RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND PROMOTION OF LIBYAN WOMEN IN LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Insights from the KIP Index

About CIBL for Women

The Center for Inclusive Business and Leadership (CIBL) for Women is an interdisciplinary regional driving force, committed to advance inclusive workplaces and dignified work opportunities for women, across the Arab Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Founded in 2019, CIBL for Women seeks to work with employers in the public, private and nonprofit sectors to create inclusive and empowering workspaces and give a greater share of voice and the agenda for women throughout their careers. Concurrently, CIBL for Women serves as a catalyst for policy change building on extensive and essential regional research and analysis through multi-stakeholder partnerships, with governments and private businesses across the region.

About the KIP Index Project

The Knowledge is Power (KIP) Index is the first indigenous organizational-level measure of the recruitment, retention and promotion of women, informal sector employers across the Arab MENA region. The pioneering initiative by the Center for Inclusive Business and Leadership for Women tracks employer HR practices and policies as well as women's lived experiences in 11 countries, in order to provide insightful and concrete data about the participation in, and challenges faced by, women in the workplace.

The data and analysis included in the KIP Index will serve as the foundational reference for decision makers, human resource practitioners, and policy makers in both the public and private sector, to engage in evidence-based dialogue, in order to accelerate effective change in employer policies and to strengthen gender-inclusive workplace practices across the region. As the first regional data-driven index, the nuances and heterogeneity of the realities of women in the Arab MENA region's economies will be captured and transformed into a measurable set of dimensions and benchmarks, to influence sustainable change. The first edition of the KIP Index will be published in January 2021.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The following report includes both, quantitative (111 organizations) and qualitative (50 interviews) information that was collected for Libya for 2017 and 2018. The quantitative analysis, which was collected in the form of surveys from human resource managers across 111 organizations provide a bird›s eye view of trends and patterns of recruitment, retention and promotion (RRP), and the qualitative data provides unique insight into women's voices. Taken together, these insights form an important resource for generating actionable recommendations to HR managers within the Libyan context, towards building more inclusive workplaces and opportunities for women.

Sampling of Libyan Organizations and Female Employees

Most of the Libyan organizations participating in the survey are in Tripoli, the capital. Misratah and Benghazi come in second and third place respectively. Participating organizations represent education and academia (around 16% of participating companies), tourism (around 14%), wholesale and trade (12%), followed by manufacturing (10%), information technology and telecommunications (9%), health and healthcare services (8%), food services (8%), construction (7%), agriculture and fishing (7%), and smaller representation of the electronics, transportation and logistics, as well as consulting and financial services sectors. Taken together, most of the participating organizations are for profit (around 90%).

Representation of Libyan Women in Small and Medium Size Organizations

The results of the quantitative analysis of the data from 111 Libyan organizations, indicates that most of the participating organizations have less than 50 employees. Of all organizations participating in the survey, 35% are small size companies that employ less than 15 employees, and 39% are of medium size employing between 15 and 50 employees. As illustrated in Table 1, the percentage of contracts awarded to women is around 7% for small organizations versus 93% for men; for medium-size organizations (15-50 employees), 12% of for women versus 88% for men. This indicates that large organizations tend to employ more women, however this remains a very small percentage over the overall employee base.

Table 1. Representation of Libyan women in small and medium size organizations

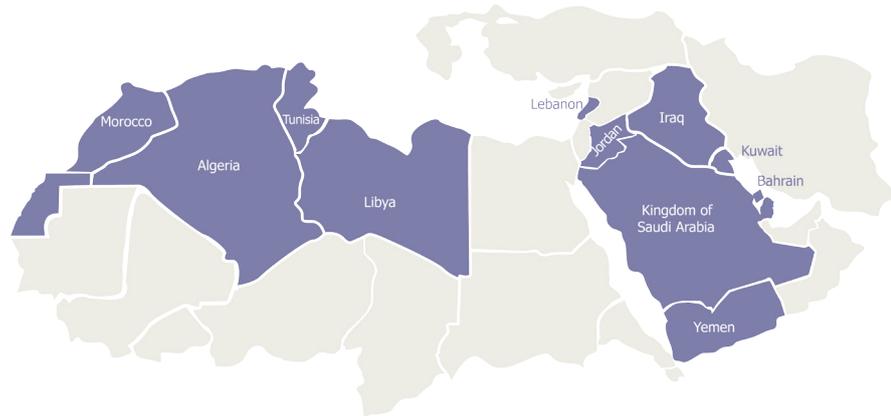| Survey Data (N=111)	Number of Employees	
	0-14 (small)	15-50 (medium)
% of participating organizations	35% (39 organizations)	39% (43 organizations)
Average % women›s full time and part time employment	7% (˜ 14 total employees)	12% (˜ 24 total employees)

