



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite significant interest in gender and philanthropic activities separately in the Arab world among scholars and policymakers, little research has focused on the interaction of these two spheres. Responding to a gap in the literature, this policy paper examines 23 foundations working on gender in the Arab region, based on the information available on their websites, other online sources, and interviews conducted with a selection of senior foundation leadership. Our findings highlight that while gender is perceived to be a cross-cutting theme across regional philanthropic work, there are still substantive gaps in gender-specific initiatives, such as research, programs specific to boys and men, and a lack of programs to support and advocate for change in legal structures that currently disadvantage women across the region. To address these gaps, we suggest that foundations conduct further research at the sectoral and organizational levels on gender, equally target both genders in programming, and create a philanthropic culture with the necessary infrastructure to share work related to gender. Finally, foundations should consider engaging in advocacy supporting policies that would address current legal frameworks that act as barriers to women's full participation and emancipation in the region.

Philanthropy and Gender in the Arab World

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Introduction

Faced with complex issues at the intersection of gender, education, and labor market outcomes, the Middle East countries pose a unique environment for foundations. While girls increasingly outperform their male peers in education, female labor force participation rates remain among the lowest in the world. Philanthropic organizations are well-positioned to provide localized and targeted support through funding, programs, and initiatives; however, their work is often impacted by various systemic issues, including cultural beliefs, social norms, and legal considerations that can relegate women to a secondary role in society and men to merely providers.

This paper presents an analysis of 23 Arab foundations' work on gender to address the gap in the literature. This analysis includes exploring their typologies and programmatic focus areas. The information was collected using available online resources, existing literature, and interviews with chief executives and directors of foundations working in the sector. Overall, we find that most foundations working in gender consider it a cross-cutting theme of their work but that much of their thematic priorities are clustered around the same areas. The result is an over-representation in some areas and neglect of other areas, including a lack of research on gender, minimal boys-specific programming, and a neglect of the legal frameworks and structures that constrain women in multiple domains.

Our findings suggest that foundations should more explicitly integrate gender as a critical component of their work and adopt a holistic definition that includes men and boys to consider their impact on both genders more effectively. In addition, foundations should seek to engage in advocacy on gender issues and be open to sharing their work and how it relates to gender by supporting the creation of data infrastructure that explicitly captures key factors such as gender. Finally, additional research should be conducted on the philanthropic sector and the foundations themselves to better identify the challenges around gender and design better programs strengthened by robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

Background

Philanthropy in the Arab World

With vastly different geographical, social, political, and economic conditions between the countries of the Arab world, philanthropy in the region is not a monolithic entity but varies based on factors found in each country, especially in terms of funding. In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) oil-rich countries, high net worth individuals and families have gained international recognition for pledging large donations through strategic initiatives or by creating foundations. For example, Saudi Arabian Prince Alwaleed bin Talal pledged his entire holdings, estimated to be worth USD 32 billion, to the Alwaleed Philanthropies

(Ibrahim, 2015). On top of large one-time gifts, such as a USD 1.25 billion grant by the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, foundations, corporations, and families in the Gulf donated USD 337 million to a variety of causes, including public health, education, and humanitarian aid (Coutts & Co., 2016). While the availability of funding in the resource-rich Gulf may drive philanthropic activity, the need and potential benefit from philanthropic initiatives are more pronounced in the non-GCC Arab world. Similarly, when looking at the level of overall giving, countries of the GCC outperform non-GCC Arab countries. In a 2018 global survey of how frequently individuals reported donating money or volunteering time, the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) report ranked three GCC countries (Bahrain, UAE, and Kuwait) as the highest in the Arab world, with Lebanon, Egypt, and Palestine coming in at the bottom of the list (Charities Aid Foundation, 2018).

In addition to giving more, the nature of philanthropic giving in the Arab world is also changing. While a large portion of philanthropy is still rooted in faith-based traditions,¹ centered around anonymous donations and charity for the poor and needy, both Islamic and non-Islamic philanthropic organizations across the Arab world have taken on a more visible role in recent years. This has taken the form of large-scale campaigns and programs targeting a wider variety of sectors and beneficiaries, including public health, education, economic empowerment, and women, among others. Despite regional foundations changing from being solely charitable organizations to including more advocacy and programming, research on the growing role of philanthropic actors in the social and political spheres of the Arab world remains scarce. The region has long been the focus of research by Western scholars and media regarding its approach and treatment of gender, particularly women's rights. While gender ostensibly ranks high on national development goals across Arab countries, little has been written about the role of philanthropic entities in this space.

