

**High Level Regional Conference  
Health Sector Integrity in the Arab Region:  
Risk, Solutions, and Roles of Stakeholders**



**Session 1 :**

**Challenges facing the health sector in the Arab region and the role of integrity in addressing it from a sustainable development perspective**

**Gender considerations for better governance**

Cairo, 21 October 2024

# Gender equality: central for achieving sustainable development

Gender equality & women and girls' empowerment : central for achieving SDG 5 on women and girls, it is transversal all other 16 SDGs incl. SDG 3 .

## Assessing women's condition relative to that of men

### Public sphere includes :

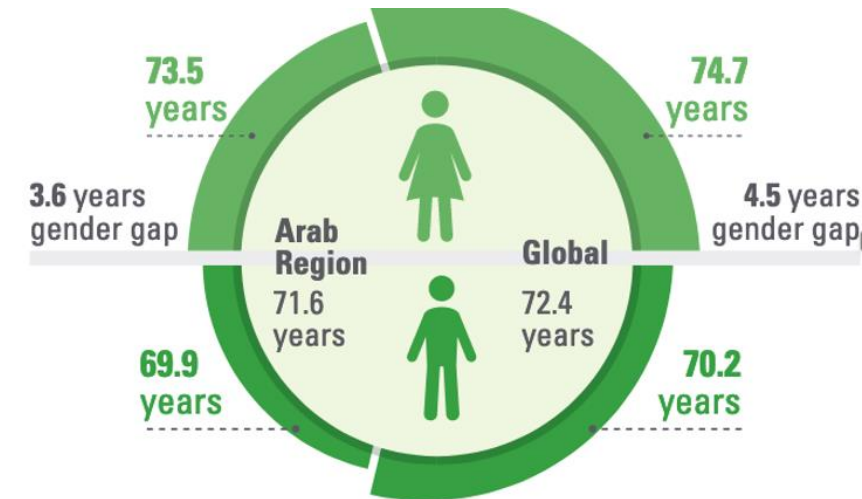
Health, nutrition, education, access to economic assets and resources, political opportunity, freedom from coercion and violence

Arab countries : despite progress, major challenges in achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls remain, incl. in health

# Improved general health indicators in Arab countries ... but

- **Higher fertility rates than other region.**
- **Unequitable access to safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene:** women in poor households are less likely to have access to clean and safe sanitation facilities that provide appropriate security and hygiene standards
- **Emergency and conflict settings affect women and girls health disproportionately**
- **Women and girls remain particularly vulnerable to food insecurity** (undernutrition, overweight and micronutrient deficiencies).
- **High maternal mortality with limited access to reproductive health care.**
- **Women victims of violence** not always well acknowledged or addressed

Life expectancy below global average, particularly for women



# No gendered corruption/integrity distinction

## Corruption risks in health are high

### Occurrence at many levels incl.:

- the **highest political level** changes government allocation of funding,
- **misappropriation** of funds,
- **Nepotism**, favouritism in hiring, transfer and promotion and training,
- **lack of transparency**
- inefficiency, involuntary or deliberate administrative errors.

### Impact:

- Lack of effective coordination between the different components in health wastes resources, generates duplication of actions and resource,
- Suboptimal primary health care system with limited human and financial resources,
- Insufficient regulations with respect to particular practices such as prescription of medication,
- Fragmented health information limits local timely decision-making &
- Lack of adequate health infrastructure.

# Women : disproportionately vulnerable in the health eco-system

budget allocation, policy development, service identification and resource disbursements



## Practices impacting women's health

Women tend to be more frequent users of health services and interact with, and rely on, public health institutions (pregnancy, birth and post-natal, children, elderly, victims of violence, in-adequately or adapted medication).

Specific needs are usually not considered by public sector budget allocations & company considerations investing in health research are changing too slowly.

Healthcare providers, organizers, insurers = critical in structuring the sector. Yet, there are strong gender distortions which may affect decisions on their wellbeing.

