

Informal employment in Arab States: A Gender Equality and Workers' Rights perspective

Report of the Regional Meeting of Experts
Carthage, 15-17 July 2008

International Labour Organization
Regional Office for Arab States
Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR)

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Printed in (Lebanon)

Preface

The objective of the research component of the ILO/CAWTAR regional initiative on Gender Equality and Workers' Rights in the Informal Economies of Arab States, undertaken in 2007-2008, was to start reversing the regional knowledge gaps in relation to statistics and extension of social protection to informal workers. The research phase has generated key research and references to influence the thinking within governments, workers' and employers' organizations, research institutions, and the international agencies working in the select Arab States included in this regional initiative. This phase has also achieved to pool together a group of 21 experts from the countries of the region including the researchers and the advisory group members. Highlights of progress to date include:

- Mainstreaming Arab States into the global discussion on informal employment by:
 - ensuring that the regional research network members use the latest tools, concepts and definitions globally available;
 - encouraging the regional research network members to become resource people for any further informal economy research in the region; and
 - providing the global knowledge networks with the emerging research from the region for comments and comparisons with other regions.
- Providing proof of the flaws in applying global assumptions to the region without substantiating empirical evidence; and
- Calling for use of sex-disaggregated data and inclusion of gender-responsive indicators in household and labour force surveys (inclusive of discouraged workers, home-based workers, domestic workers, and unpaid work) in order to understand the nuances of the high rates of economic inactivity of women in the region.

The report was drafted by Mr. Mansour Omeira based on the presentations and discussions during the workshop. Ms. Simel Esim, Ms. Emanuela Pozzan and Ms. Sanaa Abousleiman provided inputs for its finalization.

Abbreviations

ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers' Activities
AGFUND	Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations
CAWTAR	Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research
ESP	Economic and Social Policy
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
HUEMS	Household Unincorporated Enterprises with at least some Market Production
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ICLS	International Conference of Labour Statisticians
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISSA	International Social Security Association
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and Northern Africa
MSEs	Micro and Small Enterprises
NGED	Arab Network for Gender and Development
RO-Beirut	Regional Office for Arab States
SNA	System of National Accounts
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

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1. Introduction

1.1. Regional initiative

The global knowledge on informality in the world of work has witnessed in the last 10-15 years a shift from a concept based on the economic unit to a concept based on the job. Global initiatives moving the understanding of informality forward have included the thirteenth, fifteenth, and seventeenth sessions of the International Conferences of Labour Statisticians, the Delhi Group on Informal Employment Statistics, the Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) policy network, the International Labour Conference of 2002, and the ILO's InFocus initiative on the Informal Economy.

In Arab States, the knowledge base on informality of employment remains limited. The region witnessed a delayed introduction of the informal sector discourse in the 1990s. Concepts related to informality in the world of work were introduced by international donor initiatives, while key references on the issue have not been available in Arabic. In addition, statisticians in the region have not agreed on the terminology and measurements to adopt; there thus remains a multiplicity of terms used in Arabic for the same concepts.

The regional initiative of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) aims to bring the global knowledge and learning on employment in the informal economy into Arab States, and mainstream Arab States into the global discussion through evidence, data and analysis. It consists of three interlinked components: research, knowledge sharing and awareness raising. It adopts the concept of informal employment to refer to the characteristics of jobs rather than those of the economic units. Furthermore, a gender equality and workers' rights perspective is applied to the analysis of informal employment in select Arab States (Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, West Bank and Gaza Strip, Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia).

1.2. Regional meeting of experts

The regional meeting of experts took place in Carthage, Tunisia on July 15-17, 2008. Its main goals included bringing clarity to the concepts and terms related to informality, presenting highlights of findings of the research phase of the regional initiative, discussing findings with regional constituents, and identifying the institutional responses needed in light of the findings. The organizers of the regional initiative and the meeting presented the international definitions of concepts and terminology related to informality, without imposing them, to encourage discussion and convergence of usage.

It included researchers, representatives of workers' and employers' organizations, officials from key governmental institutions including ministries of Labour, social security organizations, and central statistical organizations, and representatives of international and regional institutions. Participants agreed that despite their diverse backgrounds, they did not consider their views as representative of all Arab States, but considered their exchanges as essential building blocks for elaboration in future undertakings.

