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Gender Equity and Equality in Syria

Samira Soubh

NAPC Researcher

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Introduction

Since gender equity and equality is one of the basic principals of human rights and the desirable path to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of United Nations (MDGs), bodies and agencies working with development gender equity are facing many constraints. Such constraints are the lack of data and information to formulate the relevant policies and programs that aiming at narrowing the gender gap, efficient use of society potentials to provide opportunities in front of all individuals, whatever their classes and sanctions are, to participate effectively in the comprehensive development process. On the other side, investment directed to women and young people, who constitute most of world population, lead to good economic and social results. Whereas, gender discrimination incurs high education cost, low productivity, and high mortality rate among infants and mothers. Consequently, failing in realizing gender equity lead to deepening poverty in next generations where gender inequality lead to degradation of countries and societies completely toward chronic poverty, and poor health care, especially in developing and less developed countries.

In this report, we will attempt to highlight and focus on areas where gender gaps are problematic and that are stricture by knowing the obstacles that still hider realization of gender equity and equality and women empowerment. Then which policies and actions are needed to address gender gap and to achieve social equality and equity among all society's members according to their qualification and capacities in order to release equal opportunities to achieve a comprehensive development in all social, economic, and political aspects. Accordingly, the third goal of Millennium Goals of realization of gender equity and women empowerment can be achieved.

1. Historical Background of Gender Equity

Due to the bad conditions of injury, inferiority, and inequity, women started as groups claiming liberty and equity with men in all life aspects after French revolution in 1789 . They claimed women rights and better status in society such as freedom, equity, wellbeing and more justice laws. Women's claims were focusing on woman's right to participating in public life. Even though, women's injustice status remain unchanged until the beginning of twentieth century and the first of its decades with the breaking out of World War I which lead to increase the women participation in the labor force making huge pressure on the society and political forces. So that, women movements started to preponderance in favor of women until the beginning of sixties to witness the radical's women movement whose objectives were:

- Enlarging, improving, and equal education opportunities for women;
- Lawful equity at labor and providing governmental jobs for women equal with men;

After that period and with the beginning of emerging democratic regimes in the Western countries, governments started to realize the importance of equity and equality among all individuals of the society, especially between men and women. However, there was a confliction between supporters and opposites of gender equity saying that the relation between men and women is built on religious, historical, and social basics. The opposites of gender equity point out their views as follows.

Women are imitating men in every thing, by which they may lose their femininity that may also be contradicted with religion, in addition to the economic dimension which becomes related to marriage eternity. In addition, Not working women might not get married or even married women worker might lose their marriage if they lose their job;(<http://www.wresearchc.org/index.php?tp=6&id=172>)

- Rising of the individualism and increasing divorce rate due to economic independence of women; and
- decreasing of time allocation for children care and increasing the family disjunction that may leads to a huge social problems;

Whereas, gender equity supporters see that women should treated equally with men in all aspects such as: lawful and political aspects; giving women the same opportunities that provided to men; equal resources allocation among them; involving women in development and in making decisions since they are benefited, active and effective at the same time; and not discriminating against women in rights and duties. Based on that and in order to achieve gender equity, providing equal opportunities to access to resources and equal resources allocation effectively at all levels among women and men equally. Those principals have been assured by all world conferences held for women issues during last decades which can be summarized as follows:

- All constraints that prevent gender equity should be eliminated;
- Increasing people and governments' awareness about gender equity and equality through formal and informal channels, media, non-governmental organizations, and political parties forums;
- Adopting Beijing Platform recommendations of women empowerment and eliminating all obstacles that hinder women from participation effectively in all public, private, social, cultural, and political life aspects;
- Sharing the responsibilities and decision making between men and women at home, workplaces, and community levels as well as at national and international societies' levels.

As for gender equity in Syria, Islamic law governs the personal status of women in Syria. Several civil laws have been amended over the last 30 years to create gender equity. Many of these reforms have not been activated as social convention prevents enforcement of statutory code. Following the 1995 Beijing Conference, the government established the National Committee of Post-Beijing Follow-up of Women's Affairs. This committee issues reports to the United Nations on the nation's progress towards gender equity and makes recommendations to the national government. The National Committee of Post-Beijing Follow-Up has noted a need for better implementation of reforms already codified.

2. Definition and Typologies

Many gender terminologies and definitions are circulated in all gender reports and studies that discuss gender equity issues, women empowerment, closing gender gaps, gender roles, gender analysis, gender mainstreaming in development programs, and gender perspectives. Therefore, defining those terms and typologies is important before going deeply over development and gender index and indicators.

Woman, Man, and Gender

Originally, gender term has emerged from the western culture at the late of last century and at the beginning of globalization and liberty era, where become too difficult to live in isolated society from social international movements. It was too difficult to keep the local traditions and norms where each society was enforced to be involved with other cultures; regardless of its willingness, conveying economic, cultural, and social evolutions and changes that are witnessed in the global context. Therefore, gender term has emerged to differentiate between male and female which refer to biologically-based reference and recognize human being from natal; and between man and woman which refer to biologically and socially or culturally-based references. However, roles performed by men and women are similar and different at the same time

according to sanctions and societies that belong to. Moreover, gender differences strongly affect the distribution of resources among men and women; therefore, those differences are shaped by religious, ethnic, economic, social, and ideological terms. Since gender's roles are social issue and not natal issues, social prevailing behavior in resources distribution can be changed through aware social procedures including public policies.

Hence, it should distinguish between female and woman terms so that female term can be defined biologically-based reference only, while woman or girl term refers to sex, biological, social, and cultural references at the same time. It is recommended to use woman term when possible since female has more connotation. Whereas, maternity term refers to the state of being a mother, which refers to tasks, responsibilities and activities that woman perform to give birth and bring up children. Women make a significant contribution to the welfare of the family and to the development of society which is not always recognized. The social importance of maternity and the role of parents in the family and in the upbringing of children should be acknowledged. These roles require shared responsibilities of parents and society as a whole. Maternity, motherhood and the role of women in procreation must not be a basis for discrimination nor restrict the participation of women in society. It is important to recognize the important role played by women in caring for the family members, (Gender glossary, WFP, p45).

Equity and Equality in the Islamic Share'a

Equity is a fundamental part of justice, and justice lingual means judging rightly and it is opposite of inequity and injustice. Equity is middle and equilibrium, namely, balancing between two different conflicting parts without bias to any part against the other. In other word, justice is balancing between parts where each is given his right without cheapness or inequity.

Equity among man and woman is balancing between the humanity of woman (with man characteristics) and her feminism (relating to different biological and psychological characteristics of man). Wisdom Sharie'a supported this dialectic and made the equity originally for absolute majority of religion's verdicts related to both sexes. Not only that, but also, functional biological differences were not considered as restricting factor of equalization between both sexes since those differences don't have key impact in this issue.

Gender discrimination and gender issues

Gender differences are unfurled and opened-out in case of hunger, health, mortality rate and skills of each sex, lawful practices, and options types that women and girls face in comparison to men and boys. Therefore, those differences occur clearly in poor environment especially when crises and disasters take place, where women try to compensate of fatigue by giving their burdens on girls causing dropping-out large number of girls of schools, which in turn lead to missing education opportunities, being put in poverty cycle, and preventing them to live better-off in future.

