



CGIAR
GENDER EQUALITY
AND INCLUSION

Co-Creating a Gender and Social Inclusion Learning Agenda for Food, Land, and Water Systems in Middle East and North Africa Region

CGIAR Gender Equality and Inclusion

Rahma Adam, Eman Abd-Allah A. El-Zainy, Menna Mosbah, Ranjitha Puskur, Benu Verma, Dina Najjar and Ojongetakah Enokenwa Baa



Workshop Report



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Corresponding author: Rahma Adam (R. Adam@cgiar.org)

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About CGIAR Gender Equality and Inclusion (GENDER Accelerator)

CGIAR Gender Equality and Inclusion is CGIAR's Accelerator designed to put gender equality at the forefront of global agricultural research for development. The Accelerator will transform the way gender research is done, both within and beyond CGIAR, to kick-start a process of genuine change toward greater gender equality and better lives for smallholder farmers everywhere. gender.cgiar.org

CONTACT & LOCATION DETAILS

Address: Old Naivasha Road, near Uthiru, Nairobi, Kenya
Mailing: P.O. Box 30709, GPO 00100, Nairobi, Kenya
Email address: Gender@cgiar.org

This is a contribution to the following:



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (Egypt)
CAWTR	Centre for Arab Women for Training and Research
CEDARE	Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
EU	European Union
FLWS	Food, Land, and Water Systems
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
J-PAL	Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFI / MFIs	Microfinance Institution(s)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RCT	Randomized Controlled Trial
SMS	Short Message Service
UN	United Nations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report synthesizes the outcomes of the Regional Workshop on Co-Creating a Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Learning Agenda for Food, Land, and Water Systems (FLWS) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, convened under the CGIAR Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator. The workshop brought together researchers, policymakers, civil society actors, and development partners to assess existing evidence, identify persistent gaps, and co-design a regional learning agenda to inform gender-responsive research, policy, and practice. Discussions were framed by the MENA region's intersecting challenges of climate change, water scarcity, land degradation, conflict, displacement, and widening inequality. Participants discussed a defining contradiction shaping gender outcomes in the region, specifically the MENA paradox, whereby women's relatively strong achievements in education and health have not translated into commensurate economic participation, leadership, or decision-making power. Female labour force participation remains among the lowest globally, particularly within agriculture and rural livelihoods, despite women's substantial and growing contributions.

A central theme throughout the workshop was the growing feminisation of agricultural labour, driven by male migration, changing employment patterns, and crisis-related disruptions. While women's participation in agriculture, fisheries, and food systems is increasing, this has not resulted in greater recognition, agency, or leadership. Instead, women are concentrated in informal, low-paid, and insecure forms of work, with limited voice in households, producer organizations, and policy processes. This feminisation without agency or decision making power was consistently identified as a defining feature of agrifood systems across the region. Participants emphasized that deeply rooted structural barriers continue to constrain inclusive transformation. These include restrictive gender norms and patriarchal practices, persistent wage inequality, limited access to and control over land and productive assets, weak access to finance and insurance, exclusion from extension services, irrigation training, mechanisation, and technology, and weak representation of women in cooperatives, producer groups, and governance institutions. The absence of reliable, accessible, and gender-disaggregated data further reinforces women's invisibility as farmers and workers, undermining accountability and evidence-based policymaking.

The evidence review presented at the workshop identified eight recurring patterns shaping gender inequality in MENA's food, land, and water systems. These include feminisation of agriculture without power or recognition; persistent gender wage gaps and precarious

employment; extremely low levels of women's land ownership linked to discriminatory inheritance systems; weak collective organization and underperforming cooperatives; and limited access to finance, technology, mechanisation, irrigation, and training. Although promising innovations exist—such as in-kind finance, bundled services, gender-responsive advisory systems, and norm-change initiatives—their scale and sustainability remain limited.

Significant research and evidence gaps were also identified. Priority gaps include:

1. Legal and social recognition of women as farmers, including visibility of informal and unpaid work.
2. Persistent inequities in inheritance practices and women's land and asset rights.
3. Barriers to women's access to irrigation training, mechanisation, and other technologies traditionally targeted to men.
4. Limited livelihood diversification opportunities and long-term economic security for aging women farmers.
5. Lack of protection, regulation, and decent work standards for women in informal and precarious agricultural labour.
6. Insufficient understanding of youth and refugee participation in agrifood systems, including working conditions, mobility constraints, and social cohesion dynamics.

Participants stressed that processes such as mechanisation and collectivisation can either reduce drudgery and enhance productivity or deepen exclusion, depending on how gender dynamics are addressed.

Building on these insights, the workshop co-developed a regional GESI learning agenda focused on strengthening evidence generation, improving knowledge sharing and policy uptake, and testing scalable solutions across land rights, financial inclusion, decent work and social protection, collective action, private sector engagement, and conflict-affected agrifood systems. Overall, the workshop reaffirmed that advancing gender equality and social inclusion is central to building resilient, productive, and equitable food, land, and water systems in the MENA region. Furthermore, the workshop participants identified nine key learning gaps, which are: (1). Evidence and knowledge management, sharing and communication; (2). Bridging research evidence policy; (3). Financial inclusion and gender-responsive financial products; (4). Digital inclusion; (5). Land ownership/rights; (6). Unpacking the conflict impact in agrifood systems, with GESI nexus; (7). Co-operatives/collectives as a business model; (8). Decent work/employment for women, looking at wage gaps, unpaid care economy and disabilities; and (9). Private sector engagement.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) are central to achieving sustainable, resilient, and equitable food, land, and water systems (FLWS), particularly in regions facing intersecting climate, economic, and political pressures. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is among the most environmentally stressed globally, characterized by severe water scarcity, land degradation, rising temperatures, declining rainfall, and increasing climate variability. Under some climate change scenarios, freshwater availability in the region is projected to decline by up to 45 percent, posing serious risks to economic stability, food security, and human well-being (World Bank, 2023). These environmental pressures intersect with protracted conflict, displacement, unemployment, and widening socioeconomic inequalities, shaping how risks and opportunities are distributed across populations. Within this context, gender and other social inequalities both drive and exacerbate vulnerability, yet they remain insufficiently addressed in research, policy, and development practice. The MENA region continues to rank as the most gender unequal globally, achieving only 62.6 percent parity in the 2023 Global Gender Gap Index. At current rates of progress, closing these gaps could take more than a century (World Economic Forum, 2023; Middle East Institute, 2023).

Despite progress in education and health outcomes in several countries, women's participation in agriculture, fisheries, and rural livelihoods across MENA remains largely informal, underpaid, and under-recognized. Women constitute a significant share of the agricultural workforce, yet they own less than five percent of agricultural land and are frequently excluded from decision-making over land and natural resource management. These structural constraints limit women's ability to adapt to climate risks, access finance and technology, improve productivity, and engage in higher-value markets (FAO, 2018; Middle East Institute, 2023). Across FLWS, women face persistent barriers to land and asset ownership, credit, extension services, technology, markets, and leadership opportunities. Discriminatory legal frameworks, weak enforcement of rights, and restrictive social norms further constrain women's economic participation and resilience, with significant implications for household food security and broader system sustainability (World Bank, 2020; Atlantic Council, 2022). These inequalities are further compounded for youth, refugees, and other marginalized groups, whose roles in agrifood systems are often invisible in policy and data.

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), through its Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator, recognizes that transforming FLWS requires more than

technical solutions. Sustainable transformation depends on evidence-based approaches that explicitly address power relations, social norms, and institutional barriers. However, in the MENA region, research and published evidence on gender equality and social inclusion remain limited, fragmented, and insufficiently accessible, even when Arabic-language sources are considered. This evidence gap weakens policy design, limits accountability for gender outcomes, and constrains the translation of research into practice (CGIAR, 2023; Middle East Institute, 2023).

Global evidence further highlights the gendered impacts of climate change in rural contexts. In low- and middle-income countries, female-headed households experience disproportionately higher income losses during climate shocks such as heat waves and floods, reflecting systemic inequalities in access to land, credit, technology, and adaptive resources. Yet national climate adaptation plans rarely address women's specific vulnerabilities or capacities in a meaningful way (World Food Programme, 2022; Associated Press News, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the Regional Workshop on Advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Food, Land, and Water Systems in the MENA Region was convened to strengthen collective learning and co-develop a regional GESI learning agenda. The workshop brought together 25 participants from 10 countries, specifically Egypt, India, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, South Africa, Tanzania, and Tunisia. The participants came from 14 organizations, including CGIAR centers, international research institutes, civil society organizations, and development partners (see Annex 1). This diversity enabled cross-country and cross-sectoral dialogue linking research, policy, and practice. The workshop aimed to build a shared understanding of existing evidence, identify critical knowledge gaps, and define priority learning questions to guide future research and policy engagement on GESI in FLWS in the MENA region. Participants reviewed available evidence, surfaced persistent and emerging gaps, documented promising practices, and co-designed pathways for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and impact.

Importantly, discussions emphasized the need to move beyond fragmented, project-based approaches toward more coordinated, system-level learning. Weak research-policy linkages, limited platforms for evidence synthesis, and monitoring systems focused on outputs rather than outcomes continue to hinder progress. Addressing these challenges requires stronger regional learning mechanisms, sustained partnerships, and deliberate investment in gender-responsive evidence and policy engagement. The outcomes of this workshop, documented in this report, are intended to inform CGIAR and partner investments and contribute to more inclusive, resilient, and equitable food, land, and water systems across the MENA region.

2.0

Day

One

Session

1

Welcome and Opening Remarks

The workshop opened with remarks from Dr. Mohie El Din Omar, ICARDA Country Representative for Egypt, who welcomed all participants and highlighted the organization's ongoing research for development (R4D) efforts in agriculture. He emphasized that ICARDA's interventions have impacted yield, water productivity, land productivity in the region and beyond. He noted that evidence of impact on gender equality remains less visible. Dr Omar noted, "Sometimes gender equality is included in projects because donors request it, but the real question is—are we seeing the impact on the ground? This workshop is important for our scientists to understand how integrating gender and social issues can genuinely benefit our agricultural and water systems." He hoped the workshop would provide a space for deepening learning, exchanging ideas, and benefit both biophysical and social scientists

Dr. Mohie El Din Omar providing opening remarks at the workshop.



Session

2

Workshop Introduction and Purpose

Session 2 was led by Dr. Ranjitha Puskur from IRRI, who opened with appreciation for Dr. Omar and the ICARDA team. She introduced participants to the “Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator,” explaining the role of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a consortium of 15 global research centers working together to strengthen Food, Land, and Water systems. She emphasized that rapid system transformations—driven by climate change, globalization, and market forces—create new challenges. Often scientific advances, that are critical to tackle these challenges, leave behind the most vulnerable. She stressed the need for evidence-based action that ensures equity and supports marginalized groups.

Dr. Puskur highlighted that the MENA region has limited research and published evidence on gender and social inclusion, even when literature in Arabic language is counted. She stated that without evidence, effective policies and programs cannot be developed, making this workshop urgent and timely. The purpose of the workshop, she explained, is to co-develop a regional learning agenda through reviewing existing evidence, identifying gaps, and defining priority questions for future research, innovation, and policy. She outlined the two-day workshop plan where participants will map ongoing efforts, generate shared knowledge, and shape next steps to collectively advance GESI-focused transformation of agricultural and food systems in the region.

