

***Gender and Work in MENA:  
Research Capacity Building Activities***

**Final Technical Report**

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**This report is presented as received from project recipient. It has not been subjected to peer review or other review processes.**

## **Abstract**

In the MENA region, gender and work is an important topic that has attracted a great deal of attention in both research and policy circles in recent years. However high-quality research on gender and work in the MENA region has been limited, in large part due to the shortage of well-trained researchers inside the region with a background in relevant literature and research methodologies. The Population Council aimed to address this deficit through the Gender and Work in MENA project, an integrated capacity building program for junior researchers from the MENA region that provided them with training, small research grants, mentorship and opportunities for publication and dissemination of their work. Through this combination of activities, the project achieved its objective of building the capacity of young scholars in MENA to conduct methodologically rigorous research on gender and work, as well as to disseminate this work to academic and policy audiences. Eleven research papers and six policy briefs on gender and work in MENA were published as a result of the research project, considerably expanding the body of peer-reviewed literature on gender and work in the region.

## **Key Words**

Gender and work, capacity building, research methods, women's economic rights, labor market, women's empowerment

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## 1. Introduction and Rationale

In the MENA region, gender and work is an important topic that has attracted a great deal of attention in both research and policy circles in recent years. Through this final report on the *Gender and Work in MENA: Research Capacity Building Activities* project, we will present a set of main findings that we consider foundational to a new generation of research in the area of gender and work. These findings indicate that for research to have significant impact, it is important to have individuals and institutions capable not only of conducting high-quality research, but also trained in how to deliver the results of any research to policy- and decision-makers who can influence communities.

However, prior to the beginning of this project, high-quality research on gender and work in the MENA region was limited. This was due in part to data limitations, and lack of knowledge regarding data that does exist, but mainly due to the shortage of well-trained researchers inside the region with a background in relevant literature and research methodologies. Thus, through this project, the Population Council worked to promote capacity building as an ongoing process through which researchers, institutions and societies enhance their ability to identify and meet development challenges. The first step towards achieving this goal is to equip researchers with the understanding, skills and access to information and training that enables them to perform effectively, and to disseminate the results of their research to policy makers in order to take an active role in developing their countries in the future.

As such, the main objective of this project was to expand the capacity of young researchers in the MENA region to conduct methodologically-sound research on issues of gender and work and to disseminate their research findings. This capacity building endeavor went beyond research funding, as it provided young researchers with the opportunity for mentorship and guidance as well as research peer review that allowed them to produce research of fine quality in the area of gender and work. Through this initiative the Council conducted a diverse set of activities, including the provision of small grants to junior researchers, training workshops, research seminars, a conference for grant awardees to disseminate the results of their work, the publication of outstanding papers, and the publication of policy briefs drawing on the results of grantees' research projects. Although the focus of this project was on the topic of gender and work, the success of the project's activities indicate that similar initiatives could be used to build capacity in other areas of research that are critical to national and regional development.

The grants and capacity building program supported both qualitative and quantitative research as well as literature reviews on various aspects of gender and work in the MENA region. Various topics were covered by grantees' work, including, but are not limited to, the segmentation of the labor market along gender lines, differences in job search behavior by gender, the economic abuse of working women, micro enterprises and women's empowerment, women's work in agriculture, trade policies and wage inequality, and changes over time in gender differences in pay and work

conditions. Awards were granted to young researchers with different educational backgrounds from seven different countries from the MENA region. A mentor was assigned for each award to advise the awardees on the relevant literature in the area, the research methodology and the write-up of findings. Mentors' tasks also included the revision of the semi-annual and final reports, as well as review of the grantees' final paper.

### **Summary of achievements**

The project met its objective of building the capacity of a new generation of junior researchers to conduct high-quality research on gender and work, as well as of expanding the current knowledge base on gender and work in the MENA region. The project also initiated a debate on the need for more research in this area.

Facts of this project are:

- 22 small grants were issued to researchers from 7 countries
- 20 research papers were submitted for review (3 grantees submitted a collaborative, cross-national paper)
- 10 papers were published
- 2 research seminars and a final dissemination conference were held for grantees to present their research
- 71 researchers were trained in quantitative and qualitative methodologies through 3 research training workshops
- 24 researchers were trained in drawing policy messages from research results through one policy messages training
- 6 policy briefs drawing on grantees' research were published

## **2. Project Objectives**

The general objective of this project was to expand the capacity of young researchers in the MENA region to conduct methodologically sound research on issues pertaining to gender and work, and to disseminate their research findings with a view towards influencing policy.

The specific objectives of this project are:

1. To provide opportunities to a new generation of researchers for intensive training in relevant concepts and methodologies related to women's economic rights, seed funding for individual research projects, mentorship by established researchers, peer review of research projects and findings, and publication of research papers.

2. To expand the body of peer-reviewed research on gender and work in the MENA region, with a view to challenging discriminatory structures, policies and practices related to gender segmentation of the labor market, the gender wage gap, women`s double work burden, barriers to women`s employment in the private sector, cultural norms defining work suitability for women, gender differences in geographic and job mobility, gender differences in unemployment rates, and the dynamics of labor market entry and exit during the life course.
3. To build the capacity of individual researchers make use of the improved evidence base to influence policy

### 3. Methodology

Our methodology included three major components 1) the provision of small research grants; 2) training workshops; and 3) dissemination activities including research seminars, a publication venue and a conference. In this section, we describe each of these components and the rationale for including them in the project. The project activities will be described in more detail in the following section.

The *small research grants* program provided funding to researchers from the MENA region to conduct research projects on topics related to gender and work. This core activity of the project was key to the first project objective of the project to provide new opportunities to the young generation of researchers in the region. The small grants also resulted in a number of high-quality published papers and policy briefs in the area of gender and work, fulfilling objectives 2 and 3.