While priority areas of foundations may shift from country to country, youth, education, and science rank among the most popular focus areas in philanthropy in the Arab world, and in particular among the countries of the GCC (Dickinson, 2017). This strategic focus reflects the large share of young people in the overall population in Arab countries. It is additionally fueled by high numbers of unemployment among young people (Kabbani, 2019). A 2017 survey that asked 59 foundations across the Arab world in which area of international development they saw the greatest alignment with their work, gender equality and education were the two most commonly mentioned areas (Kuttab et al., 2017). Although recent research on philanthropy and education has found an increased

involvement of private and state-funded philanthropies in education systems across the Arab world (Ridge et al., 2019), the intersection between gender and the work of foundations in the Arab world remains understudied. The research that exists is often limited to individual countries and organizations (see, for example, Clark, 2004; Clark & Michuki, 2009).

Women's Rights in Arab World

Despite great strides in women's educational achievement in the Arab world, cultural practices and legal provisions that place men firmly at the head of the family have limited women's access to finances, property ownership, wealth inheritance, and the passing on of their nationality to their children or spouse (UNDP, 2019). A 2019 report by the UN Development Program on Arab countries notes that "laws and law enforcement practices present barriers to women's equal participation in the workforce and public life" (UNDP, 2019, p. 13).

Across the Arab world, passing legislation aimed at closing the gender pay gap between men and women has become a high priority for countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, which in 2020 passed a federal law mandating that "female employees shall receive wages equal to that of males if they perform the same work, or another of equal value" (Naar, 2020). Despite the ostensive legal advances, however, reports such as the 2020 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap report still rank the UAE in 120th place overall and 137th in the "economic participation and opportunity" category specifically (McKeever, 2020). Equal pay legislation may therefore only serve as a small indicator of women's actual economic empowerment. Gonzales et al. (2015) found that the wider legal framework plays an integral role in increasing female labor force participation. They found that legally guaranteed equality between men and women, such as equal property rights, equal inheritance rights, women's liberty to pursue a profession, obtain a job, or open a bank account, right to initiate legal proceedings without the husband's permission, right to sign a contract, and a woman's right to be the head of a household, were all related to a statistically significant decrease in the gender gap in labor force participation (Gonzales et al., 2015). Legally speaking, women across the Arab world are now able to sign a contract, register a business, and open a bank account in the same way as a man, but in 2017, only 35 percent of women in the Arab world, compared with 52 percent of men, had a financial account of some kind (Rachidi, 2018). In addition, a survey of female entrepreneurs cited difficulties in accessing capital (AFI, 2016). High interest rates and collateral requirements are of particular concern for women as

¹ In both Islamic and Christian faiths in the Arab world, religiously motivated giving has a long tradition through donating a fixed amount of income as part of *Zakat* or paying Tithe, respectively. In contrast to public, institutional philanthropic giving, faith-based giving places an emphasis on giving charity in secret to preserve the dignity of the receiver and prevent showing off or ulterior motives of donors.

national credit information systems are underdeveloped and lenders rely on collateral-based lending (Devlin, 2015). Restrictive personal status laws may exacerbate this hurdle and exclude women from accessing finance.

However, when it comes to the domestic and family sphere, there are many more examples of laws from Arab countries where women do not enjoy the same legal privileges as men. In Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, women do not have the same right to inherit assets from their parents or surviving spouses as male family members, and they are unable to file for divorce or remarry in the same way as their male spouses (World Bank, 2021). Similarly, personal status laws in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait prevent women from being recognized as the head of the household and include provisions requiring married women to obey their husbands (World Bank, 2021). *Wilayah*, the supervision or guardianship of the child, which is enshrined in most Arab states' laws, affords fathers the sole right to make decisions about the child's person and property, including health, education, and finances (UNDP 2019). Especially after divorce, obtaining custody may be challenging for women, who have to demonstrate the father's absence or incapacity (UNDP 2019). Cultural norms and laws emphasize the importance of the father as both the head of the family and the provider (Ridge et al., 2018). Examples like this highlight the interplay and reinforcement of social and cultural norms and legal provisions.

Similarly, the countries covered in the sample of this policy paper are all governed by marital property laws that ignore nonmonetary contributions to the marriage; for example, childcare or other unpaid domestic work, which further restricts the wife's ability to own property

during marriage and after a potential divorce (Gaddis et al., 2020). The disadvantaged position of women regarding property and land ownership is further exacerbated in poor, rural areas, where land ownership plays a central role as the main place to live and produce (Gaddis et al., 2020). A global study that includes the Middle East finds that the poorest quintile of women is more likely to live in rural areas, where gender gaps in property ownership are larger than in urban areas (Gaddis et al., 2020).

