therefore, the solutions to these challenges also need to be intersectional. Second, the lack of gender-disaggregated data makes it difficult to measure the progress in women's advancement and empowerment. Third, the success of prescriptive policies and programs that aim to empower women and



combat gender-based discrimination is heavily reliant on the existence of a holistic gender strategy that not only addresses issues pertaining to women but also incorporates their voices in reparative efforts.

In the light of such challenges, the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW) takes on an added importance in the policy spheres of OIC member countries. The OPAAW is a comprehensive strategic document that seeks to layout a framework for addressing challenges faced by OIC member countries in improving the overall status of women. It aims to do so by eliminating all forms of discrimination between women and men pursuant to Islamic values of social justice and gender equality. OPAAW's significance for women's development in OIC member countries is substantial. For instance, amongst other objectives, in seeking to eliminate discrimination in all its forms to enhance women's participation in society, OPAAW addresses the fact that there is an acute interdependence between factors of unsustainability and gender inequality.

The objectives put forth in OPAAW are in line with international, regional, and national covenants such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and values of the Islamic world. More importantly, the implementation of OPAAW is highly contingent upon multi-sectoral cooperation between states, civil society, media agencies, trade unions, private sector, and more. To this end, the following chapter discusses the progress OIC member countries have made towards the implementation of OPAAW.



3. Progress towards the Implementation of the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW)

The advancement and empowerment of women in Islamic societies has been one of the central foci of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) since its inception. In order to address the challenges faced by women and improve their status, OIC member countries adopted the OPAAW during the 2nd Ministerial Conference on Women's Role in the Development of OIC Member States, convened in Cairo, Egypt, in 2008. The most recent updates to OPAAW took place at the 6th Ministerial Conference held in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2016. The 7th Ministerial Conference, held in Burkina Faso in 2018, adopted the Resolution No. 7/7-W, concerning the mechanism for preparing, drafting, and submitting progress reports on the implementation of OPAAW. In abidance of this resolution, SESRIC conducted a survey of 57 OIC member countries on “Measuring the Progress in the Implementation of OPAAW: 2019” (hereafter referred to as OPAAW Implementation Survey). It was circulated online through Survey Monkey in three languages (Arabic, English, and French) to focal points in member countries between October 2019 and June 2020.

The Survey was designed to gather information on the implementation of OPAAW in OIC member countries in seven distinct domains: women’s participation in decision-making, status of women’s education, women’s health, women’s economic empowerment, social protection for women, protection of women from violence, and women in crises. More specifically, Part A of the survey collected information on measures implemented by member countries to improve the status of women in the seven domains and progress recorded on specific indicators in these domains. Part B of the survey asked member countries about the challenges they face in implementing the OPAAW, the OIC programs that can – or have – facilitated the implementation of OPAAW, national best practices in the seven domains, and the areas in which member countries require support/assistance in reaching the OPAAW objectives. As of June 2020, 27 OIC member countries (47% of member countries) from all OIC sub-regions had responded to the survey. The respondent member states were Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Djibouti, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey, and United Arab Emirates.

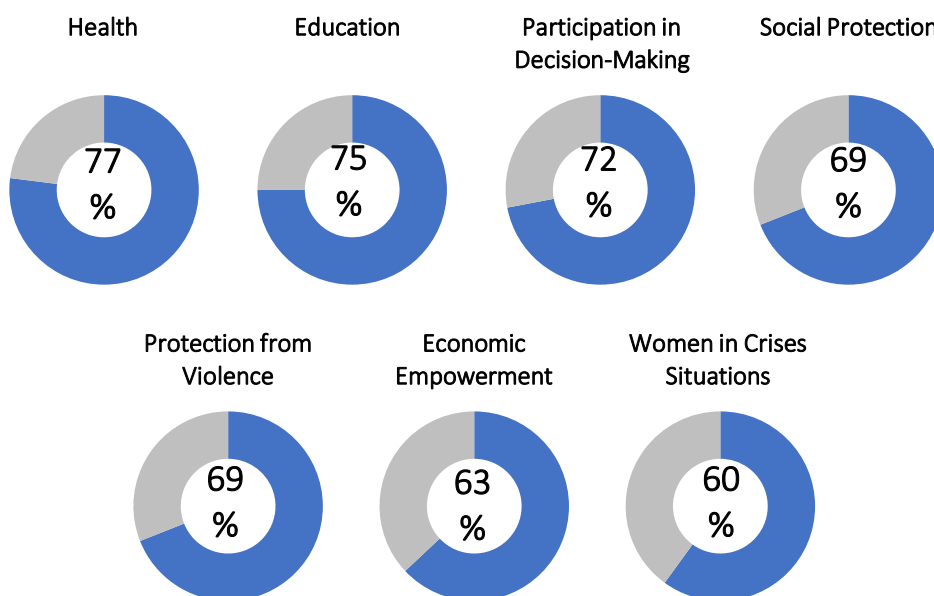


Against this background, this chapter analyses the OPAAW Implementation Survey results with a view to measuring the progress recorded by the respondent OIC countries towards the implementation of the OPAAW. It is worth noting here that the responses discussed in this chapter are self-reported by a sub-set of OIC member countries, hence inferring broad generalizations in any of the reported domains is not advised.

3.1. Implementation Status of the Objectives of OPAAW

An overview of the survey responses indicates that there has been substantial progress in the seven domains of the OPAAW. Overall, respondent countries made relatively more progress and/or improvements in the domain of health, followed by education, participation in decision-making, social protection, protection from violence, economic empowerment, and lastly, the status of women in crises. As shown in Figure 3.1, on average, more than half of the 27 respondent countries reported progress for various indicators in each of the areas covered by OPAAW.

Figure 3.1: Overall Progress* Made towards the Implementation of OPAAW (%)



Source: SESRIC staff calculations based on the OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019. Note: * Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress for indicators in these domains.

The progress reported by the respondent countries is attributable to a combination of legislative policies, institutional programs and policies, and capacity-building efforts that



OIC countries have undertaken to improve women's status across all social sectors. To achieve gender equality and improve women's participation and status in society, legislations and national strategies are of crucial importance. This is because of the prescriptive nature of legal regulations that often form the bedrock for consequent affirmative and enabling programs and policies. In any society, laws pertaining to gender protect women from exploitative practices; grant them fundamental rights and opportunities to participate in their societies; and give them the agency to challenge actions and/or actors that violate such laws. More importantly, legal and strategic frameworks can assist states in implementing progressive policies for gender equality that are in line with regional and international development agenda. The legal prescriptions that are enshrined under the OPAAW ensure active and equal participation of girls and women, which is also in line with the values of Islam.

Moreover, legislative and strategic mechanisms act as a guide for institutional programs and policies to support the advancement of women in OIC countries. Effective programs and policies can reduce gender inequality by mainstreaming gender, which ultimately results in the building of inclusive and equitable societies. However, the implementation of such programmes usually requires the use of a multi-sectoral approach that is contingent on cooperation between institutions in public, private, and civil sectors.

3.1.1. Objective No. 1 – Women's Participation in Decision Making

In the domain of women's participation in decision-making, the majority of respondent countries reported that they implemented measures to ensure political, economic, social and cultural representation of women at all levels of decision-making (OPAAW objective No. 1). For example, 100% of respondent countries said that they implemented measures to promote increased participation of women in all decision-making bodies (Figure 3.2). 96% of respondents also took necessary institutional steps towards enhancing women's role in society and their contribution to the development of their communities and families. 85% of respondent countries also implemented measures to promote necessary actions (at national, local, and community levels) in line with their international commitments towards women's empowerment in all spheres. Moreover, 74% of respondents implemented measures encouraging (through legislation) women's access to advanced technologies, including ICT, to promote their role in the decision-making and development process.

From a legal perspective, 78% of respondent countries reported improvements in legal arrangements that promote women's participation in this domain, along with 85% of respondent countries who made some improvements in activating international ratified



treaties on women’s empowerment. In 7% of respondent countries, there was no progress recorded in either of these indicators.

Figure 3.2: Status of Implementation of Objective 1

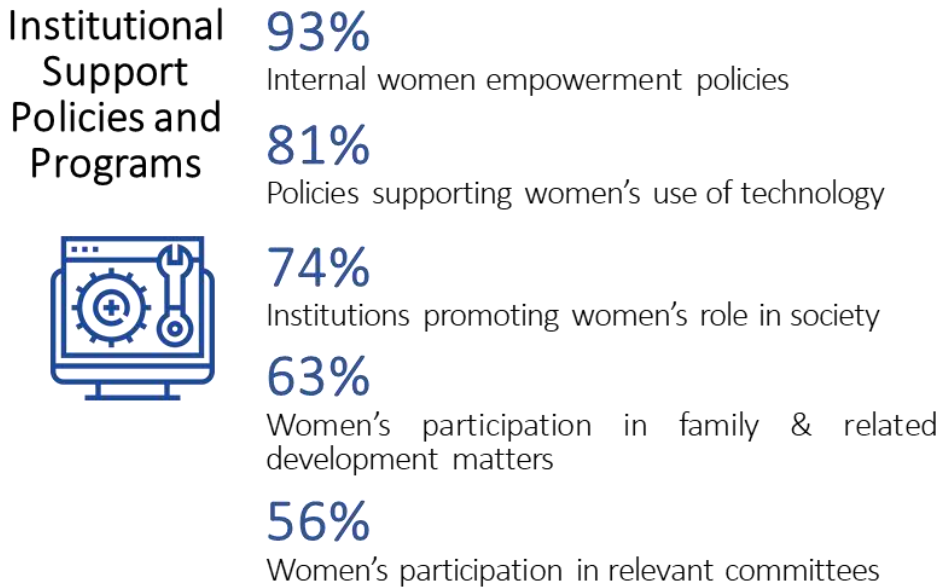


Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that have implemented such measures.

In terms of definitive institutional support programs and capacity building efforts, responses of the OIC member countries focus on two main areas: (i) broader policies and institutions and (ii) women’s use of technology – as summarized in Figure 3.3. To illustrate, 93% of respondent countries reported progress in implementing internal policies for women’s empowerment as a measure to increase their participation in decision-making. Moreover, 81% of respondent countries reported an increase in policies that support women’s use of technology. 74% of respondent countries also reported progress in institutions concerned with the promotion of women’s role in society. Furthermore, in the private sphere, 63% of respondent countries have made progress in improving women’s participation in the family and related developmental matters. However, only 56% of respondent countries made a progress in women’s participation in committees relevant to decision-making.



Figure 3.3: Institutional Support and Capacity Building Efforts for Objective 1



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress on these indicators.