**Dr. Ranjitha Puskur
providing opening
remarks and setting
the scene of the
workshop.**



Session

3

Mapping Our Lenses

Session 3, led by Dr. Benu Verma, focused on reflection, connection, and collective priority setting. Dr. Benu introduced herself as someone who works “to build bridges between research and policy, between theory and practice,” emphasizing collaboration and shared learning.

Dr. Benu led participants through an interactive movement exercise, participants regrouped several times—first by flowers, then by colors, then by preferred activities—encouraging rapport and deeper openness before moving into priority discussions on gender equality. This helped the participants to get to know each other and appreciate each other’s preferences, places of work and expertise. The final rounds transitioned into the core objective: identifying what is most important to advance gender relations and women’s rights in work systems. Participants were asked to choose between Education, Economic Empowerment, Land Rights, and Political Participation, recognizing that priorities often overlap. They then positioned themselves according to the domain where their work has the greatest influence—Policy, Research, or Development—and were asked to write one key evidence or learning gap on sticky notes.

**Dr. Benu Verma from IRRI
is leading a session on
mapping our lenses.**





Workshop participants are going through a session of interactive rounds to get to know each other's work, interests and getting connected.

Under Policy, gaps highlighted included communication and power asymmetries in decision-making, the need to formalize social protection in fragile contexts, concerns around accountability, and limited data for tracking women's empowerment. In Research, participants stressed weak links between research and policy, multi-sectoral coordination, and lack of evidence on barriers. In Development, issues raised included fragmented programming, poor knowledge-sharing, land tenure inequality, limited synergy across initiatives, and the need for cross-learning to reduce duplication and scale effective practices.



Dr. Mai Mahmoud from J-PAL MENA from Egypt putting the ideas on policy, research and development on the board, while Ms. Yasmine Lofti from J-PAL, Egypt is discussing the connections between the three with the group.

Session

4

Evidence Review Findings

Dr. Dina Najjar in her presentation, based on the evidence reviews she led in 2022 and 2025, highlighted the intersections of gender, climate change, and agriculture in the MENA region, emphasizing severe environmental strain combined with entrenched gender inequality. Dr. Dina presented key trends, themes, and evidence gaps on gender equality and social inclusion across food, land, and water systems in the MENA region. She began by outlining the biophysical and social context: the region is the most water-stressed globally, with fragile agricultural lands, rising temperatures, and declining rainfall projected to reduce crop yields by up to 60% and further strain overexploited aquifers. Socially, conflict, unemployment, rising inequality, and loss of agricultural livelihoods heighten climate insecurity. Climate impacts are experienced differently across gender, age, class, displacement status, and other identities, leaving women disproportionately affected. Despite high performance in health and education indicators, the region continues to show the world's largest gender gap—estimated to take 142 years to close—driven by particularly low economic and political participation. Moreover, even though the region performs well on health and education but counterintuitively performs very poorly on economic and political Participation: a phenomenon referred to as the “MENA Paradox”. She further explained that only 18.5% of the females participate in the labor force in the MENA region.



Dr. Dina Najjar from ICARDA shares evidence from the review findings on gender equality, climate change and agriculture in the MENA region, priorities and possibilities.

Dr. Dina highlighted eight thematic areas.

- 1.** Migration and women as de facto farmers: Women's agricultural roles have expanded as men migrate for work, yet women's increased labor is not matched by access to resources, formal recognition, or decision-making authority. Public policies are needed to strengthen women's agency, access to finance, inputs, and markets.
- 2.** Feminization of agriculture: Women are highly represented in informal, home-based, and low-paid agricultural work, shaped by entrenched patriarchal norms.

Women's invisibility in agriculture: Despite being the largest agricultural labor force, women remain statistically invisible, especially those working unpaid on family farms.
- 3.** Exclusion from land ownership: The region records some of the world's lowest levels of women's land ownership (2-5%), hindered by male-biased inheritance practices. Without land rights, women have limited ability to adapt to climate risks.
- 4.** Limited access to credit, training, and technology: Women face structural barriers to finance, extension services, irrigation training, and markets.
- 5.** Gender wage inequality: Women are paid less, occupy the most precarious and seasonal jobs, and face weak enforcement of equal-pay laws.
- 6.** Weak collective action: Women have limited opportunities to organize for rights and better working conditions. Cooperatives often underperform, and unionization remains rare.
- 7.** Limited access to decision-making: Women are underrepresented in governance and policy spaces, with research needed to understand how to increase their involvement.
- 8.**



A major section focused on “What we do not know”, articulating nine priority research questions:

1. How to secure women’s legal and social recognition as farmers? Gender-disaggregated data and recognition of informal work.
2. How to reform gender-biased inheritance practices and enhance land rights? Including whether non-land assets can strengthen women’s resilience.
3. How to understand women’s asset ownership? Including effects of sole vs. joint ownership.
4. How to enable women to access irrigation and skills deemed “masculine”? Given their participation is underestimated and training is often targeted only to men.
5. How to mechanize agriculture responsibly? Mechanization may disproportionately displace women; policies must anticipate this and support retraining.
6. How to build complementary livelihoods and support aging women farmers? Little is known about long-term outcomes for women engaged in commercial farming.
7. How to organize and mobilize women workers effectively? Cooperatives are underperforming, and unions are weak or absent.
8. How refugees participate in agriculture and how to strengthen social cohesion? Given MENA hosts major refugee populations working in rural agriculture.
9. How to enhance youth engagement in agriculture? Youth view agriculture as a last resort; responsive policies are urgently needed.

The review by Baruah and Najjar in 2022 finds that deep-rooted gender inequalities continue to shape agricultural and rural development outcomes in the MENA region, with women's roles in food systems remaining largely invisible and undervalued. Persistent constraints—including limited access to land, finance, extension services, technologies, markets, and leadership opportunities, which undermine women's productivity and agency, and weaken broader development outcomes. Addressing these challenges requires systematic collection and use of gender-disaggregated data, legal and institutional reforms to secure women's rights, and deliberate integration of gender equality into agricultural policies, programs, and investments. Strengthening women's voice, access to resources, and participation in decision-making is essential for building more inclusive, effective, and resilient agri-food systems across the region. A review of emerging research, since 2022 shows increased attention to agency, leadership, and norm change. Studies highlight women's roles in water, land, and rangeland governance, as well as their leadership in cooperatives, where mentorship and governance training strengthen women's participation. Research on intra-household decision-making and gender-transformative approaches is growing, including randomized controlled trials (RCTs) on joint training of spouses, showing promising results, youth-led storytelling, and theatre-based norm change interventions. There is also rising use of intersectional and feminist political ecology approaches to link household dynamics with national and global policy structures.

Dr. Najjar outlined new evidence in several thematic domains.

- **Gender-responsive breeding:** Recent work in crops and fish focuses on integrating gendered trait preferences into breeding pipelines using tools such as the G+ Product Profiles.
- **Digital and advisory services:** Digital advisory systems are expanding, but gender digital divides persist; women in some countries are far less likely to own smartphones. Gender integration in extension systems remains uneven across the region.
- **Inclusive finance:** Group lending models show promise, but financing must be bundled with training, technologies, and market access given women's structural constraints.
- **Fisheries and aquaculture:** Women make up around 40% of the workforce but remain concentrated in low-paid, informal roles with large wage gaps, and vulnerable to climate-related post-harvest losses. Promising examples such as Egypt's Empowering Women Fish Retailers in Egypt (EWFIRE) project exist but research remains limited compared to crops.
- **Peace, security, and fragility:** Climate fragility magnifies gender inequalities in conflict-affected contexts. Women are often excluded from peacebuilding and climate-security governance yet are increasingly taking on new economic roles as men migrate or participate in conflict. Social cohesion between refugee and host communities depends on inclusive labor and social protection policies, though evidence remains limited.

She concluded with remaining priorities for the MENA Gender Learning Agenda:

- Strengthening legal and social recognition of women farmers; joint land titling; inheritance reform.
- Promoting gender-responsive irrigation governance.
- Ensuring decent work and GBV protections.
- Improving access to climate finance.
- Strengthening gender budgeting, accountability, and follow-up research on what policies work.

She then opened the floor for questions.

Reflections, Questions & Answers

This session brought together evidence, field experiences, and participant reflections to unpack complex and politically sensitive issues around finance, mechanization, and land rights in the MENA region. On group lending, participants noted that while randomized controlled trials exist in other regions, no known RCT evidence currently exists for the MENA region, highlighting a significant gap for future research and context-specific learning.

Discussions on mechanization clarified that it involves replacing labour-intensive manual tasks with machines. Examples from Egypt illustrated how peanut harvesting and threshing in desert areas, previously done by hand, are now mechanized, alongside pumpkin seed extraction. These shifts reduce labour demand in different ways: for unpaid women working within households, mechanization can ease heavy workloads, while for women dependent on wage labour it can result in job losses unless accompanied by retraining and pathways to alternative livelihoods. Experiences from Syria underscored this tension, where women wage workers opposed the introduction of a lentil-harvesting machine because it threatened one of their highest-paid seasonal jobs. The longer-term objective, however, remains supporting women's transition into more secure, better paid, and less hazardous work.

Land rights emerged as an especially sensitive and contested issue. In Morocco, participatory theatre was used to explore inheritance norms, including a play depicting a daughter refusing to sell her late father's land despite pressure from her brother. Community discussions revealed diverse perspectives, with some supporting equal inheritance and others opposing women's land claims. Youth participants often expressed more progressive views, influenced by national debates around the *Mudawana* (Family Law). The approach deliberately avoided imposing conclusions, instead creating space for community reflection. Sensitivities around land are not unique to Morocco. In Egypt's Mubarak Resettlement Scheme, although 20% of distributed land was officially allocated to women, much of it ultimately reverted to male control. Participants emphasized that land rights are frequently framed as religious issues, yet in practice they are shaped by economic interests, gender norms, and family power dynamics. Even where religious law permits women's inheritance, many women do not receive their legal shares, a situation contested by some religious scholars but reinforced by social expectations.

Participant comments further enriched the discussion. In Palestine, land valuation varies sharply by location, and some families allocate women plots near restricted zones, knowing these cannot be meaningfully accessed or used; this highlights that equity concerns relate to land value, not just plot size. Political sensitivities also vary across contexts: while debate may be limited in countries such as Saudi Arabia, there is relatively more space for dialogue in Morocco, Tunisia, and Jordan, requiring recommendations to be tailored to political realities. Participants stressed that the core issue is not whether women receive equal or half shares of inheritance, but that many do not receive even what they are legally entitled to. Women's land ownership in much of the region is estimated at around 1%, with similar exclusionary practices observed in some Christian contexts, where customary norms transfer homes to eldest sons. Older women are often more likely to claim land, frequently out of necessity to support their children.

The discussion also emphasized that social norms rather than religion are the primary barriers to women's land rights. In some interpretations of Islamic law, women could receive more than men in specific cases, yet such provisions are rarely applied. Women across the region are increasingly vocal about land rights because of their direct implications for economic empowerment. When reflecting on the lens used to discuss land rights, participants agreed that agricultural productivity alone is insufficient; land must also be understood as collateral, capital, and a gateway to finance.