Box 1

Promoting gender equality and workers' rights in Arab States

The gender equality and workers' rights perspective of the regional initiative:

- Uses labour rights and other relevant human rights standards to identify the problems facing workers in the informal economy;
- Highlights political, economic, social, and cultural causes and consequences of informalization, and claims, responsibilities, capabilities and actions required;
- Suggests ways to introduce policies and programmes providing equal opportunities to women and men and to transform institutional norms, rules, procedures, and attitudes;
- Prioritizes rights of informally employed to exercise choices, access resources and remedies, gain voice, and organize for equality of access, benefits, and genuine empowerment.

The regional initiative has important linkages with parallel ILO initiatives in Arab States, which focus on:

- Overcoming deficits in affordable, accessible social care services that impede women's employment;
- Protecting rights of women migrant domestic workers;
- Empowering rural women economically through enterprise and cooperative development;
- Improving young women's employability through vocational and other training;

Source: Simel Esim's presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

2. Setting the scene: highlights of welcome notes

2.1. Ms. Soukeina Bouraoui, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR)

The nature of employment is rapidly and dramatically changing around the world, including in Arab States. The increasing flexibility of labour markets at global and local levels has led to a rise of informal employment, self-employment and atypical forms of employment. This process, termed as informalization, has been accompanied by an increase of insecurity and poverty, particularly for women. Official statistics, laws, policies, and programmes, however, are not sufficiently capturing the informalization of jobs, thereby impeding the much needed extension of social protection to informal workers.

To fill the gap, the ILO and CAWTAR launched in January 2007 a regional initiative on Gender Equality and Workers' Rights in the Informal Economies of Arab States. Funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), and the ILO, this two-year initiative aims to mainstream Arab States into the current global thinking on informal employment using a perspective of gender equality and workers' rights.

2.2. Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, International Labour Organization / Regional Office for Arab States (ILO RO-Beirut)

The regional meeting of experts is of great importance for the launch of the ILO campaign on Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work leading to the International Labour Conference in 2009. The global campaign highlights ILO contributions to advancing gender equality in the world of work and further emphasizes the need to overcome barriers to make gender equality in the world of work a reality, to the benefit of all. Work is central to people's well-being: in addition to providing income, work can pave the way for broader social and economic advancement, and strengthen individuals, their families and communities. Such progress, however, requires work that is decent. Decent work for all sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives.

The ILO is devoted to advancing opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Its main aims are to promote rights at work, encourage employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen social dialogue. For many women, however, access to rights, employment, social protection and social dialogue despite significant achievements, remains elusive. The ILO therefore continues to seek and advocate regional solutions to address gender equality and the advancement of women in our societies throughout the region.

The initiative on Gender Equality and Workers' Rights in the Informal Economies of Arab States aims to mainstream current global thinking on informal employment from the perspective of gender equality and workers' rights into the socio-economic decision-making processes in the Arab States region. The initiative comes at a critical time when the soaring food and fuel prices are putting great pressure on food security and the fragile livelihoods of men and women in the region who are already struggling with the challenge of unemployment, compounded by growing informality.

2.3. Ms. Rawwida Baksh, International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Gita Sen, Indian feminist economist, said that women's work lies at the intersection between their roles in reproduction and production. Women's 'invisible' non-SNA (System of National Accounts) work has been estimated at around US\$11,000 billion a year worldwide (UNDP, 1995), the equivalent of an extra 48 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product. Women do fewer hours of paid work than men, partly because of their long hours of unpaid household labour, which also reinforces labour force segmentation. Young children and a lack of childcare options constrain women's entry into paid employment and type of job. In most developing and some developed countries, the reach of both formal and informal childcare programs is inadequate. Socio-cultural attitudes, employment policies, and a lack of options for balancing work and family responsibilities or for controlling the timing and spacing of births, thus contribute to gender inequality in the labour market.

Poor education has traditionally been another barrier to women's entry into formal employment. The UN MDG (Millennium Development Goals) Report (2006) indicated that women represent an increasing share of the world's labour force - over a third in all regions except Southern and Western Asia, and Northern Africa. Although women represent an increasing share of the world's labour force, they remain at a disadvantage in securing paid jobs. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), there is a direct relationship between women's paid work and household poverty. Wage differentials, occupational segregation, higher unemployment rates and their disproportionate representation in the informal and subsistence sectors limit women's economic advancement.