The small grants program was open to advanced PhD students, recent PhD holders and post-doctoral scholars in the social sciences. While recent PhDs would have finished multi-year research projects, the program worked on sharpening their statistical skills and introducing them to a new dataset. This group is usually most in need of intellectual and financial support as they begin their professional careers as researchers. For advanced PhD students, the project served as an important means to complete their dissertations and position themselves for careers in research. The choice of topic within the area of gender and work was left open, as these research awards were designed to be a platform for generating innovative ideas and attracting promising young scholars to the area of gender and work.

The grants were provided through two competition rounds. Award amounts varied from \$4,000-\$8,000 per award for qualitative or quantitative projects, and from \$2,500-\$3,500 per award for literature reviews. A multi-disciplinary committee of experts from inside and outside the Council was responsible for reviewing proposals, and awards were made based on the ratings of this committee. Proposals were evaluated based on relevance of the topic to the thematic focus of the award competition, theoretical foundation, ability to define the problem and plans for analysis. The

review process also covered consideration of ethical issues to ensure adherence to human subjects principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice.

Given the importance of *mentorship* for the career development of young researchers, each small grant awardee was paired with a senior researcher in their field, and when possible from their country, to provide them with advice and feedback over the course of their project. As the final product of their small grant, and under the guidance of their mentor, awardees were expected to produce a paper of publishable quality in the area of gender and work.

*Training workshops* were integral to this capacity building endeavor both in terms of providing grantees with a strong foundation in the methodologies needed for their projects, and in extending the opportunity for rigorous methodological training to a broader group of young researchers in the region. Four training workshops on research methodology were held under this project. Two workshops were organized ahead of the award competition announcement. These workshops were held to acquaint potential awardees with the literature on gender and work, the various research methodologies that can be used to address this topic, and the wealth of information on gender and work available in the Egypt Labor Market Panel Survey 2006 (ELMPS06) dataset.

During both workshops, parallel sessions were conducted for qualitative and quantitative research methods, based on the choice of the trainees. Qualitative sessions included data collection issues related to sampling, dealing with gatekeepers, establishing rapport, ethical considerations and conducting interviews and focus group discussions. Quantitative sessions included operationalization issues, dealing with the correlation between marriage and work, and an optional advanced session on composite indices and the survival analysis.<sup>1</sup> Participants were introduced to software packages used for their respective method, NVIVO for qualitative analysis and STATA for quantitative.

The success of these workshops helped create a strong demand for training on the use of datasets housed at the Population Council. The Council thus held two additional workshops on the use and methodology, respectively, of the Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) 2009. These workshops focused on quantitative survey research, including extensive hands-on training in the use of STATA. These trainings provided an opportunity for a new cohort of young researchers to gain methodological training.

A number of researchers from outside Egypt attended each of these workshops in order to build greater regional participation in the program.

*Two research seminars* were organized throughout the grant period. This activity served as an assessment point for the grantees, as they were able to present their preliminary findings and get feedback from their mentors and other members of the research community in the region. The program made use of the expertise of established researchers as paper discussants. These contributed

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<sup>1</sup> The quantitative session did not include training on research ethics because all of the participants were using existing data sources.

both to objective 1, by providing the grantees with the opportunity to make a professional presentation and receive peer feedback, and objective 2, in that the research seminars were an important means of helping the awardees to develop a paper of publishable quality. These seminars also provided researchers with networking opportunities with experienced researchers from the MENA region.

*Dissemination activities* were highlighted from the beginning of the project as the most valuable output of any research. It was important to the project to see grantees' research results effectively and widely disseminated, both to research and policy circles. For this reason, a *final dissemination conference* was organized to present the findings of all the grantees, including those who undertook a literature review. Invitees included policy and decision makers, senior researchers and other stakeholders. Around 80 experts were able to attend, generating a fruitful discussion of the new knowledge produced by the grantees' studies. The project and its findings had a positive impact on the research area of gender and work, and this event acted as a key opportunity for comprehensive recommendations.

In order to build the peer-reviewed body of research on gender and work in the region, and to provide grantees the opportunity for further dissemination of their work, all research papers that involved original empirical research were reviewed for *publication* as Population Council working papers. Ten papers were published in this format, and an additional paper is being published in a peer-reviewed journal. The complete bibliography of works produced under the project is provided at the end of this report.

Over the course of the project, it became clear to Population Council staff that while the grantees had great interest in disseminating their results to policy makers, many did not have the background needed to do so effectively. In order to fulfill objective 3, a *policy messages training* was therefore conducted to train researchers in how to develop effective strategies for communicating research results to policy makers, as well as how to write a policy brief. Following the training, six *policy briefs* based on the grantees' research were published as a Council series.

Finally, the program included an *evaluation component*, in which two different external evaluators with a background in the area of research capacity building were hired to do an interim and a final evaluation, respectively. The interim evaluation was conducted after the end of the first year of the project, and the final evaluation was conducted at the project close. The objective of the interim evaluation was to assess the impact of the program and its process to provide recommendations for the remainder of the project activities. The final evaluation focused on determining the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact and sustainability or possible replication or expansion of the project. TORs for both evaluations were approved by IDRC prior to the evaluation. Based on the results of the final evaluation, the Population Council produced a *lessons learned booklet* that summarizes the outcomes of the project and provides recommendations for future research capacity building programs that may be carried out in the region.



## 4. Project Activities in Detail

Activities of this program are described here in detail based on the sequence of the activities.

### i) First Training workshop on Gender and Work in the MENA Region, 17 – 21 August 2008

The announcement for this training was sent on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 in three languages; English, Arabic and French. The mailing list used in distributing this announcement was a comprehensive list built through the Council's previous events. Additional efforts were made to ensure wide reach by posting the announcement on a number of frequently-visited websites, including the Population Council's website, the website of the British Council in Egypt, and that of the Economic Research Forum. The announcement was also sent to the GDNET for development newsletter. The deadline for receiving applications was July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008.

Once applications were received, they were ranked by Council staff into three categories: 1) accepted with full coverage of workshop expenses (including travel and accommodation for international participants), 2) over-qualified applicants, who were given the opportunity to participate under their own expense, and 3) applicants who were under qualified and thus not accepted to attend.