Examples from Jordan illustrated how microfinance programs, when disconnected from broader legal and social systems, unintentionally led to women taking loans used by male relatives, resulting in women's indebtedness and, in some cases, imprisonment, requiring royal intervention. Dr. Najjar emphasized that all lenses matter simultaneously: land rights shape elderly women's security, the livelihoods of divorced or single women, access to assets, and long-term economic stability. Many older women return to daily wage labour after widowhood or separation due to lack of assets. Family and inheritance laws are therefore deeply intertwined with land rights and require reform, with inheritance remaining the main pathway for women's land access, alongside purchase and government allocation. Importantly, improved land access generates significant efficiency gains at the household level.



Sukaina Samahan from Oxfam MENA (right), based in Palestine engaging in a question-and-answer session, seating next to Hedia Belhaj Youssef of the Centre for Arab Women for Training and Research from Tunisia.

Dr. Puskur added that these challenges are not unique to the MENA region. In India, despite laws mandating equal inheritance for daughters, women's land ownership averages only 11%. Laws alone are insufficient. The central questions are:

- (i) How quickly can these barriers be dismantled?*
- (ii) How can women access productive and not marginal land?*
- (iii) What interim mechanisms can support women while long-term reforms are pursued?*

She highlighted several cross-cutting reflections from the discussion:

- **Persistent focus on diagnosing problems:** Across regions, evidence repeatedly documents women's vulnerabilities but provides limited tested solutions. More experimentation and evaluation of what works in specific contexts is needed, especially given the urgency—142 years to close the global gender gap.
- **Need for multisectoral "bundles" of interventions:** No single solution is sufficient. Education alone, for example, cannot overcome structural inequities. Integrated approaches are required across agriculture, finance, legal systems, and social protection.
- **Digitalization considerations:** Digital tools hold potential but should not be treated as universal solutions. Digital divides persist, and interventions must be selective and context appropriate.
- **Improved communication of evidence to policymakers:** Evidence often exists but is unused or inaccessible. Strengthening knowledge translation, accountability, and e-systems for implementation is essential.
- **Knowledge sharing across countries:** Examples of what works should be shared and adapted, not simply replicated.

Dr. Puskur concluded the session and transitioned participants to the World Café discussions.

Session

6

Evidence, Gaps and Innovations

This session, facilitated by Dr. Puskur, used a World Café format where participants moved across three discussion tables, to make connections between evidence, gaps, and innovations discussing the following questions:

Evidence

What themes have strong, credible evidence that can inform development projects and policies?

Gaps

Where do major knowledge gaps persist?

Innovations

What existing or emerging solutions—within or beyond the region—can be learned from and potentially scaled?

Participants spent 15 minutes at each table, recording ideas on sticky notes, after which groups rotated while hosts briefed the new group. The highlights of the discussions at each of the tables and presented in the plenary are presented below.

Evidence Highlights from Group Discussion

Participants identified a strong body of evidence illustrating persistent gender gaps across food, land and water systems in the MENA region:

- **Education:** Women in rural areas remain significantly less educated than men. During crises, which includes conflict and economic shocks, girls are more likely to drop out of school.
- **Healthcare Access:** Rural women, especially refugees, face well-documented barriers to adequate healthcare.
- **Gender Wage Gaps:** The region continues to experience substantial gender-wage disparities that require targeted policy attention.
- **Access to Finance:** Women's access to financial services is notably low. While targeted loans and women's groups exist, these must be complemented by broader measures to ensure meaningful impact.
- **Crisis Vulnerability:** Women farmers are among the most affected during recurrent conflicts, unable to harvest or market their produce. Evidence underscores the critical need for robust social protection systems during crises.
- **Land Ownership:** Women's land ownership remains extremely low compared to men. Policy interventions could help close this gap.
- **Digital Divide:** There is clear evidence of gender gaps in digital literacy and access to the internet and devices, calling for responsive digital inclusion policies.
- **Social Norms and Support for Women's Work:** Despite restrictive norms contributing to the world's lowest regional female labor force participation, evidence shows that men become more supportive of women's work when social norms relax.
- **Unpaid Work Burden:** Women's disproportionate unpaid workload, from childcare to water collection and agricultural labor is well established and demands policy responses.
- **Technology and Information Access:** While technological and informational support improves yields and disease management, women face greater barriers than men in accessing these tools.
- **Impact of Recent Conflicts:** Recent wars have intensified women's workloads and increased their role in providing emotional support to families.
- **Need for Inclusive Approaches:** Participants emphasized that focusing solely on women is insufficient. More creative, system-wide approaches are needed to strengthen women's access to finance, land rights and services.
- **Communication Gaps:** Weak communication between farmers, service providers and microfinance institutions limits access to available opportunities. There is a strong need for clear communication policies that make services, eligibility, and support mechanisms more visible.

Dr. Puskur emphasized that while many challenges are already evidenced, more studies might be needed to unpack persisting gaps and their root causes, to be able to develop effective solutions.

Ghadeer Noufal from International Growth Center of Jordan engaging in a discussion with Latith Rahahleh from International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Jordan during the workshop.



Identified Knowledge Gaps and Priority Needs

During the group discussion, participants highlighted several critical gaps that hinder effective GESI integration in food, land and water systems across the MENA region. These gaps fall into five major categories:

- 1. Strengthening Research–Policy Pathways:** Participants emphasized the need to better understand how research influences policy and how policy, in turn, informs implementation and future research. There is limited clarity on when and how evidence translates into policy action, and discussions revealed concerns about credibility gaps between government-generated data and evidence produced by research institutes and NGOs. The full research–policy–implementation feedback loop remains opaque, demonstrating the need for clearer pathways and stronger evidence on what mechanisms work.
- 2. Safe and Context-Sensitive Data Collection:** Given the sensitivity of gender-related data in the region, the group underscored the need for practical guidance on safe, ethical, and context-appropriate data collection. Participants proposed developing a toolkit to guide researchers on how to access and collect data without exposing respondents or researchers to risk. This guidance should clarify how data will be used, include protocols for sharing back findings with respondents, and provide pathways for responsible data utilization.
- 3. Improved Monitoring, Evaluation and Gender-Responsive Indicators:** The discussion highlighted the need for stronger M&E systems with more context-specific, bottom-up indicators. Participants noted that standard indicator sets often fail to capture gender dynamics or local realities. A continuous approach to updating data throughout project cycles—from design to implementation to post-implementation feedback—was seen as essential. Moreover, everyone involved in project cycles must understand what gender responsiveness means and how to evaluate it meaningfully.
- 4. Integrating Qualitative Narratives into Evidence:** Participants stressed the importance of incorporating qualitative narratives into evidence frameworks without compromising credibility. Rich qualitative insights are often dismissed as anecdotal or “micro-data,” yet

they are essential for understanding lived experiences and influencing policy. The group identified a need for methodologies that elevate qualitative narratives while maintaining rigor.

- 5. Generating Evidence for Context-Relevant Hypotheses:** The group also discussed the importance of building evidence around commonly held hypotheses, such as the belief that improving childcare will increase women’s labor force participation. While these ideas are intuitive, they often lack context-specific evidence, replicability, or scalability. Participants emphasized the need for rigorous research to test such hypotheses within the MENA region’s FLWS context, including generating evidence that recognizes women as farmers and supports policies that reflect their roles and needs.

Dr. Puskur summarized the key issues as clarifying what data is needed, how it should be collected, and how gender-disaggregated data can strengthen long-term project outcomes. The group concluded with a strong call for evidence on “what really works,” reflecting a shared desire to move from conceptual debates to practical, context-responsive solutions.

Innovations Supporting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

The group’s discussion on innovation began by establishing a shared understanding of what “innovation” means in the MENA context. Participants emphasized that innovation is not limited to technical tools or devices; it also includes social innovations, meaning new ideas, practices or approaches that can transform communities, improve inclusion, and respond to persistent gendered barriers. Innovations may be new to a particular setting even if applied elsewhere, as seen in examples such as practices transferred across Palestine and Jordan.

Building on this understanding, participants shared a broad range of innovations with demonstrated or potential impact on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in food, land and water systems.

- 1. Digital Innovations:** Participants highlighted the transformative impact of digital tools for women and men in agriculture:
 - Weather and advisory SMS services (Palestine): Standard messaging systems provide farmers with timely weather and crop management information, helping them plan planting, harvest, and pest inspection activities more effectively.
 - Mobile money transfers (Jordan): Mobile-based cash transfer programs allow women to directly receive social safety net payments without interference, enhancing their financial autonomy.
- 2. Financial Inclusion Innovations:** The group discussed several models expanding women’s access to finance through tailored products and inclusive systems:
 - Women’s savings and lending groups; Revolving Fund (Egypt): Through an IUCN and Government of Egypt collaboration, a 2 million EGP revolving fund with a low 1.5% interest rate allows women and men to access capital more affordably than traditional microfinance institutions.
 - Micro-equity loans (Sawiris Foundation): An innovative in-kind loan model enables women to acquire small livestock, raise them, and share profits (one-third for the foundation, two-thirds for the woman). The model is being evaluated through an online RCT and shows strong replication potential.
 - Women’s home-based agriculture support (Upper Egypt): Rooftop and kitchen garden training helps women—who are restricted from working on agricultural land—produce food at home for consumption and sale, enabled by NGO-managed local outlets. Youth also benefit from training and participation.

- Hydroponics for water-saving agriculture (Lebanon): Hydroponic systems allow vertical cultivation with minimal water use. Promoting these systems among women provides new livelihood opportunities aligned with climate constraints.
- Soft-credit advocacy for agricultural loans (Palestine): Stakeholders are working to educate MFIs on the importance of agricultural lending and advocating for lower-interest agriculture-specific credit. Oxfam is piloting agricultural insurance to mitigate risk—another promising innovation.

3. Climate and Water-Related Innovations: Given the region’s acute climate vulnerabilities, participants shared innovations designed to address drought and water scarcity:

- Remote-controlled irrigation systems (Oxfam): These technologies improve water efficiency but remain financially inaccessible to many women and poorer farmers. Discussions emphasized the need for affordability strategies.
- Aquaponics and hydroponics (IUCN, Jordan): Introduced through participatory approaches, these techniques help farmers reduce water use and strengthen climate resilience.

4. Nutrition and Community-Based Innovations: School meals and women’s agricultural entrepreneurship (Centre for Arab Women for Training and Research or CAWTR, Tunisia): The PALM program provides meals to rural schoolchildren while empowering nearby women who receive land, grow food, and supply produce to schools. This model improves child nutrition, supports women’s income generation, and strengthens local food systems—a “win-win” innovation for communities.

Overall, the discussion revealed that innovations, whether digital, financial, climate-responsive, or community-centered, offer significant opportunities to advance gender equality and social inclusion in the MENA region. Participants stressed the importance of adapting, scaling, and contextualizing these models to ensure they reach women, youth, and marginalized groups across food, land, and water systems.



Participants of the workshop discussing key themes in the innovations in MENA Region. From left to right is , Latith Rahahleh from IUCN, Nathan Ronoh from ILRI, Dr. Rahma Adam from WorldFish, Rehab Moghazy from Sawiris Foundation for Social Development (the presenter), Sukaina Samahan from Oxfam-MENA and Menna Mosbah from WorldFish.

