



**Reply to the questionnaire of the Working Group on discrimination against women in law  
and in practice  
(Good Practices)**

- General Status of women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**1- Legislative Aspect:**

Applicable Laws and regulations of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, at the forefront of which is the Basic Law of Governance which is derived from the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet Mohammed Traditions, contain many texts prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, sex or on other forms of discrimination. Besides, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has acceded to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women pursuant to the Royal Decree No. M/25, dated 28/05/1421 H., corresponding to 28/08/2000.

The principle of equality is one of the principles on which the rule of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based where Article 8 of the Basic Law of Governance provides that: Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, Shoura (Consultation) and equality in accordance with the Islamic Shariah".

The Law also contains texts, previously mentioned that confirm the principle of equality and guarantee that all shall enjoy human rights without any discrimination as provided for in Articles 18, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 36, 37, 39, 40, and 47). It should be noted that the measures and procedures contained in this report on each right of the rights contained in the Charter adhere to the principle of equality and non-discrimination as provided for in the Basic Law of Governance. The Basic Law of Governance has provided for the principle of equality before judiciary. Article 47 states, "the right of litigation shall be



guaranteed equally to both citizens and residents in the Kingdom. The Law shall set forth the procedures required thereof.

## 2- Political Aspect:

Woman participation in decision-making: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken as number of steps to promote women participation in public life. The Royal Decree No. A/44 dated 12/01/2013 called for amendment of Article 3 of Shoura (Consultative) Council Law provided that women representation shall not be less than 20% of members number. Before the amendment, the women were participating in the Council as advisors. The Royal Order No. A/45 dated 12/01/2013 was issued naming the members of the Shoura Council in its new session where it has included 30 women.

Participation of women in nomination and municipal membership elections was ratified. Municipal elections, in its (third) session for the year 2015, were held under the monitoring of civil society institutions as well as interaction of local and international media. Women participation was 81% of the total electorate of women and 18 women have succeeded to win seats in these elections. Women were also allowed to participate in the nomination of elections of the Chambers of Commerce Council where a group of women have won the membership of these councils. The recent years have witnessed candidacy and wining of positions in councils of Chambers of Commerce and industry of Jeddah and Dammam cities.

It worth mentioning that Saudi women occupy senior positions in public jobs. The women have become valuable partners in political decision – making whereas they have occupied senior positions to the system of ministers and deputy ministers and employees at an excellent grade. Women participates in many commissions and national societies. Six women were appointed members of the Board of Human Rights Commission as well



as Chambers of Commerce, literary clubs and social service societies. Successive development plans have targeted the participation of various society segments without discrimination. These plans contain goals specific to support women participation.

### 3- Social Aspect:

Since its establishment, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia focused on social aspects of the family in general and woman in particular as the Kingdom is convinced that woman has a substantial and distinguished impact on the destiny of peoples. Man and woman are partners as required by birth in consideration of family as a miniature of the big community (home country) where men and women participate equally. The future of any nation shall not be promising without a conscious role of the mother.

There is no any text in the Laws of the Kingdom that discriminate against the woman. Man and woman are absolutely equal in rights without discrimination. The Kingdom has set the regulations that take into account woman physiological nature upon delivery, baby care and (*Iddat*) the period during which a widow or a divorcee may not remarry, where she enjoys paid leave for 60 days upon delivery, enjoys baby care leave for three years against quarter of the salary. The woman is entitled to have paid leave upon the death of the spouse for four months and ten days. Regulations imposed by the Kingdom aim at the protection, care and guarantee of woman freedom without being subject to any risk.

Regarding protection of family members against violence, the Law of Protection From abuse has come to combat different forms of abuse that a family member may suffer... – Article (1) of the Law provides that " abuse is any form of Exploitation, physical, psychological or sexual, or the threat thereof committed by an individual against another exceeding the limits of powers and responsibilities derived from guardianship, dependency, sponsorship. The term "abuse" shall include the omission or negligence of



an individual in the performance of his duties or responsibilities in providing basic needs for a family member or an individual for whom he is legally responsible.

In this regard, 17 protection committees of the Ministry of Social Affairs, deal directly with observed violence cases Kingdom wide. These committees receive reports, investigate their correctness and study causes of the same, then make appropriate remedy plans for each case either by reform, social or psychological rehabilitation or by accommodation in shelters.

Family Affairs Council was established to assume family care task in the Kingdom. It will be based in Riyadh city. This council aims at promoting the family status and its role in the community and raising it to preserve a strong coherent family that cares for its children and commit itself to religious and ethical values and ideals.

#### 4- Educational Aspect:

Regarding free education, article (233) of the public policy for education, issued by Council of Ministers' Resolution No. 779, dated 16-17/09/1389 H. corresponding to 26-27/11/1969, has confirmed gratis of education in all types and stages.

Article (15) of education policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has confirmed linking education in all stages with the general development plan of the state which aims at realization of a proper sound partnership between man and woman. King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue is playing an active role in this regard. The center has specified the third national meeting to discuss the (woman rights and education relation). The six national meeting was titled (de facto education and means of development). A group of thinkers both men and women have participated in those meetings as the center basically ensures participation of community members to discuss national issues.



