



**MIDDLE EAST
REGIONAL TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE CENTER**

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS:

GERMANY | NETHERLANDS | SWITZERLAND | EUROPEAN UNION | FRANCE

MEMBERS:

AFGHANISTAN | ALGERIA | DJIBOUTI | EGYPT | IRAQ | JORDAN | LEBANON | LIBYA | MOROCCO | SUDAN | SYRIA | TUNISIA | WEST BANK AND GAZA | YEMEN

The Growth Potential of Closing Labor Market Gaps and Increasing Women's Participation in Iraq

1 October 2024

WEBINAR | **IMF** | **MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER**

THE GROWTH POTENTIAL OF CLOSING LABOR MARKET GAPS AND INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN IRAQ

October 1, 2024
4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. Beirut Time

GAZI SHBAIKAT
Senior Economist
Middle East and Central Asia Department, IMF

GHADEER NOUFAL
Graduate Student
University of Edinburgh

The MENA region has the potential to convert demographic challenges into opportunities for economic expansion by leveraging its labor force. With one of the lowest rates of female labor force participation and notable skills gaps, implementing labor and education reforms to boost women's role in the economy can significantly advance private sector development and economic output. This webinar was based on a recent [Selected Issues Paper](#) on the case of Iraq, highlighting imbalances in Iraq's labor market, drivers of informality, and impediments to women's participation and mobility. The presenters quantified the growth benefits of closing gaps vis-à-vis peer countries and outline key policy priorities.

The webinar was attended by 49 participants who engaged with the presenters during the Q&A session. The presenters, Gazi Shbaikat and Ghadeer Noufal answered participants questions about the drivers of informalities, legal obstacles for female labor force participation in Iraq and what the government can do to make jobs in the private sector more attractive for women. They explained how the findings of the paper shed light on these questions, illustrated policies that can make economic participation more attractive to women, and highlighted challenges, such as weak capacity to enforce certain laws.