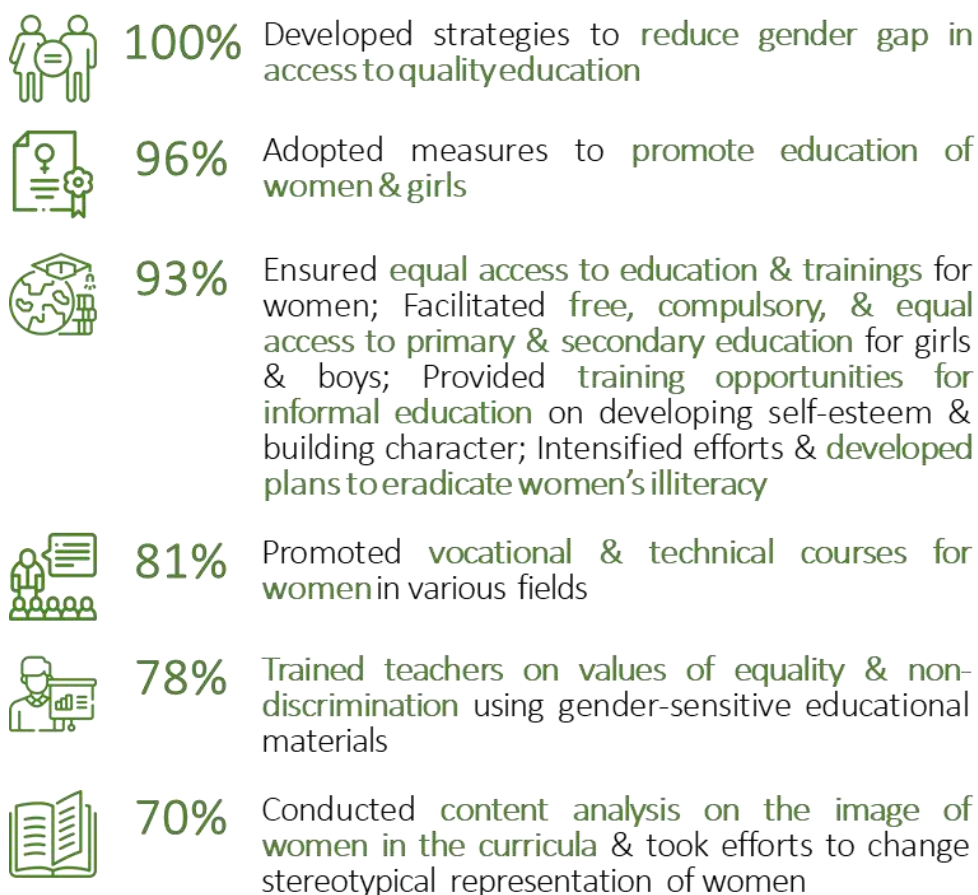
3.1.2. Objective No. 2 – Women's Education

OPAAW's second objective aims to provide equal opportunities for all women and girls to receive an education; to have access to quality education at all levels, in addition to vocational and skills training as well as literacy programs. In this area, the survey results show that all the respondent countries developed strategies to reduce the gender gap in access to quality education (Figure 3.4). Additionally, a vast majority of respondent countries implemented measures to adopt the necessary policies and programs for promoting the education of women and girls (96%). Furthermore, 93% of respondent countries developed measures to ensure equal access for women to education and training to equip them with necessary knowledge and skills to participate in decision making processes; provide training activities and opportunities for non-formal education on topics related to the development of self-esteem and building an active and productive character; and intensifying the efforts and developing study plans and mechanisms to eradicate women illiteracy.

In line with their needs and/or requirements in the education sector, 93% of respondent countries also have measures in place to facilitate free and compulsory education and equal access for boys and girls to quality primary and secondary education; 81% of respondents promote specially designed vocational and technical courses for women in

various fields; and 78% train teachers (at all levels) on values of equality and non-discrimination in activities using gender sensitive educational materials. Lastly, 70% of respondents have implemented measures to conduct a content analysis on the image of women in the curricula and working towards changing stereotypical images of women and their role in the curricula, starting from the primary school curriculum.

Figure 3.4: Status of Implementation of Objective 2



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that have implemented such measures.

In a similar vein, respondent countries reported development when it comes to specific legislative policies, institutional support programs and policies, and capacity building efforts in the domain of education that are highlighted in Figure 3.5. For example, 78% of respondent countries improved the legal arrangements concerning free and compulsory access to education. 85% of respondent countries also reported improvements towards reducing the gender gap between boys and girls in education, increasing urban and rural



awareness of the importance of girls' education, and introducing a number of broader programs/projects to promote female education.

Figure 3.5: Legislative Measures and Institutional Support Programs for Objective 2



Legislative Measures

- Legal arrangements for free and compulsory access to education – **78%**

Institutional Support Programs

- Programs to increase urban/rural awareness of importance of girls' education – **85%**
- Increase in the number of training centers for women – **78%**
- Increase in the number of technical & vocational centers – **70%**
- Policies & Programs to incorporate a gendered perspective in school curriculum – **67%**

Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress on these indicators.

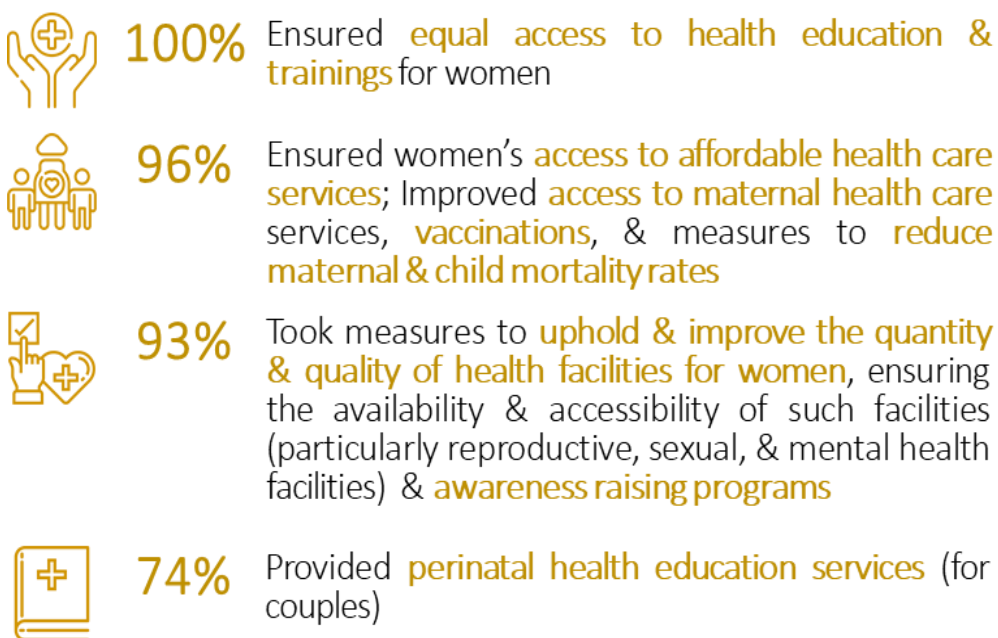
In regards to capacity building efforts for improving the state of women's education, 78% of respondent countries have increased the number of training centres for women and 70% of them have increased the number of technical and vocational centres. Such improvements can be associated with the reported increase in the number of women who attend vocational and technical courses in different fields in 78% of respondent countries. This also has to do with the rise both in the number of training programs for women and in the number of women participating in such programs in 59% of respondent countries. Lastly, 67% of respondent countries have made efforts to incorporate a gendered perspective in the school curriculum.

3.1.3. Objective No. 3 – Women's Health

According to the third objective of OPAAW, improving women and girls' health is inherently tied to their access to quality healthcare services, clean water and sanitation, as well as adequate and healthy nutrition. The OPAAW survey findings show that respondent countries have done considerably well in implementing measures and recording progress on health-specific indicators (Figure 3.6). For instance, 100% of

respondent countries implemented measures to ensure equal access for women to health education and training to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to participate in decision-making processes concerning their healthcare. 96% of respondent countries also implemented measures to improve access to maternal healthcare services, vaccinations, reduce maternal and child mortality and morbidities, and ensure the accessibility of affordable healthcare for women. Moreover, 93% of respondent countries provided support to increase the availability and accessibility of health facilities and services for women, particularly reproductive, sexual and mental health services. Those respondent countries organized programs to raise awareness on preventing health risks and diseases as well. Lastly, 74% of respondent countries provided perinatal health education services for couples, which prepare them for the arrival of the child and handling the accompanying psychological pressures.

Figure 3.6: Status of Implementation of Objective 3



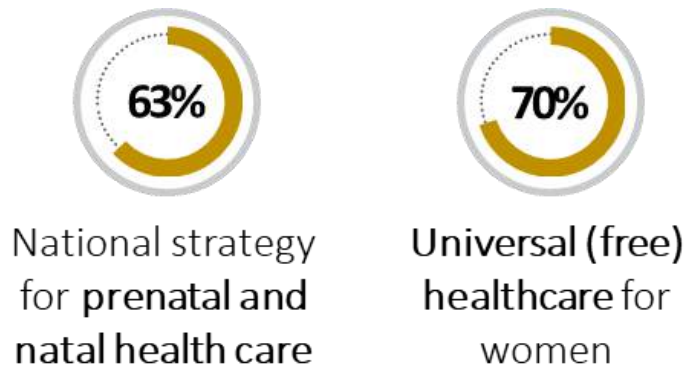
Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that have implemented such measures.

In order to implement the abovementioned measures, OIC countries have put in place a number of legislative and strategic policies in the domain of health. For example, 63% of respondent countries reported progress in implementing national strategies to increase the attention on the delivery process and 70% had legislative policies that enable women to access universal (free) healthcare services (Figure 3.7). Moreover, a majority of respondent countries (81%) increased both the number of executive, awareness, and



prevention programs for women and the number of programs on reproductive health and cancer prevention. Overall, 85% of respondent countries increased the access rate of women to health centres; 78% reported progress in the number of women that benefit from healthcare services; and 78% reported an increase in the rate of programs empowering women in the field of health. Only 52% of respondent countries reported progress made towards the reduction of health risks caused by environmental pollution.

Figure 3.7: Legislative and Strategic Policies for Objective 3



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress on these indicators.

In addition to the general policies and programs, respondent countries also undertook several specialized capacity-building efforts in the field of healthcare (Figure 3.8). For instance, 78% of respondent countries reported an increase in the number of gynaecological and obstetric health units and 70% of respondent countries increased the provision of emergency care services for pregnant women. An improvement in such facilities is likely to associate with reduced maternal mortality rates in member countries.

