

Subject Matter Briefing

Women's Empowerment

Introduction

- Women have a vital and leading role in Saudi society, and they will continue to do so moving forward under Vision 2030.
 - Women make up more than 40 percent of Saudi entrepreneurs.
 - More than half of those enrolled in Saudi schools and universities are women.
 - Saudi women are ranked first in the Arab world in terms of educational attainment where they excel in many educational fields, particularly in STEM.
 - Women are 22 percent of the Saudi workforce with a goal of increasing that to 30 percent by 2030.
- The head of the Saudi Stock Exchange, the chief engineer of Saudi Aramco, the Saudi Arabian national oil company, and the permanent representative of Saudi Arabia to UNESCO are all women.
- Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the U.S. is the first woman ambassador in the country's history, Princess Reema bint Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.
 - She has been a leading advocate for women empowerment in Saudi Arabia for many years.
- Women have been energetic leaders and participants in the development of the country's society and economy, even before the introduction of Vision 2030. Women voted and ran for office in municipal elections for the first time in 2015.
- Under Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030's reforms, women can now serve in military positions, drive cars, travel independently, register as "heads of households", claim their place of residency, and have equal authority to register cases of marriage and divorce.
- The guardianship system for women's travel, employment, and financial decisions has effectively been eliminated.
- In 2018, women received the right to gain custody of children in divorce settlements.
- The number of Saudi women working in the public and private sectors has reached 596,700 by the end of the first quarter of 2019, rising by 282.5 percent. This is the highest female employment rate in the Kingdom's history.

World Bank Report

- The World Bank Group released its annual Women, Business, and the Law 2020 Report.
 - It is a series of studies that analyze laws and regulations impacting women's economic opportunity in 190 countries.
- **The biggest improvement in the index since 2017 was made by Saudi Arabia.**
- Saudi Arabia has improved with reforms in six of eight categories, including mobility and bodily autonomy.
 - On equal footing with men, women can obtain a passport and travel abroad.
 - **Sexual harassment is illegal in both the public and private employment sectors.**
- Women additionally play a vital role in Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia's plan to modernize and diversify the country's economy.
 - **Pregnant employees are legally protected from discriminatory dismissal.**
 - The retirement age is 60 years old for men and women.

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- **Saudi women receive equal pay to their male counterparts, as mandated by Saudi law.**
- Women have more economic independence than ever before.
 - They can now apply for lines of credit, as gender discrimination and lack of access to financial services based on gender is illegal in Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion

- Women are being extended more rights than ever before in Saudi Arabia.
- Saudi Arabia's efforts to remove roadblocks for female employment is coupled with the introduction of new laws aimed at the protection of women.
- Through Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has renewed commitments to develop women's talents, invest in their productive capabilities, and enable them to strengthen their future.

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