Gender bias means the actions against women (or men) based on the perception that the other sex is not equal and does not have the same rights. As for gender disparity, it means the differences in men's and women's access to services, resources, status and power, which usually favor men and are institutionalized through laws and social customs.

Following to what mentioned above, gender discrimination issues are viewed as differences between men- women and girls-boys based on social and cultural base inside the household unit, culture unit, or different cultures. Those differences change among generations and occur in social role of each sex, in accessing to resources, in obstacles opportunities, needs, perspectives, opinions, and others. This term includes men and women together and their interrelated relationship and it doesn't express synonym of women issues term.

Gender gap

Gender gap is disparity (measured quantitatively) between women and men, and girls and boys, in their access to resources, education, health, services or power. The reduction or expansion of gender gaps can better illustrate to development workers to what extent women and men, and girls and boys have benefited from project or policy interventions in areas such as education, health care and food distribution and others (WFP, 2002 p33).

Gender Roles

Gender roles are socially determined behaviors, tasks and responsibilities for women and men based on socially perceived differences that define how women and men should act. Gender roles change over time, through individual choices or with social or political changes such as economic crises, natural disasters and consequent emergencies, and post-war situations in which the decision-making power and responsibilities of women and men may vary (WFP, 2002 p36).

For this reason, equity among all society members has become very important which also has been called all superlunary religions, human rights terms, and profits and philosophy's' instructions. Strengthening and discriminating sanction over another and underestimating in social sanction capacities lead to huge social and economic problems. Therefore, all international agreements and conventions have assured right execution and avoiding exploitation and civil discrimination that based on race, sex, and religion.

Equity and equality are meant to equal distribution of resources and equal opportunities for all society members without discrimination. On the contrary, gender equity doesn't mean, as it is viewed by some opposites of gender equity, equity between man and woman is a coincidence of man in every thing, imitating him in every thing, and preponderating him at work, education, social , economic, and political opportunities, instead, gender equity and equality means providing opportunities equally for both sexes and women fairness to enable them to participate fully in building household and society at all life aspects; social, economic, and political to realize a society dominated by equity and justice without hardship or injustice as possible. In order to achieve those objectives, gender integration in development process must be practiced through modifying some laws and curriculums, changing the stereotype picture of women in household life, gender roles, gender relations, activating women role at decision making at household and public level.

3. Gender Development Index and Gender Gaps in Syria

Since poverty is correlated strongly with human issues, weak economic growth is attributed to weak human capacities and misusing them fully. To know gender gaps, development indicators should be shown to illustrate to what extent the country has progressed concerning gender equity issues.

There are two types of human development indexes; first one is concerning human development and poverty level, while the second is concerning gender development index which have been set by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to measure the three dimensions of human development which are: long and healthy life, education and knowledge, and well being level. Accordingly, Syria is ranked at 106 of 177 world countries in 2004 based on human development indicators, while it ranked at 84 of 140 world countries based on gender development index (human development report, UNDP, 2005). Although the low rank of Syria, it is better than many Arab countries where number of them are not mentioned in the countries list according to gender development index.

Regarding women empowerment indicator, it measures woman participation rate in three domains: first, political participation and decision making, and women share in people assembly seats. Second, economic participation of women and decision making by computing women shares of lawmaking position, high officers and administrators, and women's shares in technical

and vocational position. Third, women access to resources and controlling over them, and income earned by both of men and women. Accordingly, women empowerment indicator decreases as long as gender gap extended.

3.1. Gender Development Index

Gender development index measures gender differences and variations in achievements among both sexes through modifying the same sub indicators according to gender equity degree in those achievements. Human development related gender index is less than its similar computed to the same country (UNDP, 2004).

3.1.1. Healthy and Long Life Indicator

This indicator measures life expected at birth for both, female and male and then life expectation equally distributed among them. However, before investigating in those indicators, we should show demographic profile in term of population number, growth rate, and sex ratio during last decades.

Syrian population has increased fast recently during last two decades as shown in Table 1 where population increased from /9046/million inhabitants in 1981 to /13782/million in 1994, and /17921/ million in 2004 to reach /18941/ million in 2007, where males' number reached /9685/ million and females' number reached /9256/ million in 2007.

Table 1: Syrian Population Development during 1960-2007 (000)

Years	Males	Females	Total	Females' Rate of Total Population	Sex Ratio (Males' Number per 100 Females)
1960	2344	2221	4565	49	106
1970	3233	3072	6305	49	105
1981	4622	4424	9046	49	104
1994	7049	6733	13782	49	105
1995	7306	6979	14285	49	105
1996	7503	7167	14670	49	105
1997	7706	7360	15066	49	105
1998	7914	7559	15473	49	105
1999	8128	7763	15791	49	105
2000	8343	7977	16320	49	105
2001	8552	8168	16720	49	105
2002	8763	8367	17130	49	105
2003	8979	8571	17550	49	105
2004	9161	8760	17921	49	105
2005	9340	8920	18269	49	105
2006	9563	9154	18717	49	104
2007	9798	9374	19172	49	105

Source: statistical abstract, 2007.

As for population growth rate, Table2 shows that population growth rate has decreased from 3.3% during 1981-1994 to 2.7% during 1995-2000 then to 2.45% during 2000-2005 to be finally 2.24% in 2007.

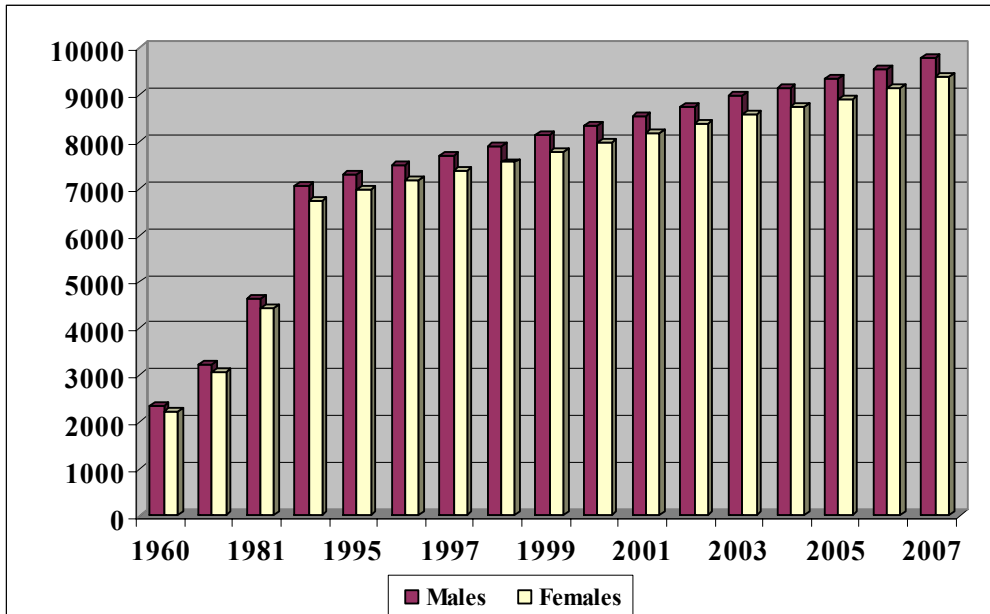
Table.2: Population Growth Rate during 1981, 1994, 1995, 2000, And 2005.

