

Women Organizations for Social Change in MENA

WCC MAPPING ANALYSIS REPORT

May 2026

Commissioned by:
Women Champions for Change (WCC)

Prepared by:
Migdalar Consulting
Einat Levi, Strategic Advisor
Rim El Alami, Analyst

MIGDALOR
CONSULTING



TABLE OF CONTENT

Executive Summary	3
Introduction & Mapping Objectives	5
Part A: Methodology Guidelines	7
Part B - Analysis	10
Part C - Summary Insights	18
Part D - Practical Recommendations	20
About the Research Team	23

Executive Summary

WCC Mapping Analysis (May 2026)

A fragmented ecosystem with high untapped regional potential

Women-led social change across MENA is strong and mission-driven, yet remains fragmented. The ecosystem is heavily concentrated in Gender Equality, Human Rights and Economic Development, with clear gaps in fields such as tech, media and diplomacy.

At the same time, women-led organizations are emerging as a powerful “soft diplomacy engine”, with 85% already engaged in limited cross-border partnerships. However, many networks continue to operate within historical ties and legacy alliances, limiting broader regional collaboration.

Why this matters: from isolated efforts to collective regional impact

90%

Women Leading organizations

+60%

of organizations have the operational capacity to scale regional initiatives

93%

are mission-aligned around women’s advancement

8%

only engage in policy or structural change, limiting system-level impact

Unlocking this potential can:

Position women as key drivers of trust, stability and cooperation across the region

Connect fragmented initiatives into a coordinated ecosystem and systemic change

Our approach: mapping an emerging movement for systemic change

This report provides a structured analysis of 130 women-led organizations across MENA and diaspora, focusing on actors with cross-border activity. Using a comparative framework across leadership, sectors, regional reach, funding and visibility, it identifies:

- Strong institutional foundations (90% formal organizations)
- High international readiness but weak formal collaboration mechanisms
- Heavy reliance on external funding (70%), creating sustainability risks

The strategic opportunity

From potential to impact, the ecosystem must evolve:

- fragmented networks to a MENA-wide inclusive framework
- From broad outreach to engagement with policy, media and academic power centers
- From informal collaboration to structured, scalable partnerships
- From external dependence to diversified, locally rooted funding models

Bottom line

Women-led organizations across MENA are not just social actors - they are a scalable platform for regional transformation. With the right strategic shift, this ecosystem can move from fragmented efforts to a coordinated force shaping the region's future.

About Women Champions for Change (WCC):



WCC enables women leaders across the MENA region to expand their impact beyond local contexts by connecting across borders, amplifying their voices, and fostering meaningful collaboration across divides. As both a platform and amplifier, WCC strengthens a growing ecosystem of women-led regional leadership while demonstrating, in practice, how cross-border engagement can drive more constructive and connected realities in the region. Rooted in a vision of a more collaborative and peaceful MENA, WCC supports women social change leaders to operate at a regional level—shaping narratives, building trust, and advancing new models of cooperation across deeply divided contexts.

www.wcc-global.org

Introduction

Women Champions for Change (WCC) brings together over women leaders from diverse backgrounds, sectors, and communities across the MENA region. Since its inception, WCC has built a foundation of trust, collaboration, and shared learning among women leaders who are advancing peace, inclusion, and social transformation in their respective communities. WCC's theory of change posits that if women across MENA have greater agency and access to trusted platforms to connect and collaborate, they will generate new narratives and coalitions that model cooperation across divides and drive systemic change. To demonstrate and strengthen this theory, WCC initiated this Mapping Report that documents, analyzes, and amplifies women-led social change across the region.

Why Does This Mapping Matter?

1

Bridging the Integration Gap: While the MENA region sees growing top-down diplomatic initiatives, there is a critical need to translate these high-level agreements into sustainable, grassroots collaboration (Bottom-Up).

