

OMAN

Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

In the Sultanate of Oman, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly have been largely and effectively implemented and have taken concrete shape as a national framework for development. The progress of such implementation has also been monitored, thus, clearly influencing the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. The main achievements are as follows:

1. Reduction of the gender gap in primary education

This is one of the main goals set by the Government in its development plans. The following table shows a gradual shrinking of the gender gap at this stage of education:

<i>Females in primary education as a percentage of all students enrolled</i>	<i>Year</i>
47.6	1993
48.3	1996
48.4	2000
Basic education 49	2001/02
Primary education 48	

Source: Report on the status of women in the Sultanate of Oman.

In 1998, the basic education system was first instituted alongside the primary education system, which remained in place until the basic system became universally available. Students at this stage were therefore divided between the two systems, as a result of which, the proportion of females began gradually to fall in the primary education system and to rise in the basic education system.

2. Reduction of the gender gap in secondary education

<i>Females in secondary education as a percentage of all students enrolled</i>	<i>Year</i>
51.1	1993
52.4	1996
51.5	2000/01
51	2001/02

Source: Statistical Yearbook, 2001.

Under the Sixth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005), the goal is to increase the female net enrolment rate at the secondary stage from 48.1 per cent in 2000 to 57 per cent by the end of the plan in 2005 and reduce the female drop-out rate from 4.4 per cent to 3 per cent over that same period.

3. Reduction of female illiteracy rates

The following data show the progress made towards eradicating female illiteracy in the years 1993, 1996, 1999 and 2000.

<i>Illiteracy rate among females aged 15 and older</i>	<i>Year</i>
54.1	1993
43.3	1996
38	1999
34	2000

Source: 1993 Census and the Ministry of Education.

Positive indicators for the eradication of female illiteracy:

<i>Females studying at literacy centres as a percentage of overall enrolment</i>	<i>Year</i>
87.8	1990/91
89	1993/94
93	1999/00
92.5	2001/02

Source: Ministry of Education.

Yearly attendance at these centres is higher among females than among males, meaning that a substantial reduction in female illiteracy can be expected in the coming years. In addition to the literacy centres are adult education centres where students from the former are able to continue their studies when they move to higher stages of education. Data from the 1993 Census indicate the following:

<i>Educational status of females</i>	<i>1993</i>
Females with academic qualifications	33.8 per cent

Source: Ministry of Education.

4. Universal access to primary education by 2000

We wish to point out that both sexes have equal opportunities to enrol in public education at all stages, free of charge and without discrimination. The main achievement goals set by the Sultanate's Ministry of Education for the end of the Sixth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005) are as follows:

- To increase the female intake in the first year of primary school from 74.4 per cent in 2000 to 84 per cent;
- To increase the female net enrolment rate in the primary stage from 89 per cent in 2000 to 91 per cent;
- To reduce the female drop-out rate in the primary stage from 1.3 per cent in 2000 to 1 per cent.

5. Universal access to basic education

This goal was one of the major orientations elaborated for the education sector in the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1996-2000) The overall rates of enrolment in various educational institutions for inhabitants in the 6-23 age group in 1995 and 2000, which are approximately the same for both sexes, are shown in the following table:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Females (percentage)</i>	<i>Males (percentage)</i>
1995	63	65
2000	66.4	67.4

Source: Sixth Five-Year Plan.

***Universal access to education: Millennium Development Goals and targets**

- Net percentage of registration in primary education (2002/03):

	<i>Percentage</i>
Females	90.1
Males	91

Source: Statistical Yearbook — Ministry of Education.

- Average percentage of pupils who enter the first year of primary school and reach the fifth year (1999/2000):

	<i>Percentage</i>
Females	97.4
Males	96

Source: Ministry of Education.

