

WOMEN AND WORK IN EGYPT

TOURISM AND ICT SECTORS: A CASE STUDY

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EDITED BY OUTI KÄRKKÄINEN, ETF
October, 2010

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PREFACE

Gender is an integral component of every aspect of the economic, social, daily and private lives of individuals and societies. Different cultures determine the roles, functions, responsibilities and opportunities of each sex. They also determine access to material and immaterial resources, such as land, credit, education, training and power. Gender differences, unlike the immutable characteristics of sex, are variants that are transformed over time and from one culture to the next, as societies change.

Reflecting the norms, laws and social values of society, the differences in the status of men and women also have profound implications, among others, for how people participate in formal employment. The enabling factors of education and training have been in constant increase for women but the formal female labour market integration lags behind, undermining the efforts to reduce poverty and socially and economically empower both women and men. In order to be able to promote education, training and labour market policies that also tackle inequalities, it is important to try to better understand the complicated mechanisms that perpetuate gender inequalities in the labour markets.

This report is one of the outcomes of the Women and Work project (2008–10) of the European Training Foundation (ETF), an EU agency providing advice and assistance to partner countries in the development of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU external relations policy. The project's objective is to contribute to the promotion of gender equality policies in Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan in the areas of education, training and employment.

This report is the result of a team work and reflects the contributions of all those who worked on the project, in particular:

- Outi Kärkkäinen, Women and Work project team leader and main editor of the report
- Elena Carrero Pérez, Milena Corradini, Debora Gatelli and Agnieszka Majcher-Teleon, Women and Work project team members
- Gihan Abou-Zeid, local expert
- Jesús Alquézar Sabadie, Francesco Panzica and Natalia Popova, authors of the Egyptian background report
- Sally Hafez, translator of the report into Arabic
- North South Consultants, the company that implemented the survey and the focus groups.

The ETF would like to thank the Egyptian consultative group members for their contribution to the lively discussions and reflections on the subject of this report and the report itself. The ETF would also like to thank the Italian Cooperation who co-financed the project.

Outi Kärkkäinen
ETF Project Team Leader

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women's participation in economic activity brings benefits at both micro and macro levels. In order to be employed, women need skills for which there is a demand in the labour market. It is normally expected that labour force participation rates increase with rising levels of education and training. Furthermore, in general, the more education one has, the greater one's individual income potential is.

Women around the world are less well represented than men in labour markets. In macroeconomic terms, this lesser presence of women in the labour market leads to low returns on investment in education and training and underutilisation of productive capacity, and as a result, less economic growth. In social terms, the fact that there are fewer women earning a formal wage undermines efforts to reduce poverty. And for the individual women concerned, this state of affairs works against their economic and social empowerment and signals a lack of freedom to fulfil their full potential.

Women's labour force participation rate is very low in Egypt – 22.4% compared to 75.3% for men (ILO, 2009). It is also low as regards the increased education levels of women. Although the enrolment of females at all educational levels still lags behind that of males, the educational gender gap is too small to explain the gender gap in labour force participation. Women's skills and qualifications seem not to be utilised to their full extent in Egypt.

About 40% of women in Egypt are working in the public sector, which is being reduced and therefore provides fewer and fewer employment opportunities. The formal private sector has not yet become a big employer of women, although it is the preferable option in transition, compared to informal private sector or unpaid family work not covered by legislation or by provisions for workers' protection and social rights. Therefore it is crucial to understand the obstacles women face in entering the labour market in the formal private sector and to promote appropriate actions to overcome these obstacles. The importance of the formal private sector as an employment generator for women (and men) has been recognised. Indeed, one of the objectives of the Sixth Five-Year Plan (Government of Egypt, 2007) is to expand job opportunities in the formal private sector for women.

Female (and male) youth unemployment remains a pressing issue in many countries, particularly the female transition from school to work, which results in many women being discouraged and dropping out of the labour force. One of the reasons for women not participating in the labour market can be the limited relevance or quality of the education and training they receive. Does education not provide young women to the same extent as young men with the necessary and sufficient qualifications to enter the labour market? What do women say about it? What do employers think? Are there other important factors to be considered? What can be done to increase the employability of women? This is the focus of the ETF Women and Work project in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia. This Egyptian country report, prepared by the ETF project team together with a local expert, is based on a review of literature and documents, fieldwork undertaken by the local service provider and various comments and input received from the stakeholders involved in the process. The project's overall aim is to contribute to the promotion of gender equality policies in Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan in the areas of education, training and employment.

The study analysed the supply and demand of labour in tourism and information and communication technology (ICT) sectors by means of desk and field research. The choice of the sectors is based on their potential for economic growth and employment generation, and their status as priority sectors in the government programmes of each of the three countries covered by the study. While the information and data gathered in the company surveys and focus group discussions reflect the subjective, personal opinions of the employers and the young women involved, the samples provide useful and relevant insights into the employment situation of women in the two sectors in larger companies and in the regions where tourism and ICT industries are most highly concentrated, particularly regarding their transition from school to work, and gives an indication of the overall obstacles and opportunities for women's integration in the private sector.

Findings

The tourism and ICT sectors in Egypt are growing and are viewed by the Egyptian government as competitive sectors of the economy. Both sectors have expanded considerably over recent years and remain economically promising sectors, attracting new investments. The number of companies in these sectors is increasing and their contribution to the GDP is increasingly important. The demand for labour is relatively high in both sectors, and the ICT sector in particular should offer many new job opportunities. Therefore both the tourism and ICT sectors present great potential for women's employment in Egypt.

The research reveals, however, that women benefit less than men from the growth in the tourism and ICT sectors. In the companies surveyed for this study (100 in tourism and 100 in ICT with more than 25 employees), women constituted 10% of workers in the tourism sector and 27% in the ICT sector (compared to the general female labour force participation rate of 22%). In tourism, a higher share of women can be observed in companies with fewer than 50 employees (women's share of the total of number of employees increasing up to 20%). As the size of the company increases, the female participation rate seems to decrease. Young women in the focus group discussion explained that they constitute a more flexible and less expensive labour force (than men) in small enterprises where the employees have very little supervision. The opposite was observed in the ICT companies: women are slightly better represented in big companies.

The companies surveyed were also asked about the recruitment that had taken place during the last 12 months before the survey. Some 8% of newly recruited staff in the tourism companies were women – a lower percentage than women's average share of employees – and 31% of newly recruited staff in ICT companies were women – slightly above their current share in ICT staff. This could indicate that the potential of ICT as an employer of women is slightly higher.

Potential female employment is more equally distributed in the tourism sector across employment categories. Whereas half of the women in the tourism companies surveyed work in professional posts, 24% are middle managers and 15% are high-level managers – a surprisingly good distribution – only about 7% of female employment is accounted for by unskilled workers and about 15% by skilled workers. In contrast, in ICT almost 90% of women work in professional roles, but very few are middle managers (8%), high-level managers (2%), skilled workers (2%) or unskilled workers (1%). The nature of the ICT sector also causes a concentration of jobs in the professional category (high-level skills), but the concentration of men is nevertheless slightly lower (69% in professional posts). The percentage of women in a given category tells us how gender-balanced a given work environment is. Egyptian tourism and ICT companies are far from being gender-balanced, but the relatively high percentage of women in managerial positions in tourism means that those women may serve as role models.

There is also less horizontal concentration of female work in the tourism sector. The highest concentration of female workers is found in administrative support in the tourism sector, while in ICT 64% of women work in production (compared to 49% of men). Furthermore, the majority of newly recruited women in the 12 months preceding the survey were in production or finance in ICT¹. In part, this may be inherent in the type of work commonly found in the ICT sector, but, even in that sector, the many negative implications of gender segregation should not be overlooked: it reinforces gender stereotyping, makes women more vulnerable to job shortages, low wages and lack of promotion opportunities, and deprives women of role models. In a gender-segregated work environment, men and women also miss chances to overcome gender stereotypes and learn how to deal with one another in a respectful and assertive manner.

Taking into consideration the level of education of women in both sectors it is not surprising that they are concentrated in better-skilled and higher positions. Indeed, both tourism and ICT attract and employ better educated women: 48% of women employed in the tourism companies surveyed have a university degree, 8% have general secondary education and 43% have vocational education, while in ICT 92% of female workers have a university degree and only 5% have primary or lower education. High concentration of women in better skilled positions is a positive feature but it also means that uneducated women have very limited access to jobs in the tourism and ICT sectors while they constitute the majority of women in Egypt.

Education – higher education in ICT, and both higher education and vocational education and training (VET) in tourism – certainly pays off for women in terms of access to employment in these sectors. As women in Egypt become more and more highly educated, access to educational programmes seems not to be the major obstacle or even a bottleneck in securing jobs. However, the quality of education women (and also men) receive still seems to be questionable, as the majority of employers complain about skills shortages among young employees and recent graduates, in particular in relation to 'soft' skills and competences as well as practical aspects of work.

The findings of our research also suggest that employers do not necessarily give preference to male workers or male candidates over females. Employers do not seem to exhibit prejudices – at least in public – about women in the tourism sector, contrary to some prevailing opinions in the society at large. Overall, employers appreciate women's qualities and see many advantages in employing women. Although recognised by many employers as a disadvantage, the organisational and financial implications of employing women were not seen as a problem to the extent that was originally expected. Half of the employers in both sectors recognised that employing women created organisational problems while 26% of the employers in tourism and 34% in ICT found that employing women was too expensive. This might be due to the relatively small size of the companies and the small number of women employed (the legislation requires organisation of childcare and similar by the companies only above a certain threshold of female employees), as well as self-selection by women who are seeking jobs in the sector (mainly young unmarried women with no family

¹ In the tourism sector, 95% of the women were recruited to work in room service, food and beverages, which could indicate some change with regard to their current presence across various departments.

obligations). It may also indicate that employers expect women to drop from the labour market when they get married and have children).

Neither does there seem to be much difference in the assessment of male and female candidates, with three exceptions. Firstly, employers expect less flexibility from female workers, for instance in terms of availability for weekend or holiday work and night shifts, indicating that they take for granted social constraints about women's free movement outside the house and their social responsibilities. This works to women's advantage in the short term but hinders their larger-scale integration into the labour market. Secondly, employers assess women's commitment to the job they do as lower than that of men. Again, this might put women at a disadvantage, as they have to prove something that is taken for granted in the case of men. Finally, and most importantly, there is a huge gender gap in performance assessment, with a majority claiming that, in reality, women do not perform as well as men. Other research should address the question of proving whether this claim is really true. If it is not, this reflects a certain prejudice against working women or the existence of double standards in the assessment of men's and women's work, requiring women to perform better than men to be treated as equal to them, and this bias has to be countered. If the claim is really true, and women's productivity is less than men's, then this is an important area for future interventions to upgrade women's skills and/or create working conditions that would foster better performance.

The findings of the focus group discussions show a less positive picture, with women complaining more about discrimination and abuse faced in the workplace. They suffer in particular from pressures in combining work and private life, and this becomes the greatest challenge for married women, together with long working hours and overtime work. They also highlight sexual harassment as a problem.

The ICT sector is exceptional in several ways. Firstly, public opinion about women's abilities in the field of modern technology seems less gender-stereotyped; secondly, women professionals in this field are as highly esteemed by the society. The low female presence in ICT cannot be attributed to the numerical disparity between female and male graduates in the field, for women are very well represented in ICT study fields. Possible reasons for this are a preference by some women to stay at home after graduation, a discriminatory or discouraging work environment, and/or employers' negative attitudes towards female employees. Some 17% of ICT employers in the survey admitted that their male employees do not like to work with female colleagues. This is a higher percentage than in the tourism sector and may indicate that some companies or people within companies are trying to 'protect' a rather sexist working environment.

In particular women in ICT feel that they are under unequal competition. Women in tourism, on the other hand, suffer more from negative social perceptions of working women in the sector. In the rural areas women's work in tourism is even less accepted. Most of the female tourism students interviewed do not want to work in tourism because their families or fiancés are against it, or because they feel that society's negative perception of the job is too discouraging. These complaints shed some light on the 'woman-friendliness' of working conditions in the sector. Such prejudice has an impact on women's retention rate and perhaps also their performance.

Women enter the labour market in far fewer numbers than their share of enrolment in different educational institutions suggests, and their school-to-work transition is less successful. Because of a variety of social constraints, prejudices and unacceptable practices still present among employers, such as specifying gender in job vacancies, women are more likely to decide to stay at home. In contrast with employers' prejudice-free statements about female employment in their sector, 70% of tourism companies indicate a gender-related preference sometimes, often or systematically when advertising job vacancies, even though this is forbidden by law. Regarding recruitment, young women with fewer networking possibilities may also be penalised by the fact that personal contacts and recommendations are still the most popular recruitment method both in tourism companies (33%) and ICT (30%).

There are also some more structural barriers. Traditional culture is not the only obstacle in Upper Egypt, Sinai and Red Sea governorates; weak infrastructure networks, including transport, and a lack of educational institutions and learning opportunities also create barriers. In the survey, 60% of employers in both sectors find transport a problem for women's employment and about 50% of employers claim that employing women creates some organisational problems.

Recommendations

The recommendations do not suggest new policies as such but complementing the on-going reforms in education, training and employment policies with a gender component.

The main opportunities identified in this research are to be found in:

- the high participation rates of women in education, which should link to higher labour force participation of women;
- the growing importance of skills in the economy and the subsectors studied, which could benefit women engaged in the education and training sectors, for instance in ICT, where important efforts have been developed in training for the sector in recent years;

- the emerging demand for new kinds of skill and skill profiles, and, in the case of ICT, the high respect female ICT professionals enjoy in Egyptian society.

The main obstacles seem to be:

- negative social perceptions of working women, in particular in tourism;
- occupational segregation within the sectors;
- inadequate institutional infrastructure in some jobs, both in remote tourist locations and in some ICT companies;
- an organisational culture unfriendly to women.

In combination, these barriers discourage women from joining the labour market in the first place; secondly, they affect their retention rates negatively (women drop out much more often than men); thirdly, they may also affect women's performance and motivation and discourage some employers from hiring women.

In order to tap the potential of these important sectors of the Egyptian labour market and its capacities to contribute to the socioeconomic development of the country and the competitiveness objectives shared by the Government of Egypt and the stakeholders, it is important for the country to make 'positive discrimination choices' so as to favour especially the incorporation and retention of women in work. This may imply action as regards some segments of the education and training systems where problems of lack of quality exist both for men and women, and also paying attention to the specific problematic of women. It also implies a slow, incremental and progressive change in society's views about certain jobs and about the roles and capacities of women to be fully operational in the labour market.

One area where special attention could be paid to enhancing women's participation in the labour market is the school-to-work transition. It involves mentoring, coaching and guiding women at three stages: (i) when they are about to graduate and make their first decisions as to whether to join the labour market or not, where and how to look for a job, what to expect in a future job and career, and how to deal with various work-related challenges; (ii) at the moment of transition, when they have left school or university but have not yet got a job; (iii) when they have started work but still have to integrate themselves in the workplace, deal effectively and assertively with colleagues and bosses, plan their careers and learn how to cope with the challenge of combining work and private life.

Attention should also be given to enabling women to get first practical work experience (which is much valued by employers as it helps young people to develop their professional identities), and to equipping both women and men in various soft skills that will help them to find the right job and perform well in it.

The private sector should not be left out: the State should encourage private companies to employ women. The State has promoted girls' and women's education but it is also necessary to facilitate the employment of women if the investment in their education is not to be wasted. Companies could be encouraged by fiscal incentives to recruit more women, and the State could play its part in financing maternity leave, nurseries, breast-feeding breaks, transport, and so on, as required by law.

To remove the obstacles and facilitate women's integration into jobs and careers, several recommendations can be made. To implement these recommendations is not the task of a single actor, but rather involves a cooperative approach among public authorities, in particular the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration, the Ministry of Family and Population, and training councils, but also including key institutions such as the National Council for Women and representatives from the employers, trade unions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society and the media.

Specific recommendations include the following:

Education and training

- Improve the image of tourism as a profession for women, through campaigns in the educational institutions, media and other means.
- Encourage female students to enrol in tourism faculties, especially in fields (such as hotels) where the number of female students is low, by offering appropriate counselling and guidance services.
- Review educational curricula, practical training and teaching methods – especially those of faculties and institutes of tourism and ICT – to equip graduates, both female and male, with soft skills and competences, thus preparing candidates better for job-related challenges. This is one of the big challenges for the education and training system in Egypt; it is addressed in a variety of reform plans (e.g. the National Strategy for Reform of Pre-University Education or the TVET Reform Strategy).
- In cooperation between business and educational institutions, make internships an integral part of vocational education, thus providing both females and males with practical experience and promoting other forms of practical training that will enable women to gain some work experience and develop their professional identities. Promote 'positive discrimination' in favour of women candidates for these internships and business practices in order to give

women more opportunities, since they are normally disadvantaged in comparison to men, for social and cultural reasons, as regards accessing the few opportunities available for getting practical training.

- For the two sectors studied, continue and expand the investment made by both the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Tourism (together with the Federation of Tourism) in training. Replication in other sectors may be possible. One possibility would be to have specific training programmes within these structures specifically targeting women and promoting their incorporation into the world of work. The newly created Training Council for Tourism can also be called upon to play a role in this field.

Employment

- Raise community awareness of the various fields of work in tourism, present examples of successful women in the sector, and use the media to provide a positive image of the sector.
- The State should provide companies with fiscal incentives to employ more women or to implement or partly fund the legal requirements for maternity leave, nurseries, breast-feeding breaks and transport.
- Involve opinion leaders at regional and local levels in remote areas in order to promote a positive image of tourism as a safe sector for women to work in. Create appropriate facilities for women (including transport, places to live, schools for their children, small communities) in tourist establishments in remote regions.
- Combat all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment, in tourism and ICT establishments. This could be done by raising awareness at of company level but also at the national level in media, schools, etc. Leaflets informing about women's (and men's) rights at work could be distributed at work places, universities and training institutes.
- Activate the Ministry of Family and Population's role in protecting women workers from all forms of discrimination by communicating with the gender units in the different ministries and seeking cooperation with employers' association.
- Facilitate networking among girls still at school and young women in universities, recent graduates and newly recruited women workers and their better-established female colleagues, in order to provide role models and enable the exchange of information and experiences, mentoring and coaching.
- Use counselling and mentoring services to develop the capacity of female workers in small and medium-sized enterprises, where the highest rates of discrimination and violation of the rights of employees in general, and females in particular, exist.
- Awareness raising campaigns could also be organised regarding the unequal division of labour in families that lead to women working double shifts.
- While reinforcing the role of social partners, and encouraging them to defend workers' rights, work towards increasing women's participation in trade unions.

Donors

- Include a gender component in donor sector programmes regarding education, training and employment in particular in active employment measures.
- Provide support in collecting and analysing gender disaggregated data in education and employment in order to have evidence on which to base initiatives and policies to promote gender equality.
- Include a component of social partnership in all the projects regarding employment and education to raise the awareness of the social partners about gender equality issues in education and employment and make them responsible for actively promoting gender equality.

I. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1. THE WOMEN AND WORK PROJECT

1.1 RATIONALE

Women around the world are less well represented than men in labour markets. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in 2007 the female labour force participation rate worldwide was 53%, compared to 78% for men.

In macroeconomic terms, this lesser presence of women in the labour market leads to low returns on investment in education and training and underutilisation of productive capacity, and as a result, less economic growth. In social terms, the fact that there are fewer women earning a formal wage undermines efforts to reduce poverty. And for the individual women concerned, this state of affairs works against their economic and social empowerment and signals a lack of freedom to fulfil their full potential.

Education, skills and access to work are intimately related; in order to be employed, women and men need qualifications and skills which are in demand on the labour market. Conventional wisdom has it that rising levels of education and skills boost labour force participation rates by improving people's productivity and giving them better opportunities for paid employment in the formal sector. Furthermore, the more educated people are, the greater their individual income potential will be. Various studies on the impact of education on GDP have found a positive correlation between the two.