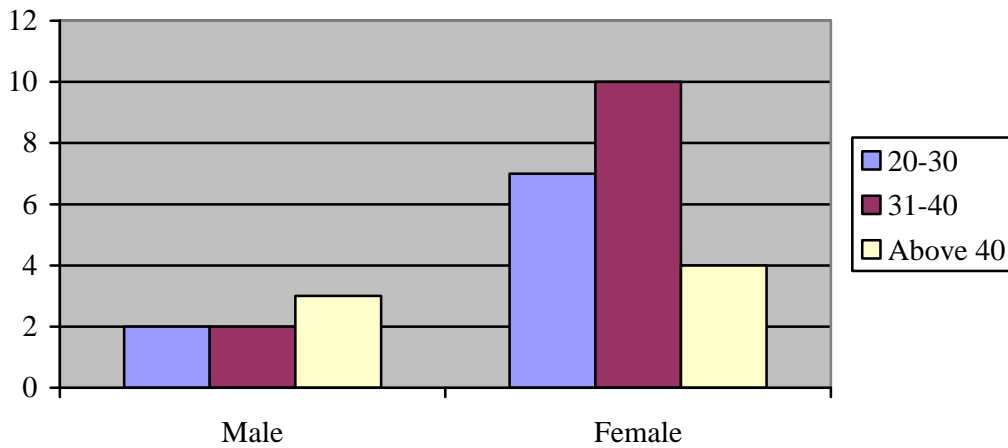
The workshop was attended by 28 researchers, nine of whom were non-Egyptians from the MENA region. The rest of the participants were Egyptian, two of whom resided in France. Table 1 below shows the composition of the workshop attendees. More than 32% of those who attended came from countries outside Egypt but within the MENA region. The majority (71%) of those who attended were female, and roughly 28% were male. The largest percentage of the researchers held a Master's degree (almost 40%), followed by Master's students (25%), PhD holders (21%) and PhD candidates (14%). The majority of attendees were young researchers, with 75% between age 20 and 40. The more senior participants included three members from the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), the Egyptian government statistical agency. These individuals were included in the training in an effort to fulfill the Council's mandate to raise the capacity of local institutions. In addition to CAPMAS members, a professor from Ahfad University in Sudan requested to attend the workshop. This application was accepted for the same reason.

**Table 1. Background Characteristics of the First Workshop Attendees**

Country of residence	No.	Gender		Education				Age		
		Male	Female	MA candidate	MA holder	PhD candidate	PhD holder	20-30	31-40	40+
Egypt	19	4	15	7	7	3	2	8	8	3

Sudan	3	-	3	-	1	-	2	-	2	1
Yemen	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Morocco	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Jordan	3	2	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
Palestine	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
TOTAL	28	8	20	7	11	4	6	9	12	7

**Figure 1. Composition of First Workshop Participants by Age and Gender**



The objective of the workshop was to give researchers training in either qualitative or quantitative research methods, while allowing both groups to receive an introduction to the issues that are important in the area of gender and work. The first training day introduced the gender and work initiative, and introduced the Egypt Labor Market Panel Survey (ELMPS) dataset, inviting those in Egypt to use it and those from outside Egypt to search for similar datasets in their countries. The first day also included an introduction to the STATA software package. These sessions were attended by all participants, regardless of their selected methodological approach.

On the second day, all trainees attended the first thematic session, on what “work” means by providing ILO definitions of employment, unemployment and labor force participation. Trainees then divided into qualitative and quantitative groups to receive training based on the methodological approach of their choice. The fact that the Council’s team included researchers with both qualitative and quantitative research experience allowed for this diversified program. The quantitative team examined measurement issues and descriptive statistics, determinants of women’s labor market participation, and fixed and random effect models. The qualitative team was introduced to what qualitative research is and the ethical considerations in doing fieldwork, including human subjects review. The qualitative sessions were designed to train researchers to conduct a mini-ethnographic study during the training program and to present their findings in the final session of the training.

The third training day was presented by the Council’s collaborator in research on gender and work, Dr. Mona Said, a professor at the American University in Cairo. Dr. Said gave three sessions on

gender discrimination in the labor market. She also covered methodological issues, using her own research as an example. The qualitative team attended the first thematic session on labor market discrimination, and then split into a separate group to focus on issues of sampling and informant recruitment. The fourth day was dedicated to issues of women’s empowerment. The quantitative team examined operationalization issues, and the qualitative team explored the documentation and organization of notes and use of NVIVO, a computer program designed to help manage and analyze qualitative data. On the fifth training day, the quantitative team looked at correlations between marriage and work, followed by a hands-on session on survival analysis techniques. The qualitative team presented the findings of their individual projects.

All trainees in the quantitative sessions had access to laptops and all sessions provided hands-on experience. The training was provided in Arabic to ensure the accessibility of training materials to all attendees. Training certificates were issued on the last day of the training, accompanied by a CD that contained all the training materials and presentations.

## ii) First Award Competition Round, September 2008

Following the training workshop, during the first week of September 2008, a call for proposals was issued for small grants on research in the area of gender and work in the MENA region. The announcement was disseminated in the same manner as the announcement for the training workshop. The deadline for receiving applications was 30th October, 2008. Twenty-two applications were received from researchers in six MENA countries, as described in Table 2 below. The majority of applicants were female (77%) and either PhD candidates (36%) or PhD holders (46%).

Following the deadline, submitted proposals were carefully reviewed by the program team and a summary of all proposals was created. A multi-disciplinary committee of experts met in November to review the submitted proposals. All committee members were from the Council’s researchers, and included: Ragui Assaad, PhD, Ghada Barsoum, PhD, Rania Roushdy, PhD, Mohamed Ramadan, MA, Ali Rashed, MA, and Dahlia Hassaniien, MA.

