MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme

Women's Economic Empowerment Forum (WEEF)

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Making digital a catalyst for women's employment in the MENA region

POLICY NOTE

The MENA-OECD Women's Economic Empowerment Forum (WEEF) and the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Integration and Family (MSISF) of Morocco co-organised the regional dialogue "*Making Digital a Catalyst for Women's Employment in the MENA region*", in the framework of the 66th UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The webinar was the third of the WEEF series "*Women's Economic Empowerment and Digitalisation* ", which aims to identify successful policy actions to empower women in the digital age.

The dialogue began with keynote speeches and a presentation of the OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs assessing the impact of automation and telework on women's access to quality jobs. Then, the high-level panel discussed policy initiatives seizing the opportunities of new technologies for women's economic advancement, while establishing safeguards to reduce the risks these technologies pose for women's employment.

This policy note builds on the dialogue and discusses the challenges that the digitalisation of labour market and employment poses on women's access to decent work in the MENA region.

Key outcomes

- The booming digital economy is a job-creating sector and a vehicle for women's economic empowerment.
- Digital talent platform, remote learning, use of artificial intelligence in recruitment process, teleworking, etc. have the potential to help reducing some of the structural barriers to women's employment in MENA.
- However, without appropriate skills development and labour regulation, digital technologies also put women's employment and quality of work at risk.

Key recommendations

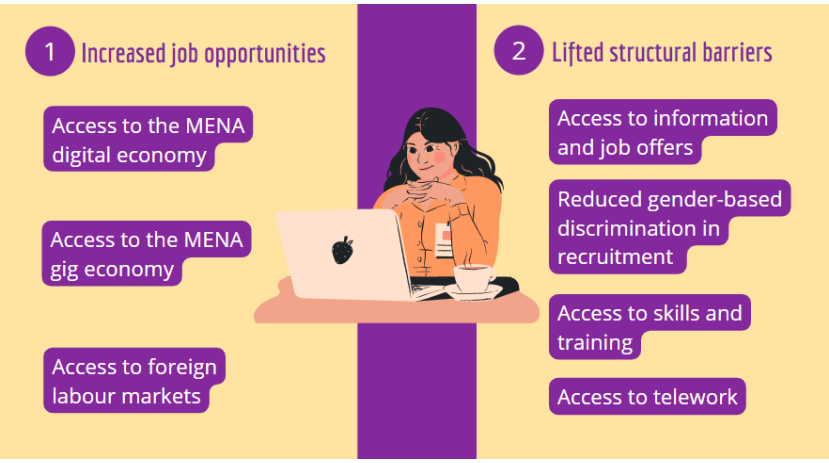
- Effective labour policies would require a greater assessment of the transition that women will need to make to seize new jobs opportunities in the automation and artificial intelligence age.
- MENA labour market actors need to adapt anti-discrimination legislation and collective agreement to the new digital environment, adopt effective regulation and develop adequate safeguard to protect female workers from the detrimental effects of the digital revolution.
- Stakeholders' attention should focus on three priority policy areas:
  1. *Leveraging digital technologies to support women's access to employment*
  2. *Supporting MENA girls' and women's upskilling and reskilling to make them benefit from automation*
  3. *Adopting adequate regulations to reconcile new forms of jobs and quality work*

Digitalisation opens new avenues for women's integration in MENA labour markets

Increasing interconnectivity and smart automation are transforming MENA labour markets. Fundamental shifts are taking place in how the global production and supply network operates through ongoing automation of traditional manufacturing and industrial practices, using modern smart technology, artificial intelligence, large-scale machine-to-machine communication, and the internet of things. This affects

women's employment in the MENA region in two ways: first by creating job opportunities and second by lifting traditional impediments to their economic contribution (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Digitalisation opens opportunities for women's access to employment



Technologies create new job opportunities for MENA women both in the region and abroad

The rise of the digital economy offers new employment opportunities for highly skilled workers – including women - in MENA economies. With an expected annual growth of 30% during the 2021-2023 period, the MENA digital economy is a promising job-creating sector (RedSheer, 2021). Globally, the World Economic Forum estimates that by 2025, automation, artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital technologies will create at least 12 million more jobs than it destroys (WEF, 2020). Job demand is already growing for data analysts and scientists, AI and machine learning specialists, digital marketing and strategy specialists, business development professionals, information security analysts, software and applications developers, just to cite a few (Albrieu, 2021). Such booming fields might provide key avenues for reducing unemployment of skilled women in the region – as long as their skill sets match the market's needs.