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made a leading educational experience by opening the doors for abroad scholarships for all its citizens men and women. Existing programs depend on providing scholarships and training opportunities equally for both sexes pursuant to the same regular requirement related to admissions procedures. Scholarships of females rose significantly either in the Program of the Custodian of the Holy Mosques or in the domestic grants of the Saudi Universities. The number of female students abroad was 34,674 in 2015 with 27% increase in comparison of the number in 2008 when it was 8128 female students. Graduated female students in 2015 were 3720 with an increase percentage of 28% compared with their number in 2008 which amounted during that year to 201 female students to join international universities. This experiment is characterized by including the spouse and children with the female student to preserve the family entity coherent. By doing so, the student shall obtain higher degrees to participate in building herself, her family and her country and to realize her needs as a women entrusted to make a family. The scholarship includes the guardian in the event of being unmarried. This is intended to encourage families to send their daughters for study abroad.

#### 5- Economic Aspect:

The Kingdom has sought to raise the economic standard of the individuals and the community by opening and diversifying work fields. Saudi women work is an of the important issues that enjoys state great attention. Woman work is an old and authentic reality. The woman is an essential partner to man in various works.

The state has made substantial efforts to protect woman against poverty by application of Council of Minister Resolution No. 120, dated 12/04/1425 H. on increasing opportunities and fields of work to women, affirming her main task to care for the family, particularly



in the event of the death of the spouse, disability, imprisonment or divorce. That will be dealt with through the laws issued by the state in this respect. The Kingdom is also going through, empowering the woman economically. The Kingdom is making clear and gradual steps including binding government authorities that issue licenses for practicing activities to receive women applications for obtaining necessary licenses to practice activities issued by those authorities.

The Basic Law of Governance has guaranteed in article 28 the right of work to every citizen without discrimination between man and woman. Efforts of the Kingdom regarding supporting women work, focused on the necessity to provide job opportunities suitable for the woman according to what suits her nature and is consistent with Islamic Shariah Provisions which is the constitution of the country. This support includes appropriate job opportunities in both the public and private sectors equally. As Labour Law does not discriminate between woman and man in rights and duties, there is also no remuneration discrimination when the value and type of work are equal. The Kingdom is one of the countries acceded to the ILO Convention bearing No. 100. This convention is an equal pay for male and female workers for equal value work and convention No. 111 on discrimination in employment and jobs. Ministry of Labour has issued Resolution No. 237/1 dated 18/09/1431 H. corresponding to 28/08/2010, which stressed the prevention of any discrimination in remuneration between male and female workers for the equal value work. We also find full equality between males and females in the help granted to those looking for work. The woman gets the same amount of help provided by the Human Resources Fund granted to men and also the support of training and employment provided by Human Resources Fund for men and women employed in the private sector either by how much training cost is supported or pay support or period of support. The Labor Law has also considered the woman nature and singled out a complete chapter (Chapter Nine) which includes additional provisions regarding employment of women in the private sector to provide them with more protection. In addition to that a number of



meaningful decisions and programs were approved to broaden work opportunities for Saudi woman in a manner consistent with Islamic Shariah Teachings and suit her nature. An initiative was released to develop woman work. It is composed of four main axes each involving a group of programs. These four axes are represented in direct employment, employment mechanisms programs, programs on addressing challenges that face woman employment and supporting services and programs on the development and activation of Legislations and laws on woman work. Many decisions that set organizational and procedure frameworks were issued to expand woman work. These include the decisions on organizing woman work in factories and commercial complexes and feminise jobs in shops selling women requirements besides other decisions relating to organizing her work in retail shops, kitchens, printing press and family entertainment parks.

Saudi Vision 2030 makes of Saudi woman an axis and goal, and a tool and means of education and knowledge. This vision invests the places of strength and make of them a base for building the future. Saudi woman has inscribed a presence and impact since the establishment of this country. She has made a clear impression in the worlds of knowledge. The future vision has involved raising the woman participation percent in labor market from 22% to 30% and to increase contribution of small and middle establishments in the DNP from 2% to 35% and to decrease unemployment from 11.6% to 7%.

#### 6- Cultural Aspect:

The state has supported the Saudi woman in cultural fields and granted her the freedom of expression and opinion through all information outlets and cultural and national festivals without imposing any restrictions or conditions. The state has also encouraged



presence of woman in international events. Freedom of expression is guaranteed in all cultural and information media for both man and woman provided that it shall not lead to sedition and division or undermining the security of the state. Article 39 of the Basic Law of Governance states that, "Mass and Publishing media and all means of expression shall use decent language and adhere to State Laws. They shall contribute towards educating the nation and supporting its unity. Whatever leads to sedition and division, or undermining the security of the state or its public relations or its or is injurious to the honor and right of man, shall be prohibited. Laws shall set forth provisions to achieve this".

The Saudi woman has an impact in making a success of King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue sessions taking interest in national issues. Woman participation shall be 50% from all strata of the society, age groups, and sectarian, cultural and social backgrounds. These sessions are characterized by being broadcasted live on local video and audio channels which allow woman the opportunity to deliver their voices without limits or restrictions to all strata of the society and to the world at large.