



REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP *on* CULTURE & DEVELOPMENT

A 230% increase in average years of schooling for females took place in the Middle East between 1980 and 2010, growing from 3.5 to 8.1. This is among the fastest increases in the world. But despite improvements in education, women still have low political and economic participation. Read more in the recently released World Bank report [“Opening Doors: Gender Equality and Development in the Middle East and North Africa.”](#)

As always, this month’s newsletter also shares the latest research products in the MENA region and announces upcoming RPCD events and webinars. Your updates are welcome for inclusion in the next newsletter!

Partnership Forum Launch



RPCD is gearing up for the Partnership Forum Launch meeting, which will create bring together PF members to plan for a sustainable future. Almost 90% of PF members say they would like the network to continue after RPCD concludes, and also say they will be active members. This conference will give members the tools to ensure the long-term life of the PF by creating governance structures, identifying a host institution, and planning activities and fundraising. It will also provide a venue for sharing the tremendous knowledge and experience that exists in the network.

Research Highlights



[Who is a Water User? The Politics of Gender in Egypt’s Water User Associations](#)

To be published in May 2013, this book chapter examines the gender bias that exists in Egyptian water user associations (WUA). Based on ethnographic research, it traces female participation back to when WUAs were first established in Egypt, including the rules of participation and processes of negotiation. This chapter will appear in the forthcoming book, *Contemporary Water Governance in the Global South: Scarcity, Marketization, and Participation* published by Routledge. The author, Jessica Barnes, is a postdoctoral fellow at the Yale Climate and Energy Institute. [Click here for more publications on Natural Resource Management](#)



[The Rise of Entrepreneurship in Egypt and Tunisia](#)

IDRC and Silatech Qatar are collaborating to produce a study on the factors influencing post-revolution entrepreneurial activity in Egypt and Tunisia. The research aims to generate baseline data on the state of entrepreneurship, particularly among youth, and explore the success of short-term initiatives implemented by the newly elected governments. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), used worldwide to gather data on entrepreneurship, will be used to guide the assessment. The findings will help identify and address gaps in the policies shaping entrepreneurship and job creation in the two countries. Policy reports are expected to be released in January 2014. [Click here for more publications on Democracy and Governance](#)



[Participatory Urban Upgrading and Power: Lessons Learnt from a Pilot Project in Jordan](#)

To be published in July 2013 in the journal *Habitat International*, this paper examines participatory planning and development in a refugee camp-city in Jordan. The Talbiyeh Camp Improvement Project sought to involve the local community in decision-making and upgrading efforts. Although the initiative represented a good opportunity to empower camp inhabitants and to enhance social inclusion and transparency, the paper emphasizes that local power structures, who perceive themselves as caretakers of the community, can be obstacles as well as catalysts. The paper is authored by Fatima Al-Nammari, freelance Urban Development and Planning Consultant. [Click here for more publications on Youth Engagement and Development](#)

Recent RPCD and Research News

Webinar on "The Current Situation of Women in Tafileh"

Mrs. Dima Karadsheh, researcher at the Jordan Center for Social Research, and Mrs. Haifa Haidar, Training Manager at the Families Development Association in Jordan, gave an RPCD webinar in April discussing the economic, political and social situation of women in Tafileh. Resulting recommendations included raising community awareness particularly among males, provision of child care services for working women and support of civil society projects working to empower women in Tafileh. [Click here](#) to view the webinar recording.

Opening of the Palestinian Centre for Youth Economic Empowerment

Sharek Youth Forum, a leading Palestinian youth institution, officially launched The Palestinian Centre for Youth Economic Empowerment last month in Ramallah. The opening event was attended by Palestinian officials as well as representatives from the private sector and international organizations. The new center will provide Palestinian youth with career guidance and trainings to help bridge the gap between the Palestinian educational system and the local job market.

Innovations in Desalination Technology

Desalination is a promising but expensive method of providing fresh water in the MENA region. Adham Ramadan, associate professor and chair of the chemistry department, along with Amal Esawi, professor of mechanical engineering and Nouran El Badawi, a chemistry graduate student, have recently devised a prototype of a hybrid nanocomposite membrane for water desalination. This groundbreaking invention has the potential to significantly reduce the energy requirements and costs of desalination. Read more [here](#).

Upcoming Events

Takaful Conference

The 3rd annual Takaful Conference on Arab Philanthropy and Civic Engagement will take place in Tunis, Tunisia on June 4 - 6, 2013.

Organized by the Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement at the American University in Cairo, the conference will discuss civil society in transition, CSO laws, youth engagement, the role of universities in promoting philanthropy and *Awqaf* or Islamic endowments. For more information and to register, visit the conference website [here](#).

Writing Effective Policy Briefs

The Economic Research Forum (ERF) will host a training on Writing Effective Policy Briefs from May 27 - 29, 2013 in Cairo, Egypt. The training will be given by Ragui Assaad, professor of Planning and Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, Mirette F. Mabrouk director of communications at ERF and Zeinab Sabet, capacity building manager at GDNNet. They will show participants how to distill policy advice from research, how to write a brief and how to organize data. Visit the [ERF website](#) to learn more.

The 2013 Mediterranean Green Energy Forum

Universite Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah is hosting the Mediterranean Green Energy Forum from June 16-10, 2013 in Fes, Morocco. Session themes will include renewable energy innovations, sustainable buildings, green ICT and energy governance. To register or learn more visit the conference website [here](#).

Your Rights & My Responsibilities: Biblical and Islamic Perspectives on Human Rights

The Institute of Middle East Studies (IMES) is organizing an event “Your Rights & My Responsibilities: Biblical and Islamic Perspectives on Human Rights” to explore how human rights are understood and practiced in different cultural and religious contexts. The event will take place from June 17-21, 2013 in Beirut, Lebanon. For the conference agenda and registration visit the IMES website [here](#).

International Conference on Scientific Computing 2013

This conference, taking place from December 3-6, 2013 in Paphos, Cyprus, focuses on the application of scientific computing to help address climate change and other pressing social problems. The deadline for abstract submissions is September 30, 2013. To learn more visit the website [here](#).

Program on Arab Reform and Democracy (ARD)

The 4th annual conference of the Program on Arab Reform and Democracy (ARD) took place in Tunis on March 28 and 29, 2013. The conference addressed constitution drafting, national dialogue, political coalitions and Islamism, political participation, economic policy and Arab relations with the United States and Europe. A full conference report is available for download at the conference [website](#).

Arab Development Forum

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah opened the proceedings of the Arab Development Forum held last month in Jordan. The two-day conference identified Arab priorities for the global development framework that will succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) after they expire in 2015. Click [here](#) for more details.

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