- Literacy rate among those aged 15 to 24 years:

	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Year</i>
Females	93.5	1999
Males	98.03	

With a view to the empowerment of women in higher education, Omani women enjoy opportunities to complete higher studies (doctorate, master's degree, diploma) as shown in the following table:

	<i>Fellowship</i>	<i>Doctorate</i>	<i>Master's degree</i>	<i>Diploma</i>	<i>Overall</i>
Number of female graduates (1995-1998)	4	7	78	1	90
Number of female scholarship students	12	31	96	-	139

Source: Report on the status of women in the sultanate of Oman.

Accomplishments of the goal to achieve universal primary education:

1. State-run education, both general and higher, is provided free of charge, as is student transport to and from school;
2. General and higher education are not compulsory, although the percentage of registration in primary education has risen;
3. The remaining net percentage of registration in primary education, which stands at 10 per cent for males and 12 per cent for females might be explained by the following:
 - Some students may have enrolled at the preparatory level as a result of early registration;
 - Some are enrolled in education systems outside the Sultanate;
 - Under-six mortality, regarding which no comprehensive official statistics are available.

Obstacles facing the goal to achieve universal primary education:

- Reluctance of males to enrol in literacy centres, where they accounted for only 7 per cent of students in 2000;
- Lack of financial support from public and private institutions for literacy activities;
- Reluctance of Omani teachers to participate in literacy activities;
- Lack of incentive to enrol in literacy programmes, since the certificate awarded does not increase access to job opportunities.

*** The goal to promote gender equality and empower women**

The principles upon which legislation in the Sultanate is based are derived from the Islamic Shariah, which honours women and guarantees their right to equality with men as a general rule. In that regard, legislation in the Sultanate is also in conformity with the principles enunciated by relevant international conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The main legislative achievement in the area of gender equality is constituted by the provisions of the Basic Law of the State, which prohibit discrimination among citizens on

grounds of gender, colour, language and so on. The general principle of current laws is that women have equal rights and duties with men, as long as the establishment of improved rights for women is not prejudicial to their nature and social tasks.

The following table shows:

	<i>Percentage</i>
Females to males in primary school (1999/2000):	93.2
Females to males in secondary school (1999/2000):	105.5
Females to males in university and higher education (1999):	71
Literate females to males aged 15 to 24 years (1999):	95.4
Women to men in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (2000):	96
Seats held by women in national parliamentary bodies:	
Council of State:	9.7 in 1997 12 in 2001

3 have been appointed deputy ministers (Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development)

2 have been appointed ministers (Minister for Higher Education and the head of the Public Authority for Craft Industries at the rank of minister)

5 have been appointed to the position of Second Deputy Public Prosecutor

*** The effect of globalization (e.g., use of information and communication technologies, market liberalization and changes in trading patterns) on the empowerment of women and girls and the promotion of gender equality**

The challenges of globalization and resulting freedom of economy have required Omani women to participate in a knowledge- and technology-based market economy. Many areas of investment have arisen in which women can participate more actively, even to the point where they can now run their own businesses from within the home. Government attention has promoted this ambition among women, stimulating their role in economic development by providing various kinds of support and encouragement, such as training, counselling, and capital and marketing support.

Part Two: Achievements in critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action

I. Women and poverty

A good indicator on the issue of women and poverty in the Sultanate is provided by the Social Security Act, which prevents women from falling into the trap of poverty and destitution. This Act serves five categories of women: widows, divorcees, abandoned women, unmarried girls and women with a family member in prison. It also covers three other categories that include both males and females: orphans, the work-disabled and the aged. The following table shows the number of cases of women in the categories of widow and divorcee, and the amounts paid by social security:

Category	1999		2001		2002	
	Cases	Amount (RO)	Cases	Amount (RO)	Cases	Amount (RO)
Widows	5 071	2 762.4	4 985	2 615.3	4 461	2 435 792
Divorcees	6 793	2 860.3	7 334	2 954.3	7 383	2 984 281

Source: 2001 Statistical Yearbook.