As a final note on representation of women in the Libyan organizations surveyed, when looking at the Board of Directors (BOD) women represent around 10% of the BOD in small companies versus 5% for medium size companies. Compared to the world average of 16.9%, this suggests that Libya, like countries around the world, has a need to engage in tangible, meaningful action to enable more inclusive organizational structures at the decision and oversight levels. The results of the qualitative analysis of the interviews conducted with 50 Libyan women currently employed were rich and showcased a range of experiences. As shown in Table 2, the sample of women ranged in demographics and personal characteristics. You can find the distribution of the sample by industry in Table 1. The industry groupings are defined: Healthcare, Education (higher and lower), Financial Services (banking and financial services), STEM (IT and construction), Government and public sector, Civil societies/NGOs, and 'Other'.

Table 2. Sample distribution of Libyan Female Employees Interviewed by Industry Group

Sector	Frequency of Interviews
Education	12
STEM	10
Government and Public sector, Civil societies/NGOs	8
Other business services and Misc.	8
Healthcare	5
Professional Services	5
Financial services	2
Total	50

Analysis and Key Findings

In what follows, the CIBL for Women Research team has compiled a summary of the key findings from an in-depth analysis of both the survey and interview findings. These findings are presented by providing a summary of the quantitative analysis, followed by a summary of the qualitative findings. We also provide a concluding section wherein we compile forward-focused insights and recommendations for the Libyan context. The information presented below will be used as part the center's efforts to develop the KIP Index – the first comprehensive data-driven index that provides economic stakeholders with knowledge and recommendations on improving women's recruitment, retention, and promotion in the formal economies in the Arab MENA. The Libya data is one of 11 countries that will be included in the index. Aligned with the KIP Index structure, the findings the current Libya report will be summarized along the three Index dimensions: **Recruitment, Retention, and Promotion.**

Recruitment:
HR Strategies Explicitly Targeting Women are Needed

Quantitative Of 111 surveyed companies, only 3.6% (4 companies) indicated that they have specific policies targeting the recruitment of female nationals (see Table 3). As also illustrated in the table, the HR managers indicated that 5% have recruitment policies targeting the increase of Arab representation generally and that 4% have policies targeting non-Arab recruitment. Moreover, only 25% of small size companies have recruitment policies targeting female nationals, compared to 75% for mid-size companies, indicating that larger companies are more likely to have recruitment policies for women.

Table 3. Recruitment policies targeting a particular employee demographic

Demographic	Recruitment policies
Female nationals	3.6% (4 companies)
Arabs	5% (5 companies)
Non-Arabs	4% (4 companies)

Of all applications for employment received by small size organizations, 24% are from women versus 76% from men. Of this 24% received from women, 30% of them were recruited into the organization largely at the non-management levels (see Table 4). Medium size companies received 40% of applications from women versus 60% from men. Of this 40% from women, only 32% of women were recruited at the non-management level.

Table 4. Recruitment of Libyan women in small and medium size organizations

	Number of Employees in Small and Medium Organizations	
	0-14 (small)	15-50 (medium)
Average % applications received from women	24%	40%
Average % women recruited at non-management level	30%	32%

Such evidence indicates that only a small percentage of women who applied for a position are recruited, and therefore more efforts (as will be recommended below) for better front-end recruitment strategies are necessary.

