# Women in the GCC

Constituent countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the larger Middle Eastern region in general have an increasing role on the global front. However, in order to fully maximize on this trend and sustain it in the long term, the nations must make conscious preparatory efforts (Almunajjed, 2011). One such step is the mobilization of all resources at their disposal to grow the economy, notable among which is the labor force (Young, 2014). The region has been traditionally notorious for sidelining women, relative to other nations globally (The World Bank, 2017). However, in this new age, the member countries must overcome the barriers in place and integrate women more for political and economic participation.

The GCC has been progressively making positive steps towards more participation of women, but some barriers remain in place. For instance, the level of female education at higher levels has increased significantly in the last few decades (El-Swais, 2016). Education is especially significant as it empowers women on a fundamental level, allowing them to participate in whichever areas they feel suit them best. However, two notable factors continue to hinder their full political and economic integration. The first one is the rigid tradition and stereotyping of gender roles, which depicts women as inferior (Hendy, 2016). Second is the overdependence on foreign labor in the GCC, which reduces the space in which the budding female labor force competes in (Young, 2016). Therefore, institutions should invest in empowering these women and creating opportunities for them, in the GCC and globally.

As seen above, the participation of women from the GCC in their local and the global economy has been low traditionally. This is attributable to their constant sidelining in their local homes. However, recent efforts to empower them has been increasingly important, as the GCC needs to mobilize all its resources to compete favorably on the global front. However, despite the gains, the region still has some barriers to overcome before full economic and political integration of women.

## References

Almunajjed, M.S. The Progression of Women in GCC Countries: The Road to Empowerment. *Arab News*.

El-Swais, M. (2016). Despite high education levels, Arab women still don’t have jobs.  *The World Bank*.

Hendy, R. (2016). *Female Labor Force Participation in the GCC*. Doha: University of Qatar

The World Bank. (2017). *Why Supporting Women’s Economic Inclusion is Vital for the GCC*.

Young, K. (2016). *Women’s Labor Force Participation Across the GCC*. Washington, DC: The Arab Gulf Institute in Washington.