Digital technologies and emerging new business models have also given rise to new forms of work, including platform-mediated work or gig-economy that uses online platforms to connect the demand and supply of services. MasterCard 2019 forecasts projected that global gig-economy transactions would grow by 17% each year until 2023 (MasterCard, 2019). These firms are also growing in MENA economies, with for instance Careem, the first ride-hailing app in the region gathering 48 million users. To foster start-ups and SMEs - and the jobs they bring for underemployed women -, MENA policy reforms aim at improving the ease of doing business and support women entrepreneurship. At the same time, MENA governments should adapt labour laws and regulations to cater to the shifting attitudes and changing makeup of the workforce — including regulating/protecting freelancers and gig-economy workers (see Policy Priority #3).

In addition, information and communication technologies push material and conceptual boundaries. Digital platforms connect employees and employers around the world, providing MENA women with greater **access to foreign labour markets** – as long as connectivity infrastructures are available to them (WEF, 2020). For example, an increasing number of MENA women are working in call-centres from the region for Europe-based firms, but also as webmaster or web designer (Assi and Marcati, 2020).

Technologies help lifting regional impediments to women's labour market integration

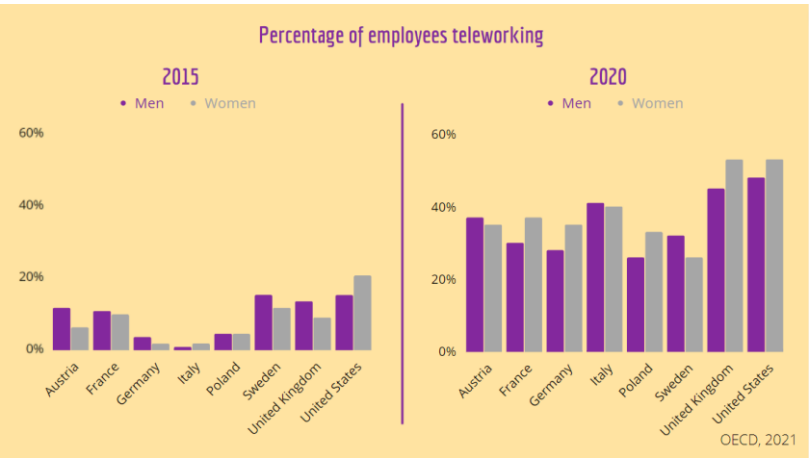
Digitalisation is transforming recruitment processes in all sectors, which can have substantial effects on gender-based discriminatory practices. Online talent platforms and use of AI in human resources management are more widespread than ever. In 2019 for example, the number of LinkedIn users reached 8 445 515 in the MENA region, with one third of women (Assi and Marcati, 2020). This contributes to a better labour market matching and might reduce gender-bias in recruitment and selection process. Indeed, with AI

and Machine Learning (ML), the algorithms can be trained in such a way that it will be blind to gender or will counterbalance unconscious biases such as gender stereotypes. Therefore, AI/ML will select the compatible candidates who are the best fit for the job role, whatever his/her gender (IDB/OECD/UNESCO, 2022). Similarly, Learning Management Systems (LMS) can support career progression of female employees by objectively defining individual's learning path and carer development options. Succession planning may also support women leadership development by recruiting and retaining best talents - free of gender stereotypes (IDB/OECD/UNESCO, 2022).

In addition, thanks to their dematerialised aspect, digital talent platforms, online government services and remote learning also provide women with a greater **access to the resources and skills needed to find a job**.[1]

The regional shift to **telework** is reshuffling the cards: greater work flexibility reaches higher maternal employment rates (Assi and Marcati, 2020). This could be particularly relevant in MENA countries. Indeed, online employment lowers barriers to getting MENA women into paid work by offering greater flexibility in working hours and place. This allowed for a better compromise between paid work and family responsibilities, and lifted mobility restrictions - both of which play a pivotal role in women's income-generating activities in the region (IDB/OECD/UNESCO, 2022). Moreover, bringing paid employment opportunities to private spaces avoids working alongside unrelated men, which is a strong deterrent to women's (and their families) employment preferences in MENA countries. For example, Jordanian women are 19% less likely to accept a job if involves working alongside men (OECD, 2017). Such objections reflect social norms. While 96% of Jordanian respondents thought it was okay for a woman to work, only 38% declare this is appropriate for a woman to work with unrelated men (Gauri, Rahman and Sen, 2019). It is worthy to note that concerns over male colleagues' mistreatment, under appreciation or entitlement may also inhibit women's interest in and ability to thrive in the paid labour force in person.

