

Chapter 4

Embedding gender considerations in public policies across the MENA region

This chapter examines mechanisms for embedding gender considerations in public policies and laws in the MENA region. It provides an overview of gender mainstreaming practices in the region, including the availability of related strategies, and requirements for gender impact assessments and gender-responsive budgeting. It argues that, by considering regulations and budgets as gender-neutral, policy makers risk potentially making them gender-blind and ignoring different circumstances faced by both men and women. The chapter also emphasises that robust measurement and gender-disaggregated data provide the necessary foundation for evidence-based policies. It shows that, while many MENA countries report measuring the status of women, many data gaps remain. Lastly, the chapter showcases current citizen engagement and public consultation practices in the region, including efforts to involve both men and women facing barriers in the consultation process. In conclusion, the chapter offers good practice examples from OECD and MENA countries, and a set of recommendations that aim to support the governments in the region in implementing gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting.

The statistical data for Israel is supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Key findings

- All MENA countries report adopting gender mainstreaming strategies. However, there are many challenges in their implementation, including the absence of legislation enabling gender mainstreaming, the complexity of existing laws, limited effective co-ordination mechanisms and limited capacity to promote a whole-of-government perspective.
- While more than half of the MENA countries that responded to the OECD survey report undertaking some form of gender analysis for all or most laws, this is rarely done in a systematic manner.
- About half of the participating MENA countries report collecting gender-disaggregated statistics in several key sectors, yet data on gender discrimination, gender-based violence, economic empowerment and representation in the public sector remains scarce.
- Notwithstanding the examples of citizen engagement in the MENA region, the general practice of public consultation, particularly with regard to gender equality initiatives, remains limited and sporadic.
- In the MENA region, about half of responding countries have introduced some form of gender budgeting at the central level, yet further steps would be beneficial to embed gender budgeting across all levels of government in a systematic manner.

In many countries of the MENA region, there is a notable political commitment to empower women; however, there is often limited awareness, understanding and capacity across the public sector to realise effective change. In some cases, ministerial lack of attention to issues of gender equality is related to gaps in knowledge and skills. In other cases, there is also limited understanding that gender neutrality does not necessarily imply gender equality. In fact, some informally interviewed officials show a certain degree of resistance to the notion of integrating gender equality on the basis that the policies or programmes concerned do not explicitly include requirements for men as well as women. At the same time, as highlighted in Box 4.1, many policies run the risk of inadvertently discriminating against women by not taking into account different impacts on men and women. Sometimes, when senior decision makers and/or professional staff resist the changes entailed by gender equality on ideological grounds, this may result in a lack of action. In most cases, however, there are many competing demands. Government agencies and staff tend to deal with those considered the highest priority; unfortunately, gender equality initiatives are often ranked as a lower priority.

The case for promoting gender equality and integrating gender into laws and policies in MENA countries is multi-faceted. While gender equality has been enshrined in many of the countries' international commitments, this report highlights that a gender equality gap persists in domestic laws and policies across the region. To this end, this chapter considers mechanisms for integrating gender into the policy making process, including:

- introducing gender mainstreaming
- applying gender impact assessment as a tool for gender mainstreaming
- using gender-disaggregated evidence as a base for decision making
- improving public consultation for gender-sensitive policies

- introducing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) as a specific method for gender impact assessment.

Box 4.1. Gender sensitivity and gender blindness

Gender blindness refers to ignoring the different and socially determined roles, responsibilities and capabilities of men and women. Gender-blind policies and public services are often based on information derived from men’s activities and/or the assumption that everyone affected by the policy (both women and men) has the same needs and interests. Because men and women will have different experiences due to societal structures, such as gender roles, access to resources and opportunities, equal treatment is often insufficient. Achieving gender equality, therefore, necessitates recognising differential impact. Effective programming and policy making must examine the underlying sources of inequality and take population heterogeneity into account.

Gender sensitivity is the “ability to acknowledge and recognise existing gender-related perceptions and interests arising from different social gender roles and to incorporate them into strategies and actions. It is a concept that aims at reducing the barriers to personal and economic development that are created by sexism and stereotyped gender roles. Gender sensitivity is considered as the beginning stage of gender awareness, which consists of a more analytical questioning of gender inequalities by identifying less evident, implicit or hidden aspects of gender discrimination or unequal treatment.”

Source: UNESCO (2002), *Gender Sensitivity, A Training Manual for Sensitizing Educational Managers, Curriculum and Material Developers and Media Professionals to Gender Concerns*, UNESCO, Paris, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001281/128166eb.pdf>; and World Bank (n.d.), *A Trainer’s Manual, Glossary of Gender Terms*, <http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/192862>.

Gender mainstreaming

Public policies, laws and regulations affect all aspects of people’s lives, regardless of gender. Even seemingly neutral laws and regulations can be discriminatory in nature, as they may affect men and women differently, intentionally or otherwise. For example, a workplace regulation that permits parents to take leave to care for a sick child may apply equally to both genders, but is more likely to apply to women as primary caregivers. Regulations also can impede the ability of women to become fuller participants in society by making it more difficult for them to find employment, gain an education, start a business, meet the needs of their family, ensure their human rights, etc. (Bremer, 2009). Policies and regulations affecting the role of women may include:

- education: access, educational materials
- health: access to healthcare, family healthcare, gender-specific concerns
- workplace issues: access to employment, gender in the workplace, access to training, equality of pay, forced labour/trafficking
- family issues: rights of women as wives and mothers, divorce, violence, inheritance, children
- public sphere: limitations on appearance, behaviour or presence of women outside the home, access to courts of law, political participation, civil society (Decuyper, 2009).

Designing and providing public services that are equally accessible and relevant to all citizens also requires rigorous processes to embed gender considerations in service design and delivery. Services are not gender-neutral; the way they are developed and delivered can have a differential impact on women and on men.

Consequently, as noted in Chapter 2, in order to obtain full strategic insight into how policies affect both men and women, it is critical to implement gender mainstreaming processes. Gender mainstreaming seeks to ensure that institutions, policies and services respond to the needs and interests of women as well as men, and distribute benefits equitably between women and men.

Gender mainstreaming should form an integral basis of policy formulation from the initial stage of policy and service development, throughout the implementation and evaluation of policy and service impacts (Box 4.2).

Box 4.2. When to mainstream? The policy process

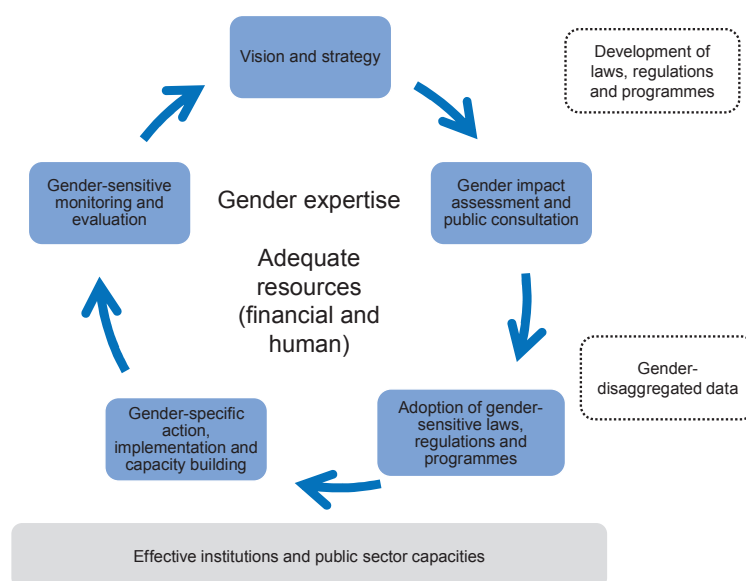
The major points of focus at the planning stage of any policy are:

- Analysis of the current situation: This involves identification of the problems and challenges to be faced; examination of gender-disaggregated statistics; and definition of the aims of the policy. Are the aims of the policy the same for women and men, girls and boys? Who will be involved in the policy making process? Are both genders involved in the policy making process?
- Decisions: Once the gender-related information is collected and analysed, decisions need to be taken about problems and challenges for women and for men, girls and boys. These need to be addressed and prioritised (based on the initial planning stage).
- Implementation: Even though adopting gender mainstreaming from the initial stage of the policy planning process allows the policy to be gender-sensitive, there is no assurance that the policy will be “inequality free.” There is a significant difference between analysing gender issues, supporting gender equality and actually implementing policies that promote equality. This is considered the “applied” stage and, therefore, new or unidentified issues may still arise. For this reason, it is important that the actors involved in the development and delivery of the policy are supported and can promote equality.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Any implemented policy requires monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure that its goals have been achieved, as well as to assess areas that need improvement. This monitoring should be a continuous process in order to assess the impact of the policy on women and men, girls and boys. Good governance involves considering, planning for and meeting the needs and priorities of all citizens. Adopting gender-responsive planning processes is an important step towards achieving this outcome and is the only way to ensure that government actions are likely to benefit women and men, girls and boys equally.

Sources: European Commission (n.d.), “A Guide to Gender Impact Assessment”, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission, Brussels, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=4376&langId=en>.

Effective gender mainstreaming calls for a whole-of-government strategy for mainstreaming, effective mainstreaming tools – such as gender impact assessments –, and implementation through gender-sensitive laws and policies. It should also be accompanied by gender-specific action and capacity-building, and gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Key components of gender mainstreaming



Source: Developed by the OECD, 2014.

All OECD countries are implementing some form of gender mainstreaming. Most countries (73%) have included a gender mainstreaming strategy within their gender equality strategy. Others report having gender mainstreaming as part of a separate strategy. Generally, however, gender mainstreaming strategies focus on the development of methodologies for incorporating gender perspectives into government legislation, regulations, policies and programmes. They are often focused on the adoption of a comprehensive, “whole-of-government” approach (OECD, 2014). An example of an approach to gender mainstreaming comes from Sweden, as highlighted in Box 4.3.

While gender mainstreaming is increasingly evident across the MENA region, further progress is needed to ensure that gender concerns are well established in the policy process. As demonstrated in Figure 4.2, more than half of participating countries report having a mainstreaming strategy either as a document other than the broader gender equality strategy (Tunisia) or embedded into a broader strategy (Bahrain, Lebanon, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority). Other countries may be carrying out gender mainstreaming activities without a specific strategy. Although many countries employ some form of gender mainstreaming, according to the OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Public Policies and Leadership, only a few MENA countries (e.g. the Palestinian Authority) take active steps to systematically integrate gender equality considerations in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies, programmes and laws.

