

مشاركة المرأة في قوة العمل في دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي

Women Labor Force Participation in the GCC

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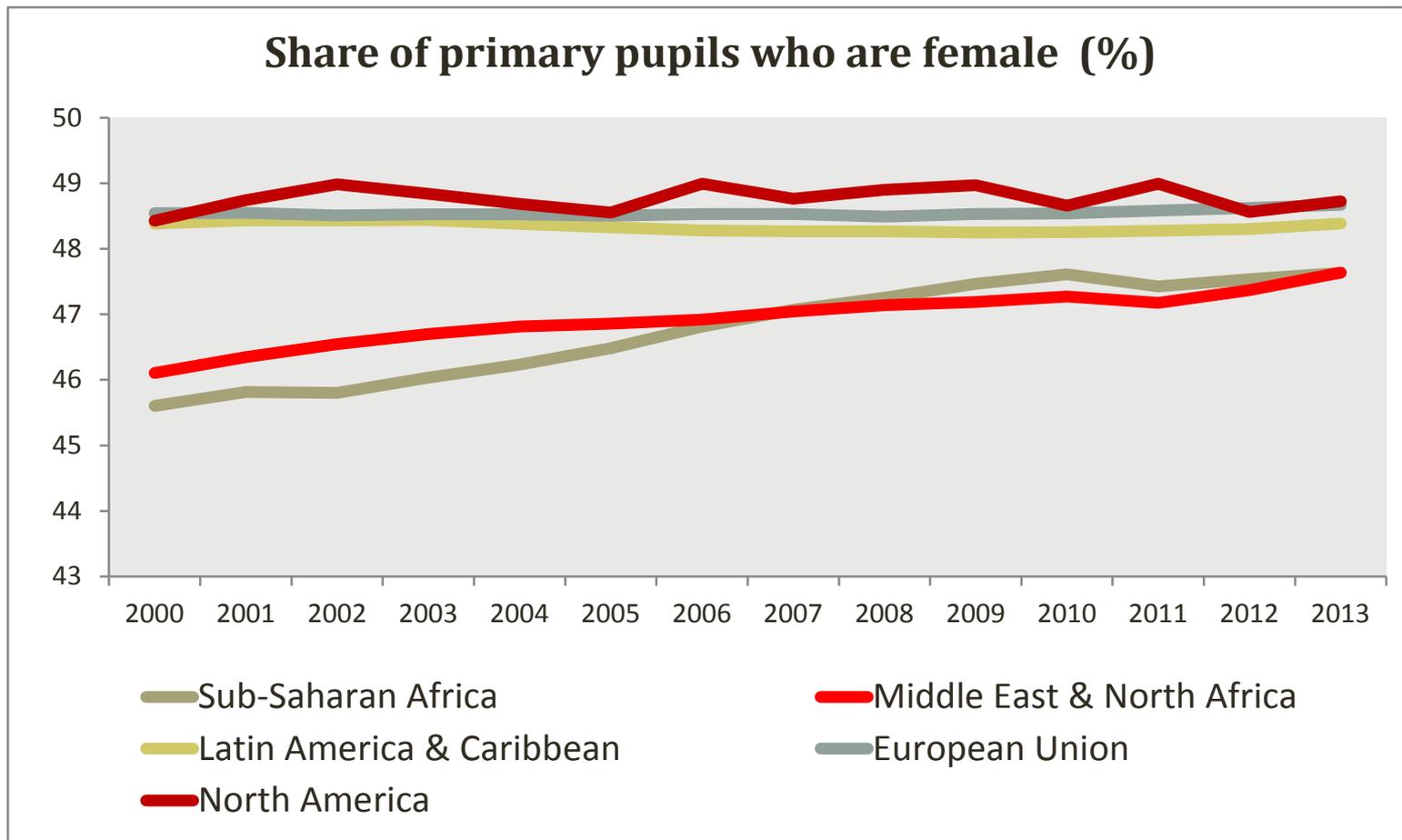
DIFI conference

May 30-31, 2016

Outline

1. Stylized Facts about employment and education:
 - A closer look at the GCC.
2. Main obstacles to Women's Participation
3. Existing policy measures in the GCC
4. Lessons from developed countries
5. More need to be done: Recommendations...