Figure 2: The COVID-19 reversed the gender gap in teleworking



Note: Left chart: data refer to all employees working either at home or in other location than the employer's premises several times a month; right chart: data refer to workers usually employed before the onset of the crisis.

The OECD's presentation showcased the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic to gendered patterns in uptake of remote work. Prior to the crisis, 8% of women teleworked compared to 10% of men on average in OECD countries in 2015 (Figure 2). As telework was mostly the privilege of highly educated workers, this gender gap might reflect the higher concentration of men in managerial occupations. Interestingly, the gender gap in remote work reversed in OECD countries after the surge of the pandemic, with 39% of men teleworking compared to 42% of women (Figure 2). Similar trends have been observed in MENA countries. In Morocco for instance, almost twice as many women as men have adopted telework during the lockdown, with 13% of

[1] For more information on online skills development, please refer to the previous dialogues respectively on digital skills and entrepreneurship.

male workers and 24% of female workers (Haut-Commissariat au Plan, 2020). Similarly, 48% of Palestinian women were regularly doing their office work at home, compared to 34% of men (UN Women, 2020).

New technologies put women's access to quality of work at stake

Panellists alerted that automation and new forms of employment might deteriorate women's access to quality work. The increased uptake of digital tools in production processes results in a creative disruption that leads to growth and decline in some occupations, affecting job opportunities for women in the MENA region. However, digitalisation of labour markets does not just destroy or create jobs – it transforms them. Yet, the rapid rise of the collaborative economy[2] and new platform business models have reinforced concerns that digitalisation separates and automates many tasks which displaced full-time employment by commoditising work into tasks crowdsourced via the Internet. This increases vulnerability of MENA women's workers and jobseekers, and as such, jeopardises MENA countries' efforts to protect female workers' rights and prevent discrimination.

Digitalisation displaces MENA women's jobs

Participants highlighted that policy analysts often focus on the effects of automation in terms of whether it creates or destroys jobs, and how it changes skills needs. However, less attention is paid to the impact of digitalisation on existing gender inequalities, such as unequal power relations, wage gaps and occupational segregation. Discussions laid the foundations of a better understanding of the transitions that MENA women will need to make - notably in terms of skills development - to weather the labour market disruption brought by digitalisation.

Destruction of women's job

Digitalisation can lead to female job losses in the MENA region as elsewhere, when tasks traditionally performed by women workers are automated. While it is estimated that the risk of automation affects in particular both routine physical tasks and routine cognitive work, non-routine jobs requiring more complex cognitive, and social and emotional skills, are also increasingly exposed as technology and AI become more efficient (Georgieff and Hyee, 2021). From contactless cashiers to welding drones to automation in lawyer firms, robotics is fundamentally affecting several sectors and jobs.

