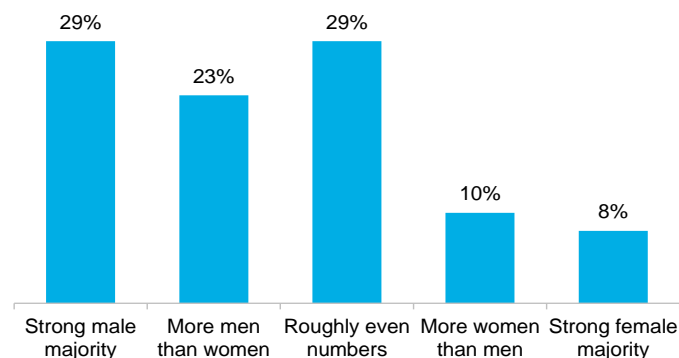


## Women in Clean Energy, Middle East and North Africa Survey 2017

The Clean Energy Business Council, the International Renewable Energy Agency and Bloomberg New Energy Finance have gathered baseline data on challenges faced by women in the clean energy sector in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Findings from the survey suggest key actions to attract more women and draw from a more diverse talent pool.

- More than 50% of the respondents in MENA say their workplace has more men than women, with only 29% reporting an even gender balance.
- Women face additional challenges compared with men, according to 34% of survey respondents from MENA. Key barriers to their entry to the clean energy industry include lower enrolment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programmes and a biased view of gender roles.
- Some respondents suggest that women join the industry in entry-level roles, but do not reach the highest levels. Key challenges for women in the MENA region, as in the rest of the world, include the glass ceiling for promotion prospects and lower wages for similar work.
- Although two thirds of MENA participants said the companies where they work pay women and men the same, one third said women still receive a lower salary for the same role. Men are more likely to believe that salaries are equal than women.
- Many MENA countries have policies on maternity leave that are similar on paper to those in Europe and better than in the United States. However, only 60% of respondents noted the availability of parental leave, which might reflect an absence of paternity leave.
- Compared with respondents from outside the region, MENA respondents reported lower levels of family-friendly policies that allow for better work-life balance within their companies. Parental leave was reported to be the most adopted policy, followed by flexibility measures like flexi-time, part-time hours and work-from-home schemes.
- Female respondents were most enthusiastic about networking events, mentoring and training as potential ways to help them in their career progression.
- Networking events should not be limited to women, since 14% of female respondents said that they preferred events open to both genders, while 84% had no preference either way.

**Figure 1: Gender balance in MENA clean energy workplaces (percentage of respondents)**



Source: *Women in Clean Energy MENA 2017*

## 1. Background

Clean energy can offer opportunities for economic advancement of women, and their greater participation in the clean energy workforce can boost the sector's prospects. As the global transition towards sustainable energy systems continues, the workforce requirements of the clean energy sector (including renewable energy and energy efficiency) are set to increase. The global renewable energy workforce, for instance, could rise from just 9.4 million in 2015 to more than 24 million in 2030 and 26 million in 2050 following an accelerated ramp up in deployment of renewables in line with global climate imperatives (OECD/IEA and IRENA, 2017).

A rapidly growing clean energy sector brings more job opportunities along different segments of the value chain, with increasing requirements for individuals with different skill-sets and talents. Increased participation of women in clean energy can effectively expand the pool of skills and talent in the sector.

The clean energy sector could potentially be more attractive for women than the broader energy sector, because they are generally more receptive to issues related to local and global sustainability. A study investigating more than 1,500 companies found that those with more women on their board of directors were significantly more likely to invest in renewable energy and address environmental risks in their financial decisions (McElhaney, 2012).

National level studies seem to suggest that the share of women in the clean energy workforce is higher than their share in the broader energy sector, but lower than their share in the economy. In the United States for instance, women were estimated to hold just under 30% of jobs in the clean energy sector, which is significantly lower than the 48% of jobs they hold across the economy, but higher than their share of 17% in the oil, gas and petrochemical industry (Hegewisch, 2013) (IHS Global, 2016). In fact, their share in the US solar workforce has increased from just 19% in 2013, to 28% in 2016 (Solar Foundation, 2017). National-level studies in Germany and Spain have similarly shown that the share of women in the renewable energy industry is close to 24% and 26%, which compare to energy sector shares of 23.7% and 20% respectively (IRENA, 2013) (PwC, 2014) (Peña, 2016). A recent global survey of 90 renewable energy companies indicated that women represent an average 35% of their workforce (IRENA, 2016).