Among the challenges of adopting gender mainstreaming, MENA country participants most often cite:

- the absence of legislation enabling gender equality and mainstreaming (Egypt, Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority)
- the complexity of the existing laws (Egypt, Jordan and Morocco)

- limited effective co-ordination mechanisms (Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) and a limited capacity to promote gender equality reform from a “whole-of-government” perspective (Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen)
- a lack of training on gender mainstreaming within the public service (Lebanon)
- a lack of awareness on gender mainstreaming (Bahrain and Yemen) and a lack of gender analysis skills (Kuwait and Yemen) within the public service.

Box 4.3. Gender mainstreaming in Sweden

Sweden adopted its first gender mainstreaming strategy in 1984, stating that all policy decisions were to be analysed on the basis of their implications for women and men. Since then, Sweden has consolidated its gender mainstreaming strategy, which aims at achieving equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for women and men, progressively into all policy areas.

Implementing gender mainstreaming in government offices in Sweden began with the Plan for Gender Mainstreaming at the Government Offices between 2004 and 2009. The initial phase included collection, analysis and dissemination of knowledge of, and experience with, gender mainstreaming. Training models for key groups within the government offices were developed and tested in 2008, and intended to be incorporated into regular training courses given by the central government administration. In July 2008, the Swedish government also instructed the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research at the University of Gothenburg to further develop and disseminate methods and information on gender mainstreaming, and develop a forum to exchange experiences on gender mainstreaming. The previous year, the Swedish government had mandated a committee of inquiry – the Gender Mainstreaming Support (*JämStöd*) – to provide information about gender mainstreaming, and develop practical methods and working models for mainstreaming gender into central government activities. It published reports such as the *Gender Mainstreaming Manual* and the *Gender Equality in Public Services Report – A Book of Ideas for Managers and Strategists*, and trained central government administrators on the implementation of gender mainstreaming. The committee also elaborated a working model outlining steps to be followed for an effective gender mainstreaming process.

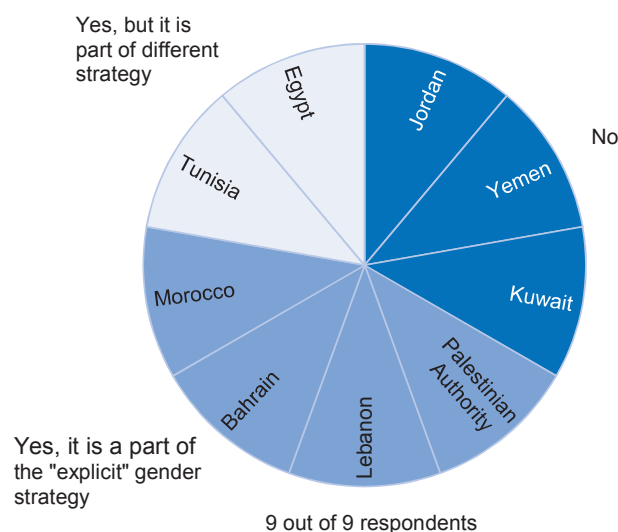
To address gender concerns that require specific attention, Sweden adopted – in parallel with its gender mainstreaming efforts – a National Strategy to Promote Gender Equality in Sweden. The National Gender Equality Strategy identified five focus areas to be addressed during the government’s term of office: *i*) representation, equal access to positions of power and influence; *ii*) equal pay for equal work and work of equal value; *iii*) violence committed by men against women, prostitution and trafficking in women for purposes of sexual exploitation; *iv*) men and gender equality; and *v*) sexualisation of the public sphere. Each minister in Sweden is responsible for fulfilling the gender equality goals in his or her specific policy area.

Source: Government Offices of Sweden (2009a), “Gender Mainstreaming”, www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/4096/a/125215; Government Offices of Sweden (2009b), “The Swedish Government’s Gender Equality Policy”, Fact sheet, Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Stockholm, www.winneteurope.org/getfile.ashx?cid=123099&cc=3&refid=14; Swedish Government Official Reports (2007), *Gender Mainstreaming Manual, A Book of Practical Methods from the Swedish Gender Mainstreaming Support Committee (JämStöd)*, SOU 2007:15, Stockholm, www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/08/19/82/3532cd34.pdf; Swedish Government Official Reports (2007), *Gender Equality in Public Services Report – A Book of Ideas for Managers and Strategists*, Stockholm, www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/08/19/82/8efba817.pdf.

Moreover, there appear to be variations in the awareness and understanding of gender-sensitive policy making among MENA countries and within specific ministries. While, in some countries, gender considerations are expanding across several areas of public and private life, in others, these issues remain primarily within specific areas of government intervention traditionally associated with women and their reproductive role,

including combating violence and providing health services. This poses a particular problem within line ministries in key sectors that are particularly important for women in rural areas and in precarious employment, including within Ministries of Labour, Economics, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs, as well as the more traditional Social Affairs, Health, Education and family-related ministries.

Figure 4.2. **Availability of gender mainstreaming strategies in MENA countries**



Source: MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014).

To address these challenges, adopting a comprehensive and government-wide approach is critical. This involves providing the tools, mandate and legitimacy to implement gender mainstreaming across the public sector at all levels. MENA countries also noted that accountability mechanisms, methodologies for incorporating gender perspectives into policies and laws, and data broken down by gender were critical to develop more gender-responsive policies.

Overall, it appears as though the majority of the countries involved in this study report to have the interest, but require political will and resources as well as capacity development to implement an overall “whole-of-government” approach to gender mainstreaming. Many reports suggest that there is a particular challenge to implement mainstreaming strategies; survey respondents note this may be due to limited accountability and oversight mechanisms across the public service, as well as some resistance to mainstreaming gender due to the increased administrative complexities it imposes, especially with regards to gender impact assessments and gender-sensitive budgeting.

Gender impact assessment (GIA)

Gender analysis or gender impact assessment (GIA) is an important tool of gender mainstreaming to evaluate the different effects (positive, negative or neutral) of any policy, legislation or practice in terms of gender equality. The EU defines GIA as a process to compare and assess, according to gender-relevant criteria, the current situation and trend with expected developments resulting from the introduction of the proposed

policy (European Commission, n.d.). GIA is a variation of the more comprehensive regulatory impact assessment (RIA), which encompasses a range of methods aimed at systematically assessing the negative and positive impacts of proposed and existing regulations. Regular use of these analytical tools helps to systematically ensure that the most gender-sensitive, efficient and effective policy options are chosen (OECD, 1997).

EU experience shows that GIA should occur both at an early stage in the policy making process, so that the policy, regulation or legislation can be adapted or reoriented, and at the end of the policy cycle, during the impact evaluation, to assess whether the intended outcomes were achieved.

GIA is in its early stages of adoption in many OECD and non-OECD countries, including those countries where the political commitment to gender equality is long established. Approximately 80% of OECD countries employ some form of gender impact assessments, as demonstrated in Table 4.1. Some of the good practices in this area are found in Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Table 4.1. **Requirements for gender impact assessments at the central/federal level of government in select OECD countries**

	Requirements for ministries/departments/agencies to conduct gender impact assessments (<i>ex ante</i>)			Requirements for ministries/departments/agencies to conduct gender impact assessments (<i>ex post</i>)			Requirement to undertake gender-responsive budgeting at the central level
	Primary legislation	Subordinate regulation	Government programmes and initiatives	Primary legislation	Subordinate regulation	Government programmes and initiatives	
Australia	⊗	⊗	●	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
Belgium	○	○	●	○	○	○	●
Chile	●	●	●	⊗	⊗	⊗	○
Czech Republic	●	●	●	●	●	●	⊗
Finland	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
France	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
Germany	●	●	●	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
Greece	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
Ireland	●	⊗	●	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
Israel	●	●	⊗	●	●	●	●
Korea	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Luxembourg	●	●	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
Mexico	●	⊗	●	⊗	○	●	●
New Zealand	●	●	●	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
Norway	●	⊗	●	●	●	●	●
Slovak Republic	●	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
Spain	●	●	●	⊗	⊗	⊗	●
Sweden	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Switzerland	●	⊗	⊗	○	○	○	●
Total OECD							
● Yes, always	10	6	3	3	3	2	9
● Yes, sometimes	6	5	11	4	4	6	1
○ No, but planned	2	2	1	3	4	3	2
⊗ No, not planned	1	6	4	9	8	8	7

Notes: Data is not available for Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey, the United Kingdom or the United States.

Source: OECD (2013a), *Government at a Glance 2013*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2013-en based on the MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014).

Box 4.4 contains the EU criteria for GIA, which take into account both the differences between men and women, and the need for restorative action to ensure that any previous gender-based inequalities are addressed, while Box 4.5 provides information on gender impact reports in Spain and Sweden.

Box 4.4. EU criteria for gender impact assessment

The European Commission's report on gender impact assessment states the following criteria:

1. Differences between women and men in the policy field, such as:
 - participation (sex composition of the target/population group(s), representation of women and men in decision-making positions)
 - resources (distribution of crucial resources such as time, space, information and money; political and economic power; education and training; jobs and professional careers; new technologies; healthcare services; housing; means of transportation; leisure)
 - norms and values that influence gender roles, gender division of labour, the attitudes and behaviour of women and men respectively, and inequalities in the value attached to men and women or to masculine and feminine characteristics
 - rights pertaining to direct or indirect sex discrimination, human rights (including freedom from sexual violence and degradation) and access to justice in the legal, political or socio-economic environment.
2. How can policies, laws and regulations contribute to the elimination of existing inequalities and promote equality between women and men in participation rates, the distribution of resources, benefits, tasks and responsibilities in private and public life, and in the value and attention accorded to masculine and feminine characteristics, behaviour and priorities?

Key questions for policy makers on gender-sensitive regulations include:

- Has a commitment to gender been incorporated at a high level into the regulatory reform, or is it an add-on (or absent from the agenda altogether)?
- Does the review process examine whether regulations have differential impacts on men and women, and determine whether corrective measures are needed?
- Are there opportunities for women to participate directly or indirectly through civil society groups, and is there monitoring of actual participation?
- Are there barriers to entry for women-owned firms overall or in government procurement?
- Are there administrative requirements that, in addition to posing barriers to entrepreneurs generally, are especially cumbersome for women, or are there areas where women's property or other rights are deficient in ways that impede business development?
- Do women face particular barriers in gaining access to credit or employment? Are there barriers to women's access to training, advisory services or other activities that would strengthen their economic participation as employers and employees?
- Are these and other gender linkages identified and are policy makers encouraged to take them into consideration actively in designing policy?"

Sources: European Commission (n.d.), "A Guide to Gender Impact Assessment", Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission, Brussels, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=4376&langId=en>; Bremer, J. (2009), "Introducing Gender Analysis into Regulatory Frameworks", position paper prepared for the first meeting of the Gender Focus Group of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme on "Addressing Gender in Public Management", American University in Cairo, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/50/43088074.pdf.