The following table shows the progression of social security cases and payments involving female categories:

<i>Female categories as a percentage of all social insurance cases and payments</i>		
Year	Cases (percentage)	Payments (percentage)
1985	28	26
1990	31	29
1995	30	27
1998	31	28
2000	31	27
2002	30	26

Source: Report on the status of women in the Sultanate of Oman — Ministry of Social Development.

– General achievements in the area of eradicating women’s poverty:

<i>Project</i>	<i>Achievements</i>		
Livelihood projects (males and females)	164 projects implemented in 1998 173 projects implemented in 2000		
Housing assistance programme for low-income people (men and women)	Cases	Amount (RO)	Year
	101	565 054	1998
	520	2 938 992	2000
	82	465 817	2001
* Income enhancement project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening of 204 sewing shops for women during the period 1995-1997 - Opening of 98 commercial shops for females in 2000 - Training of 1,000 women in the sewing profession in 1997 - Training of 1,299 women in sewing techniques in 2000 		
* Project for the promotion and empowerment of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training of 21 women in handicrafts and in the conduct of economic feasibility studies for small projects, starting at the end of 2003 and continuing to the end of 2005 at the rate of 21 women per year 		
Training for disabled young women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training of 45 young women and 40 girl children in the period 1998-1999, and of 284 girl children in various centres for the disabled 		
Marketing fairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating market access for goods produced by families, including low-income families 		

Source: Statistical Yearbook and the Sixth Five-Year Plan

* Detailed data on females is unavailable.

II. Women and health

*** Women's access to health care and information, and strengthening of preventive programmes**

The Government of the Sultanate of Oman has paid special attention to primary and preventive health care for women so that they might achieve a life free of sickness and disease. The Government has adopted a number of policies and objectives aimed at providing comprehensive preventive and therapeutic health care for women. The most important policies are as follows:

- (1) To provide comprehensive and continuous health care to mothers and children;
- (2) To lower disease and mortality rates among mothers and children as far as possible;
- (3) To provide safe maternity services;
- (4) To raise health awareness, particularly among women;
- (5) To develop and train Omani health personnel (male and female).

Main achievements

1. Provision of medical personnel

- Establishment of the teaching hospital at Sultan Qaboos University in 1988;
- Establishment of 14 training academies under the Ministry of Health including 11 nursing academies;
- The emergence of female volunteers from the community health support groups founded in 1992. By 2001, there were 3,000 such volunteers, whose main tasks are, inter alia, to:
 - Increase health awareness among mothers;
 - Serve as a connecting link between individuals and health institutions;
 - Make field visits with the aim of raising awareness;
 - Work together with the various other institutions.

2. Health care and awareness-raising

- A birth spacing programme, begun in 1994, aimed at raising awareness among married couples, of the benefits of birth spacing and its positive effects on the health of the mother child and family, and the provision of free birth control and counselling services in all institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Health. In 2000, a total of 1,349 women made follow-up visits to birth spacing clinics;
- Countrywide information campaigns in 1996, 1997 and 1998 promoting the idea of birth spacing and targeting men in particular;
- A maternity care programme aimed at encouraging hospital deliveries and providing care to mothers, babies and children. A survey of 1,967 Omani families carried out by the Ministry of Health in 2000 found that:
 - (a) 98 per cent of pregnant women aged 15 to 45 received prenatal health care;
 - (b) 93.4 per cent of deliveries take place in health institutions;

- (c) 11.6 per cent of women encountered problems during pregnancy.
- Programmes for cancer prevention (such as early detection of uterine and breast cancer), mental health and premarital examination, genetic testing services for people at risk of genetic disease, activities to raise awareness of the importance of preventing such disease and lifestyle programmes (such as smoking cessation and exercise);
 - A decrease in overall fertility rates among women of reproductive age due to increased health awareness, higher rates of female enrolment at all stages of education and an increase in the age of marriage among females to 23.3 years in 2000.