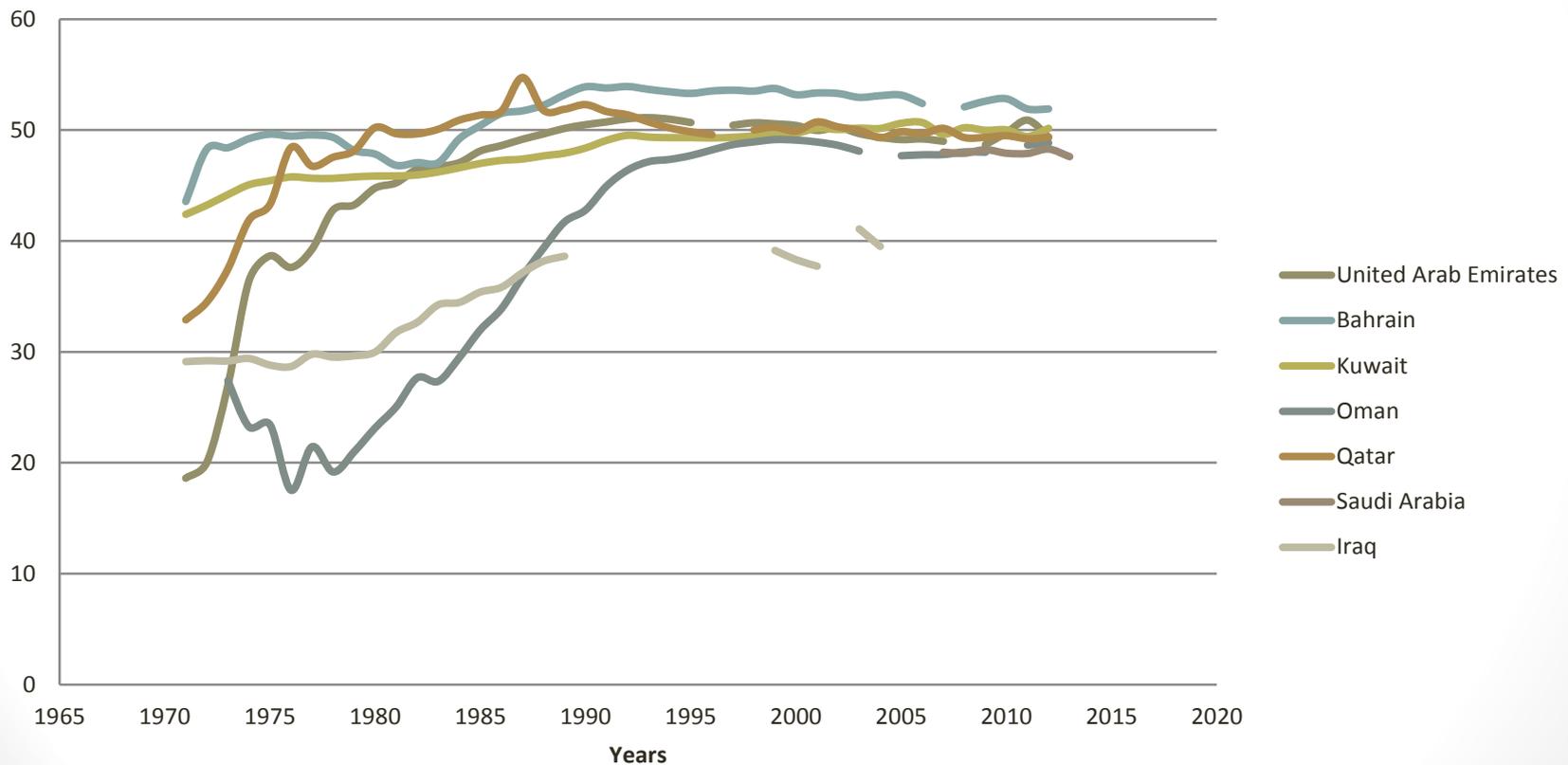
More girls attend primary school than before....