Years	Population Growth Rate
1981-1994	%3.3
1995-2000	%2.7
2000-2005	%2.45
2007	%2.24

Source: statistical abstract 2007

Figure 1 illustrates that population growth was accelerated during 1960-1995, while it has increased gradually after that period (1996-2006).

Figure 1: Population Progress per Gender during 1960-2007.2007-1960



3.1.1.1. Life Expectancy

Life expectancy is an important indicator of development. Table 3 shows the average of life expectancy of both sexes indicating that women exceed men by approximately 3-5 years. That progress in life expectancy is due to woman's attribute that characterize woman that she lives longer than man physiologically, to the prevalence of several health services for pregnant and mother woman, improvement the quality of those services, and improvement of food and nutrition that led to tangible decreasing in raw mortality rates, nurslings, and infant under 5 years old (source:.....). Therefore, life expectancy at birth has increased from 57 years during the period of 1970-1975 to 65 years old for woman and to 62 years for man in 1980, while in 1990, also has increased reaching 70 years for woman and 67 years for man, then in 2000, increased to reach 74 years for woman and 71 years for man. In 2004, life expectancy increased reaching 75.4 years for woman and 71.8 years for man.

Table.3: Life Expectancy per Gender during 1970-2004.

Years	Life expectancy for man	Life expectancy for woman
1970-1975	57	57
1980	62	65
1990	67	70
2000	71	74
2004	72	75

Source: statistical abstract, 2005

3.1.1.2. Infant and Maternity Mortality Rate

Mother's mortality rate (per 100000 live births) has decreased from 110 in 1985 to 58 in 2004 (UNDP, 2004). Accordingly, Syria has achieved 62% of 2015 goals of MDGs. Despite of the decreases in mortality rate national level, there were clear variations in maternity mortality rates in the poor Eastern region such as Al-Rakka governorate (where poverty level was 17.6%

and maternity mortality rate reached 91.4 /100000 live births). Syrian government has exerted special efforts to decrease the infant mortality rates under 5 years old. Infant mortality rate decreased from 4.17% in 1990 to 1.93% in 2004, which means that Syria has exceeded the planned objectives during that period achieving 81% of total required decreasing to achieve the planned development goals by 2015.

3.1.1.3. Fertility Rate and Family Planning Use

Woman's fertility rate decreased from 7.3% in 1980 to 5.2% in 1990 to 3.3% in 2004, and reaching the lowest rate of 3.31% in 2007 (Summary Gender Profile, world bank). That decreasing is attributed to improvement of woman education and using contraceptive means. Traditional contraceptive use rate by married women has reached 47%, while modern contraceptive means use by married women at age of 19-49 years old reached 35% in 2005. In addition, the share of child beard under skilled supervision reached 98% of total childbirths in 2005.

3.1.2. Education and Knowledge Indicators

These indicators include the measures of the ability level of reading and writing among adult males and females (people age ranges between 16 to 65 years old), total schools' enrollment rates for both sexes, and gendered education distributing index (gender gap).

In fact, Syrian government has exerted significant effort in education field, where adult females' share (at age above 15 years) who can write and read increased from 48% in 1990 to 74% in 2004, while males' share increased from 82% in 1990 to 86% in 2004 which means that the gender gap in education is still significant (-12%).

In fact, population structure in Syria has had an obvious impact on education policies in the country. Despite of the improvement in women education level and the recession of gender gap in education level, women are still lacking job opportunities in labor market.

3.1.2.1. Basic Education (Elementary and Preparatory Education)

Education sector in Syria has witnessed tangible improvement during the last two decades due to growing attention of the government to education sector. Applying compulsory system in basic education and the efforts of escaping from the basic education level are the main policies adopted to improve the education level. The pure rate of the registration in elementary schools of females reached 86% and 95% among males in 1990, while in 2000 reached 90% and 96% for females and males respectively. In 2004, the rate has increased to become 96% and 100% for females and males respectively. Table 4 illustrates that the share of females-student accounted for 48% of total student in 2006 with a gender gap of -2, (CBS, 2007).

Table.4: Basic Education Student Number per Gender (First And Second Cycle) In 2006

Males	Females	Total
2250223	2047357	4297580
52%	%48	%100

Source: statistical abstract, 2007

Moreover, it has been noticed that the average share of educated females belong the age category of 15-24 years old accounted for 93% of total females and for 97% for males of the same age category during the period 2000-2004.

3.1.2.2.. Secondary and Vocational Education

The share of enrollment females in the secondary schools stated 46% of total females' number over the period 2002-2006, while males' share accounted for 50% of total males' number in the

same period. It is noticeable that the share of females in the secondary is more than male which accounted for 51% and 49% during the period 2005-2006 respectively (Table5),

Table 5: Pupils Number Progress at The Secondary Schools per Sex during 2002-2006.

Years	Males	Females	Total	% of females to total
2002	118927	114911	233838	49
2003	134088	132108	266196	50
2004	139720	139913	279633	50
2005	154473	157659	312132	51
2006	162096	170563	332659	51

Source: statistical abstract 2007

In addition, Table 6 indicates that the rate of females who completed their pre-university education (basic and secondary schools) has exceeded males' ones, where females rate was 52% versus 48% for males with positive gender gap (+2) during the period of 1987-2006.

Table 6: Number of Graduated From pre-University Education per Sex during 1987-2006.

Basic education			Secondary education		
Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
107435	114135	221570	69647	76346	145993
%48	%52	%100	%48	%52	%100

Source: statistical abstract 2007

3.1.2.3. High Education (High Institutes and University Education)

With regard to high education and especially high institutes (post secondary schooling), Table 7 shows the supremacy of females' number graduated from medium and high institutes during 2002-2005, while their number was less than males number in 2006.

Table 1.7: Medium and High Institutes' Graduates per Sex during 2002-2006.

Years	Graduated students			% of females
	Total	Females	Males	
2002	21530	12365	9165	57
2003	23490	12623	10867	54
2004	26910	15460	11450	57
2005	22867	12261	10606	54
2006	34714	14008	20706	40

Source: statistical abstract, 2007

It is worth to mention also the significant growth in females' number graduated from university. The females' share has increased gradually, in general, year after year to be equal with males' share and the gender gap has been closed in 2006, at which females' share has increased regularly from 46% in 2002 to 50% in 2006 of total graduates. In addition, gender gap was closed in this educational stage during the mentioned year (statistical abstract 2007).

3.1.3. Women wellbeing

This indicator is meant the amount of income earned equally distributed by man and woman. Females' share in income earned yearly stood at \$1794, while males' share stood at \$5402 with explicit gender gap (UNDP, 2005).

