

Al-Raïda at 50: Bridging Local Voices with Global Goals

By Blerta Aliko, Resident Representative, UNDP Lebanon

For five decades, *Al-Raïda* has been more than a journal. It has been a living archive of feminist thought, a space where women's voices are heard, and a platform where their stories are documented and celebrated. Few publications in the Arab region have captured the evolution of feminism, women's rights, and gender equality with such continuity, courage, and clarity.

This special issue marks a milestone, the 50th anniversary of the Arab Institute for Women (AiW), and UNDP is proud to stand alongside the Institute in honoring this legacy. For half a century, AiW has been a pioneer, connecting research with action and bridging local realities with global conversations. It has ensured that women's experiences are not only studied but transformed into tools for advocacy, policymaking, and change.

The timing of this issue could not be more relevant. Across Lebanon and the Arab region, people are navigating overlapping crises: conflict, economic collapse, displacement, inequality, and the escalating climate emergency. These challenges affect everyone, but women and girls are often hit hardest - excluded from decision-making spaces, overrepresented in vulnerable sectors, and facing systemic barriers to resources and protection.

And yet, the pages of *Al-Raïda* tell a different story - one of strength, innovation, and leadership. They highlight women driving legal reforms that challenge discriminatory systems; leading peacebuilding efforts in fragile contexts; fighting climate injustice in regions where drought, water scarcity, and displacement collide; and reclaiming narratives in spaces where their voices have been silenced for too long. These are not just stories of survival, they are stories of transformation.

At UNDP, we believe real progress cannot happen without gender equality. That is why we support feminist movements, invest in women's leadership, and work to ensure that policies are informed by the lived experiences of women and marginalized communities.

But our role goes beyond advocacy.

Together with our partners, including AiW, we are working to turn evidence into policies, and policies into action. From supporting national strategies under the Women, Peace and Security agenda, to integrating gender into climate adaptation plans, to advancing reforms that make governance more inclusive, we are committed to transforming knowledge into measurable impact.

The Sustainable Development Goals remind us that gender equality is not just Goal 5 — it is the foundation for achieving every goal. This issue of *Al-Raïda* reflects that truth: when women lead, entire societies advance.

To the AiW team, past and present, and to every contributor whose voice and vision shine through these pages, congratulations on this remarkable milestone. Let us honor this legacy by building a future where justice, dignity, and equality are not aspirations, but lived realities for every woman and girl in this region and beyond.