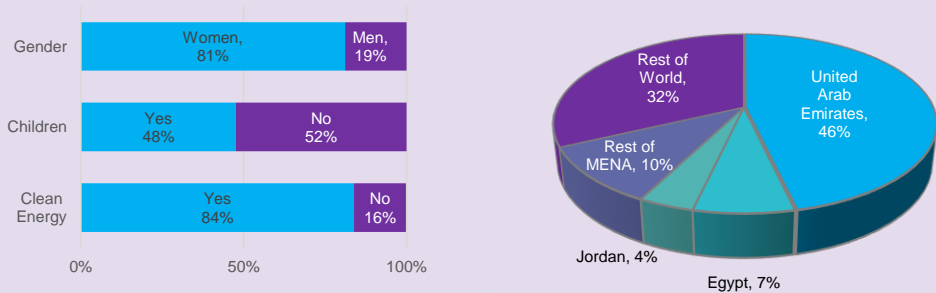
While there are several national level studies on women's involvement and status in different types of clean energy technologies, so far the topic has not been explored in the context of the MENA region. This survey intends to gather baseline data on the challenges women working in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) encounter. It also aims to identify ideas on how the clean energy industry can take full advantage of a diverse talent-pool that includes women. The survey had 250 respondents (see Box 1 for details), and findings are further explored in the following sections.



### Box 1: About the respondents

The survey attracted responses from 38 countries, 12 of which are part of the MENA region. Respondents from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) contributed 46% of the total 250 survey responses. The next two most represented MENA countries were Egypt (18) and Jordan (10). Another 26 respondents were from other MENA countries, while the remainder came from outside the MENA region. Higher response rates from the UAE, Egypt and Jordan can partly be attributed to the strong Clean Energy Business Council presence in these countries.

The survey requested inputs and insights from both genders, which meant that close to 20% of the responses were from men, allowing for a more holistic analysis. Around 55% of the total respondents were married and close to 50% had children. While most respondents (85%) identified themselves as working in the clean energy sector, the perspectives from other sectors were also helpful in enriching the findings.



## 2. Is it difficult for women to work or progress in clean energy in MENA?

### Barriers to entry and progress

About 62% of respondents in the region did not believe that there are barriers to women working in clean energy. The third of respondents who did mention barriers highlighted the following issues that prevents women from entering the industry:

- **STEM background:** A relative lack of women studying engineering and science reduces the number of women eligible for technical roles. One respondent clarified that renewable energy study *“is not presented socially as an option”*.
- **Perception of gender roles:** Some respondents noted overt discrimination; one respondent stated: *“In the Gulf the disparity is in your face, the employers most of the time instruct the [recruiting] agencies to only recommend male candidate”*, while others hinted that women have more difficulty participating in site work – *“there is still this idea that women are not capable of doing field jobs.”*

Other respondents indicated that after entering the industry, women face further challenges including:

- **Glass ceiling:** One respondent pointed out that *“female skills are not considered to be important or recognised for management positions”*, with the industry stereotyped as being male dominated, at least at the higher levels. Many respondents noted that it is easier for a woman to get into this industry than to progress.
- **Lower wages:** Around one third of respondents in MENA believe that women in clean energy earn less than men for the same position while two thirds believe they earn the same. These

results are positive in comparison with the findings of a 2016 MENA workforce survey, which indicated that 50% of the surveyed women believed that they receive less pay than their male counterparts (Bayt.com, 2016). Men were more likely to believe that salaries were equal than women – just 11% of male respondents working in clean energy in the MENA region believe that women earn less than men for equivalent positions, compared to 28% of women. These results are broadly consistent with the findings of surveys conducted in other countries. In the US, for instance, women in the national workforce are less likely to believe that men and women at their company are paid equally – 60% of women respondents compared to 78% of men (Glassdoor, 2016).

These barriers can explain, at least partly, why women continue to represent a small share of the workforce in the companies of the MENA respondents (Figure 1). Indeed, over 50% of the respondents reported low shares of women in their companies. Many noted that women are often in administrative or back office roles, rather than in technical or leadership ones.

