

**National Review on
Women's Status in the Islamic Republic of Iran
(Beijing+20)**

**Prepared by:
The Vice Presidency for Women & Family Affairs**

Section One: Overview analysis of achievements and challenges since 1995

Introduction

Preparation of the National Report on Beijing+20 is a precious opportunity to both illustrate the achievements in the Iranian women's and girls' empowerment and review the challenges. Undoubtedly, the international mechanisms for promotion of women's status, in particular the Commission on the Status of Women, play an important role to carry out an objective and unbiased assessment of the achievements as well as the challenges in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, in the view of the special emphasis of the Islamic values and the country's Constitution on the issue of women's human dignity and the promotion of their status in various arenas as well as the necessity for enjoyment and realization of women's material and spiritual rights, the Islamic Republic of Iran has regarded the promotion of cultural, social, economic, and political status of girls and women as a key element in policy-making, legislation, and national planning.

Along with this concern, the 20-year National Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran (by the year 2025) as an interdisciplinary and overarching document has depicted for the whole country; especially for those in legislative, executive, and judicial branches; the important goal of the Iranian society's enjoyment of the social justice, legal freedoms, respecting dignity and human rights, social and judicial security, health, welfare, food security, social welfare, equal opportunities, appropriate income distribution, enjoyment of an optimal environment, and a strong family foundation free from poverty, corruption, and discrimination. In this regard and considering the major share of women and their effective role in the Iranian society, the government has continuously endeavored to mainstream women's issues in the national development framework while strengthening of the family foundation has been a part of its agenda for development.

Based on the United Nations Human Development Index, Iranian women and girls have had an outstanding progress in education, research, science, entrepreneurship, employment, and sanitation and despite the existence of severe and unprecedented unilateral sanctions against our nation, Iranian women have moved towards excellence, progress, and predetermined goals. It is worth noting given the new government's approach based on "moderation, prudence, and hope", a new series of women's efforts and activities within the framework of women and family as well as public discourse on moderation has already started that is hoped to accelerate the success of women and enhance their status. In the meantime, promoting the level of the women's national machinery to the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs (formerly known as The Center for Women and Family Affairs) has strengthened this hope. At present, the mission of this Vice Presidency is to prepare the ground for realization of a gender balance in different aspects of women's life by taking a new approach and using all the existing potentials and political will for more support of women's human rights.

The moderate approach in the development plans of the country is based on protecting the families' well-being and integrity along with women's social, political, and economic

empowerment and aimed at creating a balance among the multiple roles played by women to help with their effectiveness in the family and society.

In today's world, twenty years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it is necessary to have a comprehensive attention to the root causes of the partial fulfillment of the Beijing Platform for Action, while there should pay attention to strengthening and protecting the sacred institution of the family by ensuring the full participation of women in public and private decision-taking areas as well as taking into account the unilateral and multilateral coercive sanctions as an obstacle to improving the status of women. All of these attentions should be directed to recognition of a new and complementary vision, goals, and strategies towards a gender balance and women's empowerment in a way to provide a comprehensive solution that is both created by all and practical for all.

a) **Achievements, reasons, policies and mechanisms**

I. **Education**

➤ **Achievements**

1. **Eradication of illiteracy among women and girls:** The ratio of literate women to men aged 15–24 years (Literacy Gender Parity Index) has increased to 99.30% in 2012. It is hoped that in case of stable conditions, the youth literacy rate can reach approximately 100 percent.
2. **Increase in girls' literacy rate:** This index that was 94.27% in primary education in 2009-2010 school year, reached 94.46% in 2011-2011. This rate for the secondary school was increased from 90.22% to 90.88%.
3. **Increase in girls' higher education rate:** The rate of female university students to males has increased to 97.6% in 2011.

➤ **Reasons:** Obviously, the literate and knowledgeable human persons have more abilities to demand their own rights and can serve the global community better. Thus, the Islamic Republic of Iran in line with the emphasis of international instruments and the Human Development Index has followed this issue.

➤ **Policies and mechanisms:** After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the eradication of illiteracy and the provision of free public education were considered as some major goals and thus, the Organization of Literacy Movement was established. In the meantime, while the literacy rate was increasing in villages and towns, the official bodies such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology expanded the public access to education within the framework of the Fifth National Development Plan (2011–2015).

II. **Health**

➤ **Achievements**

1. **Improvement in women's life expectancy:** The life expectancy of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran has improved dramatically. This indicator has increased from 63 years in 1991 to more than 74 years in 2012.

- **Reasons:** Life expectancy is an important indicator of human development because it includes all possible factors in a person's lifetime. The advancement of this indicator can be the result of certain factors such as improvement in knowledge and awareness of a society, especially its women, increasing women's higher levels of education, increased women's participation in the society, general promotion of other indicators and more access to health facilities including reproductive health across the whole life span (since a fetus life cycle to death).
 - **Policies and mechanisms:** The happened changes in laws and the Iranian society after the Islamic Revolution, has brought about significant achievements regarding a comprehensive development of women's affairs. The promotion in women's life expectancy indicator has been affected by many factors such as improving education and literacy indices, especially among women, paying special attention to women in rural and deprived areas, significant participation of women in higher education, major increase in the presence of women in society (employment in industry and services, management, social and political positions), improving health indicators, with an emphasis on women's health indicators through expanded health and preventive services network across the country, development of health care services, a remarkable rise in the number of female service providers at all levels of prevention and specialized and super-specialized treatments.
2. **Reducing maternal death:** The Islamic Republic of Iran has been able to reduce maternal mortality ratio (caused due to complications of pregnancy and child birth) by 75%. This indicator has improved from 91 deaths (per 100,000 live births) in 1988 to about 20 deaths (per 100,000 live births) in 2012.
- **Reasons:** The maternal mortality Index is beyond a health indicator and represents a comprehensive social and economic development in the Islamic Republic of Iran along with the promotion of public health and reduction of mortality, improvement of maternal health care, and promotion of general health indicators in the society.
 - **Policies and mechanisms:** The improvement in this indicator is a manifestation of women's increased literacy rate and their strengthened social status accompanied by the accessible facilities in reproductive health care including pregnancy-related care before, during, and after pregnancy, establishment of mother friendly hospitals, safe delivery, facilitation of access to family planning services, etc., and the qualitative and quantitative expansion of networks and community health centers.

III. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

- **Achievements:** Promoting the Center for Women and Family Affairs to the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs; creating the Women and Family Socio-Cultural Council as a policy-making body affiliated to The Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, creation of advisory positions on women's affairs in all ministries and governmental bodies, establishment of The Women's Faction in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament), and forming The Special Committee for Women and Youth in the Secretariat of The Expediency Discernment Council of the System.

- **Reasons:** The significant role of these mechanisms on promotion of women's status in the Islamic Republic of Iran and pursuing policies and actions for women's empowerment.
- **Policies and mechanisms:** Since the beginning days of the Islamic Revolution that happened with a purpose to revitalize the Islamic instructions in the society and to eradicate the injustice, women gained more attention because of experiencing more injustice in the time of the previous arrogant regime and there were gradual efforts to create mechanisms for women's empowerment and promotion of their status.

IV. Women's political participation

➤ Achievements

1. **Increased women's participation as voters and candidates:** The percentage of women's seats in the Islamic Consultative Assembly shows an increase of 350% in the interval between the first to the eighth parliamentary elections, while the female candidacy rate for the parliament indicates a 355% increase during the same period, namely it has risen up from 1.8 percent to 8.2. In the first Islamic urban and rural councils elections in 1998, 1375 out of more than 7000 female nominees were elected to the councils, while in the fourth elections in 2010, 6096 female nominees were elected to the councils. Moreover, the emergence of women's parties and the increasing number of them illustrates the importance of women's presence in politics.
- **Reasons:** Women as half of the society members can play a major role in determination of their own destiny through participation in elections and other important decision-taking process. They can also help to decisions on women's rights and their own empowerment and assist to the realization of gender policies.
- **Policies and mechanisms:** Awareness-raising of women on their right to political participation through public training and media as well as their political empowerment.

b & c) Major challenges*

1. **The low presence of women in decision-making positions including few female MPs:** Although the number of female MPs shows a growth of 350% during the eight general parliamentary elections (1979-2007) and despite the increase in women's seats in the Islamic Consultative Assembly from 0.86% in the first election to 3.14% in the ninth one (2011), women's presence in proportion to men's is still unsatisfactory.
 - **The strategy to address the challenge:** To adopt an electoral gender quota, either through coordination with MPs or the cabinet, is in the agenda of The Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs in the new government.
2. **The requirements for women to play roles as half of the effective human force needed for the social progress are not realized.**
 - **The strategy to address the challenge:** Paying more attention to women's empowerment, raising public awareness on women's capabilities and their positive and constructive functions in sustainable development.
2. **Lack of balance between the social and family responsibilities**

- **The strategy to address the challenge:** Women need their family to support them. Moreover, the approval of appropriate employment policies is needed so that women can play an effective and balanced role in both environments.
- 3. **The effect of Power relations and politics on women's technical and specialized issues including unjust sanctions at the international level and unilateral coercive measures of the influential states**
 - **The strategy to address the challenge:** Avoiding politicizing legal and development issues and promoting double standards as well as stopping the unjust sanctions as an obstacle for women's development and progress.
- 4. **The low rate of women's participation in the labor market**
 - **The strategy to address the challenge:** Paying attention to promotion of entrepreneurship for female graduates, provision of grounds for home-based employment for rural women and developing an entrepreneurial network for them, facilitating the women's cooperatives access to loans and credits.

(*) There is an increasing growth in all indicators due to the above-mentioned measures and policies regarding a gender balance approach and women's empowerment after the Islamic Revolution, however some of the indicators show less growth in comparison with others.

d) Legal developments in promotion of gender balance and women's empowerment

In addition to the general rules which govern men and women equally, there are some special regulations for additional protection of women as follows:

1. Articles 10, 20, and 21 of the Constitution
2. The Charter of Women's Rights and Responsibilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran (adopted in 2004)
3. Special articles of the National Development Plans such as Articles 111 and 230 of the Fourth and the Fifth National Development Plans, respectively
4. Special articles of the Budget Law
5. Approved policies of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution that have the same value of a law such as the policies governing women's employment, the policies for promotion of women's participation in higher education, the policies and strategies for promoting women's health, the cultural and social policies for women's sports, and literacy policies
6. The Protecting Parentless Children and Women-Headed Households Act
7. The assignment of some parts and articles of the Civil Code, the Penal Code, non-litigious procedures, as well as regulations on employment and social security to women and family issues
8. The law amending some of the provisions of Article 9 of the Act partially amending regulations regarding retirement pension of female employees, households, and other staff approved in 2000

9. The law on determining the nationality of children who are the result of marriage between Iranian women and foreign men
10. The Law of the Human Resources Development Convention
11. The law on pension payment to the children of deceased women subject to the Social Security Law and other retirement funds
12. The law to amend Article 3 of the Law on Breastfeeding Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding Mothers adopted in 1995
13. The law on accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography
14. The law on Increasing the Rehabilitation and Support Coverage for Disabled Persons and Female-Headed Households by the State Welfare Organization
15. The law amending a Civil Code article related to women's inheritance
16. The law of the Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
17. The law of the adoption of the Convention on Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and its accompanying recommendation
18. The law on Letter of Agreement for Cooperation in the Field of Women and Family between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Tunisia
19. The law amending the Population and Family Planning Law
20. The Social Security Act for carpet weavers, weaving workers, and handicraft employees
21. The Law of the Establishing Educational Justice for Graduate Admission Process
22. The Law of the Regulation and Protection of Home-Based Jobs

In addition to aforesaid legal actions, there are hundreds decrees in supporting women and family issues adopted by the Cabinet that are binding regulations. For instance, the decree on the fifty percent discount on employers' insurance premium share of women employed in private sectors, the decree regarding granting maternity and breastfeeding leave, the administrative regulations on self-employment quick-impact projects of women heads of households, the regulation on the establishment of the National Working Group on Family, the decree on allocation of a special budget for a program to upgrade women's capabilities and strengthening the family institution, the decree on payment of a physical injury without considering the gender or religion of the suffered person, the decree concerning the entitlement of Martyrs' (the victims of the imposed war and so on) family members (the victims of the imposed war and so on) of Housing facilities, the executive regulations of the rehabilitation and supportive care centers for vulnerable or socially suffered women and girls, the decree on housewives' insurance plan.

e) Allocated budgets for the promotion of gender balance and women's empowerment

1. To mainstream a gender balance and women's empowerment, besides a centralized budget allocated to the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, many executive

bodies have a specific budget line for women. Also, according to Article 100 of the Budget Law (March 2013-March 2014) the executive bodies have the permission to spend one percent of their budget on issues related to women, family, and the youth within the framework of their own executive body.

2. Based on Article 92 of the Budget Law (March 2013-March 2014), the Social Security Organization and the Social Security Fund for Rural and Nomadic Population have the duty to insure 200,000 married housewives in return for receiving 7.5% of their insurance premium.
3. To provide the executive expenditure for the self-employment proposals of the supportive bodies and to monitor the continuous accomplishment of these proposals, an extra credit equal to 5% of the specialized facilities has been allocated for the Imam Khomeini's Relief Foundation and the State Welfare Organization (Article 107 of the Budget Law, March 2013-March 2014).
4. Allocation of a Budget line for the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs to implement executive activities for realizing its goals and policies through cooperation with other executive bodies (Article 41 of the Budget Law, 2009; Article 16 of the Budget Law, 2010; Article 89 of the Budget Law, 2011; Article 73 of the Budget Law, 2012; and Article 100 of the Budget Law, March 2013-March 2014).
5. Allocation of a budget line as much as 120 Billion rials for completion of the Social Security Act for carpet weavers, weaving workers, handicraft employees, and silk producers (Article 101 of the Budget Law, 2011).
6. The Social Security Organization has the duty to pay retirement salary to women aged 55 years or more and even less due to becoming disabled at lower age, which have paid their premium at least for 10 years (Article 91 of the Budget Law, 2011 and Article 66 of the Budget Law, 2012).
7. The Retirement, Social Security, and Insurance Funds shall pay pensions to remarried widows (Article 103 of the Budget Law, 2012).

f) Mechanisms for the government's interactions with civil society

Public participation is a major factor of sustainability, survival, and dynamics of each and every society. Without public participation, development is not possible. Non-governmental organizations play an important role in organizing and mobilizing massive participation. Moreover, NGOs also play a key role in adjusting the centralized power of the government based on the power gained from the people. Canalizing, adjusting, and voicing the people's demands as well as transferring them to the authorities can be mentioned among the other roles of NGOs. They are also effective in monitoring, decision-making, and consultancy for the governmental bodies or at international meetings and assemblies.

Numerous factors have affected the growth and development of NGOs active in women and family issues. These factors, *inter alia*, are the acceptance of women and family NGOs by the government; promotion of training and education among various social groups in the society in particular among women and the youth; their increasing interest in social participation, charity, and volunteer services; and the influence of worldwide NGO movement. Therefore, the role

played by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran cannot be ignored in empowering and capacity-building of NGOs, especially women and family NGOs.

The establishment of the General Directorate for Non-Governmental Organizations in the Ministry of Interior, the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, and the Ministry of Sport and Youth as well as the creation of women's studies research centers are among the mechanisms for increased interactions between the government and the civil society. Constant meetings on various issues, in particular women's issues, between the government and the civil society organizations, especially NGOs and academic research centers have always been effective in adopting invaluable initiatives on gender balance and the empowerment of women.

Many NGOs and academic research centers have held seminars and specialized meetings, especially on the occasion of the international days such as the International Women's Day and they have discussed and reviewed the indicators of the human development and the promotion of women's status within the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action while addressing the related challenges and solutions. Most of these meetings have had the government support. At present, there are 1700 NGOs active on women's issues and 10 research centers on women in the universities. To support and strengthen these NGOs, the following measures have been carried out:

- **Legal mechanisms and facilities for empowerment of women and family NGOs and employing their capabilities and capacities**
 1. Article 158, Clause D of the Third Economic, Social, and Cultural Development Plan (2000-2004) was allocated to Women NGOs for the first time. According to this Article the government; with a view to benefit women's various financial, legal, consultative, educational, and sporting potentialities; was assigned to prepare the ground for the establishment of NGOs by giving priority to women heads of households or those without a male breadwinner in underdeveloped or less developed regions as well as deprived groups of people.
 2. Article 111, Clause D of the Fourth Economic, Social, and Cultural Development Plan (2005-2009) was also allocated to women NGOs. According to this article, the government was duty-bound to submit a bill on supporting the creation and expansion of NGOs, civil bodies, and women's organizations to the Islamic Assembly.
 3. Based on a program on NGOs within Article 230 of the Fifth National Development Plan (2011-2015), the government has the duty to develop the capabilities of non-governmental organizations. In this regard, a comprehensive plan for developing and promotion of women and family NGOs, for the first time and as one of the fourteen programs of the overarching document to strengthen the status of women and families has been added to the agenda of the eleventh government.
 4. Executive regulations on the establishment and operation of NGOs (Cabinet decree number 31281/27862 dated 30 July 2005).
 5. Supporting a consultative meeting held by the NGOs' Coordinating Council to review the NGOs Draft Law.
 6. Supporting a specialized meeting on reviewing the challenges, demands, and suggested solutions of the NGOs active on women and family.

