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Female Labor Participation in the MENA region

May 27, 2025



How can increased female participation in the labor market positively impact economic growth? What policies are essential to raise participation, and what role does data play in this process? These pivotal questions guided our recent webinar titled "Female Labor Participation in the MENA Region," organized by METAC and the IMF's Strategy, Policy, and Review Department.

The discussion highlighted the macro-criticality of female labor participation as a key driver for sustainable economic growth and development. Enhancing women's engagement in the formal workforce boosts productivity by promoting entrepreneurship, bringing complementary skills and ideas to the workplace, and supporting sectoral reallocation.

Peter Rademaker (ILO), Racha Ramadan (Cairo University), and Lisa Kolovich (IMF) brought to light the persistent structural, legal, and societal barriers that hinder women's opportunities, leaving their immense potential largely untapped. Our panel delved into critical issues surrounding women's economic engagement, the effective measurement of their contributions, the formulation of impactful policies, and the influence of cultural norms.

This was followed by a dynamic Q&A session, where participants engaged in meaningful dialogue.

Throughout the Q&A session, barriers to employment, importance of evidence -based policies, cultural perceptions, concerns regarding parental leave, and infrastructure issues emerged as the key issues regarding female labor participation in the MENA region.

These insights underscore the complex landscape of female labor participation in the MENA region, emphasizing the urgent need for targeted policies, improved data collection methods, and supportive environments that empower women to thrive in the workforce and contribute to higher economic growth and prosperity.