### Potential solutions

More than 37% of MENA-based respondents say that their employers have implemented policies or actions to encourage hiring of, and career progression for, women – while 55% say their employers have not. Selected actions taken include:

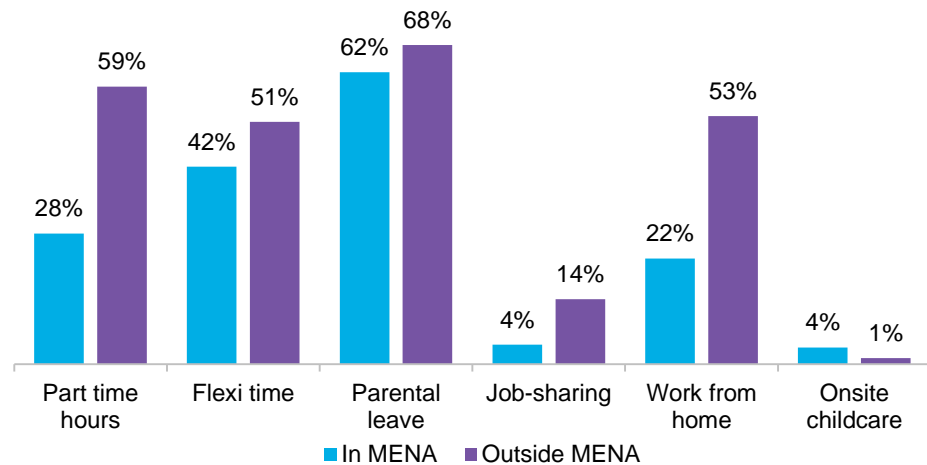
- Setting up a women’s networking groups;
- Introducing diversity-focused programmes and targets, for example “*40% women in leadership positions and 50% women as new hires*”;
- Supporting women’s participation in conferences, workshops, councils and training;
- Allowing part-time and flexi-time hours;
- Establishing mentoring and career strategy programmes.

Respondents identified parental leave as the most common family-friendly policy (or working model) (see Box 2 for definitions) offered by companies (Figure 2). Policies that allow for more flexibility in schedule such as flexi time, part-time hours and working from home were also favoured.

Responses presented some evidence that MENA countries may lag behind the rest of the world in working models that are usually considered to help women. Among the employers of survey respondents, considerably more outside MENA offer models such as part time roles, flexi time, job sharing and work from home (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Working models offered by companies where respondents work (percentage of respondents)**



Source: Women in Clean Energy, Middle East and North Africa Survey 2017  
Note: 32% of the respondents were from countries outside the MENA region

### Box 2: Family-friendly policies

Laws, regulations and social policies that recognize the importance of families to society, and act to meet, directly or indirectly, the needs of children, parents, disabled family members, and the oldest generation. These policies can be promoted by governments and can be implemented by employers as working models – selected examples are:

- *Flexi time*: A “flexible-hours” schedule that permits workers to alter their start and finish times within limits agreed with the employer.
- *Job sharing*: Two (or more) employees share a single position, dividing the working time. By each working a portion of the time, people can hold the position while increasing the time they need to fulfil other obligations such as childcare.
- *Part-time*: Working for reduced hours, sometimes facilitated by job sharing.
- *Work from home*: Remote site working for a set amount of time every week, or occasionally. Telecommuting allows people to work anywhere in the world, but this is generally possible only for those whose work is independent and does not require physical presence.
- *Maternity/paternity leave*: Paid leave for birth of a child, adoption or acceptance of foster placement.
- *On-site childcare*: Providing the facilities for the employee’s children in working hours.

Source: (The University of Kansas, n.d.)

While less than two thirds of the respondents believe that their employer offers parental leave, literature shows that most MENA countries have mandated paid maternity leave (see Table 1) –

more than the United States, where it is only mandatory to offer 12 weeks' unpaid leave for mothers who have worked for the company for a minimum of 12 months, and none for fathers. That said, few countries in the MENA region offer significant leave for fathers, which puts extra pressure on mothers to take career breaks. It is possible that respondents who did not believe that their employers offer parental leave were referring to the absence of paternity leave. It may also be that some of our respondents were not informed about the law on parental leave in their country.

**Table 1: Paid maternity leave laws in MENA countries**

Country	Time Off	Percentage of Pay	Paternity leave?
Algeria	14 weeks	100%	3 days
Bahrain	26 weeks	Unpaid	No paternity leave
Egypt	13 weeks	100%	No paternity leave
Iran	13 weeks (17 if breastfeeding)	67% for 12 weeks	No paternity leave
Iraq	9 weeks	100% for 45 days	No paternity leave
Jordan	10 weeks	100%	No paternity leave
Kuwait	10 weeks	100%	No paternity leave
Lebanon	7 weeks	100%	No paternity leave
Libya	14 weeks	50%	3 days
Morocco	14 weeks	100%	3 days
Saudi Arabia	10 weeks	50 or 100%	1 day
Qatar	7 weeks	100%	No paternity leave
UAE	6 weeks	100%	No paternity leave
Yemen	9 weeks	100%	No paternity leave

