

## Iranian women in int'l arena

Among the previous government's notable achievements is the active participation of Iranian women on regional and international platforms. The signing of international cooperation agreements with a focus on women and the hosting of international empowerment courses serve as a part of the government's main strategy to foster a robust presence for Iranian women on the

global stage. Harnessing the potential of women's diplomacy in international interactions, the late president's government developed international relations by signing six joint memorandums of cooperation, in particular, with six countries. They also followed up on the approval and implementation of joint coopera-

tion plans through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, the government hosted and participated in a training course on the international empowerment of women, as well as conducted empowerment courses for female managers, contributing to the enhancement of Iranian women's status in the country's overseas arenas.

## Consolidating families

Lastly, it's worth mentioning that the government's most critical task in implementing the general policies of the establishment was addressing Iran's aging population. In this regard, Raisi's government utilized the potential of its Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs and took significant steps. Supporting the nutrition of mothers in

deprived areas, fostering a connection between creative ideas and manufacturers and managers within the baby equipment industry, commending eight selected innovative women, and calling for the production of products and provision of services to support babies, children, and mothers were all steps taken by the Vice Presidency for Women and

Family Affairs in this domain. Supporting the provision of layette sets in underprivileged areas, pursuing the establishment of kindergartens within executive bodies, and extending free aid to underprivileged families with babies were all part of the previous government's record in addressing the needs of the young population.

## Remembering a game-changer

# Late president's work in empowering women

### PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE

*Before the government of the late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi, the women's field hadn't been paid as much attention as it should have. We can even dare say that many of this government's achievements were made for the first time in the field of women. Tackling some long-standing issues was something that had not been started before. One hundred percent infertility treatment coverage and social insurance*

*for rural housewives with three children are cases in point. These initiatives can go a long way toward addressing the country's pressing issues of population decline and aging.*

### Women taking managerial positions

The appointment of expert and elite women of Iran to decision-making councils is another significant development in the women's field. Iranian girls and women have been outperforming boys in obtaining top scientific degrees and pursuing higher education for several years, but they lacked representation in management positions. Now, thanks to the popular government of president Raisi, we see women appointed to senior management roles.

In line with this, the office of female advisors, equivalent to deputy ministers or directors-general, has been established.

### Marriage rate, divorce rate

President Raisi's government coordinated the three branches of government to facilitate marriage, employment, and paying for dowry for couples in rural areas and towns with populations of fewer than 20,000. A support package for couples in their 40s was also on the agenda of the government. Planning and coordination to provide incentive facilities for rural couples in their 40s, in particular, who wish to marry have taken place.

The rise in divorce rates under previous Iranian governments was a key concern for Raisi. Precise targeting and planning in this field by his government led to a reduction in divorce rates, as the latest statistics show. One successful program involved planning and coordinating a long-term preventive and active family counseling program, titled "Newlyweds," targeting couples in the first five years of their married life, with a pilot test in Iranian provinces at high risk for divorce.

Supporting vulnerable and affected women from the lowest-income classes of society has been a priority since the beginning of the previous government's term. Clearing the backlog of pension claims from female heads of households was a notable move towards achieving this goal and alleviating poverty. This can be counted as one of the achievements of the late



Iran's Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Ensiyeh Khazali (2nd row-C) delivers a speech at the ministerial conference held in the 68th meeting of the Women Status Commission (WSC) of the United Nations, elaborating on the measures taken to fight poverty for Iranian women.

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president's government in promoting social welfare for the most vulnerable, and it was accomplished within a short period.

### Int'l achievements of Iranian women

In addition to domestic achievements, a number of international and trans-regional accomplishments also took place under president Raisi's popular government. These include taking on the two-year incumbency of the Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment (WGEE) of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), with an extension into a second biennial term; compiling and contributing to the compilation of 30 national reports presented to international and regional forums; setting up a national committee on women and fighting corruption, an initiative suggested by the vice presidency at the annual meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and lauded by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); drafting legislation to establish a national working

group on women and fighting corruption, and getting it approved at the national headquarters of women and family affairs; and meeting with 170 official delegates and senior officials from various countries.

### Legal challenges of women, families

In order to advance affairs in any field, executive bodies need to carry out approved policies and programs properly to reach the desired goal. Under president Raisi's government, these bodies were key to achieving the best results from the approvals. Monitoring and pinpointing legal and judicial challenges faced by women, children, and families, as well as presenting legal bills and proposals to the relevant authorities, took center stage in the agenda of these bodies. In the meantime, a revision of all laws and regulations pertaining to women and families has been underway since the inception of legislation in this domain under the Islamic Republic, and the Raisi government diligently followed up on these matters.

## Iran gov't promotes female entrepreneurship

**PERSPECTIVE** *During the global economic crisis, while many developed countries were struggling with the tremendous problem of unemployment, the government of the late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi was zeroing in on employment to further its goal of serving the people.*



Iran's late president Ebrahim Raisi (R) listens as Fatemeh Nassaji (L), a female entrepreneur, explains her educational handicrafts during the president's provincial visit to Kurdistan Province, Iran, on November 3, 2023.

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The salience of the government's approach on this matter stems its two targets of facilitating stable businesses and family-oriented businesses. This is due to the fact that in the design of a sustainable family-oriented business network, the job seeker, while undertaking the necessary training and support, takes on a job whose sustainability is guaranteed and monitored by the entrepreneur for at least four years.

On the other hand, the woman working in such a network carries out her work in a flexible way, fitting in her home responsibilities and playing a part in a family-oriented role, while also making use of the capabilities of other family members. In this network, home businesses and value-creating small businesses were expanded through the use of the capacity of the Omid Entrepreneurship Fund under the previous government. What is more, female heads of households, abused women, self-supporting girls, and job-seeking graduates were employed in 239 categories as the target community. Additionally, more than 7,000 female entrepreneurs and job seekers were trained in home-based jobs through the use of facilities approved during the late president's provincial visits.

In another aspect of this network, the plan for economic empowerment of female heads of households and backing for women entrepreneurs was carried out for women leading households and unmarried girls over 45 years of age, resulting in the training of upwards of 4,500 individuals in 209 categories.

Tapping into the capacity of non-governmental organizations to generate employment for the target group of women who are heads of households, self-supporting, recovering addicts, or disabled across 15 categories opened up over 400 job fields as a result of the previous government's efforts.

The government's backing for the establishment and growth of women's cooperative companies in tandem with Iran's Ministry of Labor, Cooperatives, and Social Welfare unlocked job prospects for female heads of households as well.

Furthermore, collaborations with the aforementioned ministry in setting up and growing cooperative businesses led by disabled women across 34 categories unlocked job opportunities for this target demographic.

Harnessing the potential of the country's Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology by way of holding job training and skill-building events for female students stands as another achievement of this network.

Additionally, collaborations with the Ministry of Agriculture towards providing training in healthy crop production and establishing health gardens, with a focus on empowering local communities, culminated in over 18,000 person-hours of training for women under president Raisi's government.



Naeimeh Panaq (R), a female Iranian entrepreneur, sits in her sewing workshop where she employs some 20 other women in a village near Bandar Torkaman, northeastern Iran, in November 2022.

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