Figure 3.8: Capacity Building Efforts for Objective 3

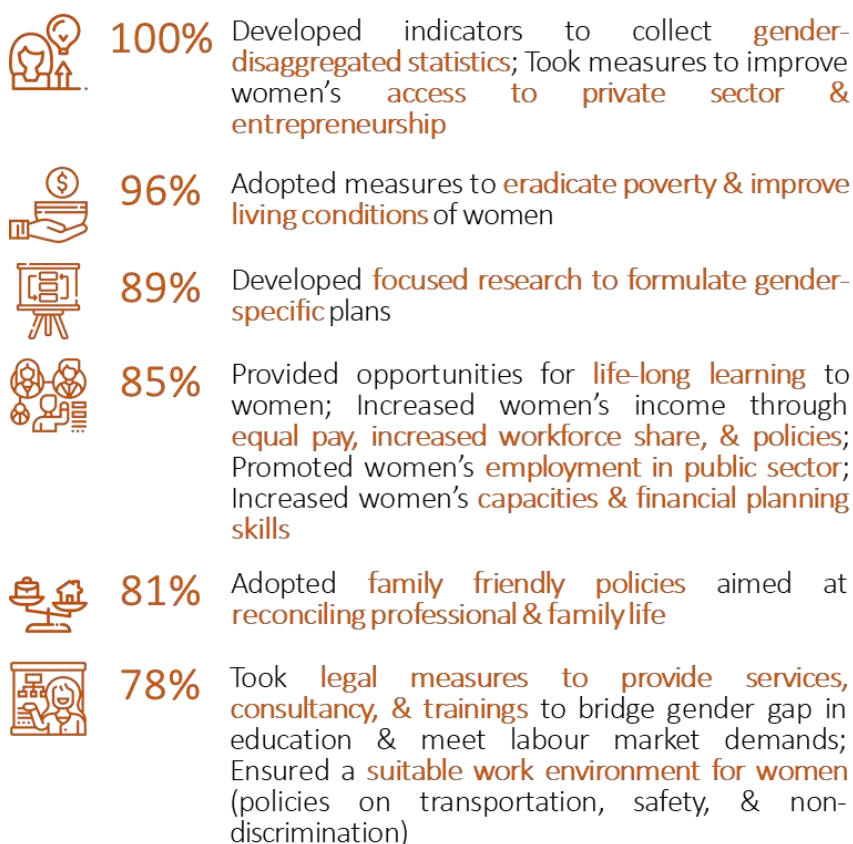


Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress on these indicators.

3.1.4. Objective No. 4 – Women’s Economic Empowerment

The fourth objective of OPAAW aims to promote women’s economic empowerment and equal access to economic opportunities in the public and private sectors. According to the survey results, there are some variations in the overall status of the implementation of this objective in respondent countries. Figure 3.9 summarizes the key areas in which member countries implemented measures to promote women’s economic empowerment. For example, on the one hand, 100% of respondent countries implemented measures to develop gender-specific indicators to collect data and statistics, along with taking necessary measures and actions to empower women in order to gain access to private sector employment and entrepreneurship. On the other hand, only 78% of respondent countries took legislative and executive measures to provide services, consultancy, and training programmes to bridge the gap between women’s education and labour market demands.

Figure 3.9: Status of Implementation of Objective 4



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that have implemented such measures.



Nevertheless, the overall implementation status of objective four was generally favourable in many other areas. For instance, 96% of respondent countries introduced effective measures to eradicate poverty among women and improve their living conditions. Such measures help promote the realization of women's full economic potential, enable their advancement and equal participation in decision-making, and ensure that they benefit from economic development. Moreover, 89% of respondent countries developed gender-focused research to inform decision-making and planning towards strengthening the role of women in the economy.

85% of respondent countries also implemented measures to improve women's economic empowerment in each of the following areas:

- Providing greater opportunities for life-long learning to women in line with rapidly changing labour markets;
- Increasing women's income through equal pay, share of workforce, and employment policies;
- Creating initiatives to promote women's access to public sector employment on equal footing with men; and
- Adopting measures for increasing women's capacities and financial planning skills by providing access to capacity building, training, access to financial planning advice, improving their understanding of personal banking, retirement, student loans, and repayment policies, and providing opportunities for microcredit finance and other financial services.

In recognizing the importance of work-life balance, 81% of respondent countries established policies for working mothers and administrative regulations required to help reconcile their family duties with their economic activity. 81% of respondent countries also adopted family-friendly policies aimed at reconciling professional and family life through the implementation of measures such as affordable and quality care services for children, elderly, and other dependents. Lastly, in easing hardships that women face while in the workforce, 78% of respondent countries implemented measures to ensure a suitable working environment for women in terms of transport, safety, and non-discrimination in the workplace.

Further analysis of survey responses shows that respondent countries made considerable progress in four concentrated areas, but the level of improvement is varied. For example, an analysis of legislative policies in respondent countries shows that, on the one hand, 78% respondent countries reported progress in laws governing the work of women; legal



arrangements for women’s economic empowerment; and decisions on minimum wages and protection of wages (Figure 3.10). On the other hand, only 48% of respondent countries improved their laws governing the employment relationship between genders in the work environment.

Similarly, respondent countries also reported a varying degree of progress in the implementation and/or adoption of legislative measures such as regulations and decisions governing working hours for women (70%), existence of an employment strategy for women (67%), laws and procedures for women’s entrepreneurship (63%), and enhancement of labour policies (59%). It is worth noting that, as compared to the other objectives, respondent countries reported some of the lowest progress levels in the domain of women’s economic empowerment.

Figure 3.10: Legislative and Strategic Policies for Objective 4



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress on these indicators.

The respondent countries also noted progress in terms of institutional support programs and policies for women (Figure 3.11). To illustrate, 78% of respondent countries reported progress in projects/programs for increasing women’s employment as well as improved the availability of programs for women (e.g. training, marketing, lending) to improve their economic status. 63% of respondent countries also reported having awareness programs for women’s skill building and 56% of respondents – each – reported having services and programs to enhance women’s life-long education, work-from-home and self-employment promotion programs, and support services for mothers. At the same time, 59% of respondent countries succeeded to increase the number of programs aimed at developing entrepreneurial culture amongst needful women and 67% of countries increased the number of training programs for developing women’s craft skills.



Figure 3.11: Institutional Support and Capacity Building Efforts for Objective 4

Institutional Support Policies and Programs



- Programs for increasing women's employment – **78%**
- Training, marketing, lending programs to improve economic status – **78%**
- Awareness programs for skill-building – **63%**
- Services & programs to enhance life-long education – **56%**
- Work-from-home & self-employment promotion programs – **56%**
- Support services for mothers – **56%**

Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress on these indicators.

In a multi-sectoral approach to economically empowering women, 63% of respondent countries recorded an improvement in partnerships and agreements between the relevant entities in support of improving women's economic status. This is in parallel with the share of respondent countries who noted an improvement in their awareness programs aimed to build women's professional capabilities and make them acquire skills (63%) and who improved the services and programs available to enhance life-long education (56%). Yet, the suitability of economic and financial infrastructure only increased in 48% of respondent countries. This includes the rate of women's access to technology, which improved in only 63% of respondent countries.

Notably, 56% of respondent countries also progressed in implementing programs that encourage work-from-home and/or self-employment. Moreover, an analysis of the progress pertaining to women-owned enterprises indicates that the ratio of women in business increased in 81% of respondent countries. Additionally, 63% of respondent countries saw improvements in the ratio of micro, small, and medium enterprises managed by women; but only 33% of respondent countries noted progress in the ratio of female entrepreneurs who successfully transitioned their enterprise from small to medium and/or large scale.

In the area of women's employment, 59% of respondent countries made efforts to broaden the base for women's economic participation in the private sector. This is in addition to a rise in the number of women working in the private sector in 63% of respondent countries. Several OIC countries also noted progress in measures that sought to reduce workplace discrimination against women and improve the facilities available to employed women and mothers (Figure 3.12). For example, in 81% of respondent countries, there was an increase in transparency while announcing vacancies and choice

of applicants and 70% noted a decrease in the rate of wage inequality and removed discriminatory provisions in salaries and allowances. Nevertheless, only 37% of respondent countries reported an improvement in the number of complaints about sexual harassment in the workplace and mobbing due to the availability of new mechanisms.

Figure 3.12: Measures to Limit Gender Discrimination in the Workplace

Measures against Gender Discrimination



81%

Increasing transparency in **announcing vacancies & choice of applicants**



70%

Decrease in rate of **inequality in wages & removing discriminatory provisions** in salaries & allowances

Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress on these indicators.

The survey results also reveal that the level of progress in provisions for working mothers was comparatively lower. For example, only 56% of respondent countries recorded progress in support services for mothers. Additionally, an increase in the number of nurseries in workplaces was only reported by 48% of respondent countries. In a similar vein, about 67% of respondent countries reported an increase in the number of care centres for children, elderly, and disabled people.

Finally, concerning the collection of gender-specific data, 74% of respondent countries reported progress, while 78% mentioned that, in the provision of statistics on the status of women's economic activities, there is some improvement. There are also some improvements in the domain of gender-focused research in the economic sectors as reported by 81% of respondent countries. In addition, 59% of respondent countries reported an increase in the number of plans that are derived from such research, with 48% going so far as to observe an increasing impact of such research on programs and services provided.

3.1.5. Objective No. 5 – Social Protection for Women

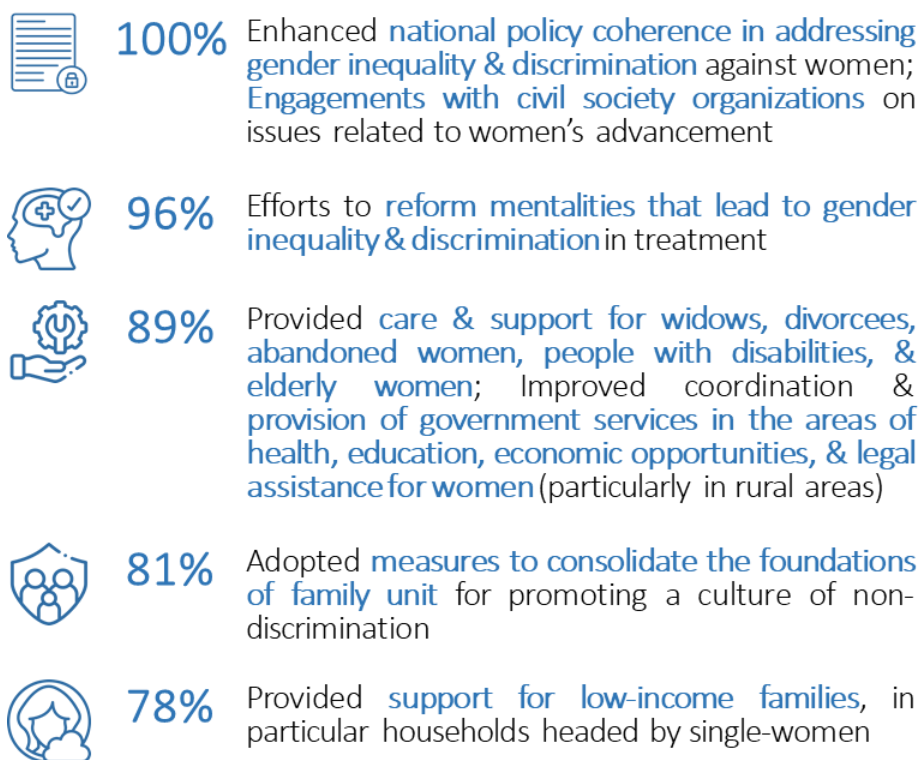
In the domain of women's social protection, OIC member countries have implemented several measures to improve and ensure women's social needs, safety, and well-being (OPAAW objective No. 5). All of the respondent countries mentioned that they have measures to enhance national policy coherence in addressing inequality and



discrimination against women and girls and engage with civil society organizations carrying out activities in defence of women’s advancement. Additionally, 96% of respondents have measures to change established mentalities at all levels of society whenever women face deprivation in equality of status and treatment.