7. Supporting the women and family NGOs' proposals by the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs with the aim to enjoy the existing capacities of NGOs and to gain their cooperation in dealing with issues related to women and families.
8. In total, during the past ten years, the national machinery for women have supported 1398 proposals suggested by women and family NGOs across the country with various subjects such as employment and vocational training, culture and awareness-raising, research activities, and so on. All members of the family, all women; in particular women-headed households, vulnerable women, graduated girls looking for a job, rural girls, housewives, members of the women and family NGOs, and female students of religious schools have been among the target groups of the said projects.
9. Implementing a national project to identify and organize the information of the women and family NGOs has been included to the government's agenda.
10. The establishment of a consultative council by the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs aimed at strengthening the communication and interaction between the Vice Presidency and the women and family NGOs, to share mutual capacities, and to prepare the ground for NGOs to play the roles of implementing, monitoring, consultancy, or co-partnership has been considered among the new government's agenda.
11. Empowerment and promotion of the specialized capabilities of women and family NGOs through holding training workshops such as proposal and report writing, facilitation skills, and two training workshops on application procedure to obtain the Consultative Status with ECOSOC.
12. Cooperation in adopting a decree on the necessity of collecting statistics on NGOs every two years by the High Council of Statistics.

It is noteworthy to mention that the private sector has shown a low profile on supporting women's issues so far and the government has plans to increase their active participation in this regard.

g) Bilateral and regional interactions and related achievements

The Islamic Republic of Iran has had many bilateral and regional interactions with other countries with the aim to introduce the life of Iranian women and exchange mutual affirmative experiences on women's empowerment and mainstreaming gender balance. The following is a list of these interactions:

- **Participation in regional meetings and conferences**
 1. Fourth World Conference on Women with many NGO participants from Iran (Beijing,1995)
 2. Most of the annual sessions of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women since 1995 (New York)
 3. Preparatory meetings of the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women since 1995 (Thailand).
 4. International Conference on Political Future of Women in Member States of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (Kuwait, 2001)

5. International Seminar on Women, Politics and Women's Role in Development (Qatar, 2002)
 6. 63rd session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Geneva, 2003)
 7. Asia and Pacific High Ranking Intergovernmental Summit on Implementation of Beijing+5 (Bangkok, 2004)
 8. The Second First Ladies Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement on Food Security and Women's Access to Resources (Rome, 2009)
 9. High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Its Regional and Global Outcomes (Bangkok, 2009)
 10. Third Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Advancement of Women (Qatar, 2011)
 11. International Conference on Women's Participation in Public Life, Politics, and Decision-Making (Tunisia, 2012)
 12. First Iran-China Joint Seminar on the Role of women in Education, Family and Culture (Beijing, 2013)
- **Strengthening the Status of Women in Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**
 1. Participation in the First OIC Ministerial Conference on Women (Istanbul, 2006)
 2. Participation in the Second OIC Ministerial Conference on Women (Cairo, 2008)
 3. Holding the Third OIC Ministerial Meeting on Women (Tehran, 2010)
 4. Participation in the 4th Ministerial Conference on Women's Role in Development of the OIC Member States: "Strengthening Women's Participation and Roles in Economic Development in OIC Member States" (Jakarta, 2012)
 - **Holding regional conferences**
 1. 16th Summit of the Heads of Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement (2012)
 2. The International Specialized Meeting on the Roadmap to Revitalize Human Rights and Women's Rights Covenant in Islam (2013)
 3. The Second International Conference of the Women Thinkers in the Islamic World on "Woman, Family, and the Islamic Civilization", held by the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (2010)
 4. The First International Conference on Women and Trade, held by the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, and Mines (2010)
 5. The Second International Conference on Human Rights and Cultures: Legal Cultures in Support of Jurisprudence of Humanity (2012)
 6. The International Conference on the Philosophy of Women's Rights in Islam (2012)

7. The Seventh Forum for Businesswomen in Islamic Countries (2013)
8. The International Festival of Muslim Women's Print Media (2011)

- **Formal bilateral meetings with officials from other countries during the foreign missions and hosting delegations from other countries**

Continuous presence at international level through sending delegations to other countries and hosting delegations, visiting high-ranking officials and international figures of various organizations, countries, and NGOs that is aiming for strengthening the bilateral relationships and sharing experiences on women and family issues. Other taken measures in bilateral/multilateral interactions are listed below:

- Production of cultural packages in form of books and CDs based on international requirements
- Supporting effective international participation of active women and family NGOs
- Dissemination of information regarding women and family through a trilingual website (Farsi, English, and Arabic)

- **Signing memorandum of understanding and agreements of cooperation on women's issues between the Islamic Republic of Iran and other countries**

The Islamic Republic of Iran has already drafted 20 memoranda of cooperation on women's issues with Indonesia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Syria, Algeria, Oman, Ghana, Uzbekistan, Union of the Comoros, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, and Nigeria that are under consideration by the parties to these MOUs. Also five Memoranda of Cooperation have been concluded with Tunisia (2000), Malaysia (2002), South Africa (2002), Lebanon (2010), and China (2012) according to them, executive plans have been prepared by the parties and working groups have been established to continue the cooperation steps. The provisions of these MOUs are mainly focused on training, economy, entrepreneurship, women traders and business women, children, and NGOs.

- **Holding friendship weeks between Iranian women and women from other countries**

Women friendship weeks along with official interactions among countries can connect women from different countries and make them familiar with women's achievements in other countries. Meanwhile, they get the opportunity to present their own culture and art to women from other countries. Some of the organized women friendship weeks are as follows:

- First Iran-Tatarstan's women friendship week (Kazan, 2013)
- Iran-Belgium's women friendship week (Tehran, 2004)
- Iran-Afghanistan's women friendship week (Kabul, 2011)

- Iran-Afghanistan's women friendship week (Mashhad, 2012)
- **Participation in economic, political, and cultural Joint commissions of Iran with other countries**

One aspect of bilateral interactions has been the highlighted presence of the Vice Presidency in economic, political, and cultural joint commissions between Islamic Republic of Iran and other countries. The Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs has had a major role in preparing the paragraphs on activities related to women and family in the final declarations of joint commissions. Usually the follow-up to these paragraphs ends in preparation MOUs and consequently, operationalizing them.

- **Holding and participating in training courses inside and outside of Iran**
 - Participating at training courses outside of Iran with the aim to share experiences on issues related to women
 - Holding training courses in Iran for regional participants on specialized issues to empower women. Some of them are as follows:
 - Training course on Increasing Knowledge about the Islamic Life Style for participants from the Central Asia (2013)
 - Training course on Media Communication for active Iraqi women (2012)
 - A knowledge increasing training course called "Shajareh Tooba" in Farsi and with presence of Muslim women from Tajikistan and Afghanistan (2012)
 - Training course for Muslim Women Thinkers with participants from Argentina (2009)
 - Training course on Women and Life Style for Muslim women activists from Albania, Kazakhstan, England, Indonesia, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, the Philippines, India, and Pakistan (2011)

h) The implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action through MDGs

Given the generality of the Millennium Development Goals that encompasses all citizens, in particular women and their empowerment, and considering the fact that the governments give more attention to their development plans rather than special programs for women, it can be concluded that Mainstreaming a gender perspective to implement the measurable and time-bounded MDGs in subjects such as poverty reduction, illiteracy and education, reduction in maternal mortality, the environment, and so on may facilitate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The process of data collection, to prepare the MDGs reports, has placed the countries in a testing and competition situation. Because knowing the achievements and challenges and endeavors to

fill the existing gaps for development and national progress are among the most important achievements of MDGs that affect directly the status of women.

The report of the MDGs achievements in the Islamic Republic of Iran shows an appropriate picture of women's progress in terms of the eight goals. The statistics show magnificent improvements in poverty and hunger reduction, education, and health. The MDGs' defined indicators and their related deadlines have paved the way for assessment of women's progress in each country and facilitated the reporting process on other binding documents such as Beijing+20.

It is worth mentioning that despite the achievements in MDGs in illustrating the countries' progress in issues such as poverty, education, health, environment, and women as well as establishing a reporting system to reflect the progress, the range of MDGs are limited and cannot properly deal with the emerging issues that affect women's lives. Therefore, an attention has to be given to the ignored issues by MDGs such as violence against women or women's presence in decision-making posts and incorporating these neglected matters can be considered as a must in the countries' agendas for beyond 2015.

Section Two: Progress in the implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action since 2009

A. Women and poverty

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

➤ Strategic objective A.1. Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty.

According to Article 230 of the Fifth Development Plan, the government shall prepare and approve the "Comprehensive Program for Women and Family Development". The program that its draft has already been prepared should contain, *inter alia*, the development and organizing the economic livelihoods affairs with a priority of organizing home-based jobs for women headed households and females with an unqualified male breadwinner as well as procuring social security for them. Among the adopted measures, the allocation of subsidies to all families, in particular women headed households and females with an unqualified male breadwinner can be mentioned.

➤ Strategic objective A.2. Revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources.

- The General Directorate for Legal Issues of the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs has started to revise the laws and regulations and has prepared a series of amendment drafts that will be submitted to the Parliament through the Cabinet. In addition to these revisions, a document has been prepared within the framework of the Comprehensive Program for Women and Family Development aimed at reviewing all the laws, including the Labor Law. It is worth mentioning that there is no limitation in allocating economic resources and facilities to the commercial or economic activities of women and they are equal with men in this respect.
- Drafting macro economic policies in the Islamic Republic of Iran with a special role for women has been taken into account. Therefore, all obstructing laws and regulations for the public's economic activities will be revised as ordered by the President and will be prepared in the form of a bill to the Parliament.

➤ Strategic objective A.3. Provide women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions.

Some of the projects to increase employment opportunities through supporting cooperatives and microcredit funds are as follows:

- The Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs and the Agriculture Bank have designed Mehr Agricultural Development Project aimed at allocating facilities to female graduates in agriculture, farming, husbandry, fisheries, and horticulture to create a greenhouse complexes, agricultural clinics, etc.
- A joint project has been started between the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs and the Imam Reza (PBUH) Mehr Fund regarding the creation of microcredit funds in urban and rural areas. This project supports the establishment of one fund per province and it is supposed to cover 400 towns and more than 1000 cities. The loans will be paid to individual applicants.

- The following projects have been implemented in cooperation with the Cooperative Development Bank:
 - Allocation of the budget to the women's cooperatives that have initiated proposals with appropriate economic justification. 300 million rials has been allocated to each applying cooperative.
 - To support women's cooperatives in various economic sectors, 500 million rials has been allocated to each cooperative.

➤ **Strategic objective A.4. Develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty.**

Due to pay equality regulations and lack of pay discrimination based on gender, feminization of poverty is less of a problem in our country. Moreover, the housing, food, clothing, and health expenditures of the majority of Iranian women are usually paid by their husbands, except some limited groups of women who have lost their husbands for various reasons such as death, martyrdom (those who died during the Iraqi Imposed War), and terror (such as those martyred by MKO). However, these women are also paid survivor's pension or they are financially supported by certain bodies such as the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs.

The proportion of female-headed households to the whole number of households was 12.1% in 2011. Of course, this figure does not necessarily mean that these women are among the poor population since they may be different from income and social class point of view. The Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, the State Welfare Organization, and the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs have covered respectively more than 53%, 3%, and 13% of women headed households. Therefore, the female headed households left without relief coverage consist about 3.19% of the whole households in the country. Moreover, the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation has extended an insurance coverage to 67% of its clients and during 2005, 71259 billion rials has been paid totally to its domestic clients and foreign asylum seekers.

In addition to the issue of pay equality, there are other issues that are stemmed from the laws and regulations of the Islamic Republic of Iran to support women against poverty including:

- Payment of the marriage portion and alimony by husbands to their wives.
- Payment of *quantum meruit* (fair equivalent remuneration) and, in case of divorce, giving half share of the husband's property gained during the marriage by observing the conditions mentioned in the law and mutual agreement on terms and conditions of the marriage.

II) Obstacles and challenges

The coercive international measures, including unilateral and unjust sanctions have imposed full-fledged side effects on people and in particular on women. The reduced opportunities for Iranian women to play an active role in the economic arenas at an international level and limitations to accessing the financial resources in foreign banks are among the aforesaid consequences.

B. Education and training of women

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

➤ Strategic objective B.1. Ensure equal access to education.

In the Fourth Development Plan (2005-2008), there are references to the creation of equal opportunities among men and women in all levels (Article 52), the improvement of women's participation in policy-making and the activities of the civil society (Article 111), creation of gender balance in the labor market to address the increasing number of educated women (Articles 101 and 155).

According to the clause D of Article 10 of the Fifth Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Ministry of Education shall promote distance learning and training through media or provide the costs of food, travel, health and other expenditures of boarding schools, in order to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities, while creating a gender balance and considering the needs of the less developed areas with an aim to end educational deprivation. Also, the government shall establish social security insurance and basic insurance of individual and family health, with an aim to expand the targeted material and moral supports of elites and innovators in science and technology.

The implementation of the development plans has resulted in the improvement of the ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and higher education (gender parity index). This indicator improved from 94.27 in the school year of 2009-2010 to 94.46 percent for the school year of 2011-2012. In the secondary school, the figure raised from 90.22 to 90.88 and for higher education, 97.84 to 97.60 – which, in general, illustrate a significant growth. It should be noted that in the academic year of 2012-2013, the share of girls from all students of medical courses have risen to 62% and 69% for other courses of basic science.

➤ Strategic objective B.2. Eradicate illiteracy among women.

Based on the recent statistics, the ratio of literate women to men aged 15-24 years (Literacy Gender Parity Index) shows an increasing trend and it has rose from 99.00% in 2009 to 99.30% in 2012.

The Ministry of Education has also tried to assist the children who have left the school for any reason to return back. In the school year of 2012-2013, 9394 students who had left school, were identified and covered. Considering the decreasing gap in literacy of men and women, especially in the three levels of primary, secondary and higher education during the past thirty years, and based on the statistical data, there is the hope, if the conditions remain stable, the ratio of youth literacy reaches approximately to 100% in 2014.

➤ Strategic objective B.3. Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education.