Questions, Comments, and Reflections

Dr. Puskur from IRRI, opened the discussion by asking about the prevalence of crop and livestock insurance in the region. She also highlighted malnutrition as a critical issue, particularly affecting women and children, and emphasized that its consequences remain severe across many contexts.

Mr. Marwan Issa, OXFAM–Lebanon: He shared findings from a study on the gendered impacts of food security, noting that social norms often lead women to eat less so that other family members can have more. While women are not necessarily disadvantaged at the production level, they face heightened food insecurity at the household and nutritional outcome levels.

Dr. Najjar, ICARDA: She noted that the opposite end of the malnutrition spectrum, which is obesity, also requires attention.

MS. Sukaina, OXFAM–Palestine: She reflected on Oxfam’s work advancing public–private partnerships. Engaging the private sector remains challenging because companies participate only when clear benefits exist. This has motivated Oxfam’s focus on supporting viable, scalable businesses and encouraging farmers to adopt a business-oriented mindset rather than focusing solely on subsistence. She reported success in facilitating a partnership between a private-sector actor and a cooperative composed of both women and men. The cooperative invested in shares of one of the largest pickle factories after recognizing the commercial potential.

On agricultural insurance, she explained that the providers are private companies—not government bodies. Oxfam has succeeded in creating the structural framework for agricultural insurance and securing the participation of four major companies. However, broader adoption requires government commitment. Despite international organizations building mechanisms, raising awareness, and preparing farmers, government ownership and political will remain essential. This underscores the importance of policy advocacy.

Reflections and Responses

Private-sector engagement and research translation (Jordan): A participant noted that although the Jordanian government has invested in infrastructure enabling private-sector engagement, significant constraints remain—especially regarding access to international markets such as the EU. Compliance with stringent rules and regulations requires technical expertise that many private-sector actors lack. As a result, agriculture cannot fully leverage opportunities provided by programs such as USAID. Strengthening technical capacity and research uptake is therefore critical.

Integrated natural resource management (Jordan): Another participant described the Human Integrated Management Approach being promoted in Jordan to ensure community participation in decision-making on water, land, and food. This approach has influenced national policy processes, such as the Ministry of Agriculture’s collaboration with IUCN to update the rangelands strategy. They also highlighted Jordan’s long-standing agricultural credit program and the establishment of an agricultural risk fund that compensates farmers during climate-related or other shocks. This was presented as a model that could be applied in other countries and incorporated into the learning agenda.

Critical reflections on cooperatives and research gaps: A participant shared concerns about cooperatives being established primarily to attract donor funding rather than functioning as genuine economic entities. Many of these cooperatives do not adhere to cooperative principles and often replicate the same activities—such as food processing—without improving quality, innovating, or meeting market standards, especially for export. As a result, products are sold domestically at high prices with limited market reach.

The participant recommended conducting research to better understand the motivations behind cooperative formation and evaluate whether they contribute to national economic development or merely serve as vehicles for donor-funded women’s economic empowerment initiatives. They also highlighted persistent stereotypes that limit the transformation of cooperatives and the potential of women within them.

Session

7

Mapping Ongoing Initiatives

In this session, participants formed four groups to map ongoing gender-focused or gender-integrated initiatives across the region, including those led by governments, NGOs, and bilateral or multilateral organizations. Groups discussed the key actors engaged in these interventions, sources of gender and social data, and challenges related to data access. A recurring concern echoed earlier in the workshop was the limited interaction among projects, such that many operate in isolation, with little to no information sharing or cross-learning. Participants explored whether greater coordination and shared learning platforms could strengthen gender outcomes across the region.

Table 1. Summary of the initiatives or projects discussed is listed below.

Initiative/Project	Geography	Implemented by	Scope of initiative
IBTIKAR (is an Arabic word, which means innovation or creativity in English)	Palestine and Egypt	Oxfam, micro-finance institutions, Ministry of Agriculture; funded by the Italian Agency for Development and Cooperation	Supports agricultural cooperatives through capacity building, business planning, income-generating activities, and access to six zero-interest financial products. Includes mixed grants and loans and a loan-guarantee scheme.
Women's Micro-Equity In-Kind Loan Scheme	Egypt (Upper Egypt – Assiut pilot)	Sawiris Foundation, MFIs; research partners IFPRI and J-PAL	Provides women with in-kind livestock loans complemented by training. RCT results show higher success rates for in-kind loans compared to cash loans. Now scaling up.
Traditional vs. In-Kind Loan RCT for Women Entrepreneurs	Egypt	Sawiris Foundation, MFIs, IFPRI, J-PAL	Experimental comparison showing greater effectiveness of in-kind loans, informing evidence-based expansion of microfinance products for women.
Bounded Agriculture Solution for Climate Resilience Smallholder Farming” (Upcoming RCT)	Egypt	Sawiris Foundation, MFIs, private sector partners	Supports smallholder farmers with certified seeds and seedlings, technical training, in-kind loans (~USD 1,200/season), and fair-price market linkages.

Women's Mouneh (Moune) Production Project	Lebanon	Women's cooperatives, municipalities	Trains rural women in traditional Lebanese preserved foods ("Moune") production, providing skills, market opportunities, and gender-focused support.
GEMINI Project (Biodiversity, Conservation & Water Management)	Regional	IUCN members, farmers, Water Users Associations, Ministry of Water	Focuses on biodiversity, conservation, and integrated landscape and water management with gender and social inclusion embedded.
Climate Change: Adaptation, Protected Areas, and Rangelands	Jordan	IUCN, Jordanian local associates	Enhances protected area management and restores degraded rangelands, with strong gender mainstreaming throughout.
Al Murunah – Nature-Based Solutions for Water Security	Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine	IWMI, IUCN, Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE)	Integrates nature-based solutions to improve water and agricultural water management, with a strong focus on women, youth, and community empowerment
Global Environmental Facility (GEF): Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality in Northern Jordan	Jordan	Ministry of Environment (Jordan), DRC, CEDARE	Works on sustainable land management, land restoration, and gender inclusion in degraded landscapes.
Nostalgic Project (Neglected & Underutilized Crops)	Regional	Cooperatives, farmers, policymakers, civil society, private sector	Promotes production, processing, and consumption of neglected crops using a gender-transformative approach.
Collective Action Initiative – Men Learning to Cook (Lebanon)	Lebanon	Ethnic cooperatives, local officials, consumer groups	Promotes shifts in gender norms through culinary training for men; uses consumer surveys and KIIs for evidence gathering.
World Bank & Other Large-Scale Gender-Integrated Programs	Regional	World Bank, national governments	Projects include access to credit programs, agricultural insurance mechanisms, micro funding, and gender-integrated agricultural development.



Marwan Issa from Oxfam Lebanon engaged in the session.

Table 2. Sources of Data in the countries presented and/or MENA Region.

Country/Region	Data Source	What data is available?
Palestine	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)	National socioeconomic indicators, agricultural data, unemployment/GDP statistics, and sectoral surveys used widely by NGOs and ministries.
Egypt	CAPMAS	National-level demographic and economic indicators, agriculture and labor data, published annual reports.
Palestine (Gaza & West Bank)	UN OCHA and UN agencies	Humanitarian data, aid-flow records, vulnerability assessments and crisis-related reporting.
Regional (including Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Palestine)	Farmer unions, cooperatives, local councils, municipalities	Local-level data, needs assessments, community-based records.
	Consultancy firms	Case studies, evaluations, and research supporting NGOs and development programs.
	RCT partners (e.g., J-PAL, IFPRI)	Experimental datasets, impact evaluations, randomized trials informing program design.
Regional – Quantitative Data	Media outlets, press releases	Contextual and narrative data on social and policy developments.
	Academic publications and annual reports	Evidence from prior studies, institutional learning, and thematic research.

Synergistic Mechanisms Among Initiatives

Across groups, participants highlighted several thematic synergies:

1. Shared challenges and programmatic priorities: Common issues intersect across many initiatives. Some of them are: (i) water scarcity and drought, (ii) land degradation and restoration, (iii) gender inequality and unpaid care burdens, (iv) agriculture sustainability and climate resilience, and (v) social inclusion of women, youth, and vulnerable farmers. These areas provide natural entry points for cross-project collaboration.

2. Need for coordination platforms: Group 3 praised Palestine's monthly coordination clusters (Food Security, WASH, Protection) as a strong model. Participants agreed that similar platforms could support the following: (i) avoiding duplication, (ii) joint learning, (iii) harmonized gender approaches, and (iv) resource optimization.

3. Opportunities for integrated project cycles: From Group 4, participants identified the project cycle, from policy design to implementation to M&E, they saw, the whole process from research to policy development as an opportunity for different actors to complement each other. Furthermore, the Egyptian Food Bank example illustrated how data collected during large-scale implementation could better feed into research, policymaking, and broader learning if shared systematically.

4. Barriers to sustainability and learning: Groups noted several obstacles. The notable ones are: (i) lack of sustained funding models, (ii) conflict and fragility across the region, (iii) insufficient knowledge-sharing platforms, and (iv) fragmentation of actors and inconsistent cross-sector engagement

5. Gender-transformative potential: Multiple initiatives, such as *Moune* (it means processing different food products and sell them) production, *Nustalgic* project, and men's cooking training, demonstrated opportunities for shifting social norms, enhancing women's agency, and strengthening household-level resilience.

Questions, Answers and Reflections

The session concluded with a rich question-and-answer discussion and reflections that deepened participants' understanding of inclusive finance models, risk-sharing, and the role of evidence in gender-responsive programming within food, land, and water systems. Clarifications were provided on the use of in-kind loans, noting that smallholder farmers receive loans valued at approximately EGP 60,000 (around USD 1,200) not as cash, but entirely through certified seeds and seedlings. Farmers select inputs exclusively from approved vendors and may only use up to the USD 1,200 equivalent. This design deliberately ensures that resources are invested directly in agricultural production, as cash transfers may otherwise be diverted to urgent household needs, such as weddings or medical expenses, rather than farm activities.

The discussion also explored revenue-sharing and risk management. Under the model presented, revenues are shared with two-thirds going to women participants and one-third to the implementing organization. Importantly, this applies only to profits. In cases of loss, the primary objective remains livelihood support: losses are written off provided that a veterinarian confirms the animal loss was not due to negligence by the recipient. This approach reflects a strong protection lens for women farmers and acknowledges the vulnerabilities they face.

Participants also sought clarification on RCTs, which were explained as experimental methods used to rigorously assess the impact of interventions while minimizing bias. This prompted a broader reflection, led by Dr. Puskur, on whether implementation is accompanied by robust impact evaluation systems, proper documentation, and knowledge generation beyond routine monitoring.

In response, the Sawiris Foundation emphasized that its programming is fully evidence-based, with all projects undergoing ongoing RCTs in partnership with J-PAL. Multiple reports are publicly available on both organizations' websites, including preliminary results from the micro-equity project, and learning seminars are organized at project completion to share findings. Oxfam highlighted its rigorous Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework, noting that funding is results-based and contingent on meeting agreed targets. Continuous monitoring, donor-required case studies, regular reporting, and newsletters are central to their approach. At the same time, Oxfam stressed the importance of contextual realism when setting indicators, cautioning against overly optimistic targets that fail to reflect complex socio-economic realities, such as sharp employment declines that can overshadow modest project-level gains.