<i>Year</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2002</i>
Fertility rate	6.9	4.7	3.64

Source: Ministry of Health.

The following tables show the most important strategic goals and measures elaborated by the Government of the Sultanate through the Ministry of Health in the area of health care and awareness-raising so that Omani women can enjoy productive lives and be empowered by the right to control all aspects of their health.

Goal 1	Expand health-care services to treat women's lifelong health needs
Measures	Provide specific and easily accessible services, such as education and information, to meet the reproductive health needs of adolescent and young adult women Endeavour to dispense services of appropriate quantity and kind to rural and urban women

Goal 2	Increase the attention devoted by media and educational establishments to raising awareness of women's health issues
Measure	Link health education, information and communication strategies to national and demographic policies

Goal 3	Increase schoolchildren's awareness of sexual and reproductive health
Measure	Incorporate instruction on sexual and reproductive health issues into all stages of government and private education

Goal 4	Increase individual and institutional participation in the promotion of health programmes
Measure	Encourage the formation of non-governmental associations and institutions involved in raising awareness of health and of socio-economic matters

Goal 5	Provide comprehensive health care to women in all areas, including mental health, premarital examination and cancer screening
Measure	Institute comprehensive programmes for women in order to deliver preventive services and increase awareness about mental health and premarital examination

3. Health achievements

The Sultanate's Ministry of Health is taking steps to decentralize health services, improve health management, raise the quality of its services and introduce a high-quality three-dimensional health-care system. More than 96 per cent of the Sultanate's inhabitants are covered by easily accessible health-care services. The following indicators demonstrate some of the gains realized by women:

1. Female life expectancy at birth has increased as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>1970</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2002</i>
Life expectancy	48.5	61.2	71	74.3	75.43

Source: Annual health report — Ministry of Health.

2. The maternal mortality rate declined between 1995 and 2000 as follows:

1995	22 per 100,000 live births
2000	16.1 per 100,000 live births
2002	37.5 per 100,000 live births

3. Resources allotted to the advancement of women's health show a per capita increase between 1970 and 2000 as follows:

1970	RO 9
2000	RO 61

4. Desired achievement:

<i>Reduce the prevalence of anaemia in pregnant women</i>	<i>Percentage with anaemia in 1999</i>	<i>Percentage with anaemia in 2000</i>
	35.7	36.5

Source: Sixth Five-Year Plan.

5. Indicator/Year

<i>Year</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2002</i>
Average visits by women to maternity clinics	5.7	7.1	7.9	8
Doctor-assisted deliveries	87%	92%	92%	92%
Abortion rate per 1,000 women of reproductive age	20.8	16.9	11.9	10.2

6. The number of people working in the medical professions and specialties has increased, together with the number of medical institutions. Health institutions in the government and private sectors have come to play a pioneering role in creating a sound health environment for women and men alike.

- Number of doctors in the public and private sectors:

<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>2001</i>
1 441	2 477	3 397

Source: 2002 Statistical Yearbook.

- Number of hospitals in the public and private sectors:

<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>2001</i>
52	53	56

Source: 2002 Statistical Yearbook.

- Number of health centres in the public and private sectors:

<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>2001</i>
4	120	122

7. The private sector has been encouraged to participate in the provision of health services.

- Number of hospitals in the private sector:

<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>2001</i>
-	1	3

- Private clinics:

<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>2001</i>
334	471	641

- Private pharmacies:

1990	1995	2001
158	254	326

Source: 2002 Statistical Yearbook.

8. Among the gains realized in the health sector was a fall in the infant mortality rate to 16.7 per 1,000 live births in 2000. The following table shows the infant mortality rate and the under-five mortality rate per 1,000 live births over a number of years.

- 9. Fall in the infant mortality rate:

Year	1994	1997	1998	2000	2002
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births	23	18	18	16.7	16.7
Under-five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	29	27.5	24.5	21.7	19.3

Source: Report on the status of women in the Sultanate of Oman.