The Reverse Gender Gap

Although there are several challenges around women's rights, boys and men also face challenges that could be supported and addressed by foundations operating in the region. Across the region, girls outperform boys in school, as shown by the latest PISA results in Table 1. In addition, boys are at increased risk of disengaging from school and engaging in risky behavior (see, for example, Ridge, 2014). As shown in Table 2, women make up a small fraction of the prison population, whereas men make up almost all of the prison population in many countries in the Middle East. Ensuring gender equality will require that all parts of the population are targeted by foundations in their work. Even those foundations that do not explicitly target both genders may inadvertently increase gender inequality by not working on gender explicitly. By not incorporating both genders into their work, foundations may also miss opportunities to address gender inequality in the work that they are already engaged in. Overall, these complexities highlight the importance of a conscious awareness and the necessity to incorporate both genders in the programming and activities of foundations.

Table 1: The Reverse Gender Gap in PISA Scores in the Middle East

	Reading			Mathematics			Science		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
Qatar	375	440	65	402	426	24	400	439	39
UAE	403	460	57	430	439	9	420	447	27
KSA	373	427	54	367	380	13	372	401	29
Jordan	393	444	51	397	403	6	414	444	30
OECD	472	502	30	492	487	-5	488	490	2
Lebanon	338	366	28	394	393	-1	381	386	5
Morocco	347	373	26	368	367	-1	372	381	9

Data Source: OECD (2019)

Table 2: Percent Female Prison Population in the Middle East

	Israel	Saudi Arabia	Jordan	Lebanon	Oman	Bahrain	UAE	Qatar
% Female	1%	1.7%	2.2%	3.2%	4.5%	4.7%	11.7%	14.7%

Data Source: World Prison Brief (2021)

It is against this background that we examine philanthropic foundations' work on gender in the Arab world. This paper intends to identify areas of neglect in programming and within gender itself. The objective is to provide key recommendations that can strengthen the work of foundations working on gender in the region by fostering collaborations, transparency, and research to ensure that philanthropic efforts and synergies are maximized and that gender equality is achieved in the region.

Methodology

To understand what is currently being done by the philanthropic sector on gender in the region, we first identified foundations in the region and then reduced our list to only those working on gender. To compile the initial list of foundations in the region, we searched through public resources, such as directories, databases, philanthropic networks, newspapers, and individual foundations' websites, which yielded a list of 96 foundations. In addition to foundations, this initial list included nonprofit organizations and public charities. To focus on relevant foundations only, we first narrowed the list using criteria for a foundation outlined by Johnson and Rahim (2018), which have been adopted in previous research on philanthropy in the Arab world (Ridge et al., 2019), including:

- Being an independent not-for-profit entity and not an official government agency;
- Having no members or shareholders;
- Having an established and reliable source of income, sometimes, but not always, from an endowment, of which 50 percent or more comes from one private source;
- Having an independent governing board;
- Providing financial resources for educational, cultural, religious, social, or other public benefit purposes by operating their own programs and/or providing financial support to other public benefit entities (such as charities, associations, and educational institutions) and/or individuals.

The initial list of 96 was narrowed down to 30 organizations by excluding those that do not meet these criteria. As a next step, we ensured that all foundations were either operating or funding programs related to gender in the Arab world. Therefore, in addition to the

