



CSW 69

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF
**THE KINGDOM OF
SAUDI ARABIA**
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
— NEW YORK —



مجلس شؤون الأسرة
FAMILY AFFAIRS COUNCIL

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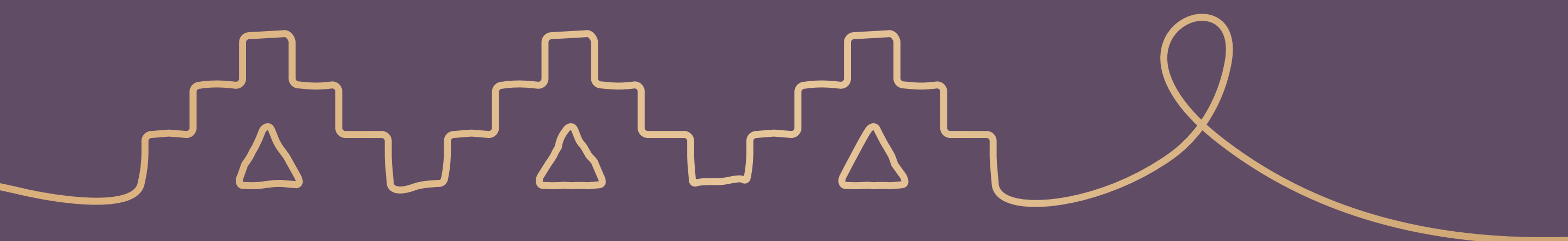
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A background image showing a group of young girls in a classroom setting, sitting at desks and looking towards the front. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

Women's Education

Overview

Girls' education has been present since the foundation of the first Saudi state in 1727, with informal education in the *Kuttab/Katateeb* (preliminary classrooms), where girls and boys learned basic subjects, such as math and literature. The first step towards formal education came in 1955 with the establishment of Dar Al Hanan Girls' School in Jeddah, marking a new era in women's education.

In 1969, the General Education Policy in Saudi Arabia affirmed that all levels of education are to be free of charge for all, ensuring equal access to learning for boys and girls. The Council of Ministers Decision No. 139 mandated compulsory education for children. Significant efforts were also geared towards eradicating illiteracy among citizens by activating the Adult Education and Literacy Law in 1972. Furthermore, the Child Protection Law defines a child as anyone under 18 and considers interrupting a child's education as a form of abuse or neglect.

As various sectors in the kingdom developed, a strong educational system came into being and has kept pace with global developments. In addition to free education in local universities, scholarship opportunities are provided to study abroad at globally recognized universities in a wide array of disciplines. These opportunities are equally available to women and men. Any student on scholarship can be accompanied by their spouse and children throughout their educational journey, and the family receives full financial support which covers travel tickets, a monthly allowance, and health insurance coverage.

From Vision to Reality

The focus on education within the framework of “Saudi Vision 2030” has resulted in several rapid developments and reforms, such as expanding access, ensuring equality, reinforcing free education, enhancing curricula, improving teacher performance, upgrading school infrastructure, advancing assessment and evaluation tools, strengthening guidance and counseling programs, and mandating education for all students with disabilities. This has led to several developments, such as:

- Women’s participation in development, from an educational perspective, increased by 14% between 2019 and 2023.
- The number of female students in general education reached 3,033,611, representing 49.4% of the total number of students.
- The number of female students in special education reached 32,751, representing 43.8% of the total number of students.
- The percentage of female students in higher education (Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctorate levels) reached 53.9% of the total student population in 2023.



Scholarship Programs

Scholarship programs for female students expanded as more options were made available to continue their studies at the most prestigious international universities. In 2023, the number of female students enrolled in study programs abroad reached 15,675, including 4,121 at the doctorate level; 2,815 at the master’s level; 6,314 at the bachelor’s level, while the remainder were pursuing diplomas, fellowships, or other programs. Female graduates in 2023 made up around 42% of all graduates.



Elderly Education and Literacy

The Kingdom has combated illiteracy through free specialized adult education programs under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, establishing a clear roadmap and outreach to remote and rural areas. These initiatives reduced the illiteracy rate to 5.6%, while upholding elderly rights through dedicated legislation.