The following table shows women as a percentage of all Omani medical personnel by specialty and year:

Specialty/Year	2000 (percentage)	2001 (percentage)
Medical doctors	49.8	50
Dentists	53	48.5
Pharmacists	86.4	85.7
Pharmaceutical assistants and dispensers	63.6	64.8
Health supervisors	6.4	6.3
Laboratory technicians	69	70.6
Female and male nurses	81	83
Radiographers and X-ray technicians	63.5	62
Orderlies	68	67.5

Source: 2002 Statistical Yearbook.

-The following is the strategic goal for the advancement of Omani women with regard to health services as set by the National Strategy for the Development of Omani Women elaborated by the Ministry of Social Development:

Goal 1	Endeavour to disseminate appropriate amounts and kinds of services to women and provide rural and urban coverage
Measure	Examine the number and quality of services disseminated to villages and urban areas, focusing on women's health programmes and ongoing awareness-raising

***Women and the media**

The various Omani media play an important and pivotal role in forming and reinforcing attitudes and values in that they address all levels of mentality, provide models, experiences and ideas, and reflect opinions in an influential social matrix which imparts new ideas that help to modify negative attitudes and ways of thinking. The media also help to further social awareness of the importance of women's participation in the development process by avoiding stereotypes of women, endeavouring to highlight their current achievements and demonstrating their role as constructive partners in society.

In the desire to realize the maximum benefit from the role of women and their contribution to development and to the media part played in instilling the values of justice and in defining duties, obligations and equal rights, without distinction or discrimination, female members of the media have risen to important leadership positions in the media apparatus, namely: director of the Arabic radio programmes department; director of the recorded television programmes department; human resources adviser in the Office of the Minister; director of the internal audit division in the Office of the Minister; and editor-in-chief of a local magazine. They have also assumed leadership of several important media divisions and perform many major technical and administrative roles; they prepare, present and direct programmes, and work in editing in all sectors of the press. Women also edit Arabic and English copy, translate Arabic and English material, design web sites and programme computers, all for the Oman Electronic Network (Omanet). Women in the media have also had the opportunity to attend a number of training courses in order to refine their technical skills and they continue to have various opportunities to participate in activities both inside and outside the Sultanate, such as international and Arab women's conferences.

Part Three: Institutional development

Through the institutional mechanisms and arrangements in place for the advancement of Omani women, it has been possible to achieve relatively high rates for many public health indicators, in particular maternal health.

Goals and mechanisms for Institutional arrangements:

1. To build government and non-governmental apparatuses with clearly defined roles in order to eliminate conflicts of jurisdiction and tasks;
2. To enhance the skills of personnel employed in the administration of women's affairs;
3. To enhance the skills needed by personnel in order to study the strategic and practical requirements for women with a view to determining action plans and related projects;
4. To train relevant personnel in the optimal use of resources;
5. To establish a social gender unit in ministries responsible for planning and finance with the goal of determining the financial allocations needed to achieve the goals and priorities in connection with issues of social gender;
6. To secure the desired balance between economic goals and women's development goals with a view to achieving established priorities.

* Institutional mechanisms established by the Sultanate

1. A Directorate General for Women and Children's Affairs was established in 1985 and is engaged in planning numerous programmes and activities aimed at integrating Omani women throughout the Sultanate in the development process and increasing their participation in social action. Social development centres have been established in various parts of the Sultanate to provide services, without discrimination between the sexes.
2. Women's training centres and centres for the development of rural women have been established by the Government. Women's training centres have also been established through private efforts.

<i>Type of women's training centre</i>	<i>Number in 2003</i>
Governmental	6 centres
Non-governmental	4 centres

Source: Report on the status of women in the Sultanate of Oman — Ministry of Social Development.