Qualitative The voices of the women interviewed were rich and provided important insights regarding the experience of recruitment in the Libyan employment context. Several key patterns of these women's experiences of recruitment emerged and provide a broad picture of the process and steps involved in securing work. The most salient pattern was women's experiences of ease in the recruitment process, once they decided to try to find work. Several women explained a positive experience in attempting and securing employment, and this was more prevalent when compared to narratives about the difficulties in the 50 women interviews. These findings and their reasons are discussed in detail next.

Most women interviewed described their recruitment experiences as positive with little disruptions or perceived difficulties due to discriminatory organizational structures, often noting that they were not discriminated against based on their gender. Many stated that they perceived the recruitment process to be largely merit-based, which facilitated the process for highly skilled women and those whose specialties were in alignment with the position. Interestingly, there was a subset of women who described skipping the interview stage in the recruitment process altogether. When probed, they explained that this was largely for reasons relating to either previous connections through personal and trusting relationships or, more prominently, the urgent needs of the organization to fill gaps due to a shortage of qualified staff. In some cases, the interviewees described the ease of being recruited was because they were women (i.e., positive discrimination), where the employer was searching for female employees specifically. This is most notably observed in the education sector, where several women have mentioned an urgent need for female teachers. The following extracts from the interviews illustrate this observation.

> **"I worked without going through an interview, because my name was known in my professional field. It was the administration that asked me to work with them in the clinic."** (Participant 50)

> **"When I was in the public sector, I was hired just by submitting my papers without a job interview because there was a shortage of female teachers and it was the most appropriate job for women in our society."** (Participant 42)

On the other hand, a smaller subset of interviewees describe difficulty in the recruitment process. This appeared most in the form of experiencing hesitation in applying to positions in the first place. In a small number of cases this hesitation was tied to familial interventions. Generally, it was perceived that husbands and fathers encourage women to work in educational sectors, due to its environment being largely women-based, but discourage work in

other sectors. This finding explains the pattern observed in quantitative data, in which the survey data generally show organizations recruit small numbers of women. Indeed, participants describe their hesitation and concerns in applying to jobs:

> "In fact, I did not imagine that I had a professional life, and I did not imagine that I would work…because of customs, tradition, etc., it varies very significantly." (Participant 17)

Therefore, despite the evident ease in recruitment experienced by most women as described previously and beyond the hesitation in applying, it is worth noting that some women did express difficulty in recruitment and challenges in entering the workplace. The reasons for this were mainly organizational and structural factors. For instance, one woman mentioned organizations categorical unwillingness to recruit women in general:

> "I also applied to (a) company once, that refused to hire women".
> (Participant 33)

Some evidence emerged concerning the perception of the hijab in the recruitment process, where there was a perceived bias against unveiled women. This bias was perceived to function on two sides. On one side the employer was sometimes perceived as placing the veil as a "condition" for recruitment, and on the other hand, the husband and father was also seen to sometimes place the veil as a condition to allow the women to work in the first place.

Another barrier to the recruitment process noted in the interviews was regarding transportation. The importance of transportation appeared particularly relevant in the recruitment context, leading women to refrain from applying to some job opportunities that were far from their place of residents. Indeed, some women described this as shaping their employment opportunities and influencing the general difficulty in succeeding in the recruitment process overall. The lack of safe and reliable transportation, the lack of secure roads due to political violence, and the lack of culturally sanctioned travel customs reflects an important macro-structural factor relating to recruitment in the Libyan context;

> "The only challenge for me is the transportation". (Participant 11)

One participant expressed difficulty in the recruitment process relating to traveling to the potential place of employment:

> "I applied to some jobs in organizations…and I was accepted in the job after my interview with them, but it did not work because a mahram was refused to accompany me when traveling and this is something that does not suit us in customs and tradition that a woman travel without a mahram, so I refused the job. Unfortunately, I was hoping for the organization to observe our Libyan customs and law, but it did not happen." (Participant 15)