Overall, the session reinforced the importance of context-appropriate financial design, risk protection for women, and strong evidence systems to inform scalable and equitable GESI interventions across the MENA region's food, land, and water systems.

Session

8

Reflecting on Own Work and Insights to Overcome Barriers to Transformation

Dr. Puskur requested participants to gather in a circle and started a discussion and conversation picking up on, the results of which highlighted systemic issues of capacity, cost, coordination, transparency, political economy, and technical expertise that shape the availability and quality of disaggregated data across the MENA region. Participants' opinions regarding their opinions on how to address these barriers revealed that change or transformation require not only technical reforms, but also institutional, relational, and governance improvements.

The discussion highlighted significant challenges related to the availability, quality, and accessibility of gender-disaggregated data across MENA countries. While some national surveys, such as Jordan's labour market and household expenditure surveys collect sex-disaggregated information, this level of detail is often not disseminated to the public. Participants noted structural constraints including limited institutional capacity, high costs of data collection, and lack of specialized gender or economic expertise within statistical offices. Access to raw data is frequently hindered by bureaucratic approval processes, and political sensitivity sometimes leads governments to reject data showing negative trends. Additional issues include inconsistent survey depth, insufficient modules on priority themes, unpublished datasets, and weak coordination between national agencies and NGOs. Below we provide a summary of the participants' insights to overcome barriers to transformation.

Table 3. Participants' Insights to Overcome Barriers to Transformation

Topic	Key Issues Raised	Responses/Insights Provided
Sex-disaggregated data availability	How much of the national data is gender-disaggregated?	Jordan collects gender-disaggregated labour and household data; some sectoral data increasingly include gender. Agriculture indices are also produced.
Data dissemination	Data is collected in a detailed manner but not published in disaggregated form.	Disaggregation does exist internally, but dissemination practices are limited.
Reasons for lack of disaggregated data	Is it the lack of importance or too much work?	Both. Low prioritization and limited statistical capacity.

Data systems across MENA countries	What data exists and where are the gaps?	Lebanon: some disaggregated administrative data. Tunisia: national surveys exist but do not cover all topics; specialized data is costly. Systems in all of the MENA countries are not in-depth enough.
Access restrictions	Why is accessing raw data difficult?	Jordan and Palestine: access requires formal approvals; much raw data remains unpublished.
Cost constraints	Why is data incomplete?	Collecting sensitive or specialized data (e.g., disability, violence) is expensive; governments lack resources for frequent surveys.
Role of NGOs	How do CSOs fill the gaps?	NGOs conduct qualitative surveys to fill missing areas, but this often leads to duplication without coordination.
Data credibility issues	Why is external data not accepted?	World Bank and other external data are not recognized as “official”; governments may dismiss negative findings as inaccurate.
Expertise limitations	Why is data not aligned with GESI needs?	Statisticians are not gender specialists; surveys often designed by people from unrelated fields (engineering, agriculture).
Depth of Survey design	Why is the data shallow?	Depth and relevance depend on survey type, expertise involved, and categories targeted.
Optimizing existing systems	How to improve data without new surveys?	Slight adjustments (“tweaks”) to existing national surveys could integrate needed GESI indicators at low additional cost.
Resource scarcity and coordination	How to avoid duplication and waste?	Strong coordination among government, NGOs, clusters prevent duplicative surveys and optimizes limited resources.
Communication gap	Why don’t governments produce the required data?	Stakeholders often fail to inform national entities exactly what data they need or what questions they are trying to answer.

Overall, participants emphasized the need for enhancing stronger collaboration, clearer communication about data needs, in addition to more transparent, credible, and user-driven national data systems in the MENA Region. The following is a summary of the multiple leverage points for transforming how GESI-related data is generated, shared, and used across the region:

1. Strengthening National Survey Systems

- Integrate GESI-relevant modules (e.g., disability, household power dynamics, gender-based violence) into routine national surveys.
- Improve survey design by involving gender specialists and social scientists, not only statisticians or technical experts.

2. Enhancing Access to and Transparency of Data

- Shift from restricted access to more open dissemination of raw microdata and disaggregated statistics.
- Establish clear, simplified processes for requesting and obtaining datasets from national institutions.

3. Improving Data Depth and Quality

- Support national statistics offices to move beyond basic indicators and expand into multidimensional, intersectional data relevant for gender and social inclusion.
- Invest in building national capacity for advanced disaggregation (gender, age, disability, geographic, socioeconomic status).

4. Reducing Duplication Through Cross-Sector Coordination

- Strengthen collaboration between government bodies, NGOs, donors, and research institutions to harmonize methodologies and share results.
- Create national or regional platforms to coordinate data collection and reduce wasted resources.

5. Aligning Data Production with Users' Needs

- Establish structured mechanisms for dialogue between data producers and data users to ensure surveys address real GESI evidence needs.
- Encourage stakeholders to communicate clearly the questions they need answered and the indicators they require.

6. Addressing Political Economy Barriers

- Promote transparency and accountability to reduce selective release of data and ensure evidence is not suppressed due to political sensitivities.
- Support advocacy efforts that reinforce the legitimacy and importance of evidence-based policymaking.

7. Leveraging Existing Data Systems

- Build on the current infrastructure rather than creating new surveys where possible small adjustments to national systems can deliver significant gains at minimal cost.
- Encourage national institutions to adopt modular survey add-ons to expand coverage gradually and sustainably.

8. Exploring the Role of Civil Society Organizations/Institutions

- Position NGOs not as parallel data producers, but as complementary partners who can provide qualitative depth and help fill gaps left by official systems.
- Encourage their participation in coordinated data strategies to improve efficiency and ensure alignment.

Synthesis of the day and reflections

After ending discussions and conversations in session 8, Dr. Puskur invited participants to reflect on what they've heard since the morning as well as their own experiences, i.e., *"What stood out for you today? What surprised you? What will you take home and continue thinking about?"*

Participant Reflections

“

The structure of this workshop really struck me. It showed me how to think about issues—starting from evidence gaps, innovations, and how everything connects. Even how the conversations were sequenced, moving from research to policies, to implementation, and back through the cycle. It all made sense and clarified my thinking.”

“

I was inspired by the colleague from Egypt and the in-kind financing model. It is very smart and aligns with farmers' seasonal income patterns. It's something I want to take home. I feel like I will become an ambassador for my team—bringing these ideas and gender sensitivities to promote economic justice.”

“

I appreciated the emphasis on context analysis. There are details often overlooked when developing the rationale behind programs, and we must address these to fully integrate gender equality and social inclusion.”

“

There is so much rich experience here that is not visible publicly. For instance, the financial inclusion examples. When preparing a G20 brief, I struggled to find gender-responsive financial products—especially in this region. Many of the insights shared today are not available in papers or online. You have a lot to offer globally, and this needs to be made visible.”

“

I expected a high-level agenda, but I really appreciated that discussions stayed grounded in local realities. The focus on local success stories—not abstract theories—was refreshing.”

Synthesis of Key Themes and Learning Gaps

Dr. Puskur summarized emerging themes and gaps to inform the regional learning agenda:

- **Evidence-to-policy gap:** How does research move into policy? The pathway remains unclear, and translating evidence into policymaking is still a “black box.”
- **Policy-to-implementation gap:** Even strong policies face challenges at the implementation stage due to varied interpretations, resource limitations, and lack of accountability.
- **Learning and accountability gaps:** Many programs that are run by large NGO and government initiatives, tend to monitor activities (e.g., number of extensions visits or trainings) but rarely assess whether people gained skills, used the advice, or benefited meaningfully. This weakens impact.
- **Access to resources and services:** Beyond credit, access to risk management tools, including insurance, is increasingly critical due to climate shocks and conflict.
- **Participant comment:** Existing insurance pilots, such as Oxfam’s agricultural insurance, only cover weather-related losses, but not human-caused damage (e.g., incidents linked to occupation). This gap needs attention.
- **Collective action and cooperatives:** Collective action does not automatically translate into greater value or empowerment. We must ask: how can cooperatives be more effective? Who is excluded, and why?
- **Mechanization:** Mechanization brings both benefits and risks. The region needs guidance on how to manage it responsibly and inclusively.
- **Legal and social recognition of women’s land rights:** This remains central to women’s access to services, yet specific actionable gaps still need to be identified.
- **Additional emerging issues:** digital inclusion, disability inclusion, refugee participation in agriculture, care economy and unpaid care work, wage gaps and social norms, social protection systems—what exists, how effective they are, and where improvements are needed, malnutrition and the double burden of obesity and undernutrition, bundling of solutions, specifically looking at what combinations of interventions work best, natural resource management, irrigation, and water governance, and private sector engagement and the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Comments on CSR and Private Sector Engagement

“Agriculture is a strong entry point for CSR. Companies want visible benefits from their contributions, and agricultural projects often provide tangible results. Targeting CSR could be an effective strategy.”

“In Lebanon, we explored engaging CSR in advocacy, but it was not very appealing. However, agriculture offers physical, visible outcomes, making it more attractive. Context analysis remains essential.”

Dr. Puskur added,

“With more women entering agriculture, they are becoming key clients for the private sector. Businesses should see women as partners in the supply chain—not just beneficiaries.”

“In Jordan, we have a CSR-funded project supporting local communities and women, worth almost USD 1 million. Three women-led associations were established, and they are now training local women, improving their skills, producing goods, and successfully marketing them. CSR can be a powerful mechanism for women’s empowerment

3.0

Day

Two

Reflection and Insights

Dr Puskur started the day with a summary of previous day's discussions, results of the pre-workshop survey on participant perspectives on important learning and evidence gaps along with those identified by the participants in the last session of Day 1 on stickies. These areas/themes reflect capacity, evidence, institutional, and systems-level gaps that must be addressed to advance gender equality and social inclusion in FLWs. The following are the results of the survey some of the participants were asked to fill out, which quite remarkably coalesced quite well with what came up during Day 1. The following are the survey questions and results noted one by one below.

Question #1: From your perspective, what are the main barriers preventing women in the MENA region from being recognized and supported as farmers or agricultural decision-makers?

Answers depicted in graph (1) regarding the main barriers preventing women in the MENA region from being recognized and supported as farmers or agricultural decision-makers indicate the following:

(1) The most significant barriers, each cited by 83.3% of responses, are:

- Patriarchal norms and restrictive cultural practices.
- Limited or no access to land rights.