Goals of the centres:

- To provide social and cultural training for women under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Development (formerly the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Vocational Training);
- To provide women's training and orientation in a number of areas;
- To educate women and raise their awareness in order to promote values and concepts that square with progress and urbanization;

- To market local women's products;
- To conduct numerous activities such as illiteracy eradication, childcare, sewing, tailoring, embroidery, handicrafts, and home-making.

3. Royal Decree No. 71 was issued in October 1997, reconstituting the National Committee for Child Welfare, which is entrusted with the task of conducting detailed studies and research on childhood, setting up programmes, and following up plans and policies adopted in this area.

4. A women's police division was established under a female police captain to carry out all tasks within the mandate of such police, namely: public security, computing, prisons and juvenile welfare, traffic, nursing, criminal investigations and inquiries, airport security, switchboards and communications, maintenance of order at national celebrations, ports of entry, passports and residence.

5. The Ministry of Health has specialized departments which were established to devote particular attention to the health needs of Omani women. These include the Department of Family and Community Health and the Department of Health Education and Information, under the Directorate General for Health Affairs. The Ministry also has a working group, comprised of specialists from the Ministry and representatives from other relevant ministries, whose job it is to solve problems relating to women's and children's affairs. In addition, there are specialized committees such as the Central Committee for Maternal and Child Welfare, a technical committee comprised of doctors, nurses and technicians that carries out planning to put policies and programmes in place.

The Committee on the National Action Plan for Maternal and Child Welfare is chaired by the Ministry of Health and includes representatives from the Ministries of Education, Social Development, the Interior, and Information, as well as representatives from the Omani Women's Association, the National Organization for Scouts and Guides, the Ministry of Defence, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Royal Oman Police.

6. Non-governmental women's associations have been formed. With 40 such associations in existence by the end of 2003, they are seen as rounding off government efforts. Their goals are, inter alia, to develop women's perceptions and raise their awareness in various spheres, organize charity fairs and markets, hold seminars, lectures and workshops, and set up productive projects.

7. A women's volunteer work coordination committee consisting of 11 members was formed in 1998 through the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Vocational Training (presently the Ministry of Social Development).

Part Four: Main challenges and actions to address them

The following is a survey of the most important measures and initiatives taken or to be taken by the Government to guarantee full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

Education

The Government elaborated the 2020 Vision for the Omani Economy (1995), the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan (1996-2000) and the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan (2001-2005), which include the goals of:

1. Providing free basic education to all male and female students of basic education age, as well as free transport (7,888 vehicles) for the academic year 2000/01 and free textbooks;
2. Building an education system that provides equal opportunity for both sexes. The following table compares female enrolment rates in general and higher education for the years 1995 and 2000;

Stage	<i>Females as a percentage of all students enrolled</i>	
	1995	2000
Primary	48	48.2
Preparatory	47	46
Secondary	51.7	51.6
Higher education	48	51.5

Source: Sixth Five-Year Plan.

3. Increasing the net enrolment rate in education for both sexes, in particular females, to 100 per cent. The policies adopted to that end include the enactment of legislation guaranteeing education for all by 2015 and the coordination of efforts by all Government and non-governmental actors;
4. Lowering the drop-out rate at the preparatory and secondary stages to below one per cent.

Mechanisms under the Sixth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005):

- To supply female teachers to all schools attended by female students;
- To devise educational and instructional programmes for school authorities and counselling programmes for students that stress the disadvantages of dropping out of school;
- To hold direct meetings with influential public figures in the regions;

- To adopt an incentive plan for teaching faculties in order to stimulate their interest in work and thus prompt them to respond favourably to plans;
- To refine teachers' skills and enhance their professional capabilities in order to improve their levels of performance and so benefit both themselves and the educational process;

5. Reducing the female illiteracy rate as a percentage of the overall number of illiterate inhabitants:

<i>Illiteracy rate (percentage)</i>	<i>Year</i>
54.1	1993
43	1996
35.7	2000

Source: 1993 Statistical Yearbook and the Sixth Five-Year Plan.