Box 4.5. Gender impact assessments in OECD countries

The Swedish government has issued a binding regulation stipulating that all committees of enquiry must conduct a gender impact analysis for policy proposals potentially affecting gender equality. Committees of enquiry are appointed by the Swedish government for policy proposals requiring extensive analysis and preparation before submission to Parliament. To support the work of the committees of enquiry, a handbook has been produced with guidelines for gender impact analysis. These guidelines stipulate that, if a policy proposal has gender relevance, its anticipated impact needs to be indicated in a report. Circumstances and conditions for both genders must be made visible, and both the impact and likely outcomes for each gender need to be listed and analysed.

The first step in an impact assessment is to determine whether gender is relevant to the enquiry. The second step is to determine the criteria for the gender impact assessment:

- Participation: What is the gender distribution of the groups covered or affected by the enquiry?
- Resources: What is the breakdown between the genders in terms of time, space, information, money, political and economic power, education, careers, new technologies, healthcare, housing, transport, recreation?
- Norms and values: What norms, values and quality measures control an activity? Who sets the standards and values?

The third step is to integrate the gender dimension in the enquiry: Is there any direct or indirect influence on the conditions of each gender in this field? Are there any gender equality gaps in this field? How can barriers to equality be eliminated in this field? What are the implications for gender equality regarding the structural and organisational changes proposed?

The fourth step is to fully reflect the gender dimension in the enquiry: What gender differences exist? Are statistics disaggregated by gender? How is the gender dimension included in problem formulation? What are the gender aspects of the report's factual and analytical dimensions? Should the report contain equality policy proposals?

Procedure for the conduct of gender impact assessment in Northern Ireland

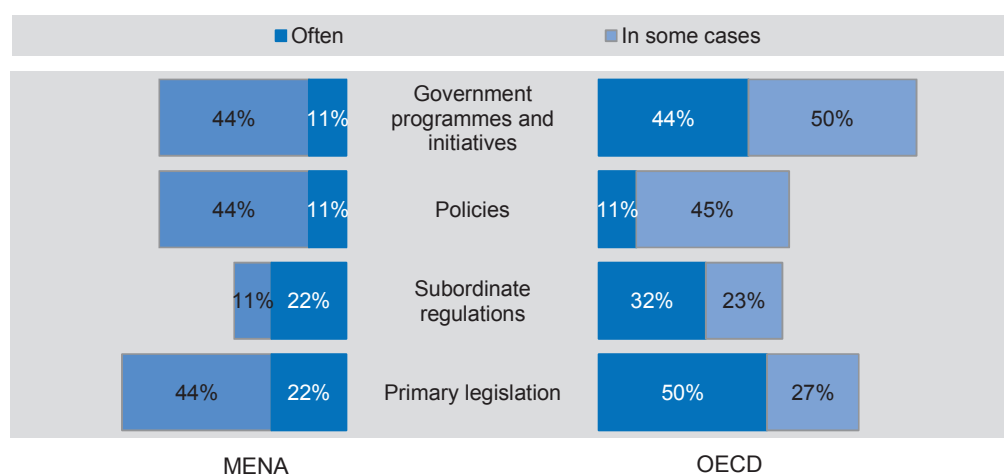
In the Guide of Statutory Duties for Northern Ireland, the Equality Commission defines the specific elements required for equality impact assessment. Particular attention is given to the consideration of measures to mitigate any adverse impact and to policies that might better achieve the promotion of equal opportunities. The consideration of mitigation and alternatives is identified as a crucial element of the process: authorities must develop options that reflect the different ways of delivering a policy outcome. Mitigation can take the form of lessening the severity of an impact. Consideration must be given to whether separate implementation strategies are necessary for the policy to be effective for each relevant group. Options should be assessed for:

- how they further or hinder equality of opportunity, or reinforce or challenge stereotypes
- the consequences for the group concerned and for the public authority of not adopting an option more favourable to equality of opportunity
- the costs of implementing each option and whether international obligations would be breached by, or could be furthered by, each of the options.

Source: Information provided by the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications; Government Offices of Sweden website; Government Offices of Sweden (2004), "Committees", Stockholm, www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/575/a/18479; Ordinance for gender impact analysis, www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/lag/19981474.htm (Swedish only); European Commission (2009), "Evaluating Socio-Economic Development", *Sourcebook 2: Methods and Techniques Multicriteria Analysis*, European Commission, Brussels.

MENA countries increasingly undertake gender analysis of their strategies, policies and laws. More than half of MENA respondents report undertaking some form of gender analysis for all or most laws, compared to 80% of OECD countries (Figure 4.3). Yet this is rarely done in a systematic manner on the basis of robust evidence for all policies and programmes. An example of regular assessment of gender impacts of all draft laws and policies comes from the Palestinian Authority. In addition, several countries have adopted many of the preconditions for a wide-ranging and effective impact assessment system, including requirements for the assessment of fiscal and economic impacts. As such, countries may capitalise on these systems to adopt a more systematic approach to assessing the impacts of draft laws, policies and programmes on men and women.

Figure 4.3. Gender analysis practices in MENA and OECD countries



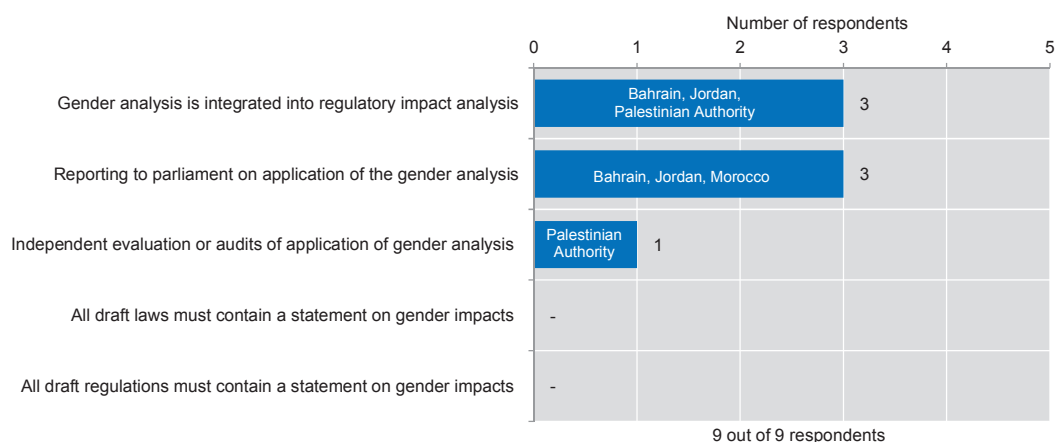
Source: MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014).

In terms of the mechanisms used to ensure that the gender analysis has been applied in practice, some countries report on the use of gender analysis to legislatures or legislative committees (Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco), others report integrating gender analysis into the regulatory impact assessment (Bahrain, Jordan, Palestinian Authority), although the practice of regulatory impact assessments is not systematically used in some of these countries (OECD, 2013b). The Palestinian Authority reports using independent evaluation of gender impact assessments. Yet these practices often remain *ad hoc* and uneven across the region, with few countries embedding the requirements for gender analysis in the mainstream law and policy making process (Figure 4.4).

Moreover, officials from MENA countries often report taking the gender impacts of regulations into account by making them gender neutral. This creates the risk, however, of regulations becoming gender-blind (see Box 4.1), and not accounting for different circumstances faced by both men and women in most policy fields (including the ability to access resources, family responsibilities, expectations and social attitudes). These differences may cause apparently neutral policies to impact differently on women and men, and reinforce existing inequalities. As such, the key task is to raise awareness of the importance of gender equality, increase capacity to carry-out gender impact assessments, and properly monitor and account for the different impacts that policies and regulations may have on men and women. For example, several efforts have been made by the government of Bahrain to attain gender equality objectives. These include setting-up

equal opportunity units in 24 different ministries and providing training, awareness raising and capacity building in the field of mainstreaming the needs of women and the importance of equal opportunities.¹

Figure 4.4. **Mechanisms to ensure that gender analysis has been applied in practice in MENA countries**



Source: OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014).

Civil society organisations revealed that, although some progress has been made with raising awareness in the public sector, much room for improvement in achieving gender equality objectives remains.

Measurement and gender-disaggregated data

The overall success of reforms most often depends on their coherence, sequencing and synergies with other reforms, as well as links to a clear vision and strategy. Gender indicators provide a useful tool to communicate goals and objectives within an overall vision and strategy for gender equality. Focusing on measuring what matters can help drive the achievement of results and monitor performance against the desired goals for gender equality. Gender indicators can aid in prioritising gender equality and making the case that gender issues should be taken seriously. They can enable better planning and actions by providing information to adjust programmes and activities for better impacts and by measuring gender mainstreaming within organisations. Gender indicators can also enhance the accountability of government institutions for commitments on gender equality, including progress on implementing the CEDAW commitments.²

Data and evidence supporting decision making are pivotal to enable governments to develop effective gender equality strategies and gender-sensitive policies. High-quality data to measure the empowerment of women and men provides the foundation for sound evidence-based policy making, gender monitoring and evaluation. The absence of gender-differentiated data makes it very difficult to understand the impact of gender equality, and mainstreaming strategies and efforts. Indeed, effective gender mainstreaming begins with ensuring that sector-specific policies are informed by gender-disaggregated data and with awareness on the different ways in which policy decisions impact the lives of women and men. As such, the identification of the types and sources of gender-sensitive data to be collected should also be based on a clear framework linked to a strategic vision to ensure

a focus on what matters in achieving gender equality, and to measure progress and outcomes.

Box 4.6. Select examples of gender-related analysis of government initiatives in MENA countries

Bahrain: The Supreme Council for Women reviews and evaluates the National Plan based on the Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women, as part of the assessment of the achievements attained during the past 10 years. The revision and evaluation process is based on two main pillars: *i)* documenting the indicators measured in the National Plan; *ii)* adopting measures to identify outcomes and general goals (surveys and focus groups).

Egypt: Gender analysis is part of the CENACT Gender Equality Strategy that aims to implement community-based gender analysis. The National Council for Women conducts gender analysis through surveys and public opinion research to achieve its role in monitoring and evaluating the general policies related to women.

Morocco: Morocco has initiated gender impact analysis in co-operation with the United States Agency for International Development. Gender analysis was introduced in the Morocco Country Strategic Plan 2004-2008 during the strategic planning process.

Tunisia: The 11th National Social and Economic Development Plan (2012-16) included a gender auditing programme in partnership with five line ministries: Economic Development, Finance, Public Health, Interior, and Local Authorities.