Accordingly, relative distribution of employment according to wages, economic sectors, and sex shown in Table 8 illustrating a negative sign of gender gap has reached the highest level in transportation and storage sector (-23.06), finance and insurance (-14.07), and industry sector (-13.55), whereas the rest of sectors show positive gender gaps in favor of women which are: building and construction (15.12), trade and hotels (8.67), agriculture (3.52) and services (1.46).

Also, males' average wages amounted about 6100 SP, while females' average wages amounted about 5702 SP with neglected difference (398 SP) in 2002.

Table 8: Relative Distribution of Workers According to Sectors and Gender Gaps

Sector	Females	Males	Gender Gap
Agriculture	84.27%	80.75%	3.52%
Industry	82.94%	96.49%	-13.55%
Building & Construction	110.63%	95.51%	15.12%
Trade & Hotels	103.54%	94.87%	8.67%
Transportation & Storage	95.11%	118.16%	-23.06%
Finance & Insurance	100.05%	114.70%	-14.07%
Services	107.05%	105.59%	1.46%
Unknown	0%	80.11%	-80.11%
Wage Average	5702	6100	0%

Source: SBC, statistical abstract 2003, table 3/12 and 11/3

Based on quantitative indicators of wages' categories distribution among men and women, Table 9 illustrates that 58% of total number of working women earned less than 9000 SP versus 46% of working men with gender gap amounted -8. On the other side, 95% of women working in agricultural sector earn wages less than 9000 SP versus 67% of working men in the same sector with gender gap amounted -45.

Table 9: Relative Distribution of Wages per Economic Sectors According to Average Wages and Gender Gap in 2006.

Economic Sector	gender	-5000	5001-6000	6001-7000	7001-8000	8001-9000	+9001
Agriculture	Males	24	15	12	11	7	12
	Females	13	2	1	1	0	1
Industry, Electricity, Gas & Water	Males	19	13	10	15	9	28
	Females	3	1	1	1	1	1
Building & Construction	Males	21	16	14	16	10	22
	Females	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trade, Hotels & Restaurants	Males	26	14	10	14	7	23
	Females	3	1	1	1	0	1
Transportation & Storage	Males	6	7	9	15	13	46
	Females	1	2	2	3	4	12
Finance, Insurance & Real Estates	Males	9	7	10	9	6	41
	Females	0	0	0	0	0	0
Services	Males	8	5	7	9	8	37
	Females	1	1	2	2	2	7
Total	Males	14	9	9	12	8	31
	Females	3	1	2	2	2	7

Source: statistical abstract 2007, labor survey 2006, table 9/3

Regarding gender gaps in wages and according to educational status of man and woman, Table 10 shows that the gender gaps have reached the highest level in illiterate women category (-11), while gender gaps have narrowed at least in medium institutes attainment category (-2), whereas university attainment intermediate those values (-5).

Table 10: Average Wages per Educational Status and Gender in 2002.

Educational Status	Males	Females	Gender Gap
Illiterate	5852	3818	-11
Can Read & Write	5700	4727	-5
Elementary	5487	4771	-3
Preparatory	5994	5115	-4
General Secondary	6824	5480	-5
Technical Secondary	6270	5364	-4
Medium Institute	6925	6314	-2
University and above	8671	7193	-5

Source: CBS, Labor Survey 2002

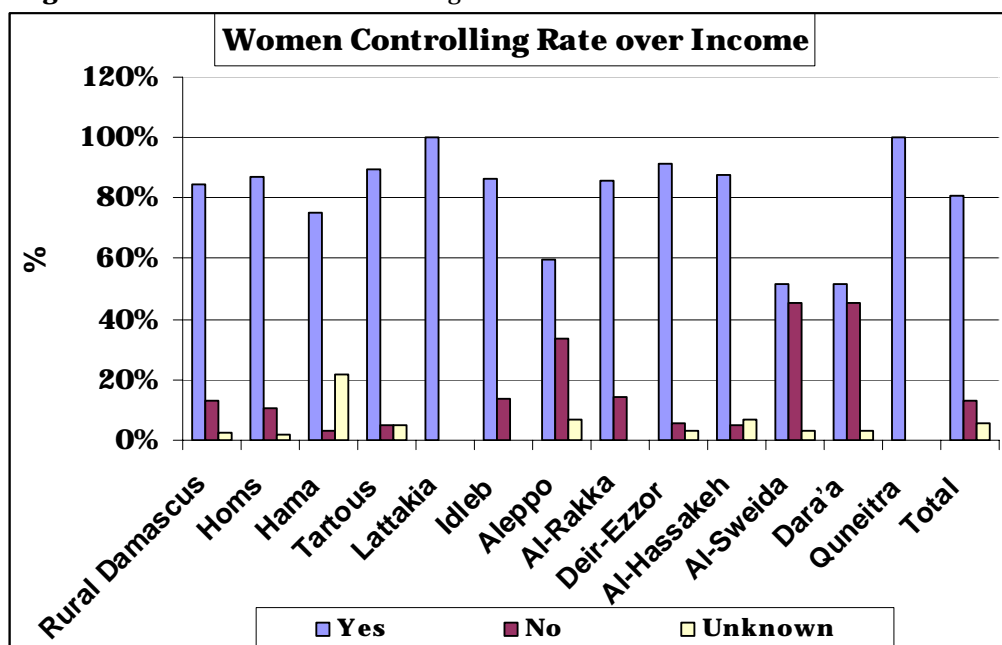
With regard to women controlling over income, Table 11 indicates that 81% of women control over their earned income and that percentage reaches 100% in some governorates like (Lattakia and Al-Quneitra), while that percentage decreases to 51% in some other governorates with some exceptions and individuals' differences. However, most of women workers in Syria are free in controlling over their income that earned for working either inside home, or outside home, especially in urban areas. Nevertheless, indicators show that women expense 73% of their income on household expenditures and that shows the rural versus urban women behavior which points out the women's status, participating in household decision making, and enabling and empowering women (UNDP, 2004).

Table 11: Relative Distribution of Women Worker According to Their Liberty in Controlling over Their Income per Governorates.

Governorate	Yes	No	Unknown
Rural Damascus	84.75%	13.10%	2.20%
Homs	87.35%	10.65%	2.15%
Hama	75.45%	3%	21.65%
Tartous	89.80%	5.10%	5.10%
Lattakia	100%	0%	0%
Idleb	86.60%	13.40%	0%
Aleppo	59.75%	33.70%	6.60%
Al-Rakka	85.70%	14.30%	0%
Deir-Ezzor	91.70%	5.60%	2.80%
Al-Hassakeh	87.90%	5.20%	6.90%
Al-Sweida	51.50%	45.50%	3%
Dara'a	51.50%	45.50%	3%
Quneitra	100%	0%	0%
Total	81%	13.10%	5.90%

Source: MAAR and UNIFEM 2000, a Survey on Rural Women Role in Non-Agricultural Sector

Figure 2: Women's Rate in Controlling over Income



In the context of agricultural wages, surveys indicated that there are no differences in wages at public sector and even in agricultural work, where differences in wages come to be very small in this type of works. Therefore, that wages are given based on the type of agricultural work performed, and on daily working hours number. Wages increase in case of working the whole day in harvesting (Nadia Forni, 2001). Women perform all manual and un-mechanized works, while men do works that require muscle power and machinery. Moreover, rural female workers constitute the majority of waged agricultural labor in rural areas. However, female employment involvement share in labor market is still constrained by traditions and social norms, and hinder females to work out of labor market. In general, female employment in waged labor market are employed within workgroups headed by (*Shaweesh*) who provide the required number of women workers to do most of agricultural activities such as weeding and harvesting. Women contribute significantly to total agricultural household income through either working in family or waged labor. Table 12 illustrates wages earned by man and woman for the same activity and the same crop, and it is noticed that gender gap becomes narrow in term of wages, except the case of lentil harvesting activity.