2

Empowering Women as the "Missing Link": Women are a primary driving force for regional trust and social change, yet their leadership potential remains largely untapped and underrepresented.

3

From Individual Leaders to a Systematic Ecosystem: Shifting the focus from personal success stories to a holistic, organized overview of the regional ecosystem of women's organizations and networks..

4

Enhancing Visibility and Recognition: Strengthening the presence of these actors by transforming fragmented local initiatives into a powerful, connected, and visible regional force.

5 **Creating a Strategic "Entry Point":** Closing the data gap to provide stakeholders with a clear, systematic gateway to engage with the region's women-led organizations.

6 **Scaling Regional Cooperation:** Building the necessary knowledge infrastructure to strengthen regional integration and sustainable channels for long-term cooperation.

Mapping Objectives



To map key women organizations in the MENA region, with a focus on cross-border collaboration.



To explore the untapped potential: identifying the opportunities and challenges for regional women collaboration and social change.



To draw practical recommendations for women organizations, international institutions and other stakeholders interested in understanding and supporting women collaborations in the region.

PART A - METHODOLOGY GUIDELINES

Mapping Structure

This study is based on a curated comparative dataset, designed to enable structured cross-country analysis rather than organic or random sampling. The mapping includes a total of 130 entities, with a balanced distribution of 10 organizations per country across 12 MENA countries, complemented by an additional regional and diaspora layer. This approach ensures both geographic representation and analytical comparability across diverse national contexts.

The geographic scope of the research spans 13 units, including Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the UAE, and MENA Diaspora actors. Data was collected through a combination of online surveys, targeted web searches, LinkedIn analysis, and AI-assisted identification, followed by a validation process to ensure consistency and reliability.

In order to maintain a clear analytical focus, the mapping applies defined threshold conditions. Included entities are women-led organizations, networks, or initiatives that promote social change, or entities whose core mandate centers on advancing women's leadership. In addition, priority was given to organizations demonstrating regional engagement, defined as operational presence in at least three MENA countries (headquarters plus two additional countries).

At the same time, the dataset intentionally excludes broad international networks that lack a dedicated focus on the MENA region, in order to preserve regional relevance and avoid analytical distortion.

Criteria & Measurement Framework

This section outlines the analytical framework used to systematically map and evaluate organizations within the WCC Mapping Ecosystem. It is based on a structured set of 27 criteria grouped across seven core dimensions: Identity, Location, Threshold, Classification, Regionality, Visibility, and Strategic orientation. Together, these dimensions provide a multidimensional lens for assessing not only the formal characteristics of each organization, but also its operational capacity, geographic scope, target constituencies, and potential for influence. By establishing a consistent measurement methodology, this framework serves as the foundation for the mapping analysis that follows.