Figure 1: Sampling Process and Methodology

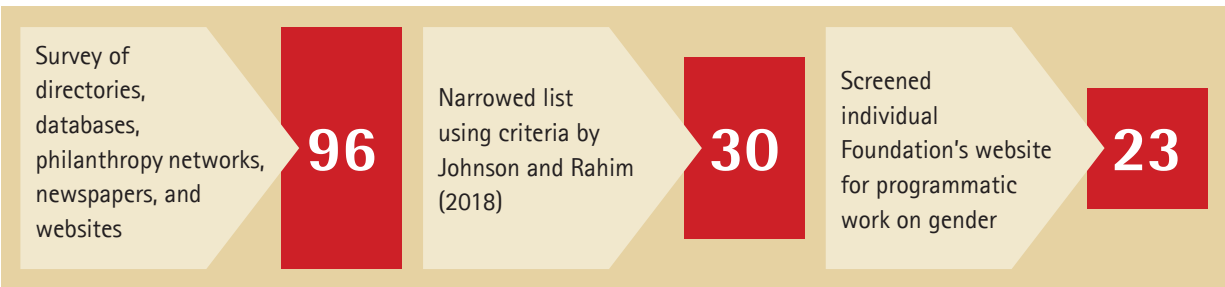
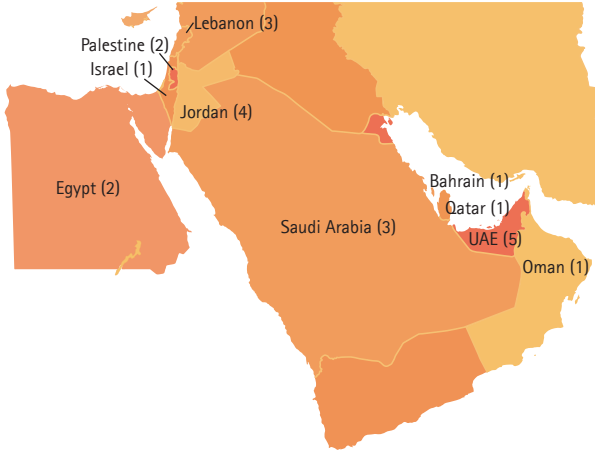


Figure 2: Map of Foundations Working in Gender by Country



above criteria, only foundations that operated gender-specific programs or provided funding through grants to implementing partners were included, resulting in a final list of 23 foundations, including operating and non-operating foundations. After this information was collated, all foundations were contacted for interviews. Of the 23 foundations, four responded to emails requesting an interview, ranging between 60 to 90 minutes. A complete list of foundations included in this analysis is listed in Table 3 in Appendix A.

Of the foundations included in the analysis, 11 are headquartered in the GCC countries, with most foundations based in the UAE (5), followed by Saudi Arabia (3), Bahrain (1), Oman (1), and Qatar (1). The remaining 13 foundations are distributed across the countries of the Levant and Egypt (2), including Jordan (4), Lebanon (3), Palestine (2), and Israel (1), with one GCC foundation and two non-GCC foundations registered in the United Kingdom.

Limitations

Due to the confidential nature of philanthropy in the Arab world and the absence of formal, comprehensive databases or registries, the foundations sampled for this policy paper only include those foundations that provide publicly available information on their programs and mission and vision via philanthropic network databases or their websites. The sample of foundations provided in this policy paper should therefore not be considered an exhaustive review of philanthropic activity in the region as it may not capture the work of foundations that are less transparent or do not make information about their work

available to the general public. While this paper presents trends related to philanthropy in the Arab world, future research is needed to corroborate findings and increase the sample size of the included countries. Similarly, the difficulty of accessing potentially sensitive data, such as finances or expenditure on certain programs, makes it challenging to triangulate the information obtained through interviews or foundations' publications.

Findings

The first part of our findings examines the programming and activities of foundations in the Middle East to identify gaps in areas related to gender, including how this compares to their funding allocation. We then consider which gender is targeted by current programming and activities and who is being overlooked. To explain the gaps in foundations working on gender in the Middle East, we consider the factors that might explain this, including the influence of policies and procedures, the role of the SDGs, and evidence-based decision-making informed through research.