A plan for reducing the overall illiteracy rate among male and female inhabitants has been elaborated, as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Projected illiteracy rate among Omanis (percentage)</i>
2005	17.9
2010	14.7
2013	13

Source: Ministry of Education.

There will undoubtedly be a noticeable fall in the female illiteracy rate in the future, which will have positive repercussions on the status of education in the Sultanate.

Women in higher education

One of the gains realized by women since 1995 is that the female enrolment rate in higher education has increased to 40 per cent among those aged between 20 and 40 years.

The following tables show the progression in the percentages of females admitted to institutions of higher learning. The table below shows the increase in women at teacher training colleges as a percentage of all students admitted annually:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Women as a percentage of all students</i>
1994/95	42.2
1995/96	44.7
1996/97	41.2
1997/98	61.8
1998/99	46.6
1999/2000	64.5
2000/01	63.6

Source: Sixth Five-Year Plan.

Female graduates of Sultan Qaboos University as a percentage of all graduates of both sexes:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Females admitted as a percentage of all students</i>
1998	57.4
1999	53.4
2000	53.6

Source: 2001 Statistical Yearbook.

The following is a summary of future goals and measures set for both males and females by the Ministry of Higher Education for the end of 2005, as specified in the Sixth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005):

1. To raise the intake rate for male and female general secondary school graduates in institutions of higher learning from 43.1 per cent at the end of 2000 to 52.4 per cent by the end of 2005 by:
 - Providing government support, awarding grants for study at private educational institutions and increasing intake in government institutions of higher learning;
2. To enhance the quality of higher education by:
 - Developing and modernizing teaching methods at learning resource centres;
 - Developing and modernizing teaching laboratories;
 - Developing and modernizing science and computer laboratories;
 - Improving the quality of higher education in private universities and colleges.
3. To accelerate the Omanization of institutions of higher learning by:
 - Increasing the Omanization of teacher training colleges from 7.6 per cent to 40 per cent by the end of 2005;
 - Increasing the Omanization of the teaching faculty at the Shariah and Law College from 50 per cent to 90 per cent by the end of 2005;

- Increasing the Omanization of academic support positions from 68 per cent to 90 per cent by the end of 2005.
4. To develop education at Sultan Qaboos University by:
- Increasing the number of students registered at the University from 8,000 in 2000 to 11,000 by the end of 2005;
5. To accelerate Omanization of the University as follows:

<i>Omanization of</i>	<i>From (percentage)</i>	<i>To (percentage)</i>
Teaching faculty with doctorates	16	43
Administrators	88	95
Technicians	69	90
Nursing staff at the University Hospital	4	10

Source: Sixth Five-Year Plan.

Future goals in:

Technical education and training:

1. To expand opportunities for technical education and vocational training for both sexes;
2. To increase enrolment at technical colleges by both sexes from 4,500 to 6,000 by the end of 2005 (*Source:* Sixth Five-Year Plan).

Mechanisms:

- To hold local seminars in the regions and at the national level in order to ascertain the needs of the labour market and produce clear and precise suggestions concerning the quantity and nature of such needs;
- To build a database covering the size and type of the incoming labour force, as well as market needs in terms of positions and the level of qualification and training necessary to fill such positions;
- To conduct field research and study in order to examine the content of training curricula, training programmes and evaluation systems so that the end results correspond to the needs of the Omani labour market;
- To instigate more meetings with businessmen and factory owners, and involve them in formulating suggestions concerning the needs of the labour market;
- To coordinate vocational training in order to pave the way for females to study in the specialist fields of engineering and construction.

Women and legislation

The main future goals set by those concerned with this aspect are as follows:

1. To propose the amendment of various legal texts in order to grant women improved rights;
2. To close the gap between the law and its enforcement in regard to women's rights;
3. To increase legal awareness among both sexes.