List of Criteria

Group	Criteria	Data Type	Description
Identity	Org ID	Unique ID	A unique alphanumeric identifier assigned to each entity for data tracking and referencing.
Identity	Organization Name	Text	The official legal name of the entity as registered in its country of operation.
Identity	Year of Establishment	Number	The year the organization was founded, used to assess organizational maturity and longevity.
Identity	Institutional Standing	Dropdown	Verification of the organization's formal registration and legal framework to ensure operational stability
Identity	OrgMission	Text	The official description of the organization's Mission(the About)
Location	Country	Dropdown	The primary nation within the MENA region where the organization is headquartered or officially registered.
Location	City	Text	The specific urban center of operation.
Threshold	Woman-led Management	Dropdown	Identifies the gender composition of the top executive or management tier to verify female leadership.
Threshold	Women Leadership Eligibility	Dropdown	Determines if the organization's core mission aligns with advancing women's leadership or social change for women.
Classification	Entity Type	Dropdown	Classification by legal structure and sectoral affiliation to identify the nature of the organization.
Classification	Staff Count	Dropdown	Approximate number of staff, including core volunteers, to assess organizational capacity.
Classification	Primary Focus Area	Dropdown	The main thematic domain where the organization exerts its primary influence and resources.
Classification	Secondary Focus Area	Dropdown	Secondary thematic area that complement the primary mission
Classification	Target Women Audience	Multiselect	Definition of the specific demographic groups or communities served by the organization's programs.
Regionality	Regional Activity	Dropdown	With how many MENA countries does the entity have an active operational footprint or collaboration
Regionality	Cross-Border Capacity	Multiselect	Evaluation of the organization's internal infrastructure and international collaboration such as Foreign Relations Dept, Signed MOUs
Regionality	Linguistic Accessibility	Multiselect	Assessment of the languages used for official communication, determining the organization's regional reach.
Regionality	MENA Diaspora Activity	Dropdown	Indication of whether the organization maintains active programs, partnerships, or outreach specifically targeting the MENA diaspora.
Visibility	Website	URL	Digital presence indicators used to verify the organization's activity and public narrative.
Visibility	Facebook Link	URL	A direct link to the organization's professional Facebook page.
Visibility	LinkedIn Link	URL	A direct link to the organization's professional LinkedIn page.
Visibility	Instagram Link	URL	A direct link to the organization's professional Instagram page.
Strategic	Funding Structure	Multiselect	Analysis of the financial sources supporting the organization's long-term sustainability.
Strategic	Social Change / Impact	Dropdown	Indication of whether the organization promotes social change or impact, taken from the mission statement and or theory of change
Strategic	Theory of Change	Text	A description of how the organization's specific interventions lead to intended social results.
Contact	OrgEmail	Text	Primary email address used to contact the organization.
Notes / Comments	Notes / Comments	Text	Open text for internal remarks, contextual nuances, and analysis.

Breakdown of Multiselect and Dropdown Criteria

Institutional Standing

Formal Institution Informal Collective

Country

Bahrain Egypt Iran Israel Jordan Lebanon Morocco Palestine Saudi Arabia Syria Tunisia UAE

Global / Diaspora

Woman-Led Management

CEO / Director (Female-led) All-Female Management Mixed (Female Majority) No

Women Leadership Eligibility

Primary Mission (Women) Secondary Focus (Women) General (but eligible) No

Entity Type

Registered NGO Social Enterprise Government Affiliated Academic Institution Private Company Social Movement

Informal Initiative

Staff Count

0-5 6-15 16-50 50+

Primary/Secondary Focus Area

Diplomacy Sport Media Education Youth Gender Equality Tech Human Rights Business

Economic Development Research Interfaith Culture Other

Target Women Audience

General Entrepreneurs Policy Makers Business Leaders Academics Youth Journalists & Media Students

Religious Communities Underprivileged Communities

Regional Activity

None 2 Countries 3 Countries 4 Countries 5+ Countries

Cross-Border Capacity

Foreign Relations Department Signed MOUs Membership in Cross-border Networks International Partnerships None Other

Linguistic Accessibility

Arabic English French Hebrew Farsi Other

MENA Diaspora Activity

Diaspora-Led Diaspora-Involved, None

Funding Structure

Philanthropy Corporate Government International Institutions Self-funded Other

Social Change / Impact

Direct Impact Advocacy & Narrative Policy & Structural None

PART B - ANALYSIS

Women-Led Management

Description

Identifies the gender composition of the top executive or management tier to verify female leadership.

Analysis

The sector exhibits a robust female leadership profile, as 51% of organizations are led by a female CEO / Director and 26% feature All-Female Management teams. When including the 13% of organizations with Mixed (Female Majority) leadership, a significant 90% of the mapped entities maintain executive structures where strategic direction is predominantly driven by female perspectives. Only 10% of the organizations reported having no female leadership in their top management tier.

Women-led Management	Count of Org	%
CEO / Director	78	51%
All-Female Management	40	26%
Mixed (Female Majority)	20	13%
NO	15	10%
(blank)	1	1%
Total	154	100%

Women Leadership Eligibility

Description

Determines if the organization's core mission aligns with advancing women's leadership or social change for women.