1. Oversaturation of certain gender programming and activities while neglecting others

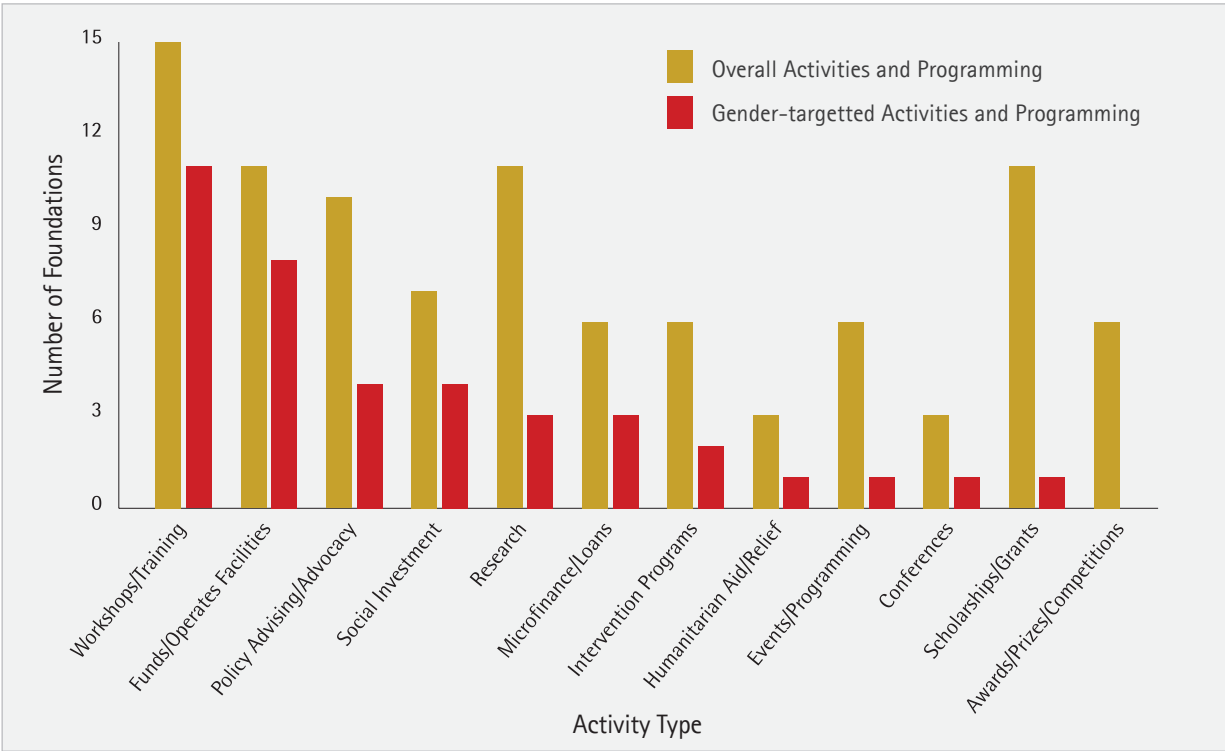
Looking at the overall activities of the 23 foundations working on gender in the Arab world, gender-targeted activities around workshops and training represent the largest share of activities across the sector. They also align the most with non-gender targeted activities. On the other hand, research and grants remain underrepresented, even though these areas are the second most common

activity of foundations in the region. This contrasts with these programs' popularity more broadly and reveals a large gap between foundations' overall program portfolios and their gender-targeted programming (see Figure 3). When examining the specific focus areas of foundations' activities on gender in the region, entrepreneurship and employment (n=12) are the most popular, followed by education (n=9) and violence and conflict (n=6), while only five foundations are working on gender-related health and medicine.



The 23 foundations working on gender in these areas either implement these programs themselves or fund programs for others to implement. Within our sample, 19 of the 23 foundations ran at least some of their own programs, while four only funded programs. In addition, foundations are more likely to directly operate programs in certain areas while exclusively funding projects in others. As a result, in addition to being the most common focus area, entrepreneurship and employment is the largest theme under which foundations operate their gender-specific programs (n=10), versus only funding programs (n=2). Similarly, in education-related programming, most foundations operate their own programs or initiatives (n=5), whereas in violence and conflict, the majority of foundations fund programs (n=4).

Figure 3: Activities of Arab Foundations



2. Heavy bias toward targeted programming for girls with a lack of programs targeting boys and men

A closer look at which gender is more commonly targeted in the activities and programs of Arab foundations reveals that most target women, with only two foundations offering programming specific to boys and men and the remaining programs highlighting girls and women as their beneficiaries. While there is a great deal of work to be done



2 foundations target males in their programming

to support women in the region, neglecting men will not ensure gender equality. Two interviewees demonstrated an awareness of the need to take a more comprehensive view of gender, but in reality, there are no strategic efforts to include or develop specific programs for men and boys:

"When you are talking gender or any tough issue in other parts of the world, it is important that you really understand how to design, so you don't have effects that are the opposite of what you want. If you, for example, look at economic empowerment and focus on women only, it may be that men feel completely sidelined." (Executive Director, Egypt)

"When we talk about gender, we're really talking about girls. We do remain mindful of keeping track of the percentages of boys versus girls, but we haven't done the same explicitly for young boys in the same way that we have done specifically for young girls." (Research Director, United Arab Emirates)

Although there is substantive rhetoric around the importance of gender equality and programming that captures both genders, we could not find any evidence of practical applications of activities or programming that explicitly mentions the cross-cutting nature of gender and involves both genders.