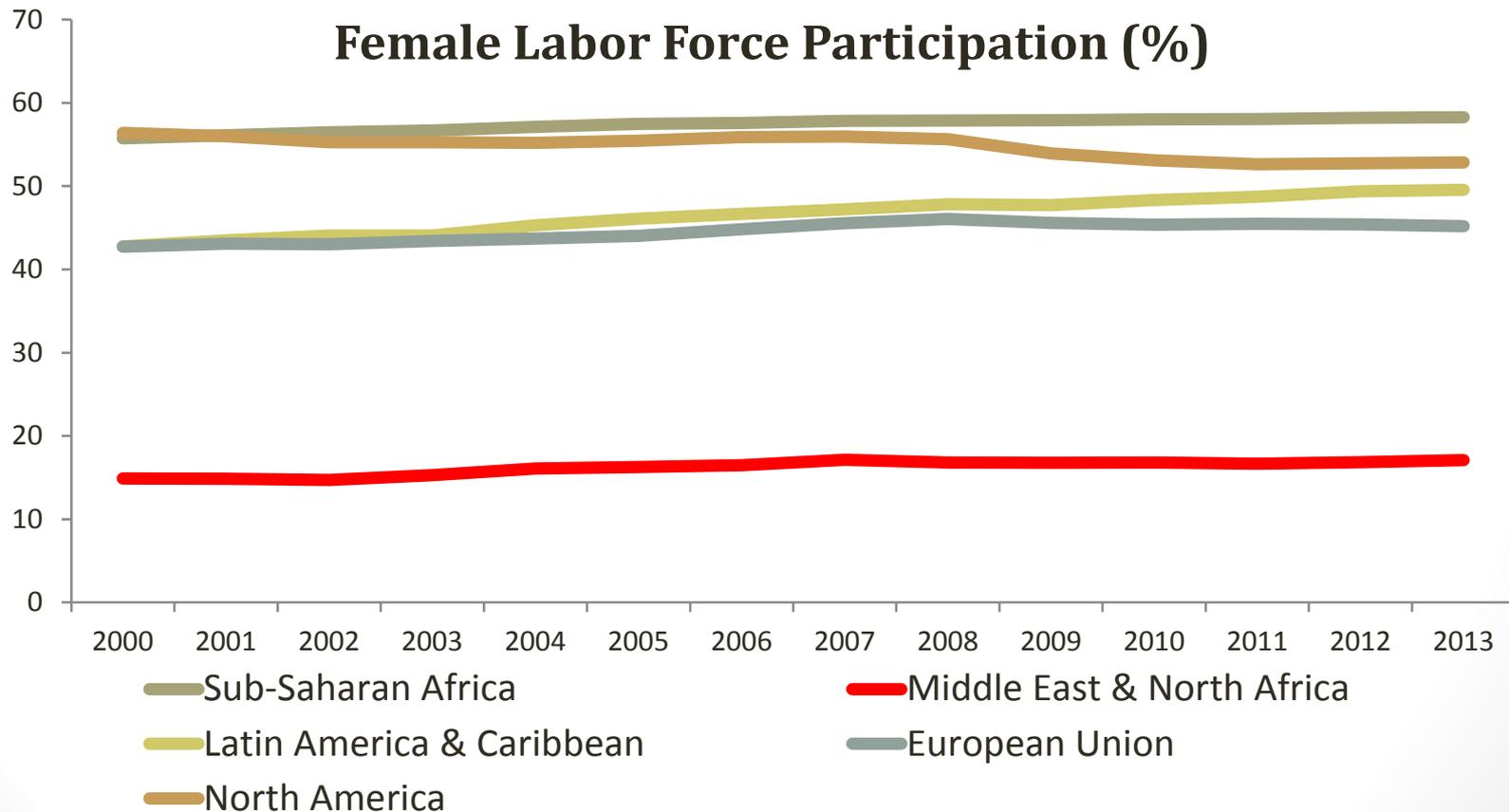
Source: World Development Indicators, World DataBank