Table 12: Main Crops' Wages per Sex in Selected Villages of Syrian Governorates (SP)

Crop	Females	Males
Cotton	150	150
Wheat	100	100-150
Potato	80-100	100
Lentil	200	400-250
Barley	80-150	100-200
Olives & Pistachio	80-100	100
Irrigation Cannels Maintenance	-	200-250

Source: Land Tenure, Nadia Forni. 2001

Findings from many studies show that rural women often carry out light agricultural activities such as: planting nurslings, seeds dissemination, weeding, harvesting, picking, grading, sorting, storing, and animals caring. Moreover, rural women spend more time than men in performing agricultural activities, house shores in food preparing, children rearing, taking care of household health, social, and vocations affairs. In fact, the absence of men due to either migration to cities seeking for job opportunities, or death is burdening woman. However, unlike men, women are

lacking access to agricultural resources and controlling over natural resources. In addition, women have less opportunity than men in accessing to education, decision making position, agricultural land, credit loans, training, and modern techniques which increases the gender gap.

3.2. Women Empowerment Indicators

3.2.1. Political Participation and Decision Making

The political leadership in Syria considers women as political principals and should be supported and targeted to achieve the gender equity goal. To this end, since 1970, women have been involved in military cadre, where women number in security police staffs has reached 414 policewoman; beside that, parachute airdropping unite for girls has been established.

Beside the significant progress of women's status in educational and economic domains during the last three decades, other privileges were given to women concerning political affair and decision making position. For example, Syria was the first country among Arab region in appointing a higher political position to woman, vice president for cultural affairs. Also, women's participation share in ministerial positions has been increased in diplomatic corps, parliament, administrations, judicial, and municipalities.

Women participation in the People's Assembly has increased from 2.2% in 1973 to 18% in 2007 (45 ladies of 244 total) with a gender gap of -32 (CBS, 2007). In addition, there was a lady held the position of legislative round secretary last year. It is worth mentioning that women's share in the Syrian People's Assembly (Parliament) is very close to the women's share in Parliament of the United States. Nevertheless, Syrian women seats' share in the parliament is quite small comparing with developing countries. The share of ministerial position occupied by women is accounted only for 6% of total ministries with gender gap of -44. Women have worked in diplomatic corps since 1953 and the first woman ambassador has been appointed in 1988. Currently, there are 3 women ambassadors, which account for 10% of total diplomatic corps.

Moreover, women's share in judicial corps accounts for 13.3% and women advocates' share is 16% of total advocates at country level. Also, women have become effective partners in judicial corps since 1975 and currently they are involved in all types of courts (i.e. courts of appeal, civil, repeal etc). Beside that, women worked as prosecutor and as member at repeal court since 1998. Female judges constitute 9% of total number of judges, 14.5% of total state advocates, and 19% of public lawyers.

The number of females in the municipalities at different administration levels has increased from 27 in 1975 to 189 in 1999, while their share in local administration councils accounted for 3.1% of in 2006.

3.2.2. Economic Participation and Decision Making

Women participation share in labor force has increased during last two decades, and their involvement in labor market has increased too due to the improvement of their education level and vocational skills; beside emerging needs for women's income due to increasing demand to provide consumption needs and changing life consumption style. All those factors together have contributed to push women to go out of their narrow context seeking for job opportunities, although they are limited comparing with men, to participate in improving livelihood, and building household more healthy, educated, and better off.

Females' economic activity rate¹ (aged at 15 years and above) has increased from 24% in 002 to 30% in 2006, while reached among males' 31% in the last mentioned year (Statistical abstract, 2007).

Regarding women participation rate in labor force, it reached 23% of total labor force in 1981 and that rate has continued increasing to become 26% in 1990, 29% in 2000, and 30% in 2004, but that rate has decreased in 2006 to become 13% among females, while it reached 87% among males with significant gender gap amounted(-37).

With regard to employment distribution per economic sectors, Table 13, shows that females' labor is concentrating mainly in services sector (6% of total employment and 27% of total employment in this sector) and the agricultural sector comes next (3% of total employment and 18% of total employment in this sector).

Table 13: Workers Distribution per Sex and Sectors in 2006.

Economic Sector	Females	Males	Total	% of Females to Total Sectors	% of Males to Total Sectors	% of Females Within Each Sector	% of Males Within Each Sector	Gender Gap In Each Sector
Agriculture, Hunting & Forest	169672	781927	951599	3	13	18	82	32-
Industry	50180	1637634	1687814	1	28	3	97	47-
Building & Construction	4754	645892	650646	0	11	1	99	49-
Trade, Hotels & Restaurants	28221	730719	758940	0	13	4	96	46-
Transportation & Communication	8253	345451	353704	0	6	2	98	48-
Finance, Insurance & Real Estates	11157	100428	111585	0	2	10	90	40-
Services	358000	950660	1308660	6	16	27	73	23-
Total	630237	5192711	5822948	11	89	11	89	39-

Source: statistical abstract, 2007 and percentage computing by report writer

However, decree No 35 dated 2001 has given married working woman paid maternity leave for first three births, while fourth birth has deprived from that grant; in addition, paid maternity leave has been increased to become 120 day for first birth 90 days for the second, and 75 for the third birth. Moreover, the government has provided nursing houses for women workers at their workplaces with very low cost.

Women constitute nearly one fifth of total workers at public sector, but the majority work in secretariat and administrative positions. On the other side, there is an obvious bias among sex in private sector for vocational and medium graduates workers. It worth mentioning that the investment's decree no 10 of 1991 has created new job opportunities for women in the official and medical professions which reflect a bias of females' enrollment in special colleges. Moreover, woman' share of economic opportunities still few due to finance and credit constraints, where they are provided easier for men than women, and women's chances in establishing their own businesses still very few.

¹ The economic activity rate for females indicates to females' rate whose age is ranging between 15 years old and above, and they do work, or they are ready to produce goods and services (statistical typology definition, UNDP).

Females' teachers rate at basic schools has reached 65% in 2006 which exceeded significantly males' teachers with positive gender gap (+15) (statistical abstract 2007).

As for females teachers rate at secondary schools and universities, it amounted 47% of total teachers number in secondary schools with gender gap (-3), while women rate at the teaching staff of universities reached 27% with gender gap amounted (-23) in 2006.

Regarding women workers distribution at governmental ministries, we noticed that the highest rate of women was in health ministry (57%), education ministry comes next (56%), tourism (53%), ministry of labor and social affairs and the ministry of high education have equal rate (48%), while their rate was (25%) in the ministry of agriculture and agrarian reform of total workers. Whereas, women workers' rate decreased significantly in the following ministries: Al-Awkaf (8%), petroleum, mining, and irrigation (9%), electricity (10%), transportation (12%), and construction and housing (13%), local administration (14%), (Table-4- in the annexes).