Analysis

There is high mission-alignment within the network, with 83% of organizations identifying women's advancement as their primary mission and 10% as a secondary focus; this indicates that 93% of the mapped entities are specialized stakeholders dedicated to social change for women in the MENA region.

Women Leadership Eligibility	Count of Org	%
Primary Mission (Women)	108	73%
Secondary Focus (Women)	13	10%
General (but eligible)	7	5%
NO	1	1%
(blank)	1	1%
Total	130	100%

Entity Type

Description

Classification by legal structure and sectoral affiliation to identify the nature of the organization.

Analysis

The mapping reveals a highly institutionalized environment, dominated by Registered NGOs at 73% (95 entities) and Government Affiliated bodies at 17% (22 entities). Together, these formal structures provide a stable and recognized legal basis for 90% of the network, which is essential for facilitating international partnerships and large-scale project implementation within the region. The remaining 10% of the sector is composed of diverse smaller-scale entities, including Informal Initiatives (3%), Social Enterprises (2%), Academic Institutions (2%), Private Companies (2%), and Social Movements (2%).

Entity Type	Count of Org	%
Registered NGO	95	73%
Government Affiliated	22	17%
Informal Initiative	4	3%
Social Enterprise	3	2%
Academic Ins.	2	2%
Private Company	2	2%
Social Movement	2	2%
Total	130	100%

Staff Count

Description

Approximate number of staff, including core volunteers, to assess organizational capacity.

Analysis

The network consists of mid-to-large-scale organizations, with 36% employing 16–50 staff members and 26% exceeding 50+ employees. This demonstrates that over 60% of the entities possess significant operational capacity, making them well-suited for substantial regional initiatives. Smaller organizations with 6–15 staff members account for 30% of the sector, while only 7% of the entities are very small, with 0–5 staff members

Staff Count	Count of Org	%
16-50	47	36%
6-15	39	30%
50+	34	26%
0-5	9	7%
(blank)	1	1%
Total	130	100%

Primary Focus Area

Description

The main thematic domain where the organization exerts its primary influence and resources.

Analysis

The mapping reveals a clear thematic concentration, with Gender Equality serving as the primary focus for 42% of the organizations (55 entities). This is followed by Economic Development (25 entities) and Human Rights (25 entities), each representing 19% of the network. Together, these three pillars account for 80% of the primary activities within the sector, while the remaining 20% is distributed across diverse specialized domains such as Education (8%), Diplomacy (3%), Inter-faith (2%), Business (2%), Youth (2%), Research (1%) and Sport (1%).

Entity Type	Count of Org	%
Gender Equality	55	42%
Economic Development	25	19%
Human Rights	25	19%
Education	11	19%
Diplomacy	4	3%
Inter-faith	3	2%
Business	2	2%
Youth	2	2%
Research	1	1%
Sport	1	1%
(blank)	1	1%
Total	130	100%

Secondary Focus Area

Description

Secondary thematic area that complement the primary focus area.

Analysis

Human Rights (27%) and Gender Equality (26%) serve as the leading secondary focus areas, indicating that over half of the organizations utilize these themes to complement their primary missions. Economic Development remains a substantial priority as a secondary focus for 18% of the entities. Collectively, these three areas represent 71% of the secondary focus across the network, while the remaining capacity is distributed among more specialized domains such as Education (10%), Business (9%), Research (3%), Diplomacy (2%), Media (2%), Culture (1%), and Tech (1%).

Secondary Focus Area - Table

Entity Type	Count of Org	%
Human Rights	25	19%
Gender Equality	55	42%
Economic Development	25	19%
Education	11	19%
Business	2	2%
Research	1	1%
Diplomacy	4	3%
Media	3	2%
Culture	1	1%
Tech	1	1%
(blank)	1	1%
Total	130	100%

Primary & Secondary Focus Areas - AVG

Description

An average calculation of both primary and secondary focus areas.