"
"I faced a difficulty in terms of the safe transport in the city as there were no public buses and women rarely used a taxi, so I decided to learn to drive and buy car. That helped me move around under these conditions." (Participant 49)

Recommendations Based on the summary of findings above, there are number of avenues that HR managers can take to build better recruitment strategies. Leveraging some of the current strengths is important, while simultaneously drafting recruitment policies and institutionalizing culturally sensitive practices that directly improve the recruitment of local women to the workplace. Recruitment is important based on the identified need to improve representation of Libyan women in small and medium size organizations samples but also to improve representation in the countries labor force more broadly. The evidence provided in the preceding sections indicates that only a small percentage of women who apply for a position are recruited, and therefore more efforts for better front-end recruitment strategies are necessary. Companies are recommended to document the reasons for recruiting only a small percentage of the total number of women who apply for a position, and then to reflect on the internal recruitment processes in order to rectify any barriers. HR processes and action that improve the recruitment of women are needed, and to do this well, it is important for organizations to try to tease apart the different reasons for the low numbers of women being recruited and also actually applying. Some recommended steps include the following:

- **Cast the net wide by broadening the reach of the HR recruitment strategy to women from different communities in Libya:** Organizations can gain by engaging in recruitment strategies that target women specifically through social media posts, social networks and through general job posting platforms. Organizations can gain by actively engaging in a recruitment strategy targeting women such as offering scholarships to top female students and then hiring them. Organizations can gain by developing and employee value proposition and an employer brand that is attractive to prospective female employees.

- **Focus on promoting the organization as a culturally appropriate workspace:** Organizations can gain by developing policies and practices which more explicitly encourage women to enter the workforce and highlighting that the organizations in committed to improving the representation of female employees. For example, organizations can explicitly communicate that they are culturally conscious to establishing safe workspaces for women. Organizations can also provide women-friendly work climate with specified maternity leaves, on-site daycare or childcare subsidy, flexible work arrangements, segregated workspaces, etc.

- **Communicate concern for employee safety in the turbulent macro context of the country:** Organizations can gain by thinking about employee safety as a key priority. Transportation must be considered

in the context of recruitment and organizations can offer solutions that respect the Libyan customs and traditions, as well as increase safety considerations that are inherent in the commute to and from work during the turbulent time in Libya's political history.

• **Train managers and staff responsible for the HR function in gender-sensitive recruitment:** Organizations can gain by requiring staff to engage in training to augment their recruitment skills. Such training can help to identify personal and structural barriers/biases that are present during the recruitment process. Many free online modules are available such as those currently being developed at CIBL for women.

Retention:
HR Efforts are Needed to Ensure Welcoming and Safe Works Experiences for Women

Quantitative The analysis of retention questions from the 111 surveys indicates that much more work is needed to ensure that women have comfortable workplace experiences in Libyan organizations. Overall, and as summarized in Table 5, there is a severe under-representation of women in these organizations. This appears to be the case at both the management and non-management levels for small and medium size companies. Organizations have much room to grow in terms of better engaging women across ranks.

Table 5. Representation of Libyan women in management and non-management levels

	Number of Employees in Small and Medium Organizations	
	0-14 (small)	15-50 (medium)
Average % women in management level	1%	2%
Average % women non-management level	2%	3%

Furthermore, the KIP Index survey data from Libya, indicates that most employees who left the sampled organization in the last two years were men. Indeed, out of all employees who left the sampled small or medium sized organizations, only 7% and 4% were women, respectively. The reasons for this gender-skewed retention rate needs to be explored further in future research. One reason could be the lack of opportunities for employment elsewhere. Another possible explanation may be that once secured, women tend to commit to keeping their job within the same organizations. Other reasons are possible and should be explored. Furthermore, this low percentage of women leaving the organization needs to be understood in light of the low percentage of women already in the organization (1-3%).

The survey results also explored reasons for leaving. Of the women who left, the main reason provided to the organization was related to the risky security situation in Libya and to the difficulty in commuting to and from work due to road threats. Other reasons provided included: the too high of the economic cost for commuting, marriage, or better opportunities for employment elsewhere including higher salaries.