Yemen: In 2007, the Women’s National Committee launched gender auditing in co-operation with the International Labour Organisation and UNFPA. It reviews to what extent policies, plans and programmes are gender-sensitive. The Yemeni government has implemented this gender auditing process in several government sectors at the national level and within four governorates. Between 2006 and 2010, administrative leaders received training in gender analysis and mainstreaming in development planning, preparation, implementation and analysis of gender budgeting.

Source: MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014).

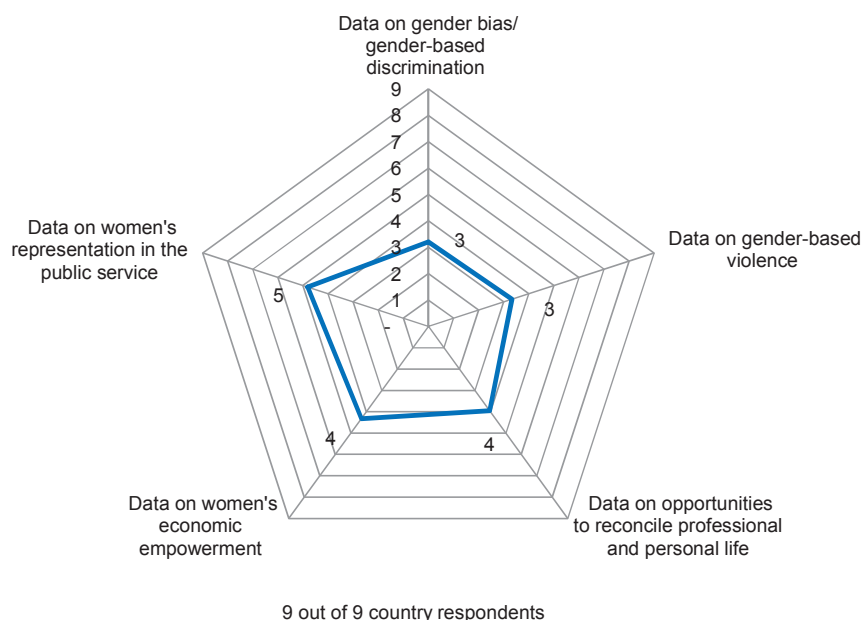
The existence of reliable systems that generate the data needed for gender policy and planning in various sectors is critical for enabling inclusive and gender-responsive policy making. Good quality gender-disaggregated data is required in all areas of public policy, along with a framework and structures for collecting data, linkages with a gender equality vision and strategy, and the capacity to undertake research and analysis within the government and outside (OECD, 2014). Building effective data collection and processing systems is not easy; many governments in the world face the challenging task of improving the quality of their data systems. In fact, sufficient good quality data provides the basis for sound performance measurement, monitoring and evaluation activities that help to understand the kinds of initiatives required, ensure that the current initiatives are on track and generate the desired impact.

CEDAW General Recommendation No. 9 (eighth session, 1989) recommends that states parties (the countries that have ratified the Convention) should make every effort to ensure that their national statistical services responsible for planning national censuses, and other social and economic surveys formulate their questionnaires in such a way that data can be disaggregated according to gender, with regard to both absolute numbers and percentages, so that interested users can easily obtain information on the situation of women in the particular sector in which they are interested.

Most OECD countries use government-wide measurement and reporting frameworks for gender equality, supported by the collection of gender-disaggregated data across most policy areas (OECD, 2014). While gaps still persist across policy sectors, the trend is to increase the availability of data to enable sound assessment of the impacts of policies and laws on men and women. Line ministries in charge of specific policy areas most often determine data needs with gender institutions and statistical offices playing an important role in the process.

In the MENA region, country representatives report low availability of data on gender discrimination, on gender-based violence, on opportunities to reconcile professional and private life, on women's economic empowerment and on their representation in the public service (Figure 4.5). Data on the representation of women in the public service is collected most often (48% of the time), while data on gender-based violence is the least collected (33%).

Figure 4.5. Availability of data in priority areas for advancing parity in MENA countries



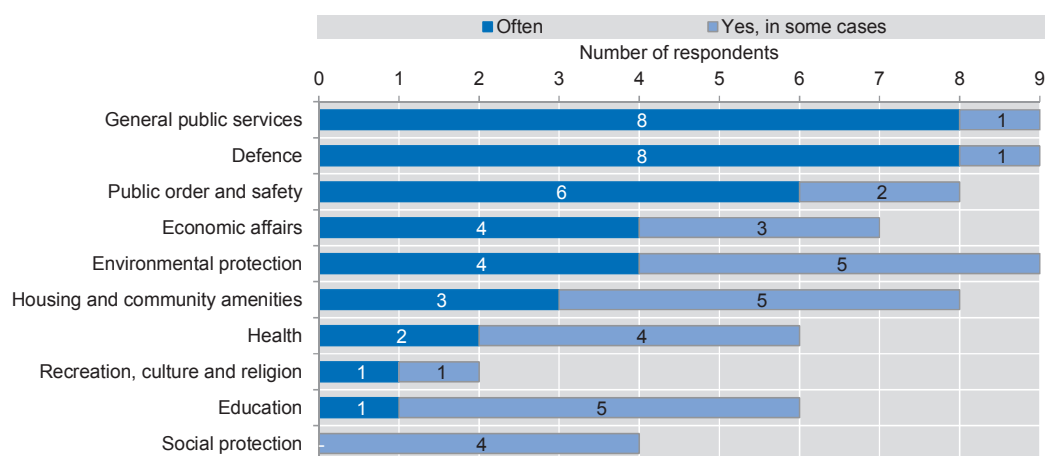
Source: MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014).

About half of participating MENA countries report collecting gender-disaggregated statistics in several key sectors including: economic affairs; housing and amenities; general public services; recreation, culture and religion; public safety and order; environmental protection; and defence (Figure 4.6).

Overall, the availability of gender-disaggregated data across policy sectors is limited. Several countries have no gender-disaggregated statistics available in key areas; others may have statistics available in key areas, but the quality and coverage of those statistics remain low in many cases. Concrete data gaps are difficult to identify, because data on gender issues is scattered throughout data-producing bodies, and the scope of data is difficult to assess by individual institutions. There are also few general frameworks for data collection on gender issues. While there are some indications of a wide range of

different types of gender-disaggregated data, these seem to be partial, not always geographically comprehensive, nor as extensive as needed to cater to the needs of a comprehensive gender equality and mainstreaming strategy. For example, data for environmental protection, defence, recreation and housing communities is less often regularly (or even occasionally) collected in both MENA and OECD countries (Table 4.2). The trends show more collection overall for OECD countries, but less collection in key areas of social services.

Figure 4.6. Government sectors with gender-disaggregated data collection in MENA countries



Source: MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership; OECD (2013a), *Government at a Glance 2013*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2013-en.

Table 4.2. Measures to improve the capacity to collect gender-disaggregated data at the central level of government across the MENA region

	Yemen	Egypt	Lebanon	Jordan	Tunisia	Morocco	Bahrain	Palestinian Authority	Kuwait
Systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into national statistics systems		x	x	x		x	x	X	x
Introduction of formal requirements for gender disaggregation and the incorporation of a gender perspective within national statistical legislation	x	x					x	X	x
Systematic identification of gaps in knowledge related to gender equality			x	x	x	x	x	X	x
Development of a handbook to guide the collection of gender-disaggregated data	x	x				x	x	X	
Establishment of horizontal co-ordination mechanisms to determine gender-disaggregated data needs					x	x	x	X	x
Setting up a gender statistics unit within a national statistical office	x	x		x		x			x
Total	3	4	2	3	2	5	5	5	5

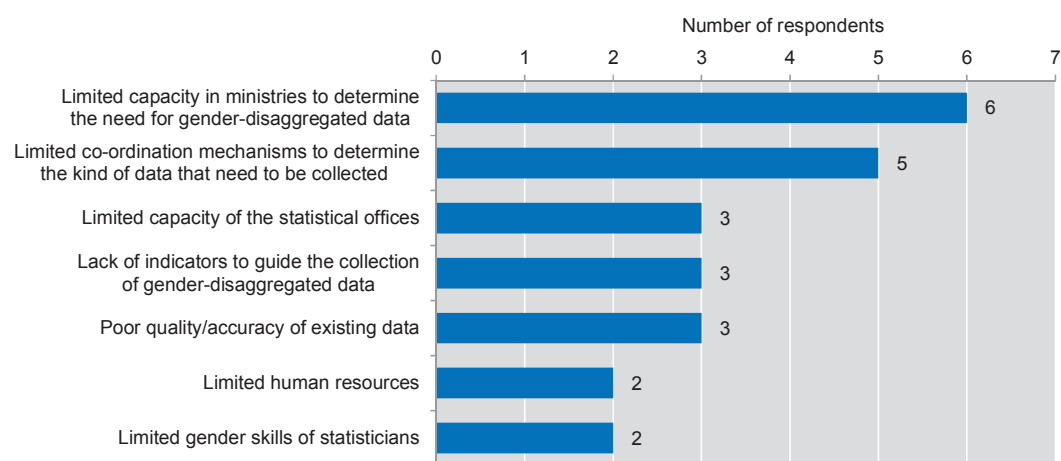
Source: MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014).

In addition, the quality and scope of statistics remains uneven. For example, available gender-disaggregated statistics in the area of education show basic indicators (enrolment rates for primary and secondary school, illiteracy), but often lack more detailed statistics that better capture quality and improvement (net enrolment rates, attrition/graduation rates and quality-based assessments such as the PISA, student-teacher ratios and teaching quality in gender-disaggregated schools, choice in subject of study, etc.).

Finally, gender strategies need to be integrated with a measurement framework and monitoring and evaluation efforts in order to understand the impact and implementation of gender equality initiatives. This function can only be performed well if there is a sufficient base of gender-differentiated data, information and analysis. Such data must be collected and analysed in advance, ideally building a database of several years' information to assess changes and take corrective action. Only one-third of countries report the availability of a government-wide measurement framework for gender equality and mainstreaming. This limits the possibility to properly track the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives in various areas of development, including gender-related human rights violations, gender-based violence, as well as sexual harassment in the workplace.

Countries also acknowledge further scope for improvement in collecting gender-disaggregated data (Figure 4.7). Some of the reported challenges in data collection include: limited capacities in line ministries to determine the need for gender-disaggregated data (Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Tunisia and Yemen); limited co-ordination mechanisms to determine the kind of data that needs to be collected (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Yemen); lack of indicators to guide the collection of gender-disaggregated data (Bahrain, Kuwait and Morocco); poor quality or accuracy of existing data (Bahrain, Egypt and Tunisia); and limited capacity of statistical offices (Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen).³

Figure 4.7. **Key challenges for data collection related to gender equality initiatives and mainstreaming in the MENA region**



Source: OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership; OECD (2013), *Government at a Glance 2013*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2013-en.