3. Lack of governance structures that support practical applications of activities and programs that explicitly consider gender

Although there is an awareness of the importance of gender, and often even an explicit mention, closer examination reveals a lack of formal structures within foundations that directly consider gender and address inequality in their programs and activities. The foundations in our sample appear to integrate their gender-specific programming into their program portfolio using one of

two approaches: (1) Listing gender as a standalone focus area or (2) highlighting gender-specific programming and initiatives within their thematic areas. While 17 of the 23 foundations make an explicit mention of gender as a focus area on their websites, annual reports, or other publications, six foundations do not consider gender a focus area itself but instead highlight gender-specific work in one of their focus areas, such as education, or health and medicine.

Interviews with senior foundation leadership highlighted that the different approaches to integrating gender-specific programming are not chosen randomly but reflect a conscious decision:

"Organizations can work in one of two ways, either make gender as a theme and say you have a gender program, or say we have a number of themes that are more of economic empowerment, and then say gender is cross-cutting. For us, gender is the topic that is cross-cutting across the thematic areas, so across education, economic empowerment, and social empowerment." (Executive Director, Egypt)

During interviews, participants were hesitant to label their foundations as gender-focused organizations per se. However, all interviewees noted an awareness and desire to include gender as a priority in their programs, should they discover it beneficial or necessary for improving the effectiveness of their programs overall. In addition to their explicit programming, foundations note the opportunity of the philanthropic sector to influence and shape gender roles and expectations more generally, but have limited formal policies and governance structures to address gender directly:

"Whenever a donor comes to our foundation, they usually ask, what's your gender policy? We don't have one! I have mixed feelings about it, actually, but the way we do it, our whole values as a foundation: equality and respect for everyone with no discrimination against anyone whatsoever. If you put this as a core value, it negates the fact of having an explicit gender policy. It's a core value at the foundation. We never look at things using a gender lens unless we feel there is inequality." (Director General, Palestine)

When asked about why they focus on one gender or the other, participants explained that it usually was not intentional but based on the type of program or activity. One interviewee explained:

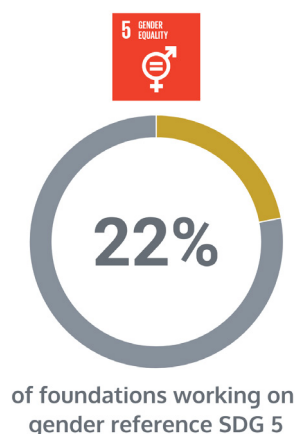
"The way we strategize it is that it's basically both genders unless we find there is something that is very specific to women that we need to address, violence against women for instance, or maternal and child health." (Executive Director, Egypt)

The findings suggest that foundations are aware of the cross-cutting nature of gender for their focus areas and programs while also considering the implications an explicit gender-only focus area may have on their activities. As one interviewee explained, they may engage their gender focus strategically in response to the social and political context of their communities:

"The reason we didn't want to label ourselves as a female-focused organization because you get pigeonholed in a certain way immediately in the country and in the region. We said, "you know what? No, we are for both, but we will push for women's rights in every way possible." It was more of a strategic decision that we thought would have more impact and influence and actually create better conditions in the long term." (Deputy CEO, Saudi Arabia)

4. Strong rhetoric on the influence of the SDGs on gender equality, but a lack of programming and evidence demonstrating this

The SDGs have been influential in guiding governments' development efforts with specific goals targeting gender both explicitly and as a cross-cutting theme for many of the goals. Although the SDGs are increasingly referenced by philanthropic organizations (Kuttab et al., 2017), we found very few foundations in the region referencing the SDGs publicly. After reviewing websites, annual reports, and public statements for explicit mentions of the SDGs, slightly less than half of all the foundations working on gender in the region (11 out of 23) make explicit links between their work and the SDGs. Goals 5 (Gender Equality) and 4 (Quality Education) are the most commonly mentioned SDGs, but the number of foundations referencing them remains relatively low, with Goal 5 on Gender Equality only mentioned by five foundations.



During the interviews, all four participants noted that the SDGs had informed their work on gender, and they expressed an intention to align their programs with the framework provided by the SDGs. However, although the senior management of these foundations highlighted the SDGs' value, they do not necessarily guide their programmatic work in practice as only 22% of the foundations working on gender in the region reference the SDG relating to gender.

