

Empowering Arab women through gender-inclusive social protection

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Gender-inclusive social protection: A pathway for empowerment

Social Protection: Concrete Effects

- Effective tool against poverty
- Reduces gender inequalities and promotes women's economic empowerment (WEE)
 - When designed, implemented, and monitored in a gender-responsive manner

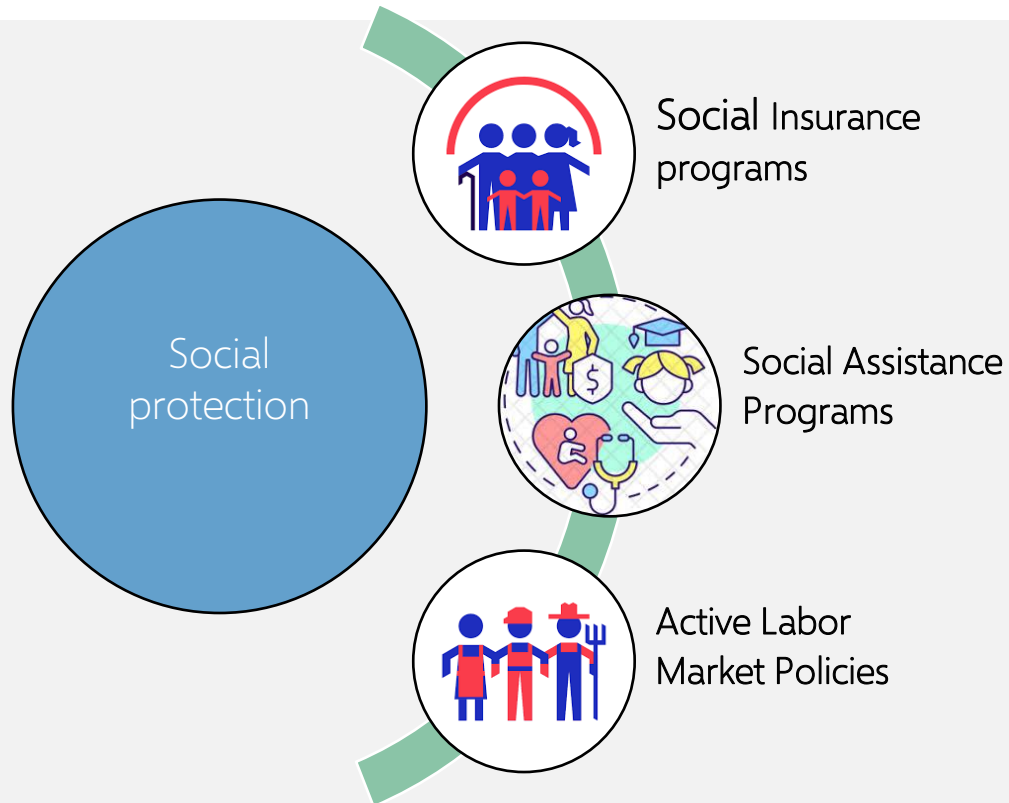
Emerging Concerns

- Insufficient support for women
- Gender-blind policies

Equitable access to gender-inclusive SP empowers women



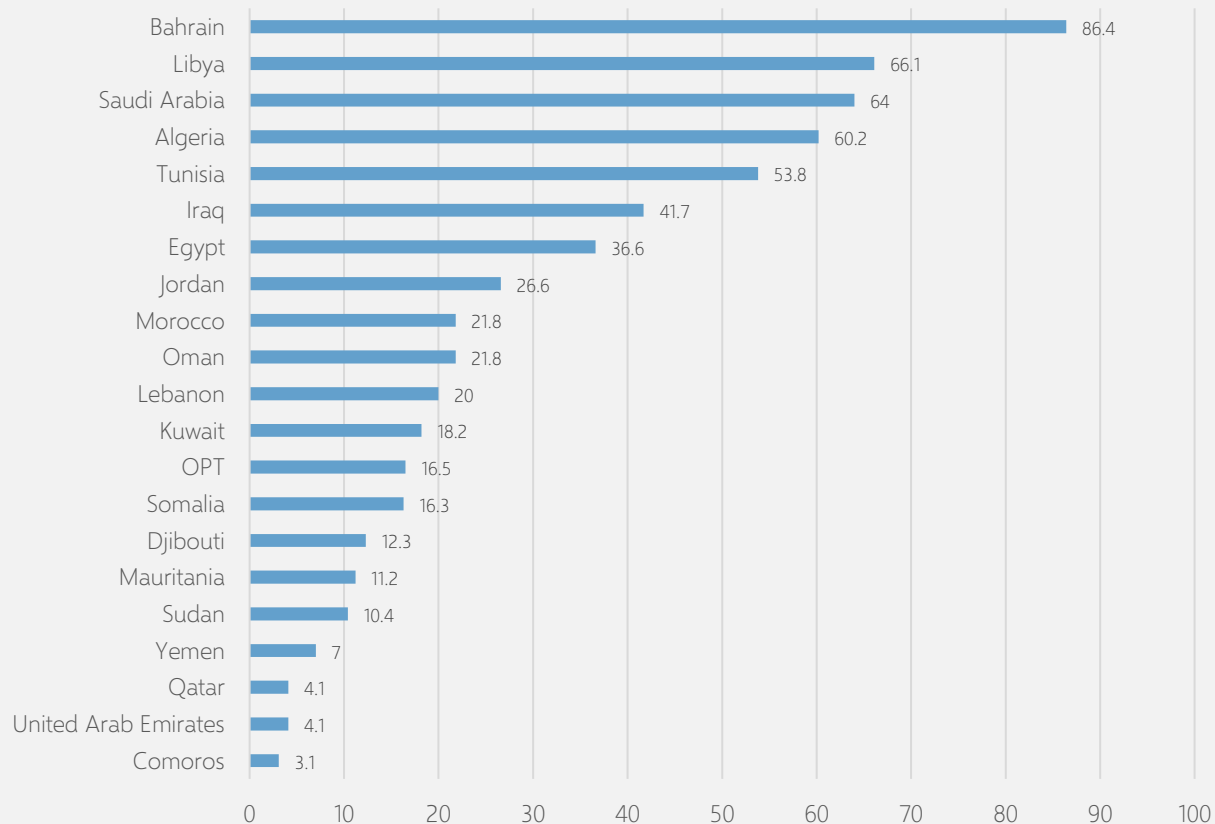