Some of the more tangible measures, summarized in Figure 3.13 below, include measures for improving the coordination and provision of government services to women, particularly in rural areas, including access to health, education, economic opportunities, and legal assistance (89%); measures for providing care and support for women, widows, the divorced, the abandoned, people with disabilities and/or elderly women (89%); and measures for providing additional support for low-income families, in particular, single women head of household in accordance with national social policies (78%). Lastly, 81% of respondents have also implemented measures to consolidate the foundations of the family unit and its role in enhancing mutual respect among male and female members in order to promote a culture of non-discrimination.

Figure 3.13: Status of Implementation of Objective 5



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that have implemented such measures.

Furthermore, as shown in Figure 3.14, in terms of legislative and strategic policies, 81% of respondent countries reported having laws to reduce gender inequality and 63% of respondent countries have active laws to support the quality of women’s lives. Efforts to improve the quality of women’s lives include institutional programs and policies related to women’s social protection. Such programs are instrumental for alleviating poverty, improving the socio-economic status of women, and providing valuable assistance to vulnerable and marginalized women. The survey’s findings show improvements in the number and scope of those programs in many respondent countries. For instance, a majority of respondent countries (78%) have made improvements in social protection programs implemented for low-income families and 56% of respondent countries improved programmes for households headed by women. Additionally, 63% of respondent countries also noted an increase in the governmental social protection services provided in urban and rural areas.

Figure 3.14: Legislative Measures and Institutional Support and Capacity Building Programs for Objective 5



Legislative Measures

- Laws to reduce gender inequality – **81%**
- Active laws to support the quality of women’s lives – **63%**

Institutional Support and Capacity Building Programs

- Social protection programs for low-income families – **78%**
- Increase in number of community partnership for women’s support – **74%**
- Increase in rate of grass-roots involvement in social protection programs – **70%**
- Social protection services for urban & rural areas – **63%**
- Social protection programs for women-headed households – **56%**

Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress on these indicators.

Respondent countries also recorded progress in various grass-roots social protection programs that are important for inclusiveness. For instance, 70% of respondent countries raised the rate of grass roots involvement in social protection programs, while 74%

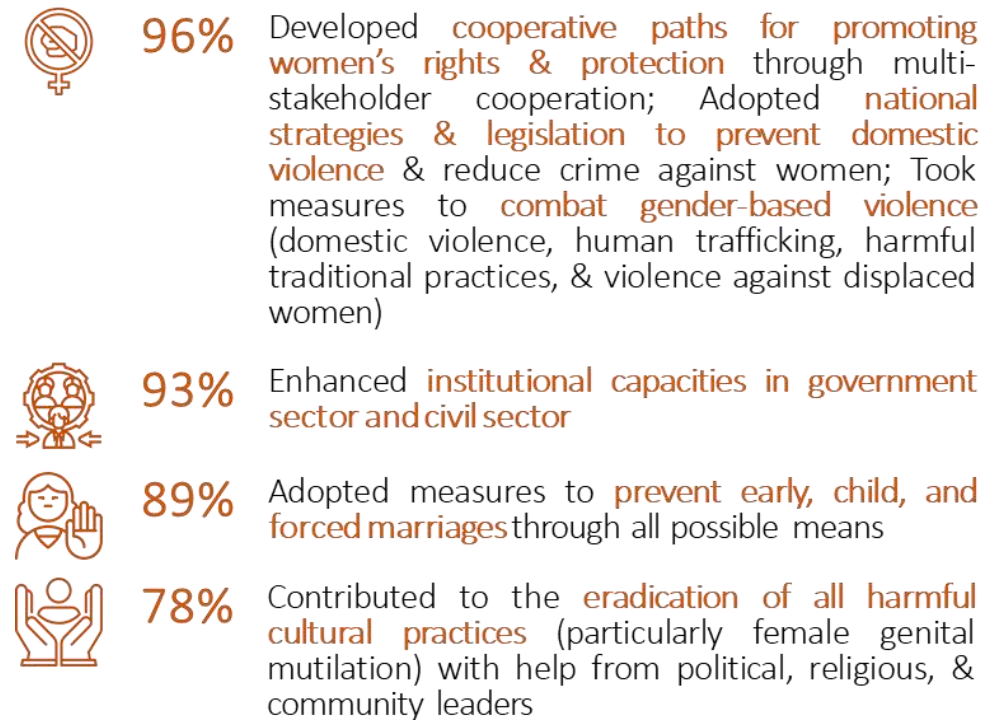


reported an increase in the number of community partnerships concluded on the subject of women’s support. Yet, only 59% of countries reported progress in financial allocations to support fragile and vulnerable groups and only 48% of respondent countries recorded progress in the ratio of financial allocations for the integration of women’s needs in the annual budgets for social protection.

3.1.6. Objective No. 6 – Protecting Women from Violence

As per the survey findings, OIC member countries have taken significant strides to protect women from violence by combating all forms of gender-based violence, human trafficking and other harmful traditional practices against women and girls (OPAAW objective No. 6) (Figure 3.15). A majority of 96% respondent countries reported having implemented measures to engage with relevant stakeholders at national, regional and international levels with a view to develop cooperative paths for promoting women’s rights and protection; encourage the adoption of national measures, strategies and legislation to prevent domestic violence and reduce crime against women; and combat gender-based violence in all its manifestations, including domestic violence, human trafficking, fighting harmful traditional practices and violence against displaced women.

Figure 3.15: Status of Implementation of Objective 6



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: *Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that have implemented such measures.

The survey results also revealed that 93% of respondent countries implemented measures for enhancing institutional capacities of governmental institutions and civil society organizations to prevent violence against women at the local and national level; 78% of respondent countries contributed to the eradication of all harmful practices, in particular, female genital mutilation through strong political support and involvement of religious and community leaders; and 89% of respondent countries took measures to prevent early, child and forced marriage through all possible means.

When it comes to protecting women from violence, respondent countries reported some of the highest levels of progress amongst all the seven domains of the OPAAW. For instance, 85% of respondent countries reported progress in the preparation of national action plans and a rise in the development of laws supporting women from all forms of violence. 74% of respondent countries also reported progress in legal arrangements dictating national response to violence against women and 78% of respondent countries reported having existing national strategies to prevent and respond to domestic violence (Figure 3.16). 81% of respondent countries said that they made progress in not just strategies adopted by OIC countries for combatting domestic violence but also benefitted from the experience of other member countries. Overall, a substantial percentage of respondent countries also made progress in overall legal arrangements for protecting women from violence (78%) and in increasing awareness about violence against women (78%). Lastly, 70% of respondent countries reported making progress in harmonizing their laws with international conventions and Islamic law (Figure 3.16).

Figure 3.16: Legislative and Strategic Mechanisms for Objective 6



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: *Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that have implemented such measures.

In a similar vein, respondent countries reported having made improvements in institutional support and capacity building efforts in four broad areas: developing human



capacities, fostering multi-sectoral cooperation, raising awareness about violence against women, and developing national systems to effectively prevent and combat violence against women. Regarding the development of human capacity, 78% of respondent countries measured progress in training initiatives for professionals, while 70% reported an increase in the number of training programs implemented to build the capacity of workers in the fields of protection and rehabilitation, and 59% of respondent countries also reported progress in preparing qualified staff. As for developing institutional and financial capacities, a majority of respondent countries (70%) reported increasing programs/initiatives implemented for education and enlightenment; 74% reported an increase in the number of programs implemented to strengthen the institutional structure of government agencies for the protection of women; and 70% respondent countries reported an increase in facilities that provide necessary protection for women. Lastly, 83% of respondent countries reported progress in the ratio of material support for organizations fighting violence against women.

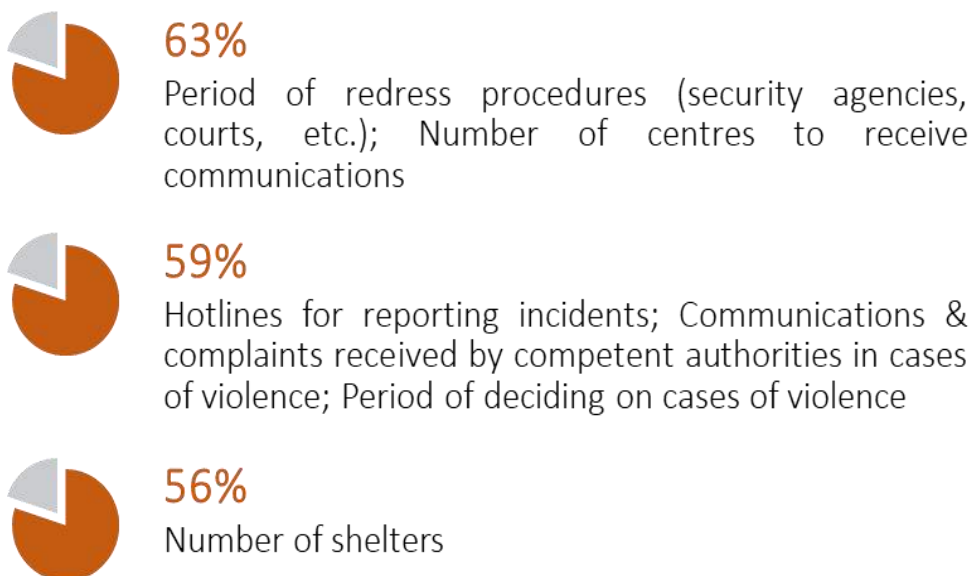
In respect to multi-sectoral cooperation to combat and prevent violence against women, 67% of respondent countries noted progress in agreements and partnerships at the national and international levels and in programs implemented in cooperation with concerned authorities. Additionally, 74% of respondent countries reported increased support for civil society organizations to achieve their goals in the protection of women. Moreover, 74% of them reported improvement in activities for sharing best practices and experience with other actors and states. In fact, 67% of respondent countries made progress in the quality of institutional work and benefitting from international expertise.

Regarding building national capacities, 74% of respondent countries reported progress in developing capacities of the national mechanisms on gender equality. 70% also reported progress in programs on strengthening the legal culture of women and their rights and 70% of respondent countries improved the relevant authorities and mechanisms to enhance their competencies in protecting women from forced marriage and underage marriage. Concerning the efforts dedicated to provide support for victims of violence, 78% of respondent countries reported progress in establishing and refining systems of protection from abuse and 78% said they increased the number of social protection units. When it comes to establishing proper mechanisms for protection from violence, respondent countries reported relatively a lower progress in various technical areas such as the number of shelters for the protection of women, which increased only in 56% of respondent countries (Figure 3.17).



Figure 3.17: Progress in Technical Mechanisms for Protection from Violence

Technical Mechanisms



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress on these indicators.

Lastly, a majority of respondent countries also made progress in raising awareness about violence against women through a variety of programs and initiatives. For example, 78% of respondent countries raised general awareness and education programs on violence against women; 74% of respondent countries also noted a rise in awareness raising activities; and 67% increased the ratio of educational and awareness programs for community groups. Moreover, in order to formulate more effective policies and inform decision-makers on this issue, 63% of respondent countries increased the number of studies and research on the attitudes, behaviours, and practices related to forced underage marriage; 63% increased the number of guidance programs in the area of family and the fight against violence; and 59% reported having updated statistics on this issue.