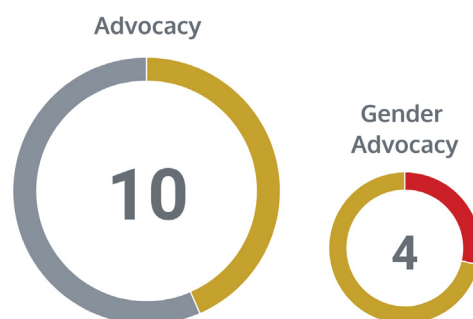
It is worth highlighting that out of the 23 surveyed foundations, 16 have a female director, or CEO, while only seven organizations have a male executive heading the organization. Interviewees highlighted that the philanthropic sector as a career path might open up possibilities and spaces for redefining gender in a professional setting. One interviewee highlighted how working in foundations allowed women to demonstrate their leadership potential and inspire change:

"We were never a female-oriented organization; however, gender was always extremely important to us. Just the fact that we were the first foundation with

90% of our board being women uniquely positioned us to push the envelope in a country where 100% of the boards were male. Our CEO was always a woman and still is, which is another first in the country. In those two ways, we thereby promoted gender rights and have shown in practice that women can do this work as much as men." (Deputy CEO, Saudi Arabia)

5. Lack of transparency and evidence pertaining to private foundation's work on advocacy around legal frameworks to support female empowerment and gender equality

Although interview data highlights the interest of foundations to shape gender, social development, and advance the role of women in the Arab world, the absence of programs tackling contemporary structural and legal issues casts doubt on how attuned foundations are to institutional challenges in the region. For most foundations, gender-specific programs targeting economic empowerment and entrepreneurship through training and capacity are an explicit goal. This is a welcome development, as it appears to acknowledge the historically low labor participation rates and restrictive laws in many countries across the region, which have put women wishing to join or start their businesses at a disadvantage. Thus, when it comes to cultural norms and considerations, foundations may be well-positioned to advocate for more women-friendly business environments and regulations.



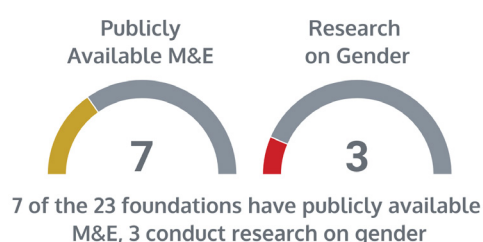
10 of the 23 foundations work in advocacy, of which 4 have a gender focus in advocacy

However, while 10 of the 23 foundations are engaged in advocacy and addressing legal structures, only four foundations are working on issues related to gender. Moreover, due to a lack of information, it is unclear if any foundations are engaged in advocacy that addresses key challenges faced by female small business owners, such as issues around the right to own a business independent of a male guardian. Without considering the wider social and legal environment, however, efforts to advance the position of women in society may be limited. In contrast to the progress made in closing the gap in educational attainment and enrolment, the Background section identified challenges to accessing land and property ownership for rural women of low socioeconomic status, which present just one example of the persistent legal and social inequalities that affect women in the Arab world. It

should be noted that none of the foundations surveyed in this paper have made reform or the updating of regulatory and legal frameworks a thematic focus of their work. They serve as poignant reminders for foundations to consider broader structural issues related to gender.

6. Lack of publicly available M&E and research to inform decision making on gender programming and activities

Within our sample, only three foundations are engaged in research around topics on gender. The lack of research also raises the question of how high-quality M&E processes that include gender can be ensured. Moreover, public availability of program evaluations is key to sharing best practices across the sector and reducing repeated mistakes. Of the 23 foundations in our sample, only seven have made documentation on the M&E of their programs and activities publicly available, demonstrating the need to exert efforts to learn more about the effectiveness of different programs related to gender. In foundations' work on gender, definitions of desired outcomes and what constitutes success must be clear and integrated into the programs as social change tends to happen over long periods. It also underscores the need for gender-specific research on women that considers factors, such as geography, class, and legal frameworks in their country.



Recommendations

Overall, we find that the work of foundations on areas related to gender is limited in the region, with much of what is being done related to education and training around female entrepreneurship with little being done to support boys and men directly. Although many foundations in the region acknowledge the importance of gender, most prefer not to make it a core component of their work. However, our findings suggest that not explicitly integrating it into their operations may impact how gender relates to their programming and cause their activities to be overlooked. This directly impacts gender equality and the types of programming foundations are engaged in, including advocacy for supporting gender equality in legal frameworks. It is also a lost opportunity for foundations to build in positive spillover effects into their programming that would support gender equality in the region. Moreover, the lack of transparency in the region makes coordination efforts between the public and private sectors difficult, creating barriers to sharing best practices and lessons learned and supporting them through research, which only further limits progress on gender equality in the region. To address these challenges, we have identified four key recommendations below.