**Table 2. Characteristics of Researchers who Submitted Proposals, Round 1**

Country of Residence	No.	Gender		Education			Age		
		Male	Female	MA holder	PhD candidate	PhD holder	20-30	31-40	Above 40
Egypt	9	1	8	1	4	4	4	4	1
Palestine	6	2	4	2	2	2	-	4	2
Sudan	3	-	3	-	-	3	-	1	2
Lebanon	2	-	2	1	-	1	-	1	1
Yemen	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Morocco	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>
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Committee members reviewed proposals and gave comments during the meeting. Comments were compiled and letters were sent out to applicants for consideration. All proposals were categorized into one of four groups:

- i. Group 1: Three proposals were selected for award pending some minor changes in the proposals.<sup>2</sup> The awards were within the range of \$5,600 - \$8,000 each, depending on the nature and duration of the proposed research activities.
- ii. Group 2: Seven proposals were deemed very promising, but needed to be revised and resubmitted with the help of a mentor. Four of these proposals were resubmitted by February 15, 2009 deadline, and these applicants were awarded grants as part of the first round. Three other applicants failed to resubmit by the deadline but were invited to submit in the second round.
- iii. Group 3: These proposals were generally evaluated as not accepted, but the committee saw some strong points in the proposal that were worth developing. These applicants were therefore advised to resubmit based on comments provided to them by the committee, but were not assigned mentors.
- iv. Group 4: These proposals were rejected either for being irrelevant to the focus of the initiative or for being of poor quality.

The first round thus resulted in a total of seven awards. These awards were made to nine researchers, as two of the research projects were joint grants.

**Table 3. Background Characteristics of Researchers with Accepted Proposals, Round 1**

<b>Country of Residence</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Gender</b>		<b>Education</b>			<b>Age</b>		
		Male	Female	MA holder	PhD candidate	PhD holder	20-30	31-40	40+
Egypt	4	-	4	-	2	2	3	1	-
Palestine	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Sudan	2	-	2	-	-	2	-	1	1
Lebanon	2	-	2	1	-	1	-	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

Grantees' award letters covered all the details of their grant and its conditions. Letters specified the name of the study, the award duration, method of payment and the expected deliverables. Payments were conditional on submission of the required narrative and financial reports, and the final payment was conditional on receiving the final research paper. Award letter included also two annexes: the first annex stated the requirements for fulfillment of the award conditions (including the narrative

<sup>2</sup> Applicants were required to submit these changes by January 15, 2009.

and the financial reports), the acknowledgment necessary for publications, and the rules governing the purchase of any equipment. Annex two contained the Approved Award Budget, differentiating between the accountable expenses, for which the awardees were asked to submit actual receipts in order to effect their payment, and the stipend amount, which was considered as a symbolic compensation for the awardees. The amount of the stipend was based on an internal chart based on the academic level of the awardees. Awardees' budgets were carefully reviewed before the grants were awarded, and several modifications were made to each budget, ensuring its compliance with the internal criteria set by the Council.

A semi-annual narrative report (three to five double-spaced pages) was requested in the middle of the award period to describe the progress of the awardee's work to date, any problems encountered, and plans for completing the remainder of the project. At the end of the award period, a final narrative report was requested to be provided to the committee (10 double-spaced pages). This report aimed to highlight the major findings of the research, assess the relevance of the results for current population and development issues, and outline additional activities and accomplishments during the period of the award. The most important deliverable expected from the project was a paper of publishable quality based on the research to be conducted by the awardee.

### **iii) Second Training workshop on Gender and Work in the MENA Region, 3 – 7 May 2009**

The announcement for this training was sent on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in three languages: English, Arabic, and French. The mailing list used in distributing this announcement was the same list used before, with the addition of any new contacts introduced to the Council between the two events. The announcement was also uploaded on the Population Council's website to ensure wide dissemination. The deadline for receiving applications was April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

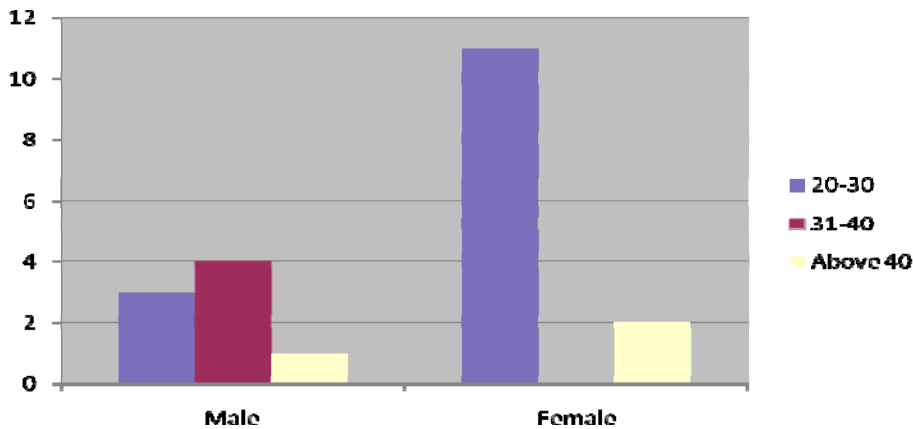
Applications were ranked by the Council staff into two categories: accepted with all workshop expenses covered, and under-qualified and therefore not accepted to attend. The workshop was attended by twenty-one researchers, nine of whom were non-Egyptians from the MENA region. The remainder were Egyptians, again two of whom resided in France. Table 4 below indicates the composition of the workshop attendees. The table indicates that the majority (approximately 62%) of those who attended were females, and roughly 38% were males. The researchers included of Master's Students (almost 43%), followed by Master's holders (approximately 24%) and PhD candidates roughly (approximately 24%) and of only (approximately 10%) of PhD holders. The majority of attendees were young researchers with 86% aged between 20 and 40 years.