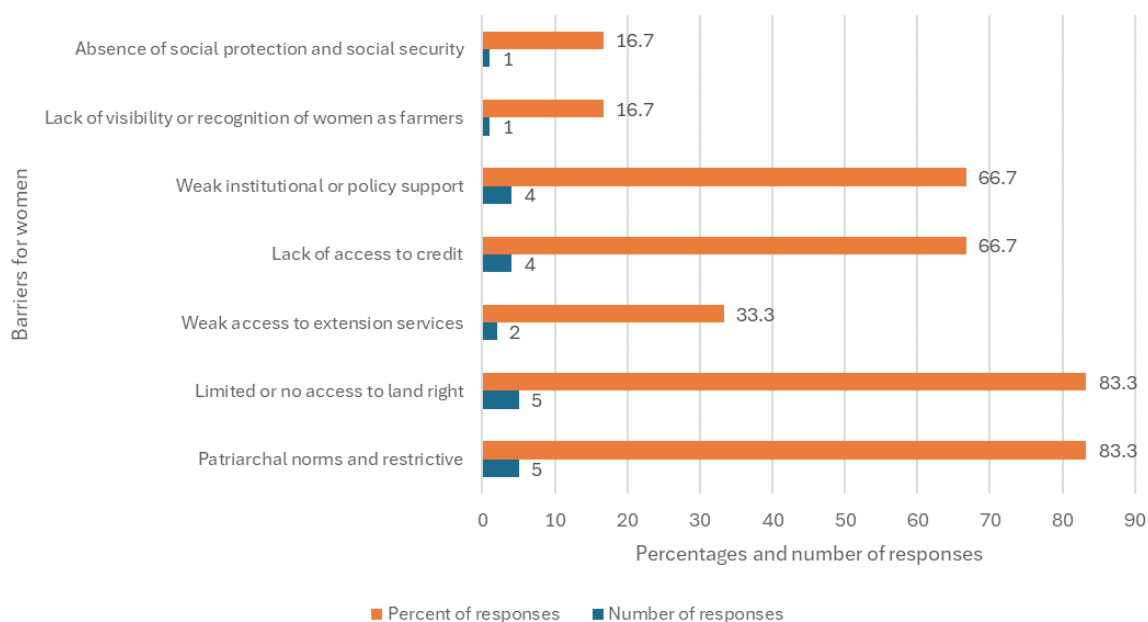
(2) Other substantial barriers, each cited by 66.7% of responses, include:

- Weak institutional or policy support.
- Lack of access to credit.

(3) Low-ranked barriers include:

- Weak access to extension services (33.3%).
- Absence of social protection and social security (16.7%).
- Lack of visibility or recognition of women as farmers (16.7%).

Figure 1. Main barriers preventing women in the MENA Region from being recognized and supported as farmers or agricultural decision makers



Question # 2: Which of the following themes should be prioritized in future research and learning?

Survey results, depicted in graph (2), indicate the following:

(1) Several themes are identified as top priorities, each cited by 66.7% of respondents:

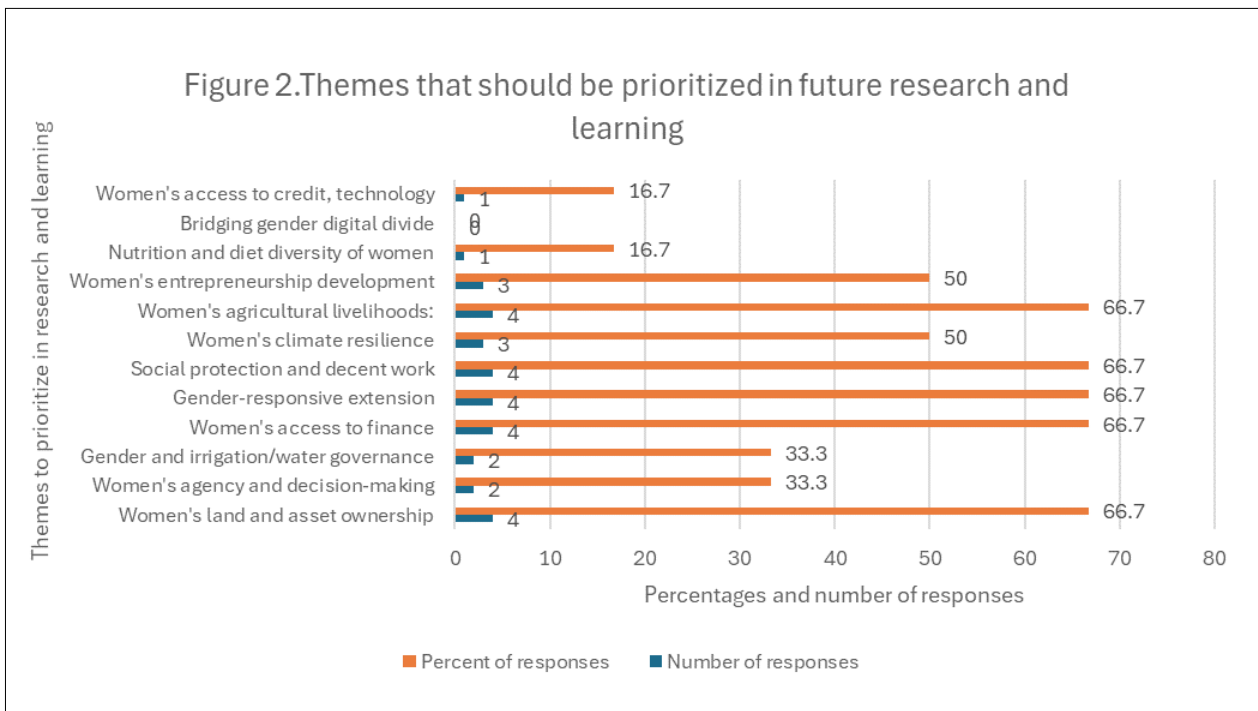
- Women's agricultural livelihoods.
- Social protection and decent work.
- Gender-responsive extension.
- Women's access to finance.
- Women's land and asset ownership.

(2) Themes cited by 50% of respondents include:

- Women's entrepreneurship development.
- Women's climate resilience.

(3) The remaining themes received lower prioritization:

- Gender and irrigation/water governance (33.3%).
- Women's agency and decision-making (33.3%).
- Women's access to credit, technology (16.7%).
- Nutrition and diet diversity of women (16.7%).
- Bridging gender digital divide (0%).



Question # 3: What types of learning or knowledge exchange would be most useful for your work?

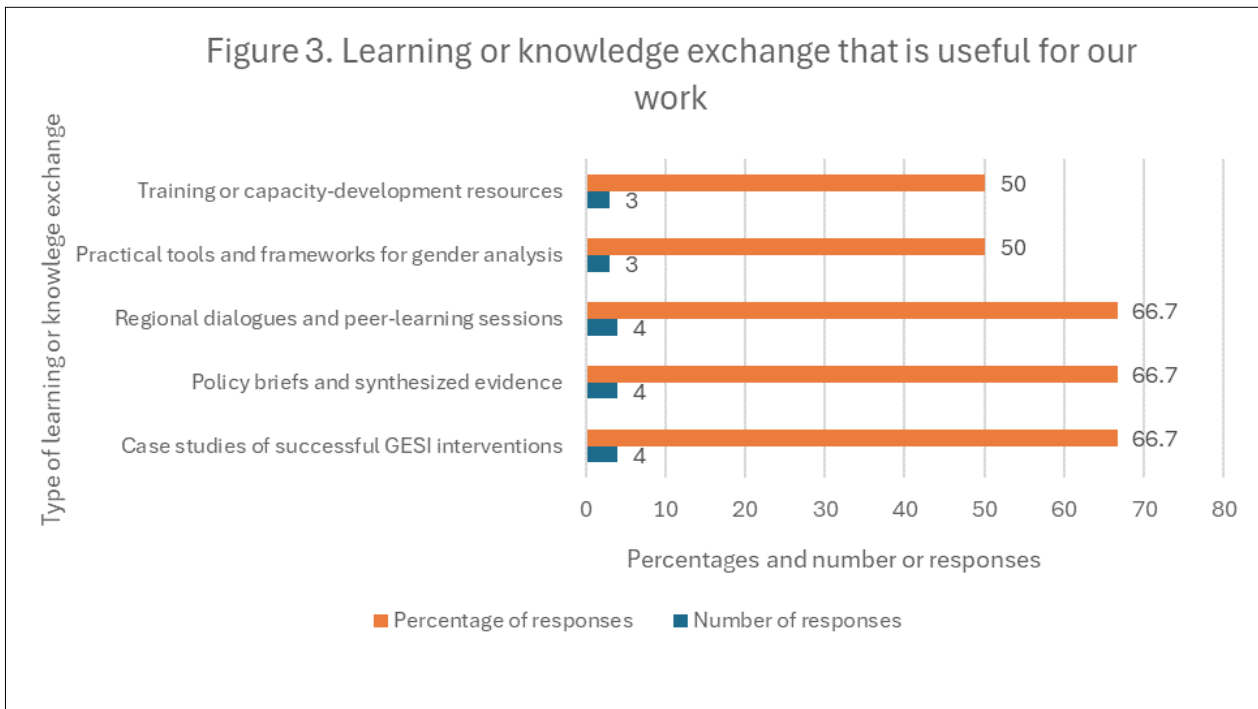
Survey results, depicted in graph (3), indicate the following:

(1) The majority of respondents (66.7%) believe the following types of learning or knowledge exchange most useful:

- Regional dialogues and peer-learning sessions.
- Policy briefs and synthesized evidence.
- Case studies of successful GESI interventions.

(2) The remaining types are viewed as useful by 50% of respondents:

- Training or capacity-development resources.
- Practical tools and frameworks for gender analysis.



It can be inferred from the results illustrated in **Figure 1** that the main barriers preventing women in the MENA region from being recognized and supported in agriculture are deeply rooted in socio-cultural and systemic issues. The most cited barrier is “Patriarchal Norms and Restrictive Cultural Practices,” noted by 83.3% of respondents. This indicates that entrenched societal structures and traditional gender roles significantly limit women’s agency and their recognition as legitimate farmers or decision-makers. A closely related barrier is “Limited or No Access to Land Rights,” also noted by 83.3% of respondents. Lack of land ownership restricts women’s access to credit, negotiating power, and institutional support, effectively excluding them from formal recognition and financial services. Other major barriers include “Weak Institutional or Policy Support” and “Lack of Access to Credit,” noted by 66.7% of respondents.

To address these findings, future research and learning should focus on dismantling these constraints. Five themes received the highest priority ranking, as shown in **Figure 2**, each noted by 66.7% of respondents: (1) Women’s agricultural livelihoods, (2) Social protection and decent work, (3) Gender-responsive extension, (4) Women’s access to finance (addressing the credit barrier), and (5) Women’s land and asset ownership (addressing the land rights barrier). The focus on land ownership and finance highlights the need to go beyond technical solutions toward protecting women’s legal and economic rights.

Preferred methods for knowledge exchange, indicated in **Figure 3** by 66.7% of respondents, aim to enable this change through peer learning, evidence-based policy, and practical solutions. Respondents prioritized “Regional dialogues and peer-learning sessions,” “Policy briefs and synthesized evidence,” and “Case studies of successful GESI interventions.” These results underscore the demand for practical, regionally relevant knowledge capable of influencing policy and supporting effective implementation.

Based on the survey results, Dr. Puskur presented a list of the questions that need to be answered:

1. How can the collection, availability, and application of gender-disaggregated data be strengthened?
2. How can sustainable and long-term GESI and climate strategies be developed and maintained?
3. In what ways do cultural norms influence women's access to agricultural technologies and resources?
4. What role do financial institutions play in facilitating or constraining women's access to finance and productive assets?
5. Which successful case studies demonstrate improved women's access to technology, and what lessons are transferable across contexts?
6. How can training and capacity-building programs be designed to be more inclusive of women and marginalized groups?
7. What approaches can support the development of resilient, inclusive agrifood and water systems in crisis-affected and rapidly changing environments?
8. What are the opportunities to strengthen climate diplomacy and regional influence in advancing GESI outcomes?

