



Unleashing the potential of MSMEs through improved business environments

Thursday 14 May 2026, 10:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m. Beirut time

Background and objectives:

Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) represent over 95% of businesses in the Arab region and contribute significantly to employment and GDP. Despite their central role, MSMEs continue to face structural barriers including limited access to finance, regulatory constraints, and gaps in institutional support systems—particularly affecting women entrepreneurs.

This session highlights experiences from the State of Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, and Bahrain to explore how integrated business-support ecosystems can strengthen MSME resilience, competitiveness, and job creation.

Objectives:

- Highlight the role of business-enabling environments in supporting resilient and inclusive MSME growth
- Showcase regional policy and programme experiences strengthening MSME ecosystems
- Identify institutional, regulatory, and financial measures to improve MSME competitiveness and access to finance
- Promote collaboration across governments, financial institutions, and ecosystem actors to accelerate gender-responsive MSME development

Questions to be addressed:

- How can national MSME support institutions act as anchors for coordinated service delivery, finance access, and enterprise formalization?
- What institutional and regulatory reforms are most effective in improving MSMEs' access to finance at scale—not only through projects, but through market-level change?
- What concrete policy and ecosystem interventions are needed to support women-led businesses in transitioning beyond micro-enterprise level, while addressing the structural constraints they face?
- What role can MSME support policies and institutions play in strengthening economic resilience and business continuity during periods of crisis, uncertainty, or external shocks across different country contexts?

Moderator:

- **Asmaa Shalabi**
Bahrain Resident Representative,
UNDP

Panelists:

- **Bassel Rahmy**
Executive Director, MSMEDA, Egypt
- **Mohammad Manasrah**
Deputy Governor of Palestine
Monetary Authority, State of
Palestine
- **Shaikha Al-Fadhel**
SMEs Development Director,
Ministry of Industry and Commerce,
Bahrain
- **Thanaa Al Khasawneh**
Chief Executive Officer & Founding
Member, Business and Professional
Women Association – Amman
(BPWA), Jordan
- **Youssef Habesch**
Upstream manager for the Financial
Institutions Group, Middle East,
Central Asia and Türkiye, IFC

This special session is organized as an online event. To participate, please register [here](#).