Regarding the unofficial vocational and skill training, the Islamic Republic of Iran offers various forms of training and in two basic and advanced levels, in the fixed centers of technical and vocational trainings, free technical and vocational training centers, the centers beside the factories and industry workshops and the moving centers in townships and rural areas and prisons for all job seekers in towns and villages, university educated students and the employed with an aim to create and promote skills among female labor force. Among the measures adopted and carried out, the following items can be referred:

- The skills training covered 7430925 women during 2005-2009
- The training in the fixed centers of technical and vocational training through 147 special centers for women and 156 centers for men and women. In total, 703504 were trained.
- The training in the free technical and vocational training centers, especially for women (private sectors) for 11532 women.
- Skills training in the private sector for 713597 persons per course during the Iranian year of 1392 (March 2013-March 2014).
- Training in industries, especially for the employed women, with an aim to upgrade the skills level, in 111 neighboring centers and inter-workshop centers for 2044 persons per course during the Iranian year of 1392 (March 2013-March 2014).
- Nearby University training: Offering entrepreneurship training, offering courses of job preparedness and business, offering training courses of specialized software, holding conferences of advanced skills, including the training programmes of the ASD centers in universities for 10409 persons per course during the Iranian year of 1392 (March 2013-March 2014).
- Trainings in rural and deprived areas: these trainings are aimed at upgrading the level of skills of rural women with an easy access to technical and vocational courses, based on the local and regional needs in the centers beside villages for 39603 persons per course during the Iranian year of 1392 (March 2013-March 2014).
- The number of professions and the title of training courses specialized for rural women: 639 mostly in designing and sewing; handicrafts; agriculture (farming and horticulture), fishery; agriculture machineries; information technologies.
- Training in prisons: these trainings are offered with an aim that the prisoners can obtain necessary skills for employment while their personality will be much more strengthened and it will raise their social status. 5150 women per course have been trained during the Iranian year of 1392 (March 2013-March 2014).
- Trainers' Education and Technical and Vocational Research Centre is responsible for training women masters and trainers with the purpose of providing the training cadres needed in industries and technical and vocational centers. 2640 women per hour have already been trained.
- Electronic training: these courses have been initiated since 2009 through launching an integrated system of registration and comprehensive monitoring on electronic trainings and also with the participation of the free technical and vocational training centers in the private sector. These centers have been successful to train 1388 women per course.
- The University Graduates' Internship Project aims at the decreasing unemployment and the imbalance in the labor market, through using the capacities of the private sector and cooperatives, and is implemented in various sectors of industries, mines, cooperatives, commerce, roads and transportation, information technology and communication, housing and construction, gas and petro-chemistry. 8571 women have attended these internship courses.
- The entrepreneurship trainings are implemented with an aim to nurture creativity and develop entrepreneur skills with an aim to increase the entrepreneurship attitude to increase the employability of women since 2009. At the present time, the model of KAB (Know About Business) entrepreneurship - as a successful method - has been used to train women by Turin International Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Instructors (ITC) based in Turin, Italy with the support of the International

Labor Organization (ILO) and about 30000 women (per course) have attended the courses.

- At the present time, the number of trained professions by training clusters for women is 485 in the services sector, 159 in industries and 140 in agriculture.
- The number of technical and vocational training centers specialized for women has increased four times since 1996 to 2011. These centers are very diverse and have been able to absorb many girl trainees through establishing the priority courses, especially in industries such as electronics, chemical industries and general mapping, as well as courses on food industries and apartment plants. These special training centers for women have increased from 183 (fixed and mobile) to 329 with a growth rate of 44.4% have had a significant role in the training of women.
- The girls and women have access to science and technology by registering in various university courses. For those who are not in the university, there are various culture centers, community houses and technical and specialized centers that can facilitate the access to learning technology and science. In the remote areas, this can be possible through virtual university courses for all girls and women. The significant number of scientific papers written by women, their presence in scientific festivals and conference, the number of educated girl students in courses of basic sciences, technology and engineering, all in all, confirm this view.

➤ **Strategic objective B.4. Develop non-discriminatory education and training.**

In addition to the Article 19 of the Fifth Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there are certain provisions in the Document of the Fundamental Transformation of the Official and Public Education System in the Islamic Republic of Iran adopted in 2011 which relates to this strategic objective. The 3rd general goal - as mentioned in this document - emphasizes on expanding and providing a full-fledged justice in education and training. Meanwhile the fourth strategy has been determined as the expansion of justice in training opportunities with an emphasis on empowerment of trainers residing in the deprived areas, villages, marginalized areas of cities, nomads and areas where there are two languages. It has to be noted that this document is being implemented since 2012.

The establishment of 29311 digital schools in the country as well as the establishment and development of boarding schools especially village-centered schools have been among certain activities to improve the quantity and quality of girls training. The Ministry of Education has tried to eliminate the gender based stereotypes and create the motivation of education among girls through free transportation and the possibility of enjoying boarding schools for those girls who would like to apply for technical and occupational courses.

Marginalized and excluded groups have been noticed as well. Those students, who did not have direct (and easy) access to the education services, have been covered through distance learning schools. At the time of this report, 109373 girls in 809 schools and 100523 boys in 997 schools are educating in distance learning systems.

In the exceptional education, there has been an increase in coverage. The number of students from 54647 in the school year of 1995-1996 increased to 74286 in the school year of 2010-2011. Among the important measures in this regard, we can refer to the expansion of the integrated student-based programmes, development of technical and vocational trainings designed especially for mentally disabled students, accommodations for students with learning disabilities, expansion of

the training spaces, and training of family members for changing the negative attitudes towards the students with special needs.

Another strategy has been to develop skills training for vulnerable women or the women suffering from social harms. More than 800 training workshops have been held in various prisoners or shelters in the country.

In the higher education, 56% of the students in the governmental universities in the academic year of 2010-2011 are women. In the higher education sector, during the academic year of 2010-2011, women have consisted 56% of students in the state universities. In the academic year of 2012-2013, women have consisted 35% of diploma students, 60% of bachelor students, 50% of master students and more than 59% of PhD candidates.

➤ **Strategic objective B.5. Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms.**

An important part of the education budget allocates to the development of training infrastructures such as computerizing schools, establishment of smart schools and/or promotion of training coverage in terms of quality and quantity. The increasing presence of women managers and authorities in education is an effective factor in the development of this sector. At the present time, there are 871 women as senior managers and 23168 women as school managers.

II) Obstacles and challenges

- a. Efforts for a more just and balanced distribution of training facilities considering the two obstacles of extensive geographic distribution and the extent of the country.
- b. Increased facilitating of education opportunities for families in rural and remote areas.
- c. Vast distribution of the illiterate in the country.
- d. Lack of access to the precise statistics on those who need education
- e. The mere existence of natural obstacles in providing sufficient education to nomadic tribes.

C. Women and health

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

➤ Strategic objective C.1. Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services.

The access of women to health care can be an important indicator for prevention of maternal mortality and can play a major role in increasing the women's life expectancy.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has considered the right to enjoy the health and treatment appropriate facilities for prevention from women's physical diseases and mental disorders in its national strategies and policy-making.

In this regard, following measures are worth mentioning: the implementation of the development plans such as the fundamental measures to improve the society's nutrition, the growth of the indicators related to the girls' and women's feeding, allocation of the financial resources to the women's sports at national level, offering comprehensive reproductive health services as well as safe reproductive services, maternal and infant care, screening for common cancers in women, qualitative and quantitative development of infertility treatments and the use of the latest technological innovations while taking advantage of the religious resources, increasing learning activities and mental abilities of girls, reducing anemia and a deficiency of iron, launching centers for genetic counseling, control of diseases of pregnant women, the implementation of vaccination campaigns, training and recognizing the symptoms of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and drug abuse prevention.

Based on the project to expand the health and treatment network, mostly the whole rural areas are under the coverage of the health and prevention services offered by 17491 health units and 2340 primary health care and treatment centers (based on the information of the Iranian year of 1390 - March 2011 to March 2012). The initiation of the Family Physicians Project in rural areas since 2005 has improved the quality and the extent of the services needed by the society. 1037 health and treatment centers in cities (2011) and the existence of an extensive network in governmental sector (not related to the health and treatment sector) and in non-governmental sector (private, charity, etc.), and also the governmental and non-governmental hospitals all over the country - have increased the access of all members of the society to the health and treatment services. It is clear that the implementation of the Family Physicians Project in urban areas (which has already started in part of the country), the access of the all society members, including the women and the girls will escalate the access to health care prevention and treatment.

A series of remarkable activities have been done to facilitate the access to the health information and transferring the health messages, including the messages on reproductive health. An action has been to launch the speaking telephone lines and 24-hour telephone information systems. The extensive network of health care, especially in rural areas is one of the most important resources for providing health information to patients and the rural community. The mere existence of 100000 volunteer health communicators in urban areas has contributed to the provision of the proper information on health issues. The participation of the public governmental and non-governmental is another influential resource for promotion of health knowledge and public awareness.

➤ **Strategic objective C.2. Strengthen preventive programmes that promote women's health.**

The fourth and fifth five-year development plans have pursued a series of policies and measures in health issues of mothers and the empowerment of women for promotion of their health. The most important programmes and measures have been as follow: The initiation of the preconception care program; improving the quality and quantity of prenatal care; provision of quality services of reproductive health and family planning; development of healthy life styles; reducing risk behaviors; development health insurance; increased deliveries by trained people; development of the specialized mother-loving hospitals.

The priority actions as mentioned in the national document of the health and treatment sector in order to improve maternal health include: health education before marriage, during marriage and after marriage services; maternal mortality care, breastfeeding; and integration of rehabilitation and community-based support system for middle-aged people.

The network of the health and treatment care - has expanded all over Iran. A Family Physicians Project has already started in rural areas since 2005. This project along with other programmes such as involvement of the volunteer health communicators are all in all the results of the preventive programmes for improving the women's health indicators. The female service providers, female volunteers as well as the increased female experts and physicians, are contributing a great deal to the health preventive services of women.

The diverse programs and services in the national health system and the free or the affordable services offered have all been among the important factors that have improved the access and the quality of preventive health services for women.

The Marriage training in which 90% of the couples attend when they want to marry, deals with issues of social, mental, spiritual, and physical health of the couples. Other important items that are raised in these training sessions are the religious foundations of marriage, social relationships of the couples in the beginning of their common life, principles of childbearing, preventing from infertility and safe reproduction issues.

The antenatal care coverage (at least one visit) in 2010 increased to 97.2% that is significant in comparison with the indicator in 2000 which was 93.1%. The indicator for the antenatal care coverage at least six visits has shown a growth from 79.8 in 2000 to 88.6% in 2010. According to the recent reports, 90.8% of the pregnant women in urban areas and 84.7% of the pregnant women in rural areas have been visited at least six times. Also, the safe delivery indicator has increased to more than 97%. The coverage of deliveries done by skilled health personnel has had an increase of more than 5% comparing with the year 2006 (91.4%) and has reached to 97%.

Access to healthy reproductive and family planning services in order to increase the planned pregnancy rate and decreasing the unplanned pregnancies and abortions have caused that 60% of married women aged 49-15 in 2011 used a method of the interval of pregnancy. The rate of the unmet need to the interval of pregnancy has been reported 5.69% based on a survey of the health indices and a demographic study in 2011.

Provision of volunteer medical services for women and girls, particularly in deprived areas, and expansion of the coverage of the Family Physicians Project and the referral system with health-oriented approach, the implementation of cancer screening programs for women, preconception counseling, providing different supplements during different reproductive periods with

emphasis on pregnancy, adolescence and youth, increasing the number of counseling centers from 58 in 2009 to 79 centers in 2011, individual and mental health education and immunization with combination vaccines, provision of delivery and after delivery training, insurance coverage of women (especially women headed households), supplementary insurance and philanthropic services - are all important factors to promote the health of women and girls' based on an approach of the access to desirable health care.

As it was earlier mentioned the Islamic Republic of promoting has carried out a series of measures on promoting women's health and preventive actions and plans. Adoption of policies, laws, programs, and provision of appropriate health and treatment facilities, especially in prevention have played an important role.

Some of the activities to promote women's health based on a preventive approach have been as follow: implementation of the project of health communicators since 1991 in marginal areas of the cities; maintaining and strengthening maternal health programs in deprived and remote areas; preparation of national guidelines on clinical considerations in the delivery of drug-dependent mothers; empowering women in pregnancy, delivery and postnatal periods to maintain and increase their health consciousness; strengthening a system of monitoring and evaluation; preparing care packages in the crisis; provision of electronic records of mothers and educational programs about common women diseases and their prevention; reinforcing and increasing the public sport through increased participation of women; establishment of the fundamental research centers for diseases in order to carry out research in the field of girls' and women's diseases; construction and launching delivery facilities and training of village midwives; implementation of special projects for women's health; the national project of women's health caravans in deprived areas; holding special workshops on reproductive health in disasters, etc.

➤ **Strategic objective C.3. Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues.**

The five-year economic, social and cultural development plans have considered various aspects of this objective just like education, employment and the empowerment of women.

Some of related activities have been listed here:

- Adoption of protective measures for women workers and employees during pregnancy and post-natal period through concessions such as paid holidays during the 9 months of pregnancy and during lactation to promote breastfeeding
- Caring for the disabled mothers during pregnancy and the provision of free consultation and timed examination to enjoy the birth of healthy children (in 2010, 96.42% of pregnant disabled women have been under the care)
- Provision of supportive services to pregnant women in disasters by the Red Crescent groups of reproductive health services.

Also considerable efforts have been made in the country in relation to the sexually transmitted diseases and their prevention. The National Strategy on HIV/AIDS Control has been developed compatible with the international experiences and requirements for the diagnosis and care of HIV-positive individuals and AIDS treatment. All aspects of human rights, privacy and well-being of patients are respected during the care and treatment.

Despite the existing sensitivity for public education about AIDS, great strides have been taken to develop training programs in recent years and many TV and radio programs have been broadcast to educate the public. Also, the initiative to launch triangular clinics and simultaneous behavioral counseling centers is used to conduct training, counseling, care and treatment for HIV/AIDS patients. All the services at these centers, including the antiretroviral therapy are voluntary, confidential and free.

One of the most important steps in preventing transmission of the diseases has been in establishing the link between reproductive health services and the activities for prevention of STI/HIV. Thus the coverage of the services has been considerably increased for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases offered in the centers of health and reproductive health services.

Some of the activities done in this regard are as follow: Mobile harm reduction programs; adoption of strategies such as "peer education strategy¹" and "prevention of sexual transmission"; establishment of behavioral disorder counseling centers (triangular clinics²); decreasing HIV prevalence among prisoners³, establishment of a Scientific Executive Committee of HIV care and treatment; expanding preventive services for women including targeted awareness towards HIV risk reduction, reducing stigma and discrimination, provision of the means of prevention, testing and HIV counseling, reproductive health, reduction of vulnerability and alternative therapies.

➤ **Strategic objective C.4. Promote research and disseminate information on women's health.**

The Ministry of Health has carried out research activities independently or in collaboration with other stakeholders and has provided certain information on women's health. These research endeavors have contributed to a better understanding of the health of a mother and her baby as well as women's reproductive health. For instance, DHS study, inter alia, is a research done in 2010 in all provinces. The results showed that the important indicators of health among mothers and babies have improved, including the coverage of prenatal care, births attended by skilled trained staff and infant mortality in children less than 5 years of age have improved. Also, the IMES research was done for all reproductive health indicators in 2005 in all provinces and its reports was published too. This big-size study with a considerable sampling measured all the indicators of women's reproductive health by the township level. Islamic Republic of Iran's Multiple Indicator Demographic and Health Survey (IrMIDHS) in 2010 provided useful information about health issues such as the prevalence of chronic diseases among women aged 15-54 and prevalence of disability. This study is of special importance for evaluation of the health programmes. The results can be very useful in the evaluation of the Fourth Development Plan as well as the MDGs in Iran.

There are other research activities too. For instance, Iran Fertility Transition Survey (IFTS) and Iran Low Fertility Survey (IILFS) that have been carried out in targeted provinces in 2003 and 2005 respectively by the University of Tehran in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and

¹Holding training classes all over the country to train peer groups and offering training certificates, and selecting 30% of trainers from among the women.

²Triangular clinics are recognized as a best practice for control and prevention from HIV/AIDS in the Middle East and North Africa region. By 2006, these clinics were launched in all provinces. At the present time there are 103 counseling centers are working in Iran. Also, 134 counseling centers are active in prisoners and are responsible for the care and treatment of prisoners.

³From 3.5% in 2001 to 1.4% in 2009. According to the analytical survey of the annual reports of DOT studies in 2008 presented by the monitoring bases of the training centers of the HIV/AIDS Care System.

Medical Training and the Australian National University. The system for registration of death is another procedure for collection of data in the Ministry of Health which is an invaluable base for calculation of the indicators within MDGs and Sustainable Development. Some other studies on women's health in the Islamic Republic of Iran are listed here:

- Developing a roadmap for high-risk and unwanted pregnancies in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2011-2012;
- Determining the status of infertility (primary and secondary) in Iran;
- Quality assessment of counseling services/training at the time of marriage in governmental centers;
- Study of the age of marriage and the related affecting factors;
- A qualitative study of the causes of increasing the use of natural methods of contraception;
- Assessment of training needs of marrying couples;
- A qualitative study of the educational needs of instructors teaching in marriage;
- Comparing the impact of two marriage teaching strategies on sexual satisfaction, marital satisfaction, quality of life and mental health of women among women clients in counseling centers in Kerman cities;
- A Review of the situation of caesarean and developing a comprehensive model for reducing it; and
- Evaluation of maternal health programs.