To address these gaps, most countries (78%) featured in the survey take measures to systematically identify gaps in knowledge related to gender equality (Table 4.2). Most participating countries report integrating gender considerations in statistical systems, introducing requirements to disaggregate data by gender and setting up gender units in statistical offices. Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait and Yemen report incorporation of a gender perspective within national statistical legislation.

The survey participants, on average, report placing the most responsibility for gender collection on national statistical offices, while institutions in charge of gender equality and line ministries have less responsibility. In this context, institutional co-ordination is especially important with respect to the collection of gender-disaggregated data. All countries report using several institutions in the decision-making and collection process for gender-disaggregated statistics. About half of the countries surveyed set up co-ordination mechanisms to improve capacity to gather gender-disaggregated data (Bahrain, Kuwait, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Tunisia) and also tend to have well-developed co-ordination mechanisms for most gender initiatives.

Expanding the role of central statistical institutions in collecting gender-disaggregated data could promote increased availability across all policy areas. Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that the vision and strategy of the central gender institution is aligned with the gender equality and mainstreaming strategy. An example of this is described in Box 4.7.

Box 4.7. Collaboration between national statistical institutions and central gender institutions in Egypt

According to a continuous co-operation between the National Council of Women, the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics, and the Information and Decision-Making Support Centre, the following action was taken by the Egyptian Council of Ministers:

1. Standardisation of concepts and ideas, and special indicators for measuring gender equality for all users and international statistical institutions.
2. The content of the labour market survey, opinion surveys, surveys of diversity, etc., used in data collection and analysis was amended, and the data was disaggregated to specify the scale, nature and importance of the gender gap.
3. Data collectors were given support and guidance; channels of communication between them and the users of data were facilitated to determine any new needs and problems.
4. The council implemented the project “Measurement of sex equality by means of disaggregated statistics” through co-operation between the National Council for Women and UNIFEM. The project incorporates the gender perspective in national statistics and strengthens the capacities of statisticians with a view to continuous updating of the gender database. Additionally, the project helps data users and decision makers to determine the scale of the problem and the priorities for action by putting in place local and international indicators for different types of gender gaps, and using them in the assessment of new data.

In addition, new typological indicators were devised to measure equality in education, health, employment, and political and public life with the aim of monitoring the earnings of women.

Sources: MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014); technical consultation of the MENA-OECD Gender Focus Group Report *Gender, Law and Public Policy Trends in the Middle East and North Africa*.

Citizen engagement and public consultation

In order to design responsive policies, achieve full empowerment of every member of society and obtain strategic insight on policy challenges and issues, it is becoming imperative for governments across the globe, in OECD and MENA countries alike, to deepen the engagement of citizens (both men and women), business, civil society and other stakeholders in policy making. Ensuring systematic, timely and inclusive consultation with affected parties, including women and women’s organisations, can help to understand the impact of public policies on both men and women, and improve their design and implementation. The public is a rich source of instant and updated information. Such consultations aim to enhance the quality of public policies and programmes, and increase the information available to governments on which policy decisions can be based. Public consultations are not a stand-alone exercise, but an integral part of evidence-based policy making, cost-benefit analysis or data analysis.

In order to ensure that policies, laws and regulations reflect citizens’ needs, it is important to consider the views and opinions of various groups of society. To do so, additional investment is needed to develop inclusive policy making tools, to ensure that men and women in different life circumstances can participate. OECD experience suggests that the following steps are needed in this regard:

- Lowering the entry barriers to participation for both men and women who are willing, but unable to participate. People face socio-economic, cultural and geographical barriers or barriers of another external nature. Figure 4.8 illustrates some of the measures that can be taken to eliminate barriers to participation and support for these measures among OECD countries.
- Increasing the appeal of participation for people who are able, but unwilling to participate. Participation may be limited by subjective rather than objective barriers. A lack of appeal of participation may stem from a low interest in politics, a lack of trust in how people’s input will be used or limited personal benefits from participation (OECD, 2009).

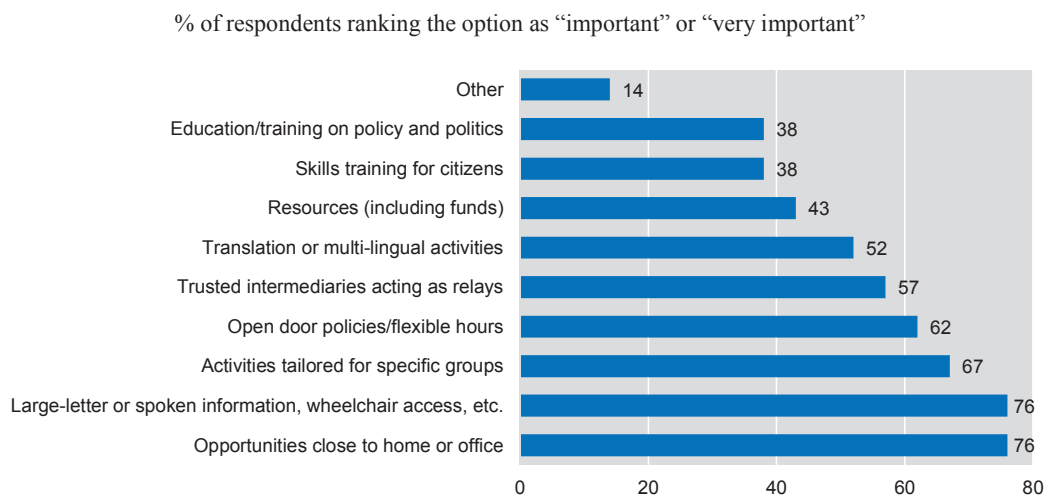
The experience of OECD countries also reveals that effective engagement of the public and broader representation of the population are among the key tools employed to improve the transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of policy making, including greater sensitivity to gender differences. Consultation with key stakeholders is best incorporated into every stage of the policy cycle, from policy development and implementation to evaluation, including for both gender-specific and mainstream initiatives.

Moreover, simply creating a “level playing field” in terms of passive access to public information, consultation or participation is insufficient to achieve the active engagement of those who are willing, but not able, and those who are able, but not willing. The value in obtaining input from stakeholders, including women and women’s organisations, lies in obtaining, to the extent possible, a wide range of inputs for evidence-based decision making.

MENA countries increasingly recognise the need and importance of consulting with various stakeholders in the policy making process, including women and women’s organisations. This recognition was reflected in the Regional Charter on the importance of transparency in the regulatory and rule-making process. Through this charter, countries agreed that consultation processes should involve different interest groups and be

transparent and responsive (OECD, 2013b). In this context, MENA countries often report undertaking public consultations when developing draft programmes or laws (Figure 4.9).

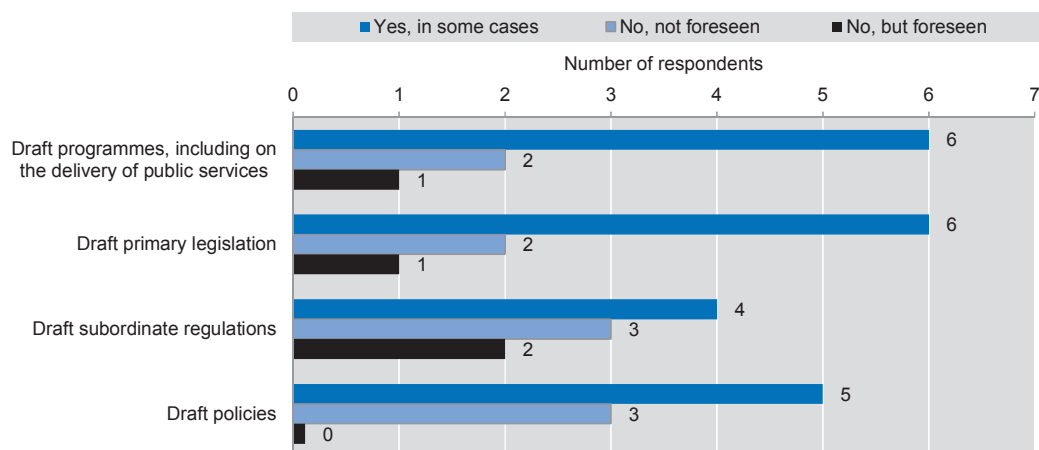
Figure 4.8. **Measures to lower barriers for consultation and participation**



Note: n = 25 countries.

Source: OECD (2009), *Focus on Citizens: Public Engagement for Better Policy and Services*, OECD Studies on Public Engagement, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264048874-en>.

Figure 4.9. **A requirement to conduct consultation processes with affected parties that ensures integration on gender considerations**



Note: Countries responded as follows: Draft programmes, including on the delivery of public services – Yes, in some cases – Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Palestinian Authority; No, not foreseen – Lebanon, Kuwait; No, but foreseen – Yemen. Draft primary legislation – Yes, in some cases – Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority; No, not foreseen – Kuwait, Tunisia; No, but foreseen – Yemen. Draft subordinate regulations – Yes, in some cases – Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco; No, not foreseen – Jordan, Kuwait, Tunisia; No, but foreseen – Palestinian Authority, Yemen. Draft policies – Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian; No, not foreseen – Jordan, Kuwait, Tunisia

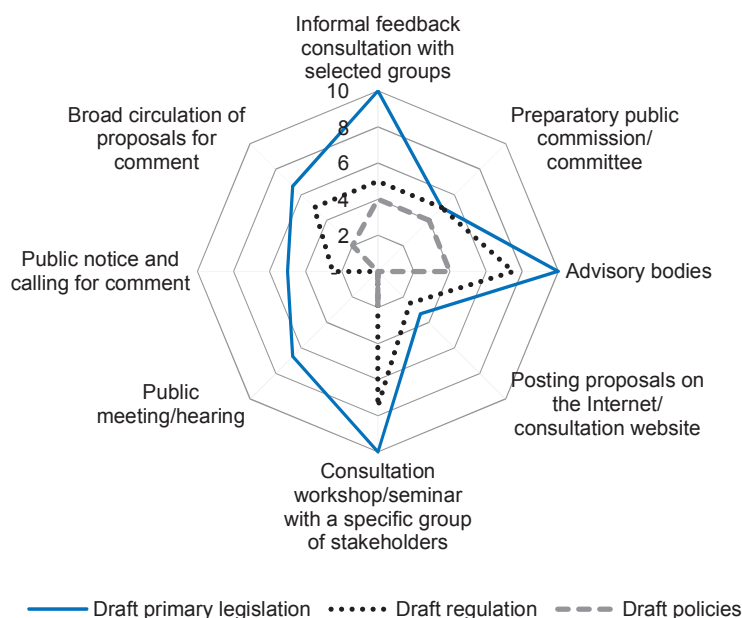
Source: OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014); OECD (2013a), *Government at a Glance 2013*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2013-en.