Women in STEM

Investment in technical education for women aimed to encourage the pursuit of specialization in science, technology and communications, engineering, health, and mathematics. Training programs and workshops aimed at enhancing women's technical skills to sustain digital environments.



Talent Development

As a result of high-quality education, Saudi Arabia ranked 7th among G20 countries in the World Talent Report 2022. Saudi female students excelled at Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF 2023), winning 27 awards—23 major awards and 4 special awards—across fields of energy, biomedicine, health sciences, chemistry, and environmental sciences, surpassing their 16 awards in ISEF 2022.

At the International Invention, Innovation & Technology Exhibition (ITEX), a global gathering for experts, investors, and entrepreneurs exploring new business opportunities from innovative projects, nine female students represented the Kingdom, making up 50% of Saudi participants.

In the National Olympiad for Scientific Creativity 2023, which fosters student competition in various scientific fields, 9,687 students registered, constituting 55.3% of all participants. Of the 160 winners, 65% were female, highlighting their strong presence in scientific innovation.



Scientific research

Saudi women have made significant contributions to science, research, and innovation, particularly in health, medical sciences, fundamental sciences, engineering, and technology. Their leadership in research has led to a 91% increase in prominent scientific publications, and a 52% rise in female-authored research papers. Additionally, in 2021, 51% of citations referenced research papers that were authored by female researchers.





Women's Health

Overview

The government prioritizes the well-being of its citizens through several healthcare provisions. The following legal frameworks underscore this commitment:

“The State shall be responsible for public health and shall provide health care to every citizen.”

Article 31, Basic Law of Governance (1992).

“Ensuring the provision and regulation of comprehensive and integrated healthcare for all the population in a fair and accessible manner.”

“The state shall provide healthcare services, including maternal and childcare and women’s health programs.”

Articles 2 and 4 of the Health Law (2002).

“The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development shall provide elderly individuals in need with assistive medical devices and equipment at no cost and cover the expenses for operation and maintenance.”

“Government authorities and any entities providing public services on their behalf must prioritize the elderly in receiving essential services, particularly health and social services.”

Articles 10 and 11 of The Rights and Care of the Elderly Law (2022).

From Vision to Reality

Significant strides have been achieved in improving women's health in the kingdom in recent years. The Safe Birth Path contributed to reducing the maternal mortality rate to 9.42 per 100,000 live births in 2022. The percentage of women who received prenatal care four or more times reached 79.7% in 2019. Pregnancy and childbirth planning services have also expanded, giving women the freedom to choose the details of their birth plan and the appropriate caregiver. The percentage of births within health facilities reached 99.9% in 2023, with 67.4% natural births and 31.7% by caesarean section. In terms of health infrastructure, the largest virtual hospital in the world was launched in 2022. It is linked to more than 152 hospitals, providing 30 specialized health services, with a capacity exceeding 400,000 patients annually. In the field of health education, the percentage of Saudi female graduates from health colleges in 2022 was 65.5% of the total graduates, while female students registered in health colleges made up 55.4% of the total students for the academic year 2022-2023.



The Kingdom continues to expand basic health services, including early screening for diseases, providing vaccinations, and health counseling and awareness services before, during and after pregnancy, with some of these services provided through mobile clinics in remote areas. AIDS testing was also included among the mandatory tests for pregnant women to protect the mother and fetus.



The Ministry of Health's 2022 budget totaled over 111.95 billion Saudi Arabian Riyals (USD 29 billion), highlighting the Kingdom's commitment to developing comprehensive healthcare services, including maternal, child, disability, mental health,

emergency care, and treatments for epidemic diseases and incurable conditions like organ transplants.



Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

The Ministry of Health, through the Population Policy Committee, implements national initiatives on sexual and reproductive health rights, known as family planning initiatives. These include integrating reproductive health into the care model, providing family planning services and contraceptives through mobile and permanent clinics in rural areas, developing a guide for consultations, training healthcare workers, and including family planning in private insurance. Additionally, medical curricula for healthcare practitioners are updated to reflect these services.