➤ **Strategic objective C.5. Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health.**

Most of the financial and human resources as well as equipment needed for the reproductive health programs have been provided through governmental investments and allocations. Thus, the international support is not much significant. The existing data shows that the international financial assistance has only provided 0.09% of all expenditure which is not considerable in comparison with the share of the international bodies in assisting the developing countries on improving the indicators of reproductive health.

The reproductive health in the Health System of the Islamic Republic of Iran is an integrated part of other public health and the primary health care network. Thus the study of the budget allocations to the reproductive health components, including the human resources, budget for the centers, equipment for provision of services, etc. will be very difficult. The data provided in this section is related to aggregation of various indicators.

All the reproductive health programs in the Ministry of Health and the universities of medical science are planned and implemented based on the strategic plans that are devised according to the higher documents, laws of the five year development plan, the mission of the Ministry of Health and the Priorities of the Health System. The monitoring and evaluation in each part is done based on the previously defined indicators of each program. After a study of the results, and devising the necessary intervention, the intervention impact on the monitored program and the extent of the goal realization will be determined.

II) Obstacles and challenges

- The high rate of caesarean section: based on the studies, various factors are involved in its uncontrolled growth; these factors are needed to prioritize their interventions.
- Lack of data and information (surveillance system) in certain dimensions of reproductive health: Although all the maternal mortality cases are reported based on the defined guidelines as pursued by the academic committee and the national meetings on maternal mortality, the lack of morbidity information on women's health needs an intervention. The priorities are information about spontaneous and induced abortion, temporary and permanent consequences arising from complicated pregnancies and childbirth.
- Maternal health crisis: Any crisis may create problems for the vulnerable groups (children below 5 years old, pregnant or fertile women) through weakening the existing stability in the service delivery system. To address this challenge, there is a priority need for a consolidated framework for service delivery, especially in the early identification of vulnerable groups and serving them.
- The health of the mothers residing in the urban marginal areas: A major challenge is the undesirable growth in migration from rural areas to towns and cities during the past two decades. Their settlement in satellite townships or in marginal areas of bigger cities, create certain problems for their health due to difficult access to the specialized health services and other problems that migrants have to face in such areas. The suffering target groups are the children below five years of age, and pregnant or fertile women. There have been some efforts to pay more attention to their problems during the recent years.
- The unmet need for safe fertility: considerable growth of the population during the past two decades and difficulties in distribution of limited resources were the reasons to make the government to control the population, and certain policies were successfully devised and implemented. In recent years, due to a decrease in fertility rate and a serious need for an increase in the safe fertility rate, a series of policies and measures are being drafted. It is necessary to follow up these measures seriously and continuously.
- Unplanned pregnancy: Despite the considerable improvement in maternal health indicators as well as unplanned pregnancies, the indicator of unplanned pregnancy is not satisfactory from the wife and husband point of view. Unplanned pregnancies are one major factor that makes the couples to end pregnancy. Also such pregnancies – if the couples are not accommodated to – will not only endanger the physical health, but will threaten their mental and social health.

D. Violence against women

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

➤ Strategic objective D.1. Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women.

- Formulation of the “National Document on the Security of Women and Children in Social Relations” based on Article 227 of the Fifth Development Plan in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior (on-going)
- Drafting the bill of “Establishing of the National Mechanism for Prevention and Supporting Women against Violence” by the Ministry of Health.
- Establishing telephone lines of free advice (129 Call Center) regarding legal and judicial subjects in the Judiciary for all persons active 24 hours;
- Establishing social support center for the socially vulnerable girls (Health Houses);
- Establishing the centers for temporary settlement of women asylum-seekers and victims of violence;
- Establishing the family intervention centers for decreasing the divorce incidence;
- The project of *Eslah Zatoibain* – was implemented in certain pilot towns in 1997 as a project to decrease the negative consequences of divorce. The positive feedback from the project developed the project in form of launching family intervention centers in ten provinces in 1999 which increased to 143 in 2001. The aim of these centers and mental and social interventions was to decrease the incidence of divorce and its negative effects.
- Implementation of Social Emergency plan: These intervention centers focus on individual, family and social crises and offer mobile services. Two call centers (123) were launched to connect those in need to the mobile centers.
- Suggestions for aggravating the punishments for those who commit violence for incorporating within the fifth Book of the Law of Islamic Punishment.
- Drafting the Comprehensive Program on Women and Family Development according on the Article 230 of the Law of the Fifth Development Plan with an aim to realize the women’s Sharia and legal rights;
- Designing training and educational programs in two formal and informal fields through:
 - Training of a culture of tolerance in school curriculum in different levels;
 - Preparation, distribution and training of Life Skills Guidebooks with an aim to increase the potentials of students and families to resolve the problems;
 - Holding workshops with a preventive approach on ethics and human values with an emphasis on the human dignity of all people, especially the women;
 - Launching the course of Family and Women Studies in universities at masters level;
 - Creation of the Family Knowledge Unit in universities with an aim to increase the awareness of students on their rights and duties of the couples in family for prevention from violence against girls and women; and
 - Provision of proper methods of education and rearing of the children and creation of a proper atmosphere between the couples and the children and observance of Economic, Social and political Rights through the media.
 - Drafting the Comprehensive Pattern of Training for a Sublime Life Style;
 - Designing and implementation of the Pattern to Train Skillful Intervention by the Trustees in Resolving the Family Issues;

- Offering family counseling services to young couples through the women's culture and social centers and active NGOs;
- Launching various branches of easy and sustained marriage in provinces all over the country;
- Provision of health and treatment services and counseling for women in need;
- Establishment of Women Police Force with an aim to create a secure atmosphere for women and provision of all kinds of relief and judicial supports;
- Preparing a series of suggestions on family, women and children for incorporation with the draft bill of "Citizenship Rights";
- Establishment of special family courts and employing women counselors and judges in these courts;
- Amending some of the laws of the Civil Code with an aim to support women's rights such as "increase in girls' marriage age", alimony, heritage and child custody, etc;
- Establishment of the Department for Supporting Women and Children in the Judiciary;
- Implementation of joint projects on shortcomings of women's rights by the Judiciary, Executive and Legislative branches;
- Supporting women's rights of the religious and ethnic minorities through their elected representatives and NGOs active in this field;
- Cooperation with the Crisis Management Organization and the Red Crescent for preventing and facing with crisis and unexpected events;
- Launching the National Committee for Organizing Counseling Services in the country;
- The medical centers for treatment, social work clinics and counseling centers may deal with the cases of violence against women and refer the case to the disciplinary and judicial officials;
- Drafting the Security Promotion Plan within the National Document on Domestic Violence Prevention (still ongoing);
- Following cases of violence against women by Social Urgency Centers and Counseling and Social Work Institutes in case if the victim cannot inform the police or cannot enter into the judicial proceedings;
- Suggestion for allocating a branch or branches for specialized handling of the cases of violence against women;
- Suggestion for exemption of women victims from payment of court costs;
- Formulation of a bill entitled "The Establishing of a National Body for Prevention and Protection of Women Against Violence";
- Formulation of a bill entitled "The Provision of Women's Security against Violence". The bill pursues two approaches of protection and prevention at the same time: protection of women victims and women exposed to violence as well as prevention of violence against women. The first chapter deals with different kinds of violence, including physical, mental, sexual, and economic violence and sexual persecution, honor crimes, self-injury, and protective and preventive measures; The second chapter defines the organization, and supportive and preventive measures and the establishment of a National Committee of Provision of Women's Security with members as representatives from the

related executive bodies; The third chapter considers the Code of Criminal Procedure, Procedure Regulations and special handling; and the fourth chapter defines “crimes” and criminalization on the objectives of the bill. The bill defines the perpetrators of crimes, as well as those who stimulate and encourage individuals as well as other persons involved in the crime.

- This bill - in 81 articles containing punishments, criminal procedures and preventive measures - is a legal bill - has come out of the agenda of the government in order to be reviewed in cooperation with the Judiciary - and it was supposed in the mutual meetings to be considered within the Punishment Bill under the section of public honor and family crimes and the second part entitled preventive measures can be submitted by the government as a separate bill.

➤ **Strategic objective D.2. Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures.**

- Carrying out various research activities on the causes of violence against women and proposing models of prevention by Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, Ministry of Health, the Judiciary Deputy for Prevention, Social Deputy of the Disciplinary Forces;
- Spotting the risk spaces and threatening factors for women in bigger cities and marginal urban areas;
- Creating a comprehensive data bank on victims of violence;
- Identifying risk factors for adjusting the urban environment to reduce defenceless and risky places and improve quality of life.
- Launching human rights studies centers in universities and investment on research in this regard;
- Studying the related sources of Islamic jurisprudence, international law and international instruments and national laws and practices as well as the related statistical studies.

➤ **Strategic objective D.3. Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking.**

- Effective collaboration with Interpol to compile and implement projects such as women and children’s trafficking and violence against women;
- Adopting laws to support children ratified in 2002 by the Islamic Consultative Assembly;
- The bill on amending the law of human trafficking; it stresses on prevention of human trafficking, especially women and children and was submitted to the Cabinet in 2010. It focuses on preventive measures related to human trafficking and the facilitation of women’s return whether as victims of crime or as perpetrator of the crime and training girls on living and social skills.
- Activating NGOs for fighting against all factors leading to corruption, drug addiction, AIDS and all forms of violence and armed conflicts which lead to women trafficking;

II) Obstacles and challenges

- Personal reluctance among women victims of violence to refer to police proceedings despite attending numerous trainings;
- Neglecting important religious orders regarding the women's human dignity and the need for full respect to women;
- Lack of expertise in this area to cover all areas due to the vast geographical distribution;
- Lack of formal legal and administrative support to victims of violence, despite the supportive view of Islam, repetitive emphasis of the Supreme Leader, and all the targeted supportive and fruitful efforts in recent years;
- Lack of adequate awareness of women, especially women victims of violence their legal rights and various existing procedures;
- The tendency to hide the violence and the reluctance to visit a social worker or counselor and even avoiding pursuing her case in the court or through the police due to certain personal views and family culture;
- Promotion of violence and using “women” as a “means” through foreign media; and
- The transition from tradition to modernity and decreased traditional support systems for women, and the lack of alternative systems.
- The necessity for increasing awareness and more attention to the important religious orders concerning respect to human dignity of women.

E. Women and armed conflict

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

- **Strategic objective E.1. Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation.**
 - A suggestion by the President of Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations General Assembly about drafting a Resolution against Violence and Extremism in 2013, and the proposal for establishing secretariats at national and regional levels;
 - Preparing the grounds for establishing a working group on violence against women in armed conflict within the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs;
 - Empowerment of Women's NGOs to facilitate their effective presence at the international level with an aim to advocate the idea of the "world against violence and extremism;
 - Efforts to use capacities of the governmental bodies, religious groups and facilities such as mosques, churches, etc. with the aim to strengthen the process of dialogue among religions for finding solutions and a united discourse on dealing with violence and destructive wars;
 - Efforts at diplomatic level for a serious campaign against killing defenceless people, especially women and children in armed conflict, such as the efforts by the World Assembly of the Women Suffering from Violence for bilateral and multilateral interactions in the Areas under the Occupation of the Zionist regime and other areas involved in armed conflict (such as Afghanistan, etc.)
 - Humanitarian assistance for women involved in armed conflict, such as Afghan women, Syrian women and the women living under the Occupation;
 - Empowerment of women in the Red Crescent and the Volunteers Organization of the Red Crescent for humanitarian assistance;
 - Tehran Declaration adopted by the Third OIC Ministerial Meeting on Women (Tehran, December 2010) with a special attention to women in armed conflict and in the occupied regions;
 - Supportive measures of the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs during the eight years of the Saint Defence and after that.

- **Strategic objective E.2. Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments.**
 - Interaction with other countries to join the Global Will for change in policies to prevent from wars and conflicts and the consequences thereof as the major factors of increased military expenditures.

- **Strategic objective E.3. Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations.**
 - Holding international seminars on humanitarian law with an aim to study the various dimensions of supporting civilians, including women and children during the domestic or international armed conflict and the post-war conditions;

- The distribution and training of brochures and booklets on the humanitarian law and the principles of human rights;
- Compensation for disability, death and losses against the producers of armaments especially chemical weapons;
- Trying to restore morality in both national and international laws.

➤ **Strategic objective E.4. Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace.**

- Creating the necessary grounds for education of peace and security friendly children in families in order to avoid from behavioral and oral violence and respect for the inherent dignity of all human persons especially women;
- Selecting artist women as peace and friendship ambassadors and sending them to other countries for promotion of peace culture;
- Preparing the grounds for active participation of women in Tehran Peace Museum with an aim to promote a culture of peace.

➤ **Strategic objective E.5. Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women.**

- Cooperation with the Department of Foreign Nationals and Migrants of the Ministry of Interior in the formulation of the Fifth Development Plan for prevention of the problems created due to the armed conflict in other neighboring countries for Iranian women and foreign refugee women.
- Compensating the spiritual, intellectual and physical loss of victims, women and children of the Iraq-imposed war against Iran
- Protecting the female refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq and other Persian Gulf neighboring countries via the following:
 - Reinforcing NGOs to protect victims of violence in wars and its consequences.
 - Allocating a certain number of entries to universities for compensating the losses caused by war
 - Improving the social status of war victims' families.
 - Financial supports, including provision of housing, schools and cooperatives
 - Facilitating marriage for refugees and compensating losses due to their reduction of population and race
 - Facilitating employment of female refugees, providing medical facilities and arranging family planning programs
 - Facilitating legal support for refugees' marriage to Iranians and their children

II) Obstacles and challenges

- The mere existence of thousands of refugee families and millions of women and men and children in Iran due to the use of coercive force and occupation of certain dominant

countries in Iranian neighboring countries - which has imposed through the years excessive costs to the government of Iran.

- The trainings for peace are slow and gradual and the propagated violence in virtual life and satellite channels neutralizes learning for peace.
- Waging wars by the most influential countries in the UN that are involved in armament commerce
- Lack of respect for neutrality by certain countries in domestic and international wars, thus aggravating the wars instead of prevention
- Lack financial support of the Islamic Republic of Iran by the related international organizations on women and the armed conflict when Iran was facing the huge number of Iraqi and Afghan refugees

F. Women and the economy

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

- **Strategic objective F.1. Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.**

According to the Fifth Development Plan, the government has the permission to carry out the following measures to create sustainable employment, develop entrepreneurship, reduce regional imbalances and advance new employments:

- A. Financial support and encourage the development of networks, clusters and productive chains, create appropriate links between small, medium, large enterprises;
- B. Remove the obstacles to the development of small and medium enterprises and help them become mature and large and competitive firms;
- C. Expand domestic businesses and home-based jobs, and support projects that increase employment opportunities in the private sector and cooperatives, especially in those regions with higher unemployment rates above the national average;
- D. Financial and legal support and adjust incentives to transform the unorganized household economic activities into organized unit;
- E. Financial support for private sector in order to develop and expand the technical, vocational, scientific and applied training and education in business and entrepreneurship.

In 2011, the policies of the High Council of Employment as the highest policy-making body in the government were focused on active market policies, especially incentives to create jobs and employments. The national banking network was equipped with resources to provide funds for the projects of entrepreneurship, self-employment, small businesses and home-based jobs. Meanwhile, credit incentives were allocated in the annual budgets.

A major issue in employment is the women's participation in the market and their role in the production. In Iran, about 17% of the all employed are women. However, in recent years, the labor market witnessed an increase in economic participation of women – which is one of the most important features of the Iranian labor market. The rate of women's participation increased from 9.1% in 1996 to 13.8% in 2012. The comparison of the women and men's participation in the economy shows that in 1996, men's participation has been 6 times more than women while in recent years it has reduced to 4.5 times.

At the present time, the ministries as well as economic bodies have implemented a series of measures to pave the way in order to use the women's potentials in increasing the national production. The most important measures are as follow:

- Investing in increasing the effectiveness of women in production, distribution and consumption networks.
- Expansion of social supports such as unemployment insurance;
- Development and strengthening of compensation mechanisms for unofficial employment in the labor market;
- Development of women's entrepreneurship and employment along with their increased education or specialization level; and allocation of entrepreneurship facilities to women.
- Supporting more employment opportunities in women's rural cooperatives through the creation of micro credit units.