Analysis

The data reveals a highly concentrated ecosystem, with 75% of activity focused on Gender Equality (34%), Human Rights (23%), and Economic Development (18%), indicating a strong advocacy-driven orientation. Secondary areas such as Education (9%) and Business (5%) play a supporting role, while strategic fields like Diplomacy (3%), Research (2%), Media (1%), Interfaith (1%), and Youth (1%) remain underrepresented. This suggests a gap between core mission areas and tools for broader influence and scalability. Additionally, sectors such as Sport, Culture, and Tech are nearly absent. Overall, the landscape is focused but lacks strategic balance and cross-sector integration.

Entity Type	Count of Org	%
Gender Equality	44.5	34%
Human Rights	30	23%
Economic Development	24	18%
Education	12	9%
Business	7	5%
Diplomacy	3.5	3%
Research	2.5	2%
Media	1.5	1%
Inter-faith	1.5	1%
Youth	1	1%
Sport	0.5	1%
Culture	0.5	1%
Tech	0.5	1%
Other	0.5	1%
Total	130	100%

Target Women Audience

Description

Definition of the specific demographic groups or communities served by the organization's programs.

Analysis

The data shows a clear preference for broad and inclusive targeting, with the General audience (33%) leading by a significant margin, followed by Youth (17%) and Underprivileged Communities (15%), which together highlight a strong focus on inclusion and future generations. Mid-level attention is given to Entrepreneurs (9%), Policy Makers (9%), and Business Leaders (7%), suggesting some engagement with economic and decision-making actors. In contrast, more specialized groups such as Students (5%) and Academicians (3%) receive limited focus, while Journalists & Media (1%) and Religious Communities (0%) are almost entirely absent. Overall, the distribution reflects a strategy centered on broad outreach and social inclusion, with comparatively less emphasis on targeted or high-influence audiences.

Entity Type	Count of Org	%
General	105	33%
Youth	53	17%
Under Privileged Communities	49	15%
Entrepreneurs	29	9%
Policy Makers	28	9%
Business leaders	22	7%
Students	16	5%
Academicians	11	3%
Journalists & Media	2	1%
Religious Communities	1	0%
(blank)	1	0%
Total	317	100%

Regional Activity

Description

With how many MENA countries does the entity have an active operational footprint or collaboration.

Analysis

The data shows a mixed but moderately active regional engagement profile. A leading 26% of organizations operate in 5+ countries, indicating a strong cohort with high regional reach and cross-border capacity. However, this is closely followed by organizations with no regional activity (22%), revealing a significant segment that remains purely domestic. Mid-range engagement is also notable, with 22% active in 2 countries, 19% in 4 countries, and 10% in 3 countries. Overall, the ecosystem is polarized between highly regionalized actors and locally focused ones, with a middle tier of organizations expanding incrementally across borders.

Staff Count	Count of Org	%
5+	34	26%
None	29	22%
2	28	22%
4	25	19%
3	13	10%
(blank)	1	1%
Total	130	100%

Cross-Border Capacities

Description

Evaluation of the organization's internal infrastructure and international collaboration such as Foreign Relations Dept, Signed MOUs, etc.

Analysis

The data reveals approximately 85% of mapped entities are integrated into international collaborative frameworks, indicating high global readiness as 49% of mapped entities already maintain International Partnerships and 36% are active within Cross-Border Networks. Leaving only a negligible 4% with no cross-border infrastructure. However, a notable structural gap exists in formal internal mechanisms; while external connectivity is high, only 3% of organizations have Signed MOUs and a mere 2% possess dedicated Foreign Relations Departments.

Entity Type	Count of Org	%
International Partnerships	95	73%
Membership in Cross-border Networks	22	17%
Other	12	6%
None	8	4%
Signed MOUs	7	3%
Foreign Relations Dept	4	2%
Total	202	100%

Linguistic Accessibility

Description

Assessment of the languages used for official communication, determining the organization's regional reach.