3.1.7. Objective No. 7 – Women in Crises

In the domain of women in crises, the implemented measures in OIC member countries seek to ensure women’s and girls’ protection and access to humanitarian assistance during armed conflicts, natural and man-made disasters, foreign occupation, forced displacement, and other vulnerable situations, particularly, rural women (OPAAW



objective No. 7). Additionally, OPAAW also recommends the OIC member countries to promote the role of women in conflict resolution, peace, and security pursuant to UN Security Council resolution 1325.

The survey findings revealed that all of the respondent countries implemented measures to engage with women's civil society organizations to reach out grass roots level women in view to promote their effective empowerment to ensure access to their basic human rights. Moreover, 96% of respondent countries have measures for integrating sexual and gender based violence response, including child violence, in all humanitarian policies and developing channels of communication to denounce these harmful practices and provide necessary assistance to victims (Figure 3.18).

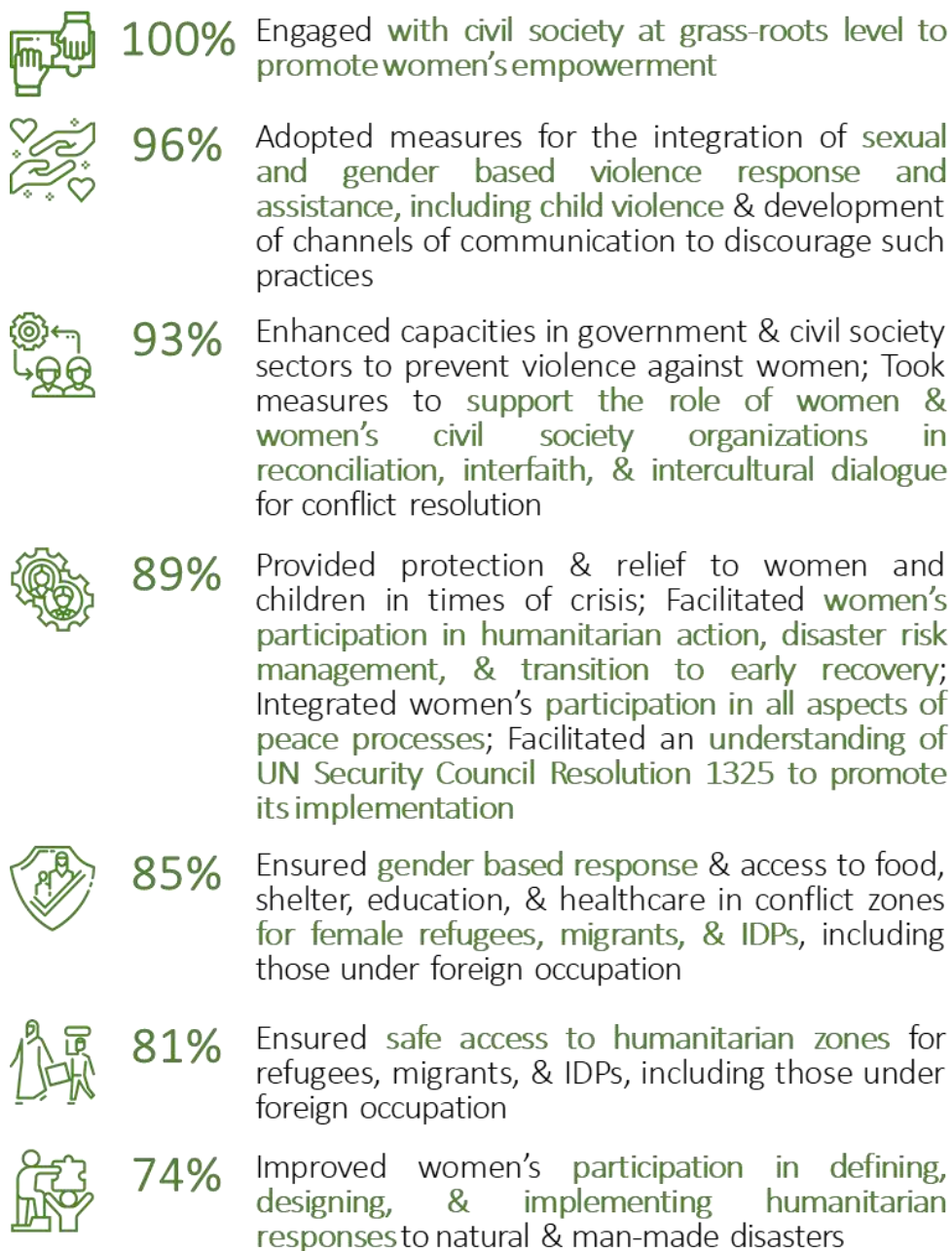
A majority of respondent countries have implemented various measures in two key areas: (i) enhancing institutional capacities of governmental institutions and civil society organizations to prevent violence against women at the local, national, and regional level (93%) and (ii) supporting the role of women and women's civil society organization in the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies through reconciliation, interfaith and intercultural dialogue among parties to the conflict (93%).

Additionally, 89% of respondent countries also implemented some form of modalities to facilitate and create conditions conducive to women's full participation (through national entities, civil society and/or community-based organizations) into humanitarian action, disaster risk management, and transition to early recovery; provide protection and relief to all women and children in times of crisis; integrate women's participation in all aspects of peace processes, including negotiation, crisis management and ending the conflict; and facilitate an understanding of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security and promote its implementation. 74% of respondent countries also reported that they have measures for improving women's participation in defining humanitarian response to natural and artificial disasters and crises (assessment, analysis, planning, and implementation).

In specific reference to female refugees, migrants, and IDPs (including those under foreign occupation), 85% of respondent countries ensured the provision of a gender based response to facilitate their access to food, shelter, education, healthcare in zones and times of conflict. Additionally, 81% countries reported that they have measures for securing the safety of such women in reaching humanitarian safe zones.



Figure 3.18: Status of Implementation of Objective 7



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: *Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that have implemented such measures.

In order to address the needs of women in crises through legislations and strategies, 70% of respondent countries reported having applied the objectives of the UN's Security



Council Resolution 1325 on the protection of women in conflict zones – as stated in the OPAAW. In addition, 67% of respondent countries reported progress in the development of policies and legislations for women in crisis and 59% said they took steps to develop policies and laws to cultivate a supportive environment for civil work, which is of critical importance to humanitarian operations.

In a similar vein, with respect to the institutional programs and policies for women in crises, the respondent countries reported progress particularly in three indicators: (i) the adoption of effective mechanisms to promote the participation of women in this area (81%), (ii) ensuring women and children have access to national and international relief and assistance programs (70%) and (iii) increase in the number of capacity building programs for civil society organizations (70%) (Figure 3.19). In addition, 56% of respondent countries increased the availability of capacity and competence building programs to engage in civil work. However, only 67% of respondent countries increased the rate of women’s participation in capacity building programs/initiatives.

Figure 3.19: Institutional Support Programs for Objective 7

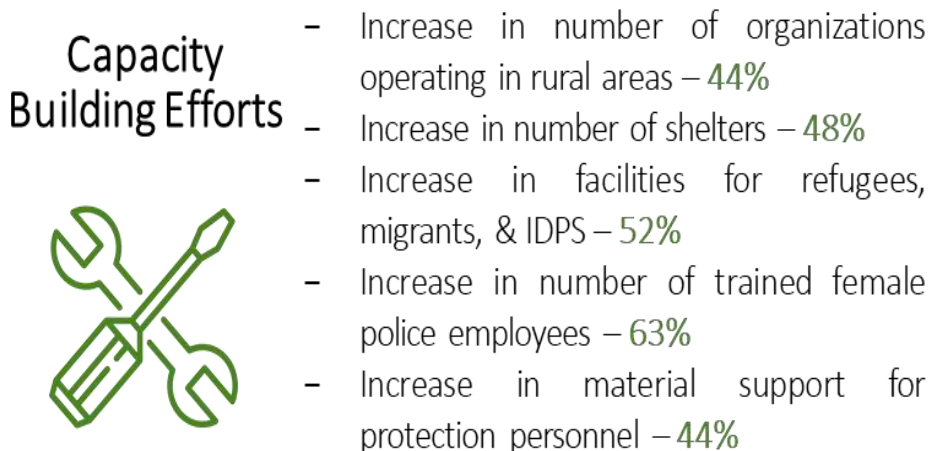


Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress on these indicators.

In addition to overall progress in policies and programs, OIC countries also made progress in improving specific capacities to deal with women in crises (Figure 3.20). For instance, 44% of respondent countries increased the number of organizations operating in rural areas; 70% improved the capacity of civil society organizations working in this domain; 48% reported an increase in the number of shelters and 37% reported an increase in the capacity of shelters; 52% of respondent countries also reported an increase in the number of facilities for refugees, migrants, and displaced persons. At the same time, in regards to human capacity development, 63% of respondent countries increased the number of

female police employees trained in international law, human rights, and the protection of civilians, while only 44% reported an increase in the number of material support for protection personnel.

Figure 3.20: Capacity Building Efforts for Objective 7



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: Values shown here refer to the percentage of respondent countries that reported progress on these indicators.

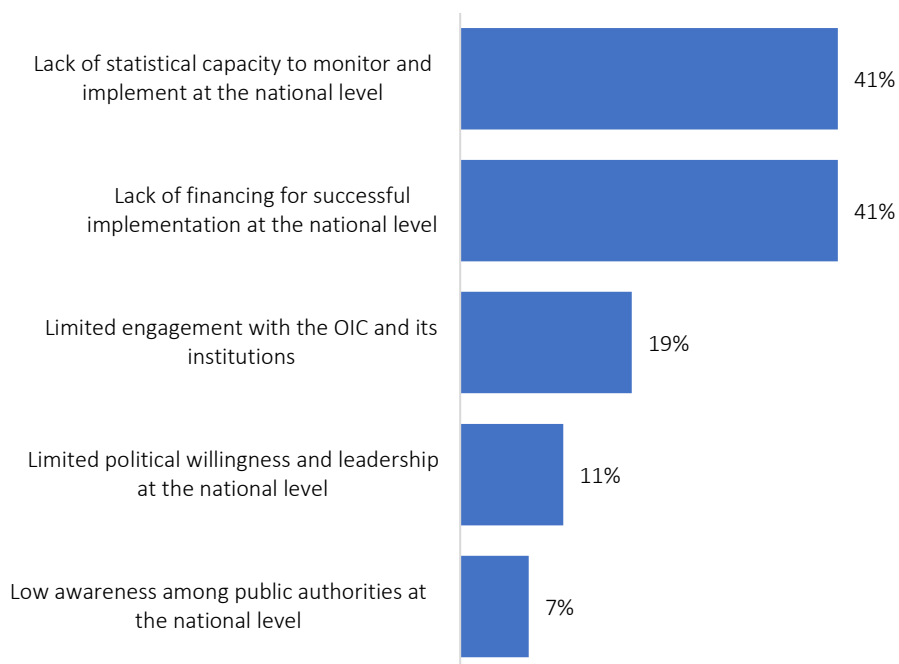
3.2. Major Challenges to the Implementation of OPAAW

The last section of the OPAAW Implementation Survey (Part B) asked OIC member countries about the challenges that they face in achieving the OPAAW objectives, the areas where they need support/assistance, and the convenience of various OIC programmes to their efforts in this regard.