Different aspects of social protection



- **Social Insurance Programs**
 - Contributory; provide income support for contingencies like old age, disability, sickness, maternity, and child benefits
- **Social Assistance Programs**
 - Non-contributory; support for poor and vulnerable segments (e.g., cash transfers, social pensions)
- **Active Labor Market Programs**
 - Government initiatives to enhance income generation and skill development for social assistance beneficiaries

The state of social protection in the region

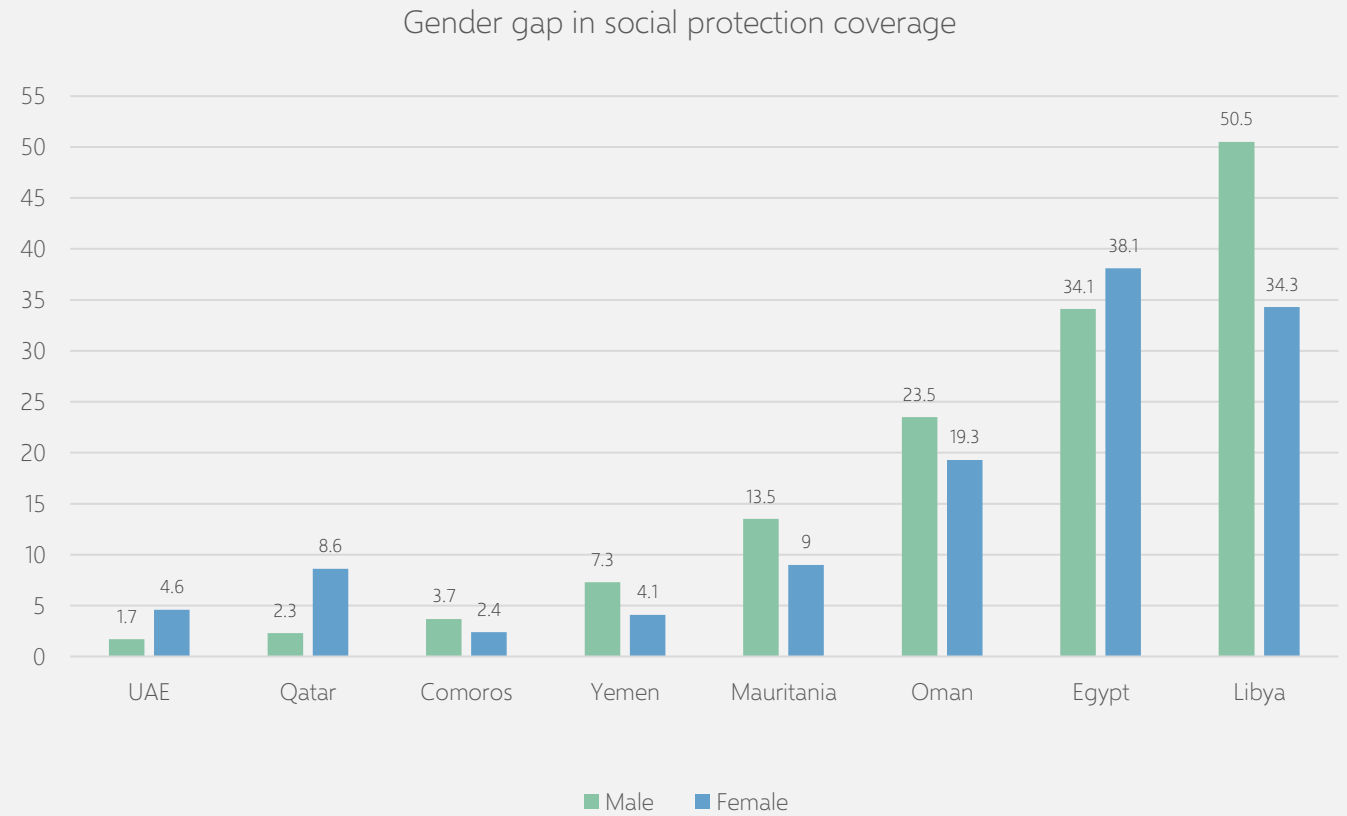
Population covered by at least one social protection benefit