There are examples of engaging women’s non-governmental organisations in developing key laws that have an impact on women (in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority). For example, in Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, civil society partners are consulted on legislation and regulations in sectors identified as key priority areas by the country’s main gender institution. In Jordan, a “list of requests” is made on behalf of the country’s gender institution, and civil society organisations are consulted accordingly. Similarly in the Palestinian Authority, the cross-sectoral strategy identifies the specific sectors relevant to the promotion of gender equality for inclusion in the public consultation process with civil society partners and parties affected by the legislation.

In some countries, policy submissions to the Cabinet must be accompanied by the list of consulted stakeholders, along with their opinions, although this is not related to gender. For example, in the United Arab Emirates, the Cabinet handbook requires consultation with stakeholders at all stages of policy development.

In terms of the forms of public consultations, most often countries use informal feedback with selected groups, advisory bodies and consultation workshops (Figure 4.10). Yet, informal consultations or feedback are risky, as they may open up channels for policy capture. Such mechanisms as public notification, broad circulation of proposals for comments or posting proposals on the Internet are rare in MENA countries.

Figure 4.10. Forms of public consultation used across MENA countries



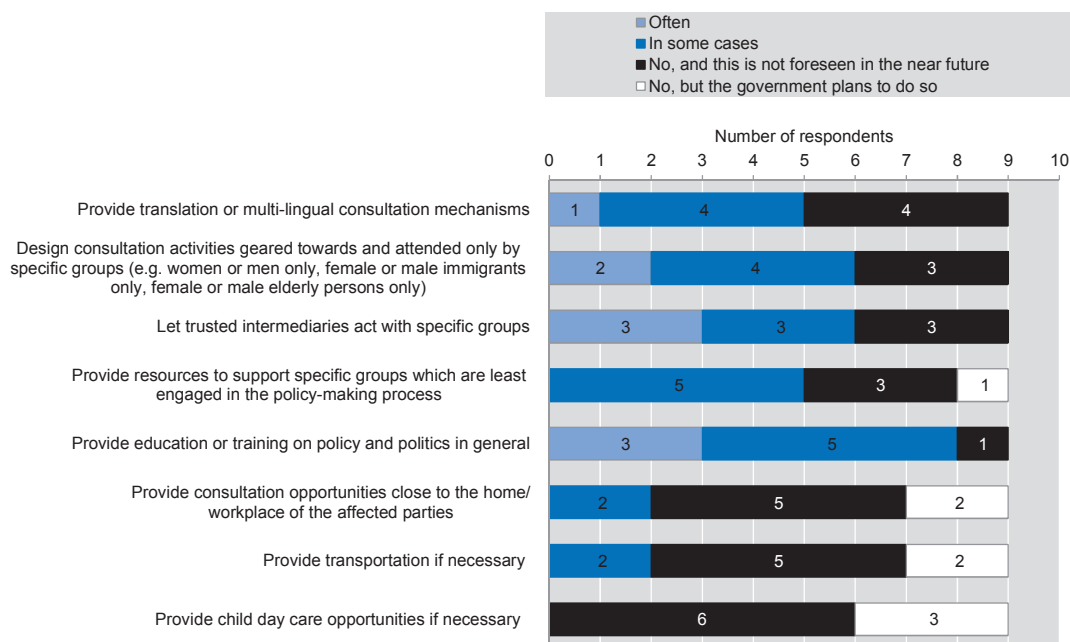
Source: OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014); OECD (2013a), *Government at a Glance 2013*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2013-en.

In addition, some MENA countries have adopted specific initiatives to increase the engagement of citizens, including women, in the policy making process. These include:

- providing education or training on policy and politics in general (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia and Yemen)

- designing consultation activities geared towards and attended only by specific groups (e.g. women or men only, female or male immigrants only, female or male elderly persons only; Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Yemen)
- offering translation services or multi-lingual consultation mechanisms (Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Tunisia)
- supplying resources to support specific groups that are least engaged in the policy making process (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Yemen).

Figure 4.11. Efforts to include men and women facing barriers to consultation processes



Note: Countries responded as follows: Provide translation or multi-lingual consultation mechanisms – Often: Jordan; In some cases – Bahrain, Tunisia, Morocco, Palestinian Authority; No, not foreseen – Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Yemen. Design consultation activities geared towards and attended only by specific groups (e.g. women or men only, female or male immigrants only, female or male elderly persons only) – Often: Morocco, Palestinian Authority; In some cases – Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, Yemen; No, not foreseen – Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia. Let trusted intermediaries act with specific groups – Often - Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority; In some cases – Bahrain, Egypt; No, not foreseen – Jordan, Tunisia, Yemen. Provide resources to support specific groups which are least engaged in policy making process – In some cases – Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Yemen; No, not foreseen – Kuwait, Lebanon, Tunisia; No, but the government plans to do so – Palestinian Authority. Provide education or training on policy and politics in general – Often – Jordan, Yemen, Palestinian Authority; In some cases – Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia; No, not foreseen – Kuwait. Provide consultation opportunities close to the home/workplace of the affected parties – In some cases – Bahrain, Morocco; No, and this is not foreseen – Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Tunisia, Yemen; No, but the government plans to do so – Egypt, Palestinian Authority. Provide transportation if necessary – In some cases – Bahrain, Yemen; No, not foreseen – Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia; No, but the government plans to do so – Egypt, Palestinian Authority. Provide child day care opportunities if necessary – No, not foreseen – Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen; No, but the government plans to do so – Bahrain, Egypt, Palestinian Authority.

Source: MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014).

Notwithstanding these examples, the general practice of citizen engagement and public consultation, especially with regard to gender equality initiatives and mainstreaming, remains limited and sporadic. In the majority of OECD countries, procedures for public consultations are established in policies and practices with a view to ensuring confidence in the legislative process and safeguarding opportunities to participate in the formulation of laws. In MENA countries, this process is still at an early stage (OECD, 2013b). While there are examples of consultative practices, these often appear to be undertaken on a voluntary basis, without a requirement for systematic consultations for all government organisations. There is also limited transparency in the consultation process and on whether/how the input of stakeholders is adequately taken into account; it is not always clear when the input of stakeholders is required. In addition, administrative barriers, such as a requirement to have a national identity card, limit individuals living in precarious and/or rural regions that have less access to national administration. Not all of the key steps and procedures involved in the policy making process are sufficiently transparent, nor do they allow opportunities for input from relevant stakeholders at critical points. There are limited formal mechanisms to ensure the use of citizens' inputs in the policy- and law-making processes, and to respond to citizens' concerns, including those of women and women's organisations.

In addition, although there is a consensus that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should have a "policy voice", limitations and new regulations on NGOs also limit their ability to ensure the use of citizens' input in the policy- and law-making processes. OECD interviews revealed that, in most MENA countries, NGOs are only in a position to point out certain challenges, but often do not have sufficient capacities to contribute to policy making due to a lack of capacities (Box 5.3). As some interviews revealed in MENA countries:

Government plays neither a direct nor an indirect role as a facilitator of the efforts of NGOs. In fact, after the recent incidents last year, the government launched a big crackdown on NGOs and stipulated new rules and regulations on the work of CSOs, and put new restrictions on their activities and their methods of financing. Getting permission or approval from the government on foreign funds is a long and very complicated process in which projects are not always properly implemented as scheduled and planned. (NGO, a MENA country)

Another important aspect is the limited capacity of the public administration for undertaking consultation. Most countries lack individual, organisational or systemic capacities or resources to launch consultations. Yet, without resources and capacities (human and financial), consultation is doomed to failure. This requires political will and committed leadership, a change of culture, a review of policy making and service delivery processes and concerted efforts to build capacities among public officials. Some countries in the region are adopting action plans for the Open Government Partnership (OGP), which could serve as an important first step in this regard.

Moreover, the consultations with women's organisations that do take place often occur sporadically, and drafts of laws and policies are available in a timely manner only to certain stakeholders within or outside the government. The fact that governments often rely on a limited set of civil society groups to deliver the message of mainstreaming gender in policies may pose a risk that these groups may not always be fully capable of reflecting accurately the views of women in diverse situations. The quality of the consultation process itself is often not subject to evaluation, which may lead to the consultation "exercise" turning into ticking boxes.

Currently, there is also a strong assumption of representation of women’s voices in the decision-making process through the voices of male relatives, senior officials or legislators. This also diminishes the importance attached to direct consultation with women. Young women and youth similarly face these restrictions related to the difficulties associated with their demographic profile.

It is interesting to have a quota for women in ministries and parliaments. It would be good for ensuring that women are represented. This could be constitutionally assured. However, this is the same case with youth. We need to increase the participation of youth in policy development for issues related directly to them. We develop training for this on a local level, but trainings are not sufficient if you do not have a mechanism that ensures that the commitment of the policy makers is respected. So quotas for youth and women need to be constitutionally present in the parliament.

Young girls are very important to focus on, because they face a specific set of restrictions. One needs to make sure that young girls are living in good and safe areas if they are employed or going to school. We need to also target young girls that do not yet have university degrees... (NGO, a MENA country)

As such, it is necessary to ensure that drafts of laws and policies are available to stakeholders within or outside the government in a timely manner. There are only two MENA countries that systematically publish draft laws online (Jordan and Morocco). In the case of Jordan, publishing draft laws on the Prime Minister’s Official website is very recent and is part of Jordan’s action plan as member of the Open Government Partnership (OECD, 2013b). To ensure that policy makers are aware of the interests of all women, it is important that decision making relies not only on a limited set of civil society groups, as the ability of such groups to accurately represent the views of all women is difficult to measure.

While there are examples of consultations with stakeholders in creating these strategies, it is important for all governments in the region to consult with women themselves about their priorities and concerns in order to systematically resolve the most pressing issues across the region and to ensure that national priorities on gender equality reflect the views and needs of various groups of the population. This may require developing alternative participatory mechanisms (e.g. women-only focus group discussions, meetings with women’s NGOs, meetings in communal locations for women at appropriate times when they are able to attend, e-consultation, advisory groups) and broadening the information campaign, so that it also engages a female audience effectively through a “multi-channel” system combining different tools to reach out to stakeholders.

Gender-responsive budgeting

Gender-responsive budgeting is an example of applied gender analysis that shows how different public spending patterns may affect both men and women. In OECD countries, Belgium, Finland, France, Israel, Korea, Mexico, Norway, the Slovak Republic, Spain and Sweden report always conducting such analyses for their central budgets. Gender budgeting is often referred to as the capacity of government and individual government entities to develop realistic budgets on gender equality. “Gender budgeting is an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It means a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote

gender equality” (Council of Europe). This integration of the gender dimension should happen in all phases of the budgetary cycle: from the budgetary proposals, to the actual spending, to the evaluation and control of the money spent (Decuyper, 2009).