In the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region², there has been significant progress in providing education for both boys and girls in recent decades. Gross enrolment in primary education is reaching close to 100% (except in the occupied Palestinian Territory) for both sexes in the region and in secondary education, an average of almost 80% has been achieved. However, when it comes to translating those achievements in education into gains on the labour market, women lag far behind men. Female labour force participation rates in the region – 23% on average in the eight countries (ETF, 2009a) – are the lowest in the world.

The proportion of females enrolled in education is still lower than that of males, but this educational gender gap is too small to explain the disparity in labour force participation rates. Furthermore, female (and male) youth unemployment remains a pressing issue, particularly the female transition from school to work, which results in many women being discouraged and dropping out of the labour force. Why is this the case? Does the problem lie with the quality or relevance of the education provided for women? Doesn't education equip young women – to the same extent than men – with the necessary and sufficient qualifications to enter labour market? Are there other social and economic factors which have more of an impact? What do women have to say about this state of affairs? What do employers think? What can be done to increase the employability of women?

It is the search for answers to these questions that has motivated the ETF³ to undertake this study as part of the Women and Work project. In Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, the countries studied within this project, the gender gap in education has been reduced or even, in the case of Tunisia, reversed. However, these countries still register stubbornly low female activity rates of 22%, 23% and 26% respectively (ILO, 2009).

The study concentrates on formal employment in the private sector. This is because, although the economies of the region have very large informal sectors, they usually only provide low-skilled and low-paid jobs or consist of un-paid household work, invisible in the national accounts. As workers in the informal economy do not enjoy basic rights such as social protection, this sector cannot be seen as a source of decent work⁴. For all of these reasons, the formal sector is the preferred option for increasing women's opportunities for employment. Furthermore, due to public sector cuts in all the countries studied, it is the private sector that has the real potential for providing more jobs for women.

The service sector is the fastest growing sector in the economies of the region, particularly compared to industry and, in particular, agriculture. In 2007, services represented 46% of employment in Egypt, 77% in Jordan and 49% in Tunisia

² Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tunisia. Libya and Israel were not considered in the study.

³ For further information see www.etf.europa.eu.

⁴ The concept of decent work encapsulates fundamental principles and rights at work, international labour standards, employment and opportunities for generating income, social protection and social security as well as social dialogue and tripartism. The ILO's primary goal is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work.

(ETF, 2009a). Within the service sector, tourism and ICTs were chosen for this study because of their high potential for economic growth and job creation and because they are seen as priority sectors by the governments of all three countries. They are also sectors which typically employ people for various kinds of jobs with different skills and qualifications, allowing some conclusions to be drawn on the impact of education on employment. If they continue to develop, these sectors may have the potential to create decent work for women by offering formal employment and relatively good salaries.

The research questions that underpinned this study are:

- What is the potential of tourism and ICT for creating jobs for women?
- If ICT and tourism companies do not employ many women, is this caused by problems in the demand or the supply of female labour?
- What impact does education have on women's employment in the two sectors? How can women's education be made more relevant?
- Why do young women who have trained in occupations related to the two sectors not go on to work in them? Is the labour market gender neutral? Are there different patterns in rural and urban areas?
- What can be done to ensure more women are employed in these sectors and in the private sector in general? What incentives are needed in order to increase female labour market participation?

Secondly, the project seeks to provide conclusions and recommendations for the government and other stakeholders in these sectors and beyond in answer to the following questions:

- What could be done to support greater gender equality either through gender-mainstreaming or interventions specifically targeting women?
- How could donors, in particular the European Union, support these initiatives?

1.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Women and Work project is part of the ETF Innovation and Learning projects. Its overall objective is to contribute to the promotion of gender equality policies in Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan in the areas of education, training and employment.

More specifically the project aims at increasing knowledge of and interest in women's employment opportunities and benefits in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, and at enhancing the ETF's expertise by acquiring new knowledge and experience that can be used to respond to different types of request from the European Commission or for providing policy advice at the request of ETF partner countries. By involving different national stakeholders in the process and disseminating the study results at international level, the employers in the two economic focus sectors of the study in the three countries are encouraged to become actors in the promotion of gender equality and other donors are given the possibility of benefiting from the research results within the overall context of promoting gender equality and fighting against poverty and exclusion.

1.3 PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The project started with stocktaking missions to Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia in 2008. The ETF met with the relevant national stakeholders and the donor community. The services of the European Commission and Italian Cooperation, the co-funder of the project, were consulted on the choice of case study countries. Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia are among the priority countries of both the European Union and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Tourism and ICTs were selected as the focus sectors of the study.

The field research, based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis of female labour supply and demand, was conducted in 2009. On the demand side, the focus was on studying the preferences, requirements and barriers to female recruitment by means of a survey of employers in the two focus sectors. On the supply side, the study looked at the obstacles and opportunities for female labour market insertion in the tourism and ICT sectors by means of focus group discussions with young women. Given that the problem is often related to the transition from school to work and the first entry to the labour market, the project's target group is young women aged 15–29 years. Small companies were excluded from the employers' survey for two reasons: they represent a smaller absolute potential for employment generation, and small (family) companies seldom have in place human resources policies of the kind the survey focused on.

A national consultative group was established in each country, including representatives from the government, the EU Delegation and the social partners, in particular professional federations, to ensure local participation and ownership of the project. The groups met three times during project implementation. The representatives of Italian Cooperation and

the European Commission participated in these meetings too. Other donors in the three countries were informed about the project in order to ensure coherence and synergy among the international donor community.

A study visit to the EU for 24 participants was organised as an opportunity for members of the consultative groups to familiarise themselves with initiatives promoting women's employment in the Piedmont region, to share knowledge and experience in enhancing women's employment in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and the EU, and to discuss and come up with suggestions and recommendations to be incorporated in the country reports.

A synthesis cross-country report with policy recommendations was drafted and published in the second half of 2010.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 APPROACH

Gender determines access to material resources, such as land, credit and training, and more intangible resources, such as power. The implications for everyday life are many, and include the gendered division of labour, the responsibilities of family members inside and outside the home, education, employment and opportunities for professional advancement, and a voice in policy-making. Gender is an integral component of every aspect of the political, economic, social, daily and private lives of individuals and societies, and is a determinant of the different roles ascribed by society to men and women.

This study investigates women's opportunities in education, training and employment from a gender perspective in Egypt. Accesses to employment is not considered as an objective in itself but as a means to acquire economic independence, enhance, the well-being of families, fight against poverty and contribute to socioeconomic growth.

While the study was undertaken to increase knowledge the aim of the action is to contribute to the transformation of the given situation. This is why the project has aimed to involve a variety of stakeholders such as local authorities, education providers and, in particular, employers in the process with the implicit objective of engaging them as promoters of gender equality and to formulate policy recommendations.

The research was based on three components: a literature review and quantitative and qualitative analyses of female labour supply and demand.

- On the demand side, a survey with employers in tourism and ICT was conducted to study women's level of participation, the barriers and opportunities affecting their entry into the labour market, and the skills requirements for them.
- On the supply side, the focus group discussions aimed to understand how education contributes to female employment and how the transition from education to work takes place. Information was gathered on education and career choices, the quality and labour market relevance of the education received, job search and unemployment experiences, and perceived difficulties and opportunities in joining the labour force.

A questionnaire for the survey and guidelines for the focus group discussions⁵ were developed in English by the ETF to be used in all three countries studied; these were then translated, adapted and piloted in Egypt to reflect the local context.

2.2 LABOUR DEMAND: SURVEY OF EMPLOYERS

Labour demand in the tourism and ICT sectors was assessed by means of a survey of companies employing women in the two sectors. The survey targeted medium-sized and large companies in the tourism and ICT sectors. Those with less than 25 employees were excluded from the survey for several reasons. Although they are an important part of the economy, these types of businesses, especially family ones, do not usually have systematic human resources policies in place. Second, in absolute terms they employ fewer people than medium-sized and larger companies.

2.2.1 TOURISM

In order to sample the companies in the tourism sector for an interview, a mapping exercise had been conducted and a list of the companies according to their geographical distribution and size was produced. Only bigger companies were targeted as it was believed that, firstly, they create most jobs in the tourism sector and, secondly, they are more likely to have some human resource policies in place.

⁵ The following documents are available upon request: (i) questionnaire for employers' survey, (ii) focus group guidelines, (iii) survey statistics and (iv) focus group participants' profiles.

The hotel subsector

According to the *Egyptian Hotel Guide* published by the Egyptian Hotel Association in 2008, there are 1 484 hotels in Egypt, of which 54.6% are five-star to one-star hotels, 7.4% are unclassified hotels and the remainder are Nile and Lake Nasser cruise ships and floating hotels (**TABLE 2.1**). Most of the hotels are located in border governorates (57%), including the Red Sea, and urban governorates (27%) (**TABLE 2.2**).

There are no data available on the share of total employment by either by hotel classification or geographical distribution. The assumption was, however, that 3–5-star hotels employ the substantial share of the hotel workforce. Firstly, they constitute 35% of all hotel establishments, secondly, they accommodate the largest proportion of foreign tourists and are relatively large in terms of numbers of rooms and staff, as they are bound to keep high standards. Therefore the sample frame was limited to 3–5-star hotels. These are represented in the sample proportionally to their share in the population. Hotels were selected from three major tourist locations – Greater Cairo, South Sinai and Upper Egypt (**TABLE 2.3**). The aim was to carry out interviews in 50 hotels. The hotels were randomly selected and contacted for the interview. In case of refusals other hotels were randomly selected until the total of 50 was reached. Some 63% of the hotels were from the Greater Cairo area, 30% from South Sinai, and the rest from Upper Egypt (Helwan and Assiut). This means that Greater Cairo and the urban governorates are overrepresented in the sample and border governorates underrepresented.

TABLE 2.1 CLASSIFICATION AND NUMBER OF HOTELS IN EACH SUBSECTOR

Hotel classification	Number	%
Five-star hotels (including +5-star hotels)	133	8.9
Four-star hotels (including +4-star hotels)	177	11.9
Three-star hotels (including +3-star hotels)	207	13.9
Two-star hotels	183	12.3
One-star hotels	113	7.6
Unclassified	111	7.4
Nile cruises	274	18.4
Lake Nasser cruises	6	0.4
Floating hotels	280	18.8
Total	1 484	100.0

Source: Egyptian Hotel Association, *The Egyptian Hotel Guide 2007–2008*

TABLE 2.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF HOTELS

	Number	%
Upper Egypt	99	10.7
Lower Egypt	38	4.1
Border governorates	522	56.5
Urban governorates	249	26.9
Total	924	100.0

Note: Not all the hotels were classified according to their geographical location.
Source: Egyptian Hotel Association

TABLE 2.3 HOTEL SAMPLING FRAME

Hotel classification	5 stars	4 stars	3 stars	Total
Governorate				
Greater Cairo (Cairo + Giza)	28	16	42	86
South Sinai	41	48	40	129
Upper Egypt	8	5	14	27
Sum (sample frame)	77	69	96	242
Sample size	16	14	20	50
% of sample size to sample frame	20.7	20.3	20.8	20.7

TABLE 2.4 PEOPLE INTERVIEWED IN THE HOTELS

People interviewed	Number	%
Officer	2	4
Manager	8	16
Human resources officer	33	66
Owner/president	2	4
Other	5	10
Total	50	100

The company representatives interviewed were in most cases human resources officers (66%), followed by other managers (16%).

Tourism companies

Tourism companies are defined by Law No 38 of 1977. They include companies that:

- organise collective or individual tourist journeys inside or outside Egypt including transport, accommodation, and related services;
- sell tickets, facilitate luggage transport, book different means of transport, represent airlines, shipping lines and other transportation companies;
- run means of land, sea, air and river transport for the tourists conveyance.

The above definition classifies the companies into categories A, B and C. According to the Egyptian Tourism Federation, there were 1 524 tourism companies in 2008, of which 76% belonged to category A, 0.5% to category B and 17% to category C. Some hotels were left unclassified. Most of the companies were located in urban governorates (mainly Cairo, with 65%), followed by Upper Egypt, with 24% (**TABLE 2.5**).

According to the Egyptian Federation for Tourism the number of companies that have more than 25 employees is 155. Companies that have more than 15 employees total 305.

TABLE 2.5 TOURISM COMPANIES BY LOCATION

	Number	%
Upper Egypt	358	23.5
Lower Egypt	96	6.2
Border governorates	83	5.4
Urban governorates	985	64.6
Total	1 524	100.0

Source: Egyptian Tourism Federation, 2008

TABLE 2.6 TOURISM COMPANIES SAMPLE FRAME

Number of companies (sample frame)	264
Sample size	50
% of sample size to sample frame	18.9

TABLE 2.7 PEOPLE INTERVIEWED IN THE TOURISM COMPANIES

People interviewed	Number	%
Officer	4	8
Manager	36	72
Human resources officer	5	10
Owner/president	4	8
Other	1	2
Total	50	100

Because the overwhelming majority of tourism companies are located in Greater Cairo (Cairo + Giza), all 50 companies in this location only were sampled which obviously makes the capital region over-represented. The same procedure as in the case of hotels was followed: the companies were randomly selected and contacted for the interview. In case of refusals other companies were randomly selected until the total of 50 was reached.

The tourism company representatives interviewed were in most of cases managers (72%). Only 10% were human resources officers, the low percentage being probably due to the fact that human resources units rarely exist in small companies (**TABLE 2.7**).

The margin of error for the survey in tourism at the confidence level of 95% is 8.79.

2.2.2 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

The ICT sector in Egypt is classified as follows:

- software development,
- IT services (including call centres),
- IT applications,
- telecommunications,
- hardware, computers and equipment.

Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA) has classified only 399 companies according to their subcategories, number of employees and geographical distribution, but it is not known whether there is a systematic difference between classified and unclassified companies. It was found that 211 of these companies have more than 25 employees, and this list served as our sampling frame. The great majority (97%) of companies with more than 25 employees are located in Cairo and Giza (**TABLE 2.8**).

TABLE 2.9 shows the distribution of bigger companies according to type of product and services. The majority are involved in software development (63%), followed by IT services (26%) and telecommunication (12%). Unfortunately there was not enough information on the shares of the different subsectors in total employment.

TABLE 2.8 ICT COMPANIES BY LOCATION

Governorate	Number of companies
Cairo	115
Giza	90
Alexandria	3
Sharkia	1
Qualubia	1
Ismailia	1
Total	211

Source: Calculated on the basis of data from ITIDA

TABLE 2.9 ICT COMPANIES DISTRIBUTED GEOGRAPHICALLY AND BY CATEGORY

	Cairo	Giza	Alexandria	Ismailia	Sharkia	Dakahlia	Total	%
Software development	68	59	3	1	1	1	133	63.0
IT services	16	21					37	17.5
IT application	5						5	2.4
Telecommuni- cation	18	8					26	12.3
Hardware	8	2					10	4.7
Total	115	90	3	1	1	1	211	100.0

Source: Calculated on the basis of data from ITIDA

It was decided to sample only companies located in Greater Cairo (205 companies out of the total of 211) and to ensure that they were represented in the sample proportionally to their share in the population regarding different subsectors (**TABLE 2.10**). Because of insufficient information the share of the total employment in each of the subsectors could not be factored in.

The people interviewed on behalf of the ICT companies were in most cases managers (43%), while 29% were human resources officers, probably because human resources units rarely exist in small companies (**TABLE 2.11**).

The margins of error for the survey in ICT sector at the confidence level of 95% is 7.03.

TABLE 2.10 ICT COMPANIES IN GREATER CAIRO (CAIRO + GIZA)

Subsector	Software development + IT application	IT services	Telecom	Hardware development
Number of companies				
Total (sample frame)	132	37	26	10
Sample size	65	18	12	5
% of sample size to sample frame	49.2	48.6	46.2	50.0

TABLE 2.11 PEOPLE INTERVIEWED IN THE ICT COMPANIES

People interviewed	Number	%
Officer	18	18
Manager	43	43
Human resources officer	29	29
Owner/president	5	5
Other	5	5
Total	100	100

2.3 LABOUR SUPPLY: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Labour supply was studied qualitatively by means of focus group discussions with actual or potential female employees. Eleven focus group discussions were held with women aged 15–29 years. Interviewees were drawn from both rural and urban areas and were studying tourism or ICT or undergoing training in one of these fields, currently employed in tourism or ICT, economically inactive, or unemployed and seeking a job in one of the two sectors.

The composition of the focus groups was as follows:

Tourism

1. university students,
2. school students (vocational students),
3. employed women,
4. unemployed women,
5. economically inactive women,
6. women with tourism degrees in rural areas.

Information and communication technologies

1. university students,
2. trainees⁶,
3. employed women,
4. unemployed women.

Although the focus group discussions' findings are not representative of young women, they add a qualitative dimension to the study, as the focus group discussion enabled young women to express their points of view about the opportunities and obstacles they encountered in entering the labour market. Focus group guidelines served as a general framework for the discussions. Data collected during the focus group discussions were analysed, common and unusual patterns highlighted and expressions or narratives were used as illustrations (names were changed to ensure anonymity). Ninety-one young women participated in the focus groups.

2.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The survey had some limitations. Firstly, in order to focus on companies with human resources policies and the highest absolute employment generation potential, microenterprises and some small enterprises, which in fact constitute a majority of companies in Egypt, were excluded from the survey⁷. Secondly, in the sampling design the employment share of different subsectors could not be taken into account and the sample size is too small to compare findings between different subsectors.

Nevertheless, the survey gives a good overview of the female employment in larger companies in the geographical areas where the ICT and tourism industries are most highly concentrated.

Several difficulties were encountered when organising the focus group discussions. The university student and vocational students (trainees) did not feel comfortable speaking in the presence of the other group. Accordingly it was decided to split the two groups. It was also extremely difficult to find suitable attendees for the economically inactive women's groups and the service provider had to depend heavily on personal contacts to organise them. In order to communicate with trainees in the ICT sector several training institutes had to be contacted since only some of them permitted the holding of focus group discussions, on condition that they were held in a public place away from the institutes' premises.

⁶ As there are no vocational schools in ICT in Egypt, this group was organised through the CAPMAS Information Training Centre.

⁷ In order not to exclude completely small enterprises (according to international definitions 10–49 employees), important in the economies of the countries, the threshold of 25 employees was adopted.

3. GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION

3.1 GENDER EQUALITY IN EU EXTERNAL RELATIONS POLICY

The European Union has reaffirmed gender equality as a common objective and a common value for the entire EU and a goal in its own right. To progress towards greater gender equality most EU Member States and the European Commission have adopted a twin-track strategy: on the one hand mainstreaming gender equality in all policies, strategies and actions and, on the other, financing measures which directly support women's empowerment. Progress has been considerable but much remains to be done. As an indicator relevant to this study, according to Eurostat (2008) the average EU labour force participation for women is only 64% compared to 78% for men.

The promotion and protection of women's rights figure high in EU external policy. The EU acknowledges that gender equality is not only crucial in itself but is a fundamental human right, a question of social justice (European Commission, 2007) and a prerequisite for poverty reduction. The European Consensus on Development, agreed by the EU's General Affairs and External Relations Council on 22 November 2005, identifies gender equality as one of the five key principles of the EU development policy (Council of the European Union, 2006):

'The gender aspect must be addressed in close conjunction with poverty reduction, social and political development and economic growth, and mainstreamed in all aspects of development cooperation. Gender equality will be promoted through support to equal rights, access and control over resources and political and economic voice.'

On International Women's Day 2010, in commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, the Commission reaffirmed its commitment to the vigorous pursuit of gender equality in its relations with third countries (European Commission, 2010):

'Our ambition is not limited to the borders of the Union. Gender equality must be fully incorporated into our external policies too so as to foster the social and economic independence and advancement of women and men throughout the world. The EU is committed to promoting gender equality in all contexts, including conflict and post-conflict countries. Reducing gender inequalities, tackling gender-based violence, and promoting women's rights are essential for developing sustainable and democratic societies.'

For the period 2007–13, EU external cooperation in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment is financed through geographical instruments – the European Development Fund, the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) – at the national and regional levels and by thematic instruments (Investing in People and the Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights)⁸.