Women in the Workforce

Overview

The Saudi labor system aims to meet international standards, ensuring a suitable work environment for women, safeguarding their rights, and preventing discrimination. According to Article 1 of the Civil Service System, merit is the basis for employee selection in public sector positions. Both men and women in the public sector are subject to the same regulations regarding appointment, promotion, wages, health protection, job security, and retirement, with equal access to grievance mechanisms for any discrimination.

Saudi Arabia prioritizes women's empowerment and increased labor market participation. It has offered new opportunities in both public and private sectors, including roles for females in practicing law, expanded participation in the military, and leadership positions in the Presidency of the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques as female assistants and deputies to the General President. Additionally, Royal Decree No. (M/134) issued in 2019 amended Article 3 of the Labor Law to state that "Citizens are equal in regards to the right to work, without any discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, age, or any other form of discrimination, whether during work, at the time of hiring, or advertising for jobs." This includes equal pay.

From Vision to Reality

Modern work patterns such as remote, freelance, and flexible work have created more job opportunities for women. The National Transformation Program supports Saudi Vision 2030 by developing infrastructure and fostering an enabling environment across sectors. Key achievements for women include:

- Women's labor market share rose from 17.4% in 2017 to 36% in Q3 2023.
- Women in administrative roles increased from 28.6% in 2017 to 43.7% in Q3 2023.
- Economic participation of Saudi women grew from 17% in 2017 to 36.2% in Q3 2024.



Support programs have also benefited women's workforce participation, including:

- Over 28,475 beneficiaries of the Qurrah Program for child-care
- More than 245,579 beneficiaries of the Wusool transportation program
- 3,357,318 beneficiaries of the freelance work initiative
- 385,284 beneficiaries of flexible work
- 274,464 beneficiaries of remote work

Women's participation in labor committees increased from 4% in 2020 to 19% in 2023, with 30 women out of 200 total members. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development launched the Leadership Training and Guidance Initiative with INSEAD International University to boost women's representation in middle and senior leadership positions.

The Gender Balance Center introduced the National Program for the Preparation and Development of Administrative Leaders, aiming to identify, prepare, and develop future leaders. In its second year, the center achieved notable progress, including:

- 14 training programs for senior, executive, and emerging leaders
- 3,583 leadership training participants, with 38% women (1,356) and a 90% satisfaction rate



In the communications and technology sector, women's leadership participation reached 23.6%. Over 41,000 women have been empowered through awareness campaigns and conferences, and more than 55,000 women have registered in the Future Skills Program.

The Kingdom has been keen to develop a number of initiatives, programs and policies that contribute to increasing the rate of women's participation in the labor market. The National Policy to Promote Equality of Opportunities and Treatment in Employment and Occupation (2023) has been implemented and should last for an estimated 10 years in two phases, each of which will last 5 years; to develop non-discriminatory regulations, evaluate the results, make adjustments, and expand the scope as necessary.



Women Entrepreneurship

Overview

Since the foundation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, women have been key contributors to economic development, engaging in trade and revitalizing local markets through traditional businesses and handcrafts. Despite early challenges, they established a strong entrepreneurial presence, gradually expanding small businesses and driving economic empowerment.

Saudi women leveraged their skills in trade and resource industries to support their families and communities, from market vendors to artisans producing carpets and wickerwork sold locally and across regions. Over time, their entrepreneurial efforts laid the foundation for future generations to enter business on a larger scale.

Today, Saudi women lead major enterprises and have achieved remarkable success, supported by economic and legislative reforms, owning and leading 47% of small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia.

From Vision to Reality

Saudi Arabia is transforming its entrepreneurial landscape, with women playing a key role in economic growth and innovation. Supported by Vision 2030, they are expanding into new sectors and strengthening their presence locally and globally while advancing sustainable development goals.

The Kingdom ensures equal access to entrepreneurial support. Established in 2016 by Cabinet Resolution No. (301), Monsha'at empowers female entrepreneurs through training, mentorship, partnerships, and a dedicated entrepreneurship department.