- Strengthening of women's self-employment through employment facilities and supporting technical and vocational training.
- Strengthening of women's commercial and business networks and their expansion through developing information technologies.
- Strengthening of women's self-employment through employment facilities and supporting technical and vocational training.
- Strengthening of women's commercial and business networks and their expansion through developing information technologies.
- Strengthening the rural associations and cooperatives with and aim to create income generating activities among rural women and financially empower them through facilitating their access to the production resources, land, capital and ownership rights.
- Allocating of loans to women for home-based jobs in line with the culture and customs of each region in order to preserve the traditions of different towns and create an appropriate economic space.
- Allocating entrepreneurship and self-employment loans in order to strengthen their successful presence in their political and social positions.
- Adopting the early retirement bill without any age requirement for women entrepreneurs and women-headed households.
- Granting supporting loans to women with a priority for women headed households and women entrepreneurs with the least possible fee.
- Formulation of supporting regulations for women workers in terms of their working levels, working shifts and hard and hazardous jobs.
- Women's empowerment in terms of providing equal opportunities (with men) through following up the employment of elite graduated students, interacting with researchers who carried out surveys on water, electricity and new energies and conducting research projects as well as holding related festivals.
- Following the issue of allocating child and child care allowance to eligible women.
- Launching and establishing the Foundation of Cooperatives and Development of Women's Entrepreneurship.
- Formulation of a bill to amend certain articles of the Labor Law for the improvement of women's employment.

➤ **Strategic objective F.2. Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade.**

While the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs offers training courses on the economy and livelihood, has established an interactive relationship with the other bodies to achieve the above objective:

- Trainings planned and implemented by the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs.
- Training courses that have been held through the support and efforts by the Vice Presidency to prepare the mechanisms and the budget allocations of the national or provincial bodies. During the period of 2009-2013, 1300762 persons/per course have attended the training courses on economic issues.

- The Agriculture Bank's Project to support women entrepreneurs: the project aims to economically empower women entrepreneurs in business and therefore, this group of customers has to be regarded as special customers for the Bank.

Other related projects on the agenda of the government are as follow:

- Proposing the project to create a favorable environment for entrepreneurship and reducing business barriers that have been incorporated in the agenda of the new “Government of Prudence and Hope”;
- Establishing the council of government-private sector dialogue to facilitate economic activities in the private sector as well as reducing barriers to business;
- Following the regulations related to the business environment in the Fifth Development Plan, including Articles 62 and 70 regarding facilitating the process of obtaining permits and building a process of the unique window within the organizational structure;
- Efforts to develop, set up and communication of regulations and guidelines on improving the business environment in partnership with the private sector;
- Adopting policies and strategies such as restoring the master - apprentice system, supporting for knowledge based activities, development of home businesses, small businesses, self-employment and the development of business courses and technical and vocational training;
- Drafting the Comprehensive Program on Women and Family Development – with an emphasis on the employment of women headed households and the entrepreneurship of young skillful girls.
- Drafting the project to support the national production with an emphasis on the Iranian labor force, especially women.

➤ **Strategic objective F.3. Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women.**

- Education and training programs have been to strengthen, promote and facilitate women and the family's livelihood during 2009-2011.
- More than 24,600 women participated in the courses organized by the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs in 2009. For instance, 2844 women attended the handicrafts course that was held in collaboration with the Organization of Nomadic Affairs. 6375 female students from villages or nomadic tribes were trained in a similar training course held in collaboration with the Special Education Organization within the same period. In other training courses on the reduction of the agricultural waste, entrepreneurship and an introduction to the plant clinics, held in cooperation with the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad in various provinces, 1581 women from nomadic tribes or from villages attended. Also, the Vice Presidency held handicraft training courses in cooperation with the Cultural Heritage, Handcrafts, and Tourism Organization in 26 provinces for 13835 women.
- In 2010, a series of vocational courses were held by the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad and a number of other governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- In 2011, more than 104768 women attended the courses that were held by the Vice Presidency in collaboration and cooperation with governmental bodies and NGOs.
- In line with the above strategic objective, training courses on financial management for rural women have been held by the projects supported by the International Fund for

Agricultural Development (IFAD). The Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) have organized financial training courses for women too, and the International Seminar on Iranian Women Economic Empowerment was hosted in Tehran (January 2013) by the Agriculture Bank of Iran in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

➤ **Strategic objective F.4. Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks.**

Two entities have been established with an aim to strengthen the women's economic capacity and their commercial networks: The Foundation for Development of Cooperation and Entrepreneurship for Women and the Comprehensive Center for Empowerment, Employment and Entrepreneurship for Women and Families.

- The Foundation for Development of Cooperation and Entrepreneurship for Women focuses on cooperative sector and is trying to use the potential of this field to promote entrepreneurship and employment for women and families.
- The Comprehensive Center for Empowerment, Employment and Entrepreneurship for Women and Families aims to reduce the lack of practical skills needed for entrepreneurship and employment among women and families, lack of confidence and knowledge, especially knowledge management in the market. The Center works to empower women in the areas of the employment and the economy and to achieve the sustainable employment among women.

➤ **Strategic objective F.5. Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.**

In 2014, the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs has submitted a bill entitled "Amendment of Certain Articles of the Labor Law" to the Parliament approved by the Cabinet that will further eliminate any discrimination in employment more than ever. Some of the suggestions raised in this bill have been listed below:

- To amend Article 38 of the Labor Law (the principle of equal wage)
- To incorporate a paragraph to Article 73 of the Labor Law (the Family Vacation)
- To amend Article 77 of the Labor Law (prohibition of night work)
- To decrease the working hours of women workers
- To consider early retirement for working women without the age requirement
- To amend Article 167 of the Labor Law (the presence of the representative of working women in the High Council of Labor)

Other proposals to improve women's employment rights:

- To increase three years to the maximum age of the women's employment for the woman with a child (2012)
- To issue a circular to all the governmental agencies to define "women headed households" (2012)
- To make all the government agencies to appoint competent women managers and increase the number of their annual appointments to provide opportunities for equal conditions of employment (2012)

- To eliminate the ambiguity and problems in implementing the directive regarding to pay the “family payment right” to single working women.
- To amend the paragraph 4 of Article 68 of the Civil Service Management Code regarding the family payment right for the women headed households and to forecast a child payment right for them and to issue a directive to remove the ambiguity thereof (2009, 2010, 2011).
- To resolve the ambiguity and the implementation problems of the approval regarding the employment status of women headed households (2010 and 2011).
- To use the subsidies account of the women headed households as a bank guarantee for taking loans of domestic jobs and reduce the number of guarantors from two to one (2011).

➤ **Strategic objective F.6. Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.**

The Housewives Insurance Plan: This plan is an attempt to maximize the use of existing legal and institutional capacities, providing women with insurance and the continuation of insurance for housewives through respecting women’s freedom and dignity and the value of their work at home.

There has always been an issue of the balance between the women’s social and family responsibilities and certain legal amendments to realize the balance. Also, cultural awareness through the media and the efforts to define the importance of the women and men's participation in family responsibilities has been much helpful in this regard. Some of the legal amendments are as follow:

- The proposal to resolve the implementing problems regarding the Housewives Insurance Plan (2010);
- The proposal to resolve the ambiguity of the paragraph 1 of Article 87 of the Civil Service Management Code regarding decreasing the working hours of women workers (2009);
- The proposal to increase the women’s maternity leave for 9 months and considering a two-week leave for me (2013);
- The proposal of the step-by-step plan of insurance for all housewives (since 2013);
- The proposal for giving a one day off on Thursdays for the employed mothers having two children under the 7 years of age and a child that goes to the primary school that can be compensated during the week or through working at home;
- The proposal to increase the allowance of childcare within the annual budget law, appropriate with the standard fees announced by the State Welfare Organization by the age of six years.

II) Obstacles and challenges

- The necessity to increase the required budget to the related plans and projects in the field of women and family with an aim to implement the related laws.
- The necessity of more empowerment of women in various sectors for improvement and promotion of their employment status.
- More efforts for adopting laws and regulations to employ the women.

- The necessity for establishment of more civil society organizations to support and empower women.
- More efforts for increased support of women's production cooperatives, especially in agriculture and handicrafts since women are more active in these two fields.

G. Women in power and decision-making

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

➤ Strategic objective G.1. Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Political participation and presence in positions of power and decision-making has been recognized as a right and a duty for women in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the 20-year Vision of the system, the realization of Sharia and legal rights of women in all fields and strengthening of their status have been emphasized.

From the legal point of view, there is no prohibition for women to be in decision-making and power positions. However, in practice, women are facing numerous challenges in their fair access to political opportunities; the challenges which the new government deals with them as part of its agenda, using an approach of moderation and justice.

In the Charter of Women's Rights and Responsibilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran adopted in 2004, the women's right to participate in policy-making and decision-taking, act in the educational and scientific management and their rights and responsibilities to participate and play the role in deciding on the laws and regulations have been recognized.

Therefore, the women have the access to a full participation through women's awareness raising activities and increased potentials for presence in decision-making positions. It has to be noted that a woman as a Minister was successful to gain a vote of confidence from the Islamic Consultative Assembly in the tenth government. Also the decision taken by the President to have five women in his cabinet and three women in the eleventh government and their recommendations to all the governmental agencies for involving women as managers – illustrate the serious will of the government for a full participation of women in the power structures.

At the present time (2014), at all the governmental bodies at ministerial and provincial levels (including governor's office in the central cities of the provinces as well as governorship at smaller towns), Radio and TV broadcasting, the Staff of the Army, women have a position of advisor or the director general on women's affairs, and according to a related directive by the Cabinet, the advisors on women's affairs in the higher councils of the related bodies, have the power of voting and participation in decision-making. Also, there is more percentage of women managers in the Ministry of Education.

The percentage of the women's seats in the Islamic Consultative Assembly has increased by 300% during the eight elections of the Consultative Assembly (from the first to the eighth). The women's participation has had an increase from .86% in the first run to 2.82% in the eighth.

The women's candidacy rate for the Consultative Assembly elections shows a 355% growth from the first round to the eighth round of elections, which has increased from 1.8% to 8.2%. At present, (the ninth Consultative Assembly), the number of women MPs are nine.

Urban and rural councils are decision-making bodies in the Islamic Republic of Iran and those elected to these councils have an effective role in managing and administrating the towns, cities and villages.

Urban and rural elections have provided another appropriate opportunity for women to prove extensively their potentials. In the first round of the elections of urban and rural councils in 1998,

more than 7000 women were nominated as candidates and 1491 women were elected to the councils that had a growth of 8.44% in comparison with the first round.

The Growth rate of female members of the urban and rural councils during the years 1997-2003 has been 79.76%. Moreover, the growth rate of women managers in the middle management level has been remarkable. For instance, the percentage of legislators, senior managers and employees in comparison with the all employed in 1976 has been 0.52% for men and 0.11% for women; these figures have changed to 2.9% for men and 3.36 for women in 2006, with a growth rate of 2954%.

48 women as representatives of women's affairs in ministries and government agencies as well as 31 female as general directors of women's affairs at provincial governorship offices are working.

The following appointments can be mentioned as the examples of women's presence in the power structure and political participation of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- The appointment of women as ministers (Minister of Health), the appointment of women as the Vice Presidency and the Head of the Department of Environment (DOE), Vice Presidency for Legal Issues, Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, elected women MPs in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament), appointment of women as members of the Women and Family Socio-Cultural Council, appointment of women as legal advisors and judges, appointment of women as advisor to the Ministers on women's issues, appointment of women as the director general of the Women's Offices in the provincial, township and district levels, supporting the urban councils to select women as mayors, appointment of women as mayors or governors, elected women in the urban and rural councils, appointment of women as the District mayors, and the head of community councils, election of women as *Dehyar* (village head), promoting the candidacy of women in the electoral arena in the higher provincial councils; appointment of women as director, general director, deputies to Ministers, and head of the governmental agencies, and supporting the active participation of women in political parties.
- It has to be noted that the promotion of position of "advisor on women and family affairs" to the Vice Presidency on Women and Family Affairs and pursuing a proposal to create a mechanism for increasing the number of women in the Islamic Consultative Assembly is part of the approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the promotion of women's status and increasing political participation of women.
- The number of women experts has increased by 317000 from 494000 to 811000 during the years 1996-2011, while within the same period, the number of men experts has only increased by 226000. This indicates that the women have preceded men in expertise and the gap between men and women has decreased.
- The percentage of women legislators, senior managers and employees in comparison with the all employed has been 0.11% in 1976, 16% in 1986, and a remarkable growth in 1996 and this growth is much more obvious in the years 2001 to 2006 in a way that in 2006, the percentage of women is higher than men.

➤ **Strategic objective G.2. Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.**

In the new government, there has been a special attention to the issues of women's management and a training workshop on result-based management was recently held.

Also, within the Comprehensive Program on Women and Family Development, that has been formulated based on the Fifth Development Plan, there has been a positive attention to the strategic objective of women in power under the section of the promotion of women's empowerment. The second objective of the Program is about the promotion of women's potentials, skills and expertise, especially those of the women managers and elites.

II) Obstacles and challenges

- The existing plans to empower women managers do not meet the great need for women elites. The empowerment courses have to increase
- Allocation of a limited quota for women in parties' lists for participation in the elections of the Islamic Consultative Assembly.
- Limited number of courses on executive management issues for women
- Cultural obstacles, weak self-confidence and a lack of interest among many women for presence in the positions of power and decision-making.
- Limited access to financial resources for women to use in their electoral campaigns and unfair access to resources and opportunities.

H. Institutional mechanism for the advancement of women

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

➤ Strategic objective H.1. Create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies.

Creating and strengthening national machineries and paying attention to the institutional mechanisms depending upon local needs and requirements of each country can be regarded as the strategies that promote the enhancement of women's status in the world. These mechanisms could include balanced attitudes to women and men in laws, policies and programs at national and international levels as well as at micro and macro contexts and create appropriate grounds to achieve the desired results in realizing an ideal and appropriate place for women in any society. Therefore, in the Islamic Republic of Iran, first the Presidential Office for Women's Affairs was established as the highest national mechanism. Later, it was promoted to the "center". Considering the serious will of the new government (2013), this mechanism was promoted to the Vice Presidency, which means it will have more powers for effective measures. Another newly established mechanism is the National Headquarters for Women and Family, which is chaired by the President and eight Ministers and the MPs from the Islamic Consultative Assembly. Besides these two mechanisms (Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs and National Headquarters for Women and Family) there are other important mechanisms as follow:

The decision-making and strategic mechanisms in women's issues

	The mechanism	Organizational Status	Considerations
1	Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs	The Executive Branch	The chairwoman is a member to the Cabinet and acts as the Vice President.
2	National Headquarters for Women and Family	The Executive Branch	The President chairs the Headquarters.
3	The Women and Family Socio-Cultural Council	The Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution	The chair is selected by the council members. The Strategic bodies have one member in this council.
4	The offices of women's affairs in Ministries with the title of General Director or Minister's Advisor on Women's Issues	The Executive Branch	These offices are active in all Ministries.
5	The offices of women's affairs in Governors' Departments	The Executive Branch	31 offices in all 31 provinces, 397 offices in all towns and 1331 in all towns and districts.
6	The Special Committee on Women, Youth and Family	The Expediency Discernment Council of the System	
7	The offices of women's	The Ministry of Science, Research,	These offices are established in universities and credible

	studies	and Technology	research institutes and are active in various research issues related to women to educate the necessary expertise for legislation and other executive affairs.
8	The offices for Women's Employment Services	The Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare	These offices deliver services of finding employment, entrepreneurship, and legal consultancy
9	The General Department of Women of the Judiciary	The Judiciary	Various issues such as social work, legal consultancy, and women's rights. 31 offices are active.
10	The Department of Human Rights and Women in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs	The Department is active to study the human rights and women's conditions in Iran in relationship with the international environment in cooperation with the centers of policy-making and research as well as non-governmental organizations
11	Offices of Women and Advisors in Municipalities	Municipalities and Governors' Offices	These offices have been established to develop and promote cultural issues and citizenship conditions of women all over the country. Also, cultural and sport centers such as the Houses of Culture and the Community Cultural Houses have been established in communities. Most of them belong only to the young women and girls.

Besides the governmental mechanisms, there are more than 1700 NGOs that can be considered another mechanism for the advancement of women.

➤ **Strategic objective H.2. Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects.**

The two following development plans were the most important mechanisms for integrating gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects.