A recent paper commissioned by IDRC on women's economic rights in MENA countries argued that research on women's economic rights in the region has tended to be compartmentalized, and proposed a multi-faceted cross-disciplinary and sustained investigation of the multiple fields in which women produce, claim, or are denied economic rights. These fields include the labour market (both formal and informal), households, families and communities. The reports of this ILO/CAWTAR regional initiative provide for the first time an analysis of women's informal employment that can contribute to policy influence in the MENA region as well as enhance the global picture.

The IDRC Women's Rights and Citizenship program focuses its support to researchers in developing countries in five key areas: women's citizenship and governance, access to justice, economic rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and migration. IDRC support is directed towards creating a local research community whose work will contribute to building healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous societies. It has three main objectives: 1) knowledge generation; 2) policy influence; and 3) capacity building for research. IDRC is committed to supporting new research that has the potential to influence policy and improve women's lives.

3. Thematic summaries

3.1. Concepts and terms on informality

3.1.1. Why informality?

Participants voiced the view that conceptual clarity was of utmost importance in undertaking policy-relevant research aiming to advance gender equality and workers' rights. Some participants questioned the worthiness of adopting a conceptual framework based on informality of employment, arguing that other frameworks such as vulnerability and exclusion are more inspiring to mobilize resources and take action. In response, it was pointed out that the need for adopting a conceptual framework based on informality emanates from a real world phenomenon, the global retreat of the traditional employment relationship, in other words, the informalization of employment.

Consequently, the global discussion on informality is not confined to academia, but it is more about praxis and means to improve formal social protection coverage as a basic right, as indicated in the debates taking place at the International Labour Conference and other ILO meetings, particularly since 2002. In addition, to better inform policy, over the years statistics on informality of employment have benefited from efforts to establish more precise international definitions and technical guidelines as pillars for a sound statistical base. The work of the Expert Group on Informal Sector Statistics (the Delhi Group) and the International Conferences of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), particularly the fifteenth and the seventeenth conferences are examples of such efforts.

Moreover, the conceptual framework on informality of employment is particularly relevant to Arab States, where official social and economic policies have contributed to the stabilization and sometimes the increase of the size of agricultural employment, a sector where work continues to be informal and where women are predominantly active as contributing family workers, as well as to growing numbers of informal jobs lacking basic entitlements such as legal recognition and social protection.

Finally, central to the approach adopted by the regional initiative is the emphasis on social protection as a central strategy for the reversal of informalization, and workers' agency and voice

to advance such a process by organizing the unorganized, and taking collective action to bring visibility their concerns and influence policy¹. Finally, the regional initiative's understanding of informality is reflected through a gender equality and workers' rights perspective based on normative grounding, which is essential to justify policy and encourage mobilization.

3.1.2. Multiple terms for the same concept

In the region, terms in Arabic referring to the 'informal' have included 'unofficial', 'unorganized', and 'non-structured'. Positions diverged on whether there should be a unification of terminology in Arabic and definitions across the region, and if so, how such unification would happen. Some suggested that the discussion would be pointless, and recommended instead to adopt ILO current practice and focus on the nature of the phenomenon and its policy implications in the region. Others opined that consistency in terminology was necessary for clarity, and for overcoming the confusion over terms related to informality:

- 'unofficial' suggests that formality is only in the public sector, while public sector employment itself is witnessing informalization;
- 'unorganized' is inappropriate since 'unorganized' workers are 'non-unionized', and although organizing is an important strategy towards formalization, it is not itself a criterion for defining informality according to international definitions;
- 'non-structured' strictly focuses on establishments rather than jobs, moreover structuralists emphasize the subordination of the informal sector to the formal sector.

A consensus emerged that even if the terminology continued to differ across countries and institutions, it was necessary to ensure that national definitions related to informality in the world of work were consistent with the international statistical definitions, as set by the most recent (ICLS). As for definitions of unemployment, the countries could report on informality using international statistical definitions as well as their own definitions adopted for the specificities of their own contexts.