Key Achievements in Women Entrepreneurship include:

- Saudi Arabia ranked 1st in «Ease of Starting a Business» (2021/2022), with 532,155 establishments led by female entrepreneurs.
- In Q1 2023, 11% of female entrepreneurs received 1.8 million Saudi Arabian Riyals in financing, 73% benefited from the Tamooh program, and 37,000 women accessed support centers offering 16,000+ advisory sessions.
- 58 female consultants recruited for business support, 34 empowerment events held, and 17 businesswomen centers established nationwide.
- Monsha'at Strategy (Nov 2022) focuses on funding access, business facilitation, market expansion, innovation, and entrepreneurial culture.



Global & Inclusive Initiatives:

- She's Next Program (by Visa, Arab Bank, and partners) provides financial, training, and mentorship support for Saudi women entrepreneurs.
- CODE Business Accelerator launched programs like Game Founders, Developers Field, and Game Developers Experts, benefiting more than 150 women.
- Entrepreneurs with special needs receive tailored programs under Cabinet Resolution No. 110 (2023), ensuring equal opportunities in leadership and business.



These initiatives position Saudi women as a driving force in the business sector, fostering sustainable development and global leadership in women entrepreneurship.





Women in Various Occupations and Sectors

Overview

Saudi Arabia has continuously worked to empower women across various sectors, including media, sports, arts, and culture. Women have long played a vital role in preserving and evolving artistic traditions while actively participating in local and international exhibitions, galleries, orchestras, and media broadcasts. They have achieved major milestones in sports, broken barriers in professions such as pilots and astronauts, and continue to champion Saudi culture and heritage on the global stage. Their ambitions have even taken them beyond Earth into space, reflecting the kingdom's commitment to inclusion and progress.

From Vision to Reality

Saudi Arabia continues to advance women's participation through national initiatives, policy reforms, and investments across multiple sectors.



Key developments in gender equality and policy reforms include:

- Extensive reforms in women's rights, making it the largest area of human rights advancement
- The National Policy for Encouraging Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation issued by Cabinet Resolution No. (416) in 2023
- Education reforms (185 deletions, 171 amendments, and 77 replacements in curricula to align with human rights standards and eliminate gender discrimination)
- Extracurricular activities introduced to enhance female student skills in arts, sports, entrepreneurship, and volunteer work
- Saudi Arabia ranked among the top 3 globally for progress in bridging the gender gap (World Economic Forum, 2022).



Key developments in sports include:

- Physical education and self-defense training introduced for boys and girls at schools

- **Olympic and e-sports participation for women:** Over 100 professional female players, 10+ club administrators, and 10+ referees in e-sports.
- **Women's teams established:** Up to 25 teams by 2020, and 72 female athletes won 12 medals at the 2020 Arab Women's Club Games
- **Mass participation:** In 2023, 404,848 female students engaged in sports like football, karate, and athletics, while 11 attended an elite football camp in Spain, and 3 competed in an athletics championship in Brazil.



Key developments in arts and culture include:

- **Scholarships:**
 - In 2022, 21 female & 7 male graduates
 - In 2021, 83% of 548 graduates were female
- **Art Grants:** Misk Art Institute awarded 1 million Saudi Arabian Riyals to six artists (4 women and 2 men).
- **Residency Programs:** Women made up 61% of participants across 7 art residency programs in 2022.
- **Incubators:** 4 launched in 2022, including culinary, theater, and traditional arts, with 80% female participation.
- **Philosophy Training:** 75% of participants were women; two received research grants.
- **Vocational Training:** 420,000 beneficiaries (70% women); 10,000+ consultations provided.
- **Teacher Training:** 7,000 kindergarten teachers trained in auditory arts; 32 special education teachers trained to teach musical theater to students with autism and Down syndrome.



Key developments in media and investment include:

- Media Empowerment: Women received 2,011 media licenses, 2,417 trusted licenses, and 79 professional cards.
- National Investment Strategy (Vision 2030) focuses on tourism, entertainment, and sports, where women play a key role.
- **Kayani Initiative (2023):** Launched by the Public Investment Fund and chaired by Princess Reema Bint Bandar, Kayani promotes women's health, sports, active lifestyles, nutrition, and wellness services.