The experience from OECD member countries suggests that gender budgeting is important for several reasons. Since every government and every ministry has a budget, the integration of the gender dimension into budgets is an effective way to ensure that government programmes account for gender differences. Moreover, budgets also reveal the degree of engagement of governments with gender equality and women’s empowerment spending, since budgets indicate which projects and actions will receive funding. Budgetary analysis from a gender-sensitive perspective can also help to avoid ineffective and gender-blind spending. Furthermore, the mechanisms to monitor spending can help assess the actual spending of resources.

Implementing robust financial tracking and monitoring systems is key to strengthening accountability and transparency in financing for gender equality and women’s rights. In partnership with UN Women, the OECD has been supporting national governments in developing countries to track public expenditure in support of gender equality and women’s rights using the post-Busan global gender equality indicator. This indicator – one of 10 in the post-Busan monitoring framework – measures the “proportion of developing countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment”. The indicator is an entry point for ensuring that resource allocations benefit women and men equally. The 2013 stock-take of progress found that, of the 35 countries that reported on the indicator, 12 have systems to track and make public allocations on gender equality (OECD/UNDP, 2014: 66). Many more are stepping up their efforts to improve transparency and accountability in financing for gender equality. The strong take-up and interest in the global indicator, even from countries without a system in place to track and make public resource allocation, is a measure of the strength of government commitment to financing gender equality priorities.

Examples of gender-sensitive budgeting come from a number of countries, including Austria, Belgium and Spain (Box 4.8).

Box 4.8. Experiences of OECD countries with gender-responsive budgeting

Belgium

Belgium’s 2007 Law on Gender Mainstreaming includes a mandate for federal agencies to use gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). This obligation is repeated in the circular letter containing the guidelines for the draft budget. Federal Public Services must attach a “gender note” that serves as a tool for performing a gender analysis of their annual budget proposals. The gender note includes three categories: credits that can be exempted from a gender analysis (e.g. the purchase of furniture); credits concerning proactive measures for the promotion of gender equality (e.g. the salary for a co-ordinator on gender issues); and the regular public policy credits that must undergo a gender analysis (e.g. does the budget for drug prevention take into account the differences in drug use of boys and girls?). In 2009, the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men enacted a gender analysis of the budgets of all the Federal Public Services and prepared draft gender notes for each budget. Following this analytical exercise, the institute helped budget officials apply GRB by supporting them in drafting gender notes for the 2010 annual budget. The institute plans to publish a gender budgeting manual to explain the gender budgeting procedure in detail and provide concrete examples that support budget officers in fulfilling their tasks.

The concrete steps include:

Box 4.8. Experiences of OECD countries with gender-responsive budgeting (cont.)

1. The officials in charge of a dossier define whether there is a gender dimension for each budget category.
2. They inform the budgetary service of their ministry of the category of the dossier and credits when asking for a budget for the next year.
3. If the official in charge of the dossier classifies the dossier as belonging to Category 3 (regular public policy credits with a gender dimension), the official must prepare a gender explanation that indicates how the gender dimension will be taken into account when further elaborating the dossier. This gender explanation has to be included in the “justification for the allocation” for every credit.
4. The budgetary service of the administration assembles all this information and, as requested by the Law on Gender Mainstreaming, drafts a gender note for the credits of Category 2 (credits specifically intended for actions to promote equality). This gender note consists of a table developed by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, which makes it possible to locate these credits in the general expense budget. Finally, the budgetary service of the administration incorporates all this information in the budgetary proposals it sends to the Ministry of Finance.
5. The Ministry of Finance integrates all the information in the regular credit tables that constitute the project of the general expense budget.

Spain

At the end of 2010, the Spanish government presented the General State Budgets for 2011 to the parliament of Spain, which was accompanied by a Gender Impact Report (GIR), Spain’s third report of this kind. The legal framework for the establishment of this report was initiated in October 2003 with Law 30/2003 on Actions to Introduce Gender Impact Assessment in All Government Regulations, followed by organic Law 3/2007 on Effective Equality Between Men and Women. Royal Decree 1083/2009 then ordered the presentation of a report of regulatory impact analysis, and in December 2009, the Spanish government approved a methodological guide for the elaboration of this report, which includes a gender impact guide. Finally, the Annual Order of the Ministry of Economy and Finance established rules for drafting the general state budgets, taking into account all previous regulations. The order established that the report of regulatory impact analysis include a gender analysis of each expenditure programme of the budget (a so-called expenditure programme gender report, EPGR).

The preparation of the Gender Impact Report (GIR) follows these steps:

1. The Working Group meets with budget officials and representatives of equality units of the different ministerial departments to identify expenditure programmes in their budgets which “have a clear gender impact” and produces a GIR for each expenditure programme (EPGRs). The Working Group also meets at the end of the process to produce the final version of the GIR.
2. The General Secretariat of Budget and Expenditure makes a first validation of the report, providing a provisional list of expenditure programmes with “a clear gender impact” and a first draft of all EPGRs, which constitutes the first draft of the GIR. The Secretariat also validates the following reports and produces a third draft of the GIR.
3. The Technical General Secretariat of the Equality Ministry and the Budget General Directorate receive the first draft of the GIR, validate the tasks, update each EPGR with accurate comments and produce an updated draft of the GIR.
4. The General Secretariat of Budget and Expenditures conducts the final validation and editing tasks, producing the final GIR of the National Budget, and sends it to the Spanish parliament.

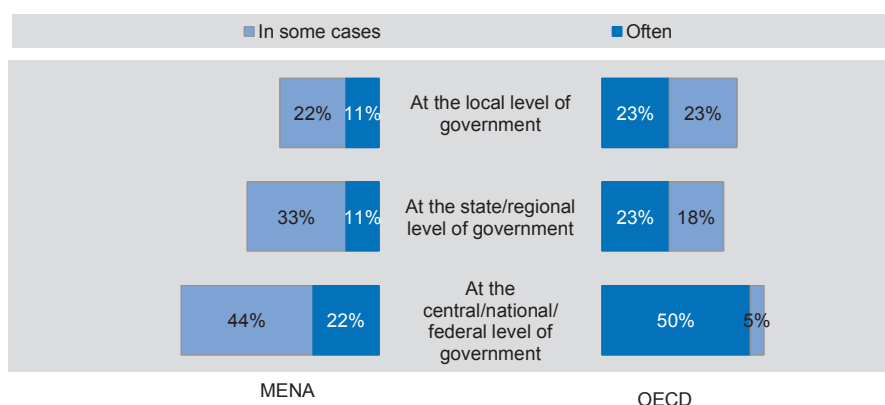
Sources: Information provided to the OECD by the Belgian Institute for the Equality of Women and Men; Cal Martínez, I. (2010), “Gender budgeting in Spain”, PowerPoint presentation at the 3rd Annual Meeting of Middle East and North Africa Senior Budget Officials (MENA-SBO), Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 31 October-1 November, Secretaria General de Presupuestos y Gastos, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Spain.

As the Belgian experience indicates, gender budgeting initially requires some extra human and monetary resources to create a stimulating dynamic. However, once the process becomes routine and comes closer to achieving its goal, the efforts needed diminish, and the impact increases.

In the MENA region, about half of responding countries have introduced some form of gender budgeting at the national level, however, further steps would be beneficial to embed gender budgeting at all levels of government. Morocco provides a leading example of gender budgeting in the MENA region, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Women's and Family Affairs. Other countries (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Yemen) have introduced important elements of gender budgeting into their government-wide budgeting requirements, although further progress is needed. Of those countries, all report some requirements for gender budgeting at the central level of government (Figure 4.12). Several countries report establishing these requirements in regions (Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority); Egypt and the Palestinian Authority also report to have done so on a more local level. In the Palestinian Authority, these requirements are implemented at different levels and are expanding slowly to all sectors. In Bahrain, a circular from the Minister of Finance on gender budgeting has been issued to all governmental organisations. The co-operation between the Ministry of Finance and the Supreme Council for Women has led to several circulars, including a specific section for measuring gender mainstreaming in the national budget. Furthermore, an Equal Opportunity Unit now exists in the Bahraini Ministry of Finance for this purpose. Other countries that have initiated gender budgeting include Tunisia, whose tentative 11th National Social and Economic Development Plan (2012-16) dedicates a chapter to the issue of gender-responsive budgeting, and Yemen, whose Ministry of Finance has established a General Directorate on Gender Budgeting and a project in collaboration with the Women's National Committee.

Gender budgeting is a must for the country's budget... Budgeting needs to be cross-cutting at all levels of government, and at the level of NGOs. (NGO, a MENA country)

Figure 4.12. **Requirements to undertake gender-responsive budgeting by level of government in MENA and OECD countries**



Note: Countries responded as follows (MENA): At the local level of government – Often – Palestinian Authority; In some cases – Egypt, Bahrain. At the state/regional level of government – Often – Palestinian Authority; In some cases – Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan. At the central/national/federal level of government – Often – Morocco, Palestinian Authority; Yes, in some cases – Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen.

Source: MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014).

Box 4.9. Examples of the inclusion of gender concerns in budgeting procedures

Bahrain

The national model for mainstreaming women's needs in Bahrain reinforces the importance of setting budgets that are responsive to the needs of women. The main national gender institution, the Supreme Council for Women, works with the Ministry of Finance (MoF) towards making budgets sensitive to the needs of women. The MoF has issued a circular with procedures stating that all national organisations are to take into consideration the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and to issue budgets that are responsive to the needs of women.

Egypt

Egypt has focused on addressing gender inequalities in public spending and fiscal policies by modifying the public budget process frameworks and allocations. It has revised the legal framework and adopted a series of laws to institute gender budgeting practices.

1. In 2005, Egypt committed to restructuring the national budget and adopting performance-based budgeting by 2010. The Ministry of Finance established an Equal Opportunities Unit (EOU).
2. In 2006, this EOU launched a pilot project on equal opportunities for women in the national budget. This project consists of two pillars: developing a gender-responsive budget programme and improving human resource development from a gender perspective.
3. In 2008, the Egyptian parliament voted for the institution-wide implementation of gender-responsive and performance-based budgeting based on a proposed law submitted by the Ministry of Finance and the National Council for Women. The amended 2008 budget laws introduced gender concerns for the first time in the budget planning and execution process. The 2008/09 budget circular paved the way for institutionalising gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and suggested that data should be disaggregated by sex.
4. In 2008, a gender report containing specific budget allocations for women was annexed to the national budget for the first time, making it an official government document.
5. The government moved from line-item budgeting to gender-responsive, performance-based budgeting in all national budgets in 2010, following a pilot project in the 2009/10 budget that initially introduced gender-sensitive budgeting in a gradual and decentralised approach in 15 governorates and six target sectors: education; health; water resources and irrigation; labour; social security; and food supplies. The Ministry of Finance carried out a budget analysis for each of these subsectors and supported the relevant line ministries in incorporating gender in budgetary planning, review and execution processes.
6. In order to clearly identify the share of women, children and men in budget allocations, the Ministry of Finance developed gender indicators and collected sex-disaggregated data on the beneficiaries of public services within five governorates.
7. An expert group comprising representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Development, the National Council for Women, the Institute of National Planning and UNIFEM developed a training manual on GRB in 2007 that was translated into a training curriculum.