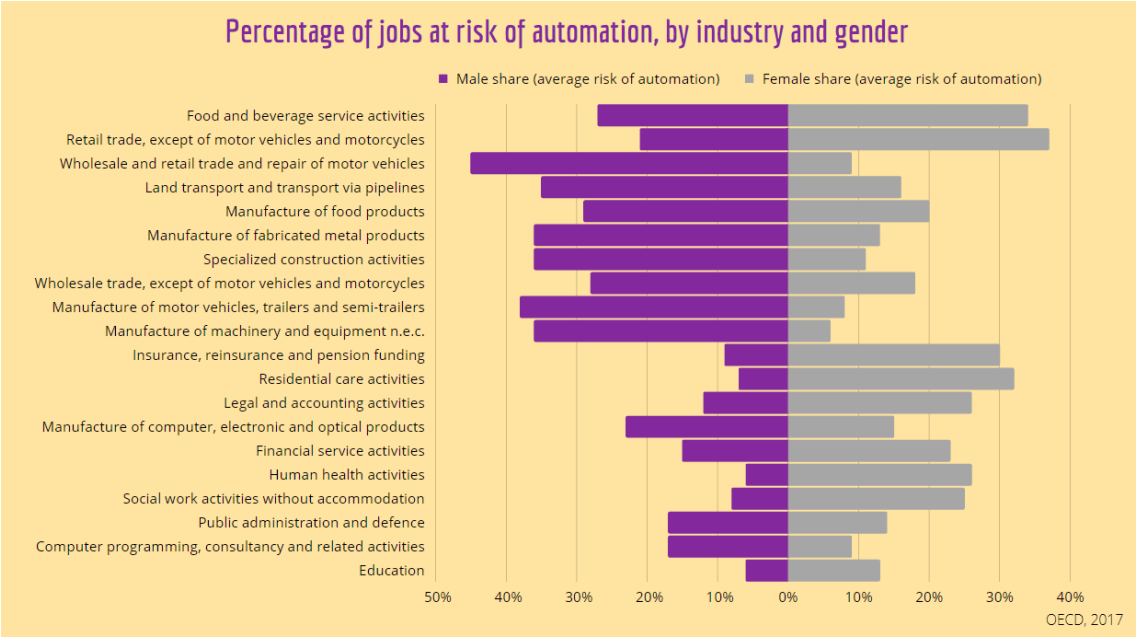
Automation can be detrimental to already low levels of women's employment in some MENA countries. Indeed, the World Economic Forum estimated that 41% of all work activities are susceptible to be automated in Kuwait, 46% in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, 47% in the United Arab Emirates, 49% in Egypt, 50% in Morocco and 52% in Qatar (WEF, 2017). Yet, only 5% of women older than 15 were employed in Yemen in 2020, 8% in Iraq, 10% in the Palestinian Authority and Jordan, 12% in Egypt and Algeria, 17% in Lebanon, 19% in Morocco and Tunisia, 25% in Libya and Saudi Arabia, 40% in Bahrain, 42% in Kuwait and UAE, and 57% in Qatar (ILOSTAT, 2020).

OECD's presentation showed that women and men face a similar scale of potential job losses, but in different areas. Men predominate in physical roles such as machine operators and craft workers, which could be replaced by robots. Conversely, women predominate in many occupations with high automation potential due to routine cognitive work, such as clerical support or service worker roles (Madgavkar, 2019). In Northern Africa and Arab States, 1 445 000 and 2 255 000 women living are employed in those sectors in 2020, respectively (ILOSTAT, 2020). The feminised professions, such as residential care and human health activities, are also in jeopardy, with respectively one-third and one-fourth of women workers that may lose their jobs in OECD economies (Figure 3). Beyond sectoral disparities, jobs have different likelihood to be automated, depending on their complexity. For example, managing people or applying expertise are less at risk of

[2] In the "collaborative economy", consumers use new technology to provide, buy, sell, share or rent goods and services.

automation. However, in 2018, only 2.8% of working women hold management occupations across the MENA region (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020).

Figure 3: Women's jobs are at risk of automation in all sectors



Mismatch and lack of adaptability of women's skills

Participants warned that MENA women's potential to benefit from the job boosting ability of digitalisation will depend on their upskilling and reskilling opportunities. A recent report of Mc Kinsey estimates that between 40 million and 160 million women globally may need to transition between occupations by 2030, often into higher-skilled roles (Madgavkar, 2019). The demand for specialists with digital and STEM skills increases in the MENA region to develop applications, manage networks, code or facilitate the human-machine interactions. However, the distribution of well-equipped women is uneven across MENA countries. For example, less than 4% of young and adult women had already wrote a computer program using a specialised programming language in Qatar in 2019, 11% in Saudi Arabia, compared to 7% and 16% of men, respectively. The gender gap in much narrow in Bahrain where around 18% of women and men declared having such experience (UNESCO, n.d.).

