

Invisible Women and Gender Inequality in MENA Region

Meltem Ince Yenilmez, Associate Professor

Department of Economics, Izmir Demokrasi University (Turkey)

Introduction

Women and girls' rights within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) continue to be unsolved. Although a few developments have been documented, the progress is understated and does not now no longer constitute the region's commitments to Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, nor does it cope with the region's difficulties (UNICEF, 2020). Over the remaining decade, there was a few development in several regions regarding gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. Within the region, laws, policies, and programming selling gender equality are getting greater prevalent, women's illustration in authorities and country wide programming is increasing, and many nations have installed country wide women's machines and different establishments that sell the rights and welfare of women and girls (WEF, 2020).

While governments have extensively accelerated their efforts to satisfy their gender-primarily based totally human rights obligations, it's also critical to focus on the growing engagement of civil society, specifically woman and teenagers feminist civil society, in claiming and securing profits. Female civil society within the vicinity has actively participated within the girls, peace and safety schedule on the global level. For example, girls activists have testified earlier than the Security Council to focus on the gendered effect of battle and career at the lives of girls and women within the vicinity (UNICEF, 2019). Yet, within the midst concerning this profits, gender gaps in the vicinity persist then piece concerning modern boom is at risk regarding regress. These gaps are redoubled through the unanswered interrelated troubles on woman and women, then are similarly blended through manner of globalwide or nearby events, along with political then monetary upheaval, battle, and career. (OECD, 2020). Increasing backlash from governments in the direction of unseasonable network because of the reality the Arab uprisings upon a decennary ago, particularly closer to girls's rights then teenagers feminist groups, has moreover impeded development. Conflict is every other component a lot

perpetuates propagate inequalities or ethnic suitable violations into the unfinished nations of the vicinity (UNFPA, 2020). Furthermore, the patriarchal character regarding governments keeps to steer the motion in the direction of create par which, into turn, reinforces the structural inequities current among horrific socio-cultural norms but practices thru laws, argument mechanisms but socio-political institutions. Taken so a entire or irrespective of the profits made, the proof specific in some unspecified time in the future of it document illustrates because the MENA or the Arabian States location has carried out the slowest development concerning propagate equality at some stage in multiple symptoms and indices (Burki, 2020). Despite those critical profits, girls`s economic public sharing into the MENA vicinity stays the bottom among the global, at 25 through cent, as compared to a global common concerning spherical 50 in step with cent (SDG, 2020). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the difference among the pretty passionate fitness but training fields as compared in imitation of politics or monetary participation is often referred in conformity with so the MENA paradox (ILO, 2017). Women arm the predominance regarding the legal responsibility over unpaid work (UN Women, 2020) into the vicinity, of not unusualplace woman perform 4.7 instances extra than men, then tiny has been instituted in conformity with apprehend then really well worth their contributions through the availability over population services, infrastructure, but neighborly protection according with expand shared responsibility, as a lot set overseas through the Sustainable Development Goal.

Obstacles to Justice in MENA

Throughout the MENA area, women confront structural impediments that prevent them from becoming equal members of their families and society, as well as equal citizens in the eyes of their nations. One of the most significant impediments in the region is the region's family laws.

Most MENA nations draw their family laws from religion laws to control family concerns such as marriage, divorce, custody, and maintenance. Furthermore, colonial impact by British or French laws has resulted in hybrid legal systems. The religious components of those family laws differ across the region; for example, Tunisia has one of the most secular family laws, whereas Yemen claims to base its Family Law solely on Shari'a. Regardless of the distinctions, the region's family laws are rooted in patriarchal ideology, which

perpetuates certain rituals and traditions that discriminate against women, violate their human rights, and prolong the gender power imbalance (GJC, 2020).

Penal Codes and Laws Domestic laws, such as family, criminal, and personal status laws, have formalized discrimination against women, effectively lowering their standing in comparison to their male counterparts. Marriage, divorce, citizenship, and freedom of movement are all governed by these laws. They frequently actively govern gender relations by sustaining patriarchal norms that confer legal power on males over women in their homes. This legal inequality inhibits women's equal participation in society and increases their vulnerability to violence. There is no substantial protection for women against violence in the legal codes, and there is no unhindered way to make reports of abuse.

Social and Traditional Practices Even when women's rights are explicitly stated in both the constitution and the legal code, they are useless in practice unless they are implemented. Informal customary practices can trump formal legal or religious rules, causing state legislation to be often disregarded. For example, despite Islamic injunctions, women are denied their part of inheritance if state regulation on the minimum age for marriage is violated. Because decision-making is regarded to be solely the realm of male family members, the state seldom intervenes in such activities. Furthermore, women who seek justice through the judicial system face unfavorable consequences on a regular basis, making it uncommon for women to file complaints. As a result, it is customs in many instances. As a result, conventions and societal pressure, rather than laws or religions, significantly limit women's access to justice in many circumstances.