- Corruption limits women's access to care
  - women have less access to household resources and require more preventive reproductive health services
  - women show a higher rates of illness /malnutrition /mortality
  - misadapted (over-under) treatments
  - lack of knowledge of their rights and entitlements make them more vulnerable to bribery demands
- Gender disparity in recruitment/promotion: prevents women to engage in leadership and governance positions.
- Corruption affects the most vulnerable and those at a high socioeconomic risk = many women. **Corruption may reinforce the vicious cycle of women's poverty**

# Implement a gender dimension in sector specific anti-corruption policy tools to curb corruption



**Mainstreaming gender:** assess implications for women and men of any planned action to ensure that the gender perspective becomes an integral dimension in the design, implementation and monitoring of any policies, programmes and institutions

**Anticipate** potential differential impacts of policy actions on women and men and the possibility to design. **Implement** gender-sensitive policy actions in order to maximize opportunities for all. **Avoid** the adoption of measures which increase gender disparities

**Sector integrity policies** deserve attention to specific circumstances.

- **Stakeholder** mapping and **issues mapping** are closely correlated and understanding the country's and the industry's corruption dynamics
- Collect **disaggregated data** and use it in designing progressively more adapted **anti-corruption reforms**
- Include a **gender** perspectives in the “**prioritization of interventions**”
- In **decision making processes** ensure that **women's concerns** are adequately considered
- **Hiring** on the basis of **merit** for **diversity**.....

See UNDP “Anti-corruption strategies and the link to gender equality” **with a sector perspective**



**Thank you for your attention**

**Nicola Ehlermann**  
Senior Anti-Corruption and Gender Advisor

# Arguments on the gender-corruption link

- ❖ **Fairer sex myth:** difference in behavioural characteristics and that women are often selfless than men; women are less involved in corruption and accept less bribes but it was shown that promoting women into high-level positions on the basis of their superior morality is an ill-conceived presumption.
- ❖ The **difference of opportunities** argument suggests that women lack the knowledge and opportunities in partaking in corruption as women are generally excluded from « male-dominated patronage » and corruption network.
- ❖ **Fairer system** : observation that in liberal democracies where equality, fairness and meritocracy are promoted, women's political participation increases including among opposition candidates, free journalism and an independent judiciary and corruption is lowered. A less predictable the public administration's sex composition, the lower the level of corruption. Some suggest that this link is reduced in autocratic systems.
- ❖ The **risk averse attitude** that characterizes women is also put forward to explain the gender-corruption relationship. This argument is further reinforced by studies that argue that women are more severely punished when engaging in corruption, in particular where there is a high probability that bribery will be discovered and punished. However, when corruption is risk free, there is no gender difference.
- ❖ The **helping 'behaviour'** shows that when women are involved in political decisions, they are generally considered more likely to engage in public services and social spending relevant to the needs of their own gender.
- ❖ **Gendered forms of corruption** : men are more sensible to “greed” corruption, whereas women are more likely than men to perceive that corruption is driven by need.



# Gender and corruption: data needs

Gender disaggregated data to be collected such as:

- How many men/women come back to undertake all the requested tests and procedures
- Number of men/women that prefer to consult a pharmacist for the most appropriate treatment?
- How many men/women actually prefer attending the primary health care facility even if it's not as efficient versus travel to the nearest hospital?
- Patients that apply for subsidized medical treatments and the type of treatments and medications the subsidies are being applied for.
- Number of women doctors/nurses and their position in the hierarchy of the ministry, medical institutions, the management of funding, the pharma industry etc.

# Corruption in the analyses of the health sector

An average of **5.59%** of annual worldwide health spending is lost due to Fraud

Nepotism - resulting in inefficient resourcing

Abusing job and absenteeism

Overcharging patients

Wasting resources in the public health sector by requesting unnecessary tests and investigations

Performing unneeded procedures for greater financial gain

Pharmaceutical industry driving a particular medication over another, or even encouraging a more medically reliant diagnosis over another

Taking bribes and prescribing expensive medicine in favor of kickbacks

Weaknesses in the procedures of detecting and dealing with corruption

Corruption and leakage that prevent the allocated budget resources from reaching the geographic areas and the populations most in need