With concern of unemployment², unemployment females' rate reached 23.9% of total females' labor force in 2000, and that rate has increased to come to 24.1% in 2004, and to reach 45% in 2006 with gender gap amounted)-5(among both sexes (table -13-). However, total unemployment rate for all labor force reached 11.2% in 2000 and increased in 2004 to become 11.7%.

Table 14: Unemployment Distribution (at Age+ 15 Years) per Sex in 2006.

Total	Females	Males	% of females	Gender gap
432240	196542	235698	45	5-

Source: statistical abstract, 2007

3.2.3. Controlling over Resources

Controlling over resources is meant accessing, land, assets, machineries, and livestock. In general, rural women don't possess assets like land, machineries, and livestock where they are rarely compensated of their entail a small amount of money. In addition, it is very difficult for women to get own loans due to lacking of collaterals, while even they get small loans from development projects' fund or employment agency, the amount is very poor; in addition, they are not free in controlling over those loans, so those loans are consumed and expensed mostly by husband, father, or brother's order.

Accordingly, it is noticed that the share of women own assets and resources doesn't exceed 5%, while males owners' share stood at 95%, where 92% of them own poultry, comparing with 8% of females'. Males own 97% of sheep, 93% of cows, and 96% of goats. So that shares were strange because females own only 3% of sheep, 7% of cows, 4% of goats, and 2% of poultry, (Nadia Farah, 1999). Although the Islamic Share'a has given women full right and eligibility to own and controlling over resources, that right still theoretical and not practiced in reality where traditions and social norms still consecrated in the Syrian rural, and confine women to enjoy that right. Women in rural areas abandon their heritage rights to their males' brothers or they authorize husband and brother to control over their inherited resources. That behavior is due to a common argument stated to avoiding women to be communicated with men in real estates deals and other administrative deals which women might not afford. Therefore, it is obvious that local community impose additional pressure on woman by its traditions and norms to abandon her right to her males' brothers.

Moreover, it was noticed that women employment migration was increasingly continued to come to 90% in some villages due to low agricultural wages for man which make him seeking for better alternatives leaving women to do agricultural works as unpaid family workers or as paid

² It indicates to all people who exceeded specific age without employment, waged or don't work as self employment; nevertheless, they are ready to work and they get certain steps to seeking waged job or self employment (statistical typologies definitions, UNDP).

workers outside the village; therefore, women perform most of agricultural tasks, which increase their burden. However, women participation increase might have positive impact on women by increasing their participation rate in decision making inside and outside home, (Nadia Forni, 2001).

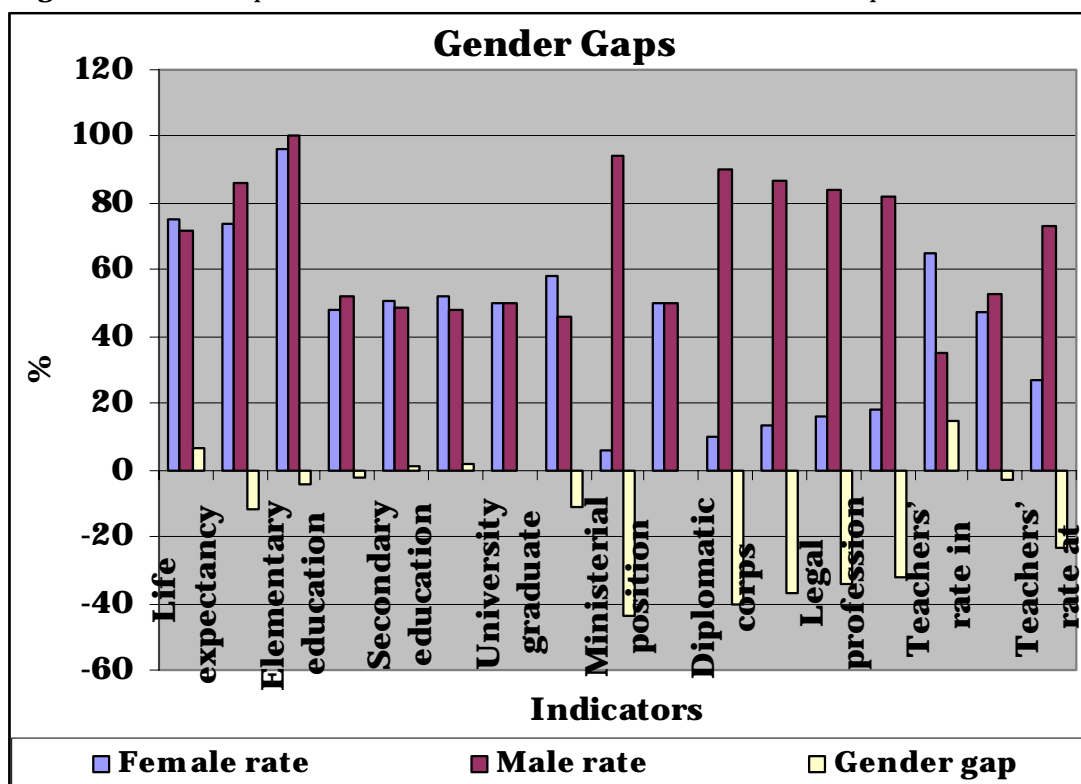
The following table (15) summarizes gender gaps in gender development index and woman empowerment.

Table 15: Gender Gaps in Life Expectancy, Education, Political and Economic Domains

Indicator	Female rate	Male rate	Gender gap
Life expectancy	75.4	71.8	6.3+
Reading & writing ability	74	86	12-
Elementary education enrollment	96	100	4-
Basic education enrollment	48	52	2-
Secondary education enrollment	51	49	1+
Pre-university education rate	52	48	2+
University graduate	50	50	0
Earning less than 9000SP	58	46	11-
Ministerial position	6	94	44-
High position (vice president)	50	50	0
Diplomatic corps	10	90	40-
Judicial corps	13.38	86.62	36.62-
Legal profession	16	84	34-
People house	18	82	32-
Teachers' rate in basic schools	65	35	15+
Teachers' rate in secondary schools	47	53	3-
Teachers' rate at university	27	73	23-

Source: based on statistical abstracts, development reports, and computed by report writer.

Figure 3: Gender Gaps in Educational Levels, Economic and Political Participation



4. Main Findings

According to surveys' data conducted on gender inequality and inequity in Syria show that gender gaps have been narrowed significantly during last two decades in education and economic domains; in addition to the tangible progress in political participation due to government's efforts in enhancing investment in the social sector. That matter of fact has led to large evolution of changes such as: improvement of women status socially, health, job opportunities availability, and women involvement in the economic, social, and political aspects. But many reforms still need to be executed like rural areas where illiteracy rates among women still high due to their high rate of dropping-out of schools. In addition, those villages still suffer from poor health services comparing with urban areas, beside hard conditions that rural people live, especially women due to hard environmental condition, women hardship in accessing to resources and low wages. We are listing main results and indicators showing differences and gender gaps in economic, political, educational and social domains (although gender gaps are narrow, in general speaking, in Syria).