As part of the survey questions, respondents were asked about organizational policies that targeted different aspects of the employee experience at work. The analysis of these responses revealed that 56% of all surveyed organizations have employee well-being policies, out of which only 5% provide specific support or considerations for female employees. That is, very few of the Libyan organizations surveyed have women-inclusive policies. When looking closer at the policies, only 5.7% of all surveyed organizations have those that target women in terms of improving salary, hiring, promotion, maternity leave, education, benefits, etc. A larger portion of the organization sampled (i.e., 14%) however, had in place broad anti-discrimination policies, which related mostly to anti-sexual harassment efforts. Of the 14% who indicated such policies, only 17% indicated an associated formal mechanism to support an investigation and resolution process within the organization.

Qualitative The interviews demonstrated that the women were mainly satisfied with their working conditions, evident through descriptions of their willingness to stay in the job and the many statements made describing their personal positive wellbeing at work. Yet, the data also showed that some women were dissatisfied with the day-to-day conditions in the workplace, citing reasons for why they wanted to leave the job and their personal experiences of negative wellbeing. In what follows, we provide a summary of two such general sentiments including: (1) Women's (un) willingness to stay in the organization and (2) Women's experiences of wellbeing at work.

Regarding the first, the interviews suggest that the factors driving women to leave (or stay in) the job and organization were mostly due to the work environment. These findings are consistent with the quantitative analysis of survey data but provide a more depth in understanding why. In terms of reasons for staying, the most salient reason women described was the positive work environment. More specifically, important factors at work included a safe, peaceful, and supportive environment. One participant mentioned transportation as a reason to stay in the job:

> **"The work environment is very good, safe, and providing the necessary transportation. There are no restrictions at work. This is one of the most important factors that facilitated the development of myself to hold onto the job. There are no obstacles."** (Participant 17)

Furthermore, additional reasons mentioned by some participants as reasons for staying in the organization included their need for financial independence and working in a job that fulfils their ambitions and self-development.

In terms of reasons for leaving, many of the women interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the compensation packages provided by their employer (i.e., salary and benefits), and often described that inconsistency between compensation and the relative to the effort required for their work. For example, one interviewee noted that :

"The most important motivation to leave the previous job was the low financial return compared to the effort made in completing the work".
(Participant 40)

Also, some women mentioned that they experienced a "lack of harmony with the team", and difficulties with management, feeling that women were given more work:

"I was working way more than what I was paid for because I was woman. This was honestly declared to me. My request for a raise was denied so I decided to quit". (Participant 39)

Additional reasons for leaving the work environment included workplaces not being supportive to working mothers.

Regarding the second general sentiment (i.e., women's experiences of wellbeing at work), the analysis suggests that women's experiences have been mostly positive. The women's narratives often referred to experiences of feeling comfortable and satisfied with the work environment, low or no work-life conflict, and feeling protected from harassment while at work. However, there were negative exceptions to this pattern. These are noted and described below and refer specifically to work experiences relating to harassment and transportation to and from work.

When it comes to harassment at work, women reported that they mostly did not experience such incidents. They mention that they feel safe and protected at work. The interviewees often used the descriptors "respectable" and "conservative" when explaining that they did not experience harassment. These words are significant, in that they provide an interpretation tied to morality as opposed to violence-free workspaces. Following a similar argumentation, another reason given for not experiencing harassment related to their surrounding communities. These interviewees described their community as a family or "one tribe" which makes them less subject to harassment at work and outside of the workplace. The logic provided explained that people in their community know one another, and women are respected and treated "properly', again evoking the morality argument:

"**There are no such incidents in the region because we are considered as one family and we follow the logic of the respected and there is no harassment or abuse to any working woman and has a special place among society.**" (Participant 18)

"In fact, such exposures are not widespread in the city of Zintan, because we consider one tribe and we all know the other, so it is considered a rare case that such harassment is found." (Participant 16)

Beyond the interviewed women's descriptions of potentiality of harassment, they also described many instances where the organizations provided protection against harassment through implementing anti-harassment policies or initiating security measures such as surveillance mechanisms in the workplace and/or hiring security personnel. It is also important to note that a subset of women attributed the low level of harassment experienced because their workplace was predominantly made up of female employees. It was also often evident in the data that participants expressed a strong willingness to report harassment (if it should ever occur) in order to protect others in the future. That is these women saw reporting as a deterrent against future occurrence.