Low-and-medium-skilled women will also need to acquire generic Information and Communication Technology skills to use digital tools in their daily work, manage software or access online information (OECD, 2016), as all jobs undergo radical changes due to the increased uptake of digital technologies (OECD, 2021). For example, headquarters staff at retailers are increasingly turning to digital tools and advanced analytics to improve performance, while sales staff are using online stock-checking applications to respond to customer enquiries. Large established industries of MENA countries, such as oil and gas, aviation, or transportation can support these transformations and offer life-long learning to their female employees. However, investments could be too heavy for SMEs (WEF, 2017). Women without experience in ICT make the majority of female population in some MENA countries. For example, in 2019 more than 60% of female youth and adults in Morocco and Tunisia have never used copy or paste tools; more than 80% never created an electronic presentation with presentation software or used basic arithmetic formulae in a spreadsheet (UNESCO, n.d.). They would be especially vulnerable to technology disruption.

Reinforcement of gender roles, wage gap and occupational segregation

While teleworking may boost female labour force participation in the MENA region, it may also have negative externalities. Working remotely may further disadvantage women's career development, and so in turn, both

gender wage gap and vertical occupational segregation,[3] as developing collegial networks and rapport, trust and interpersonal skills with - predominantly male bosses is harder online.

Remote work also risks preserving gender inequalities beyond the realm of work and fail to alter social norms that are subject to inherently unequal gender relations. For example, women's greater access to telework has been accompanied by a heavier unpaid care burden during the COVID-19 pandemic, and resulted in increasing working hours (OECD, 2020). For example, 62% of Palestinian women reported a significant increase in household duties, compared to 46% of men (UN Women, 2020). In addition, concerns raised about female remote workers ability in separating work and personal life, which can have detrimental psychological effect, due to over-working and a lack of time for recuperation (Christine, Wallace and Spurgeon, 2013).

New labour market skill needs may also deepen the already high wage disparities between women and men.[4] MENA countries perform relatively well in terms of feminisation of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education. Still, despite representing 34% to 57% of STEM graduates (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020) and outperforming boys in digital skills (OECD, 2021), few MENA women pursue their careers in STEM occupations. In Lebanon for example, among students with high scores in mathematics or science, over 46% of boys reported that they wanted to be engaged in science and engineering professions in the future, while only 26% of girls reported so (OECD, 2019). Thus, women are less likely than men to be recruited as computer-savvy workers, which commanded wage premiums of 10% to 15% more than their computer-illiterate counterparts (Krueger, 2021). Moreover, displaced female workers from jobs owing to automation would have to compete with other workers for whatever jobs are left, even for lower wages (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2021). For example, clerical workers who have been replaced by automation may subsequently seek employment in sectors that have not been automated, and experience wage drop. Evidence show that automation was one of the main factor of the increased gender wage gap in the Unites States between 1980 and 2016, explaining about 7% out of 17% of the change in real wages for women relative to men (ibid).

In the same vein, displacement of female workers to "feminised" sectors less at risk of automation may reinforce already significant gender occupational segregation, which reached 57% in the MENA region compared to 35% the 2018 world's average (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020). Indeed, one-third of the MENA female workforce is employed in low-risk sectors, such as education (Assi and Marcati, 2020). Strengthening gender segregation also means reducing potential for female role models in ICT and STEM careers, and so, perpetuating gender norms that determine what positions are suitable for women.

Digitalisation increases MENA women's exposure to low quality and unsafe work

Discussions showed that without adequate legislation and regulation, the digitalisation of work can affect women's working conditions and put year of advancement at risks in the MENA region. New forms of work – including platform work– might be associated with lower job quality and increased vulnerability. Moreover, use of digital tools, such as AI in recruitment process, has proven to mirror existing discriminatory practices. As anti-discriminatory provisions have not been adapted to new realities yet, recent legal reforms supporting women's economic rights are jeopardised. Similarly, legal framework is slow adjusting to new forms on gender-based violence including online harassment.

[3] Vertical segregation refers to a situation whereby men and women are clustered in different occupations with a hierarchical divide. Horizontal segregation refers to a sectoral divide and differences in occupational characteristics attributes between the jobs occupied by men and women.

[4] According to ILO data, women are paid 13.5% less than men in Egypt and 8.6% in Tunisia. ILO Global Wage Report 2018/2019.