The ETF adheres to the principles and objectives of the European Commission as regards promoting gender equality in external relations. The ETF works with 29 partner countries⁹ which are involved in the ENPI¹⁰ or in the EU enlargement process under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)¹¹. Additionally, the ETF works in a number of the countries of Central Asia¹².

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/gender/index_en.htm

⁹ The ETF's partner countries are: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

¹⁰ The ENPI was developed in 2004, with the objective of avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbouring countries, aiming rather to strengthen the prosperity, stability and security of both the EU and its neighbours.

¹¹ The IPA is an EU external relations instrument which aims to provide targeted assistance to countries which are candidates and potential candidates for EU membership.

¹² Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

3.2 PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION

The relationship between the EU and the Mediterranean countries was governed by the Declaration on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (also known as the Barcelona Process)¹³. Its five-year work programme, agreed at the Euro-Mediterranean Summit in November 2005, included gender equality as a key priority. The work programme remained in force when the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was relaunched, at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean in 2008, as the Union for the Mediterranean.

In November 2006, at the first Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, the Euro-Mediterranean ministers approved the Istanbul Framework for Action for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality in the civil, political, social, economic and cultural spheres. In particular, regarding economy, employment, education and training, the measures agreed upon – which were confirmed in the Ministerial Euromed Conference of Marrakesh in November 2008 and November 2009 – that are most relevant to this study are listed below.

Economy and employment

- Create equal opportunities and remove obstacles for women to work or to be recruited/ employed or to stay employed.
- Promote family friendly policies, aiming at reconciliation between professional and family life, in particular affordable care services for children, elderly and other dependents, and ensure a professional environment that is suited to women in terms of transport and safety and non-discrimination at the workplace.
- Promote and strengthen national capacities to regularly collect and analyze gender disaggregated data, including on the informal sector and on the impact of macro-economic reforms on women and men.
- Strengthen knowledge of the impact of macro-economic policies on women's and men's employment and develop research focused on gender to enable the elaboration of efficient strategies aiming at strengthening the role of women in the economy.
- Promote women's representation and participation in economic decision-making positions, in particular in employers' association, workers' unions and other socio-economic structures.

(EMHRN, 2006, pp. 4–5)

Education and training

Ensure empowerment of women including through greater access to education at all levels and to vocational and technical training. In this regard:

- Promote specific vocational and technical training courses for women in diversified job sectors.
- Promote post-training support through appropriate linkages between relevant partners such as training institutions and governmental employment agencies.
- Ensure greater access to lifelong learning to provide women with skills responsive to the rapidly changing labour market.
- Provide guiding programmes to help women return to the labour market after an absence or to direct them to new sectors.

(EMHRN, 2006, pp. 5–6)

The cooperation instrument for the region – the ENPI – identifies gender equality as one of the common values between the EU and the Mediterranean countries and a possible area for further subregional cooperation. ENPI Country Action Plans for the region include the promotion of women's participation in economic, political and social life.

In this context, and in line with the EU strategic guidelines for the promotion of gender equality, the ETF has included a gender approach in its activities related to education, training and employment. As stated in its Mid-Term Perspective 2007–10, gender equality in participation in education and employment will continue to be a priority for the ETF. The Women and Work project was designed in this context.

¹³ The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, initiated in 1995, is a wide framework of political, economic and social relations between the Member States of the European Union and partners of the Southern Mediterranean. It comprises 35 members – 25 EU Member States and 10 Mediterranean partners (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey). Libya has had observer status since 1999. The three main objectives of the partnership are: (i) the definition of a common area of peace and stability through the reinforcement of political and security dialogue (Political and Security Chapter); (ii) the construction of a zone of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership and the gradual establishment of a free-trade area (Economic and Financial Chapter); (iii) the rapprochement between peoples through a social, cultural and human partnership aimed at encouraging understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies (Social, Cultural and Human Chapter).

4. COUNTRY PROFILE

With its large population of 79 million and its strategic position between the Middle East and North Africa, Egypt plays a crucial role in the Mediterranean region. Egypt's economy and society have seen marked improvements in the past 30 years as the country moved from the low-development to the medium-development group of countries. Today Egypt ranks 120th out of 177 countries in the Human Development Index (UNICEF, 2009). Between 2004 and 2007 both GDP and GDP per capita growth reached an average of 7%. However, the international economic downturn of 2009 slowed Egypt's GDP growth to 4.5%, hitting export-oriented industries most severely.

The service sector also provides a substantial portion of the nation's job creation (46% of the total of employed in the formal economy). In particular, the tourism sector helps to drive economic growth.

Rapid population growth is one of the main problems facing development efforts in Egypt. In the early 1990s Egypt underwent an economic reform and structural adjustment programme and moved from a centrally planned economy towards a market economy. The public sector, which had traditionally absorbed large numbers of job entrants, had to undergo downsizing and privatisation processes, while the incipient private sector was not yet sufficiently powerful to create enough new jobs to absorb the labour market entrants. Thus unemployment became a major preoccupation (ETF, 2009b).

In addition to high unemployment, the main challenges are high inflation, significant budget deficits, unbalanced growth between different economic sectors and geographical areas, and increased poverty despite economic growth (World Bank, 2009). The richest 10% of the population account for 28% of the country's income, while the poorest 20% must survive on 9% of the national income (World Bank, World Development Indicators Database). Approximately 18% of Egyptians live below the poverty line, but in rural Upper Egypt that rate is as high as 40% (UNICEF, 2009).

The quality of education remains one of the core weaknesses in the development of a modern and competitive economy in Egypt. The modernisation of the industrial and service sectors has been structured primarily on an upgrading towards medium technology levels, with a growing demand for personnel with medium skill levels, and the training of the currently employed. Not only is the number of newly created jobs lower than the number of new entrants to the labour market, but the current shortage of skilled labour (especially for ISCED 2 and 3 levels and higher technical levels) has created capacity constraints especially in the more dynamic sectors, as well as growing wage inequalities (ETF, 2010).

Egypt is in the process of completing a demographic transition, with favourable changes in the age structure of the population. The working-age population and the youth population are growing faster than the overall population but their growth is slowing down. The rural working-age and youth populations are still growing faster than their urban counterparts (Assaad and Barsoum, 2006).

4.1 LEGISLATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S MACHINERIES

The women's movement in Egypt started more than a century ago under Ottoman rule. Seclusion, oppression and denial of the right to education were the reasons behind the early movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The subsequent phase was spurred by nationalism and the urge to participate in the rebellion against colonial rule. The 1952 Revolution, under which the women of Egypt were granted greater constitutional benefits and rights in education, voting, employment, equal pay, and other respects, was, paradoxically, at the same time the beginning of autocratic rule (Euromed, 2006b).

Egypt has undertaken substantial legal reforms concerning the status of women in last fifty years. The Constitution of 1956 acknowledged women's right to equal political participation. The current Constitution, issued in 1971, emphasises the principle of equality between men and women in all fields, political, social and economic. Article 8 of the Constitution provides that 'the State shall ensure equal opportunities for all citizens'. Article 40 is even more explicit: 'Citizens are equal before the law. They have equal rights and duties without distinction regardless of their sex, origin, language, religion or belief.'

All Egyptian laws and statutes affirm the principle of equality among all citizens with respect to the right to work. Article 13 of the 1971 Constitution gives all citizens the constitutional right to work, without discrimination between men and

women. In addition, Articles 10 and 11 of the Constitution impose an obligation on the State to protect mothers and children, as well as to reconcile women's duties towards their families with their work in society.

The Egyptian Parliament ratified a new labour law, Law No 12, in 2003. It comprises 257 articles, which address all the legal aspects regulating the Egyptian labour market. It does not, however, apply to free zones, foreign investment companies, civil servants, or agricultural and domestic workers. The law aims to increase private sector involvement and at the same time to strike a balance between employees' and employers' rights. The law includes a chapter on the employment of women. These rules secure for working women the constitutional right to work without any discrimination between men and women performing the same job. The particular section on the employment of women is intended to help enable women to carry out their responsibilities towards their families and children without suffering any prejudice or any deprivation of their rights as workers, by the following means:

- prohibiting wage discrimination based on sex, origin, language, religion or creed;
- requiring the application of all provisions governing employment, without discrimination between men and women who perform the same job;
- prohibiting the employment of women between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., except in certain types of work, the nature and circumstances of which entail night-time work. These include work in hotels, restaurants, theatres, hospitals, cinemas, airports, tourism and airline offices, and during official holidays. This exception applies also to female executives in senior posts. In these cases, employers are required to provide the necessary guarantees for the safety, protection and transport of female employees.

Though the law is intended to protect and benefit women, it may lead to discrimination against women, in particular in the private sector, and may provide constraints on women's rights to employment (Euromed, 2006b).

- Female workers who have been employed for at least ten months are entitled by law to three months' fully paid maternity leave up to twice during their period of employment and up to two years' unpaid maternity leave up to three times¹⁴.
- Employers with 100 or more female employees are required to set up a nursery close to the workplace but sited away from noise, pollution and wastes, and to allow breast-feeding breaks of not less than half an hour twice a day.
- Employers have to provide female employees with two fully paid half-hour rest breaks daily to breast-feed, during the 24 months following confinement.
- Even when night work is allowed, as in the tourism sector, the law requires that transport be provided for women after 8 p.m.

These requirements in turn drive some employers to refuse to hire female wage workers on the grounds that it is too expensive to employ them. The chances for female workers to find formal jobs are therefore limited, leaving the private informal sector as their only refuge (Euromed, 2006a). The informal sector is by nature an insecure employment sector as it does not offer a work contract, social protection or medical insurance.

Moreover, the fact that women are not allowed to partake in certain jobs – e.g. in bakeries, bars and, restaurants, casinos, soldering, mines – obviously limits their share in employment, particularly in the private sector. Labour legislation protects women from hazardous work as well as night work: Article 90 prohibits the employment of women in work that is 'detrimental to their health or morals' (Euromed, 2006b).

Although the labour law allows for collective bargaining, it is noticeable that the share of female presence in labour unions is very weak. Women represent only 3.4% of all workers' representatives in the Union of Labour Syndicates and women have achieved leadership positions in only four out of 23 syndicates (Nassar, 2004).

Egypt has committed itself to enhancing gender equality in international agreements: it ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1981 and is a signatory of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action.

The following make up the current array of institutions with responsibility for women's affairs ('women's machineries') in Egypt.

- Women's affairs in Egypt were formerly under the mandate of the Ministry of Social Solidarity, where a Department of Women's Affairs was established in 2000. In March 2009 the new Ministry of State for Family and Population was established. Its mandate is to establish policies, strategies and an operational work plan relating to family empowerment and well-being, working across different sectors – education, health, labour, economic development, investment and information – in coordination with other relevant ministries.

14 The unpaid maternity leave option is required of employers with more than 50 employees.

- The National Council for Women was established in 2000, as an independent national mechanism reporting directly to the presidency. It aims to empower Egyptian women in all fields of life and to enable women better to preserve their national identity and heritage. The council is headed by the First Lady of Egypt, Mrs Suzanne Mubarak. It carries out policy analysis and advocacy, gender planning, mainstreaming and monitoring, communication and awareness raising, research, documentation and dissemination (Euromed, 2006b).
- The National Population Council was created in 1994 to address issues concerning women's reproductive health and family planning.

4.2 GIRLS AND WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

According to Article 18 of the 1971 Constitution, education is a right guaranteed by the State and is compulsory during the primary phase. Article 20 of the Constitution further provides that education in the educational institutions of the State is free of charge in all phases of education from primary school to university, without discrimination between male and female. The first primary school for girls was established in 1873, the first secondary school in 1921, and the first group of female students was admitted to university in 1928 (Euromed, 2006b).

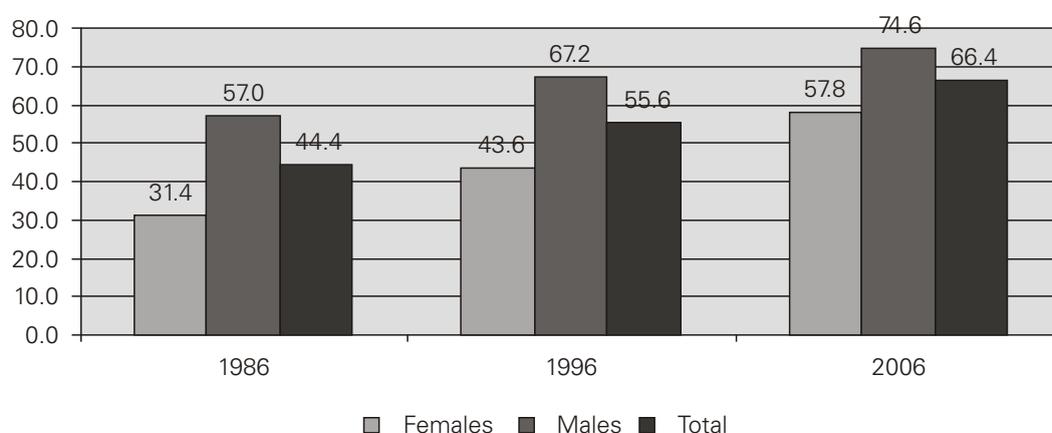
Egypt has achieved quite high primary net enrolment rates. This is due to the substantial investment in this level of education. The net enrolment rate in primary school was 94% for boys and 91% for girls in 2007 (UNESCO, 2010). According to the World Bank (2007), 89% of girls and 92% of boys complete primary education.

Female literacy has increased in the MENA region, with some variations between countries. The positive trend is noticeable in particular when comparing the youth and adult populations. These trends are also evident in Egypt, where literacy levels are lower among adult women (58%) than men (75%) while the differences are less pronounced in the age group 15–24 (82% females, 88% males) (UNESCO, 2010).

However, of the potentially active population (15–64 years old) still 32% have no education and most probably are illiterate. Furthermore, women represent 63% of the total of 15–64 years old population without any education (MEDA-EET, 2009).

Enrolment rates in secondary education are far lower for both sexes: in 2002–08, the net enrolment rate for males was 82% and for females 78% (UNICEF, 2010). About 39% of girls in secondary education go to general secondary education and the rest to technical education¹⁵ (ETF, 2010). Consequently, even though the female enrolment rate at secondary level is lower than that of boys, girls are slightly better represented in secondary technical education: 46% of all the students are female. The technical secondary education is organised around three key sections: industry, agriculture and trade. Women represent 22% of students in the agricultural section, 38% in the industrial section and 64% in the commercial section (MoE, 2010).

FIGURE 4.1 ADULT LITERACY RATES BY GENDER (%)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010

¹⁵ The general secondary stage includes three years of education, whereas the secondary technical track could last from three to five years. Formal TVET covers different levels of qualification ranging from skilled worker to higher technical education. TVET is provided through technical secondary education (Ministry of Education), Technical Colleges (higher education) and vocational training (various line ministries) (ETF, 2010).

TABLE 4.1 TOTAL NUMBER OF GRADUATES AND PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE GRADUATES, 1996/97 AND 2003/04

	1996/97		2003/04	
	Total number	Female graduates (%)	Total number	Female graduates (%)
Humanities				
Language	599	70	1 617	78
Economics and political science	261	56	593	79
Art	215	67	291	79
Literature	20 725	58	38 486	68
Information	174	68	918	76
Trade university	30 013	39	60 261	39
Law university	14 694	31	27 595	38
Technical/scientific				
Fine art	1 116	56	2 040	63
Dentistry	392	41	1 741	52
Pharmacy	1 829	38	9 325	58
Medicine	3 305	35	8 150	48
Science	3 975	37	8 916	52
Agronomy	2 889	28	5 979	47
Veterinary science	817	25	2 622	53
Engineering	5 712	24	18 132	25

Source: CAPMAS, *Working men and women, 2007*

The gross enrolment rate at higher education in Egypt was 28% in 2008 (UNESCO, 2010). In 2004–05 women represented 49% of enrolments in higher education, according to the State Information Service (SIS) and women's share of the university students is increasing. The lower proportion of men entering universities may indicate that men find it easier to access jobs and economic opportunities.

However, female enrolment tends to be concentrated in the fields of study that are traditionally considered appropriate for girls (such as the arts, humanities, home economics and nursing), while their representation in natural sciences, engineering, computer sciences and medicine is relatively low (TABLE 4.1).

Notwithstanding the increasing number of higher educated people, among the potentially active population (15–64 years old) only about 11% have university education (MEDA-ETE, 2009). Women represent 41% of these higher educated potentially active people.

4.3 WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE

In 2009, women's labour force participation rate in Egypt was 22.4% compared to a male participation rate of 75.3% (ILO, 2009).

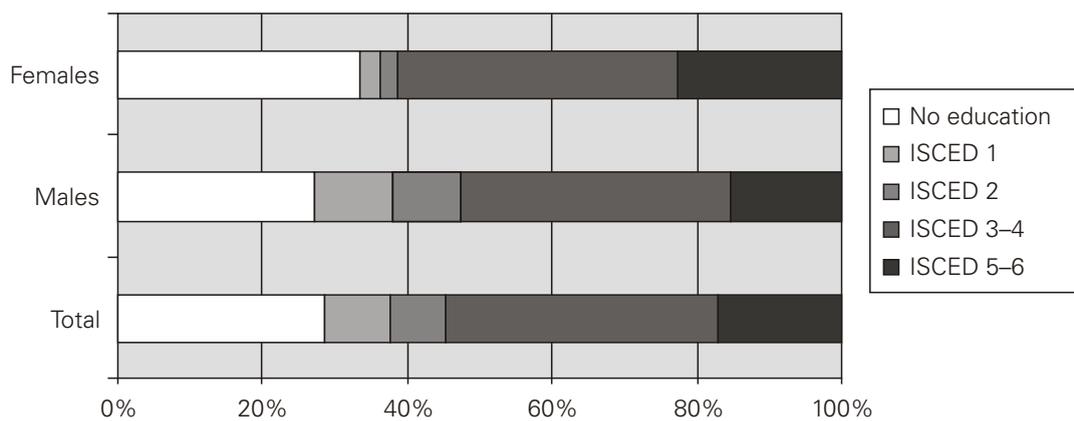
The activity rate of both women and men increases with the level of education, but education has a much greater effect on women's labour force participation. According to ETF calculations in the framework of the MEDA-ETE project (MEDA-ETE, 2009), men's activity rates decreased from 90% without education or primary education (ISCED 1) to 39%

with lower secondary education (ISCED 2), to increase again to 76% with upper secondary or post-secondary education (ISCED 3–4) and to 91% with higher education (ISCED 5–6) while women’s activity rates decreased from 20% without education to 13% with primary education and to 4% with lower secondary education but increased to 31% with upper secondary or post-secondary and to 61% with higher education in 2007. In other words women’s activity rates tripled with higher education compared to those with no education while men’s participation increased only about 1%.

These figures indicate that men’s activity does not depend as much as women’s on the education and that they look for employment opportunities no matter the education they have received (except the quite low activity rate of men with lower secondary education, 39%, which is however much higher than women’s with the same level of education, 4%). Women’s activity instead heavily depends on the level of education and it is not before the upper secondary or post-secondary education, and in particular higher education, that women start to work or look for a job in the formal labour market.

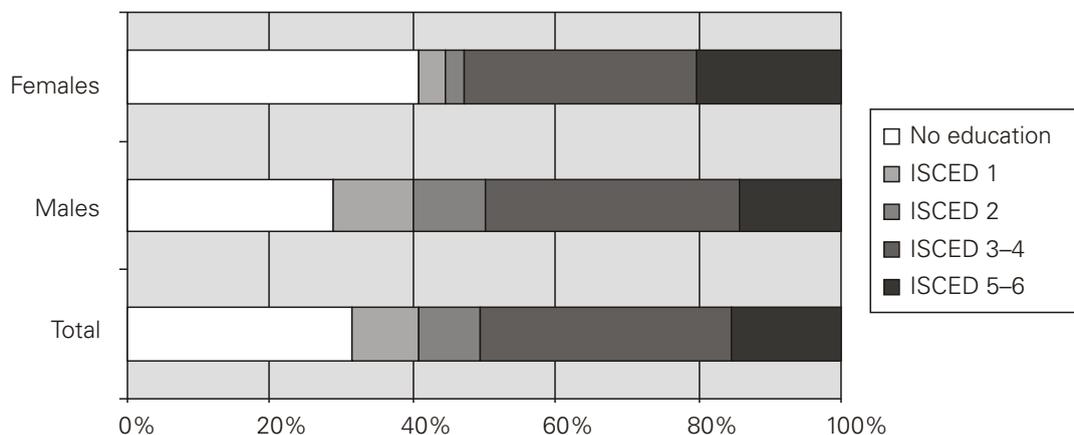
However, taking into consideration that 41% of the potentially active female population (15–64 years old) do not have education, 6% has primary education, 14% lower secondary and 30% upper secondary education and only 9% have university education (MEDA-EET, 2009), it is only a small minority of women who benefit of the impact of higher education on their activity rates. This partly explains the low activity rates of women in Egypt.