In the cases where the interviewees described actual instances of being subjected to harassment, the examples given referred largely to verbal and/or visual harassment (i.e., staring, uncomfortable looks or gestures). It is notable that there were a subset of narratives emerging where women described feeling like there was no anti-sexual protection at work and that when harassment occurred, they preferred to handle the matter on their own rather than report it. When probed for further explanation, the reasoning related to trying to avoid any reputational damage. This appeared to be more common in cosmopolitan cities (Tripoli and Benghazi) where women are more vulnerable because they tend to depend on themselves in remedying the situations. Some women living in urban cities reported that they fear reporting cases of harassment to "mangers and security officers» because they themselves are accused of harassments" . This provides insight into the lack of the existence, or lack of knowledge, of anti-harassment processes and/or reporting mechanisms. In contrast rural cities reported that the rare cases of harassment are remedied through tribal mechanisms in which they find trust.

The second experience relating to negative wellbeing at work concerned transportation. Similar to concerns regarding transportation in recruitment, the women also noted instances of how transportation impacted their wellbeing even after securing employment. Indeed, the interviewed women described limited access to public transportation as a major factor decreasing their personal sense of wellbeing in this context. Many women reported that it is difficult for them to use public transportation without being subject to judgment or harassment or exposing themselves to forms of risk. This was particularly evident in relations to the often dire security conditions in parts of the country:

"Transportation is very difficult, especially private, and it is rare for a woman to ride in a taxi in the south as a result of society's view. So that the woman is comfortable while on the move work had to be close to home." (Participant 44)

> **"Concerning the means of transportation, public transportation of women is still seen as negative and society does not accept it."**
> (Participant 46)

Additionally, a social norm appears important in this regard whereby the customs and traditions interact to create a more nuanced picture of transportation and its link to women's retention at work. Therefore, working close to home and organization-provided transportation (as illustrated previously) were seen as solutions by some women.

Recommendations As a first step HR managers should attempt to track numbers on a more continuous basis. Overcoming the data deficit in terms of tracking representation and linking this to organizational performance is key to developing reasonable and sustainable strategies. Without establishing a baseline and then attempting to track differences in performance, seriously restricts the ability to make progress in terms of retention. To date, the data deficit makes such tracking very difficult. HR managers and the broader organization and industry would benefit from collecting gender disaggregated data because such data would allow for better process planning and tracking over time. Such data is also essential in order to provide evidence to help trace the link between employing women and organization performance in Libya. Additionally, and based on the key findings listed above, it is important to create and implement local gender-inclusive retention polices and implementation mechanisms. HR managers could invest into drafting policies that are more women friendly and that protect women in the workplace. These policies can better integrate dimensions relating to employee well-being, anti-harassment policies. Some recommended steps regarding retention include the following:

- **Overcome the HR data deficit:** Organizations can gain by creating ways to collect and track gender-disaggregated data on an ongoing basis, and then to use this data to inform the effective policy and process implementation. Ensuring that data is collected and used for continuous organizational improvement is key to building more inclusive workplaces in Libya. As part of this effort, organizations can work to engage in frequent employee surveys to pinpoint any issues encountered by different categories of employees such as women and other minorities. It is important to collect gender-desegregated data on all employee related decisions such as pay, absenteeism, turnover, etc. Such data is important in order to identify and address any lack of parity, and to design tailored ameliorating mechanisms. Further consideration could be given to designing and conducting exit interviews / surveys with employees leaving the organization to identify the reasons behind their departure, and then to find ways to alleviate such issues in future.