- Life expectancy has developed during last two decades where it reached 75.4 years among women and 71.8 years among men in 2004 with gender gap about (+3.6).
- Education's share among adult females (aged +15 years) can read and write has jumped from 48% in 1990 to 74% in 2004. Also, males' share who can read and write has increased from 82% in 1990 to 86% in 2004 with clear gender gap amounted (-12);
- Females enrollment's rate in elementary schools has increased from 86% in 1990 to 96%, while increased from 95% to 100% among males in 2004 with gender gap (-4). Also, females' enrollment rate at basic education (elementary and preparatory schools) reached 48% of

total pupils in 2006 with gender gap didn't exceed (-2); moreover, that rate didn't differ from rural and urban and between governorate and other.

- Females' enrollment rate at secondary education was 46% of total females' number in this period, while males' rate was 50% of total males' number for the same period (2002-2006). On the other side, females' rate (51%) has exceeded males' rate (49%) in the secondary education in 2006 with positive gender gap amounted (+1). In addition, females' rate has exceeded males' rate in completed pre-university education (basic and secondary), where females' rate was 52% versus 48% among males during 1987-2006 with positive gender gap came to (+2).
- With regard to high education, also females' number in this stage has increased where females graduated from universities reached 50% in 2006 where gender gap was closed in this stage of education.
- 58% of women workers earn less than 9000SP versus 46% among men with gender gap amounted (-8). Moreover, it was noticed that gender gaps have reached the highest level in illiterate females (-11), while those gaps have narrowed to least level in medium education attainment (-2), and universities attainment mediate those values (-5).
- Concerning to women' participation in the political domain:
 - For the first time in Arab region, a lady has been appointed as vice president for cultural affairs on March, 23, 2006;
 - Ministerial position rate occupied by women has reached 6% of total ministries with gender gap amounted (-44);
 - A lady ambassador has been appointed for the first time in 1988. Now there are three ambassadors and women rate at diplomatic corps reaches 10%;
 - Women rate in the judicial corps reached 13.38%, women lawyers 16% of total lawyers, women judge rate 9% of total judges in the country, women' rate of state' attorney is 14.5% , and 19% of public attorney;
 - Women' participation in the local administration has amounted 27 women in 1975 to become 189 ones in 1999, then came to 3.1% in local administration councils in 2006;
 - Parliament seats occupied by women reached 12% in 2004, but that rate has increased to become 18% in 2007;
- Economic participation of women distributed as follows:
 - Women constitute about one fifth of total public employment, but the majority of them are working in secretary and administrative positions.
 - Women's participation rate in labor force increased as follows: from 23% in 1981 to 29% in 1990, 29% in 2000, 30% in 2004, and to become 11% in 2006;
 - Females' teachers rate in basic education was 65% in 2006, which is much more than males' teachers with positive gender gap (+15), (statistical abstract, 2007);
 - Women teachers' rate in the secondary schools reached 47% of total teachers in those educational type with negative gender gap (-3), while women teachers' rate at university education reached 27% with gender gap (-23);
 - The highest rate of women workers at governmental ministries are concentrated in the following listed descending: health ministry (57%), education ministry (56%), tourism (53%), two ministries equally distributed: labor and social affairs (48%), while women workers decreases in the following ministries: Al-Awkaf (8%), petroleum and mining, and

irrigation (9%), electricity (10%), transportation (12%), building and housing (13%), and local administrative ministry (14%);

- The rate of women holding resources and assets didn't exceed 5%. Rural women don't possess capital assets like land, machineries, and livestock where sometimes they are compensated of their right in heritage with small amount of money.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Since the development efforts agreed internationally and listed in millennium declaration aim at enhancing gender equity and women empowerment being effective tools to combating poverty, hunger, and diseases, all governments, governmental and non-governmental bodies, and the indigenous bodies have to work altogether to enhancing gender equity and motivating sustainable development through plans, programs, and behaviors set. In addition, the tenth five plans in Syria has aimed at gender mainstreaming in the development process to achieve a fair society based on realizing women rights, improving the Syrian status internationally in the development index, women empowerment, enhancing women contribution in achieving resources investment effectively, achieving sustainable growth rates, achieving social equity goals, and reducing poverty, (the tenth five plan, chapter 23, woman sector).

The following recommendation should be taken and carried out in order to women raising status and achieving the desired social equity:

- Assuring women and men equally to access to economic opportunities to achieve equal opportunities principal for both sexes through increasing women participation rate in market labor, increasing women contribution rate in the economic activity and all productive and service activities, constructing a lay of women economic activities, enabling women of physical and moral motivations to do what is required, and giving priority to the rural sector, which is less developed, and to the most needy social groups.
- Checking loans given to women to establish income generating activities go to the targeted domain to avoid any exploitation might be applied on women, especially in rural areas, through rural households' awareness on credit laws and conditions, giving loan mechanism, what are the penalties and procedures should be taken in case women didn't invest the loan in the targeted domain, and women's awareness on loan manner to establish small business generating income.
- Since women labor constitute large part of unpaid agricultural labor in the rural areas, that labor should be included in the agricultural and non-agricultural activities derive income, facilitating women access to training and extension programs, and to using simple modern techniques to conservation natural resources like land, water, grazing land, and forest;
- Reviewing educational curriculums, rectification and developing them to updating the stereotyped picture of woman that still dominated, introducing demographic and environmental education in the educational curriculum, and expansion of post basic education schools, especially in remote areas;
- Improving the educational levels and skills among women to hold administrative and political positions as partners in decision making, and increasing women political participation rate through increasing the number of parliament's seats specified for women;
- Insuring women's access to knowledge, information, services, consultation, and resources to protect them to bear huge burden that affect their health badly, and paying attention to education and training the handicaps' people;
- Conducting extensive field surveys about poverty related to gender, especially in the rural areas where differences are more obvious and clearer than urban in order to know gender gap size that still existed and work to close those gaps or narrowing them as possible;

- Establishing safety nets to support women and households, especially in rural areas, and arranging and including them in national strategy deals with gender issues;
- Activating development programs in rural areas, and addressing women improvement status, local community awareness about the importance of involving women in agricultural, economic, social and family decisions making;
- Achieving regional balance of development between rural and urban through giving the opportunities to woman in rural and urban areas in accessing to available resources and getting benefits from those resources to execute women raising status programs;
- Modifying legislations and laws that dedicate gender differences and working to reform them; and issuing penal law specific for violence against women applied either by household, or by the society;
- Training skilled and highly educated women to pursue advanced industrial professions beside evolving them in training on traditional industries and facilitating industrial business women and juniors craftswomen similar to industrial and craftsmen.

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Annexes

Table 1: Relative Distribution of Unemployment (+ 15 Years) per Education Level & Sex in 2004.