Analysis

The linguistic profile of the network is characterized by a strong bilingual foundation, with English (44%) and Arabic (41%) serving as the primary vehicles for official communication. This balanced distribution ensures that 85% of the organizational reach is optimized for both international engagement and local MENA regional operations. French remains a secondary but relevant linguistic bridge at 8%, while Hebrew and Farsi represent specialized linguistic niches, each accounting for 4% of the total accessibility.

Staff Count	Count of Org	%
English	115	44%
Arabic	108	41%
French	21	8%
Hebrew	10	4%
Farsi	10	4%
Other	0	0%
Total	264	100%

MENA Diaspora Activity

Description

Indication of whether the organization maintains active programs, partnerships, or outreach specifically targeting the MENA diaspora.

Analysis

The data shows that the 18% of Diaspora-Led organizations (24 entities) represent a strategic segment reflecting the MENA population's reality as a global migrant community. This suggests that some organizations intentionally base themselves within the diaspora to leverage greater political stability, international funding, and global professional networks. While 38% of the network (50 entities) integrates the diaspora through leadership or involvement, the 62% (80 entities) reporting None reveals a stark majority. This structural gap indicates a heavily localized sector that under-utilizes the immense human and financial capital of its global migrant population.

Entity Type	Count of Org	%
None	80	62%
Diaspora-Involved	26	20%
Diaspora-Led	24	18%
Total	130	100%

Funding Structure

Description

Analysis of the financial sources supporting the organization's long-term sustainability.

Analysis

The data shows that the Funding Structure is primarily driven by external sources, with Philanthropy (37%) and International Institutions (33%) accounting for a combined 70% of total organizational support. This heavy reliance on global donors suggests high alignment with international standards, yet highlights a potential vulnerability to shifting global priorities. In contrast, internal and commercial funding streams remain underdeveloped, as Government (10%), Self-funded (8%), and Corporate (3%) sources represent a much smaller fraction of the ecosystem. This distribution underscores a critical need for the sector to diversify its revenue models to enhance long-term sustainability and local financial autonomy.

Staff Count	Count of Org	%
Philanthropy	95	37%
International Inst.	85	33%
Government	26	10%
Self-funded	21	8%
Other	19	7%
Corporate	8	3%
Total	254	100%

Social Change & Impact

Description

Indication of whether the organization promotes social change or impact, taken from the mission statement and or theory of change

Analysis

The data illustrates a nearly equal split between Advocacy & Narrative (46%) and Direct Impact (45%), with these two strategies representing 91% of the sector's total organizational activity. This balanced distribution suggests a dual-track approach to social change, where creating public awareness and providing tangible services are treated as parallel priorities. However, a significant gap exists in Policy & Structural change, which accounts for only 8% (11 entities) of the mapped impact. This indicates that while the network is highly effective at storytelling and local intervention, it possesses limited capacity for systemic, top-down legislative or institutional transformation.

Entity Type	Count of Org	%
Advocacy & Narrative	60	46%
Direct Impact	59	45%
Policy & Structural	11	8%
Total	130	100%

PART C - SUMMARY INSIGHTS

Women's Leadership

The sector is characterized by an exceptionally strong female leadership profile, with strategic direction driven by women in **64%** of the organizations (51% led by female CEOs, out of which 26% all-female management, and 13% female-majority management).

Additionally, for **93%** of organizations, women's empowerment is either their primary (83%) or secondary (10%) mission.

A Formalized and Stable Environment Enabling Partnerships:

The ecosystem relies on regulated legal structures - **90%** of entities operate formally (73% registered NGOs and 17% government-affiliated organizations). This foundation is critical for advancing international partnerships and implementing large-scale regional projects.

