

Ongoing Gender-Based Challenges in Post-2015 Development Agenda: A Comparative Study between Qatar and Arab States

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Abstract : Discrimination against women and girls impairs progress in all domains of development articulated either in the framework of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Paper aspires to create greater awareness among researchers and policy makers of the challenges posed by gender gaps and the opportunities created by reducing them within the Arab region. The study reveals how Arab countries are closing in on gender-oriented targets of the third and fifth MDGs. While some countries can claim remarkable achievements particularly in girls' equality in education, there is still a long way to go to keep Arab's commitments to current and future generations in other countries and subregions especially in the economic participation or in the political empowerment of women. No country has closed or even expected to close the economic participation gap or the political empowerment gap. This should provide the incentive to keep moving forward in the Post-2015 Agenda. Findings of the study prove that while Arab states have uneven achievements in reducing maternal mortality, Arab women remain at a disadvantage in the labour market. For Arab region especially LDCs, improving maternal health is part of the unmet agenda for the post-2015 period and still calls for intensified efforts and procedures. While antenatal care coverage is improving across the Arab region, progress is marginal in LDCs. To achieve proper realization of gender equality and empowerment of women in the Arab region in the post-2015 agenda, the study presents critical key challenges to be addressed. These challenges include: Negative cultural norms and stereotypes; violence against women and girls; early marriage and child labour; women's limited control over their own bodies; limited ability of women to generate their own income and control assets and property; gender-based discrimination in law and in practice; women's unequal participation in private and public decision making autonomy; and limitations in data. However, in all Arab states, gender equality must be integrated as a goal across all issues, particularly those that affect the future of a country.

Keywords : gender, equity, millennium development goals, post-2015 development agenda

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