Education status	Unemployed has worked before			Unemployed has not worked before			Total		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Illiterate	11.8	10.9	11.7	9.8	8.7	9.4	9.9	8.7	9.5
Read and write	32.9	19.2	30.9	34.6	24.3	31.5	34.5	24.2	31.5
Elementary	31.1	17.3	29.1	29.5	22.4	27.4	29.6	22.3	27.5
Preparatory	12.8	11.3	12.6	11.9	13.9	12.5	12.0	13.8	12.5
Secondary	6.3	20.8	8.4	9.2	17.2	11.6	9.1	17.3	11.4
Medium Institutes	2.6	13.9	4.3	3.2	9.1	4.9	3.1	9.3	4.9
University and above	2.5	6.7	3.1	1.9	4.4	2.6	1.9	4.4	2.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: premium results of 2004 census. Table 3/12

Table 2: Workers' Distribution per Wages (+15 Years) per Economic Activity, Sex, and Salary Groups in 2006

Total	Salary Groups						Gender	Sector
	+9001	8001-9000	7001-8000	6001-7000	5001-6000	-5000		
140230	20274	11618	19409	20979	26654	41296	Males	Agriculture
32900	1488	598	1468	2360	4135	22851	Females	
173130	21762	12216	20877	23339	30789	64147	Total	
452831	136227	43614	71631	48888	61584	90887	Males	Industry, Electricity, Water, & Gas
36162	6740	2730	4451	3706	5787	12748	Females	
488993	142967	46344	76082	52594	67371	103635	Total	
382309	83808	40060	60067	53225	62944	82205	Males	Building & Construction
3352	833	292	586	372	603	666	Females	
385661	84641	40352	60653	53597	63547	82871	Total	
204930	49398	15425	30471	22313	30946	56377	Males	Trade, Hotels, & Restaurants
10552	1493	610	1466	1254	1098	4631	Females	
215482	50891	16035	31937	23567	32044	61008	Total	
169980	81719	22372	27327	16700	11628	10234	Males	Transportation, Storage, & Communication
7475	3617	1179	1052	741	584	302	Females	
177455	85336	23551	28379	17441	12212	10536	Total	
31221	15686	2217	3283	3847	2645	3543	Males	Finance, Insurance, & Real Estates
7219	2138	682	1712	752	732	1203	Females	
38440	17824	2899	4995	4599	3377	4746	Total	
868831	442027	91243	105603	79563	54932	95463	Males	Services
340179	166526	41978	48489	35002	22288	25896	Females	
1209010	608553	133221	154092	114565	77220	121359	Total	
2250332	829139	226549	317791	245515	251333	380005	Males	Total
437839	182835	48069	59224	44187	35227	68297	Females	
2688171	1011974	274618	377015	289702	286560	448302	Total	

Source: statistical abstract, 2007. labor force survey 2006 table 9/3

Table-3: Relative Distribution of Workers per Sex and Salary Groups in 2006

Economic Sector	Gender	-5000	5001-6000	6001-7000	7001-8000	8001-9000	+9001
Agriculture	Males	24	15	12	11	7	12
	Females	13	2	1	1	0	1
Industry, Electricity, Water, & Gas	Males	19	13	10	15	9	28
	Females	3	1	1	1	1	1
Building & Construction	Males	21	16	14	16	10	22
	Females	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trade, Hotels, & Restaurants	Males	26	14	10	14	7	23
	Females	3	1	1	1	0	1
Transportation, Storage, & Communication	Males	6	7	9	15	13	46
	Females	1	2	2	3	4	12
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estates	Males	9	7	10	9	6	41
	Females	0	0	0	0	0	0
Services	Males	8	5	7	9	8	37
	Females	1	1	2	2	2	7
Total	Males	14	9	9	12	8	31
	Females	3	1	2	2	2	7

Source: statistical abstract, 2007. Labor force survey 2006 table 9/3and report writer

Table 4: Employment Distribution in The Governmental Departments per Sex and Department in 2006

Departments	Females	Males	Total	% of females	Gender gap
I-Awkaf Ministry	497	5617	6114	8	42-
Ministry of petroleum and mining	3801	39456	43257	9	41-
Ministry of irrigation	3018	29385	32403	9	41-
Ministry of electricity	4142	36909	41051	10	40-
Transportation ministry	5255	38614	43869	12	38-
Housing and building ministry	5364	35861	41225	13	37-
Environment and local administration ministry	9745	57573	67318	14	36-
People council	48	207	255	19	31-
Others	10044	41748	51792	19	31-
Ministry of industry	16367	61740	78107	21	29-
Trade and economic ministry	8653	31070	39723	22	28-
Foreign ministry	198	654	852	23	27-
Communication and telecommunication ministry	6354	20503	26857	24	26-
Ministry of agriculture	18688	55355	74043	25	25-
Ministry of information	1705	4350	6055	28	22-
Justice ministry	1667	4197	5864	28	22-
Finance ministry	9761	19986	29747	33	17-
Interior ministry	1512	2924	4436	34	16-
Culture and national guidance ministry	2067	3466	5533	37	13-
Expiries ministry	28	45	73	38	12-
High education ministry	16013	17564	33577	48	2-
Labor and social affairs ministry	2603	2768	5371	48	2-
Tourism ministry	1511	1344	2855	53	3
Education ministry	182753	145068	327821	56	4
Health ministry	44311	33885	78196	57	7
Total	356105	690289	1046394	34	16-

Source: statistical abstract 2007

Except republic presidential, cabinet, public establishments and military companies

Table 5: Summary of Gender Profiles in Syria during 1980-1990-1995-2004

Indicators	1980	1990	1995	2004
Per capita of GDP (USD \$)	1,560	880	910	1,230
Total population (Million)	9	12.8	16.8	18.6
% of females of total population	49.8	49.8	49.7	49.7
Life expectancy at birth of males (years)	62	67	71	72
Life expectancy at birth of females (years)	65	70	74	75
Males' education rate (+15 years)	..	82	..	86
Females' education rate (+15 years)	..	48	..	74
Total Labor Force (million)	2	4	6	7
Women's labor force (% of total labor force)	23	26	29	30
Total unemployment (% of total labor force)	..	..	11.2	11.7
Females' unemployment rate (% of total females' labor force)	..	..	23.9	24.1
Access to education and educational attainments				
Net enrollment rate at elementary schools				
Males' net enrollment rate at elementary schools	..	95	96	100
Females' net enrollment rate at elementary schools	..	86	90	96
Males' rate at 5 th grade of total pupils in this stage	..	97	92	..
Females' rate at 5 th grade of total pupils in this stage	..	95	92	..
Males' completion rate of elementary grade (of total pupils in this age group)	..	94	89	109
Females' completion rate of elementary grade (of total pupils in this age group)	..	83	82	104
Young males' rate of education (age group of 15-24)	..	92	..	94
Young Females' rate of education (age group of 15-24)	..	67	..	90
Health				
Total Fertility rate (number of births per woman)	7.3	5.2	3.7	3.3
Contraceptive rate usage (% of women aged between 15-49)	20	..	45	..
Births rate delivered under skilled staffs(% of total births)	..	..	..	..
Maternity mortality rate (per 100000 live births)	..	..	160	..
Infants undernourished and underweight rate (% of infants aged under 5 years)	..	..	7	..

Source: human development report, UNDP, 2005