Operational Capacity and Human Resources

Over **60%** of organizations demonstrate significant operational capacity suited for extensive regional initiatives, with **36%** employing between 16 and 50 staff members and **26%** being large organizations with over 50 employees. Only a small minority (7%) consists of organizations with 0-5 employees. Although small scale entities can also lead very successful collaborations.

Strong Core Focus Alongside Strategic Gaps:

75% of organizational activities are concentrated in three core areas: Gender Equality (34%), Human Rights (23%), and Economic Development (18%). However, fields with broad impact potential such as diplomacy, research, media, sport, and technology are barely represented, indicating a lack of intersectoral balance, integration and untapped potential for social change.

High Readiness for Cross-Border Collaborations

There is high international readiness in **85%** of organizations (49% through international partnerships and 36% as members of global networks), despite a lack of internal institutional mechanisms like foreign relations departments or signed MOUs.

Connected Ecosystem Yet Fragmented

While **77%** of organizations are multi-national (operating in 3+ countries), collaboration remains limited by political and cultural boundaries. The ecosystem is split between Pan-Arab, Abraham Accords, and Diaspora networks of different ethnicities, leaving a vacuum where geopolitical conflicts restrict intersectional cooperation.

Robust Bilingual Infrastructure

Communication activities are based on English (**44%**) and Arabic (**41%**) with overlapping. This distribution allows organizations to optimize their impact both in the international arena and within Middle Eastern countries.

Under-utilization of the Diaspora

While **38%** of organizations utilize or are led by the diaspora to achieve political stability or global networks, the clear majority (62%) maintains no diaspora activity. This reveals a heavily localized sector that does not fully tap into the human and economic capital of Middle Eastern migrant communities worldwide.

Financial Vulnerability and Dependence on Foreign Funding

Organizations rely significantly on external sources, with **70%** of funding originating from Philanthropy (37%) and International Institutions (33%). Local funding channels such as government support (10%), self-funding (8%), and corporate investment (3%) are underdeveloped, creating a dependency on global priorities and necessitating the development of models for long-term economic independence.

Success in Advocacy and Fieldwork vs. Weakness in Structural Change

Prevailing organizational strategies are split between Advocacy & Narrative (46%) and Direct Impact (45%). The central insight here is that only 8% of organizations engage in Policy or Structural change, indicating an excellent capacity to raise awareness and provide services, but a very limited ability to generate "top-down" institutional changes.

PART D - PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

From Pan-Arab Identity to a Broad MENA Framework

Mapping data indicates a significant prominence of networks operating within a Pan-Arab identity, which excludes entities from non-Arab countries in the region. Positioning activity under a broad MENA geographic-professional identity is key to the strategic inclusion of women from Israel, Iran, Turkey and others. This shift enables the creation of cross-border female solidarity that bypasses ethnic and linguistic barriers, connecting all parts of the region under a shared professional agenda (diversity within unity).

Pivoting Towards Strategic Influencers and Power Centers

Mapping data indicates that organizations primarily target broad and inclusive audiences, such as the general public, while strategic "power centers" like policymakers, academics, and media professionals are severely under-engaged. To bridge this gap and drive top-down structural change, the ecosystem must strategically penetrate these influential circles. This can be achieved by: (1) Creating targeted fellowships or routine briefings for regional journalists to amplify women-led narratives in mainstream media; (2) Establishing structured partnerships with academic institutions to co-produce evidence-based research that bolsters advocacy efforts; and (3) Forming specialized task forces or advisory boards that include supportive policymakers to champion legislative initiatives. Shifting resources toward these high-impact groups will enable grassroots organizations to translate their extensive field success into systemic policy changes

Bridging Institutional Efforts and Grassroots Activity (Bottom-Up)

There is an inherent gap between governmental bodies and local grassroots organizations and initiatives. Therefore, it is crucial to create platforms that bring together leadership from both parts of the ecosystem. Such a synergistic connection can provide grassroots organizations with legitimacy and access to resources, while simultaneously providing institutional organizations with a direct and authentic link to the dynamic needs of women in their daily lives, thereby strengthening the effectiveness of the entire ecosystem.

