



Member of Qatar Foundation for Science and Education



Gender -Responsive Social Protection for Adolescent Girls to Enable Aspirations and Reach the SDGs in the Arab Region

18 March 2019
3:00 – 4:15 pm
Conference Room (A)

PROGRAM

- 3:00 – 3:05 **Welcoming Remarks**
- *H.E. Ambassador Alya Ahmed S. Al Thani*, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations.
- 3:05 – 3:20 **Opening Remarks**
- *Mr. Omar Abdi*, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
 - *Dr. Sharifa Al – Emadi*, Executive Director of Doha International Family Institute (DIFI).
- Panel Discussion**
- Moderator:** *Dr. Shreyasi Jha*, Senior Gender Advisor (UNICEF)
- 3:20 – 3:30 *Mr. Atif Khurshid* –Policy Specialist, Social Protection, Social Policy and Inclusion, UNICEF New York
- 3:30 – 3:40 *Dr. Lina Abirafeh*, Director of the Arab Institute for Women/Lebanese American University.
- 3:40 – 3:50 *Dr. Hala Al Ahmadi*, Senior Policy Analyst – DIFI
- 3:50 – 4:15 Discussion.

Please RSVP by 11 March 2019 to
events@mun@mofa.gov.qa



Concept Note

Gender-Responsive Social Protection for Adolescent Girls to Enable Aspirations and Reach the SDGs in the Arab Region

Side Event at the 63rd Session of the Commission of the Status of Women

18 March 2019

3:00 – 4:15 pm

Conference Room (A)

United Nations Headquarters -New York

CONCEPT NOTE

PURPOSE

This side-event builds on DIFI's work on "Family Sensitive Social Protection (FSSP).¹ It seeks to discuss the challenges faced by adolescent girls in accessing social protection in the Arab region within the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) framework. The conclusions and recommendations of this side-event will serve to guide and inform subsequent programming, advocacy endeavor, evidence-based studies and policy discussion on the issue.

BACKGROUND

Adolescent girls in the Arab region² face serious challenges. Poverty³, high levels of economic stress, early marriage, drop-of-school, reproductive health issues, gender-based violence⁴, lack of visibility and autonomy, lack of voice and political participation are but a few (CAWTAR 2003; UNFPA 2012⁵; DIFI 2015; ESCWA 2017⁶; UNICEF 2018⁷)⁸⁹. Girls experience adolescence differently due to the gender-differential socialization of boys and girls and prevailing gender social norms, practices and structures in Arab countries (CAWTAR 2003). In many countries and contexts in the Arab region, adolescence can increase girls' vulnerabilities. However, because of its dynamic nature in which girls' capabilities emerge, this period can as well be transformative and empowering (Ibid 2003). The SDGs asserted the importance in investing in adolescents' education, skill, knowledge, voice and access to services to enable them to reach their potentials and contribute to human and economic growth.

Education of adolescent girls is one of the key goals of agenda 2030. According to UNICEF (November 2018)¹⁰, population's working age between now and 2050 in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) will increase opening opportunities for economic growth in this region. Yet, without significant investments in education, healthcare and employment, the region risks adding 5 million more children to the 15 million already out of school and an 11% rise in youth unemployment by 2030 (Ibid 2018). Family poverty influences adolescent girls' education, as their enrolment in school often declines severely due to the costs of education or to the need of the labor (whether inside or outside the home) (UNICEF 2015)¹¹. Gender-responsive social protection systems can play vital role in supporting adolescent girls' access to education, especially those in poor households and in

¹ In collaboration with ESCWA, DIFI conducted a policy study on Family-sensitive Social Protection (FSSP) in the Arab region and organized an EGM to inform the finding of this study in June in 2018. The report is a draft, and will be published very soon.

² and other parts of the world

³ A study on the multidimensional poverty in the Arab region conducted by ESCWA in collaboration with UNICEF, LAS and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Institute (2017) shows that across the 286 million people living in the 10 countries covered in this analysis, 116.1 million (40.6%) belong to poor households, of which 38.2 million (13.4%) live in acute poverty, see "Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report", accessed at:

⁴ Including domestic violence

⁵ Loaiza E, Wong S. Marrying too young: End child marriage. New York: UNFPA; 2012. Available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/publications/pid/12166>

⁶ A study on the multidimensional poverty in the Arab region conducted by ESCWA in collaboration with UNICEF, LAS and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Institute (2017) shows that across the 286 million people living in the 10 countries covered in this analysis, 116.1 million (40.6%) belong to poor households, of which 38.2 million (13.4%) live in acute poverty, see "Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report", accessed at:

⁷ According to UNICEF (2018) adolescent girls in the MENA region are more likely to be illiterate than adolescent boys and 1 in 10 girls under the age of 20 has suffered sexual violence

⁸ Doha International Family Institute (2015) "Adolescents in Arab Countries: health statistics and social context, DIFI Family Research and Proceedings, Mr. Makhlof Obermeyer.