Women in Volunteer Work

Overview

Since the foundation of Saudi Arabia, women have played a vital role in charitable and endowment work, fostering a legacy of generosity across generations. A key example is *Sabalat Moudi* (1727-1818), the first charitable endowment in the First Saudi State, led by women to provide shelter for visitors, travelers, the needy, and students, symbolizing the kingdom's deep-rooted values of generosity and service. Over time, women's contributions have expanded, leading and actively participating in non-profit organizations, further strengthening their role in philanthropy.

From Vision to Reality

In recent years, women's involvement in non-profit sectors has increased, on account of legislation enabling their participation in social and humanitarian efforts. The National Center for the Development of the Non-Profit Sector, established by Cabinet Resolution No. (618) in 2021, aims to expand non-profit organizations' roles, particularly in women's rights. Since the launch of Vision 2030, non-profit organizations in Saudi Arabia have grown by over 173.4%, with initiatives supporting sectors like sports, education, culture, and social services. The government also introduced regulations to delegate certain services to the non-profit sector. Women contributed 47.44% of total volunteer hours registered in Saudi Arabia.

The Shaml Initiative helps resolve family disputes involving custody and visitation by working with the non-profit sector to provide suitable spaces for child and family support. The Digital Giving Initiative, backed by the Ministry of Communications, empowers volunteers, with 194,110 female volunteers benefiting 14,560 women. Saudi women now lead several non-profit organizations, including the Zahra Breast Cancer Association and the Rofaida Women's Health Association.





Women in Humanitarian Work

Overview

Saudi Arabia continues to support women's rights globally, especially in conflict zones, by providing humanitarian aid and promoting policies that empower women in peace and reconstruction efforts. The kingdom expands humanitarian aid for women and girls affected by conflicts, strengthening partnerships with regional and international organizations to ensure aid reaches those in need. Saudi Arabia also supports international policies for women's participation in peace processes, helping build stable societies. Additionally, the kingdom invests in economic and social empowerment programs for women in conflict areas, offering sustainable opportunities for reintegration and development. In response to global crises, the King Salman Center for Relief and Humanitarian Aid provides programs to alleviate the suffering of refugees and displaced persons.

From Vision to Reality

Saudi Arabia, through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, prioritizes supporting vulnerable communities, particularly women and girls in conflict zones. The Kingdom implements humanitarian projects in collaboration with UN and local partners, empowering women and helping them lead dignified lives. Since its inception, the center has executed 788 projects in 79 regions, benefiting over 109.6 million women with \$520.7 million in aid. Additionally, 20% of the center's workforce are female.

The Saudi Fund for Development, established in 1974, provides concessional loans for development projects in 93 countries. It has financed 741 projects worth 77.8 billion Saudi Arabian Riyals, with 779 loan agreements signed to enhance economic and social growth in developing nations.



A portrait of a woman with dark hair, wearing a light brown hijab and a grey jacket, looking directly at the camera. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Women in International Roles

Overview

The government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia recognizes women as a vital pillar of society, ensuring their rights and empowerment across various professions through clear legal guarantees. In recent decades, there has been a significant increase in support for Saudi women's participation in foreign affairs, reinforcing their role as key contributors to global diplomatic, economic, and humanitarian efforts.

From Vision to Reality

Saudi women have assumed international roles, such as Regional Director of the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean Office and Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of several non-profit organizations dedicated to women's health, including the Zahra Breast Cancer Association and the Rofaida Women's Health Association.



Saudi women represent the government at both the international and regional levels by serving as ambassadors, working in the kingdom's embassies, consulates, and missions, and presiding over and participating in the Kingdom's delegations at regional and international conferences and fora. Saudi women have held senior leadership positions and participated in international and regional organizations, including the United Nations and its agencies, along with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the League of Arab States, and the Gulf Cooperation Council.



Women constitute 20% of the total members of the Shura Council (parliament) and contribute to making decisions, submitting proposals, and examining recommendations related to environmental and climate issues.





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