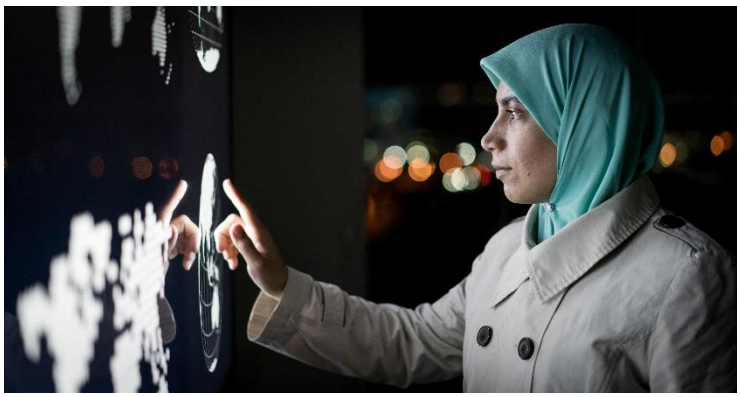
Increased threats of informal and vulnerable work

The digitalisation of the labour market is creating new forms of informality, raising concerns about working conditions in MENA economies as elsewhere (OECD, 2021). In particular, platform or gig work blurs the lines between employment and self-employment. Platform workers are often deliberately classified as own-account workers, so that platform operators can avoid regulation and taxation (OECD, 2020). Because of their self-employed status, they are excluded from the rights, benefits and protections available to employees, enabling employers to evade their responsibilities (OECD, 2019). Concerns have thus been raised about platforms' working conditions, in terms of job and income security, access to social protection, rights to collective bargaining or career development. Evidence suggests that labour platforms in the global South lead to increased vulnerability and inferior labour outcomes for disadvantaged groups, including women (Albrieu, 2021). MENA women's already restricted access to social protection and weak involvement in collective bargaining agreements risk thus to be exacerbated by such new working arrangements.

Outdated protection against gender-discrimination in the digital age

Robotics are everywhere for better and for worst. Companies incrementally adopt technology to assess applications, sort resume or interview candidates. Yet, as elsewhere in the world, legal loopholes regarding use of AI weaken regulatory frameworks. If 14 countries in the MENA region have laws prohibiting discrimination in employment based on gender, algorithms screens do not fit within these existing provisions (World Bank, 2022). For example, laws prohibiting gender-based discrimination in employment hold employers liable for discrimination and rely on employees' report, but ignore AI vendors and developers' accountability. Whether the employer used traditional recruitment tools or AI when engaging in a prohibited hiring practice does not affect his legal responsibility.

Due to lack of publicly available information on algorithm composition, discrimination is hard to prove and women might lack protection (Yang, 2021). The use of AI in recruitment stages has already proven to reinforce gender discrimination due to biased. For instance, Amazon discovered in 2018 that its resume screening algorithm favoured white men applicants because they were considered as best performers in its historical job performance data (IBD/OECD/UNESCO, 2022).



Rising cyber violence[5] against women

Speakers reminded that one of the main perverse effect of the widespread use of the Internet and social media is the rise of online gender-based violence. According to UN Women, 49% of women internet users in the Arab region feel unsafe from online harassment and 16% of women reported having experienced online violence at least once in their life (UN Women, 2021). Prevalence and reporting rates vary across countries

[5] Cyber violence is defined as "the use of computer systems to cause, facilitate, or threaten violence against individuals, that results in (or is likely to result in) physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering and may include the exploitation of the individual's circumstance, characteristics or vulnerabilities", Council of Europe (2017).

with one third of Palestinian women having been victim of online sexual violence and harassment compared to 81% of Jordanian women (Euromed Rights, 2021).

Harmful online practices make digital an unsafe tool rather than a vehicle of women's empowerment and inclusiveness. Indeed, threats of cyber violence against women reduce their probability to get the benefit of digitalisation. One in five MENA women declare having deleted or deactivated their account after having been victim of online violence (UN Women, 2021).

MENA legal frameworks are increasingly addressing online violence against women, such as in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia (World Bank, 2022). However, implementation of those laws and labour codes is complex. Most justice systems have restricted capacity and rights to enforce laws on cyber gender-based violence within and outside their jurisdictions (UN Women, 2021).

Three policy areas to make digital a catalyst for MENA women's employment

Speakers called for adopting effective policies and adequate regulations to make the best of digitalisation for women's access to quality employment.