- Insufficient levels of SP
 - Coverage about 35% vis-à-vis global average of 47%
 - Significant variations across countries
- Low SP spending
 - Less than 5% of GDP
- Social insurance lacks comprehensiveness and excludes informal workers
- Existing social assistance programs are largely inadequate

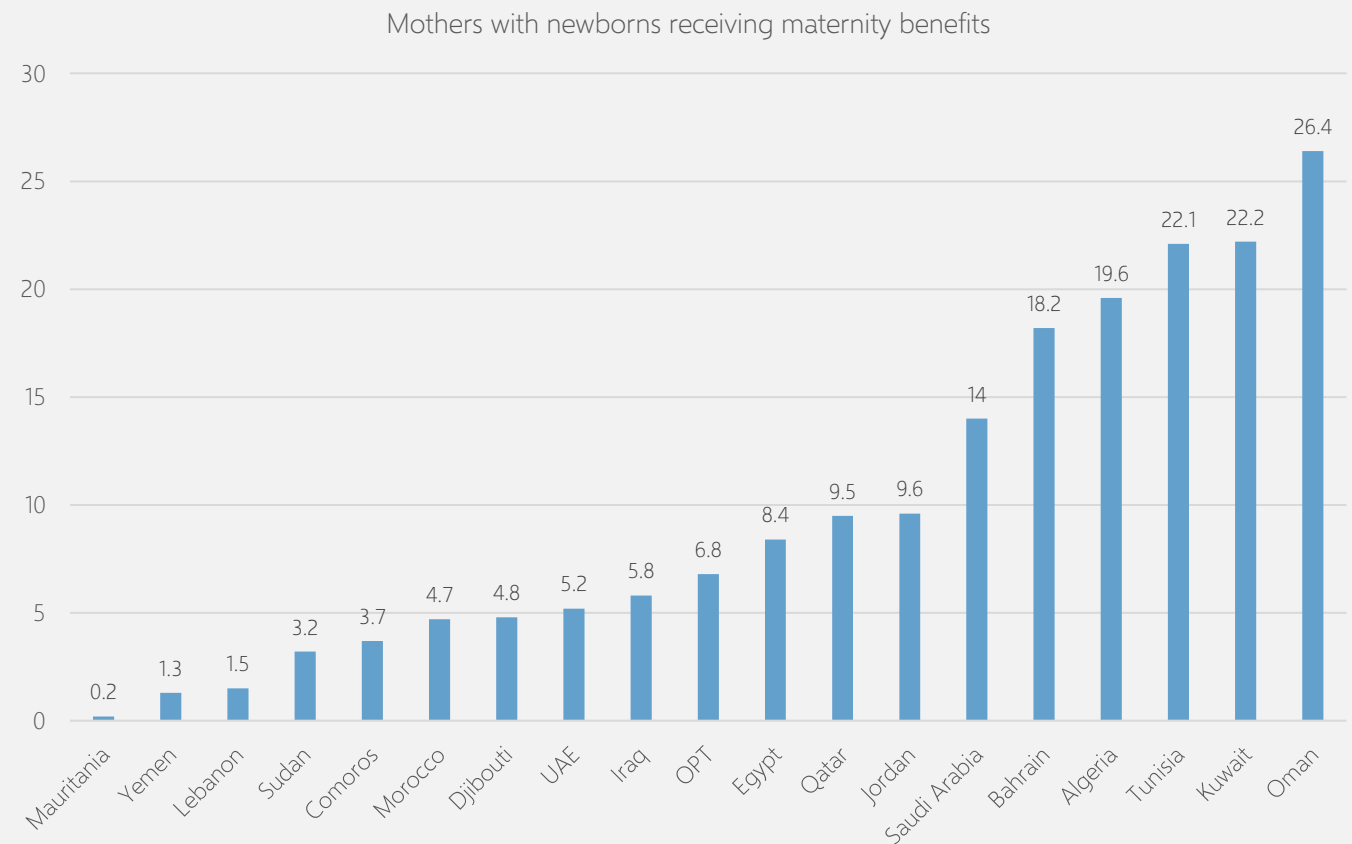
Social protection for women: Key challenges