An essential feature of ICLS definitions is the conceptualization of informal employment by status in employment and type of production unit (see table 1). In particular, the Seventeenth ICLS distinguishes an additional type of production unit other than the formal and informal sector categories: 'households' which encompass these households producing goods exclusively for their own final use and households employing paid domestic workers. Households producing unpaid domestic or personal services for own final consumption, such as unpaid care work, are excluded (ILO, 2003). Since women's informal employment often takes place in the household, the distinction of households provides a better depiction of the gender dimension of informality.

¹ The approach adopted by the regional initiative thus contributes to filling an important research gap, as identified by Chant and Pedwell (2008) who concluded that "more emphasis needs to be placed on generating studies dedicated to social security and protection and organization, representation and social dialogue from a gender perspective".

Table 1. Informality by Production Unit and Status in Employment

Status in employment	Production units by type		
	Formal sector enterprises	Formal sector enterprises	Households
Own-account workers	Formal	<i>Informal</i>	<i>Informal</i>
Employers	Formal	<i>Informal</i>	
Members of producers' cooperatives	Formal	<i>Informal</i>	
Employees	<i>Depending on working conditions</i>	<i>Depending on working conditions</i>	<i>Depending on working conditions</i>
Contributing family workers	<i>Informal</i>	<i>Informal</i>	

Source: Mansour Omeira's presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

3.1.3. Which informality concept(s)?

Participants discussed the usefulness of the 'informal economy' concept. At one end was the view that "the informal economy has a positive role to play", and that the new concept, "although imperfect, is a good starting point" to understand the totality of informal economic activities. At the other end was the view that through the new concept "the ILO is causing confusion". In general, participants disapproved of the concept of the 'informal economy'. Some pointed out that it is too comprehensive because it covers the activities of enterprises as well as workers', which seriously undermines its usefulness. Others expressed concern that the concept of the 'informal economy' carries a bias against those who belong to it and suggests that they are illegal, preferring instead the more traditional concept of the 'social economy'. Yet others recommended discarding the concept of the informal 'economy' altogether, because an 'economy' is not only limited to the sphere of production and includes distribution, exchange, and consumption.

Participants also noted the importance of the concept of the 'informal sector' as it relates to the measurability of its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product, given its inclusion in the SNA. Many pointed out that the informal sector was particularly relevant for activities in the agricultural sector, and that countries in the region needed to ensure that agricultural activities were included in informal sector measurement². Some remarked that people might mix between the 'informal sector' and other 'sectors', meaning branches of economic activity (industries). Others noted that the informal sector includes workers in subsistence activities or poor working conditions, and public policy should aim to decrease their numbers, as well as dynamic entrepreneurs, whom public policy should foster; given these two contradictory elements for policy, the concept of the 'informal sector' was judged problematic. Yet others pointed out that the adoption of a job-based understanding of informality alongside the enterprise-based concept would make clear that the

² The Fifteenth ICLS allowed the exclusion of agricultural activities from the informal sector for practical reasons related to data collection (see ILO, 1993; 2003).

goals of fostering informal sector enterprises and of supporting informal sector workers were not contradictory, and could instead be complementary. Examples were provided of public policy that provides incentives to micro and small enterprises (MSEs) to improve working conditions for workers in these enterprises.

Participants welcomed the concept of ‘informal employment’ for its focus on jobs and workers. They noted that the definition of informal employment on the basis of deficits in workers’ rights makes it engaging, and its international statistical definition makes it measurable, albeit with different criteria across countries. Although a statistical concept, it can be integrated into socio-political and economic concepts more easily than the larger concept of ‘informal economy’. Because of its job-focus, it avoids the complications related to the enterprise-based concept, and allows for monitoring of progress in achieving decent work. It also incorporates jobs with poor working conditions not covered by the informal sector, including home-based workers, outworkers, and domestic workers.

Many participants, however, suggested that ‘informality’ hinged on illegality and putting the responsibility on workers instead of States and employers. They recommended the use of the term ‘unprotected employment’ instead of ‘informal employment’. It was pointed out that the international definitions allow for such terminology; but it can lead to difficulty of interpretation, as people can be protected by community interventions and not necessarily by the State. They emphasized that, while they may provide much needed relief on many occasions, community interventions should by no means be interpreted as replacement for State role and responsibility in providing protection to workers.