The responses from member countries about the challenges they face in achieving the OPAAW objectives are summarized in Figure 3.21. For 41% of respondent countries, the two prevailing challenges to implementing the OPAAW were the lack of statistical capacity to monitor and implement the OPAAW at the national level and the lack of financing for successful implementation of the OPAAW at the national level. Another 19% of respondent countries cited limited engagement with the OIC and its institutions as challenging, whereas 11% of respondent countries said limited political willingness and leadership at the national level was a challenge to the implementation of the OPAAW in their country. In comparison, only 7% of respondent countries said low awareness among public authorities on OPAAW at the national level was a challenge to the implementation of the OPAAW.



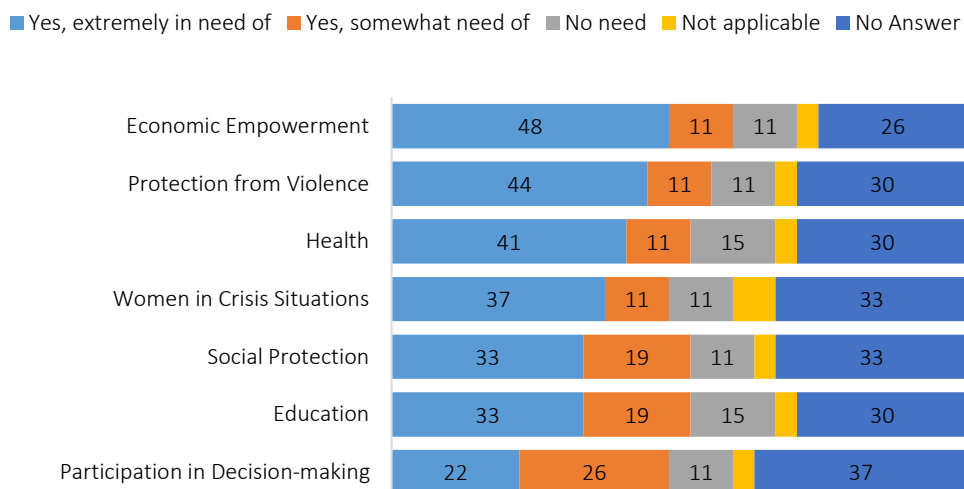
Figure 3.21: Challenges* faced by Respondent Countries in the Implementation of OPAAW (% of responses)



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019 Note: *The values shown here refer to the share of responses that cited a problem as “very challenging” or “mostly challenging”.

The survey results also revealed that many OIC countries are in need of some support and assistance for better implementation of the OPAAW. For instance, 48% of them mentioned that there is an extreme need for support and/or assistance in achieving the OPAAW objectives for women’s economic empowerment (Figure 3.22). 44% of respondent countries identified a similar need in the area of protection from violence while 41% were in extreme need of support in the domain of health. Another 37% of respondent countries identified an extreme need in the area of women in crises and 33% of respondent countries identified an extreme need for support and/or assistance in the field of social protection and education. Only 22% of respondent countries required extreme assistance in the area of women’s participation in decision-making. Nevertheless, 26% of respondent countries said they were somewhat in need of support and/or assistance in this area.

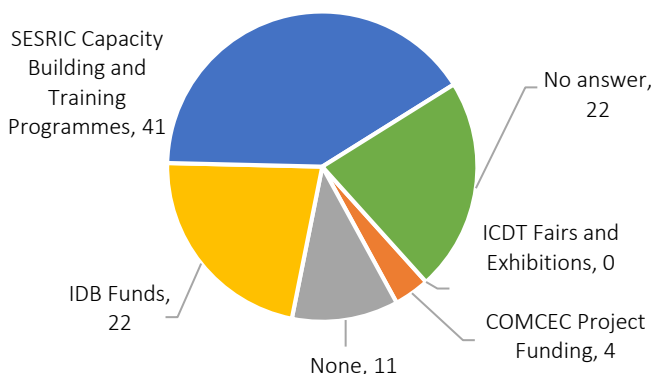
Figure 3.22. Areas in which Respondent Countries Need Support and/or Assistance in Achieving OPAAW Objectives (% of responses)



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019

In order to achieve the objectives of the OPAAW, the majority of respondent countries (41%) said SESRIC’s Capacity Building and Training Programmes could facilitate their efforts. Another 22% of respondent countries said IDB Funds could facilitate the implementation of the OPAAW in their countries, while 4% identified the COMCEC’s Project Funding as a possible mechanism that can facilitate their efforts to empower women (Figure 3.23). It should be noted that 22% of the respondent countries did not answer this question in the survey.

Figure 3.23: OIC Programmes That Can Facilitate the Implementation of OPAAW (% of responses)

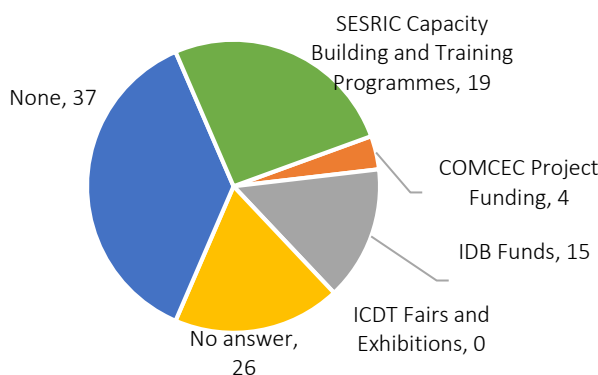


Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019



However, in practical terms, half of the respondent countries said that they had not benefited from any of the available programmes (Figure 3.24). Only 19% of respondent countries benefited from SESRIC’s Capacity Building and Training Programmes, 15% benefited from IDB Funds, and 4% benefited from COMCEC Project Funding for the implementation of the OPAAW in their respective countries. 26% of respondent countries chose not to answer the question.

Figure 3.24: Respondent Countries Having Benefited from OIC Programmes (% of responses)



Source: OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019

3.3. National Best-Practices Contributing to the Implementation of OPAAW

In the OPAAW Implementation Survey, OIC member countries were asked if they had best practices contributing to the implementation of the OPAAW in their countries. In response to this question, a vast majority of respondent countries (85%) said they had some best-practices to improve women’s participation in decision-making. 79% of respondent countries also had best-practices in the domains of protection from violence, social protection, economic empowerment, and education. In addition, 63% of respondent countries had best practices in the domain of health and 56% had best practices for women in crises. The best practices shared by the respondent countries included a diverse set of policies and practices conducive to achieving the objectives of OPAAW.

Regarding **women’s participation in decision-making**, for instance, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Djibouti, Morocco, Pakistan, and Palestine all have gender quotas in the political and/or administrative branches of the government that increase women’s participation in decision-making bodies. Additionally, Mauritania has a National Strategy that seeks to mainstream gender in governmental institutions (parliament, municipalities, and regional councils), Bahrain has a National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini

Women, and Senegal has adopted a law on achieving gender parity in elective and semi-elective bodies. In Indonesia, women's leadership training in rural areas ensures women's visibility and participation in community-wide decision-making processes. In Brunei Darussalam, the Special Committee on Family Institution, Women and Children is responsible for coordinating national efforts towards promoting and protecting the rights of children, women and the family institution. Under this Special Committee, three Plans of Action were formulated, namely; Plan of Action on Family, Plan of Action on Women, and Plan of Action on Children that promote multi-sectoral cooperation amongst various stakeholders. Similarly, Turkey has created a peer council that promotes gender equality and equal opportunities between men and women. Turkey has also issued ministerial circulars to raise awareness about the necessity of equal opportunities for men and women in the decision-making mechanisms. A set of affirmative policies in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) also resulted in women's higher participation in a number of governmental bodies including the national council, diplomatic corps, Council of Ministers, and presidency of the national council.

In order to improve women and girls' **education**, one of the prevalent best practices is to offer free education to girls. This best practice is currently in effect in Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Djibouti, and Tunisia. Brunei Darussalam and Djibouti have also made girls' formal education compulsory for up to 9 years and 16 years, respectively. Senegal and Turkey also have initiatives to reduce the dropout rates for female students by keeping them in schools. Burkina Faso, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and UAE have national strategies and plans to improve women and girls' education at various levels. Indonesia has schools dedicated to women belonging to vulnerable groups and Morocco provides direct financial support to needy families (through Tayssir Programme). This financial support is meant to ease the financial burden of sending girls to school.

Thanks to several policies and best practices, women in many OIC countries saw improvements in **health** outcomes. In Burkina Faso, women's access to healthcare is improved through services such as free healthcare for children 0-5 and pregnant women. Djibouti offers free healthcare for all, including refugees. In Senegal, women have free access to caesarean sections and treatment of specific types of cancer, along with free care of children aged 0 to 5 and universal healthcare coverage. At the same time, countries like Brunei Darussalam and Pakistan have programs in place to make healthcare more affordable for women. In terms of more specific services, Benin has the Arch project that includes provisions for health insurance for those involved in the agriculture sector, crafts, trade, transportation, art, and poor households; Cameroon provides free vaccination for children aged 0-1 and free antiretroviral drug for HIV; Mauritania has a national nutrition programme that includes provisions for women; Palestine offers free health services for battered women; and Saudi Arabia and Bahrain both have national health strategy for women. In Tunisia, dedicated health centres provide sexual and



reproductive health services to women, while in Turkey there are women's health centre in many medical schools. Best-practices in the UAE cover a range of services including annual campaigns for raising awareness about women's health, raising the marriage age for women, and the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children that offers mental health services to women.

In the domain of **women's economic empowerment**, a number of respondent countries have adopted national plans and/or strategies that are dedicated to improving women's employment, entrepreneurship, and income generation. Some example of these plans include: Supreme Council for Women for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship in Bahrain, women's income generation programme in Mauritania, the 3N initiative in Niger, the Nigerian Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, Benazir Income Support Programme in Pakistan, the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Women in Saudi Arabia, and the National Plan for the Economic and Social Empowerment of Women and Girls in Rural Areas, Single-Parent Households, and Women with Special Needs in Tunisia.

In terms of the scope of the best practices aimed at **women's economic empowerment**, Morocco has some of the more extensive initiatives including the National Initiative for Human Development, launched by His Majesty King Mohammed VI in 2005 to promote social development and provide local services to the most vulnerable groups and regions. This initiative has reported a positive outcome with respect to reducing social inequalities and combating poverty, exclusion, marginalization, and vulnerability. There are also a number of concentrated programs such as:

- The "Idmaj" programme, which aims to develop the human resources of enterprises by improving its management works to encourage the employment of young (female) job seekers,
- The "Tahafiz" programme that encourages employment in newly established companies, societies and cooperatives,
- The "Tahil" programme, which provides contractual training to improve the employability of female job seekers in line with labour market needs,
- The Central Guarantee Fund "Elakaman" that encourages women's entrepreneurship by granting them up to 80% bank loans,
- The self-enterprise system, which includes legislative measures to encourage and support women's entrepreneurship, and
- The "Min Ajlak" programme, which aims to encourage women to establish income-generating business activities, within the framework of a partnership between the state and civil society, in order to contribute to the economic empowerment of women through the quantitative and qualitative development of women's entrepreneurship and their employability.