FIGURE 4.2 ACTIVE POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, 2007



Source: ETF, MEDA-EET, 2009

FIGURE 4.3 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, 2007



Source: ETF, MEDA-EET, 2009

In the active population, women are the best represented among those who have higher education (32% of the total of active higher educated), no education at all (28%) and upper secondary or post-secondary education (25%), above the average female labour market participation (22%). This means at the same time that over 90% of the active population with primary or lower secondary educations are men.

Education has a great effect on women's activity rates, i.e. whether women work or wish to work in the formal labour market, but it does not seem to have a proportional effect on the employability of women, i.e. whether women get a job. In fact, among the female employed population the proportion of those without education increases to 41% while they represent 33% of all the active women and the proportion of those with upper secondary or post-secondary education decreases from 39% to 32%. The employability of higher educated women seems to be better but their share among employed women (20%) still decreases compared to their share among active women (23%) (TABLE 4.2 and 4.3).

Men's activity and employment rates are almost the same for each educational level. This may indicate that even though there is a general problem of the relevance of the education in Egypt, men benefit more of education in terms of skills and qualifications in demand on the labour market or that women are double penalised by the irrelevance of education and gender inequalities regarding the access to the labour markets.

Almost 60% of women are employed in rural areas (SIS, 2010) and about 47% of women work in agriculture and fishing (CAPMAS, 2008). This contributes to the large share of illiterate women without education in the labour force.

The public sector and the informal sector are the biggest employers of women. In total, 40% of women working outside the home are employed in the public sector, and women account for about 30% of government employment (Assaad and Barsoum, 2006). Women seem discouraged from seeking jobs in the private sector and instead wait for years to be employed by and in the government, which provides them with the permanent and secure job. However, jobs in the government ranks have become almost inaccessible for all new entrants to the labour market, regardless of their gender, since the beginning of the 1980s (Euromed, 2006a).

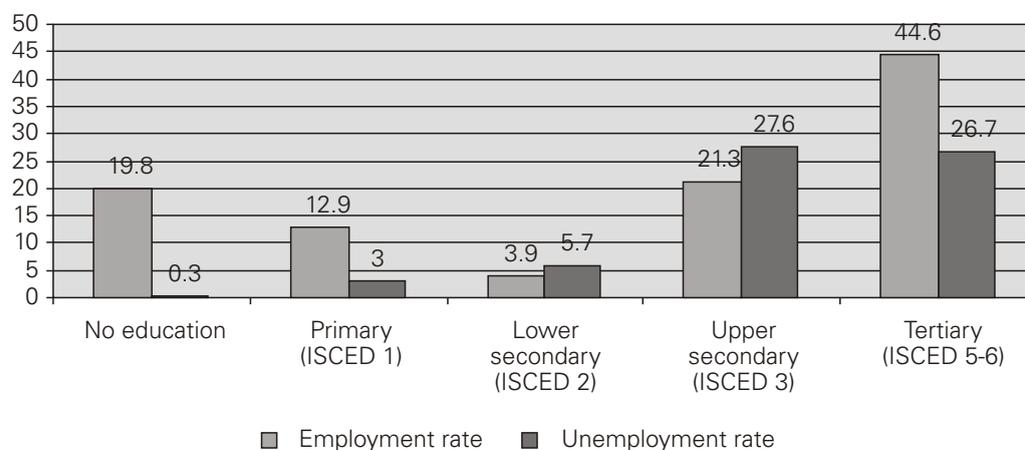
Women's engagement in the informal sector differs from men's. Whereas most men in the informal sector are either wage workers or employers, women are primarily non-wage workers contributing in various ways to household production and family businesses. It is also noteworthy that women and men are almost equally likely to be self-employed, but men are far more likely to be employers. Substantial differences among women also exist, with rural women being more likely to be self-employed, while urban women are more likely to be engaged in non-wage family-oriented labour. Most women in the informal sector work in agriculture (Euromed, 2006a).

The share of working women in the services sector is relatively high. However, the Egyptian labour market is suffering from horizontal (sectoral) gender segregation like many other countries. In 2006, 18.5% of women working outside the home were employed in the education sector, constituting 40% of the overall employees in this sector. Second after education, general management activities absorbed 9.8% of women workers, constituting 21% of the total workforce in this sector (SIS, 2010). Meanwhile, women still constitute a limited share and represent only 8% of the total labour force in the manufacturing sector in 2003. Women working in manufacturing are concentrated in labour-intensive industries such as textiles and garments, food processing and the pharmaceutical and electronics industries.

TABLE 4.2 WORK STATUS OF WOMEN, 2006

Work status	Total workers	Women workers	% of total	% of women
Salaried/waged	126 352	20 851	16.5	53.7
Employer supervising others	27 361	1 096	4.0	2.8
Self-employed with no employees	23 881	4 223	17.7	10.8
Unpaid household help	26 842	12 672	47.2	32.6
Total	204 436	38 842	19.0	100.0

Source: CAPMAS

FIGURE 4.4 EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, 2007

Source: National Statistics Offices, according to MEDA-EET data collection

TABLE 4.3 EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS BY GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, 2007

	Employment rates			Unemployment rates		
	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
Total 15–64	45.78	19.85	70.87	8.95	18.58	5.93
No education	45.24	19.83	89.25	0.53	0.32	0.61
ISCED 1	60.75	12.88	88.73	0.86	2.96	0.67
ISCED 2	23.44	3.92	38.12	2.55	5.71	2.29
ISCED 3–4	47.82	21.34	68.68	13.14	27.65	8.43
ISCED 5–6	65.17	44.60	79.56	17.31	26.66	12.97

Certain customs and traditions can limit the activity of women and confine them to the realm of the family. The degree to which customs and traditions are applied varies between rural and urban communities, but to a significant extent Egyptian cultural and social norms constitute important barriers preventing young women, especially those who are married, from joining the workforce (Abou-Zeid, 2006). Women in rural areas face the additional challenge of geographical discrimination. The government provides few educational or employment services in rural areas. While skill development and microfinance programmes targeting female entrepreneurs exist in urban areas, almost no such programmes target rural women (Khafagy, 2009).

Although the Constitution and the law stipulate equality between males and females and prohibit discrimination between them, the reality is different. The Labour Force Information Project results showed that women workers face various forms of discrimination, such as maltreatment by colleagues and managers (42%), harassment by the public (33%), prejudice against women (5%), lack of transport (5%), childcare problems (5%) etc (Nassar, 2004). These findings are to some extent confirmed by the Women and Work study.

According to the Labour Force Information Project study, wage discrimination was considered the primary form of prejudice against women in rural areas, while female workers in urban areas suffered most from limited chances for promotion. In the government sector, limitations on travel abroad ranked first in forms of discrimination against women, followed by limited chances of promotion to higher positions. As for the private sector, type of work ranked first, followed by discrimination in wages.

The unemployment rates are high for both men and women but are much higher for women. Whereas the male unemployment rate was 5.9% in 2007, the rate for women, at 18.6%, was three times higher (MEDA-EET, 2009).

The unemployed are in general young and educated. The unemployment rate for the 15–24 age group was estimated at 34% in 2005 (ETF, 2010). In fact, unemployment for both men and women increases with the level of education. The incidence of unemployment is highest among those with intermediate education (ISCED 3-4), followed by those in universities and above, indicating that unemployment is mainly a problem of finding a place for educated young people and eliminating the mismatch between labour supply and demand (**TABLE 4.3**).

Women's unemployment rates are higher than those of men irrespective of their level of education. Women's unemployment rates increase with education partly because education encourages women to become active in the formal labour market. The low unemployment rate of women without education is due to the importance of unpaid household help and the informal sector; dropout from these sectors does not show in unemployment rates. Indeed, in 2007, the unemployment rate of women without education was only 0.3% while it was 26.7% for women with ISCED 5–6 levels of education. For men without education the unemployment rate was also low, at 0.6%, but it was also lower (17%) for those with ISCED 5–6 levels of education.

II. RESEARCH FINDINGS

5. WOMEN IN TOURISM

5.1 SECTOR PROFILE

Tourism is one of the main contributors to the Egyptian economy. The sector is a major generator of income and foreign exchange earnings, as well as a main provider of job opportunities. Tourism also exerts indirect economic impacts on other sectors supplying goods and services for tourist entities and activities, such as agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing and construction. According to the annual report of the State Information Service, in 2007 the sector contributed 11.3% to national GDP, 40% to non-commodity exports and 19.3% to the income in foreign currencies. It employs almost 7% of the Egyptian total work force directly and another 6% indirectly¹⁶.

There are eight types of tourism in Egypt: cultural tourism, recreational tourism, religious tourism, therapeutic tourism, festival tourism, environmental tourism, sports tourism, conference tourism and safari tourism. The private sector owns 99% of the tourism establishments in Egypt.

When Presidential Decree No 452 was issued in 1992, a new development policy started targeting the achievement of comprehensive tourism development with the support of international and domestic expertise. New sites for tourism were established in various areas considered remote, which added considerably to the areas of Egypt covered by tourism. The current government programme to boost tourism runs from 2006 to 2011. This programme aims at attracting the private sector to make new investments in tourism totalling approximately EGP 8 billion, which in turn will create new job opportunities for young people in tourism projects. The programme also aims at boosting the number of tourists to 14 million, raising the total number of nights spent in the country by tourist to 140 million, and increasing hotel capacity at a rate of 16 000 rooms per year to a total of 240 000 rooms.

According to the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) (World Economic Forum, 2009), one of Egypt's major strengths in tourism is its price competitiveness – it ranks first out of all countries as a result of very low ticket taxes and airport charges. The country is perceived as relatively safe from HIV/AIDS, ranking first on that indicator. It also does relatively well with regard to the government's focus on the sustainability of the tourism and travel sector, ranking 38th, although the general assessment of environmental sustainability in Egypt is less positive, ranking 103rd overall, with environmental legislation that is considered not sufficiently strong or well enforced. The quality of air transport, ground transport and ICT all showed a significantly low ranking. Safety and security continue to be of concern. In addition, the TTCI found the overall policy environment to be not sufficiently conducive to the development of the sector because of a low incidence of foreign ownership, a lack of transparency in government policies, and the high cost of starting a business in Egypt. The country also suffers from a lack of qualified human resources, attributable in part to the quality of the educational system, and is ranked 83rd in this respect.

Egypt has a number of specialised educational institutes in the field of tourism, ranging from universities, at the highest level, to specialised vocational schools providing basic skills in one or another of the branches of tourism. The highest density of faculties, institutes and schools is found in Cairo and Alexandria; this decreases considerably in tourism governorates such as Hurgahada, South Sinai and Delta, although these account for the largest labour force in the tourism sector.

The technical institutes that offer tourism-related courses are of two different types. The first accepts students who finish secondary school, and has a study period of four years. The second category of technical institutes is similar to the first, except that the study period is two years.

There are no recent data about the enrolment of students in university faculties on courses linked to tourism.

A study commissioned by the Egyptian Tourism Federation took a random sample of 25 000 employees in the tourism sector; it showed that 13% of workers in the tourism sector have related qualifications. The distribution of women in hotel employment by educational level indicated that almost 25% of the women employees hold a university degree and another 60% have intermediate or higher intermediate education levels. In the catering sector, the results of the

Economic Census of 2000–01 show that one-third of women employed in small informal establishments are illiterate and another 30% are just able to read and write, implying lower educational levels compared to hotel employment.

According to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), women accounted for 22–28% of the total tourism workforce in 2008. The total share of women personnel in employment in hotels and restaurants ranged between 8% and 13%. Some publications reveal even lower percentages varying between 5% and 6%. These figures, however, are misleading because of poor reporting and failure to capture the casual jobs that are often carried out by women, as well as marginal forms of employment in small family restaurants and non-classified hotels. Examples include cleaning staff, kitchen, dining room and café assistants, and many other low-skilled occupations in small enterprises. According to CAPMAS, only 0.2% of the total of female employed population and 2.5% of the total of male employed population works in hotels and restaurants¹⁷.

Within the same study, data gathered on the organised hotel business show that over 50% of female personnel are employed in the five-star category; another 30% are found in the four- and three-star categories. These figures show that, within the organised accommodation sector, the 3–5-star hotels are the main providers of jobs for women with relatively high educational qualifications. Nevertheless, the extent of occupational segregation by gender is clearly apparent in the tourism labour market. Most women are confined to low-level jobs, and they are often relegated to traditional professions or support functions while at the same time tending to be underrepresented in professional and managerial positions. The Labour Law (No 12/2003) does not permit gender-based discrimination in remuneration (Article 35); but in practice men often manage to acquire extra income by working longer hours and night shifts, in addition to performing multi-skilled functions that enable them to gain bonuses and tips.

5.2 WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN TOURISM

Tourism in Egypt has a long history but the mass tourism industry is a recent phenomenon. The majority (61%) of the tourism companies interviewed in the survey conducted for this study were established in the last 20 years. As regards financial status, a majority of respondents (84%) stated that their financial situation is good or very good, with only 9% declaring a bad situation. The employers are also very positive about the future, as is reflected by the high percentage of companies planning to invest both in new infrastructure and technology (45%) and in the recruitment of new employees (35%). The new jobs are to be created mainly for professionals and skilled workers (93% altogether). Furthermore, a slight majority (52%) of the companies experienced in the last twelve months an increase in the number of employees. The flourishing of the tourism industry is likely to create additional jobs that could appeal to women.

5.2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Employment by gender

Women constitute 10% of all workers in the companies surveyed, considerably less than the estimated average female labour force participation rate of 22%. There is no difference between the hotel and tourism companies in the survey. While smaller enterprises were excluded from the sample, one may still observe a higher share of women in companies with fewer than 50 employees (women's representing up to 20% of the total number of companies' employees). As the size of the company grows, women's participation rate seems to decrease.

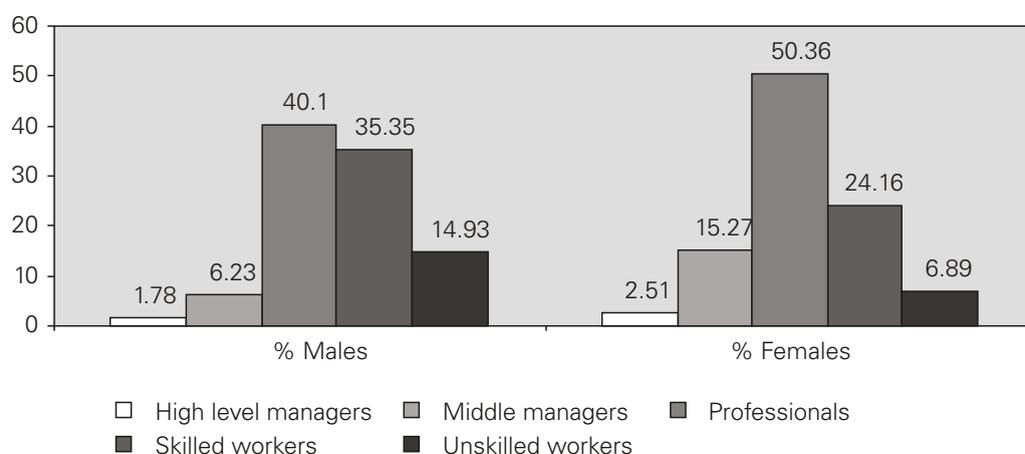
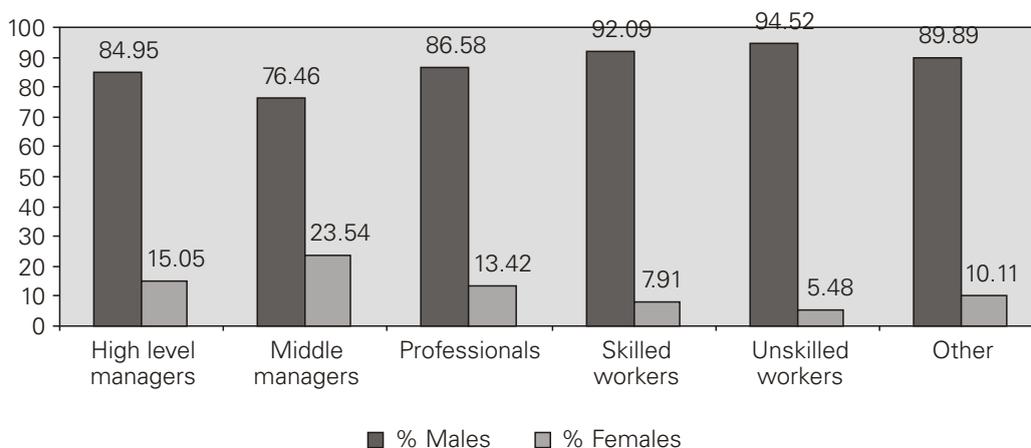
Employment by gender and category

Most female staff are concentrated in professional (50%) and skilled jobs (24%) (**FIGURE 5.1**)¹⁸ Some 15% of them are middle managers and fewer than 7% are unskilled workers. The tourism industry in Egypt attracts better-educated women. Men are more likely to work as skilled and unskilled workers and the sector attracts many low-skilled and low-educated males.

The share of women among managers is quite high, almost 24% of middle managers and 15% of high-level managers (**FIGURE 5.2**). Women also constitute 13% of professionals. The percentage of women among skilled and unskilled workers is definitely much lower (8% and 5% respectively).

¹⁷ CAPMAS, Labour force research 2008.

¹⁸ The following categories were used: high-level managers, middle-level managers, professionals (people who have at least higher education and/or management skills), skilled workers (those who have high or technical school education and experience) and unskilled workers (those with no specific training regardless educational level acquired). The categories are not clear-cut according to educational credentials and the respondents were assigning employees to different categories at their discretion, so inconsistencies between employers may have occurred.

FIGURE 5.1 EMPLOYEES BY GENDER AND CATEGORY IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES²⁰**FIGURE 5.2 EMPLOYEES BY CATEGORY AND GENDER IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES**

Employment by gender and department

With regard to the share of female employees by department, we notice that the highest percentage of women is in sales and marketing (33%), followed by 19% in administration (**FIGURE 5.3**). On the other hand women are most heavily underrepresented in maintenance and food and beverages departments (5% and 4% respectively). Reception, room service and finance have a women's share of some 13% on average.

Women are more likely to be employed in administration (27%), sales and marketing (15%) and finance (14%), and less likely to be found in core functions with the exception of room service (18%)¹⁹. Some 11% work in food and beverages departments and only 4% in reception (**FIGURE 5.4**). Men seem to be concentrated more in food and beverages departments (29%), room service (14%), administrative support and other undefined functions (13% and 15% respectively).

¹⁹ The proposed structure by department is artificial though based on functions that are normally found in any given tourist/hotel establishment. The respondents assigned employees to different departments at their discretion and inconsistencies between employers may have occurred. Owing to the prevalence of multi-tasking and the fact that administrative support is a function found across several departments, the distinction between departments is not clear-cut.

²⁰ Tourism companies in figures refer also to hotels included in the survey.