**Table 4. Background Characteristics of the Second Workshop Attendees**

Country of residence	No	Gender		Education				Age		
		Male	Female	MA candi date	MA holder	PhD candid ate	PhD holder	20-30	31-40	40+
Egypt	12	4	8	5	2	3	2	10	1	1
Sudan	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1

Yemen	3	3	-	2	-	1	-	-	3	-
Morocco	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-
Jordan	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Palestine	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Tunisia	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Lebanon	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>

**Figure 2. Composition of Second Workshop Participants by Age and Gender**



The program of the 2<sup>nd</sup> training was largely the same as the first training. The main difference was that the thematic day on marriage and work was replaced with a thematic day on gender differences in education.

#### **iv) Second Award Competition Round, February 2009**

In the second award round, two sources of proposals were considered. First, the three revise and resubmit proposals that were pending from the first round. Second, proposals that came in through a new call for proposals that was announced during the last week of February 2009. The deadline for receiving applications was May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

Following the deadline, submitted proposals were carefully reviewed by the program manger and a summary of all proposals was created. A multi-disciplinary committee of experts met in June to review the submitted proposals. Committee members were drawn from both inside and outside the Council, in response to feedback from the midterm evaluation. The committee thus included, from inside the Council, Ragui Assaad, PhD, Ghada Barsoum, PhD, Rania Roushdy, PhD, Asmaa Elbadawy, PhD, Mohamed Ramadan, MA, and Ali Rashed, MA. From outside the Council, Hania Sholkamy, PhD (Social Research Center), Mona Said, PhD (American University in Cairo), and Hanaa Sogban, PhD (former professor at the American University in Cairo) participated in the committee.

This committee generated a list of projects approved for funding, based on the quality of the submitted proposals. The breakdown of applicants for the second round of grants is shown in Table 5. Out of 40 proposals submitted, 15 grants were awarded. One of these grants was awarded to a joint project by two researchers, and a group of three researchers working on a comparative, cross-national study were each awarded a grant for their country component. In addition, four grants were awarded for literature reviews only. Although these four scholars had originally submitted proposals for an original research project, the committee felt that their knowledge base in their respective areas of focus was not strong enough to successfully carry out the proposed research. The committee therefore offered them the opportunity to conduct a literature review through which they could improved upon this knowledge base before embarking on additional research.

**Table 5. Characteristics of Researchers who Submitted Proposals for Small Grant Awards, Round 2**

Country of Residence	No.	Gender		Education				Age		
		Male	Female	MA Candidate	MA holder	PhD candidate	PhD holder	20-30	31-40	40+
Egypt	22	4	18	3	5	5	9	14	6	2
Palestine	2	2	--	--	1	--	1	--	1	1
Sudan	5	2	3	--	1	--	4	--	3	2
Lebanon	1	--	1	--	1	--	--	--	--	1
Yemen	4	4	--	2	--	1	1	--	4	--
Morocco	2	1	1	--	--	1	1	1		1
Tunisia	2	1	1	--	2	--	--	1	1	--
Jordan	2	--	2	1	--	--	--	--	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>

Although the second round of awardees were given a shorter grant period than the first round, they were given the choice of selecting their own mentors, rather than being assigned a mentor by the Council. This was meant to facilitate a quicker start on the research project. The names and CVs of mentors proposed by the awardees were sent to the Population Council for evaluation and approval.

As mentioned above, each award letter included the requirement that the awardee submit a paper of publishable quality. In order to encourage the awardees and provide a venue for the actual publication of these papers, it was announced that selected papers would be published by the Population Council either as a working paper series or as an edited book volume. The publication of the awardees' work will be discussed in more detail below. This requirement for the small grants output was put in place in order to help meet the project's objectives of providing new opportunities for junior researchers – including the opportunity for peer-review and publication – and the objective of expanding the body of peer-reviewed research on gender and work in MENA.

As with the first round of awards, all budgets were carefully reviewed before the grant was awarded, and budgets were divided into two categories: accountable expenses and stipend amounts. All grants ended by the end of February 2010.

The overall distribution of the 23 researchers who received grants through the two award rounds, by nationality, gender, education, age, and type of research is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. Background Characteristics of Researchers who Received Small Research Grants, Total**

Country of Residence	No.	Type of Research			Gender		Education*			Age		
		Qual.	Quant.	Lit. Revie	Male	Female	MA holder	PhD candi date	PhD holder	20-30	31-40	40+
Egypt	13	3	6	4	3	10	1	4	8	7	5	1
Palestine	2	1	1	--	2		1	--	1	--	1	1
Sudan	2	2	--	--	--	2	--	--	2	--	1	1
Lebanon	1	1	--	--	--	1	1	--	--	--	--	1
Yemen	1	--	1	--	1		--	--	1		1	--
Morocco	1	1	--	--		1	--	1	--	1		--
Tunisia	2	1	1	--	1	1	2	--	--	1	1	--
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>

\*No MA candidates were accepted to the small research grants program

#### v) Research Seminars, June and November 2009

The core idea of the research seminars was provide an opportunity for awardees to present the preliminary findings of his/her study at an early stage in the research. This structure allowed the grantees to get feedback from mentors, experts and other researchers on the study's progress toward its objectives, and to generate recommendations for the remainder of the research. All of the awardees stated that the research seminars were very useful for them in the process of developing their projects.

The first research seminar was held on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009, and was primarily for the first round awardees. The second research seminar was primarily for the second round awardees, so was held for two days, November 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009, in order to accommodate their greater number and ensure that each researcher had enough time to present. First round awardees were also encouraged to



attend the event in order to learn from the projects of their peers and have an opportunity to network with the other awardees. In both seminars, each awardee was given around 20 minutes to present, followed by 20 minutes for open discussion and suggestions. The Council covered the travel and accommodation expenses of presenting awardees from outside Egypt for both seminars.

#### **vi) Final Dissemination Conference, 15 March 2010**

The final dissemination conference was designed as a forum for the awardees to present the final results of their work to a large audience. This event contributed to the objective of providing opportunities for young researchers in the area of gender and work, as it served as a valuable opportunity for the awardees to meet senior researchers in a variety of fields and potentially open up future collaborations or possibilities for further funding. It also played an important role in publicizing the growing body of high-quality research on gender and work produced through this project, contributing to the Council's overall aim of increasing interest in this important area of research.