1. Include gender-specific programming for at-risk boys and men

The paper's findings have presented an overwhelming focus on programming that targets women and girls, while men and boys are more often than not only implicitly or tangentially addressed. To realize the potential of boys and men as allies and agents of change, foundations' initiatives and programs should explicitly include, if not provide, tailored programs in gender-specific programs. Intervention programs targeting disengaged boys at UAE secondary schools, for instance, have shown promising results in raising attendance and improving behavioral issues (Dingus & Eckert, 2019). Alternative teaching methods and curricula that consider the needs of adolescent boys may demonstrate effective, gender-specific programming. Moreover, gender-specific programming must take care not to reinforce social norms or concentrate solely on specific activities and thematic areas such as training and entrepreneurship for women. To further support gender equality in the activities of foundations operating in the Middle East, a concerted effort must be made to engage in activities that will address the needs of men and boys in synergy with the factors affecting women.

2. Engage in advocacy addressing legal structures that would increase the impact of gendered programming and activities

To complement the work of foundations on gender, it is essential that foundations also address legal structures that may limit the impact of their gender programs. For example, many foundations are conducting programming on training women around entrepreneurship to open and run their own businesses. By engaging in advocacy around gender issues directly related to the program and activities of foundations, synergies can be realized and impact increased. It should be noted that personal status laws and legislation surrounding marriage, divorce, and inheritance are persistent hurdles for women in the region seeking to access capital or property ownership to start their own business or become financially independent. Thus, when aiming to bolster female entrepreneurship and greater economic empowerment, foundations must consider the wider legal frameworks surrounding women in the Arab world and advocate for more progressive laws where possible.

3. Support the creation of data infrastructure on philanthropy in the region that explicitly captures programs and activities on gender

Our findings have underscored the need for increased mapping and data sharing related to philanthropic activity in the region and specifics on how these activities explicitly and implicitly involve gender. Highlighting how activities address gender and making them publicly accessible is essential to understanding the work currently being done in the region that might otherwise be overlooked, leading to continued inefficiencies in the sector. Gains in efficiencies would be achieved by avoiding duplication

and identifying gaps in the current programming of foundations. To help foundations make better informed decisions and share best practices, country-level databases should be constructed with pertinent information on the types of foundations, programmatic activities, focus areas, and funding sources, explicitly highlighting key areas of their work on gender, mapped to the SDGs. Requiring foundations to disclose certain key data would improve transparency and accountability and aid the research on gender and philanthropy.

For example, philanthropic networks, associations, and forums can be leveraged to create databases that share information on gender-related programming and facilitate collaboration and address programmatic gaps. These networks are uniquely positioned to not only share which foundations are in their network, but also serve as a public platform on which additional critical information could be offered, such as the foundation's website, the types of gender-specific programming they are engaged in, their expertise in operations, such as M&E, and as links to key financial documents such as annual reports and audited accounts.

4. Conduct and fund research on gender

Future studies are needed to take a more focused look at specific aspects of foundations' work on gender in the region. Findings from this paper raise the nature of gender as a cross-cutting theme in foundation's work in the region, the benefits, as well as the drawbacks of treating gender as an implicit, rather than an explicit focus area may be critically examined and compared across countries and foundation types. Additional research may also aid the sector in identifying effective strategies for supporting gender equality in their activities and be complemented by M&E that is then publicly accessible. This will ensure that what is being done on gender in the region is more widely known and can facilitate sharing best practices on designing programs that address gender. Moreover, research policies and procedures should be established, outlining specific factors that should be integrated into all research and M&E. It may therefore be worthwhile to include a gender component in the M&E of all foundations' programs, gender and non-gender specific, to be able to evaluate how each program intersects with or affects gender and avoid any unintended consequences.

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Appendix A

Table 3: Overview of Foundations

Imam Sadr Foundation
Clore Israel Foundation
King Faisal Foundation
Hariri Foundation
Alwaleed Philanthropies (including Alwaleed Bin Talal Foundation)
Noor Al Hussein Foundation
A. M. Qattan Foundation
Jordan River Foundation
King Hussein Foundation
Arab Science and Technology Foundation
Sawiris Foundation for Social Development
King Khalid Foundation
Royal Humanitarian Foundation
Mansour Group
Al Fanar
Dubai Foundation for Women and Children
Dubai Cares
PalTel Group Foundation
Varkey Foundation
Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research
Al Jisr Foundation
Education Above All Foundation
Queen Rania Foundation

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