In addition to support for women's economic empowerment, some respondent countries also provide financial support for women as part of their social protection programs. For instance, Brunei Darussalam has the BKB100 programme, Employment Plan, Small Business from Home, and Innovation Visionary Youth Programme with a view to empower women and alleviating their financial burdens.

OIC countries are also rich in terms of **social protection** and support programmes for women. For instance, Tunisia has a special system for the social support of women in the agriculture sector in rural areas. In Djibouti, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, and Turkey, social protection systems cover healthcare for women, especially women belonging to vulnerable groups and low-income or poor households. In Pakistan, EHSAAS programme provides welfare to reduce inequality, invest in people, and lift lagging districts. In Palestine, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, social protection also includes procedures for dealing with issues of violence, rehabilitation shelters, and protection homes. In Qatar, social protection also covers family rehabilitation provided by Family Counselling Centres that aim to strengthen marriage and family ties and limit the disintegration of the targeted groups of families suffering from marital and family problems by providing services in both preventive and therapeutic fields.

As for the best practices to **protect women from violence**, a number of respondent countries have national laws and regulations to prevent and combat violence against women. These include the National Strategy for the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence and the establishment of the National Database and Statistics on Domestic Violence (Takatuf) in Bahrain; Women and Girls Protection Act (Cap 120), Islamic Family Law Order, Married Women Act, Children and Young Persons Order, Prevention of People Smuggling Order, and Anti-Trafficking in Persons Order in Brunei Darussalam; the law on the protection, prevention and care of women and children victims of violence in Djibouti; the cell for the fight against harmful female genital mutilation and National Strategy for Combating Domestic Violence in Mauritania; Special Law to Combat Violence against Women (Law 103.13), the National Committee for the Care of Women Victims of Violence under the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Development, Equality and Family, the National Observatory on Violence against Women and the National Observatory of the Image of Women in the Media, and Institutional Directory for Receiving Women and Children Victims of Violence in Morocco; Anti-Harassment Crime Regulations in Saudi Arabia; and the Issuance of Basic Law No. 58 to eliminate violence against women in Tunisia. A good number of respondent countries also have best-practices on establishing national systems for combatting violence against women that regulate the setting up of shelters, support centres, providing legal support to victims of violence, training health personnel and police officers to effectively deal with victims of violence, and monitoring instances of violence against women.



Lastly, in a number of respondent countries, social protection measures included provisions for **women in crisis** as well. For example, a number of respondent countries indicated having implemented (or are in the process of implementing) strategies and regulations in relation to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 to protect women in crises and provide needful assistance to such women. In particular, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Palestine, Senegal, and Tunisia have implemented (or are in the process of implementing) regulations and/or committees within the framework of Security Council Resolution 1325 in cooperation with civil society organizations. In Cameroon, the UN provided support for the establishment of call centres, gender desks, and women's cohesion spaces to provide psychosocial and economic support for women in refugee camps. Similarly, Pakistan has established a cell dedicated to women and children in its National Disaster Management Authority.



4. The Path to Women's Development

The path to women's development in OIC member countries is entwined with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of OPAAW, both stressing on eliminating gender inequality to achieve sustainable socio-economic development. Building inclusive and accountable societies is closely linked with developing gender-sensitive and responsive systems that can help alleviate gender disparities. In order to build such societies and systems, OIC member countries need to focus on two fundamental factors: (i) mainstreaming gender across all sectors of society consistently, and (ii) paying attention not to have contradicting policies on gender related issues given the crosscutting nature of gender sensitive policies. It is also imperative that efforts to address gender disparities follow a three-pronged approach to tackle root causes of gender inequality, reform long-standing norms and mentalities, and address structural discrimination (direct and indirect) against women in private and public spheres. In addition, granting women agency and voice in policy-making processes can improve their representation in society and make policy-making mechanisms more gender balanced. Lastly, the goal should be to not only formulate reparative policies and programs for lip service, but also establish institutions and mechanisms that ensure their implementation and enforcement throughout all sectors of society.

OIC member countries have made significant strides in addressing gender disparities in numerous sectors in the past few decades. Analysis of the data gathered from international sources in Chapter 2 of this report shows that OIC member countries have effectively formulated and implemented a number of regulations, policies, and practices that have had an empowering effect on women. More importantly, these regulations, policies, and practices have kept in line with Islamic values and teachings – so as not to create undue tensions between religion and society. For example, women's economic activity and entrepreneurship are compatible with the teachings of Islam. According to World Bank's Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) index, OIC member countries improved their score from 52.5 in 2010 to 59.1 in 2019. This was made possible due to a series of legal reforms that improved women's access to economic opportunities (World Bank, 2020). Yet, the fact that OIC member countries lagged behind the world average (75.2) indicates a need for further facilitative policies and programs that encourage and support women's economic empowerment in OIC member countries.

Similarly, OIC member countries also noted progress in basic indicators of human development – particularly those related to education and health – that have had positive



impacts on women. For instance, OIC member countries reported an increase in the participation of girls and women in education institutions that resulted in higher literacy rates. They improved women's access to skilled birth personnel and health facilities, which helped reduce the number of maternal mortalities. In the areas of economy and social protection, female labour force participation rates have increased and more OIC member countries now provide the globally accepted right for 14-week paid maternity leave.

The OPAAW Implementation Survey –Chapter 3 of this report discusses its results– also reveals similar findings of the progress made towards improving women's status in member countries. A summary analysis of the responses from 27 OIC countries demonstrates that respondent countries made relatively more progress in the domain of women's health, where 77% of them took measures on the relevant health indicators listed in the OPAAW. It was followed by the domains of education (75%), decision-making (72%), social protection (69%), protection from violence (69%), economic empowerment (63%), and lastly, the status of women in crises (60%).

OIC member countries achieved this progress thanks to the adoption and implementation of affirmative legislative policies, institutional programs and policies, and capacity building efforts that aim to improve women's status across all social sectors. The modalities undertaken by OIC member countries to achieve the objectives of OPAAW were very diverse in their nature and scope. For example, on one hand, a large number of respondent countries have adopted –or are in the process of adopting– national strategies, laws, and regulations dealing with a wide-range of issues that are specific to women such as protection from gender based violence. On the other hand, a number of respondent countries have implemented –or are in the process of implementing– programs to reform institutions, build human capacities, and provide financial support to organizations and personnel dealing with women-specific issues.

The OPAAW Implementation Survey revealed that over three-fourth of the respondent countries consider that programmes maintained by various OIC institutions could facilitate the implementation of the OPAAW in their countries, yet only half of them reported having benefited from those programmes. In particular, 41% of the respondent countries chose “SESRIC's Capacity Building and Training Programmes” as the leading OIC-level mechanism through which they can facilitate the implementation of OPAAW. However, only 19% said they have benefited from such programs.

Moreover, programmes and activities of relevant OIC institutions –highlighted in Box 1.1 – have also played an important role in providing momentum for the realization of OPAAW and facilitation of intra-OIC cooperation. For instance, SESRIC's training session on “Guidelines for Preparing, Drafting and Submitting Progress Reports on Implementing the OPAAW” and its administration of the “OPAAW Implementation Survey 2019” were



crucial for guiding data collection and dissemination on gender-related issues amongst OIC member countries.

The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) and Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Promotions of SMEs of Côte d'Ivoire's Regional Online Marketing Workshop in April 2019 assisted women entrepreneurs in Côte d'Ivoire in expanding their businesses online. The Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture (ICCIA) launched the "ICCIA Businesswomen Information Network" (ICCIABIN) as a platform for women entrepreneurs to interact with each other and to exchange business information among themselves and share best practices.

In the category of arts, to promote the Islamic arts among women and to raise awareness, the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art, and Culture (IRCICA) organized exhibitions on "calligraphy and illumination" by female artists. The Islamic Development Bank Group (IsDB) financed several projects (across various sectors) that helped improve the socio-economic status of women. IsDB also awards the IsDB Prize for Women's Contribution to Development. The Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) also organized various programmes targeting young women and girls in OIC member countries. In September 2020, the ICYF, in cooperation with the Investment and Technology Promotion Office of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Bahrain, organized a capacity-building programme on "Young Women Entrepreneurs as Drivers of SDGs".

These examples provide concrete evidence that OIC institutions, in cooperation with member countries and the OIC General Secretariat have exerted efforts with a view to advancing women's status in the Islamic world and progressing towards reaching the objectives of the OPAAW. Specifically, in reference to developing institutional capacities, OIC countries have made considerable progress in realizing the importance of civil society organizations in reducing gender inequality and mainstreaming gender in society. This is why they have undertaken a number of initiatives for providing support to such multi-sectoral organizations and programs. Survey findings in various domains show that OIC countries realize the intersectional nature of factors that affect women's development on a daily basis; achieving gender equality is a crosscutting endeavour that requires the use of an intersectional approach with gender at its centre. Such initiatives constitute a strong platform for OIC member countries to exchange technical expertise, share best practices, and implement programmes and activities that encourage women's empowerment.

However, despite all the progress recorded, a combination of physical and intangible barriers continues to obstruct women's participation and visibility in society, which fosters gender inequalities across the OIC region. These barriers keep women from realizing and refining their potential, dampen their motivations, and curb their public and private success. Similarly, the OPAAW survey results also reveal a number of hurdles that prevent effective implementation of the OPAAW. For example, 41% of the respondent countries



mentioned that, at the national level, the lack of statistical capacity to monitor and implement and the lack of financing are leading challenges in the implementation of the OPAAW. They also identified an “extreme need” for support and/or assistance in reaching the objectives of the OPAAW in the following areas: economic empowerment (48%), protection from violence (44%), health (41%), women in crises (37%), social protection (33%), education (33%), and participation in decision-making (22%).

