

# **Boxed Women in Public Administration - Between Glass Ceilings and Glass Walls: A Study of Women 's Participation in Public Administration in the Arab States**

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## **Abstract**

Inclusive decision-making is necessary in terms of both legitimacy and good policy outcomes. Recognizing this, closing persistent gender gaps in public life has emerged as a critical policy issue as countries increase their efforts to foster inclusive growth and build trust and confidence in public institutions while working towards the SDGs. The public administration determines the manner in which political and economic decisions are implemented and how budgets are planned and spent. Additionally, it is a primary employer for women in many developing countries ó"particularly in the Arab world. In some countries, women have in fact surpassed parity in terms of public administration employment but still lag far behind the 30% target in leadership positions. Balanced total employment among women and men is important but it is equally important to have women dispersed throughout all the different sectors of administrative governance, as well as equitably represented in all levels of decision-making. Women tend to outnumber men in general positions and decrease significantly in number further up the grade ladder. In addition to the glass ceiling that women face in the public sector, there also appears to be a strong trend of horizontal profiling: "glass walls". Women in the public sector are primarily involved in the traditionally feminized sectors of health, education and social services and almost absent from other sectors such as security and foreign affairs. The status quo represents a challenge to achieving SDGs 5, 8 and 16 and the biggest impediment to adjusting the situation is the absence of relevant data. This paper will examine the gender gap in the public administrations of Arab countries; analyze trends and policy with the ultimate aim of contributing to the development of tracking mechanisms for gender equality in the public administration.

*Journal of International Women's Studies*