



# Changing Laws, Changing Minds

## Women's Economic Empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa

Commission on the Status of Women 63 - Side event co-sponsored by Sweden  
United Nations Headquarters, New York

#ChangingLawsChangingMinds  
#menaOECD

11 March 2019 | 08.15-09.30  
Conference Room 12 - GA Building

### Speakers & programme

The panel discussion will centre around four key issues underpinning women's economic empowerment: i) legislative reform, ii) social norms/local traditions, iii) access to resources/opportunities and iv) women and men's attitudes.

Moderator: **Eva Johansson**, Lead Policy Advisor, SIDA and co-Chair of the OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET)

Keynote address: **H.E. Neziha Labidi**, Tunisian Minister of Women, Family, Children and Seniors Affairs

Speakers include:

- ♦ **Mohammad Naciri**, Regional Director for Arab States/North Africa, UN Women
- ♦ **Nickie Monga**, Country Director, Oxfam in Jordan
- ♦ **Charlotte Goemans**, Policy Analyst, OECD

Concluding remarks: **Dr. Soukaina Bouraoui**, Executive Director, Centre of Arab Women for Training & Research (CAWTAR)

### What's at stake?

While women in the MENA region are more educated than ever, the female labour force participation rate in the region continues to be the lowest in the world. The OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) estimates that in 2017 the impact of discrimination in laws, social norms and practices costs the MENA region a staggering USD 14 billion (USD 2,738 per capita). A number of national legal frameworks are still not in line with constitutional guarantees on gender equality and women's empowerment. When these favourable frameworks are in place, social norms and stereotypes sometimes prevent their correct interpretation and implementation.

*The 2018 MENA-OECD Women's Economic Empowerment Forum affirmed that important legislative reforms and policy actions in support of women's economic empowerment are underway in many MENA countries and momentum for change is building across the region.*

While progress across the region is heterogeneous and fragile, all economies of the region have success stories that can inspire change. The [MENA-OECD Women's Economic Empowerment Forum](#) offers a platform for representatives from MENA and OECD countries to share such success stories and find solutions for enhancing women's economic empowerment through encouraging further policy and legal reform.

## The event

The OECD, Oxfam, UN Women and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) will jointly host this event. The event is in line with the [review theme](#) of this year's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) and in particular with CSW's call for actions to strengthen normative, legal and policy frameworks. Benefiting from the participation of a wide variety of stakeholders and experts, the event will offer insights for reforming legislation and reshaping social and cultural attitudes for greater women's economic agency in the Middle East and North Africa. -

The event will draw upon the OECD-CAWTAR [ongoing research](#) on legislative reform for women's economic empowerment across the MENA region. Oxfam brings the practitioners approach to the table through its [Conceptual Framework on Women's Economic Empowerment](#), including practical policy recommendations to increase women's engagement in the labour market. UN Women will share the findings of their research on [Understanding Masculinities](#), which explores attitudes towards gender equality in different MENA economies. Tunisia, a front-runner on women's rights in the region, will present its recent legal achievements and implementation strategies for women's economic empowerment. The audience will also learn more about Sweden's advanced development co-operation strategies and tools on gender equality, with focus on its support to MENA economies<sup>4</sup>

## Stakeholders

Representatives from governments, international/regional organisations, private sector actors, academia and CSOs around the MENA women's economic empowerment agenda.

## Registration

Contact: [mathieu.miranda@oecd.org](mailto:mathieu.miranda@oecd.org)

For this event, a UN Ground Pass is required. Unfortunately, only CSW63 participants who have already registered for their pass will be able to attend.

For further information on CSW63 registration, please go to the [registration web page](#).