Learning Gaps: Participants identified the following priority themes for the learning agenda: 1) Evidence and knowledge management, including how information is generated, shared, and communicated in the MENA region. 2) Bridging research, evidence, policy, implementation, and impact at scale, with stronger influencing strategies, evidence uptake, and M&E systems. 3) Financial inclusion through gender-responsive credit and insurance, including mapping needs in conflict areas. 4) Land ownership and rights, focusing on impacts on agriculture and food systems and effective approaches such as joint titles and improved legal and social recognition for women farmers. 5) Digital inclusion. 6) The conflict-agrifood systems-GESI nexus, including crisis and shock preparedness. 7) Cooperatives and collectives as business models, examining strengths, challenges, and alternative models for women's entrepreneurship and innovation. 8) Decent work and employment for women, including wage gaps and unpaid care burdens. 9) Social protection approaches for women, including solutions relevant to conflict settings. 10) Private sector engagement and articulating the business case for advancing GESI. 11) Innovative research on agriculture-climate change-gender linkages. 12) Access to extension and advisory services. 13) Disability inclusion and refugee agriculture. 14) Malnutrition, particularly the dual burden of undernutrition and obesity. 15) Natural resource management for water and soil. 16) Mechanization and gender-responsive access to technologies.



Dr Rahma Adam from WorldFish (right) and Dr. Dina Najjar discussing on the learning gaps for the workshop and how to best address them.

Table 4. A summary of the key learning gaps identified by participants

Learning Gap (s)	Learning Gap (s)	Learning Gap(s)	Learning Gap (s)
1. Evidence and Knowledge management, sharing and communication	3. Financial inclusion and gender-responsive financial products – credit and insurance (climate, conflict) -In conflict areas – map extent, needs and possible solutions	5. Land ownership/ rights -How does it impact agriculture and food systems – business case -What works to improve land rights- access and control – joint titles - Legal and Social recognition of farmers	7. Co-operatives/ collectives as a business model – strengths and challenges, alternative models for women’s entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, enterprise diversity and innovation
2. Bridging Research-Evidence-Policy-Implementation- Impact at scale and developing effective feedback loops -Effective influencing strategies and enhancing evidence uptake -M&E systems	4. Digital Inclusion	6. Unpacking the conflict-agrifood systems- GESI Nexus -Crisis/shock preparedness -Social protection for women – what works In conflict areas – map extent, needs and possible solutions -Refugee agriculture	8. Decent work/ employment for women – wage gaps, Unpaid care economy - Disabilities 9. Private sector engagement for advancing GESI Business case – what’s in it for them?

Session 11 and 12

Learning Agenda: Thematic Co-design

Session 11 focused on the first round of group discussions, where participants were divided into four groups and assigned one or two of the priority learning gaps that emerged earlier. Each group was tasked with identifying a key research question, sub-research questions, key learning activities, and key actors to engage, following the provided template. The first group provided the inputs they had with regards to the learning gap’s theme noted extensively. Then once the activity was done, other people from other groups were allowed to come and add other questions and information that were not captured by the first group (first round of ideas). Specifically, this was the second round that was conducted in session 12 through a “Gallery Walk,” in which groups circulated from one table to the next, reviewed and discussed the content on the flip charts, added missing elements or suggested changes using sticky notes, and continued rotating until all tables were visited. During the workshop though participants focused only on the abovementioned eight (8) themes for the discussion, digital inclusion was not discussed as a stand-alone theme, rather as a cross-cutting theme. The following table provide the research question(s), sub-research questions, and key learning activities participants identified for each of the 8 themes during the Gallery Walk.

Table 5. Learning Gaps, Key Question, Sub-Questions and Learning Activities

Learning Gaps	Key Question	Sub-Questions	Learning Activities
1. Strengthening Evidence, Knowledge Sharing & Policy	How can we ensure that evidence and knowledge are accessible, widely shared, and updated regularly for public use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can coordination among initiatives be improved to support co-learning and avoid duplication? • Which platforms/ tools best enhance knowledge sharing? • How do we ensure that knowledge reaches the most relevant and impacted audiences? • How do we guarantee that knowledge sharing occurs at all levels and across stakeholders? • How can knowledge systems—including Indigenous Knowledge—be aligned or standardized across FLWS? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic knowledge-sharing meetings and reflection sessions • Mapping consumers and recipients of knowledge (e.g., beneficiaries, donors, cooperatives) • Communication plans tailored to audience groups • Mapping knowledge producers/ implementing agencies • Institutional learning mechanisms (e.g., CGIAR unified project registry/dashboard)

2. Bridging Research & Policy

How can evidence and knowledge be made more accessible, usable, and consistently updated for public and policy influence?

- Strengthening coordination across initiatives to avoid duplication and enhance co-learning
- Identifying effective platforms and tools for knowledge sharing
- Ensuring knowledge reaches most relevant/affected audiences
- Promoting multi-level knowledge dissemination across stakeholder groups
- Aligning and standardizing knowledge systems, including Indigenous knowledge
- Regular reflection meetings and learning exchanges
- Mapping knowledge consumers (beneficiaries, donors, cooperatives)
- Tailored communication strategies for target groups
- Mapping knowledge producers and implementing agencies
- Institutional learning systems (e.g., CG unified registry/dashboard)

3. Financial Inclusion & Resilience

Are gender-responsive financial products and services available and suitable for women, PWD, migrants, youth, and women farmers?

- Availability of tailored insurance products
- Availability of non-financial services (capacity-building, coaching, soft skills)
- Existence of in-kind financial services/products
- Accessibility and ease of use of services/products
- Alignment of loan conditions with seasonality and income cycles
- Suitability of loan guarantee schemes
- Gender-sensitive financial literacy availability
- Barriers preventing access by women, PWD & migrants
- Impact of political instability & mobility restrictions on access
- Effect of climate & environmental shocks on access
- Surveys
- Case studies
- Peer-learning exchange
- Impact evaluations
- Gender-responsive surveys
- Mixed-method research
- Systematic/scoping reviews
- Training workshops

	<p>How does digitalization influence women's control, use, and decision-making over financial services?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure readiness for digital FS access • Regulatory barriers affecting women's agency after access • Influence of social norms on adoption of digital FS • Drivers of mistrust in banking/digital systems 	<p>Same learning activities apply as above</p>
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4. Land ownership & Rights

<p>How does conflict on land rights affect women's landownership rights?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would enhancing women's and marginalized people's land rights help achieve development outcomes (productivity, economic gains, cooperative membership, access to technology, training, credit, and achieving LDN)? • What success stories or best practices exist that effectively enhance women's land rights? • What approaches work best for enhancing women's land rights? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-led distribution of land. • Pilot interventions to improve land ownership rights (joint land titling, inheritance reform with automatic procedures, women-led cooperatives, simulation models, forum theatre, advocacy). • Community-based solutions to secure women's land rights. • Identify and analyze barriers to land rights for women and marginalized groups.
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5. Conflict & Agrifood systems (FSI Nexus)

<p>How does conflict affect gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in agrifood systems, and what policies or strategies can address these impacts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does conflict contribute to insufficient policies and strategies for GESI in agrifood systems? • How does conflict affect GESI outcomes broadly? • What solutions can provide social protection and decent livelihoods for refugees? • What are the contributions of refugees to agriculture, and what are their work conditions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies and situation analyse on gender and agriculture in conflict-affected countries • Reflection and learning sessions to identify what works • Systematic and scoping reviews of GESI policies and their impacts • Pilot national and regional initiatives supporting refugees, livelihoods, and social protection (e.g., Jordan, Lebanon)
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6. Cooperatives & Collectives

How do we create sustainable & profitable cooperatives/collectives led by women, youth, and other socially marginalized groups in the MENA region?

- How can a successful business model be created for cooperatives, what does it look like?
- How can cooperatives/collectives stay profitable & efficient?
- How can cooperatives be participatory and equitable?
- How can cooperative/collective models be redesigned to allow women to work from within their homes (e.g., home gardening, food processing, value-added activities)?
- Case studies and identification of good practices.
- Peer learning exchanges.
- Impact evaluations.
- Training workshops.
- Mapping of cooperatives by country.
- Scoping & systematic research.
- Action research.
- Mixed-methods integrative assessments.
- Gender audits of cooperative groups.

7. Decent work & Employment

How to create sustainable and equitable safe, decent environments and access to decent work for women, youth, and other marginalized groups in FLWS in the MENA region?

- What are the kinds of work women are engaged in under FLWS (e.g., hidden work, unpaid labor, informality)?
- What are the redress mechanisms that support a safe work environment?
- What childcare and transportation services are readily available for women?
- What are the avenues for accessing social protection for women, youth, and marginalized groups?
- Mapping “work activities” conducted by women in FLWS.
- Scoping studies on existing legal frameworks in informal workplaces and transportation-service sectors.
- Situation analysis and development of infographics on childcare & transportation services for a safe working environment.
- Advocacy for stronger regulations to formally recognize agricultural labourers as workers with social protection rights.

8.Private Sector

How do we create return on investment (ROI) to encourage private-sector engagement with the GESI agenda in FLWS in the MENA region?

- How can the private sector support developing a “service provider model” for ROI?
 - How can market access strategies be unlocked to increase private sector profitability?
 - How can accountability be created between the private sector and GESI teams?
 - How can private sector buy-in be created and leveraged to invest in women, youth, and other marginalized groups?
 - What measures can governments offer to encourage private-sector engagement in the GESI agenda?
 - Situation analysis & advocacy for standardized work contracts for women (including internal monitoring mechanisms).
 - Private-public consultations to understand knowledge and market trends
 - Case studies where service-provider models have worked or demonstrated strong dynamics.
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Session

13

Integration and Prioritization

Participants reviewed all eight thematic areas and their associated learning gaps, guided by the sub-questions. Each participant received six votes in total: three green votes for the highest-priority areas and three yellow votes for medium-priority areas. Examples of the themes that should be prioritized included: (i) women’s land and asset ownership, (ii) access to finance, gender response, (iii) social protection, (iv) livelihoods, and (v) entrepreneurship development. The voting exercise produced results, that are displayed in Table 6.