Significant improvement in female education in the GCC

% of Females in Secondary Education



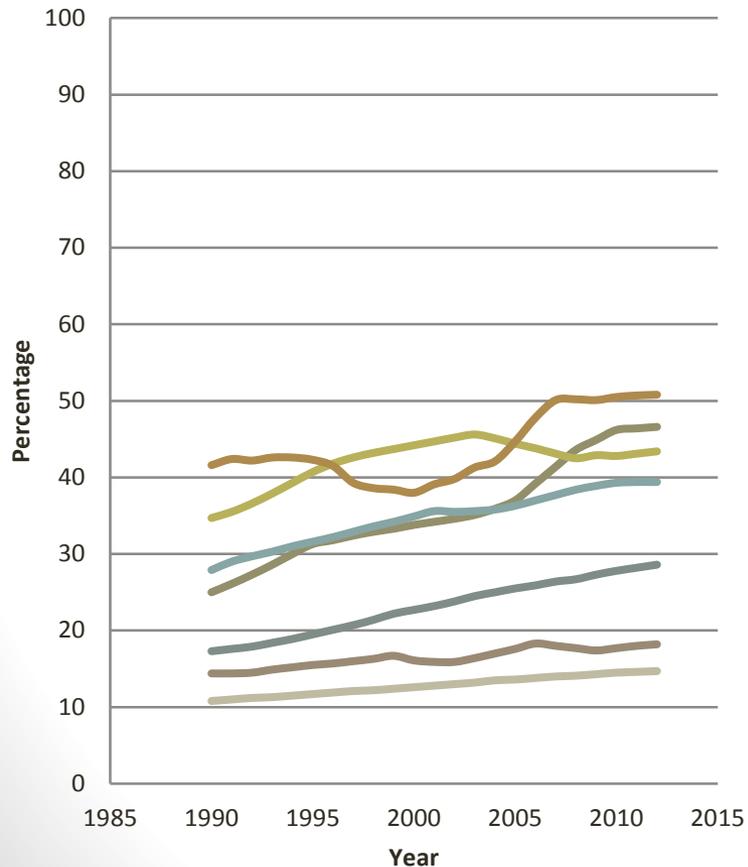
But little change or even decline in women's participation in labor force in the past decade...



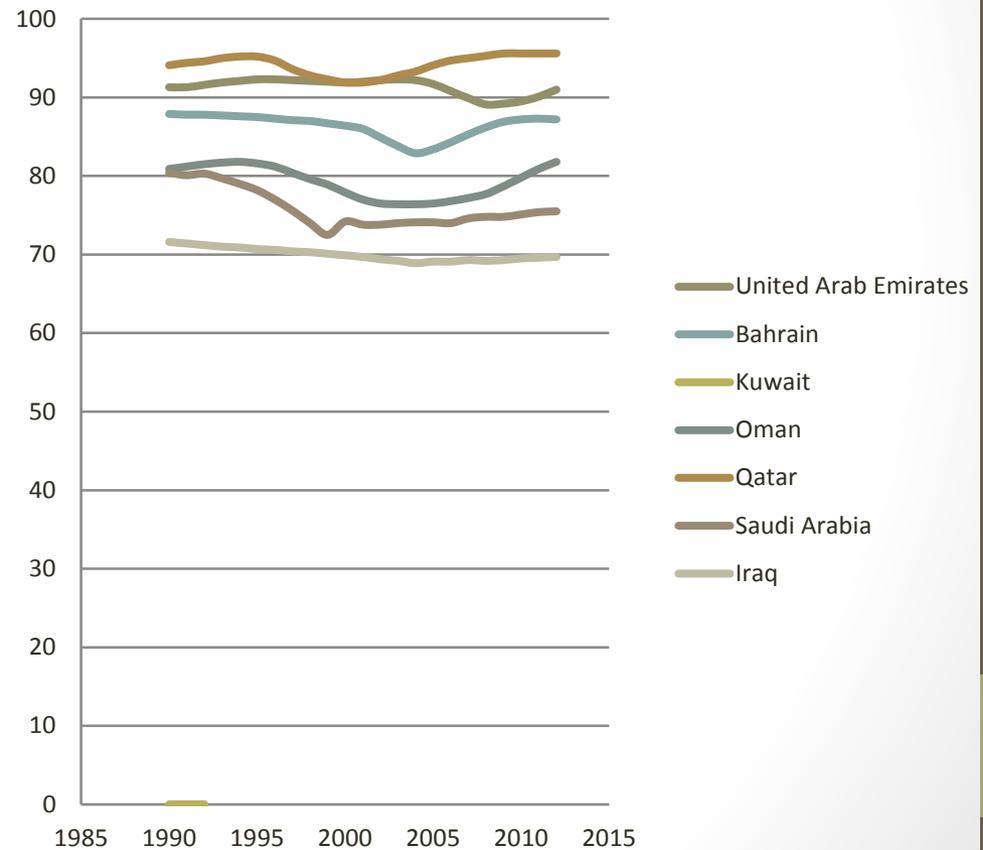
Source: World Development Indicators, World DataBank.