Nineteen of the 22 submitted papers were presented during this event. Each awardee made a presentation of the main findings of his/her study, as well as the associated policy recommendations. Mentors served as the discussants for their respective awardees' papers, providing commentary on both the strengths and the weaknesses of the research.

The Council sent the invitation for the event to a wide range of researchers, policy makers, and civil society organizations in Egypt. Attendees included all the awardees and their mentors, junior and senior researchers from a variety of universities and institutes, NGO and civil society representatives, donors, policy-makers and other governmental bodies (i.e. CAPMAS, the Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) of the Egyptian Cabinet, the Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Finance etc). The conference was attended by around 80 participants.

#### **vii) Publication of Working Papers**

After the final dissemination conference, the 16 papers involving original research (the three person cross-country team produced one combined paper) were all reviewed for potential publication. Each paper was sent to a research with expertise in the MENA region, the topic of gender and work, and the methodology used by the author of the paper, whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed-method. Each reviewer was provided with a comprehensive rating sheet that asked them to rate the paper based on 14 different points, including clarity of the research question, appropriateness of the methods, quality of the evidence, relevance of the conclusions, organization, and quality of writing.

The ratings for each paper were tallied and the paper was given a comprehensive score. The top ten papers were then selected for publication as part of the Population Council's working paper series

Gender and Work in the MENA Region. However, as one of the selected papers had already been accepted to a peer-reviewed journal, this author excused herself from the working paper series and the next-highest rated paper was accepted in its place. Thus, of the final published working papers, six are on Egypt, two on Palestine, and one on Tunisia. The final working paper is a cross-national study of Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt.

Although the original proposal was to publish the selected papers both as part of the working paper series and as an edited volume, the Council decided not to publish the edited volume. This is because many of the awardees have expressed interest in submitting their papers to peer-reviewed journals, which will not be possible if the papers have been published in a book. The working paper series is not considered a final, refereed publication, so papers published in this format will still be eligible for acceptance in journals. The working papers will be made available online through the Population Council's website, and in hard-copy. Awardees will be given provided with some of the hard-copies to distribute through their home institutions and, for those outside Egypt, in their home countries.

The collection of published working papers covers a wide range of topics, including gender wage discrimination, women's household labor, gender differences in job search behavior, and the gender dynamics of the transition from school to work, in four MENA countries. These works represent a significant contribution to the current state of knowledge on gender and work in the MENA region, meeting the project's objective of expanding the peer-reviewed literature in this field. The fact that one of the awardees has already managed to publish her paper in a peer-reviewed journal is an indication of the high quality of the work produced under the project, and bodes well for the further dissemination of other papers through academic journals with wide readerships. For a full bibliography of papers and publications produced under this project, please see Section 7.

#### **viii) Policy Messages Training, 24 – 25 May 2011**

The third objective of the Gender and Work project was to build the capacity of researchers to influence policy. Over the course of the project, Council staff realized that most of the awardees did not have the background or know-how to effectively disseminate their results to policy makers, and would need additional training in this area beyond the activities already conducted under the grant. For this reason, the Council requested a cost-extension from IDRC in order to carry out additional activities related to disseminating research results to policy makers.

The main activity held under this component of the grant was a training on "Translating Research into Policy Messages," held from May 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Twenty-four researchers attended this training, including five of the small grant awardees.<sup>3</sup> Of the non-awardees who attended, one came from Jordan and two from Syria. The remaining attendees were researchers at universities and government bodies in Egypt. Most of those admitted to the training were junior researchers, as these were expected to benefit most from participating in the training early in their careers. Several more

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<sup>3</sup> Two other awardees from outside Egypt had planned to attend the training but were unable to travel due to continuing instability and changing visa requirements related to the Arab Spring.

senior researchers were admitted from government research bodies due to the importance of their institutions' position in Egyptian policy making processes.

The first day of the training was presented by Dr. Tawhida Khalil, an independent consultant and expert on policy communication. Dr. Khalil presented an overview on how and why disseminating research results to policy makers is different from disseminating to an academic audience, and covered the fundamentals of identifying one's audience for policy messages and effectively communicating research results to this audience. Dr. Ahmed Ghoneim, an economics professor at Cairo University, also held an informal discussion session on lessons learned from his work with policy makers in Egypt. Day two of the training was lead by Population Council staff and provided a hands-on workshop on developing a policy brief. Training participants formed groups around one of the awardees, and used the awardee's gender and work research projects as an example of how to distill the messages of a research paper into a policy brief. Several of the awardees then drew on these group exercises in developing their own published policy briefs, as described in the next section.

#### **ix) Policy Brief Publication**

After the policy messages training, a call was sent on to all of the small grant awardees offering them the opportunity to write a policy brief based on their gender and work paper, and to submit that brief to the Population Council to be reviewed for potential publication. Materials from the policy messages training workshop were distributed with this email so that awardees who were unable to attend could use them as a reference when writing their briefs. The call was sent on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and the 4-page policy briefs were due to the Council on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

Six awardees submitted policy briefs, and all were accepted for publication. These briefs covered studies from Egypt (2), Palestine (2), Lebanon (1) and Yemen (1). A full list of the brief titles can be found in the bibliography. Council staff worked with awardees to revise their briefs and develop the most effective presentation of the policy recommendations, in most cases going through two or three drafts with the authors before the briefs were sent for publication. As with the working papers, the briefs, which were published as a new Gender and Work in the MENA Region Policy Brief series, will be disseminated on the Population Council website as well as printed in hard copy. To ensure greater accessibility of the briefs among policy makers in the MENA region, all six briefs will be published in both English and Arabic.

#### **x) Additional Research Workshops, July and November 2011**

The economic administration of the grant during its first three years allowed for the funding or partial funding of two additional research training workshops in July and November 2011, respectively.<sup>4</sup> These workshops focused on the use of a new dataset, the Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE),

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<sup>4</sup> Project funds were used for these workshops with the prior approval of IDRC.

which was fielded by the Population Council in 2009 and the data released in December 2010. The opportunity to train a new cohort of young researchers on SYPE is an important first step in raising the capacity of researchers in a number of different fields to conduct research related to youth, work and gender in the Middle East. These trainings laid the groundwork for future, multi-disciplinary research capacity building programs in MENA.