FIGURE 5.3 EMPLOYEES BY GENDER AND DEPARTMENT IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES

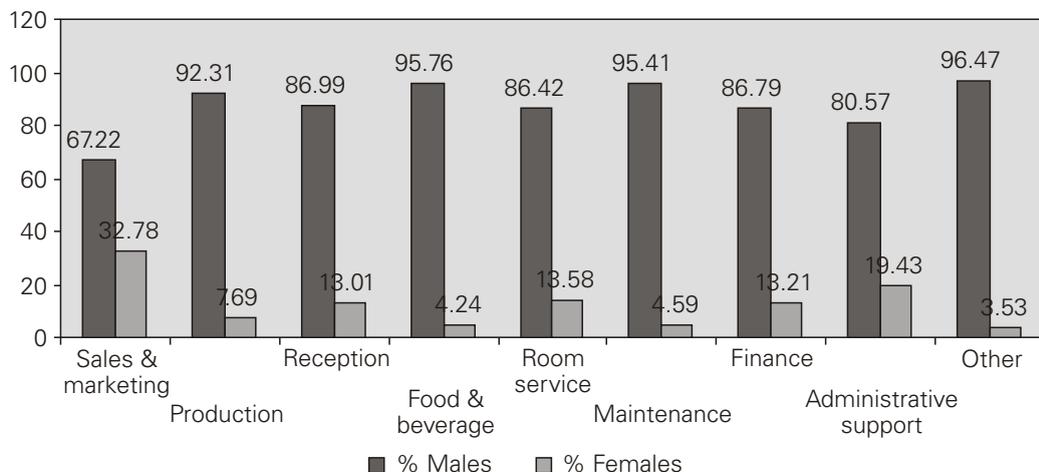
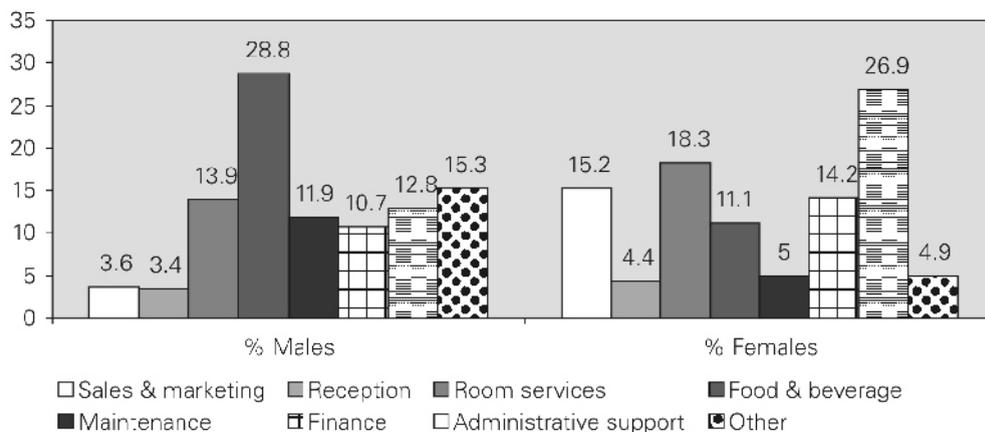


FIGURE 5.4 EMPLOYEES BY DEPARTMENT AND GENDER IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES



Employment by gender and education

Female employees are relatively well educated: 48% of the women in the surveyed companies have a university degree, 8% have general secondary education, 43% have received a vocational education, while a residual 2% have either primary education or less.

5.2.2 RECRUITMENT

Current recruitment trends by gender

Women constituted only 8% of all newly recruited staff during the last 12 months before the survey, slightly below their share in the tourism industry at the time of the survey. They constituted 29% of all new professionals and 20% of all new middle managers. The overwhelming majority of men took skilled jobs and a small percentage professional jobs. The majority of newly recruited women filled professional and skilled jobs (68% and 24% respectively) (FIGURE 5.5).

FIGURE 5.5 NEW RECRUITS BY GENDER AND CATEGORY IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES

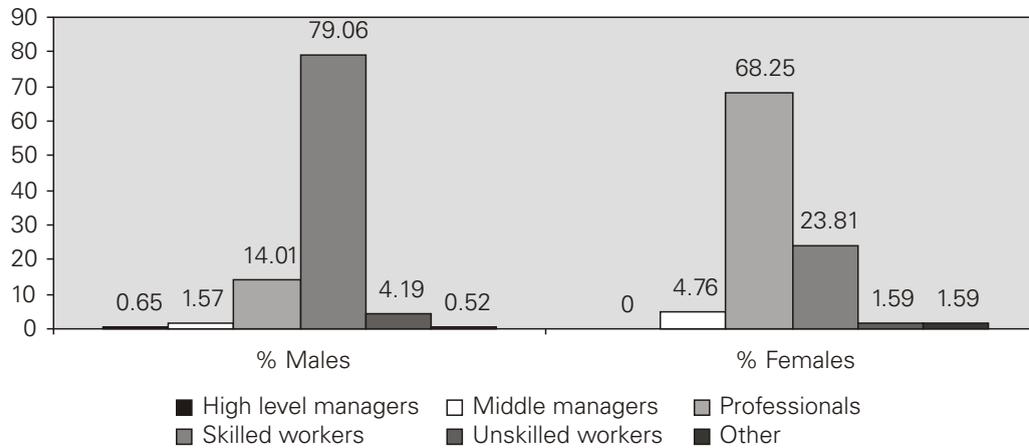
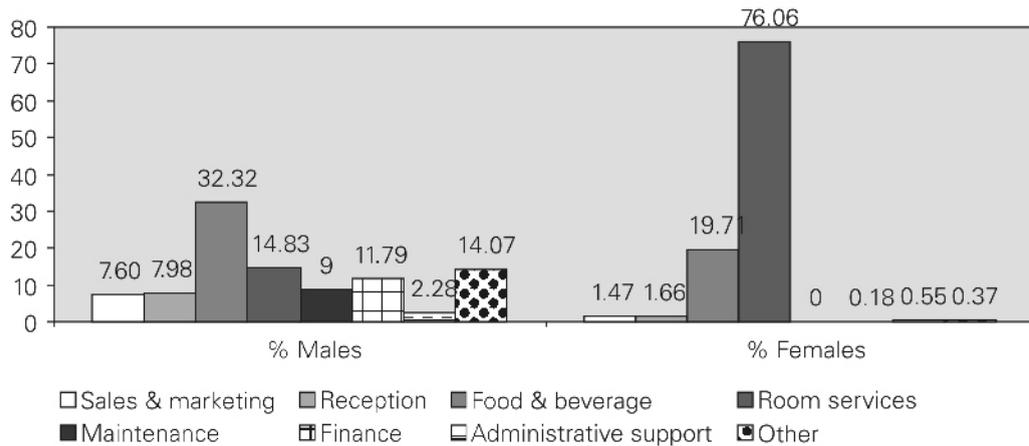


FIGURE 5.6 NEW RECRUITS BY GENDER AND DEPARTMENT IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES



At the same time 95% of newly recruited women were hired for core functions – room service and food and beverages – and this indicates some change with regard to their presence across various departments at the time of the survey (FIGURE 5.6). However, the fact that the majority of newly recruited women were hired for professional positions may indicate that women’s employment is still limited largely to specific functions. Men on the other hand were hired for the whole range of functions and departments, although room service and food and beverages account for the majority of male recruits too.

Training of new recruits by gender

When recruiting new employees, 48% of companies provide some training for all new recruits and only 8% provide no training. In 65% of the establishments employers claimed that they provided training to all or the majority of new female recruits. However, in 11% of the cases no new female workers participated in training, which may still indicate that women are slightly less likely to be sent for training.

Recruitment mode

Personal contacts and advertising remain the most popular methods of recruitment (33% and 32% respectively). Employment agencies and educational institutions are much less popular (10% and 9% respectively) (FIGURE 5.7) 65% of the employers surveyed reported that less women apply for jobs than men, while 10% report that no women at all apply for jobs in their companies.

Despite legislation that prohibits the specification of gender when advertising job vacancies, the study showed that 57% of tourism establishments sometimes indicate the gender of the candidates they require and 7% do so often or systematically (FIGURE 5.8). The majority of employers (65%) say that fewer women than men apply for the jobs, 10% admit that no women apply, but 17% have more female applicants than male.

Importance of different characteristics in recruitment

When recruiting new young staff, employers attach importance firstly to soft skills and key competences, secondly to appropriate qualifications and work experience, and thirdly to candidates' flexibility as regards work routines. Personal characteristics, though important to some extent, play a different role.

FIGURE 5.7 RECRUITMENT CHANNELS FOR YOUNG NEW EMPLOYEES IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES

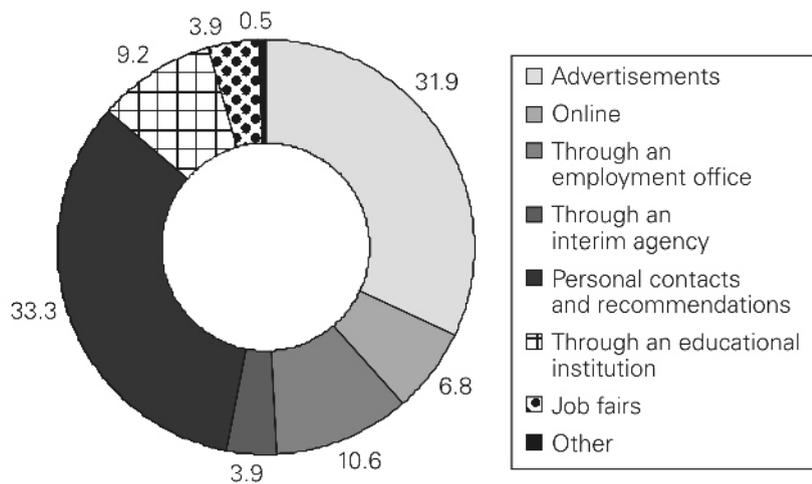
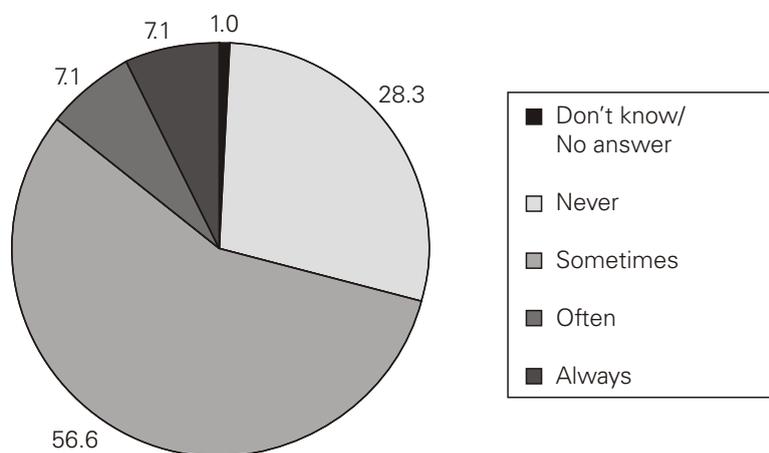


FIGURE 5.8 SPECIFYING GENDER WHEN ADVERTISING JOBS IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES



All the companies surveyed agreed on the importance of language skills and service attitude (100% said they are very important or important). Other most important characteristics were intellectual abilities (99%), followed by university degree (98%), availability to work over-time (96%), ability to work in teams (94%) and work experience (91%). Teamwork and computer skills scored a little lower (very important, respectively, for 62% and 42% of employers). The finding that tourism recruits higher educated young people is confirmed by the fact that lower-level qualifications (VET or general education) were less important (71%).

Some sector-specific characteristics such as availability for night shifts and work during weekends or holidays were seen as important but less essential. Good physical appearance was considered an asset. Marital and family status (being married and having young children) also scored relatively high (74% and 87%), though it is unclear whether this was seen as an asset or not, or whether it was important for only some categories of potential employees.

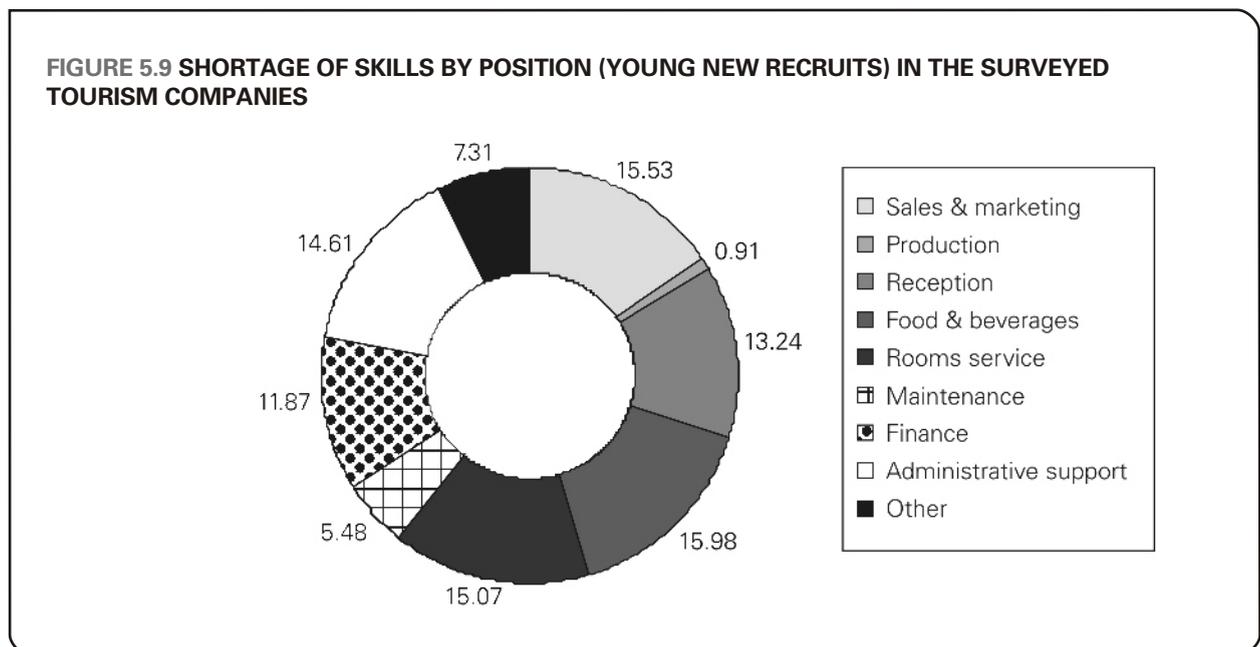
Employers overall attach importance to the same characteristics when recruiting young women: soft skills, key competences and qualifications. Some differences can somehow be observed. The lower-level qualifications (VET or general education) have even less importance than in the case of recruiting in general. This may be due to fact that the sector employs very little women as skilled workers Language skills were also quite important but, interestingly, employers regarded language skills as less important in female than in male candidates, and this may indicate that women are supposed to have less direct contact with foreign guests.

There is a striking difference regarding the commitment expected from women (very important or important for 99% of the employers) and from potential employees in general (66%). It seems that women were particularly judged on whether they exhibited commitment or not.

A degree of flexibility is also expected from women, in particular availability to work overtime (very important for 75%), but the availability to work over weekends and on public holidays is not considered as important when recruiting women than when recruiting overall which may indicate a certain acceptance of women’s family responsibilities and role in the society. Nightshifts are even less expected from women: only 20% of employers consider the ability to do nightshifts very important or important in the case of women while this was considered very important or important by 78% of the employers for potential employees in general. Age and nationality have slightly more important when recruiting women than recruiting in general.

5.2.3 COMPETENCES AND NEEDS

Despite the major role assigned to skills development, the research reveals that 85% of employers face skills shortages when recruiting young employees. Skills shortages are mostly reported with regard to new employees in sales and marketing departments and in administration, as well as in core functions such as room service and food and beverages departments (FIGURE 5.9).



With regard to the types and levels of job for which skills shortages were reported, professional and skilled jobs came first (43% and 30% respectively), followed – quite naturally yet somehow surprisingly – by unskilled jobs (**FIGURE 5.10**).

In an open question about what kinds of skill and knowledge the employers felt were most, lacking, the answers showed that new recruits lacked technical (professional) skills and knowledge in particular. Inadequate language skills and lack of computer skills also scored highly. Weak communication skills, inadequate general knowledge, inability to work in a team, lack of commitment and readiness to learn were also mentioned, as was the lack of leadership skills, decision-making skills and problem-solving skills.

Employers' attitudes towards female employees

The employers surveyed in the tourism sector had generally positive opinions about women as employees and did not report traditional prejudices about the sector or women's employment (**FIGURE 5.11**). The overwhelming majority (89%) claimed that it was appropriate for women to work in the tourism sector (or more specifically in a company like theirs). They reported few prejudices against working with women on the part of their male employees (11% said their male employees do not want to work with female colleagues) or on the part of their customers (only about 5% claimed that their customers did not want to be served by women). Surprisingly, over 70% saw no problems in employing married women.

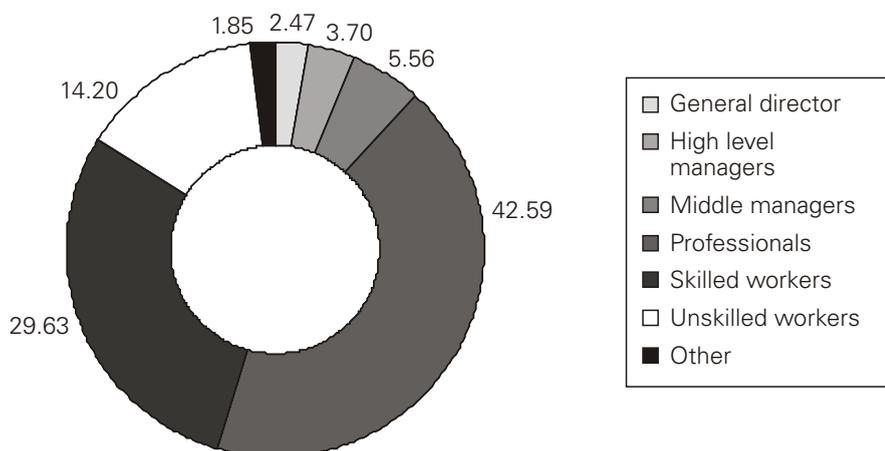
The employers were, however, less positive about women's performance: 58% of employers disagreed that women performed as well as men. It is difficult to judge to what extent they were referring to skills and to what extent to attitudes. Nevertheless, 35% of employers said that it was difficult to find women with appropriate qualifications. Half of them also admitted that employing women could create organisational problems for the company (e.g. if women were absent on maternity leave). The financial implications of employing women in accordance with legal provisions were not seen as a barrier for over 70% of employers, but we should keep in mind that the company size threshold normally applies and smaller companies do not have the same obligations as larger ones. Providing transport for female employees was treated as a serious problem, on the other hand, with 61% of employers having difficulties in that respect.

Regardless of the problems related to employing women, a considerable percentage of employers saw advantages in employing women. They admitted that women were likely to provide a better image of the company (86%), could establish better relations with clients (87%), and were more patient than male workers (70%). Half of the employers also recognised that women accept lower salaries than men; although this is an advantage to them, it should be counteracted to avoid exploiting women workers and increasing gender pay gap. Finally, women were not considered as better qualified, more precise or more service-oriented than men.

5.3 ASSESSING THE SUPPLY OF LABOUR: WOMEN SPEAK UP

To identify the real situation of women working in the tourism sector and the challenges they face, a series of focus group discussions was held with several different groups of women: students at tourism faculties at university, students at specialised tourism schools, women working in the field of tourism, women seeking a job and women who have dropped out

FIGURE 5.10 SHORTAGE OF SKILLS BY LEVEL (YOUNG NEW RECRUITS) IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES



of the labour market. The discussions focused on the various dimensions of women's work in the tourism sector and unveiled the weaknesses of some educational programmes, along with other cultural and social realities that women experience.

All women working in the tourism sector experience negative attitudes towards working women to some extent. Women also face conflict both in the workplace and at home; at work male colleagues undermine their work and at home they often find that spouses or other family members object to their working outside the home. Many women are put in the position of defending their presence in the workforce by continuously having to prove their capabilities.