Priority 1: Leveraging digital technologies to facilitate MENA women's access to employment

An intersectional approach of women's digital empowerment relies on prerequisites, which encompass greater connectivity, as well as ability and competencies to access and use digital technologies. For example, poor internet and network coverage are significant challenges for 28% of MENA women entrepreneurs and 17% considered the lack of digital literacy as a principal barrier to use technologies in their business activities. This rose to 17% for women entrepreneurs having lower levels of education, compared to 4% for those who graduated from university (UNIDO, 2021). The difficulties are amplified for rural women, with only 34% of rural household having access to a computer compared to 67% for urban ones (IUT, 2020).

Best practice example:

- As part of the government's "New Development Model", the Moroccan Ministry of Solidarity, Social Integration and Family has made digital one of its pillar to promote social development and women's employment. Within this framework, the Ministry supports the digital transformation of 4 500 social centres spread across the country, including in rural areas. The Ministry equips centres with a smartboard and connect them to the Internet through the VSAT satellite technology, allowing women to access information to find a job or follow distance training.

Dematerialising services would promote MENA women's access to the resources and skills needed to find a job. Thanks to their dematerialised aspect, digital talent platforms connect job seekers with employment offers from all over the world, providing women with greater access to information on job opportunities in domestic and foreign labour markets. Online resources and remote training also allow women to develop the skills they need to search employment or apply for a job, such as drafting a resume or preparing a job interview.

Best practice example:

- Online platform "InHerSight" matches women to jobs at companies where they will feel valued, supported, and included. In addition to provide basic information on job vacancies, the platform

aggregates employer reviews that measure the aspects of a company culture that are most important to women, such as access to equal opportunities, flexible work hours, wellness initiatives, and parental leave support, and uses that data to help companies recruit and retain professional women. With reviews for 200,000+ employers, *InHerSight* has the largest database of women-rated companies and is helping millions of women navigate their careers.

- The Egyptian National Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development launched the "She is for a Digital Future" training program, in cooperation with CISCO and the UNDP, which is being held via the Zoom electronic platform.

Promoting safe telework to give MENA women more flexibility. Enabling MENA women to choose where, when and how they work can boost their employment rates and help reduce the structural low female labour participation. Given the potential risks and pitfalls, labour regulation and collective agreements on teleworking rights are critical for women's empowerment.

Best practice example:

- Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Labour and Social Development launched a Telework Programme, aiming at bridging the gap between employers and job seekers who face obstacles to access employment opportunities. Women, qualified people with disabilities and people living in remote areas are at the chore of the programme. Several specific initiatives have also been launched by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) capitalizing on telework to promote women's integration in the labour market.

Supporting opportunities for MENA women's employment associated with platform work. It includes its advantages in terms of flexibility and autonomy for workers, its ability to provide an additional source of income and opportunities for self-employment, and the contribution that platforms make to economic growth.

- Saudi Arabia is encouraging platform creation to support women's labour market integration. For example, the Ministry of Commerce launched "Maroof" e-platform to enhance confidence in transactions relevant to e-commerce between the seller and the e-shopper. Women who wish to document their e-commerce activities can register on the e-platform for free and benefit from a variety of activities, such as e-marketing, electronic solutions, but also women accessories.

Priority 2: Developing MENA girls' and women's digital skills to make them benefit from automation

Ensuring MENA girls' have basic digital skills would prepare them to evolving labour market needs. Reshaping school curriculums and widening access to digital training is key to equip future MENA women with the adequate skills. Women's ability to manage digital tools will indeed determine their adaptability to meet the new needs of the labour market and their chance to secure employment.

Best practice example:

- The initiative Girls Got ICT led by the Lebanese League for Women in Business and supported by the UNICEF gives girls access to hands-on training workshops and tutorials to gain technical STEM skills. Already 3 000 girls in Lebanon have been introduced to ICT, contributing to bridge the gender digital skill divide.

Facilitating MENA women's access to reskilling would allow them to transit to new jobs. Providing opportunities for livelong digital education is key to mitigate the negative externalities of digitalisation on no computer savvy MENA women.