From July 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011 the Population Council held a training workshop on “The Use of the Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) Data” as part of a SYPE dissemination project funded by the Ford Foundation. The workshop was attended by 38 junior researchers from Egypt and around the MENA region. Funds from the Gender & Work project were used to contribute to this workshop, funding the participation of the seven international participants who attended the workshop. These participants represented four countries: Jordan (3), Sudan (2), Palestine (1) and Syria (1). In addition, the cost of renting laptops for five Egyptian participants from outside Cairo was funded through the project. This allowed the Council to include researchers from areas of Egypt in which it is often difficult for researchers to access capacity building programs such as the Gender & Work project.

The first two days of the training covered an introduction to the SYPE survey and hands-on training in the fundamentals of using STATA for statistical analysis. The following three days covered the thematic areas of education, employment and health, respectively. Each day included in-depth examples of important research topics in the given area, with hands-on training in how to implement relevant statistical models in STATA.

The second workshop, “The Methodology of the Survey of Young People in Egypt,” was held October 30<sup>th</sup> – November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011. This workshop, funded entirely by the Gender & Work project, focused on training researchers from government institutes and agencies on how to implement a nationally-representative survey like SYPE. The workshop was aimed at addressing the low capacity of government institutions to implement high-quality survey data collections. The first three days of the workshop covered sample design and selection, questionnaire design, fieldwork implementation, data entry and quality control. The final two days covered the fundamentals of data cleaning and analysis using STATA. The workshop was attended by 21 researchers, including one participant from the Department of Statistics in Jordan and one from the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics. Egyptian institutions represented include CAPMAS, IDSC, the National Center for Childhood and Motherhood, the National Institute for Sociological and Criminological Research, and Cairo University.

## **5. Implementation Challenges**

Several challenges were encountered in the implementation of this project. First, the group of awardees entered the project with varying levels of methodological knowledge. A balance thus had to be struck in the support of those who were in need of foundational training in qualitative and quantitative methods, and those who already had a solid background but needed further, more

individual support in order to develop a publishable paper. Similarly, a balance had to be struck between supporting projects that otherwise could not have been carried out, and attracting researchers with other potential projects to the field of gender and work. This challenge was addressed through the variety of activities carried out under the project, and the individual mentoring system, but nevertheless presented a challenge to project planning and training implementation.

The mentorship, while a critical to providing tailored support to each awardee, also presented challenges in its degree of individualism. The mentor relationship varied considerably across awardees, depending on the researchers needs, the mentor and researcher's time, and in some cases the fact that appropriate mentors could not be found in the awardee's home country, leading to greater difficulty in communication. Some awardees and mentors have thus expressed that they would have like to have more structure built in to the mentorship relationship.

Finally, the project entailed a great deal of administrative work on the side of the Population Council. The terms of the agreement had to be explained, as many awardees had not received grants of this type before. An individual orientation session was provided to each awardee to ensure that he/she fully understood his rights as well as his commitments. Considerable follow-up to ensure the submission of reports and deliverables in a timely manner was also needed. A series of emails and reminders had to be sent to each awardee, reminding them of their deliverables time line, and providing them guidance on the expect outputs. At the end of each award, a thorough review of each and every voucher, bill and/or receipt had to be undertaken to ensure that all the attachments of the expense report complied with the internal rules and regulations of the Council, as well as the annex attached to the award letter

## **6. Project Outputs and Outcomes**

A full list of works generated under the project, published and unpublished, is provided in the bibliography in Section 7. Through the capacity building project, 22 junior researchers from seven MENA countries were provided with small grants to pursue research projects related to gender and work. Twenty papers resulted from the small grants program, 16 of which entailed original quantitative or qualitative research. Of these 16 papers, 11 (68%) have been published thus far, 10 as Population Council working papers and one in a peer-reviewed journal. In addition, six policy briefs were published based on the results of the grantee's works. Grantees also participated in one of two research seminars held under the project, as well as a final dissemination conference, forums that allowed them to gain feedback on their work, present their results, and network with senior researchers in their field.

In addition to the small grants program, 109 researchers from nine MENA countries were trained on quantitative and/or qualitative research methods. These trainings exposed the researchers to important issues in the area of gender and work, provided them with in-depth training in commonly used methods in the study of issues, and taught them the fundamentals of advanced computer

analysis programs. An additional 24 researchers from five MENA countries were provided training in how to effectively communicate research results to policy makers and how to write a policy brief.

An important outcome of the project was that it increased the visibility of gender and work as a vibrant area of research in the MENA region. The final dissemination conference and publication of the working papers and policy briefs have also played an important role in publicizing the availability of high-quality research in this field. Many of the researchers have also presented their work in other regional venues, such as the Economic Research Forum's annual conference, emphasizing the linkages between gender and work and other areas of social and economic research. Importantly, in addition to supporting researchers already interested in the area of gender and work, through the small grants program this project was able to attract talented young researchers who may otherwise have focused their work on different topics to this area of study. This has been key to building a diverse cadre of young researchers with interest in gender and work

In terms of the awardees themselves, the project played several different roles in the development of their careers. For many, and particularly those in the early post-doctorate phase or trained in regional universities, the project provided a much-needed opportunity for continued financial and academic support in the early stages of their career. The intensive nature of the program, with its trainings and mentorship component, was critical to these awardees' ability to carry out a methodologically rigorous research project and develop a paper of publishable quality. The capacity building project was an important supplement to their doctoral training, as well as an opportunity to gain experience with the presentation and peer-review process entailed in publishing scholarly research. These researchers are now in a much stronger position to continue conducting research and publishing in the area of gender and work.