The Fourth Development Plan

The Fourth Development Plan (2005-2009) was the first five-year plan after the twenty-year Vision of the country. When its bill was under the study in the Assembly, some parts were changed. In some of the Articles, there was an approach of elimination of gender inequalities, and all the governmental agencies were to plan based on a gender perspective. The issues such as the equal access of men and women to resources and opportunities, amendment of laws and regulations to guarantee gender equalities, an increase in women's role in decision-making, promotion of technical and vocational training for increasing women's empowerment, supporting women's entrepreneurship, strengthening women's rights non-governmental organizations, gender balance in the labor market, capacity-building in services sector with an aim to employ educated girls, expansion of the social security for women without job; increasing women's participation in the civil society organizations, and supporting women headed households, were among important demands by women that could be met through implementing the Fourth Development Plan.

In Article 111 of the Fourth Development Plan that is a special Article related to the strengthening of women's role in the society and the development of their participation level. According to the provisions of the Article, the government was responsible to expand women's activities in the society, increase opportunities for their participation through formulation of a comprehensive program for the development of women's participation, prepare and submit bills on consolidating the institution of family to be approved by the responsible bodies, prepare preventive programmes, and adopt legal measures to eliminate violence against women and prepare a bill to support the creation and expansion of non-governmental organizations, civil society institutions and women's organizations.

The Fifth Development Plan

According to Article 227 of the Fifth Development Plan Law, the government is required to prepare "the National Document on the Security of Women and Children in Social Relations" with the participation of the relevant organizations. Also, based on the Article 230, the government shall draft and adopt the Comprehensive Program on Women and Family Development in cooperation with the related organizations with an aim to strengthen the position of women in social fields and the institution of the family, to realize their Sharia and legal rights in all fields. The program contains provisions on consolidating the family institution, amendment of laws and regulations, prevention from social harms, development of economic and livelihood affairs giving priority to home-based employments for women headed households, social security, recreation, research, development culture of modesty and hijab, health promotion, skills development of non-governmental organizations, skills promotion of women executives and elite, development of international interactions, deepening of religious beliefs, and reforming administrative structure of women and family issues.

Also, the presence of the Vice President in the Cabinet is an effective mechanism to bring special attention to the gender perspective in all decisions taken by the Cabinet including directives, circulars and regulations. It is worthwhile to mention that the representative of the Vice Presidency will attend at all the meetings of the sub-commissions, including the Commission for the Compilation of the Cabinet Bills and comments on various decisions using a gender approach. Also, the presence of the advisors of the ministers in the higher council of the relevant body with the right to vote is another mechanism for gender mainstreaming in decisions and programs. The

Women's Fraction of the Islamic Consultative Assembly has the important duty of influencing and commenting on the proposals and bills.

➤ **Strategic objective H.3. Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.**

The Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs tries to discuss the latest evaluation of the women's status, the existing opportunities and challenges during periodical meetings with advisors of the Ministries on women's issues and MPs to adopt the required measures. Meanwhile, the official website of the Vice Presidency has provided statistical information, policies and plans concerning women's issues that can be reflected by the media. The Women and Family Socio-Cultural Council and many other women's offices in various governmental agencies have launched websites for dissemination of information on planning and activities. Another activity was to establish the first Iranian Women News Agency (IWNA) with an aim to raise awareness and publish news on women's potentials and their problems. There are other specialized websites too.

II) Obstacles and challenges

- Inadequate legal, financial and administrative mechanisms;
- Lack of necessary flexibility regarding women and family issues;
- Insufficient coordination and cooperation among different sectors concerning women's affairs;
- The mere existence of certain cultural and social stereotypes.

I. Human rights of women

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

➤ Strategic objective I.2. Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice.

In this context and given the strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran based on protection, justice, trust and the Iranian Islamic culture, long-term programs have been anticipated for promotion of human rights of women on the basis of non-discrimination and respect for human rights, and at three levels of individual, familial and social. The most important measures are:

- Formulation of the Bill of the “Charter of Citizens’ Rights” for strengthening human rights.
- Establishment of special family courts with women judges and consultants; amending parts of the Civil Code with an aim to support women’s rights such as increasing the minimum age of marriage for girls, the laws regarding alimony, inheritance, child custody, and establishment of the Department to support women and children in the Judiciary.
- Implementing joint projects on the legal shortcomings of women’s rights by Judicial, legislative and executive branches.
- Protecting women’s rights of religious and ethnic minorities through elected representatives and the NGOs active in this field.
- Protecting women’s rights of Afghan and Iraqi refugees or displaced women living in Iran, in particular supporting them in literacy and employment.
- Efforts to formulate the National Document on the Security of Women and Children in Social Relations (Article 227 of the Law regarding the Fifth Development Plan).
- Some of the Specialized Executive Structures in charge of and responsible for the support of women's rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran are: Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs; the Women and Family Socio-Cultural Council; Ministry of Justice; and the Department for Supporting Women and Children in the Judiciary.
- The Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs as one of the executive and supportive structure for women’s rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran has proposed or has incorporated in its agenda the following items – in order to pave the way for realization of women’s rights:

A. Employment

- Amendment of certain Articles of the Civil Service Management Code.
- The Bill of the loan facilities and services for the women headed households.
- Early retirement for working women (submitted to the Islamic Consultative Assembly).
- Proposing to reduce the military service of the married soldiers owning a child and to increase their wages.
- Compulsory leave for working parents at the time of air pollution.

B. Social arenas

- The bill of “Establishing of the National Mechanism for Prevention and Supporting Women against Violence”.

- Requesting changes in the field of women, children and families in the Charter of Citizens' Rights.
- Recommendations to the Guardian Council regarding the removal of Article 27 concerning the Marriage of the guardian with the adopted child, and drafting the bill to remove the paragraph to be submitted to the Cabinet.
- Recommendation to the First Vice President to stop the gender quotas in governmental bodies.
- Recommendation to the First Vice President regarding the requirement of all bodies to appoint women managers and prevention of discrimination and raising the issue in the High Council of Administration.

C. Legal arenas

- Amendment of the Civil Code on family issues (20 amendments) such as: studying the ceremony of proposal and engagement within the law and the need for explicit anticipating of the civil responsibility for unjustifiable withdrawing of engagement; reviewing and amending Article 1044 of the Civil Code concerning the lack of provision of guardian permission of an incapacitated virgin to marry; reviewing and amending Article 1083 of the Civil Code regarding updating the postponed marriage portion with the dissolution of marriage; claiming priority over other debts of her husband due to marriage portion demand as Priority Receivable Due (proposing a new clause); reviewing and amending Article 1089 of the Civil Code concerning the authority for fixing the marriage portion can be entrusted to the husband or a third party; reviewing and amending Article 1105 of the Civil Code provisions regarding the exclusive right of the husband to be in the position of the head of the family only if it is in the best interest of the wife and the child/children; reviewing and amending Article 1108 of the Civil Code concerning the recognition and guarantees for enforcement when the husband refuses to fulfill duties of a husband without legitimate excuse; reviewing and amending Article 1110 of the Civil Code concerning non-entitlement of the wife to cost of maintenance (alimony) during the *uddeh* period due to the death of her husband; possibility of repayment of alimony (amending Article 1112); reviewing and amending Article 1117 of the Civil Code regarding the employment of the husband and the wife; reviewing and amending Article 1119 of the Civil Code concerning the absolute representation of woman in divorce. These suggestions are within the recent agenda of the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs.

D. Removing ambiguities and implementing problems of the laws and regulations concerning women and the family.

E. Adopting laws and regulations in the field of women and the family, employment, working conditions and social security, and social issues.

➤ **Strategic objective I.3. Achieve legal literacy.**

Publications

- Creation of numerous personal websites and weblogs in virtual space to increase legal awareness
- Supporting the newspapers and other public magazines to have columns about legal issues and women's rights
- Distributing legal brochures on various issues by the General Directorate of Public Training of the Judiciary

II) Obstacles and challenges

- Limited number of professors, teachers and trainers in human rights in comparison with the other fields in law
- Lack of interest among law students to study human rights in comparison with other academic fields.
- Certain cultural factors and incorrect beliefs of non-accepting the social presence of women despite the whole progress made by women.
- The mere existence of certain personal opinions or family tradition for concealing violence without any referring to a consultant or even referring to police or the court, if any legal remedy is needed.
- Imposing unilateral sanctions on Iran and its effects on allocating training and education budgets.

J. Women and the media

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

➤ Strategic objective J. 1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.

The Iranian women, by employing various media, have raised their general knowledge about their own rights and the ways of demanding them from the concerned authorities. Nowadays, we are witnessing women's active presence in different types of mass media including electronic, print, and new age media. Their active presence in mass media accompanied by a gender-based approach is considered as one of the most important factors that has affected the policy-making process. That is to say, in some cases a documentary report, film, article, or news created by a knowledgeable woman working in the media has helped the public, particularly the relative authorities to become more familiar with women's issues and find the appropriate solutions for the problems.

The allocation of more than half of the university seats to female applicants for graduate programs in journalism, communication sciences, and program making, provision of legal protection to identify and seriously punish the perpetrators of the objectification of women in media by the Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology, and the establishment of the first Iranian Women News Agency (IWNA) with an aim to disseminating information on women as well as mentioning their capacities and concerns are among the notable measures implemented to achieve the strategic objective J. 1.

The following can be mentioned among the most significant objectives achieved during the past 5 years by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), in place of the most popular broadcast media amongst women:

- Offering graduate programs such as media management for female directors working in national media by IRIB University
- Integrating specialized women issues into the curriculum of all of IRIB faculties
- Launching a radio network on family as well as labeling IRIB-Channel 2 as the Family and Children or Life Network
- Launching a virtual network and allocating a considerable portion of its programs to women and family issues
- Increasing the number of female experts taken managerial, technical, production, research, training, performance, and anchoring positions
- Growing the number of research projects conducted on women issues with a remarkable annual record of 23 projects
- Compiling a comprehensive document to portray women's presence in various aspects including social, educational, political, familial, and sports through the national media
- Taking the first steps to compile a comprehensive document on program making for children and teenagers
- Broadcasting many nationwide TV and radio programs on various issues regarding women, in particular those aimed at women's human dignity and their high status in Islam, women and family, 12 critical areas of Beijing Platform for Action, and so on

- Appointing an advisor on women's affairs in IRIB to increase women's participation in policy-making through the national media

It is noteworthy to mention that many Iranian females by presenting in virtual space express their opinions, especially about the need for supporting women's rights. There are also a few websites created by social activists to focus on women's issues.

➤ **Strategic objective J. 2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in media.**

The active presence of successful women in the media is a good role model by itself for the Iranian women to learn how to create balance among their personal, familial, and social responsibilities as well as actualizing their rights in this regard.

The following table shows the produced programs on women and family by IRIB various national and international TV and radio channels and networks during 2009-2013

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total	209411 (hours)	253703 (hours)	29992 (hours)	29727 (hours)	350217 (hours)

At present, there are quite a large number of women working in IRIB. They consist of 9132 people, including 143, 263, 264, and 91 people working in managerial, anchoring, producing, and program directing positions respectively. Most of the above said female personnel have academic education, that is to say, 5024, 810, and 82 people have BA or BS, MA or MS, and PhD respectively. The high school diploma holders also consist of 1946 individuals.

II) Obstacles and challenges

- Paving the ground for increasing the number of women's senior executive positions in the media, specially in national Television and Radio
- Lack of the production of programs focused on awareness raising and empowering women and family despite all the efforts made and produced programs so far
- Preparing the ground for increasing the budget allocation on supporting the production of the programs aimed at providing purposeful training for women and family

K. Women and the environment

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

➤ Strategic objective K.1. Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels.

Considering the national policies concerning the right to a healthy environment and the responsibility to conserve it, three major issues can be mentioned here regarding the policies and the initiatives for participation of women in this field:

- Creation of a management position for women in environment issues, decision-making regarding planning, organizational issues and operationalizing both national and international action plans for protection of the environment.
- Prediction of monitoring roles for women through educating experts, empowering and encouraging increased participation, promoting environmental knowledge in university courses and targeted advocacy by NGOs and cultural entities, all in all in order to enjoy from "individual potentials" of women as mothers or wives, and to use potentials of women's groups and trade unions as farmers, workers, professionals, artisans etc., and their "organizational and social potentials" in decision-making roles.
- The Department of Environment, the High Council of Environment Conservation, the Ministry of Industries, the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad, and municipalities are the executive bodies that are directly involved in issues concerning women and the environment. The activities of these organizations are focused on women's participation in decision-making, training and facilitation of the access to the environmental information, and effective strategies for sustainable development including the risky patterns of production and consumption. The following can be referred:
 - Appointment of women as members of the High Council of Environment Conservation under the Presidency.
 - Holding national and provincial seminars on the role of women in environment and participating in scientific and specialized international conferences and presenting papers by women experts on environmental issues.
 - Supporting Women's NGOs active in protecting environment (18 percent of all NGOs).
 - Planning for involving women especially in courses of basic sciences in the field of producing clean energies.

Also, there are the following decision-making procedures in DOE realizing the right and responsibilities of women in environment:

- Heading of the Department of Environment that is also a Vice Presidency position has been with women for thirteen years. Also, within DOE, deputies for Training and Research and the Marine Environment are with women. The DOE head has a special attention to the participation of women in environmental decision-making and promotion of women in sustainable development and conservation of environment and this is being realized through formal and non-formal training and education for more preparations for decision-making and -taking.

- The number of women employed in DOE are 1171 and 40% of the deputies are women: 3 female managers, 1 female advisor, 10 female deputies of the General Directors, and 81 female heads of groups, 57 female experts. These figures show a significant growth.
- The education level of the employment women in DOE are as follows: 7 PhD, 215 Masters and 194 BA.

➤ **Strategic objective K.2. Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development.**

- Encouraging and supporting women's NGOs in order to increase their participation in environmental issues and creating appropriate conditions for their increased participation
- Promoting participation of women in environmental programmes due to their role in increased public awareness and decreasing environmental problems
- Signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Labor and the Technical and Vocational Training Organization regarding the green employments and women's entrepreneurship in environmental issues - which may play a role in social and cultural promotion of women and their employment especially in supporting women headed households as green entrepreneurs.
- Creating the possibility for participation of women in environmental management of the society in form of organized intellectual groups through cooperation with rural and urban councils
- Providing formal and informal training courses through various means especially to people to promote women's awareness in sustainable development and conservation of the environment and the natural resources
- Formulating programs for awareness raising and active participation of women with an emphasis on their vital role in realizing sustainable patterns of production and consumption
- Preparing the grounds for public training, developing promotional programs, designing appropriate patterns for training, increasing awareness campaigns, especially through the mass media and giving more attention to special role that can be played by the Radio and Television
- Encouraging MA and PhD students and centers of higher education to carry out research on the role of women in environment
- Designing national policies and strategies concerning promotion of sustainable patterns, encouraging more efficiency in energy consumption and decreasing the waste as much as possible

➤ **Strategic objective K.3. Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional, and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.**

- Developing social networks and strengthening of NGOs, implementing similar projects through public mobilization such as strengthening of volunteers of environment protection, local groups, using the local capacities in each region and respecting traditions in every place

- Holding workshops, specialized meetings, and conferences at national, regional and international levels concerning the environmental issues and evaluation of the existing policies
- Creating a comprehensive data system on environment and legal issues with an aim to evaluate policies and measures

II) Obstacles and challenges

- Imposing energy sanctions and subsequently money and currency sanctions against Iran have been much effective in increasing the role of women in decision-making concerning the environment and sustainable development, in a way that limitations in financial resources have affected the policy-makers to allocate credits to livelihood issues, and infrastructure industries, and thus there are less credits for activating the role of women in environmental businesses
- Environmental pollutions (dust, water pollution of borderline rivers and the Sea) have had negative effects on health, life quality and social activities of the women as the head of family.

L. The girl-child

I) Progress status, legal measures, national policies and strategies

➤ Strategic objective L.1. Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl-child.

- Considering the principle of non-discrimination as delineated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there have been various planning activities by the national body of the Rights of the Child with participation of the representatives of the related agencies and departments in a way that girl children are behaved equally far from any discrimination. Also, cultural activities have been planned by the media and religious leaders to train families about the human dignity of girl children.
- There is a full equality between girls and boys in cases where the government should support children such as free education, health services, treatment, social supports especially when the child has no guardian or the guardian does not properly behave the child, support services against poverty, insurance coverage as well as pensions.
- Regarding the support within the family and according to the laws that make the father to provide the costs of the life for all children including boys and girls equally or give the responsibility of proper nurturing of children to the parents there is no difference among children. The girl children have a suitable position within the society due to the education and training activities.
- Establishment of a national committee for children growth and development, and formulation of a document concerning the children growth and development: The committee has been launched as a result of a tripartite cooperation of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Training and the State Welfare Organization with an aim to increase the services' kinds and coverage, coordinate and prevent from parallel activities.