- **Communicate positive workplace values:** Organizations can gain by thinking about the ways to share core organizational values with employee stressing the importance of maintaining a culture that is inclusive, safe, and harassment free. An important part of this work is to develop and roll

out trainings and related mechanisms that establish and reinforce anti-harassment and other relevant practices supported by related policies and reporting mechanisms.

· **Acknowledge the importance ensuring that employees can safely travel to and from work:** Organizations can gain by explicitly acknowledging employee concerns about safe travel. As noted in the section recruitment, this is a recurring obstacle for the female employees surveyed. Organizations can hold focus groups with female employees to understand and accommodate transportation constraints. Group-based solutions may be possible. All in all, based on the evidence provided in this section, a key recommendation for HR managers is to consider investing more in supportive transportation options with the possibilities for additional security protection.

· **Train employees to recognize and think through and report incidences of harassment:** Organizations can gain by developing a policy to prevent harassment in the workplace. This must involve clearly defining what harassment means as a form of violence, as opposed to a form of moral indecency stemming from a women's appearance or behavior. As a first step, it is important to train organizational leaders about the forms of workplace harassment, including types of behaviors, how to spot the early signs, and how to respond effectively. Tt is also critical to train employees to know when they are being harassed at work, and to feel safe from reputational harm and in-job retaliation should they decide to report. Workplace harassment is a serious issue with a lot of gray areas. Ensuring that all organizational stakeholders recognize that harassment can happen anywhere, in different forms is very important. It is also important to establish a trysted process to deal with cases of harassment in the workplace and to establish that if it happens employees should not feel moral shame. A discernment needs also to be made, however, between harassment patterns in cosmopolitan cities (such as Tripoli and Benghazi) and rural cities (such as Zintan and Sabha). Data from a separate collection efforts indicated that patterns of harassment are more widespread in cosmopolitan cities. In contrast, rural cities denounced and denied the existence of any harassment, and have explained this by noting that their cities being more conservative, and tribal. This last point is particularly important for HR managers to address given the moral arguments described by the interviewees. Employees who are harassed should not feel shame, the blame is for the perpetrator to feel and not the other way around. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the organizational losses incurred by ignoring this form of violence stem from the psychological and physical ramifications of ignoring the negative impact on individuals and the workplace generally. HR managers can do more to prevent and respond to such toxic behaviors and to establish more psychologically safe interactions among all workplace stakeholders.

Promotion:
More HR Efforts to Support Women's Upward Trajectory in Libyan Organizations

Quantitative The analysis of promotion questions from the 111 surveys, indicated that of all employees that were promoted in 2017 and 2018, on average only 2.8% were women in small organizations. The data reveals a slightly worse situation in medium size organizations with women being only 1.5% of those employees receiving promotions. These findings reveal a stark gender difference in opportunities for promotion. However, it can also be noted from the survey findings that for women who were actually offered a promotion, the average time period is no different than for their male colleagues, with an average time of 1.7 years in small and medium size organizations. This latter finding is likely related to the government's annual promotion policy for public sector employees.

Qualitative The interview data show a further nuanced picture regarding opportunities for promotion at work for Libyan women, mainly centering around the difficulty experienced in obtaining promotions. When discussing opportunities for promotion, some women described the absence or scarcity of women in management positions as evidence of a lack of possibilities for upward mobility. For example, one interviewee described that:

"In all stages of my career, managers were males". (Participant 41)

Women attributed the difficulty in accessing higher-level jobs for several reasons. One reason provided was that the women perceived employers to favor providing trainings to men rather than women due to the belief that men will be able to be more committed to their work because women often leave their jobs when they get married or pregnant. Another related reason given related to the belief that higher-level positions were more suitable for men who have fewer responsibilities at home, greater flexibility in travel, and therefore the ability to work the long hours necessary for promotions:

"It is possible for a man to be promoted more than a woman because he works long hours and late hours, and also works in all specialties, from ambulance and medical staff, etc. These specializations are not easy for a woman to carry or enter for a number of reasons, including customs and traditions." (Participant 17)

Further to this, the data show evidence of the perceived difficulty of other employees accepting to be managed or lead by women. This sentiment is evidenced in the following quote:

> **"When women were allocated managerial positions some men refused to work under them stating that they wouldn't take orders from a woman. However, this was approximately 30% of men. Men are generally preferred as managers because women are considered to have other priorities".** (Participant 33)

The data also display women's low expectations in receiving a promotion at work, mainly due to discrimination in organizational and structural factors:

> **"There is no equality between men and women. They have a pre-judgement of women as unqualified and that they don't have time to work. Also, nepotism plays a big role. Hence, I am not expecting any promotion."** (Participant 33)

Common narratives extracted from the interviews to explain the lack of promotion opportunities often referred to factors relating the organizational culture of the particular organization, with many descriptions evidencing difficulties in their leadership roles being accepted by both men as well as other female employees. The following quote displays the inconsistency in perspectives and nuance in the data for this dimension:

> "Employees are annoyed by women manager as if we are taking over what belongs to men. They think women should stay at home. Some are understanding and some are the complete opposite." (Participant 33)

There are, however counternarratives, in the data as well with some women describing being promoted successfully and, in some cases being promoted automatically every few years. In some interviews, it was evident that promotions were perceived as dependent on seniority (regardless of gender). Indeed, as small subset of women described promotion opportunities in their workplace as equal and transparent:

> **"The promotion process in my institution is absolutely transparent and open to men and women on an equal footing without any discrimination. Everyone reaps the fruits of his work through sincerity and diligence."** (Participant 47)

Importantly, organizational factors were described by these women as the main reasons influencing ease of promotion. It was mentioned that management plays an important role in women's progression and promotion at work, or alternatively, creating barriers to upward movements.

Recommendations The key findings pertaining to promotion suggest the existence of gender imbalance, however these must be interpreted in the structural context of the actual organizations sampled. That is, it is important to acknowledge that the actual opportunities for promotion in small and medium size organizations are often restricted due to the size of the organization generally. However, having said that, even when promotions are opened, men tend to receive the bulk of the opportunities. As a first step

HR managers should attempt to create an implement fair and transparent performance management systems that captures employee performance regardless of their gender. Some recommended steps regarding promotion include the following:

- **Establish an equitable performance management system:** Organizations can gain by engaging in concerted efforts to systematically track employee performance in order to take specific merit-based decisions. Concrete, locally-driven and gender-disaggregated performance measures are important to be able to track performance and to be able to take well informed promotion decisions. Investing in developing a fair and transparent performance management systems will help HR managers to better analyze and identify top performers, as well as to identify performance problems in need of rectification.

- **Invest in training high performers:** Organizations can gain by developing training programs to address documented performance issues and put in place employee development programs targeting women to prepare them for future leadership roles. Successful high-flyer or management training programs have been evidenced in organizations around the region and HR managers can learn from the training modules and adapt for the Libyan context.

- **Train managers to recognize gender bias and to overcome it:** Organizations can gain by developing gender-sensitive training programs to make managers aware of gender biases and to foster a culture of acceptance and inclusiveness of female employees in managerial and leadership roles. As part of this training, managers should also be provided with relevant practices that can help them put in place career management and planning services to support female employees in their career development plans. Furthermore, this effort should also include training about ensuring fair and transparent promotion guidelines and succession plans and developing fast-track promotion opportunities for high potential /high performance employees, as described in the previous point.

Summary of Recommendations

This report has provided evidence-based data capturing women's work experiences and workplace policies in Libya. Taken together, the information and recommendations presented in this report form an important resource for developing and implementing HR policies and practices that can help build more inclusive workplaces and opportunities for women.

In summary, we stress the importance of engaging in the following:

- Document the experiences of women through frequent engagement surveys

- Collect gender-disaggregated data pertaining to every HR policy and practice to ensure the ability to track different forms of discrimination, and therefore to devise and implement remediation mechanisms

- Link performance review processes to training and development and provide career development opportunities for Libyan women with the organization

- Ensure the establishment of an inclusive culture free of any harassment and gender-based hostility

- Run gender sensitivity training for managers on a yearly basis to raise awareness about gender biases