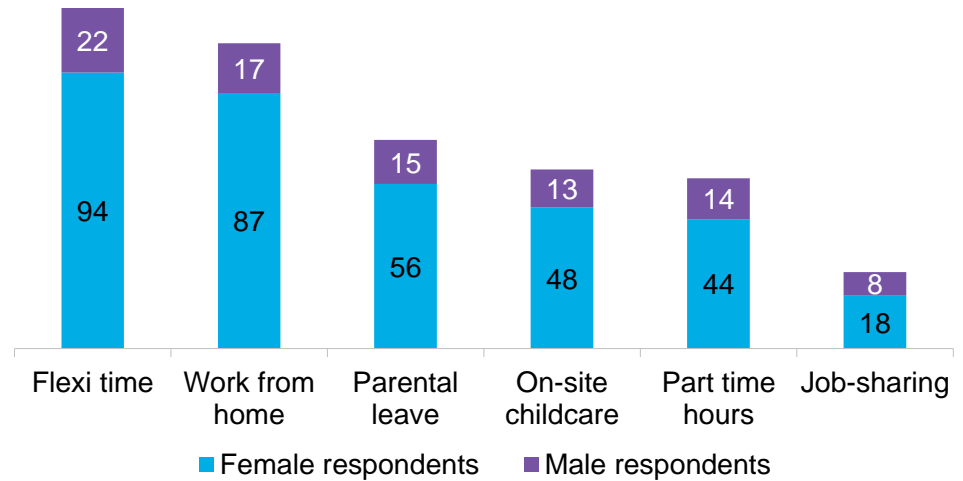
Source: International Labour Organisation, 2014

### 3. What can employers do to help improve the gender balance?

Clean energy is a vibrant new sector with a very promising outlook for growth and job creation. As the number of jobs in the sector continues to grow, employers will have to play a key role in creating workplaces that are welcoming to both genders. The respondents of the survey identified the kind of family-friendly policies (working models) they would appreciate at a workplace (Figure 3).

Policies that allow for more flexibility, such as work from home and flexi hours, were most favoured – selected by 104 and 116 respondents, respectively. Policies that facilitate child raising, parental leave and onsite childcare were also popular with more than 70 and 60 respondents, respectively. Those policies that imply a decrease in remuneration, such as part time hours and job-sharing, were least favoured.

**Figure 3: Working models favoured by respondents from the MENA region (number of respondents)**



Source: *Women in Clean Energy, Middle East and North Africa Survey 2017*

Several respondents specified ways in which they would like to work, for example on short projects, or four days per week. Many respondents brought up once again the different models discussed in section 2, such as remote working, flexi-time, reduced hours and childcare. Other specific actions suggested by respondents are:

#### ***Policies that encourage hiring and retention***

Some respondents identified policies that aim to hire more women and support retention, including:

- Target shares for women in leadership and workforce (40% for both was suggested);
- Gender balance as a key performance indicator (KPI) and overall company policy.

However, one respondent argued that quality should remain essential such that, *“The policy should be about hiring people with good managerial skills who can manage on-time, good quality delivery while making sure individual special needs are met on an individual basis.”*

#### ***General policies to ensure fairness in internal processes***

Several respondents in the sector said that they would appreciate policies that were based on *“fairness and transparency”*. Specific examples include:

- Transparent appraisal and promotion processes;
- Promotion and remuneration based on output rather than hours worked.

The respondents believed that rigorous application of such policies is crucial to achieving lower discrimination while ensuring that women see equitable opportunities for growth.

#### ***Policies that allow for better childcare***

Various participants brought up ideas to support workers with new born babies, including:

- Flexible schedule after maternity; for example, *“5 hours of work a day during the first 2 years after maternity, up to 10 years (with reduced salary)”*;
- Paternity leave, to complement maternity leave;
- Breastfeeding and breastmilk pumping facilities at work.

**Programmes that provide training and promote women’s empowerment**

A recurrent suggestion given was to include empowerment training, mentorship, career progression and leadership development programmes for women. Specific suggestions were:

- A female empowerment and anti-bullying programme, or negotiations training;
- Paid training;
- Executive women development training, technical training, mentorship, career training;
- Leadership workshops;
- Career development programmes;
- Mentoring programmes.