➤ Strategic objective L.2. Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls.

- The human dignity of girl children has been trained to families through cultural activities by means of local media and religious leaders, especially in deprived regions with old traditions. Also, behavioral and psychological training courses on the rights of the girl child have been carried out by the Society of Parents and Teachers; some of the old attitudes have changed and the girl children enjoy enough admiration in the society.

➤ Strategic objective L.3. Promote and protect the rights of the girl-child and increase awareness of her needs and potential.

- In addition to the laws such as the Law to Support Children, the Civil Code and the punishment codes that provide boys and girls with special support, the law concerning the rights and responsibilities of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran has paid special attention to children especially to the girl children. As it was mentioned, parents have been trained on the rights of the child, potentials of the children, characteristics of the girl child, their growth, and proper behavior with them through formal and informal ways, especially in schools and through the Radio and Television channels.

➤ **Strategic objective L.4. Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training.**

Various programs have been implemented to provide the equal opportunities for girls and boys as follow:

- Providing facilities for promotion of public education and increasing the access of the girl children in the deprived regions to the formal education, in particular through the boarding schools.
- Recognizing the opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses in the vocational training for developing the quality and the quantity of technical and vocational courses and training women teachers for extending the skills training among girl children.
- Implementing the project of the Work Internships among girl children who have left school
- Empowerment of female managers and teachers in nomadic schools
- Predicting holding workshops, training courses and specialized meetings in order to empower the experts working in the field of women
- Developing counseling and consultancy in all educational levels for decreasing students' problems with an aim to keep students within the training system
- Promoting resources efficiency and increasing the governmental investments on providing training facilities and increasing the education coverage
- Developing the pre-school training especially in rural and bilingual regions
- Providing children in deprived regions with free stationary, food and clothes as well as transportation services
- Giving attention to a happier atmosphere in schools among girls students through holding scientific, cultural and art contests
- Extensive and effective promotion of awareness and interest among parents about the education of their child/children
- Diversifying education methods through full presence, half presence and non-presence education
- Implementing various projects such as attracting all the students to the compulsory education according to the international obligations
- Implementing a project of half-presence education for girls who had already left school
- Implementing the project of "*Saba-ye Mehr*" to improve the education conditions of potential girl students in deprived regions
- Carrying out the project of "*Meshkat Dokhtaran*" to improve the skills and mutual communications among those who deal with the girl students
- Developing special life skills training for deprived regions
- Implementing the project of the empowerment of the rural women
- Launching the Houses of Information Technologies
- Using the mass media in order to promote the literacy
- Establishing a national television channel for training
- Planning for decreasing the geographical, economic, racial and linguistic factors that impedes the education

➤ **Strategic objective L.5. Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition.**

- Increasing the life skills of the girl children through holding training, vocational and health classes
- Implementing various projects of health and its assessment in schools throughout the country with a special view to the health of the girl child
- Studying and reviewing the statistics and the data on the education and health situation (physical and mental health) of the students by the Ministry of Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran
- Implementing a project of the creating health houses for girl children
- Planning for developing a culture of proper nutrition for the girl children in schools
- Expansion of educational and legal counseling centers for dealing with abnormal behaviors among girls
- Providing medical services in rehabilitation boarding centers by the physicians, psychiatrists, nurses and health workers in order to improve the health conditions, and to treat communicable diseases, and to prevent epidemics and to carry periodic checkups
- Providing various services of occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy in order to avoid limitations resulting from the disability and increased morbidity, contributing to resolve mental and emotional problems, family counseling, and reduce on family pressures resulting from disability
- In 2009, 49300 children below six years of age, suffering from malnutrition, who are living in relatively poor families, were covered by a food program. All these children received a food basket of 50,000 rials on a monthly basis.
- Establishment of health centers, treatment centers, issuing notebooks of insurance of treatment services (used for prescription with decreased fee), launching family physicians, and presence of health workers, midwives and physicians in villages, all in all have led to an improvement of health among girls. By now, 17000 health centers and 2400 treatment centers have been established in villages and about 5500 physicians and 4500 midwives are working over there and provide the rural people with various treatment and health services.
- Distribution of iron supplements: The Ministry of Education, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education have taken measures to provide girl students in high schools (both governmental and non-governmental) and ten percent of the female students at guidance level with iron supplements.
- Distribution of milk and bread: All newcomers to the pre-school level, students of other educational levels and teachers and the school personnel have a quota of two meals of free milk of 250 cc per week. The secretariat of the Committee of Milk and Bread in Schools has taken measures to distribute milk among all students throughout the country and the enriched bread with certain minerals, especially for students in urban areas, food and clothing for students in rural and deprived regions, notebooks for distribution among disadvantaged rural and urban children, provision of food stuff to prepare three meals in boarding schools and the technical and professional teacher training institutions.

➤ **Strategic objective L.6. Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labour and protect young girls at work.**

- Prediction of a law to ban to employ children in the Labor Law of the Islamic Republic of Iran which has decreased the economic exploitation of children. If the law is breached, it can be sued.
- Increasing governmental and private training centers in urban and rural areas
- Endeavour for creating a proper cultural attitude towards girl children for preventing using girl children in economic sectors
- Providing low income families with financial support and nutrition baskets to prevent forcing children to work in deprived areas

➤ **Strategic objective L.7. Eradicate violence against the girl-child.**

- Providing informal training through State Welfare Organization, Imam Khomeini's Relief Foundation, Ministry of Health, Red Crescent Society and others for improving the life conditions of girl children (such as prevention from violence, forced marriage, etc.)
- Promotion of knowledge and skills of the parents and the teachers in dealing with children in all schools at all levels throughout the country
- Amending certain laws and regulations that are effective in the life of the girl child (custody law, increasing the minimum age of marriage)
- Mental and social support program for children and their families – implemented for the first time in Bandar Abass in a deprived area and can be regarded as a pattern for replication in other deprived regions.
- Planning for Intervention Model of Social Health in 13 provinces with a special attention to the deprived and marginalized urban areas and the needs of special groups
- Social Emergency Program
- Telephone line of the State Welfare Organization for urgent intervention in times of risk for children
- Training and retraining of managers (170 hours), teachers (180 hours) and applicants for kindergarten a nursery (70 hours) with subjects such as child psychology, rights of the child, introduction to the behavioral disorders of children, etc.
- Participation in the intervention project on determinants of the social growth and development of children in coordination with the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education and with participation of the World Health Organization (WHO)
- Providing the families of the mentally disabled people with social work services for studying their social and economic situation and endeavor to decrease their problems and establishing a working relationship between the family members and the counseling center in order to promote the mental health of the disabled child.
- Establishing a small refuge house for those low mentally disabled children who are without guardians or do not have effective guardians and providing them with various rehabilitative, cultural and social services and finding appropriate volunteer families for giving the custody of the children to the them in form of adoption or temporary trustee.

➤ **Strategic objective L.8. Promote the girl-child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life.**

- Signing memoranda of understanding with active international bodies in growth and development of children in order to achieve the goals related to the integrated growth and development of children
- Establishing school students councils and assembly for facilitating the students' participation in decision-making processes
- Increasing access to the training and skills in order to increase the vocational opportunities and more participation in social activities
- Expanding the educational titles regarding the awareness of the girls regarding participation in social, economic and political life
- Educating the special book of social sciences in schools for introducing social roles among school students
- Attracting young girls' participation in social non-governmental activities
- Various activities of the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adolescents in deprived regions of the world
- Launching fixed cultural and art centers (similar to the fixed urban centers) that provide services to children; the mobile cultural and art centers (53 centers) cover 1000 villages.
- 48 post centers that cover 700 villages through sending books and training packages
- The Center for Art and Literary Creativity which is responsible for holding art and literary contests for children; the center is involved to discover the potentials and capacities of the children in art and literature.
- Launching the project of "Each Child One Skill" for the first time and holding the bigger festival of the "Family, Child and Skill Learning" through designing and producing training packages of the skills, specially produced for children of 3 to 7 in various vocational fields such information technologies, robotics, electronics, etc.

➤ **Strategic objective L.9. Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl-child.**

- The consolidation of the family and its security is an effective factor in supporting the girl children in the family and improvement of their situation. Therefore, the family consolidation and the respect to the rights of the girl child have been among major components in planning in order to prevent violence against girl children. For instance, the training courses for the families of the employees have been held based on this approach. Also, the courses for the young couples in universities follow the same model and train the students about the correct behavior with children.

II) Obstacles and challenges

The unilateral coercive measures and sanctions against Iran have limited the existed financial resource and have affected the process of priorities. The sanctions have limited strong mechanisms for planning and policy-making in the best interest of the child, monitoring mechanisms on all families and their behavior with girl children. However, the new government has tried to decrease the problems through appropriate planning such as boarding schools and health centers, etc.

Section Three: Data and statistics

a) Establishing a core set of national indicators for monitoring progress in gender equality

According to the mandatory laws of the I. R. of Iran, the High Council of Statistics is the highest decision-making body for national statistical activities, especially the setting of macro statistical policies and assigning the statistical tasks to the government agencies, etc. The Council is also responsible for preparing and updating the statistical frameworks to fulfil the country's planning requirements including the national development goals. Compiling the statistical definitions, concepts, criteria, and classifications are also among the Council's duties.

Since 2007, the National Population and Housing Census has been conducted every five years, however in some cases a complementary census may also be held at irregular intervals to provide more updated data. The conducted censuses by Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) as well as the reports of the National Organization for Civil Registration are considered as the main sources of demographic data in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Since 2006, SCI has taken into account a gender approach in collecting and analyzing specific statistical data related to labor force and employment. This approach has also affected the hiring of male and female interviewers.

On the basis of Article 230 of the Fifth National Development Plan (2011–2015), the government shall draft and adopt a Comprehensive Program on Women and Family Development in collaboration with the related organizations and bodies, including The Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs with an aim to strengthen the family bonds and women's status in social areas and to vindicate women's Sharia and legal rights in all aspects.

The program also contains provisions on consolidating the family institution, amending the laws and regulations, preventing social vulnerabilities, developing and organizing economic livelihoods affairs giving priority to home-based employment for women-headed households and females with an unqualified male breadwinner, procuring social security, providing leisure times opportunities, conducting research projects, developing the culture of modesty and hijab, health promotion, increasing the capabilities of non-governmental organizations, skills promotion of women executives and elites, development of international interactions, deepening religious beliefs, and reforming the administrative and organizational structure of women and family issues.

To put into practice Article 230, some of the concerned organizations and bodies have developed gender specific indicators to measure the status of health, hygiene, education, etc. For example, the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education in some cases independently or with the assistance of other relevant organizations has collected certain exclusive data by doing research projects led into a better understanding of mother-child health status as well as reproductive health.

In this regard, the results of a Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) done in 2000 across the country shows that some important mother-child health indicators such as maternal health care services, births attended by skilled health personnel, infant mortality rate, and under-five mortality rate have improved. Moreover, in 2005 a national and expansive survey was conducted with a considerable sample size by using an Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (IMES)

to measure all reproductive health indicators. In addition, the Iran's Multiple Indicator Demographic and Health Survey (IrMIDHS) administered in 2010, provided additional and even more useful data on health issues such as the prevalence of chronic diseases among women, the prevalence of disability among population, and the rate of accidents not led to death. The survey results are of great importance to assess the implementation of health programs, the country's National Development Plans, as well as MDGs.

In addition to those above-mentioned studies, two more surveys titled Iran Fertility Transition Survey (IFTS) and Iran Low Fertility Survey (ILFS) were undertaken in selected provinces in 2003 and 2005, respectively by Tehran University and in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education and The Australian National University. Death registration system is among the collected data by Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education that can provide a valuable base to measure the indicators emphasised in Beijing Platform for Action.

It is worth noting that the aforesaid indicators are used to measure women's status merely in health and hygiene, education, as well as employment areas, while there are other prioritized issues related to women and family such as strengthening the family foundation, the proportion of women in decision-taking position, including the number of female MPs, women managers in private sector, women managers in the judiciary and executive power, and women's special vulnerabilities that are needed to be measured and evaluated regularly through statistical indicators.

b) Minimum Set of Gender Indicators

To collect and compile the UN agreed MSGI, the Statistical Center of Iran is responsible for collecting and releasing the following indicators:

- Average number of hours spent on unpaid domestic work, by sex
- Average number of hours spent on paid and unpaid work combined (total work burden), by sex
- Labor force participation rate for 15-24 and 15+, by sex
- Proportion of employed who are own-account workers, by sex
- Proportion of employed who are working as contributing family workers, by sex
- Proportion of employed who are employer, by sex
- Percentage distribution of employed population by sector (Agriculture; Industry; Services), each sex
- Youth unemployment by sex
- Gender gap in wages
- Proportion of employed working part-time, by sex
- Proportion of individuals using the Internet, by sex of household head
- Proportion of individuals using mobile/cellular telephones, by sex of household head

- Proportion of households with access to mass media (radio, TV, Internet), by sex of household head
- Literacy rate of persons aged 15-24 years old, by sex
- Adjusted net enrolment ratio in primary education, by sex
- Gross enrolment ratio in secondary education, by sex
- Gender parity index in enrolment at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels
- Share of female science, engineering, manufacturing, and construction graduates at tertiary level
- Proportion of females among tertiary education teachers or professors
- Primary education completion rate, by sex
- Contraceptive prevalence among women aged 15-49
- Under-five mortality rate, by sex
- Maternal mortality ratio
- Women's share of government ministerial positions
- Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament
- Women's share of managerial positions
- Percentage of female judges
- Adolescent fertility rate

In recent years, producing and updating statistics, especially on gender-sensitive indicators has been emphasized as an important issue by concerned authorities. To answer this demand, the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs as a national machinery for gender issues has held several joint meeting with Statistical Center of Iran and has reached an initial agreement with the head of SCI (who is also the secretary of the High Council of Statistics) on submitting its for the membership of the said Council to relevant authorities relying on legal reasons.

At the above-mentioned joint sessions, the UN Minimum Set of Gender Indicators have also been discussed and considering the calculation of certain indicators in the country, including economic structures, participation in productive activities, access to resources, education, and health care; the SCI was assigned to make its experts' a top priority to cover the indicators have not yet been noticed. Moreover, the SCI was asked to compile gender-sensitive indicators based on a national-religious approach and appropriate to cultural, social, political, and economic characteristics of the Iranian society in order to be presented to concerned international addressees.

It is noteworthy that the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, in addition to the above-mentioned taken measures, has carried out the following activities to promote statistical data regarding women and family issues and to collect gender-related data:

1. Establishing regular contact with the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education to get updated information and statistics on women's and family sanitation and health

2. Signing an MOU with the Ministry of Interior to have access to its comprehensive social database with a view of compiling indicators concerning women and girls' social vulnerabilities as well as collecting the related data through the Ministry's website
3. Negotiating with statistical data collecting and processing companies to launch a database on women and family. According to a preliminary agreement, the database will be structured based on the following sections and subjects:

Sections	Categories	Indicators
1	population	demographic characteristics by sex, province, city, and town
2	household characteristics	family and household status by sex, province, city, and town
3	marriage/matrimony	marital and divorce status by sex, province, city, and town
4	literacy and education	literacy and education rate by sex, province, city, and town
5	economic activity	economic activity, employment, and unemployment rate by sex, province, city, and town
6	health care and treatment	health care and treatment index by sex, province, city, and town
7	insurance and social security	insurance and social security rate by sex, province, city, and town
8	social vulnerabilities	social vulnerabilities and depravity index by sex, province, city, and town
9	life style	life style index (nutrition, leisure time, access to media and Internet, etc.) by sex, province, city, and town
10	dwelling and resting places	housing type and the rate of access to public and private places by sex and province
11	household facilities and services	vehicle's type, access to drinkable water, types of fuel used in homes, and subsidy

d) The undertaken process to collect data on the situation of particular groups of women

The SCI is duty-bound to conduct a national population and housing census every five years and collecting data on particular women groups including rural and older women is among their duties. Research centers under the supervision of HIV/AIDS Control Office affiliated to the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education are responsible for collecting statistical data on women living with HIV and AIDS.