However, despite some negative aspects of work in the tourism sector, many female vocational and university students were able to point out attractive features, such as interacting with people instead of sitting in an office, and many opportunities to learn languages and to increase one's own knowledge. Family members usually played a very important role in encouraging girls to choose this educational path; sometimes, interestingly, the encouragement came from mothers or older sisters or cousins already working in the sector.

The women felt that access to work in tourism requires higher academic standing, and also prior training on the specific aspects of the work. Overall, they felt that the best jobs available for them in the sector were as tourist guides and in ticketing offices. Tour guides are generally able to earn a good income, and working in local tourism ensures them a degree of stability since it allows them to work in their home city as well as giving them the flexibility in terms of time to combine wage work and family life.

In order to get the job they want, women are quite ready to make some sacrifices: to work long hours or accept a lower salary at the beginning of their careers. Asked about the problems they encountered when looking for a job, working women most often mentioned the difficulties of getting the licence that is obligatory for tourist guides. Many women were using personal connections to find jobs, but they also admitted that some leading tourism companies were seeking employees in open competition.

It is noteworthy that most of the students who were studying in tourism schools (though less so at college levels) do not actually want to work in tourism. The main reasons given for this unwillingness were family opposition – either from the family of origin or the fiancée – and society's negative perception of women working in the tourism sector, especially in room service in hotels. However, some vocational students considered working even after marriage, as this would be a good means of providing for their families' needs. Moreover, because of the financial and sociocultural constraints, the ability of female students to challenge the current status quo is limited. It is even more difficult if there is no male support, such as the father or an older brother already working in the tourism sector; this is something a number of female students pointed out.

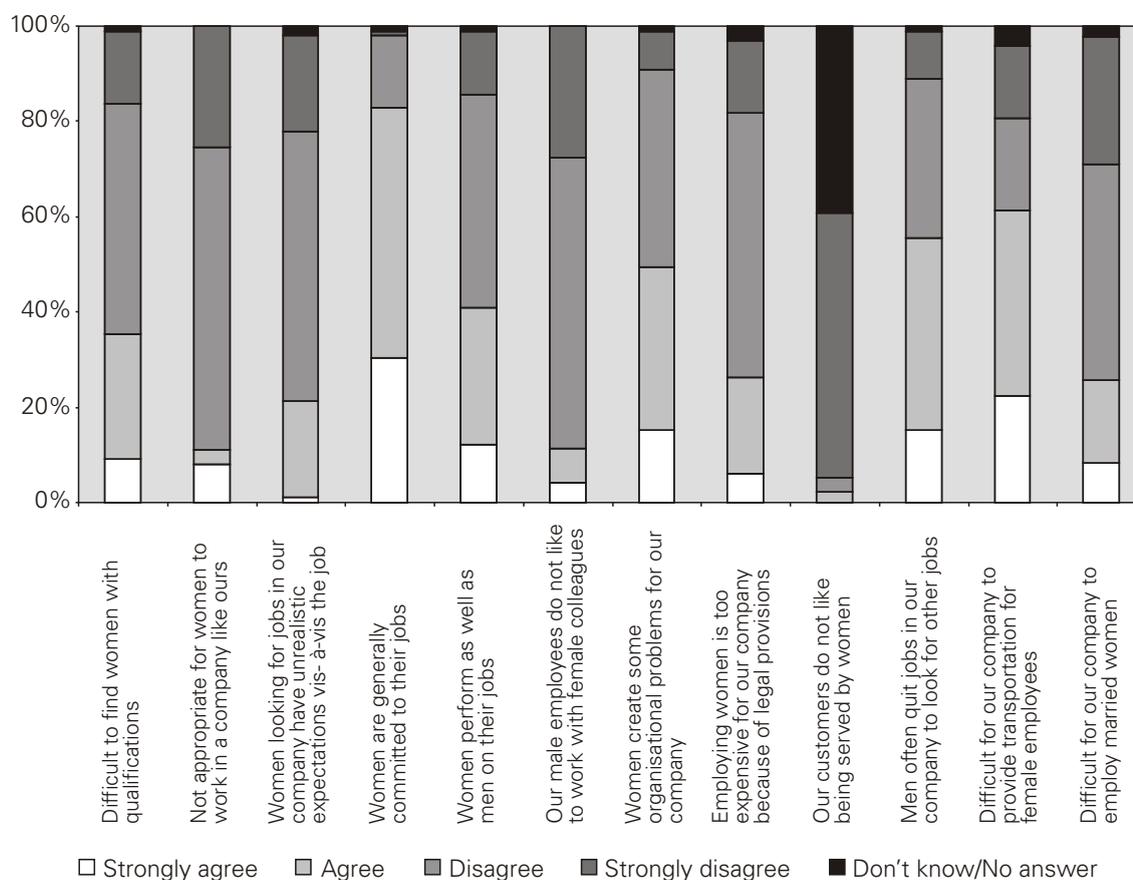
Students in higher education criticised the weakness of the skills that they acquired during the years of study. They complained that the education system did not do enough to endow them with the skills they need, such as time management, problem-solving skills, foreign languages, communication skills for dealing with different types of people and problems, or intercultural skills. They indicated that their education was mainly theoretical, and did not qualify them to enter the labour market. The students also pointed out the absence of modern teaching tools and methods. In contrast to the university students, however, the vocational students believed that their schools' tourism curriculum was useful and good.

The types of challenge facing female students in Cairo also differ from those in rural areas. Firstly, training opportunities are very limited, if not completely blocked, in most non-tourist governorates. Secondly, opportunities to travel to other regions in order to receive training or subsequent work seem to be absent, due to the multiple social pressures facing those who live in rural areas. Thirdly, the chance of enhancing foreign language skills diminishes due to centralisation of language teaching centres.

Female students are fully aware of the responsibilities and requirements related to forming a family and what it entails in terms of sacrificing their professional and personal ambitions. Those students who were more persistent about getting a job in tourism declared that they would strive to achieve the difficult balance between family and career. They felt that the tourism sector provided some flexibility for them, as the working hours are flexible and they would be able to choose convenient hours.

Female workers already in the tourism sector were less optimistic. They complained about very demanding bosses at work and demanding husbands at home; thus they are caught between male pressures of similar significance. Most of the female workers in the focus groups had had to make sacrifices, such as refusing tasks that require travel outside the governorate and refusing to work additional hours.

At the professional level, discrimination in promotions was the most obvious challenge, along with the partiality of superiors toward male workers. Veiled women rarely find work in jobs related to the tourism sector. Women workers also pointed to what they called 'the worst challenge', sexual harassment, prevalent especially in smaller enterprises, which represent the highest number of establishments in the sector. Women are exposed to sexual harassment from supervisors, colleagues and customers. Sexual harassment is more frequent in tourist governorates where female

FIGURE 5.11 EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS EMPLOYING WOMEN IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES

employees are working far away from home, and women might also experience sexual harassment during their travel to and from work, especially if they do not own private cars and the employer does not provide transport. On the whole, the tourism sector fulfils its responsibility for providing transport for workers to a very limited extent in practice, because of the large investments this entails. Women are not adequately trained in how to deal with such situations.

'Because of my extensive experience, I got a job in the public relations department of a five-star hotel in Hurghada. I was thrilled at the opportunity. However, just a few weeks after starting the new job, my boss approached me and quite bluntly told that he expected a little more from me than just her work. I said that I was not interested and tried to forget about it, but he continued to harass me with inappropriate talk and gestures that made me feel uncomfortable. Finally he told me that I should just make it easy for myself – it was not going to help my career if I refused him. I was alone, no one was there to help me; all the supervisors in the hotel were men. I couldn't complain to any of them. In the absence of any formal body to complain to, I had to quit the job and go back home.'

Young woman employed in tourism

The additional challenges faced by female labour in small companies are worth noting. Small enterprises operate on a flexible basis and do not provide employees with a great deal of supervision. Women complain that they constitute a less expensive labour force for these firms while they are more devoted and eager to work than their male counterparts. They live under continuous intimidation, working up to 12 hours a day and having their requests for holidays refused.

Women also claim discrimination in favour of male colleagues as regards wages, premiums or promotions, under the pretext that men are responsible for providing for their families and that women have lighter financial burdens. The female workers participating in the focus groups inquired reproachfully whether women were not supporting their families too.

6. WOMEN IN ICT

6.1 SECTOR PROFILE

ICT opens potential new areas of employment for women. The government has invested heavily in the development of the ICT sector as a means of increasing the country's competitiveness and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). The sector consists of communications and IT subsectors in Egypt.

The real growth rate of ICT sector has been 12% in 2009–10 and its contribution to the GDP at the level of 4%. The employment has increased with almost 4% growth rate. In June 2010 the 3 726 operating companies in the sector were employing 192 150 people²¹ (MCIT, 2010b).

Governance is provided by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. The ministry has two strategic objectives: to disseminate ICT tools nationwide and to set the foundation of an export-oriented ICT industry. The government is supported in these tasks by an operational agency, the Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA), which is responsible for enhancing and developing Egypt's position as a leading global outsourcing location by attracting FDI to the industry and maximising exports of ICT services and applications. Other main ICT sector stakeholders in Egypt are: the National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA), Telecom Egypt (TE), Egypt Post, the Information Technology Institute (ITI), the Smart Village, the Nile University, the Technology Development Fund (TDF), the ICT Trust Fund and the Centre for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage (CULTNAT).

According to ITIDA, the ICT sector encompasses:

- software development,
- IT services (including call centres),
- IT applications,
- telecommunications,
- hardware, computers and equipment.

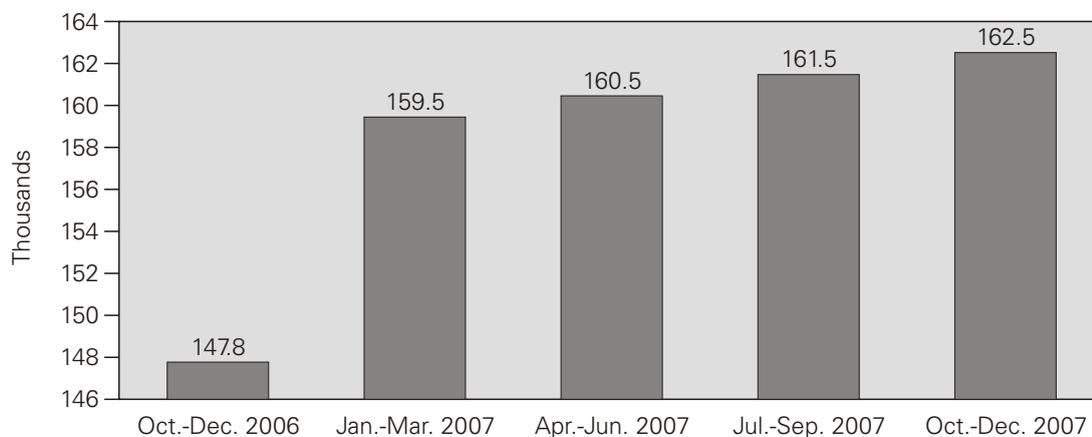
In 1999, the government announced Egypt's National Project for Technology Renaissance, which aims to make Egypt a producer of high-technology elements and a major base for the information industry. With the collaboration of all state institutions and the private sector, a widespread national technology literacy campaign was launched throughout the country. It promoted the use of computers in schools, universities and all governmental institutions and led to the establishment of a network that contributed towards providing computers and internet services to most sectors of the society, from cities to remote villages. In addition, high-technology industries supporting the export trend were established, thus opening up substantial new sources of national income.

Egypt has put ICT training at the top of its agenda by including it in its National Plan, and the government has developed training programmes and formed partnerships with training institutes to enhance and invest in ICT skills and capabilities. University-level training is available in disciplines such as computer science, engineering and other ICT-related disciplines. Enrolment and graduation rates have been increasing since these programmes were launched in 1997.

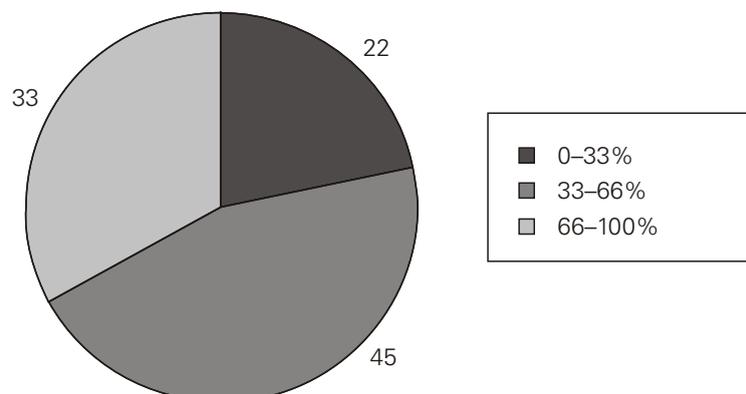
The total number of ICT graduates reached 9 311 in 2007/08 compared with 7 930 graduates in 2006/07 with annual growth rate of 17% (MCIT, 2010a). The education in ICT is organised around two specialities: IT speciality and communications speciality. In 2009 females represented 38% of the IT speciality graduates and 33% of the communications speciality graduates according to the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology but the official figures of the Ministry of Higher Education reveal that women represent 49% of the ICT graduates. Some 10% of the public faculties provide specialisation in communications and 19% in information technology (MCIT, 2010b).

Under the mandate of the national investment laws, the number of companies operating in the field of ICT in Egypt was 2 519 at the end of March 2008 compared to 2 185 at the end of May 2007, an increase of 12%. This contributed towards providing additional job opportunities in the ICT sector. The number of ICT employees at the end of 2007 was 162 500 compared to 147 800 at the end of 2006, an annual growth rate of 9%. **FIGURE 6.1** shows the development in employment in this sector (MCIT, 2008).

²¹ This includes ICT sector employees, Telecom Egypt, Post and Smart Village employees but does not include indirect employment in IT clubs, internet cafes and private communications stores.

FIGURE 6.1 DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYMENT IN ICT

Source: Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and Ministry of Investment

FIGURE 6.2 SHARE OF EMPLOYEES AGED UNDER 30 IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES

6.2 WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE ICT SECTOR

ICT is a new sector and the majority (78%) of companies surveyed for this study were established in the last 20 years. The financial status of 79% of ICT companies is reported by employers to be either good or very good, while only 9% declare that they have financial difficulties. Most companies reported changes in the number of their employees and 59% of them hired new staff. Also, 82% are planning to invest in new technologies and 62% are planning to create new jobs during the twelve months following the survey. These trends indicate a high potential for employment creation.

ICT companies rely heavily on young people (**FIGURE 6.2**), much more than tourism. In one-third of the companies, most of the staff is under 30, reflecting the relative youth and dynamic development of the sector and also the fact that the skills necessary for jobs in ICT are not in great supply among older cohorts. The focus age group of the study, namely young women aged 15–29, could profit from the growth of the sector and its employment of young people in particular.

6.2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Employment by gender

Women are still in a minority, representing 27% of the employees in the companies surveyed. However, this is above the average Egyptian female labour force participation rate of 22% (ILO, 2009). There is some correlation between the share of women employees and company size (again noting that micro-enterprises were excluded from the sample); whereas in the tourism sector the percentage of women decreased as company size increased, in ICT we see the opposite trend, with women slightly better represented in big companies.

Employment by gender and category

Analysing the structure of the labour force by categories relating to level or position, we see that both men and women are more likely to work as professionals (70% and 88% respectively)²². This is because the sector characteristically requires high-level skills (FIGURE 6.3). Men are more likely than women to take up the existing skilled and unskilled jobs (11% and 8%, respectively, of men and around 1% of women).

Accordingly, women are better represented in professional and middle management positions (31% and 27% respectively), while among skilled and unskilled workers they constitute only up to 4% (FIGURE 6.4).

Employment by gender and department

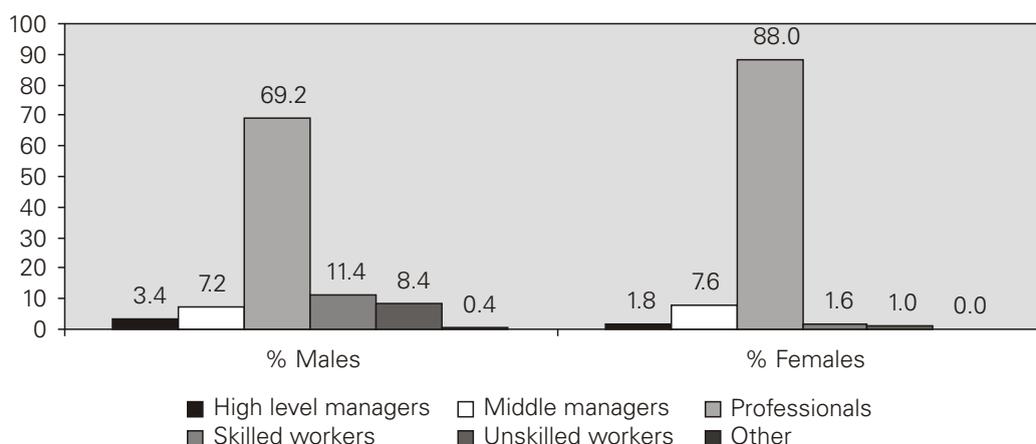
Women are to be found first of all in production departments (64%), followed by administrative support (13%) and sales and marketing (11%)²³. The distribution of men across departments is slightly less concentrated (FIGURE 6.5).

In production departments women constitute around 30% of work force, but they are severely underrepresented in maintenance (6%) (FIGURE 6.6).

Employment by gender and education

Female employees in the ICT sector have a high level of education: 92% of female workers in the companies surveyed have a university degree and only 5% have primary education level or lower. This finding is not surprising given the specific nature of the ICT sector.

FIGURE 6.3 EMPLOYEES BY GENDER AND CATEGORY IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES



²² The following categories were used: high-level managers, middle level-managers, professionals (people who have at least higher education and/or management skills), skilled workers (those who have high or technical school education and experience) and unskilled workers (those with no specific training regardless of the educational level acquired). The categories are not clear-cut according to educational credentials and the respondents tended to assign employees to different categories at their discretion, so inconsistencies between employers may have occurred.

²³ The proposed structure by department is artificial though based on functions that are normally found in any ICT company. The respondents were assigned employees to different departments at their discretion and inconsistencies between employers may have occurred. Owing to the prevalence of multi-tasking and the fact that administrative support is a function found across several departments, the distinction between departments is not clear-cut.