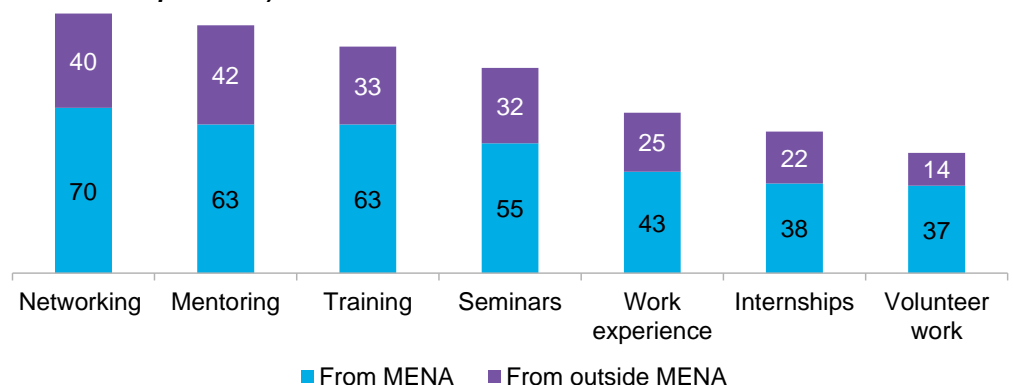
Many of these actions suggested by the respondents seemed to be gender neutral in that both women and men advocated the right to work from home, clarity around internal processes and complaints about administration. There also did not seem to be notable differences between respondents of different marital or reproductive status.

One participant cautioned that too much focus on policies can be counterproductive, arguing: *“The relationship between employees and management should not be purely policy-based. [...] Unfortunately, not all employees in an organisation display the same level of responsibility and therefore the rules for flexi hours and work from home can work perfectly in some cases, while it can go very bad in others.”*

**4. What can other organisations do to support women in clean energy in the MENA region?**

This question was asked to find out what actions the Clean Energy Business Council, and other organisations that support gender diversity, can take to support women in the clean energy industry. The respondents favoured networking events, mentoring and training, with some interest in opportunities to gain experience through internships.

**Figure 4: Activities that female respondents working in clean energy would like included in a diversity programme by an organisation like the Clean Energy Business Council (number of respondents)**



Source: Women in Clean Energy, Middle East and North Africa Survey 2017

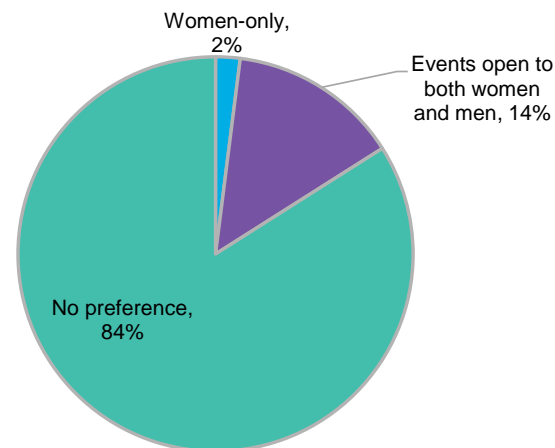


Respondents suggested;

- **Training and guidance:** *“Provide women the opportunities for learning from training and internships and mentoring and then let the market decide who is best to occupy what position. At the end whether it is a male or a female, the company should only do what is in its best interest.”*
- **On-line platform:** *“Activities and events should be expanded in other cities within MENA region. CEBC can also create a platform for professional women in renewable energy to exchange their experiences online, share opportunities and help each other to find a job”.*

While there is considerable interest in networking, only 2% of women in clean energy working in MENA asked specifically for women-only events, with 14% preferring gender-neutral ones (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: What sort of events do women in clean energy in MENA prefer to attend?**



Source: *Women in Clean Energy, Middle East and North Africa Survey 2017*

A few respondents believe that it is more beneficial to have gender-specific events in some cases (like women-only leadership training events), while celebrating other events together. One of the respondents who prefers female-only events said: *“Too often in mixed-gender events, male attendees ignore female attendees or worse. Women need to focus on building networks of their own and not be tokens or ignored.”*

However, others point out that *“it is essential not to create positive discrimination as the goal is to have the most talented persons, that bring their best efforts to the table, regardless of gender”*, and that *“the more segregation that happens, the larger the rift between the sexes” will be*. As such, *“assimilating women in a predominantly male dominated work environment [...] cannot happen without the buy-in of men”*.

## 5. Conclusion

Clean energy is a dynamic and vibrant sector that is set to bring more job opportunities along different segments of the value chain. Including the gender dimension in clean energy can simultaneously help the industry to address its skill gaps and to create opportunities for gender empowerment.

While a lot has already been accomplished, much more remains to be done to attract a greater number of women to the sector. The survey helped identify further steps that should be taken by employers and governments to help create more welcoming work environments. These include actions such as mentorship and training; flexibility in working hours; fair and transparent processes; support for parenting; and targets for diversity. These actions can not only address gender discrimination in the workplace, but also strongly support the growth of the clean energy industry.

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