A closer look at the GCC

Female Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+)



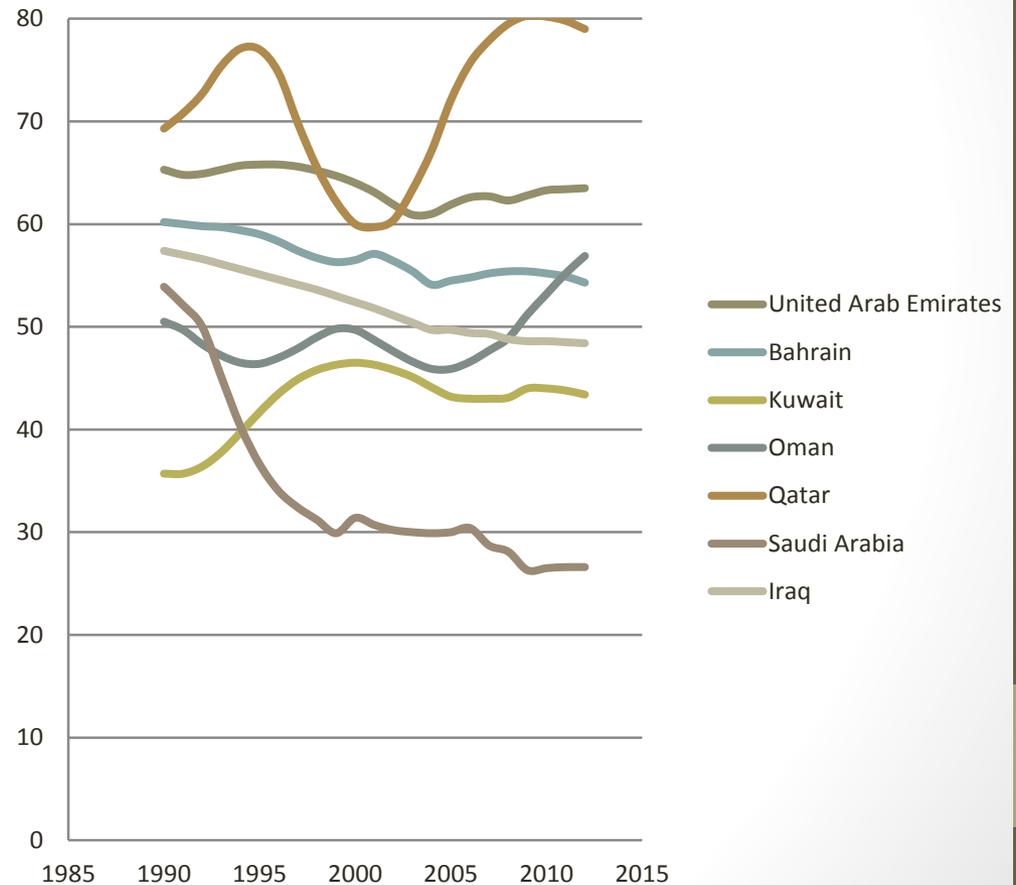
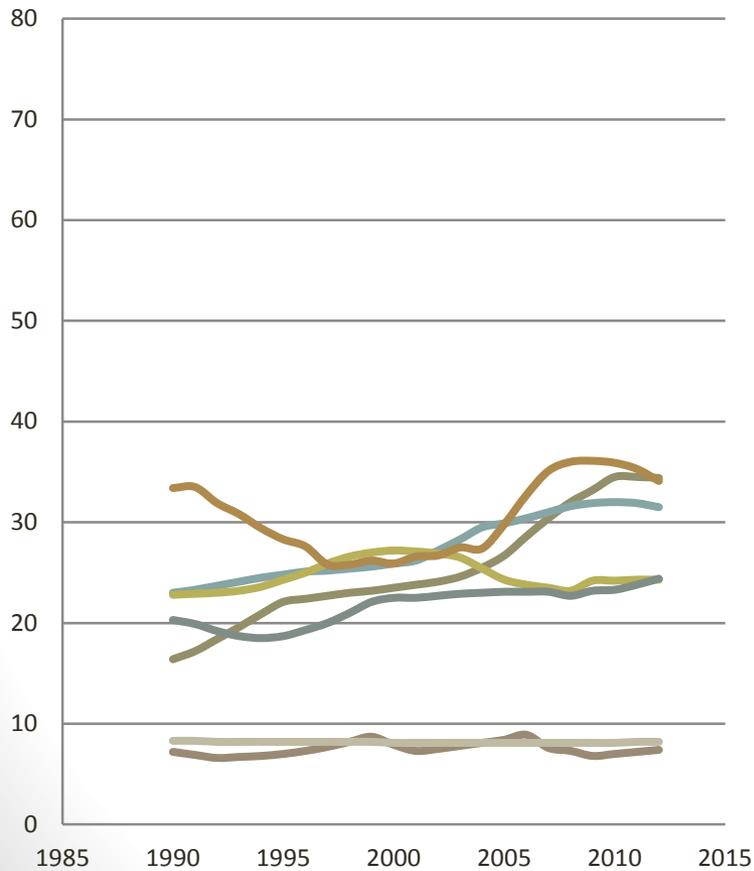
Male Labor force participation rate (% of male population ages 15+)



Youth Employment in the GCC

Female Labor force participation rate for ages 15-24 (%)

Male Labor force participation rate for ages 15-24 (%)



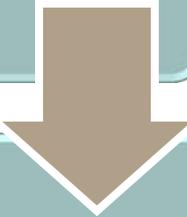
Qatar and UAE- The Super Stars

- Participation of women in the labor force in 2013 in UAE and Qatar increased by **more than 10%**.
- Other GCC countries also displayed an increase in the percentage of women in the workforce, but at a lower extent than the increase witnessed in Qatar and UAE.
- Qatar has the highest rate of female labor force participation at 51%, closely followed by the UAE at 47%.
- These two countries make up the highest rates of female labor force participation in the GCC region for the year of 2013.

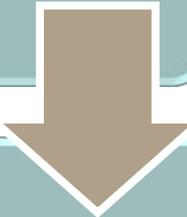
Source: World Bank.

Story line...

Significant increases in educational attainment in MENA and the Gulf in particular



Persistently low levels of women's economic participation



Wasted opportunities for development

Demographic changes in the GCC

- Smaller Families,
- Higher average marriage age,
- More Educated female workforce,
- Rising Divorce rates,
- Social acceptance is growing.