- Women are among the most disadvantaged groups in Arab labour markets
- LFPRs remain strikingly low, underscoring the significant barriers and challenges
- Fewer women in formal employment



Social protection for women: Key challenges

- Significant gender gaps in access to contributory social insurance
 - Inadequate maternity provisions
 - Gender imbalance in contributory pension programs
- Heavy reliance of FHHs on cash assistance
- Non-contributory old-age pensions are not common



National social protection strategies and gender priorities

- National social protection strategies showcase a country's commitment to social development and provide a roadmap for achieving this through various measures. These strategies are crucial in shaping gender-sensitive systems.
- UN-Women Indicator Framework: Only a few Arab countries have dedicated SP strategies (Comoros, Djibouti, Jordan, Mauritania, Somalia)
- Existing gaps:
 - Implicit recognition of gendered risks and vulnerabilities.
 - Lack of specific measures to address these risks.
 - Insufficient incorporation of a gender perspective.
 - Failure to prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment.

Promising practices for strengthening social protection for women

- Recognizing the importance of maternity benefits for gender equality and women's economic empowerment, Jordan was the first in the region to switch from an employer-liability mechanism to collectively funded social insurance, including childcare financing in the maternity insurance scheme.
- Egypt's Takaful and Karama cash transfer programs are designed to empower women by distributing cash benefits directly to mothers, thereby strengthening their position within their families.
- Non-contributory old-age pensions are uncommon in the region, but countries like Bahrain and Oman that offer them have successfully ensured income security for elderly women.
- Oman's recent reform significantly strengthens protection for women and promotes gender equality. The law introduces guaranteed pensions regardless of contributions, extends maternity leave to 14 weeks paid plus 98 days unpaid (job-protected leave), and provides seven days of paid paternity leave, promoting gender balance and shared responsibilities.

Driving gender-inclusive social protection forward



I. Develop national social protection strategies that adopt a life course lens

II. Enhance women's access to formal employment

III. Ensure comprehensive maternity coverage and promote maternity insurance

IV. Address gender gaps in access to contributory social insurance

V. Strengthen social assistance for women

VI. Introduce non-contributory old-age pensions for women

ESCWA's initiatives



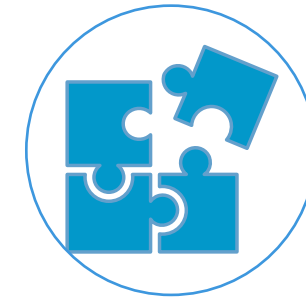
Supporting Member States

- Provides technical assistance to promote inclusive, equitable, and responsive SP systems
- Facilitates policy development and implementation



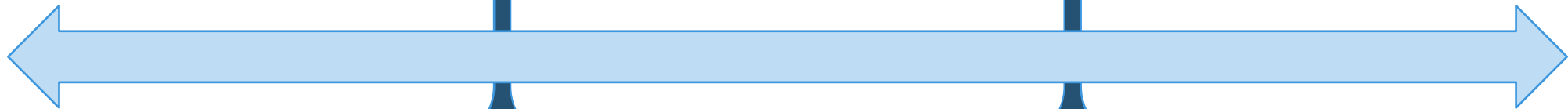
Assessing effectiveness with SPP-RAF

- Evaluates national SP programs (identifies beneficiary characteristics and needs and minimizes errors in targeting)



Enhancing graduation strategies

- Assists governments in graduation approaches, to transition beneficiaries out of poverty and to enhance their employability





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Thank you!

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