FIGURE 6.4 EMPLOYEES BY CATEGORY AND GENDER IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES

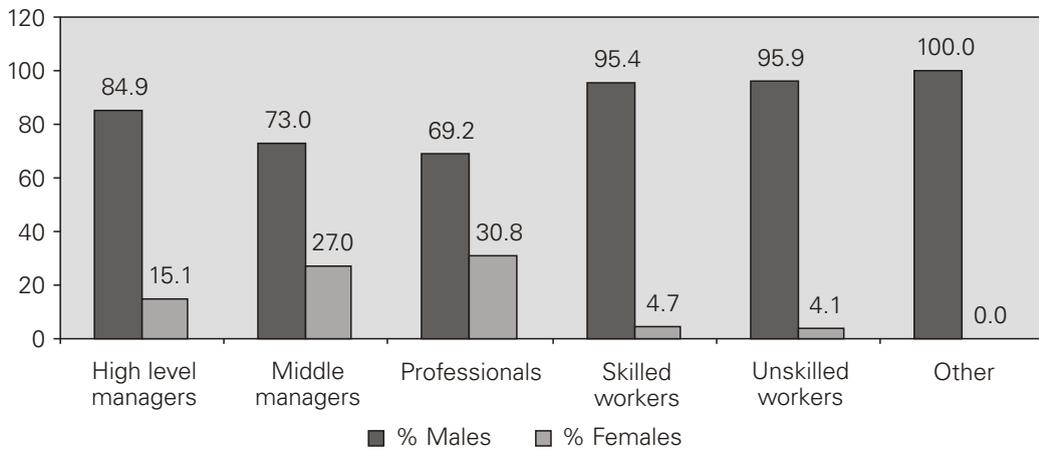


FIGURE 6.5 EMPLOYEES BY GENDER AND DEPARTMENT IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES

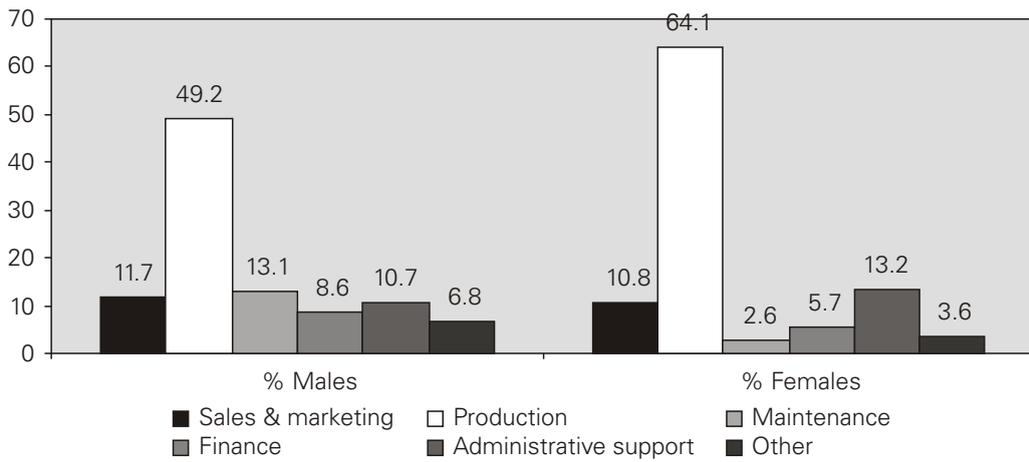
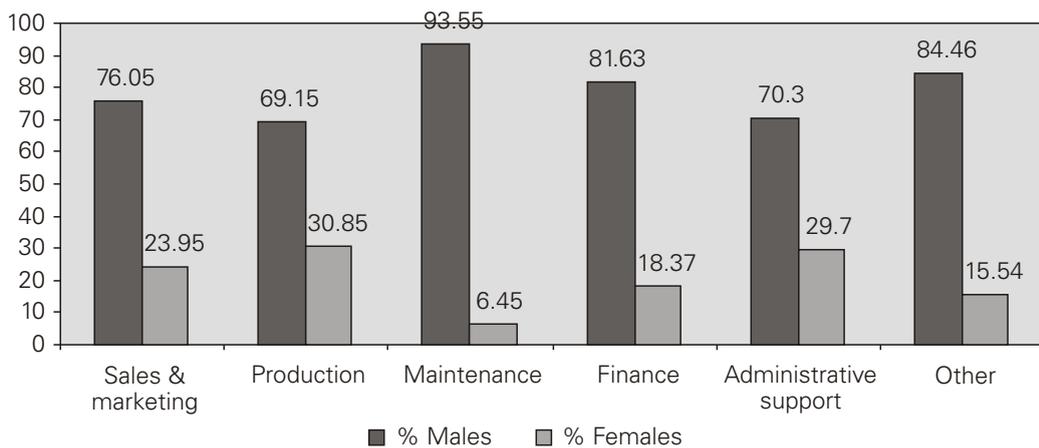


FIGURE 6.6 EMPLOYEES BY DEPARTMENT AND GENDER IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES



6.2.2 RECRUITMENT

Current recruitment trends by gender

Women constituted 31% of new recruits, slightly above their current share in the ICT sector which is a positive sign of the sector’s potential for women’s employment.

As regards the categories of level or position for which women were recruited in the companies surveyed, they were mainly recruited as professionals (96%); only 3% were recruited as middle managers. No women at all were hired to high-level managerial posts, neither as skilled nor as unskilled workers. A similar pattern can be observed for men, with the exception that at least a few men were recruited as skilled and unskilled workers (3%) (**FIGURE 6.7**).

Across departments, the share of women among new recruits overall was highest in finance and production (38% and 36% respectively). Most new female employees (70%) were recruited in production departments; 19% were recruited in sales and marketing, and 8% in administrative support (**FIGURE 6.8**).

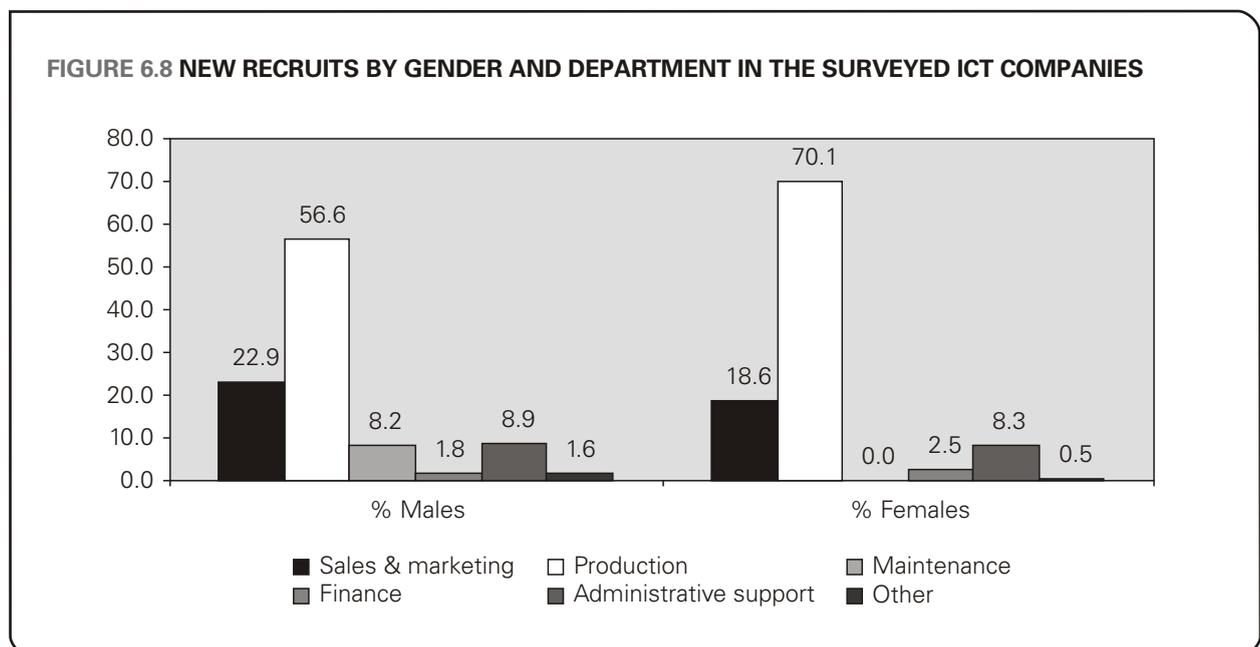
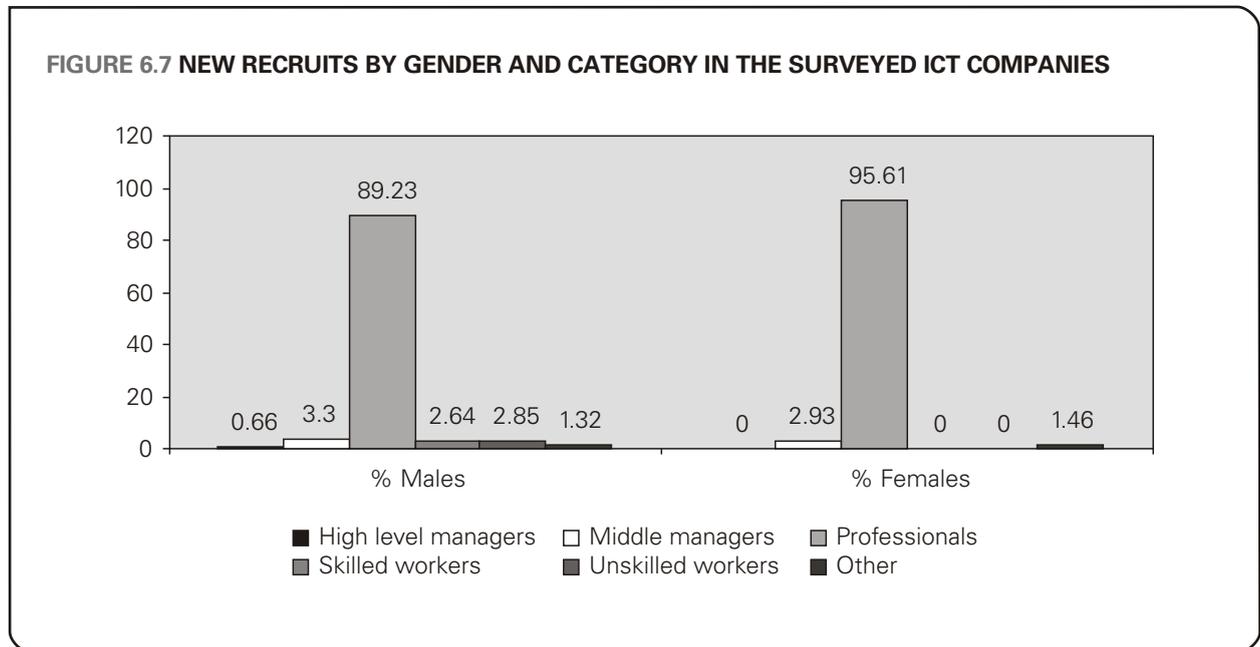
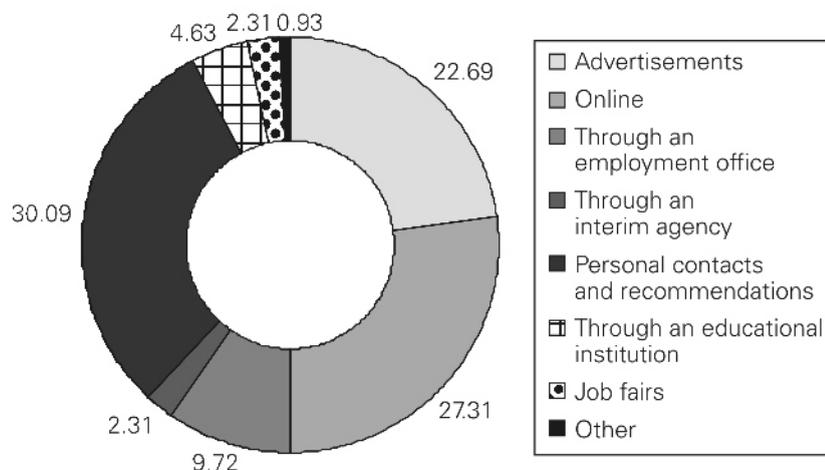


FIGURE 6.9 RECRUITMENT CHANNELS FOR YOUNG NEW EMPLOYEES IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES

Training of new recruits by gender

Some 44% of ICT companies stated that all their new recruits received training, while 53% mentioned that most or some of their recruits are being trained. Only 3% of companies acknowledged that they provided no training at all to their new employees. In 52% of the companies interviewed, all new female recruits participated in training, while in 40% only some of the new female recruits were trained; in 6% of companies none of the new female recruits received training, which may indicate that women are slightly disadvantaged regarding access to training.

Recruitment mode

Most of the companies referred to personal contacts (30%), online channels (27%) and advertisements (23%) when looking for new employees (**FIGURE 6.9**). Job fairs and interim agencies are almost irrelevant (2%). The large share of online recruitment channels among the methods of searching for potential candidates indicates the technological advancement of the sector and favours applicants with access to modern tools.

When asked about the number of women who applied for jobs in the companies surveyed, 54% of ICT companies found fewer women than men applying for jobs, while in 18% of the companies female applicants were more numerous than their male counterparts. However, employers themselves specify gender when advertising jobs: sometimes - 36%; often or always - 16%.

Importance of different characteristics in recruitment

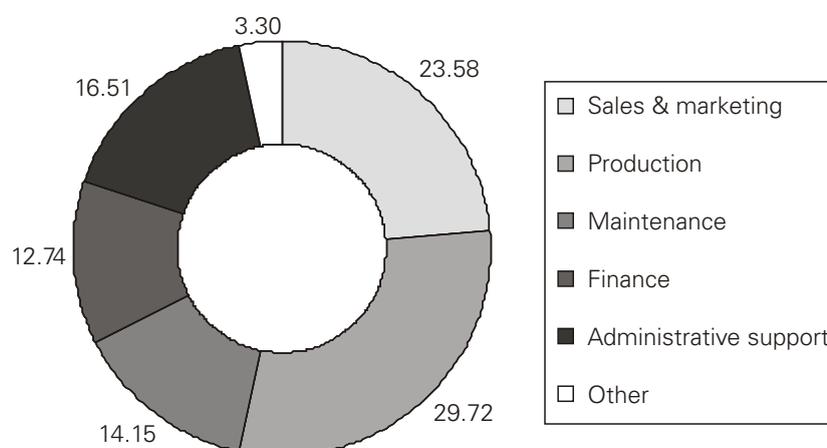
Soft skills and qualifications were considered most important by the ICT employers surveyed. Service attitude was considered very important or important by all the surveyed employers, followed by intellectual abilities (99%), language skills (99%), university degree (98%) and ability to work in a team (96%).

Interestingly, commitment to work scored very low, with only 29% of employers seeing this as important or very important. Flexibility such as availability for work overtime (92%), during weekends and holidays (72%) were quite important while the sector requires less night shifts (51%).

Personal characteristics such as physical appearance or marital status were rarely described as important, with the exception of family status and having young children (76%), age counts little (9%) while half of the employers gave importance to nationality.

Employers had slightly different expectations when recruiting women and attached different importance to some of the characteristics of female candidates. No big differences were recorded with regard to the formal qualifications, language skills, intellectual abilities, teamwork or service attitude expected, but age counted more for female candidates (29%). Employers' expectations with regard to the labour flexibility of female workers were slightly lower (weekend and holidays 12%, nightshifts 12%), with the exception of availability to work overtime (87%). There was a completely different approach to commitment to work and discipline. While the latter played hardly any role when assessing candidates in general, it was of the highest importance for employers when assessing women (very important or

FIGURE 6.10 SHORTAGE OF SKILLS BY DEPARTMENT (YOUNG NEW RECRUITS) IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES



important for 97% of employers). On the other hand there was no big difference as regards the importance attached to marital status or having young children, a figure that was exceptionally high anyway.

6.2.3 COMPETENCES AND NEEDS

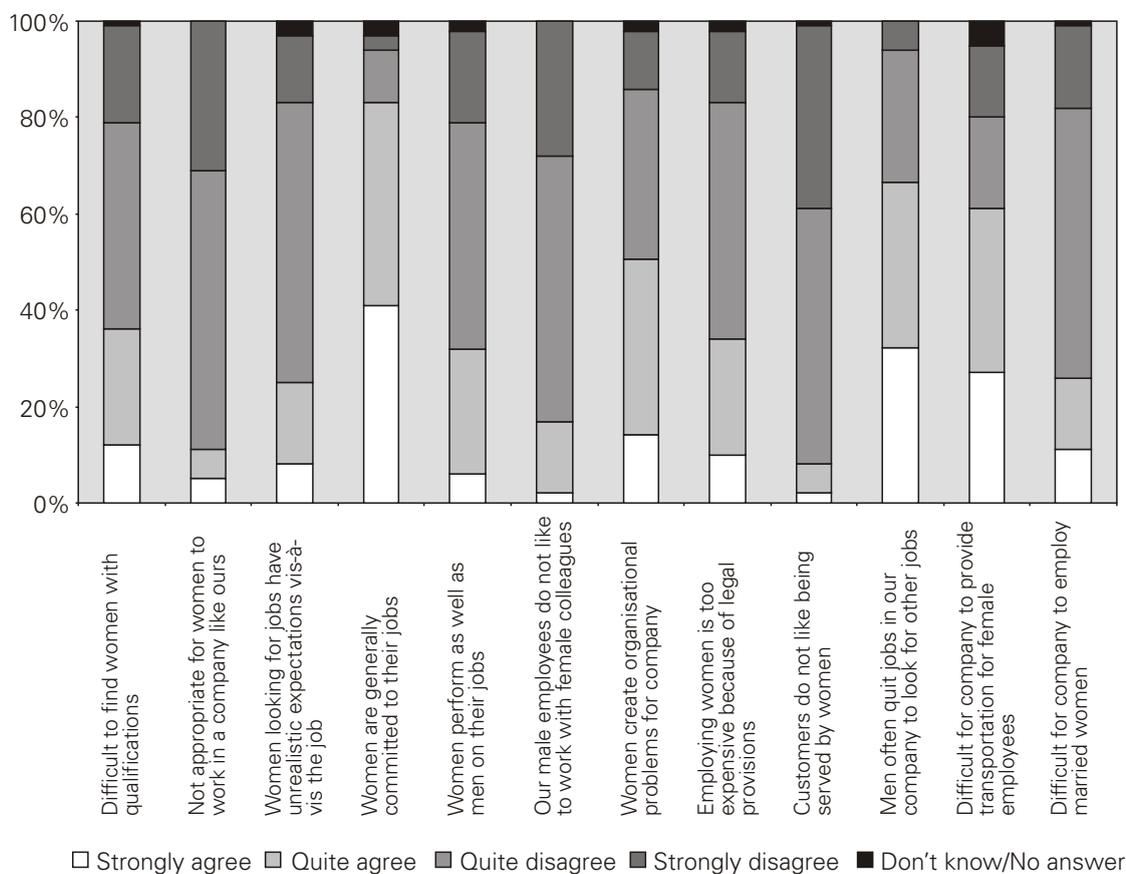
In general, 84% of respondents complained about shortages in the skills and knowledge of new staff. Taking into account that most employees and new recruits are university graduates, the greatest shortages were reported with regard to young people with post-secondary or university education, 96% of whom were reported to be lacking in skills and knowledge. For people with vocational education the percentage was 64%, and for those with secondary and primary education the lack of skills was definitely less common (31% and 20% respectively).

Shortages in skills and knowledge were reported mainly in production departments (30% of the surveyed companies) and in sales and marketing (24%). A further 17% of the companies reported facing skill shortages among administrative support staff, while those among maintenance and finance staff were lower (14% and 13% respectively) (**FIGURE 6.10**).

Finally, professionals were the category for which shortages in skills and knowledge were reported most often (54%), followed by skilled workers (21%) and middle managers (10%).

In an open question about what kinds of skill and knowledge the employers felt were most lacking, the answers showed that new recruits particularly lacked technical (professional) skills and knowledge, as a result of the highly theoretical training they received at universities. Inadequate language skills scored high as well. Weak teamwork skills, lack of commitment and responsibility towards their own duties, low communication and presentation skills, inadequate general knowledge, and work ethics were also mentioned.

FIGURE 6.11 EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS EMPLOYING WOMEN



Employers' attitudes towards female employees

Firstly, only 11% of employers found ICT companies like theirs to be inappropriate workplaces for a woman. Only 8% said that their customers did not like to be served by women, but a surprisingly high share (and higher than in tourism) of 17% of employers admitted that their male employees do not like to work with female colleagues. Around four-fifths (83%) of employers recognised that women are committed to their jobs, but only 32% claimed that women performed as well as men, while 36% complained of the lack of women with adequate qualifications (FIGURE 6.11).

From the survey it also emerged that 50% of the companies surveyed believed that women create some organisational problems for the companies where they work, related for instance to maternity leave absences and the like. A further 34% considered women's employment as costly owing to legal requirements, while 26% of companies found it difficult to employ married women. Providing transport for female employees is also a relevant problem in the ICT sector (61%).

Finally, employers saw many advantages in employing women. While 78% of the companies praised the ability of women to establish good relations with clients, 66% confirmed that employing women improved the company's image and 75% emphasised women's patience. Also, 58% admitted that women accept lower salaries than men, which could be seen as another kind of problem (though this does not mean that employers are paying women less). Less than half thought women are more precise than men. Finally, the employers vehemently disagreed that women were better qualified or more service-oriented.