While a majority of OIC countries recognize the importance of OPAAW, the findings of this report highlight that there is room for improvement when it comes to implementing the OPAAW. There is a need for intensifying efforts at the national level, as well as at intra-OIC cooperation level, in order to address the persisting challenges that hinder the advancement and empowerment of women. In this context, the following policy recommendations provide some guidance to policy makers in OIC member countries on how to facilitate the advancement of women:

- **Invest in human capital:** A lack of proper education and skills negatively affects women’s success and limits their contribution to social development. Various economic, institutional, and socio-cultural factors play role in deciding the education outcomes for girls and women. One such factor is the lack of teachers owing to limited investments made in the field of education in recent decades. Such shortcomings can be rectified with relatively simple or straightforward interventions. For instance, OIC member countries could invest more in human capital development to increase the participation of girls and women in schools, vocational training, and education institutions. However, investments should focus on not only the quantity (e.g. number of teachers) but also the quality. The curricula and education systems need to be gender-sensitive, so that they can effectively address the needs of girls and women.
- **Increase investments in infrastructure:** Women in a number of OIC member countries continue to suffer from gender disparities stemming from their limited access to basic services due to inadequate physical infrastructure such as education, health, and information technology (IT). In this regard, OIC member countries should increase their investments in infrastructure. It is also essential to mainstream gender while deciding on priority areas and scope of investments in various fields. In this way, policy makers could have a better understanding of the potential impacts of such investments on women, while also maximizing their yield for men and women.
- **Review legislations using a gendered approach:** As this report finds, a group of OIC member countries has successfully taken steps to make their laws, regulations, and legal documents gender-sensitive. However, there are several OIC member countries where legislations are not considerate of the distinct needs of women. Legislations that do not use a gendered lens often fail to protect women from incidents such as abuse, harassment, or domestic violence. The lack of gender-sensitive laws and



regulations is especially detrimental to vulnerable women such as those living under protection, IDPs, and refugees. Traditionally, long-standing laws and legislations are neglectful of the gendered impacts and imbalances that their implementation can bring about. Therefore, such rules or regulations neither help in the eradication of gender disparities nor empower women. To this end, reviewing legislation using a gendered approach is important to improve the state of women.

- **Improve the quality of gender-disaggregated data:** A leading challenge to monitoring the implementation of OPAAW in OIC member countries is the lack of sufficient national gender-disaggregated data. The OIC Implementation Survey is solely based on self-reporting and the lack of national data complicates the process of drawing quantifiable comparisons in progress that member countries have made to reduce gender inequality. However, the recommendation is not only to increase the quantity of data, but also to improve its quality and one-way to do this is to develop standardized guidelines and methodology to gather and report gender-sensitive indicators in member countries. The lack of gender-disaggregated data obstructs the ability of policy makers to formulate and implement effective policies. It also makes it difficult to discern whether existing policies and interventions are actually successful in promoting gender equality and improving women's status in society. Without the presence of standardized methodologies, there are operational disparities in data collection, interpretation, and reportage between public and private institutions and civil society organizations. Along with formulating guidelines to standardize data collection methodologies, OIC member countries should also consider the establishment of central data hubs that can effectively produce and disseminate gender-sensitive data.
- **Address gender stereotypes, social norms, and cultural barriers:** Improvements in institutions or legislations are necessary but not sufficient. Many countries across the globe continue to struggle in coping with gender stereotypes, social norms, and cultural barriers even after having undertaken a series of reforms. It is because changing perceptions in society requires time and energy. Therefore, complementing gender-equality and women empowerment related reforms with policies to address gender stereotypes, social norms, and cultural barriers could be pivotal in OIC countries. Awareness raising campaigns through mass media or education institutions can play an important role in rectifying gender stereotypes, social norms, and cultural barriers. Promoting and publicly celebrating the experiences of successful women (e.g. CEOs, politicians, and artists) can be a policy option. Organizing training programmes for public officials to equip them with knowledge on coping with gender-based discrimination can also help in reducing malpractices.
- **Include civil society into policy dialogue:** Fostering a culture where civil society is included in policy dialogue is essential, especially in areas where there are different



views and practices across communities, like gender issues. In this regard, addressing gender inequalities and empowering women in OIC member countries is not possible without involving the civil society. Various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society institutions, community leaders, religious figures, and other relevant stakeholders can help clarify misconceptions about the rights of women in Islam as well as in the modern world. Civil society institutions can also help with awareness raising efforts at the grassroots or community level.

- **Further cooperation with international and regional institutions:** National level efforts and policies on improving the state of women and addressing gender disparities can have some limitations such as in terms of finance or impact. Thus, experiences of various international and regional institutions (UNIDO, UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, OECD, World Bank, African Union, ASEAN etc.) are precious for OIC member countries when designing or implementing gender policies. This is because such institutions can draw from their accumulated knowledge and expertise on country experiences in different regions and levels of development. In this context, maintaining and furthering cooperation with such institutions, exchanging ideas and views with them as well as having regular consultation meetings can bring additional momentum to the efforts of OIC member countries in the domain of empowerment of women.
- **Enhance intra-OIC cooperation:** There is no doubt that the empowerment of women is socially and economically beneficial for individuals, their families, and societies. Policies, practices, and initiatives more conducive to gender parity are instrumental in improving the state of women. The country examples mentioned in this report show a number of successful initiatives and policies that already exist in OIC member countries. They range from policies on easing women's access to social protection and increasing representation of women in politics to reducing maternal mortalities and eliminating domestic violence. OIC member countries can benefit from the experiences of other member countries and perhaps replicate successful initiatives in their respective countries by considering local conditions. This can enhance intra-OIC cooperation and partnerships, while also enabling the achievement of the OPAAW objectives.



APPENDIX

Annex I: Country Group Classifications

OIC Member Countries (57):

Afghanistan (AFG)	Gabon (GAB)	Maldives (MDV)	Sudan (SDN)
Albania (ALB)	Gambia (GMB)	Mali (MLI)	Suriname (SUR)
Algeria (DZA)	Guinea (GIN)	Mauritania (MRT)	Syria* (SYR)
Azerbaijan (AZE)	Guinea-Bissau (GNB)	Morocco (MAR)	Tajikistan (TJK)
Bahrain (BHR)	Guyana (GUY)	Mozambique (MOZ)	Togo (TGO)
Bangladesh (BGD)	Indonesia (IDN)	Niger (NER)	Tunisia (TUN)
Benin (BEN)	Iran (IRN)	Nigeria (NGA)	Turkey (TUR)
Brunei Darussalam (BRN)	Iraq (IRQ)	Oman (OMN)	Turkmenistan (TKM)
Burkina Faso (BFA)	Jordan (JOR)	Pakistan (PAK)	Uganda (UGA)
Cameroon (CMR)	Kazakhstan (KAZ)	Palestine (PSE)	United Arab Emirates (UAE)
Chad (TCD)	Kuwait (KWT)	Qatar (QAT)	Uzbekistan (UZB)
Comoros (COM)	Kyrgyzstan (KGZ)	Saudi Arabia (SAU)	Yemen (YEM)
Cote d'Ivoire (CIV)	Lebanon (LBN)	Senegal (SEN)	
Djibouti (DJI)	Libya (LBY)	Sierra Leone (SLE)	
Egypt (EGY)	Malaysia (MYS)	Somalia (SOM)	

* Syria is currently suspended from OIC membership.

Non-OIC Developing Countries:

Angola (AGO)	Dominica (DMA)	Malawi (MWI)	Serbia (SRB)
Antigua and Barbuda (ATG)	Dominican Republic (DOM)	Marshall Islands (MHL)	Seychelles (SYC)
Argentina (ARG)	Ecuador (ECU)	Mauritius (MUS)	Solomon Islands (SLB)
Armenia (ARM)	El Salvador (SLV)	Mexico (MEX)	South Africa (ZAF)
The Bahamas (BHS)	Equatorial Guinea (GNQ)	Micronesia (FSM)	South Sudan (SSD)
Barbados (BRB)	Eritrea (ERI)	Moldova (MDA)	Sri Lanka (LKA)
Belarus (BLR)	Ethiopia (ETH)	Mongolia (MNG)	St. Kitts and Nevis (KNA)
Belize (BLZ)	Fiji (FJI)	Montenegro (MNE)	St. Lucia (LCA)
Bhutan (BTN)	Georgia (GEO)	Myanmar (MMR)	St. Vincent and the Grenadines (VCT)
Bolivia (BOL)	Ghana (GHA)	Namibia (NAM)	Swaziland (SWZ)
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH)	Grenada (GRD)	Nauru (NRU)	Tanzania (TZA)



Botswana (BWA)	Guatemala (GTM)	Nepal (NPL)	Thailand (THA)
Brazil (BRA)	Haiti (HTI)	Nicaragua (NIC)	Timor-Leste (TLS)
Bulgaria (BGR)	Honduras (HND)	Palau (PLW)	Tonga (TON)
Burundi (BDI)	Hungary (HUN)	Panama (PAN)	Trinidad and Tobago (TTO)
Cabo Verde (CPV)	India (IND)	Papua New Guinea (PNG)	Tuvalu (TUV)
Cambodia (KHM)	Jamaica (JAM)	Paraguay (PRY)	Ukraine (UKR)
Central African Republic (CAF)	Kenya (KEN)	Peru (PER)	Uruguay (URY)
Chile (CHL)	Kiribati (KIR)	Philippines (PHL)	Vanuatu (VUT)
China (CHN)	Kosovo (Unassigned)	Poland (POL)	Venezuela (VEN)
Colombia (COL)	Lao P.D.R. (LAO)	Romania (ROU)	Vietnam (VNM)
D.R of the Congo (COD)	Lesotho (LSO)	Russia (RUS)	Zambia (ZMB)
Republic of Congo (COG)	Liberia (LBR)	Rwanda (RWA)	Zimbabwe (ZWE)
Costa Rica (CRI)	North Macedonia (MKD)	Samoa (WSM)	
Croatia (HRV)	Madagascar (MDG)	São Tomé and Príncipe (STP)	

Developed Countries* (39):

Australia (AUS)	Germany (DEU)	Lithuania (LTU)	Singapore (SGP)
Austria (AUT)	Greece (GRC)	Luxembourg (LUX)	Slovak Republic (SVK)
Belgium (BEL)	Hong Kong (HKG)	Macao SAR (MAC)	Slovenia (SVN)
Canada (CAN)	Iceland (ISL)	Malta (MLT)	Spain (ESP)
Cyprus (CYP)	Ireland (IRL)	Netherlands (NLD)	Sweden (SWE)
Czech Republic (CZE)	Israel (ISR)	New Zealand (NZL)	Switzerland (CHE)
Denmark (DNK)	Italy (ITA)	Norway (NOR)	Taiwan (TWN)
Estonia (EST)	Japan (JPN)	Portugal (PRT)	United Kingdom (GBR)
Finland (FIN)	Korea, Rep. (KOR)	Puerto Rico (PRI)	United States of America (USA)
France (FRA)	Latvia (LVA)	San Marino (SMR)	

* Based on the list of advanced countries classified by the IMF.



Annex II: Geographical Classification of OIC Countries**Sub-Saharan Africa (21): OIC-SSA**

Benin	Gambia	Nigeria
Burkina Faso	Guinea	Senegal
Cameroon	Guinea-Bissau	Sierra Leone
Chad	Mali	Somalia
Comoros	Mauritania	Sudan
Côte d'Ivoire	Mozambique	Togo
Gabon	Niger	Uganda

Middle East and North Africa (19): OIC-MENA

Algeria	Kuwait	Saudi Arabia
Bahrain	Lebanon	Syria*
Djibouti	Libya	Tunisia
Egypt	Morocco	United Arab Emirates
Iraq	Oman	Yemen
Iran	Palestine	
Jordan	Qatar	

*Syria is currently suspended from its OIC membership.

East and South Asia and Latin America (9): OIC-ESALA

Afghanistan	Guyana	Maldives
Bangladesh	Indonesia	Pakistan
Brunei Darussalam	Malaysia	Suriname

Europe and Central Asia (8): OIC-ECA

Albania	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmenistan
Azerbaijan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Kazakhstan	Turkey	



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