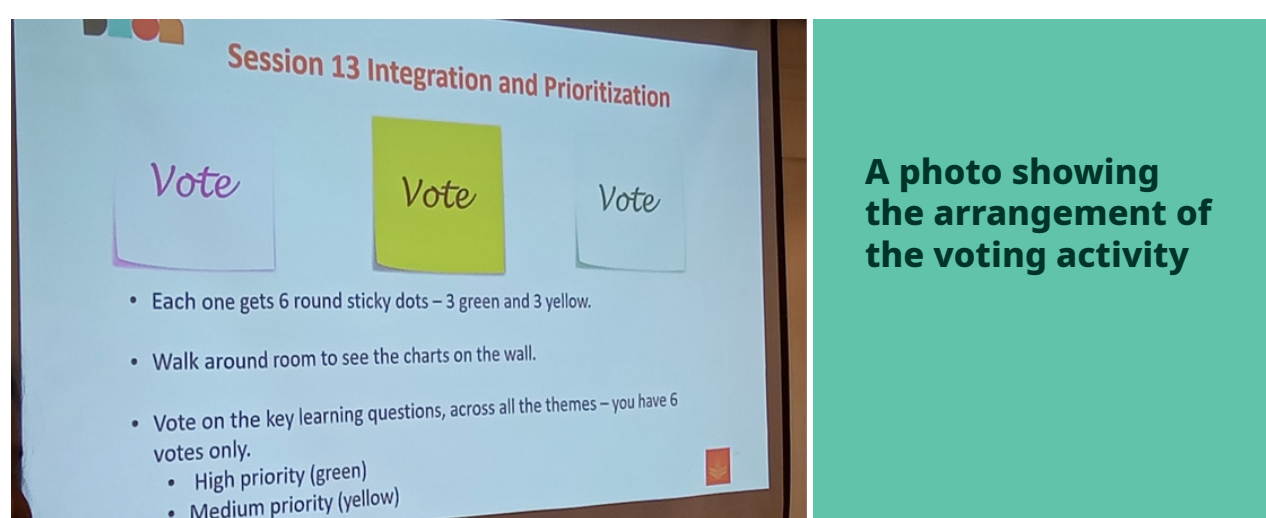


Table 6. Prioritized Learning Questions for the MENA Region Learning Agenda

Theme	Top Priority Question(s)	Second-Level Priority Question(s)	Medium Priority Question(s)
Theme 1: Financial Inclusion	Is there a special gender-responsive financial product that satisfies the needs of women, persons with disabilities, migrants, women farmers, and youth?	How do climate and environmental shocks affect access to financial services?	How does digitalization affect women’s ability to control and use financial services?
Theme 2: Land Ownership / Rights	How would women’s land rights help achieve development outcomes (productivity gains, cooperative membership, access to technology, training, credit, and land degradation neutrality)?	N/A	What works for enhancing women’s land rights?

Theme 3: Conflict & Agrifood Systems	What are the solutions for providing social protection and decent livelihoods for refugees?	N/A	What is the role of GESI in peacebuilding efforts (prevention, recovery, and return)?
Theme 4: Cooperatives / Collectives	How do we create sustainable and profitable cooperatives/collectives led by women (including youth and other marginalized groups)?	How can cooperatives be participatory, equitable, and feminist?	How can cooperatives remain profitable, efficient, sustainable, and resilient? How can collective models be redesigned to allow women to participate from within their homes?
Theme 5: Decent Work & Employment	If childcare and transportation services need to be readily available for women, will it increase their labour force participation?	What types of work do women engage in within FLWS, and what forms of labour remain 'hidden' or unpaid?	Are there situational analyses or infographics on childcare and transportation for women?
Theme 6: Private Sector Engagement	How can the private sector support a service-provider model that generates return on investment (ROI) for investing in GESI in FLWS?	How can private sector buy-in be leveraged to invest in women's livelihood and income-generating activities?	What policy or incentive measures can governments introduce to encourage private sector partnership?
Theme 7: Evidence & Knowledge Sharing	Is there coordination across initiatives to promote co-learning and avoid duplication?	N/A	How can knowledge be made available to relevant audiences and communities most affected?
Theme 8: Bridging Research & Policy	What monitoring and evaluation systems/tools are required to measure desired impacts?	N/A	How can research be positioned to influence policy at local, regional, and global levels?

Pathways for Collaboration

To identify potential pathways for collaboration under the workshop Learning Agenda, participants were organized into four groups and asked to reconvene to further deliberate on the priority questions identified during the previous session. Each group worked toward consensus on the following guiding considerations:

- Leadership and coordination responsibilities
- Capacities required for effective implementation
- Potential sources of funding

Building on this discussion, each group proposed feasible collaboration mechanisms, such as regional learning platforms, joint pilot initiatives, knowledge exchange series, and policy dialogues. These mechanisms were used to structure group outputs around:

- Priority learning questions
- Key actors to engage
- Required capacities
- Potential donors and funding partners

Session 15

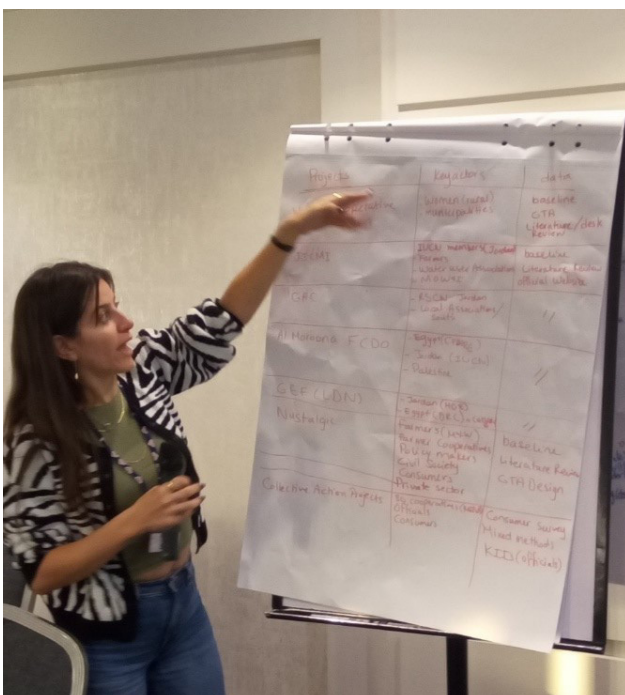
The learning agenda framework

Participants presented the consolidated Learning Agenda Framework, outlining priority research questions, proposed learning activities, key actors, required capacities, and potential funding channels across the six thematic areas discussed in session 14. Discussions highlighted clear pathways for collaboration, with emphasis on strengthening financial inclusion for women and marginalized groups, improving cooperative structures, enhancing workplace equity, advancing evidence-sharing systems, recognizing and valuing refugee labour contributions in agrifood systems, and expanding women’s land rights to enable equitable development outcomes. The table that follows summarizes the decisions and direction identified through this session, offering a reference point for future programming, investment priorities, and strategic partnerships.

Table 7. Learning Agenda Framework – Priority Areas, Actions, and Collaboration Pathways

Theme	Priority Learning Questions	Proposed Learning Activities	Key Actors to Engage	Capacity Needs	Possible Funders
Financial Inclusion	Gender-responsive products; Shock-responsive insurance; Impact of instability on access	Mapping, surveys, case studies, research, monitoring systems	INGOs, NGOs, MFIs, insurance groups, feminist networks, government bodies, research centers	Gender expertise, data/statistical capacity, financial inclusion specialists, IT/data system skills	Government, INGOs, GIZ, Oxfam, banks, insurance companies
Cooperatives & Collectives	Sustainable profitable cooperatives; Ownership context; Accountability; Inclusive governance	KPI/SOP development, peer learning, scoping reviews, impact evaluations, audits	NGOs, private sector, policymaking institutions, cooperatives, researcher networks	Context-driven research, MEL gender audit capacity, GESI technical skills	GIZ, IFAD, World Bank, Gates Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation

Decent Work & Employment	Legal/social mechanisms; Work environment challenges; Hidden labour; Fair employment terms	Situational analyses, evaluations, workplace audits, infographics, surveys, RCTs	Government, private sector, NGOs, legal service bodies	Workplace equity research, legal frameworks, grievance system strengthening	BMGF, ILO, IDRC, UN Women, CSR/private sector funding
Evidence & Knowledge Sharing	Coordination to avoid duplication; Platforms/tools for exchange	Periodic reflections, documentation, platform mapping	NGOs, universities, think tanks, NARS, CBOs, UN agencies	Digital literacy, ICT expertise, coordination & facilitation skills	EU-AICS, GIZ, Gulf Funds, Gates Foundation, SIDA, Japan, Dutch MOFA
Conflict & Agrifood Systems	Contribution and conditions of refugee labour	Case studies, livelihood pilots, regional collaborative research	Ministries, municipalities, Arab League, cooperatives, universities, NGOs, UN	Training, technology access, research design & proposal development	FAO, IDRC, EU, AFD, Islamic Development Bank, GIZ, Arab Gulf Fund
Women's Land Rights	Development outcomes of improved land ownership	Success documentation, barrier analysis, pilot interventions	Ministries, land agencies, NGOs, UN bodies, cooperatives, rural organizations	Training on land rights, gender-transformative approaches, coop strengthening	UN-Habitat, GIZ, ILC, Arab Land Reform Initiative, IDRSP



Rasha Jabr from Collective for Research & Training on Development – Action engaging in the formulation of the learning agenda framework.

Session

16

Wrap up (Reflection, Commitments and Closing)

The final plenary session provided participants with an opportunity to share reflections, insights, and commitments, and to offer recommendations for advancing the Learning Agenda. Participants described the workshop as highly valuable, engaging, and enriching. They appreciated the interactive, small-group format and the respectful, inclusive, and energizing environment. Many noted that the session deepened their understanding of GESI issues across MENA countries and referred to the experience as an “eye-opener.”

Discussions highlighted that while substantial knowledge and resources exist on GESI in the region, gaps remain in coordination and accessibility. Participants from research, policy, community, and development sectors brought complementary expertise, allowing the workshop to generate a shared understanding and define key learning areas. Commitments expressed included reviewing and providing input on drafts of the Learning Agenda, participating in follow-up sessions, co-developing proposals, maintaining communication through shared platforms, and engaging in future regional exchanges. Participants also recommended extending future workshops, using shared online documents to refine the Learning Agenda, holding virtual follow-ups, and documenting topics not covered for future attention.

The facilitator wrapped up the workshop outlining the next steps which included finalizing the Learning Agenda, developing donor-ready proposals, targeting potential funders, and organizing donor dissemination events. The participants recommended creating and sharing a comprehensive contact list and sharing funding opportunities systematically. The session concluded with strong enthusiasm and commitment to advancing the Learning Agenda and sustaining collaboration beyond the workshop.

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Annex 1: Workshop participants

#	Name	Organisation	Gender	Country
1	Ahmed Nasr-Allah	WorldFish	M	Egypt
2	Basma Yassa	IFPRI	F	Egypt
3	Ahmed Sakr	ICARDA	M	Egypt
4	Benu Verma	IRRI	F	India
5	Betty Abrilian	ICARDA	F	Egypt
6	Dina Najjar	ICARDA	F	Lebanon
7	Eman Abdullah El Zeiny	WorldFish	F	Egypt
8	Ghadeer Noufal	International Growth Centre	F	Jordan
9	Hedia Belhaj Youssef	Centre for Arab Women for Training and Research	F	Tunisia
10	Laith Rahahleh	IUCN	M	Jordan
11	Mai Mahmoud	J-PAL MENA	F	Egypt
12	Maram Darwish	IFPRI	F	Egypt
13	Marwan Issa	Oxfam - Lebanon	M	Lebanon
14	Martina Wessa	ICARDA	F	Egypt
15	Menna Mosbah	WorldFish	F	Egypt
16	Mohamed Elsherief	ICARDA	M	Egypt
17	Mohi El Din Omar	ICARDA	M	Egypt
18	Nathan Ronoh	ILRI	M	Kenya
19	Ojongetakah Enokewa Baa	IWMI	F	South Africa
20	Rahma Adam	WorldFish	F	Tanzania
21	Rasha Jabr	Collective for Research & Training on Development - Action	F	Lebanon
22	Puskur Puskur	IRRI	F	India
23	Rehab Moghazy	Sawiris Foundation for Social Development	F	Egypt
24	Sukaina Samahan	Oxfam MENA	F	Palestine
25	Yasmine Lotfi	J-PAL MENA	F	Egypt