6.3 ASSESSING THE SUPPLY OF LABOUR: WOMEN SPEAK UP

The results of focus group discussions shed further light on women's experiences in the ICT sector. Firstly, while the survey shows that women are well represented in the core functions, the discussions showed that some gender segregation is already occurring in organisations, with women working more on software while male workers tend to work in the maintenance, network and design departments.

Women complained also about discrimination in the sector. The marital status of a woman applying for a job is still a factor that determines her chances. Similarly, having young children is not welcomed. Female workers complained that the performance assessment depends to a great extent on the number of hours worked (and overtime work), and agreed that there is unfair competition not only between women and men but also between married and unmarried women, and even between married women who have young children and those who do not.

Female workers said as well that men receive better treatment, as they are able to work longer hours and stay late if required, as opposed to those women who are unable to stay late, especially if they are married. They also felt that additional working hours affected their family relations and they emphasised that 'it is difficult for women to find a compromise [between work and private life] due to the burden of responsibilities on both sides'. Some of the other challenges facing female workers in the ICT sector are obligatory maternity and childcare leave. Women are not able to compensate for these career breaks, whereas their male colleagues progress smoothly. Also pressure was put on women to avoid making mistakes. Finally, working on a yearly contract does not ensure long-term stability and hinders women's professional development.

'I met my husband in the same company and we worked equally for three years. When we got married I struggled to get home to fulfil all the household duties, in which my husband refused to give a hand. He stayed late at work. After two years I had a child; my husband was promoted and became a section head, and I did not move one step forward professionally.'

Young women employed in ICT

The focus group gave the same answer when asked whether women could find a compromise between household duties and a job in ICT. Most of them stated that 'it is difficult for women to find a compromise, due to the burden of responsibilities in both settings'.

The women admitted that getting a job in ICT is not easy. They agreed that university education is not enough to assure them of a job and that the curriculum is far from the requirements of the market. In order to find and get a job, they had to resort to doing volunteer work to be kept updated with all the developments, follow the advertisements in the newspaper, contact friends, accept a lower salary, take training courses and/or work in distant places. One of the unemployed women in the focus group declared: 'I stopped wearing the veil.'

On the other hand, the employed women reported that there are many ways to get a job in the ICT sector, by developing connections and networking in the ICT field, or applying for any job in ICT companies and then seeking a placement appropriate to their field of study. They mentioned the importance of gaining the skills required to obtain a job, such as language, communication skills, CV writing and presentation skills, in addition to acquiring advanced IT skills.

The non-working women confirmed their rejection of working outside the home, on the one hand because of their personal beliefs about this and on the other hand because they could not accept the current working and labour market conditions. Some of these women were interested in joining the labour market, but said that they would only do so on a short-term basis, to get some work experience.

The unemployed women who were seeking job opportunities showed an interest in joining the labour market. The working environment, discrimination and lack of personal skills came at the top of a long list of factors preventing unemployed women from entering the ICT sector. Other reasons given were harassment at work, being female when most advertised jobs asked for men only, limited work experience, weakness in foreign languages, long working hours, and their own personalities – some of the women mentioned being shy as an obstacle to getting a job. Among the negative implications of prolonged unemployment, the women reported that they were losing self-confidence, did not have a chance to develop good communication skills, and felt bored as their skills gradually became obsolete.

Finally, the positive message across all the focus group discussions was that women in the ICT sector are highly admired and respected by family members and society as a whole. This is due to the perception that the ICT field, although difficult, is also one of the best sectors in which women can develop a career, as it helps them to increase their general knowledge and also to be part of the international workforce.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Women's labour force participation rate is very low in Egypt, at 24.5%, compared to 78% of men (CAPMAS, 2009). It is also low in view of the increased education levels of women. Although the enrolment of females at all educational levels still lags behind that of males, the educational gender gap by itself is too small to explain the gender gap in labour force participation. The skills and qualifications of women seem not to be employed and used to their full extent in Egypt.

About 40% of women in Egypt work in the public sector, which is being reduced and therefore provides fewer and fewer employment opportunities. The formal private sector has not yet become a big employer of women, but it is the preferable option in transition compared to the informal private sector or unpaid family work, which are not covered by legislation or practices for workers' protection and social rights. Therefore it is crucial to understand the obstacles women face in entering the labour market in the formal private sector and to promote appropriate actions to overcome these obstacles. The importance of the formal private sector as an employment generator for both women and men has been recognised. Indeed, one of the objectives of the Sixth Five-Year Plan (Government of Egypt, 2007) is to expand job opportunities in the formal private sector for women.

This study has analysed the supply and demand side of labour in tourism and ICT by means of desk and field research. While the information and data gathered in the survey and focus group discussions reflect the subjective personal opinions of the employers and the young women involved, the samples provide useful and relevant insights into the employment situation of women in the two sectors, particularly regarding their transition from school to work, and gives an overall indication of the obstacles and opportunities for women's integration in the private sector.

The tourism and ICT sectors in Egypt are both growing and are considered by the Egyptian government to be competitive sectors of the economy. Both sectors have expanded considerably in recent years and continue to be economically promising, attracting new investments. The number of companies in both sectors is rising and their contribution to the GDP is increasingly important. The demand for labour is relatively high in both sectors, and in particular the ICT sector should offer many new job opportunities. Therefore both the tourism and ICT sectors can present a great potential for women's employment in Egypt.

The research reveals that women benefit less than men from the growth of the tourism and ICT sectors. In the companies surveyed for this study, women constituted 10% of workers in the tourism sector and 27% in the ICT sector, compared to the overall female labour force participation rate of 24.5%. In tourism while the company size grows, the female participation rate seems to decrease. Young women in the focus group discussions explained that they constitute a flexible labour force, less expensive than men, in small enterprises where very little supervision is provided for employees. The opposite was observed in the ICT sector, where women are slightly better represented in big companies.

The companies surveyed were also asked about the recruitment that had taken place during the 12 months before the survey. In the tourism companies, 8% of the newly recruited staff were women – a lower percentage than their average share of the employees – and 31% of the newly recruited staff in ICT companies were women, slightly above their current share in the ICT. This could indicate that the potential of ICT as an employer of women is slightly higher than that of tourism.

The potential for female employment is more equally distributed across the categories in the tourism sector. While half of the women in the tourism companies surveyed work as professionals, 24% as middle managers and 15% as high-level managers – a surprisingly good result – about 7% of female employment in companies is held by unskilled workers and about 15% by skilled workers. In contrast, in ICT almost 90% of women work as professionals but very few as middle managers (8%), high managers (2%), skilled workers (2%) or unskilled workers (1%). The nature of the ICT sector also causes a concentration of jobs in the professional category (high-level skills), but men are nevertheless slightly less concentrated (69% in professional posts). The percentage of women in a given category tells us how gender-balanced the corresponding work environment is. Egyptian tourism and ICT companies are far from being gender-balanced, but there is a relatively high percentage of women in managerial positions in tourism who may serve as role models.

Horizontal concentration of women's work in the tourism sector is also lower. The highest concentration of female workers can be found in administrative support roles in the tourism sector (27% of all female employment), while in ICT 64% of women work in production (compared to 49% of men). Furthermore, the majority of women hired in the previous 12 months were recruited in production or finance in ICT, whereas 95% of newly hired women in the tourism sector were recruited to work in room service or food and beverages, which could indicate some change with regard to women's current presence across various departments. This may be partly inherent in the type of work offered by the

ICT sector, but, irrespective of the sector, the many negative implications of gender segregation should be borne in mind: it reinforces gender stereotyping, makes women more vulnerable to job shortages, low wages and lack of promotion opportunities, and deprives women of good role models. In a gender-segregated work environment, men and women also miss chances to overcome gender stereotypes and learn how to deal with one another other in respectful and assertive ways.

Taking into consideration the level of education of women in both sectors, it is not surprising that they are concentrated in better-skilled and higher positions. Indeed, both tourism and ICT attract and employ better-educated women: 48% of the women employed in the tourism companies surveyed have a university degree, 8% general education and 43% vocational education, while in the ICT companies 92% of the female workers have a university degree and only 5% have primary or lower education. This high concentration of women in better-skilled positions is a positive feature but also means that uneducated women, who are the majority of women in Egypt, have very limited access to jobs in tourism or ICT.

Education – higher education in ICT, and both higher education and VET in tourism – certainly pays off for women in terms of access to employment in these sectors. Women in Egypt are becoming more and more highly educated and access to educational programmes seems not to be the major obstacle, or even a bottleneck, in securing jobs; however, the quality of the education both women and men receive is still questionable, as the majority of employers complain about skills shortages among young employees and recent graduates, in particular in relation to soft skills and competences as well as practical aspects of the work. Qualifications, work experience and in particular soft skills and competences are the key qualities employers look for when employing new staff.

The findings of our research also suggest that employers do not necessarily give preference to male workers or male candidates over females. Employers do not seem to exhibit prejudices – at least in public – about women in the tourism sector. Overall, employers appreciate women's qualities and see many advantages in employing women. Although recognised by many employers as a disadvantage, the organisational and financial implications of employing women were not seen as a problem to the extent that was originally expected. Half of the employers in both sectors recognised that employing women created organisational problems while 26% of the employers in tourism and 34% in ICT found that employing women was too expensive. This might be due to the relatively small size of the companies and the small number of women employed (the legislation requires organisation of childcare and similar only above a certain threshold of female employees), as well as self-selection by women who are seeking jobs in the sector (mainly young unmarried women with no family obligations). It may also indicate that employers expect women to drop from the labour market when they get married and have children.

Neither does there seem to be much difference in the assessment of male and female candidates, with three exceptions. Firstly, employers expect less flexibility from female workers, for instance in terms of availability for weekend or holiday work and night shifts, indicating that they take for granted social constraints about women's free movement outside the house and their social responsibilities. This works to women's advantage in the short term but hinders their larger-scale integration into the labour market. Secondly, employers assess women's commitment to the job they do as lower than that of men. Again, this might put women at a disadvantage, as they have to prove something that is taken for granted in the case of men. Finally, and most importantly, there is a huge gender gap in performance assessment, with a majority claiming that, in reality, women do not perform as well as men. Other research should address the question of proving whether this claim is really true. If it is not, this reflects a certain prejudice against working women or the existence of double standards in the assessment of men's and women's work, requiring women to perform better than men to be treated as equal to them, and this bias has to be countered. If the claim is really true, and women's productivity is less than men's, then this is an important area for future interventions to upgrade women's skills and/or create working conditions that would foster better performance. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to measure the real productivity of men and women in any objective way.

The findings of the focus group discussions show a less positive picture, with women complaining more about discrimination and abuse faced in the workplace. They suffer in particular from pressures in combining work and private life, and this becomes the greatest challenge for married women, together with long working hours and overtime work. They also highlight sexual harassment as a problem.

In particular women in ICT feel that they are under unequal competition. Women in tourism, on the other hand, suffer more from negative social perceptions of working women in the sector. In the rural areas women's work in tourism is even less accepted. Most of the female tourism students interviewed do not want to work in tourism because their families or fiancés are against it, or because they feel that society's negative perception of the job is too discouraging. These complaints shed some light on the 'woman-friendliness' of working conditions in the sector. Such prejudice has an impact on women's retention rate and perhaps also their performance.

The ICT sector is exceptional in several ways. Firstly, public opinion about women's abilities in the field of modern technology seems less gender-stereotyped; secondly, women professionals in this field are as highly esteemed by the society. The low female presence in ICT cannot be attributed to the numerical disparity between female and male

graduates in the field, for women are very well represented in ICT study fields. Possible reasons for this are a preference by some women to stay at home after graduation, a discriminatory or discouraging work environment, and/or employers' negative attitudes towards female employees. Some 17% of ICT employers in the survey admitted that their male employees do not like to work with female colleagues. This is a higher percentage than in the tourism sector and may indicate that some companies or people within companies are trying to 'protect' a rather sexist working environment.

Women enter the labour market in far fewer numbers than their share of enrolment in different educational institutions suggests, and their school-to-work transition is less successful. Because of a variety of social constraints, prejudices and unacceptable practices still present among employers, such as specifying gender in job vacancies, women are more likely to decide to stay at home. In contrast with employers' prejudice-free statements about female employment in their sector, 70% of tourism companies indicate a gender-related preference sometimes, often or systematically when advertising job vacancies, even though this is forbidden by law. Regarding recruitment, young women with fewer networking possibilities may also be penalised by the fact that personal contacts and recommendations are still the most popular recruitment method both in tourism companies (33%) and ICT (30%).

There are also some more structural barriers. Traditional culture is not the only obstacle in Upper Egypt, Sinai and Red Sea governorates; weak infrastructure networks, including transport, and a lack of educational institutions and learning opportunities also create barriers. In the survey, 60% of employers in both sectors find transport a problem for women's employment and about 50% of employers claim that employing women creates some organisational problems.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, different opportunities and obstacles to full women's participation in the workforce in tourism and ICT sectors in Egypt have been identified. It needs to be pointed out that this study is focusing on the findings of a very specific research. The topic is very broad and multiple stakeholders are active in this field. The efforts of institutions such as the National Council for Women, different NGOs and organisation and donor-supported programmes have to be widely recognised. In the sectors studied (tourism and ICT), both the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Tourism (together with the Federation of Tourism and the newly created Tourism Training Council) are key actors that are trying to contribute to the expansion of the human resources in these sectors, of which women are a very important part with a potential not yet fully exploited. This report makes a plea for these actors to work together and coordinate their efforts, while providing some lines for further reflection on the areas where already work is under way. The recommendations do not suggest new policies as such but complementing the on-going reforms in education, training and employment policies with a gender component.

The main opportunities identified in this research are to be found in:

- the high participation rates of women in education, which should link to higher labour force participation of women;
- the growing importance of skills in the economy and the subsectors studied, which could benefit women engaged in the education and training sectors, for instance in ICT, where important efforts have been developed in training for the sector in recent years;
- the emerging demand for new kinds of skills and skill profiles and, in the case of ICT, the high respect that female ICT professionals enjoy in Egyptian society.

The main obstacles seem to be:

- negative social perceptions of working women, in particular in tourism;
- occupational segregation within the sectors;
- inadequate institutional infrastructure in some jobs, both in remote tourist locations and in some ICT companies;
- an organisational culture unfriendly to women.

In combination, these barriers discourage women from joining the labour market in the first place; secondly, they affect their retention rates negatively (women drop out much more often than men); thirdly, they may also affect women's performance and motivation and discourage some employers from hiring women.

In order to tap the potential of these important sectors of the Egyptian labour market and its capacities to contribute to the socioeconomic development of the country and the competitiveness objectives shared by the Government of Egypt and the stakeholders, it is important for the country to make 'positive discrimination choices' so as to favour especially the incorporation and retention of women in work. This may imply action as regards some segments of the education and training systems where problems of lack of quality exist both for men and women, and also paying attention to the specific problematic of women. It also implies a slow, incremental and progressive change in society's views about certain jobs and about the roles and capacities of women to be fully operational in the labour market.

One area where special attention could be paid to enhancing women's participation in the labour market is the school-to-work transition. It involves mentoring, coaching and guiding women at three stages: (i) when they are about to graduate and make their first decisions as to whether to join the labour market or not, where and how to look for a job, what to expect in a future job and career, and how to deal with various work-related challenges; (ii) at the moment of transition, when they have left school or university but have not yet got a job; (iii) when they have started work but still have to integrate themselves in the workplace, deal effectively and assertively with colleagues and bosses, plan their careers and learn how to cope with the challenge of combining work and private life.

Attention should also be given to enabling women to get first practical work experience (which is much valued by employers as it helps young people to develop their professional identities), and to equipping both women and men in various soft skills that will help them to find the right job and perform well in it.

The private sector should not be left out: the State should encourage private companies to employ women. The State has promoted girls' and women's education but it is also necessary to facilitate the employment of women if the investment in their education is not to be wasted. Companies could be encouraged by fiscal incentives to recruit more women, and the State could play its part in financing maternity leave, nurseries, breast-feeding breaks, transport, and so on, as required by law.

To remove the obstacles and facilitate women's integration into jobs and careers, several recommendations can be made. To implement these recommendations is not the task of a single actor, but rather involves a cooperative

approach among public authorities, in particular the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration, the Ministry of Family and Population, and training councils, but also including key institutions such as the National Council for Women and representatives from the employers, trade unions, NGOs, civil society and the media.

Specific recommendations include the following:

Education and training

- Improve the image of tourism as a profession for women, through campaigns in the educational institutions, media and other means.
- Encourage female students to enrol in tourism faculties, especially in fields (such as hotels) where the number of female students is low, by offering appropriate counselling and guidance services.
- Review educational curricula, practical training and teaching methods – especially those of faculties and institutes of tourism and ICT – to equip graduates, both female and male, with soft skills and competences, thus preparing candidates better for job-related challenges. This is one of the big challenges for the education and training system in Egypt; it is addressed in a variety of reform plans (e.g. the National Strategy for Reform of Pre-University Education or the TVET Reform Strategy).
- In cooperation between business and educational institutions, make internships an integral part of vocational education, thus providing both females and males with practical experience and promoting other forms of practical training that will enable women to gain some work experience and develop their professional identities. Promote ‘positive discrimination’ in favour of women candidates for these internships and business practices in order to give women more opportunities, since they are normally disadvantaged in comparison to men, for social and cultural reasons, as regards accessing the few opportunities available for getting practical training.
- For the two sectors studied, continue and expand the investment made by both the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Tourism (together with the Federation of Tourism) in training. Replication in other sectors may be possible. One possibility would be to have specific training programmes within these structures specifically targeting women and promoting their incorporation into the world of work. The newly created Training Council for Tourism can also be called upon to play a role in this field.

Employment

- Raise community awareness of the various fields of work in tourism, present examples of successful women in the sector, and use the media to provide a positive image of the sector.
- The State should provide companies with fiscal incentives to employ more women or to implement or partly fund the legal requirements for maternity leave, nurseries, breast-feeding breaks and transport.
- Involve opinion leaders at regional and local levels in remote areas in order to promote a positive image of tourism as a safe sector for women to work in. Create appropriate facilities for women (including transport, places to live, schools for their children, small communities) in tourist establishments in remote regions.
- Combat all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment, in tourism and ICT establishments. This could be done by raising awareness at the level of companies but also at the national level in media, schools etc. Leaflets informing about women’s (and men’s) rights at work could be distributed at work places, universities and training institutes.
- Activate the Ministry of Family and Population’s role in protecting women workers from all forms of discrimination by communicating with the gender units in the different ministries and seeking cooperation with employers’ association.
- Facilitate networking among girls still at school and young women in universities, recent graduates and newly recruited women workers and their better-established female colleagues, in order to provide role models and enable the exchange of information and experiences, mentoring and coaching.
- Use counselling and mentoring services to develop the capacity of female workers in small and medium-sized enterprises, where the highest rates of discrimination and violation of the rights of employees in general, and females in particular, exist.
- Awareness raising campaigns could also be organised regarding the unequal division of labour in family that render women working double shifts.
- While reinforcing the role of social partners, and activating them to defend workers’ rights, work towards increasing women’s participation in trade unions.

Donors

- Include in donor sector programmes regarding education, training and employment a gender component, in particular in active employment measures.
- Provide support in collecting and analysing gender disaggregated data in education and employment in order to have evidence on which to base initiatives and policies to promote gender equality.
- Include in all the projects regarding employment and education, a component of social partnership that would raise the awareness of the social partners about gender equality issues in education and employment and render them responsible to be active actors in promoting gender equality.

ACRONYMS

CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
EGP	Egyptian pound
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
ETE	Education and Training for Employment
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FDI	foreign direct investment
GDP	gross domestic product
ICT	information and communication technology
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IT	information technology
ITIDA	Information Technology Industry Development Agency
NGO	non-governmental organisation
TTCI	Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
VET	vocational education and training

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Made of paper awarded the European Union Eco-label, reg.nr FR/011/002, supplied by International Paper.

CONTACT US

Further information can be found on the ETF website:
www.etf.europa.eu

For any additional information please contact:

European Training Foundation
ETF Communication Unit
Villa Gualino
Viale Settimio Severo 65
I – 10133 Torino

E info@etf.europa.eu
F +39 011 630 2200
T +39 011 630 2222