Section Four: Emerging priorities

- a) Our country's key priorities for action over the next 3 to 5 years are classified as follows:
- **Gender-disaggregated Statistics and information**
 - Planning to compile and complete domestic gender indicators
 - Interaction and negotiation with related bodies to gather gender-disaggregated data during data collection process and census implementation
 - Creating and completing a comprehensive database on women
 - **Strengthening families foundation through the following measures:**
 - Empowering the family to encounter modern world challenges
 - Reducing generation gap
 - Reducing the divorce rate
 - Facilitating marriage preparation process and strengthening youth to assume the responsibility for establishing their own lives
 - Providing trainings courses on both premarital and post-marital communication skills
 - Developing specialized family-based counseling centers
 - **Reduction of gaps and shortcomings towards women's access to their Sharia and legal rights through** interaction with Women's Faction of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, the Judiciary, as well as religious authorities and institutions
 - **Promotion of women's status in decision-making through the following steps:**
 - Training and empowering women in managerial and decision-making arenas
 - Interaction between the Executive and Legislative Powers to increase the number of female MPs in the Islamic Consultative Assembly
 - Creating a databank on women executives and elites
 - Encouraging and lobbying with the public and private bodies to increase women's presence at higher managerial levels
 - **Mainstreaming a gender justice approach in all aspects of the country's development plans besides integrating a special chapter on women and strengthening a monitoring and evaluation system regarding women issues**

- **Strengthening women's national machinery and reviewing relational mechanism to enhance intersectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration among all concerned bodies**
- **Increasing women's economic participation by taking the following actions:**
 - Expanding and empowering the vocational and scientific skills of the job seekers
 - Creating employment opportunities in particular for university graduates
 - Acknowledging and providing grounds for implementation of entrepreneurship projects proposed by skilled women across the country
 - Supporting home-based jobs and expanding women's micro-enterprises
 - Integrating the projects for supporting women economic empowerment in the national budget attempted to provide the required financial resources
 - Increasing women's access to financial resources and credits to implement entrepreneurship projects in various fields in addition to agriculture sector
 - Revising the Inheritance Laws, especially the laws on personal statutes of non-shiite Iranians to provide women's more access to land

It is worth noting that because of job market saturation for academic graduates, there is a need to establish a more harmonized policy among concerned authorities regarding the admission process appropriate to present market job.

- **Interacting, supporting, activating, as well as expanding the capabilities of NGOs and civil institutions in order to benefit from their capacities and potentialities towards empowerment programs and reduction of women's vulnerabilities**
- **Developing international interactions aimed at portraying the real picture of Muslim women and introducing the Iranian women's capabilities as well**
- **Promotion of women's education and health**
 - Reinforcing the programs for quantitative and qualitative development of women's integrated healthcare system (both inside and outside the hospital) and reinforcing the programs on mother's health in remote and deprived regions based on the framework of the Fifth Development Plan
 - Promotion of the social security medical coverage for women in particular women heads of households
 - Provision of the housewives' health insurance
 - Supporting amateur and athletics sports for girls and women

- Advancing the quality of education for male and female students to play an interactive gender-based role and to prepare them to assume appropriate and balanced familial and social roles
- Promotion of women's increased participation in higher education, particularly in academic disciplines such as natural sciences, technology, and engineering

b) The following issues are among priorities should be taken into consideration in our country's the post-2015 development agenda:

- Bearing in mind the cultural, historical, and religious characteristics of local communities while compiling the national development strategies
- Taking supportive measures to facilitate and provide unlimited universal access to technology, knowledge, and information as a worldwide asset
- Paying a focused and comprehensive attention to main factors hindering the achievement of MDGs all over the world
- Considering the importance of strengthening, supporting, and preserving family as a sacred institution as well as guaranteeing the women's full-fledged participation in private and public decision-taking arenas
- Concerning some ignored critical issues by MDGs such as, inter alia, violence against women
- Taking a gender-sensitive approach to all MDGs alongside a specific goal to establish gender justice
- Considering the impact of coercive measures and bi-multilateral sanctions as an obstacle to development
- Paying special attention to disappointing situation of women and girls living in situations of armed conflicts or under foreign occupation

Annexes to national reviews

1. The process of preparing the national review

The General Directorate for International Affairs of the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs to fulfill its mandate to prepare a national review on "Beijing+20" developed a working plan. After holding preparatory working sessions with the experts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the first specialized meeting for formulation of the national report was held with the experts on international affairs and those responsible for the women's affairs in various agencies and departments in October 2013. The presence of the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, as the highest national machinery on women's issues in this meeting and her emphasis on necessity of effective cooperation of different governmental agencies in the preparation process of the national review in line with her communication with the Ministers in order to achieve their cooperation and assistance in preparing the related reports proves the importance of the issue in the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs.

The purpose of the meeting was to describe the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to determine the necessity of formulation of a Comprehensive National Report on the taken measures and initiatives by the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this meeting, the UN Women suggested format for preparing the report was also introduced.

According to the decision taken in the meeting, the representatives of the Ministries and the related agencies were missioned to collect and prepare their own progress reports in the twelve critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action through holding meetings and inter-agency communications. In February 2014, to follow-up for collecting all the reports by the General Directorate for International Affairs of the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs and subsequently after launching a data bank and reviewing of the received reports, the second specialized meeting to formulate the national review was held with an aim to establish specialized and scientific working groups and to divide the related activities among themselves. In this meeting, it was also decided to review the reports based on the twelve critical areas of concern within the next one month.

When the specialized working groups accomplished their reports, the General Directorate for International Affairs held the last specialized meeting with the presence of the members of the working groups in March 2014 in order to complete the section one on achievements and challenges since 1995 and finalize the whole review.

Considering the importance of the statistics in preparation of the Beijing+20 Report, the Vice Presidency met the head of the Statistics Center of Iran, aimed at having their advocacy support for an active and effective cooperation and assistance during the formulation process of the national review as well as explaining the need for the disaggregated statistical data based on gender indicators in various fields.

2. Some detailed information

The training activities and programs to economically empower women are listed below:

Titles of some of the implemented programmes to empower women headed households under the cover of the State Welfare Organization

- Establishment of the Self-Help Groups of the women headed households
- Social Security Insurance of the rural and nomadic girls and women
- Financial micro credit services
- Community-based empowerment for Poverty reduction
- Assisting women's physical and mental health in families in need
- Identifying the clients who are prone to rehabilitation and determining the degree of their skills and performance
- Monitoring the employment projects of the clients of the State Welfare Organization and controlling the quality of their productions
- Finding employment opportunities for the clients who are ready to work and preparing the grounds for involving the trained clients in labor market
- Payment of entrepreneurship loans, preparing the materials and equipment
- Creating the appropriate working opportunities for potential clients
- Preparing the grounds for the clients to have access to bank facilities
- Vocation and technical training in order to promote the scientific awareness of the clients

Titles of some of the implemented programs to empower women by the Imam Khomeini's Relief Foundation

- Identifying the clients who are prone to rehabilitation and determining the degree of their skills and performance
- Monitoring the employment projects of the clients and controlling the quality of their productions
- Finding employment opportunities for the clients who are ready to work and preparing the grounds for involving the trained clients in labor market
- Payment of entrepreneurship loans, preparing the materials and equipment
- Preparing the grounds for the clients to have access to bank facilities (using the credits for the small-sized enterprises with quick returns and other credit lines).
- Preparing the grounds for the loan allocation to rural women headed households through the credits of the Project of Hazrat Zeinab (pbuh)
- Preparing the grounds for the group or collective self-sufficiency through production or training workshops
- Technical or logistics support from the entrepreneur clients
- Assisting clients in marketing their productions
- Providing the space for their self-sufficiency activities
- Social Security Insurance of those involved in self-sufficiency projects

Titles of some of the empowerment training courses by the Imam Khomeini's Relief Foundation

- Providing clients with consultancy services in ethical, physical, mental, familial, employment, educational, legal and training issues.
- Providing clients with technical and vocational training in order to raise their skills and awareness.

Some of the activities by the Tehran Municipality Empowerment Center for Women Headed Households

- Providing women with sustainable livelihoods and creating suitable and secure vocational opportunities
- Facilitating the process of gaining technical and vocational permissions
- Facilitating the access to the counseling services and social work
- Creating the access to diverse vocational opportunities
- Creating Kousar skill training centers in all 22 districts of Tehran municipality
- Launching, strengthening and developing self-employment markets
- Creating interaction between Kowsar skill training centers and self-employment markets
- Endeavour to expand a culture of futurism and facilitating the enjoyment of insurance coverage for the target group
- Establishing cooperatives and trade unions for women headed households
- Developing supportive and welfare programmes and services
- Advocating for support from various governmental bodies for empowerment of the target group
- Conducting applied research and actions for empowerment of women headed households
- Comprehensive and effective planning and for empowerment of women headed households and their families
- Helping to solve problems of women headed families in various fields of family or social issues
- Guiding and enriching the leisure time of women heads of households and their families
- Cooperation and exchange of information and experiences with relevant organizations and initiatives at national and international level

Titles of some of the empowerment training courses by the Tehran Municipality Empowerment Center

- Developing and conducting training and skill-upgrading courses
- Increasing vocational training levels and helping the clients to learn more vocational and marketing skills
- Introducing the target group with the Labor Law and the regulations of social security

3. Case studies and good practice examples

A. The project to increase the compulsory educational coverage of the students with an emphasis on attracting vulnerable or deprived children and girls of primary and secondary education

The project was implemented with an aim to attract and cover those students that have to be educated but have been deprived of primary and secondary education and in this way, provide them with various services such as preparing the list of deprived children to education, awareness raising, scholarships, purchase of stationery and clothing, development of boarding schools as well as schools with dormitories or schools in central villages, distance learning, and the establishment of additional classes. The goals of the project were to create equal educational opportunities, eliminate gender inequalities, increase the educational coverage, and decrease the obstacles in the way of providing education for children deprived of it.

In 2008, due to the implementation of the project, 25,964 students (14,830 girls and 11,134 boys) who had left primary schools and 31,092 (16,851 girls and 14,241 boys) students who had left secondary schools returned to the formal educational system.

It is worthwhile to add that a program of blocking the formal educational system to the illiterates (they are covered in other plans) has been carried out since the same time to guarantee a full educational coverage at primary level so that at least 10,575 people have been targeted to return to the educational system.

B. The project to decrease the maternal mortality through the National Maternal Mortality Surveillance System

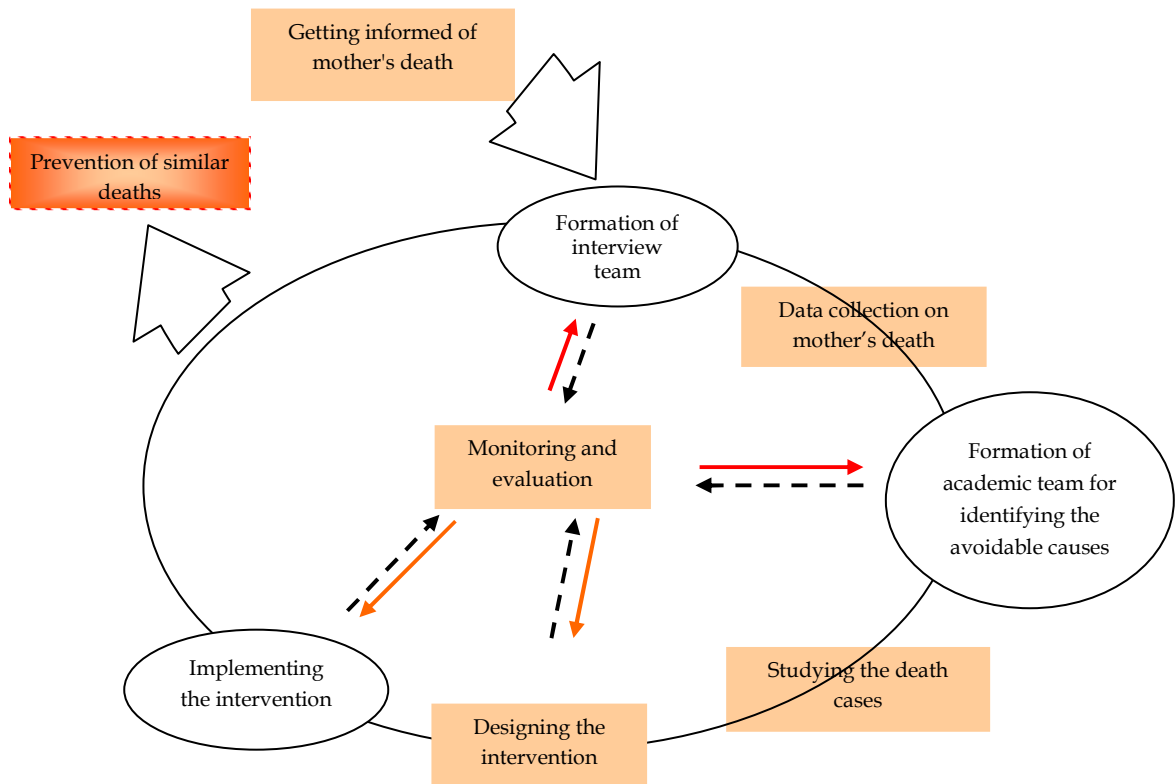
During the recent years, a great deal of noteworthy programs have been designed and implemented to improve mothers' health in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the National Maternal Mortality Surveillance System.

In this regard, the identification of the causes and effective determinants of maternal mortality would play a major role to recognize the status of development in the society and explain the existing situation of mothers' health in order to take appropriate measures to improve maternal health. Therefore, the National Maternal Mortality Surveillance System has been initiated in the country since 2001 with an aim to reduce maternal mortality rate due to the effects of pregnancy and childbirth and in line with the realization of national and international objectives and commitments. Implementation of this program aimed at identifying the factors contributed to maternal mortality during the pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum periods through discovering the process that each mother has followed until her death, identifying avoidable causes of death, designing appropriate interventions to solve the problems, and preventing the occurrence of similar deaths.

According to ICD-10 definition, maternal mortality means the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.

Since the Maternal Mortality Surveillance System is concerned about the exact registration of mortality data, the aforesaid definition has been announced to the whole covered units so that

after immediate reporting of a mother's death, the details of her death would be documented through certain questionnaires filled by expert teams and considered in academic committees as well as the Maternal Mortality Reduction Committee and finally the essential intervention would be designed and implemented based on the findings of the investigation. Now, the program has been launched in the whole country and is being monitored and evaluated according to the predetermined indicators. The figure below presents the procedure and measures set out in implementation of the Surveillance System.



C. The Iran Banking Scheme

The Iran Banking Scheme was implemented in 2010 with an aim to expand vocational opportunities for women, help vulnerable people, reduce poverty among women, make familiar the rural and urban women with banking activities, and encourage them to start saving accounts. The scheme is consisted of four projects as follows:

❖ ***Irاندokht***

All single girls above 18 years of age can join the *Irاندokht* scheme and open a current account without accessing to personal chequebooks. They can also use the electronic banking facilities of the Agriculture Bank and while receiving loans for purchasing goods of basic needs, can buy life and accidents insurance services as well.

❖ ***Iranbanoo***

All housewives and women headed households in urban and rural areas can join the scheme and open a current account with accessing to personal chequebooks in various branches of the Agriculture Bank. They can enjoy electronic banking facilities such as opening a special account titled “future”, receiving loans to buy goods of basic needs or livelihood facilities, purchasing production equipment or items for their houses, as well as benefitting from services of life and accidents insurance.

❖ *Mehr-e Iran*

All urban and rural women can open a current account without accessing to chequebooks and can enjoy electronic banking facilities for buying car or goods of basic needs, benefit from services of life and accidents insurance, or even get loans for purchasing production tools or house items.

❖ *Dokhtaran-e Aftab*

All girl students studying in an accredited university in Iran can join this scheme and open a current account without accessing to personal chequebooks in the Agriculture Bank. They can enjoy electronic banking and get loans for buying educational tools or goods of basic needs and be covered by the life and accidents insurance. The amount of the allocated loans for purchasing educational tools will be calculated on a scale of three times of their average deposit for the last six months up to a maximum of 10 million rials with a banking fee of 12 percent and a return period of 24 months. The amount of loans for buying goods of basic needs will be counted on a scale of three times of their average deposit for the last six months too and the return period will be 36 months.

The total number and amount of banking facilities paid to female addresses within the Iran Banking Scheme is summarized in the following table:

Year	2010	2011	2012
Number	346	117595	366260
Amount	7.9 (billion rials)	3122.1 (billion rials)	10911.9 (billion rials)

Source: The General Directorate of Planning and Data Analysis, Agriculture Bank