Judicial Participation Is Limited In several Middle Eastern nations, it is illegal for women to serve as judges or, in some situations, public prosecutors. Women have various limits on their judicial competence in countries where it is not illegal, and are barred from prominent and crucial positions in the nation's higher courts. Furthermore, there may not even be a professional group of judges in certain areas; instead, self-appointed religious or tribal authorities may "legislate" and adjudicate locally as they see proper. Women are excluded from the majority, if not all, of these conventional adjudication procedures. Another issue is that male judges may have great discretionary authority when it comes to implementing and interpreting the law.

As a result of the absence of female representation in the courts, women have restricted access to the legal system, particularly when it comes to topics that directly affect their lives, such as family and personal laws.

Economic Participation, Challenges and Opportunities

Women's employment has also been a problem in MENA nations for the last 30 years. This was exacerbated by the Arab Spring, which raised worries about women's responsibilities inside their own houses, in the public arena, and in economic life (Nazier and Ramadan, 2018). MENA nations have long recognized the value of education in general and, more especially, in empowering women. As a result, it was incorporated as a critical component of their growth strategy. As a result, enrollment at all levels of education has increased significantly during the last few decades. Enrollment in primary schools, for example, has reached 100 percent in the majority of MENA nations (Farzaneh and Moghadam, 2003).

Although the gender gap in schooling has narrowed in many MENA nations, this progress has not translated into a shrinking of the gender gap in the labor market. According to recent data, the MENA area continues to rank last in the world in terms of women's economic involvement and opportunity (WEF, 2018). When compared to the rest of the globe, the area has a relatively large disparity in unemployment rates between men and women (McCloughlin, 2013). The area has the world's lowest female labor force participation rate, with only 21% of women in the region economically engaged (Nazier and Ramadan, 2018). South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, have equivalent figures of around 40% and 60%, respectively. Women's limited economic engagement in the MENA area has resulted in income losses of 27% of the region's potential GDP (Abbott, 2017). Therefore, investing in human capital, increasing female educational attainment, and delaying marriage have not resulted in greater female labor-force participation in the region. This is referred to as the "MENA conundrum" in the literature (WEF, 2012).

Political Rights in MENA

Women's political engagement has long been hampered throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Conflict, gender-based violence, disempowerment, and restrictive legislation are all ongoing difficulties for women in the region. For more than a decade, pro-democracy rallies have swept across MENA, forcing the region's governments to

reconsider the role of women in their society. Women who were at the vanguard of protests deserved to be at the forefront of politics as well. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) develops programs across the MENA region to address these difficulties and the gender disparities that exist in society by improving women's rights and encouraging women to engage in politics (UN, 2017; UNDP, 2019).

Women were prominent participants in the Arab protests of 2011, particularly in Yemen's revolution. Women's physical involvement in those protests became a major source of disagreement, with liberation myths colliding with experiences of mass public sexual harassment. The transformations that followed those upheavals were particularly difficult for women. Following the early electoral triumphs of Islamist parties in Egypt and Tunisia, many feminists, liberals, and Western media outlets expressed worry that the new governments might weaken women's rights and curtail political freedoms. The hotly contested talks over new constitutions heightened such anxieties (ILO, 2017; Dalacoura, 2019).

Many supporters were concerned that other rules safeguarding women's rights, particularly inside the family, might be modified as well. Autocratic governments actively backed projects that – at least on the surface - promoted women's rights. Of fact, such politicization of women's rights was not new. Both autocratic regimes and democratically elected Islamist governments have used the rhetoric of women's rights and female bodies to explain and promote their political objectives. However, in the aftermath of the 2011 upheavals, women's activism, like most other forms of political mobilization, could not be as simply repressed and appropriated as previously (OECD, 2014; ESCWA, 2020, UNDP, 2020). Women's rights and political ambitions are intricately linked to other political conflicts, and are formed more by local circumstances than by ostensibly permanent cultural patterns.

Conclusion

For decades, the lack of democratic practice and the tight control of authoritarian governments explains the restricted, and in some cases, non-existent, political representation of women. Social policy reforms are also required so that women are properly acknowledged and rewarded for their home care obligations, allowing them to

engage more fully in the formal sector. Furthermore, formalizing work is a necessary step toward increasing social safety coverage for women. In any case, it will take a long time for MENA internal politics to evolve away from their current hybrid condition and toward some degree of political liberalization and democracy. However, there is momentum in this direction, and women will play a key role in driving it via their advocacy.

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