For those awardees with stronger, often international, PhD training, the capacity building project was in many ways more important for the seed money and the forum it provided for networking with senior and junior scholars from around the MENA region than for the methodological training. For many of these scholars, the seed money allowed them to complete parts of their dissertation, or early post-doctorate research projects, that might not have been possible otherwise. The mentorship component of the research, the research seminars, and the other opportunities for meeting fellow awardees, provided an important networking component to the project. Meeting junior and senior researchers in their field allowed the awardees to explore future collaborations and funding possibilities.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This project demonstrated that there is a high level of interest in and demand for research training and opportunities for mentorship among young researchers in the MENA region. It also

demonstrated that much can be accomplished through an integrated program of training workshops, seminars, and mentoring. However, participants needed a great deal of support in order to get their work to the point of being a publishable paper. Capacity building programs such as this one therefore need to include sufficient time and resources after the completion of the research itself to ensure that the work can be made available to the broader research and policy communities. The Council also found that specific training on how to draw policy messages from research results was needed in order for awardees to be able to effectively address policy audiences.

The project also demonstrated that a focused capacity building initiative such as this one can play an important role in building interest in, and the visibility of, important but under-studied research areas such as gender and work. The initiative was able both to build the skills of researchers already engaged in this area, and to encourage talented young scholars in related fields to shift their research focus to include a strong gender and work component. However, there is still much to be learned regarding gender and work in MENA, and future capacity building initiatives in this area could support continued visibility of the issue.

The results of the project also suggest that similar capacity building initiatives focused on new data sources, such as the Survey of Young People in Egypt, can play an important role in increasing the usage of these sources in high-quality research. This is key to exploiting the full potential of existing data to help the research, civil society and policy communities understand pressing social issues, such as the situation of youth during the current period of instability in the Arab World. Furthermore, there is still a great need to enhance local research capacity in the MENA region, and, as demonstrated by this project, a considerable demand among young researchers for training and mentorship opportunities.

In conclusion, our recommendations for future research capacity building programs include:

- Use a combination of activities over the course of the program
- Ensure that researchers and their mentors create a joint work plan for their roles over course of the program
- Include mid-term assessment points, such as research seminars, to encourage the development of publishable works
- Include specific trainings on the write-up and presentation of research results for both academic and policy audiences



## 8. Bibliography of Works Produced under the Project

### Population Council Working Papers

- El Haddad, Amirah. 2011. *Female Wages in the Egyptian Textiles and Clothing Industry: Low Pay or Discrimination?* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Working Paper Series: Poverty, Job Quality and Labor Market Dynamics, No. 13. Cairo: Population Council.
- Abdel-Majeed, Ayman. 2010. *The Decline in the Labor Market in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Causes and Determinants from the Gender Perspective.* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Working Paper Series: Poverty, Job Quality and Labor Market Dynamics, No. 14. Cairo: Population Council.
- Zaki, Chahir. 2011. *On Trade Policies and Wage Disparity in Egypt: Evidence from Microeconomic Data.* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Working Paper Series: Poverty, Job Quality and Labor Market Dynamics, No.15. Cairo: Population Council.
- Gadallah, May. 2011. *Factors of Career Mobility in Egypt by Gender.* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Working Paper Series: Poverty, Job Quality and Labor Market Dynamics, No. 16. Cairo: Population Council.
- Hendy, Rana. 2011. *Rethinking the Time Allocation of Egyptian Females: A Matching Analysis.* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Working Paper Series: Poverty, Job Quality and Labor Market Dynamics, No. 17. Cairo: Population Council.
- Salem, Rania. 2010. *Women's Economic Resources and Bargaining in Marriage: Does Egyptian Women's Status Depend on Earnings on Marriage Payments?* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Working Paper Series: Poverty, Job Quality and Labor Market Dynamics, No. 18. Cairo: Population Council.
- Al Kafri, Saleh. 2011. *Transition from Higher Education to the Labor Market: Unemployment among Graduates from the Gender Perspective in the Palestinian Territory.* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Working Paper Series: Poverty, Job Quality and Labor Market Dynamics, No. 19. Cairo: Population Council.
- Zouri, Sami. 2010. *La dynamique de la discrimination salariale et de l'équité gendrielle sur le marché du travail au Maroc.* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Working Paper Series: Poverty, Job Quality and Labor Market Dynamics, No. 20. Cairo: Population Council.
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### Other Peer-Reviewed Publications



Habib, Rima, Jinan Usta and Nisrine Makarem. Forthcoming. Economic Abuse among Working Women. *Violence against Women: Special Issue on Violence Against Women in the Middle East*.

### **Population Council Policy Briefs (also published in Arabic)**

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Chahir, Zaki. 2011. *Trade Barriers Harm Female, Urban and Blue Collar Workers: Is there a Way Out?* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Policy Brief Series, No. 2. Cairo: Population Council.

Usta, Jinan. 2011. *Work and Women: Abuse or Empowerment?* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Policy Brief Series, No. 3. Cairo: Population Council.

Abdel-Majeed, Ayman. 2011. *Our Purpose is to overcome the Challenges of Youth Participation in the Labor Market in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from a Gender Perspective.* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Policy Brief Series, No. 4. Cairo: Population Council.

El Kafri, Saleh. 2011. *Empowering Women from Early Life Requires Job Creation in Parallel with Development of Education.* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Policy Brief Series, No. 5. Cairo: Population Council.

El Kebsi, Tarek. 2011. *Yemeni's Women Employment: Reality and Challenges.* Gender and Work in the MENA Region Policy Brief Series, No. 6. Cairo: Population Council.

### **Unpublished Research Papers**

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Ebeid, Dina. 2011. *Steel Lives under Economic Reforms: Gender, Households and Work in Helwan, Egypt.*

El Kebsi, Tareq. 2011. *Female Labor Force Participation in Yemen.*

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El Zein, Sumaia. 2011. *Factors Affecting Women's Promotion into Top Managerial Positions in Sudan.*

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Hazem, Samaa. 2011. *Review of Literature on Gender and Work: Reflecting on the Experience in Egypt and Globally.*

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