

# ILO Arab States Gender Newsletter

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Happy new year from the Gender Program of the ILO Regional Office for Arab States. This first newsletter provides highlights of key activities, products and outcomes from the last few months and a glimpse of some upcoming efforts. Future newsletters will highlight developments from the Arab States as well as interviews with women and men working to promote gender equality in the world of work.

## Gender Equality in the World of Work in the Arab States

### *An Overview*

The ILO Regional Office for Arab States (RO-Beirut) covers 12 countries and territories: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, West Bank and Gaza Strip, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. RO-Beirut is implementing Decent Work Country Programmes guided by the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda: employment creation and enterprise development, social protection, standards and rights at work, and social dialogue.

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_100281.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_100281.pdf)

## Field updates

### *New Initiatives in Yemen*



ILO RO-Beirut Gender Programme has recently launched two initiatives in Yemen: one is on rural women producers and their cooperatives, and the second is on gender mainstreaming in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). In both cases, situation and institutional assessments were followed by policy dialogue, technical discussions and training activities. In October 2009 a Girls

Training and Education Department was established in the Ministry of TVET in Yemen.

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_114217.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_114217.pdf)

### *MDG-F Funded Activities in West Bank and Gaza Strip*

A Training Workshop on the Participatory Gender Audit was conducted in Ramallah in October 2009 in which participants were familiarized with the concepts and principles of gender auditing and were trained on the methodology and approaches for its implementation. A multi-departmental gender audit of the Ministry of Labour of the Palestinian Authority is taking place in January 2010.

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## Publications

### *Mainstreaming Arab States into Global Informal Economy Discussions*

In 2007, the ILO Regional Office and the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) launched a regional initiative, “Gender and Employment in the Informal Economies of Arab States” in order to bring the global knowledge and learning on employment in the informal economy into Arab States, and to mainstream Arab States into global discussion on the issues.



The *Glossary of Terms on Gender, Employment and the Informal Economy* (English and Arabic) that has just been published is a timely tool that emerges from the ILO/CAWTAR joint initiative. The glossary clarifies concepts to reduce confusion about terms and moves the discussion in the Arab States around “informality” forward.

[http://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/lang--en/docName--WCMS\\_113743/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/lang--en/docName--WCMS_113743/index.htm)

The *Report of the Regional Meeting of Experts* that recapitulates the discussions and knowledge sharing in Tunis on July 2008 regarding informal employment in the Arab States has also been published. The meeting gathered 21 experts from countries of the region, who presented and discussed with regional constituents findings of the regional initiative to identify appropriate response strategies.

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_100281.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_100281.pdf)

To date, the initiative has contributed to integrating informality as a central tenant of analysis in labour statistics toward informing policy. Examples include the post-crisis household survey of Lebanon and the labour force surveys of the Syrian Central Bureau for Statistics and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

### *Focus on Rural Women Cooperatives in Arab States*

Two briefs are in press highlighting the situation of rural women cooperatives in Arab States.

The policy brief on *Enhancing the Participation of Rural Women Producers in Cooperatives in Yemen* explores the situation of rural cooperatives in Yemen and their potential in generating employment and income-earning opportunities for women. The brief identifies challenges and obstacles facing rural women producers and their cooperatives in Yemen, as well as ways to strengthen them.

The issue brief on *Rural women producers and cooperatives in conflict settings in Arab States* exposes the reality and history of rural cooperatives in Lebanon, Iraq, West Bank and Gaza Strip. It explores the potentials of rural cooperatives in attenuating the implications of conflict on women through employment, entrepreneurship, and filling the absence of formal social security.

*RO-Beirut Gender Programme staff share knowledge and findings*

Gender Programme staff have been actively engaging with international and regional organizations. Ms. Simel Esim, senior technical specialist, made an appearance on the Tawasul program of the Future TV station, which aired in November 2009. She answered questions on the situation of women migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. <http://stream.future-news.tv/M00001500009102.wmv>

Mr. Mansour Omeira, research and knowledge sharing officer, made a presentation on “Gender and Youth Dimension of the Global Economic Crisis in the Euro-Med” in the framework of the Euro-Med NGO Platform/Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Global Economic Crisis and Youth in the Euro-Med Region: Discussing Impacts and Solutions, which took place in Beirut on 10-13 September 2009.

**Announcements***Raising Awareness on the Situation of Women Migrant Domestic Workers*

In the context of its work on protecting the rights of women migrant domestic workers, the ILO-RO Beirut has begun distributing “Mimi” to public schools, targeting first and second graders and their teachers.

RO-Beirut has produced a *Frequently Asked Questions and Answers* brochure about live-in migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. It aims to raise awareness on these workers’ rights and duties, conditions and current situation. The document is available on: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_113954.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_113954.pdf)

*Get Ahead for Women and Enterprise: Training Package & Resource Kit in Arabic*

RO-Beirut has undertaken the regional adaptation and implementation of Women Enterprise Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE) tools in Arab States. The initiative which focuses on rural women producers and their cooperatives in Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and West Bank and Gaza Strip, has trained several hundred trainers from service providers who have then transferred the learning to their own beneficiaries. Until now, the WEDGE tools had been utilized by a number of international agencies including UNDP in the region. The first tool from the WEDGE adaptation, *Get Ahead for Women and Enterprise*, will be available in Arabic print in March 2010.

Photo by Lara Uhlenhaut  
Cartoon by Maarten Wolterink

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**To share your feedback and suggestions, or for more information:**

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