Best practice examples:

- The Egyptian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology provides a range of basic digital skills development programs accessible to all Egyptian citizens. These specialised technical training aim to develop digital capabilities and target students and graduates as well as job seekers. Courses include Introduction to Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Computer Vision, Natural Language Processing, or Conversational Artificial Intelligence.
- The French Ministry for Gender Equality, Diversity and Equal Opportunities supported the launch of the Femmes@Numérique Foundation, which deploys projects to support women in digital careers. One of the main target of the initiative is to create adapted training programs and develop women's access to Vocational Education and Training, offering them the possibility to give a new direction to their careers.

Priority 3: Adopting adequate regulations to reconcile digitalisation and quality work

Protecting platform workers would unleash the economic potential of the gig economy for MENA women. Adequate legislation and regulation is required to guarantee women platform workers' rights, clarify their classification and improve their working conditions. Policy actions encompass extending collective bargaining rights, introducing a minimum wage, regulating working time and improving occupational safety or strengthening social protection.

Best practice example:

- The ILO project Understanding and improving women's work on digital labour platforms explores the opportunities and challenges of digital labour platforms for women in India, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. The initiative aims at building evidence and providing guidance in order to ensure decent working conditions for women platform workers.
- The French 2016 law on labour, modernisation of social dialogue and securing of professional careers granted some rights to platform workers, including the possibility to form or join a trade union, and access professional training. The law also requires platform operators to provide reimbursement for insurance against occupational accident or illness.

Preventing gender AI driven discrimination is key to give MENA women and men equal access to employment opportunities. Non-discrimination and data protection laws are the main legal regimes that could protect job seekers from gender bias and discriminatory AI-driven recruitment practices. Ensuring AI transparency and accountability is also critical to prevent these risks. Measures governments can implement include raising awareness in the human resources sector, assessing risks of recruitment procedures, issuing ethical guidelines on the development and use of AI, ensuring transparency of data in AI applications, monitoring AI systems and carrying out gender impact assessment.

Best practice example:

- In 2019, the AI High-Level Expert Group established by the European Commission issued Guidelines on trustworthy AI, providing key requirements to alleviate the negative implications of AI. In order to ensure diversity and promote non-discrimination in algorithm, the Expert Group recommends establishing diverse design teams.

Combatting cyber violence would make digital a safer tool of empowerment. Measures include laws penalising cyber violence, prevention and education campaigns, victims' protection arrangements and specialised units for the investigation and prosecution of online violence. Importantly, governments need to recognise that cyber violence disproportionately affects women and girls and adopt a gender lens to design and implement policies.

Best practice example:

- Morocco has deployed efforts to address cyber violence in its legislation. The 2018 Law 103.13 Concerning Combating Violence Against Women introduced new Penal Code provisions addressing violence against women facilitated by the use of technology. In particular, article 503 expanded the Penal Code's definition of sexual harassment and includes written messages by phone or any other electronic device, recordings, or images. Article 447 penalises the distribution of individuals' messages or photos without consent and the dissemination of false allegations aiming to harm or defame someone's private life - including through the use of digital tools.

Developing appropriate guarantees is key to ensure telework brings MENA women flexibility without jeopardizing their rights. Labour codes and collective agreement on teleworking should addressed gender-bias. Provisions can guarantee inclusive collective bargaining rights, anti-discrimination, career advancement opportunities, ability to revert to office based-working, data privacy and cyber-security. They can also specify employers' liabilities for occupational safety and health, working schedules, and indicate who bears the cost of teleworking equipment.

Best practice example:

- In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Spanish Ministry of Work and Social Economics introduced a telework legislation in Royal Decree Law 28/2020 to support teleworking while protecting employees and employers. The law requires an agreement to be signed between employers and employees outlining details on teleworking arrangements. It secure remote workers 'right to disconnect outside of work hours and guarantee them equal treatment and opportunities as on-site workers.

Promoting care infrastructure would mitigate the detrimental effects of telework on MENA women's work-life balance. In order to achieve gender-neutral teleworking in the MENA region, labour regulations should be accompanied by policies promoting the availability, accessibility and affordability of care infrastructure and services for children.

Best practice example:

- The Moroccan Ministry of Solidarity, Social Integration and Family promotes the reduction of women's time spent on unpaid care work. The government's New Model of Development aims indeed at developing childcare services and infrastructures to facilitate women's participation in the economy. This includes establishing public pre-schools, childcare facilities in large companies, continuous schooling for children, or tax deductibility for employing domestic help. Morocco is also working on the creation of the childminder status, which does not exist in the country.

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