⁹ UNICEF Workplan 2018-2021, accessed at <https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/unicef-strategic-plan-2018-2021>

¹⁰ UNICEF-Middle East and North Africa, November 2018 "Generation 2030", can be accessed through: <https://www.unicef.org/mena/sites/unicef.org/mena/files/2018-11/infographic%20gen%202030%2015%2011%202018.pdf>

¹¹ UNICEF (2015), "Regional Report on out of School Child", accessed at <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/regional-report-on-out-of-school-children-middle-east-and-north-africa-2015-en.pdf>

conflict-affected areas (World Bank, 2007).¹² **Elimination of harmful practices** and the freedom from all forms of violence, coercions and abuse remains a key concern for adolescent girls in the Arab region (UNICEF 2018).¹³ While acknowledging that risks to girls' bodies vary tremendously by context, adolescent girls in the Arab region are confronted with high odds of two main forms of harmful traditional practices¹⁴: a) child marriage and b) female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Both forms of violence occur in the "private sphere" and encouraged by family members (UNICEF 2005)¹⁵. Adolescence can be a period of heightened **psychosocial vulnerability**, with half of all mental illnesses beginning by age 14 and neuropsychiatric disorders the main cause of disability in adolescence.¹⁶ Globally, adolescent girls are more likely than their male age mates to show signs of mental health disorders, especially depression and anxiety (WHO, 2014).¹⁷ Adolescents' health care needs are not adequately met in the Arab region even in high-income countries like the GCC which is a home to more than 25% adolescents.¹⁸ Gender-responsive social protection policy and programs (cash transfers, accessible mental health services, health fee-waivers, psychosocial and home care programs that is family oriented, etc.) can promote adolescent girls resilience to aforementioned risks during this vital period of their lives.

OBJECTIVES

This side-event aims to resume the discussion on current models of welfare and protection systems in the Arab region initiated by a study conducted by DIFI "Family Sensitive Social Protection (FSSP)" with specific focus on adolescent girls. The side-event will discuss protection systems within the context of adolescent girls' *practical needs* – those emanating from their physical and biological vulnerabilities - and to *strategic needs* – those that associate to girls' limited autonomy, lack of voice and agency.

Specific focus will be devoted to the role of protection systems in:

- Advancing adolescent girls' education;
 - Protecting adolescent girls from harmful practices notably early marriage and FGM/C;
 - Promoting the psychosocial health of adolescent girls in a changing world and environments.
- Model of gender responsive protection policies and programs that can truly empower adolescent girls in the three aforementioned arenas.
 - Recommendations for a social protection system that is empowering for adolescent girls in the Arab region.

PARTNERS

- Qatar Permanent Mission at the UN.
- UNICEF.
- The Arab Institute for Women/Lebanese American Univer

¹² World Bank (2007) 'Yemen: An Integrated Approach to Social Sectors towards a Social Protection Strategy.' Phase I Report. Washington, DC: World Bank.

¹³ UNICEF (2018) "A Profile of Violence Against Children and Adolescents in the Middle East and North Africa", accessed at

¹⁴ amongst other forms of violence and abuse

¹⁵ UNICEF (2005) "EARLY MARRIAGE: A HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICE", accessed at: https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf

¹⁶ WHO (2014) Health for the world's adolescents: A second chance in the second decade of life. Geneva: WHO.

¹⁷ GAGE (2017) "Gender and Adolescence: Why understanding adolescent capabilities, change strategies and contexts matters", Gender and Adolescent Global Evidence (GAGE), available at <https://www.gage.odi.org/sites/default/files/2017-07/Gender%20and%20Adolescence%20CF%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

¹⁸ AbdulKarim Said Al Makadma (November 2016), "Adolescent health and health care in the Arab Gulf countries: Today's needs and tomorrow's challenges", Alfaisal University, College of Medicine, Clinical Medicine Department, Saudi Arabia, International Journal of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, available at https://ac.els-cdn.com/S235264671730008X/1-s2.0-S235264671730008X-main.pdf?_tid=e8d76aa7-8b34-42d7-90e5-3bb72c635f8b&acdnat=1542787896_711a56325320a50dda63bbd2a309bc82