From Individual to Organizational Membership

The majority of initiatives are based on individual participation of leading women, where the focus is on key figures rather than the institutional entities they represent. To promote a connected and sustainable regional ecosystem, it is recommended to adopt a model that integrates formal membership of organizations, movements, and initiatives. This move will ensure that regional connections rely on institutions rather than just individuals.

Prioritizing Regional Consensus & "Soft Diplomacy"

Political issues with high sensitivity complicates the formation of broad collaborations. Therefore, it is recommended to focus initial network efforts on areas of clear regional consensus, such as economic empowerment, technological innovation, sport and addressing the climate crisis. Opting for these "safe-space topics" enables the building of long-term trust and a professional foundation that benefits all parties, thereby paving the way for deeper and more complex dialogue regarding conflict resolution and structural changes in the future.

Leveraging the Diaspora and Creating Digital Spaces to Bypass Political Barriers

In countries where political activity is dangerous or restricted, such as Syria and Iran, civic engagement relies almost entirely on diaspora communities and virtual spaces. Consequently, it is of critical importance to adopt secure digital dialogue practices that ensure participant anonymity and safeguard their personal privacy & security.

The Need for an Integrative "Network of Networks"

The Middle East is rich with existing organizations, initiatives, and networks; however, what is lacking is an "Umbrella" entity capable of connecting and integrating these diverse initiatives rather than competing with them. A strategic partnership that respects the diversity between organizations can harness their collective power to drive regional change.

Expanding the Mapping:

This mapping is an important first step toward building a broader understanding of the ecosystem, and it is recommended to expand it further. In the next phase, it would be valuable to deepen the mapping of relationships between entities—who is connected to whom—in order to move from viewing actors as isolated units to understanding the system as a network of interconnected nodes, making it possible to identify key hubs, clusters, and gaps in connectivity. It would also be useful to integrate country-level contextual indicators such as political system type, the level of civic space openness, and legal and operational risk, as these factors are essential for interpreting organizational behavior across different environments. Another layer of refinement could involve classifying entities according to their functional roles within the ecosystem—such as implementers, advocates, network hubs, funders, or intermediaries—thereby clarifying how different actors contribute to the system and where structural imbalances may exist. Finally, it is recommended to expand the geographic scope to include Turkey, given its growing regional importance and its strategic position as a bridge between East and West.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH TEAM

Einat Levi, Strategic Advisor

Einat specializes in regional partnerships and is a leading expert on MENA cooperation. As the Co-founder of ViaCity - The Center for City Diplomacy, she develops cross-border and bottom-up frameworks designed to strengthen regionalization and local engagement across the MENA region. Einat has worked at the forefront of Israel-Morocco relations for over 15 years, contributing to the strengthening of bilateral ties. She was a member of the founding team of Israel's mission to Morocco at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where she led economic and academic affairs, and later served as a strategic advisor to the Ministry of Regional Cooperation. In recognition of her contributions, she has received the "Coup de Coeur" Award from the Salam Forum & the Moroccan Ministry of Culture and the "Knights of Peace" Award from the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation. She is a policy-fellow at Mitvim Institute for Regional Foreign Policies of Israel and a member of the Coalition for Regional Security.

Rim El Alami, Analyst

Rim is a student and a researcher in Moroccan cultural diplomacy. Holds a degree in Moroccan American Studies with a focus on cultural studies. Current research explores Moroccan cultural diplomacy beyond the state, examining the role of NGOs and grassroots ecosystems in shaping soft power, international exchange, and socio-economic sustainability. Currently volunteering with the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) in cultural and educational NGOs in Poland.



“The fastest way to change society is to mobilize the women of the world.”

Charles Habib Malik, Lebanese Representative to the United Nations

WCE

wcc-global.org