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International cooperation in using space for sustainable development: Towards a 'Space2030' agenda (1)

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SPACE FOR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN MIDDLE EAST: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Abstract

The general idea that space is a man's world is far from truth but still does not shadow the fact that the industry is male-dominated. Women and diversities play key roles in advancement of projects but the quantity is always low. In 2017 OECD survey showed that less than 20% of workforce in STEM are women. While this data represents only participated countries, statistics are worse in Middle East. Reasons behind low participation of diversities are almost the same around the world. However, countries react differently to remedy the inequality and encourage more inclusion.

As for Iran, official statistics show that almost 50% of university entries for STEM during the past decade are women. Although there is no follow-up data about how the graduates end up in work places but the eventual result is clear and concise. Inequality is obvious.

In order to specify the reasons, a methodic survey using questionnaires and interviews is designed and implemented. Initial results will be presented in an event held by Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC) in mid-June or early July 2021 with potential presence and speech of most significant women in aerospace in Middle East.

Alongside rooting, potential solutions to bolster equality are also suggested. These solutions include two categories. (1) Methods that should be supported by government and (2) methods that can be implemented by NGOs or individuals. As for the first category proposed solutions are categorized as follows:

- 1.1. Legislations that support women grow into senior roles, fair recruitment and create opportunities.
- 1.2. Support of empowering programs for skill training. Compatibility issues between academic and required work place skills are serious and require modifications.
- 1.3. Programs that grant scholars and funds designed to encourage more women in accepting responsibilities in different executive roles such as launching businesses.
- 1.4. Supporting Mentorship programs specially the ones that let young entries engage with accomplished women in the sector and learn closely.

As for the second category, the solutions proposed by NGOs such as SGAC are as follows:

- 2.1. Inspire and maintain access for enthusiast to be in contact with encouraging contents.
- 2.2. Expand partnership and develop networks that introduces fresh talents to the industry.
- 2.3. Holding events and promoting STEM subjects and heroes.

The effectiveness of each solution is to be discussed in relevant panels during the aforementioned event and similar experiences of active women in the sector will be shared and concluded.