Obstacles to Women's Participation in Economic Activity are Well-Known

Cultural Barriers

- Cultural and social norms relating to women's honor and virtue

Primacy of Domestic Sphere

- Traditional division of labor between men and women

Labor Market Barriers

- Regulations that result in higher cost to employ women
- Occupational segregation
- Inhospitable workplaces
- Absence or high cost of child care

Existing Measures in the GCC: Saudi Arabia

GCC countries have come up with many policies to improve the employment of women:

- Creating thousands of new jobs and ensuring that a good chunk of these jobs are for women.
- In **Saudi Arabia**: the government has attempted to put forth a framework to create many more employment opportunities for women in education for example.
- Establishment of female sections in the government as well as training programs.
- Saudi Arabia also revised their labor code so as to factor in maternity leave as well as nurseries, vacation time and so on.

Existing Measures in the GCC: UAE, Qatar and Kuwait

- In 2008, **UAE** launched a five-year plan to develop women's roles and find future female leaders.
- Training programs that help prepare UAE women for the business world.
- **Qatar** within the 2030 National Vision have stressed on creating increased opportunities and vocational support for their female population.
- **Qatar and Kuwait** have launched business forums that help business women contribute to the economic development of their countries.
- To combat discrimination of women in the workplace, all the GCC countries except for Oman have ratified the International Labor Organization's Convention No. 111 on job discrimination.

Gender equality in the GCC region: what does it take?



Struggle for gender equality is a **shared task**

Collective effort to bring about **governance reforms** to tackle inequality and injustice in various forms

Require **cooperation and coalition** work of scholars, donors, international organizations, environmentalists, grassroots community organizations.

Make words into deeds

Lessons from Developed Countries

- OECD countries: Policies leading to a 10% increase in the labor force participation of women
 - more part-time work,
 - child benefits,
 - childcare
 - parental leave



Such work-family reconciliation policies will support women and will lead to increased female labor force participation without negatively affecting fertility rates.

Recommendations..

- **Women-friendly laws:** Gender discrimination is “codified in law, frequently in family law or civil codes,” it is important to replace these with laws that support rather than alienate women from the workforce.
- **Efficient Family-Friendly Policies:** Maintaining the work-family balance is especially difficult for women as their career demands are increasing while they are still required to maintain their domestic duties.
- Promote **more attractive Jobs:** “accommodating work arrangements across the public and private sectors (working hours, internships, career counselling and benefits) that compatible with their multiple roles”

Recommendations

- Government intervention to classifying some jobs as “Family Friendly.”
- Organizations need to be held accountable for providing a **healthy working environment** that doesn’t mistreat women and that allots them basic amenities.
- Education or Awareness programs could be put in place to continue to change society’s and their family’s perceptions so as to ultimately lead to increased support of working women.
- Longer maternity leaves (too short in UAE).
- Flexible working hours.
- Quality and Government-funded childcare (not wide array of publicly-subsidized childcare in GCC).

Recommendations

- Encouraging women to take part in entrepreneurial roles will allow women more options for work in the labor market.
 - This could allow women more outlets and could match with the conservative culture of the GCC as women could work from home.
 - Entrepreneurial initiatives could be especially beneficial to GCC women as they can use their wealth and education to own and manage their own businesses.
 - In the UAE, 33% of enterprises that are owned by women generated over 100,000 USD a year while that percentage of firms in developed nations such as the US only adds up to 13% (“Women Entrepreneurs in the Middle East and North Africa: Characteristics, Contributions, and Challenges”, 2007).

In a nutshell...Urgently Needed

- Family policies: A need for regulatory reforms.
- Efficient policies that support women's access to productive employment.
- Employers consideration the family burden that falls on women.
- Need for more flexible private sector jobs: part-time and work from home opportunities.
- **Innovative solutions:** Promote women entrepreneurship

Conclusion

- Although the GCC region has witnessed a rise in labor force participation of women, a lot of work still needs to be done to get closer to the world average.
- The policies that some GCC countries have already put in place are a great first step but more needs to be done to reduce this issue all together.
- It is important to understand the work-family balance of women and put in place policies that are family friendly.

Thank you for your kind attention