Morocco

Morocco provides one of the clearest examples of GRB in the MENA region, where it was introduced as part of the broader gender mainstreaming strategy and tied to the broader budget reform framework.

1. Morocco first implemented a decentralised, results-based and performance-oriented budget approach in 2002: this structural budget reform presented an opportunity and strategic point of entry for GRB.
2. The Ministry of Economy and Finance carried out a feasibility study in 2002, which applied to the 1997/98 budgets and identified key elements for introducing the gender dimension into budgeting.

Box 4.9. Examples of the inclusion of gender concerns in budgeting procedures (*cont.*)

3. The government gradually introduced a gender dimension into ministerial department budgets, starting with five pilot departments in 2005 (finance, education, health, agriculture and planning), which was expanded to 21 departments in 2009). Since 2005, the Ministry of Finance publishes an annual Report on the Gender Budget as part of the report accompanying the finance law.
4. The government developed tools for each stakeholder group, reaching beyond budget officials to include parliamentarians and representatives of civil society. A 2005 Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy and UNIFEM guide addressed integrating the gender dimension into the new performance budgeting approach, followed in 2006 by a manual on integrating the gender dimension in budget planning and elaboration. In 2006, the Ministry of Finance also launched a new website to raise awareness of the GRB initiative.
5. In 2007, the Ministry of Finance published a study entitled “Comprehensive examination of gender-sensitive indicators in Morocco”, which is a collection of statistics essential for developing, monitoring and evaluating sectoral policies for promoting gender objectives.
6. Gender budgeting capacity has been decentralised progressively. Since 2007, several ministerial departments have created their own programmes to incorporate gender into budgeting at the local level.
7. As a result, GRB now functions as a permanent fixture in the performance-based budgeting process, budgets benefiting women are now available in four line ministries (Agriculture and Rural Development, Education, Health and Finance), and the budget line allocated towards targeted livelihood activities for women has increased from 5 million dirhams in 2002 to 6.3 million dirhams in 2006.

Source: OECD (2010), *Progress in Public Management in the Middle East and North Africa: Case Studies on Policy Reform*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264082076-en>.

Most countries reported the participation of Ministries of Finance and central gender institutions, although only a few countries mentioned the participation of the Prime Minister’s office, national statistical offices and parliament (Table 4.3). Yet, these stakeholders are very important in ensuring good quality data to support the approval and implementation of gender-responsive budgeting. In addition, it is important to ensure that line ministries take an active part in the gender budgeting process so as to increase their ownership and buy-in.

Moreover, MENA countries that undertake gender budgeting have established a range of mechanisms to support its implementation, including capacity-building and training sessions for government officials (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Yemen). Egypt, Jordan and Morocco use *ad hoc* pilot projects, and Jordan, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority use government-wide requirements with assessment by relevant line ministries. Egypt and Morocco use a special gender budgeting unit within the Ministry of Finance (Figure 3.13). In Yemen, the Women’s National Committee provides analytical frameworks and templates to support gender impact analysis on budgets, and is currently planning to provide training on the use of templates for gender-sensitive budgeting within the government budgeting offices.

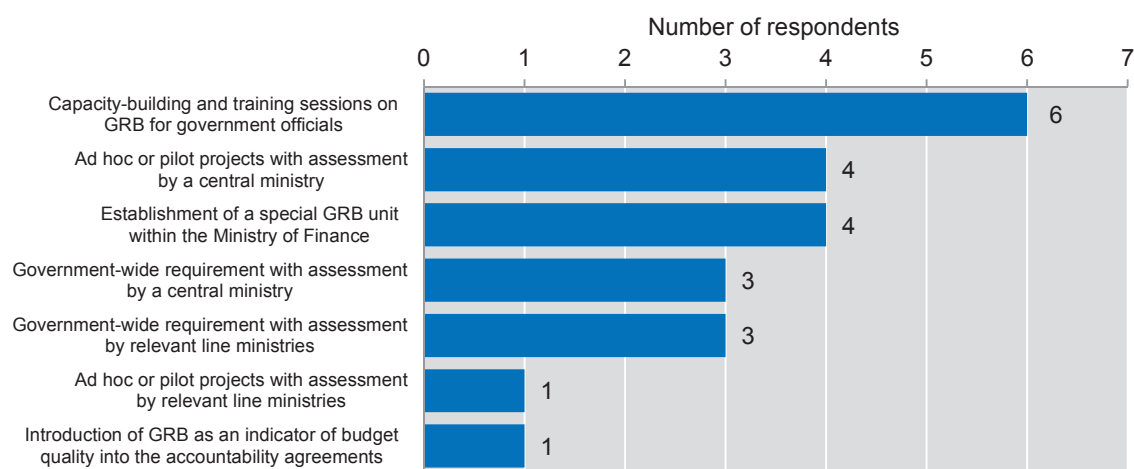
Overall, gender-responsive budgeting clearly provides an important and useful tool for embedding gender considerations into policies and government services, the absence of which risks increasing gender-blind policy making that disproportionately places services more often used by women at a disadvantage. The development of data related to gender budgeting and of the capacity to analyse budgets from a gender perspective, while

Table 4.3. Institutions involved in implementing gender-responsive budgeting in MENA countries

	Yemen	Egypt	Lebanon	Jordan	Tunisia	Morocco	Bahrain	Palestinian Authority	Kuwait
Prime Minister/President's Office						x			
Ministry of Finance	x	x		x		x	x	x	
Inspectors of finances				x		x			
Institution responsible for promoting gender equality	x	x				x	x	x	
Parliament, certain parliamentary committees						x			
Court of auditors/Auditors						x			
National statistical office						x			
Non-governmental organisations						x		x	
International organisations						x		x	
Bilateral donors	x					x			
Academic institutions						x		x	
Certain line ministries/departments/agencies				x		x		x	
Total	3	2	-	3	-	12	2	6	-

Source: MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014).

Figure 4.13. Mechanisms used to implement gender-responsive budgeting



6 out of 6 relevant country respondents

Notes: GRB: gender-responsive budgeting. Kuwait, Lebanon and Tunisia do not have a GRB requirement. The countries responded as follows: Capacity-building and training sessions on GRB for government officials - Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Yemen; *ad hoc* or pilot projects with assessment by a central ministry - Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco; establishment of a special GRB unit within the Ministry of Finance - Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen; government-wide requirement with assessment by a central ministry - Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan; government-wide requirement with assessment by relevant line ministries - Jordan, Morocco, Palestinian Authority; *ad hoc* or pilot projects with assessment by relevant line ministries - Jordan; introduction of GRB as an indicator of budget quality into the accountability agreements - Morocco.

Source: MENA-OECD Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership (updated in 2014).

initially resource-intensive, immediately signal gaps in gender equality and areas for further improvement in line with the broader gender equality and gender mainstreaming strategies. Further investments are required in most MENA countries to embed gender budgeting into the mainstream budgeting cycle across government and for these practices to take root. It would be important to ensure that all pertinent stakeholders, including parliaments, are actively engaged in this process. Good practices from both OECD and MENA countries (e.g. Morocco) may support MENA policy makers in the implementation of gender budgeting in a systematic and sustainable manner.

Summary recommendations

Advancing gender mainstreaming

- Ensure the development and implementation of a gender mainstreaming strategy, either within the main gender equality strategy or as a stand-alone strategy. This would allow for gender mainstreaming to be taken into consideration more strategically and ensure buy-in at all levels of government, as well as raise awareness of gender mainstreaming.
- Develop a systematic and comprehensive approach to integrate gender analysis (gender impact assessment) into the policy and programme development process.
- Build capacity within government institutions to develop gender-sensitive policies, budgets and programmes in MENA countries to address the current gaps in the understanding of and the limited skills in applying gender impact assessment.
- Raise awareness of the difference between gender-sensitive and gender-neutral policy making to help create an understanding of the importance of accounting for different impacts that policies and regulations may have on men and women across the region.

Strengthening collection and use of gender-disaggregated data

- Strengthen the development and implementation of data collection strategies, and expand the scope and depth of gender-disaggregated statistics to support evidence-based decision making in this area.
- Increase co-ordination among data collecting and producing bodies to develop an efficient statistical system, and ensure a coherent and government-wide approach to collecting gender-disaggregated data.
- Improve access to gender-disaggregated data through online dissemination or statistical yearbooks to support the effectiveness of national and international decision making.

Introducing systematic and inclusive approaches to public consultation

- Improve the clarity, regularity and transparency of the consultation process for policy making, including on policies related to gender equality. Strengthen mechanisms for systematic consultations. Consultation efforts should include efforts to reach out to both women and men facing various participation barriers (“willing but not able”), as well as those who have limited interest in consultation (“able but not willing”) by creating an enabling environment to ensure that

government policies and programmes are reflective of and respond to the views of various groups of the population.

- Increase opportunities for women’s organisations to participate in the policy making process in an inclusive and transparent manner, for example, by including them in advisory bodies that are regularly consulted by the government.

Implementing a robust approach to gender-responsive budgeting

- Adopt a systematic and comprehensive approach to gender-sensitive budgeting, which should be accompanied by capacity-building programmes and awareness-raising campaigns.
- Strengthen national systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women’s rights and report on these efforts through the post-Busan gender equality indicator.

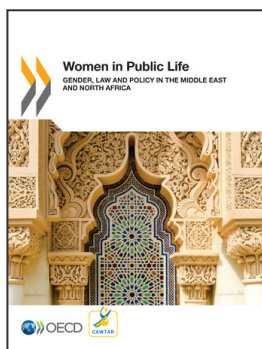
Notes

1. Shura Council, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Organisation for Youth and Sports, Information Affairs Authority, Ministry of Municipalities and Urban Planning, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Works, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Health, National Oil and Gas Authority, Ministry of Finance, Council of Representatives, Economic Development Board, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Education, Civil Service Bureau, Institute of Public Administration, National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training, Labour Fund (Tamkeen), University of Bahrain, Bahrain Polytechnic (Reference to the eGovernment Authority).
2. www.oecd.org/social/gender-development/43041409.pdf.
3. No responses were received from the Palestinian Authority.

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