The discussion then moved to mechanisms of developing definitions at the international level. Participants agreed that the tripartite framework of the ILO provided an adequate space for dialogue. Some, however, held the view that the tripartite structure is in itself a problem because it tries to reconcile contradictory interests: workers strive for their rights, employers want more profit, and governments want to keep the ruling party in power. In this view, statistical norms also reflect compromises between the ‘Global South’ and the ‘Global North’, just as gender norms reflect compromises within households. With ideology also playing a role, they considered that it was not useful to attempt to have a unified opinion. Others pointed out that a unified opinion was not necessarily desirable; even if it could not be reached, social dialogue on informality of employment was important for understanding differences and reaching consensus on common principles. An agreement on common principles, despite diverse interests, could open the way for identification of different roles, responsibilities, and needed actions.

3.2. Social protection

3.2.1. Social security vs. social protection

While there was agreement on the significance of other concepts related to social protection, opinions varied regarding the emphasis on social security versus social protection, and which is more of a priority for workers in general and women workers in particular. It was noted that the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, including in ILO publications. The emerging understanding was that social protection is more general than social security, and includes provisions from different actors including the community, non-governmental organizations, and private sector entities.

Box 2

Work, family, and the Israeli occupation

A Palestinian woman trade unionist proposed to include the time necessary for workers to perform their duties beyond set working hours, above a certain threshold, in the definition of informal employment. Such a definition would cover time spent commuting between workplace and home in both directions. Workers in the West Bank and Gaza can wait up to four hours at Israeli checkpoints, hours they receive no remuneration for. Additional costs include psychological pressure, and inability for working parents to see their children who would have already gone to sleep by the time they arrive.

Large numbers of women and men political activists have spent their lives as volunteers and have been detained repeatedly by Israeli occupation forces. As their age advances, they find themselves without any social protection or source of income, and with children depending on them. No job opportunities are available for them because they could not finish their studies for security reasons, or because they consecrated their time to political activism, without considering the option of occupational training.

Source: Palestinian woman trade unionist's testimony at the regional meeting of experts.

Participants noted a regional trend of shifting risks down the value chain, and back to the household, by reducing state social provisions, particularly in resource-poor countries. They warned that the focus on social protection should not in any way relieve states from their responsibility to provide social security.

3.2.2. Protection of women over their lifecycle

Participants raised the concern that in many countries of the region, institutions concerned with women's issues typically target 'women and children', which mirrors a persistent legacy of patriarchal social norms confining women strictly in their reproductive roles as mothers and wives. Instead, the participants chose to focus on issues related to protection of women across their lifecycle, taking into account the different stages from birth to old age.

In childhood, both girls and boys need shelter, typically the parental home, which should provide them with their basic needs, including good nutrition and quality education. Education, starting from nursery school, to kindergarten, and primary and secondary school, should be compulsory and free. Girls must have access to nutrition, health care and psychological care on equal terms with boys in both school and home, and children with special needs should receive appropriate care. More generally, girls need an environment that is conducive for intellectual and physical development, including playgrounds and gardens. Wherever they are, they must have protection from violence and sexual abuse.

Protection from violence and sexual harassment is necessary across the lifecycle, particularly in adolescence. A legally set minimum age for marriage, completion of compulsory education, sexual education, and moral support, including from social welfare institutions, are some of the measures needed for this purpose. The full respect of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including freedom of expression and freedom of association, is necessary for all States.

In adulthood, women have the right to health insurance, the right to equal education and equal opportunities in selecting their field of specialization, as well as equal opportunities in access and preservation of employment. The availability of conditions conducive to education, including habitat, health care, scholarships, and transportation is necessary, as well as general educational and vocational orientation. Women's physical mobility remains constrained in many countries of the region; States need to ensure that women have the right to travel freely, without the need for a male guardian's permission or presence. Widows need to receive special assistance. Proper mechanisms must be in place to protect women from violence in the workplace and domestic violence requires, and particular attention must be given to protection from human trafficking and sex trade.

Box 3

Facing the social protection challenge

The extension of social protection should adopt the goal of including all workers in schemes adapted to their specific situation during the period of employment and beyond, when health and income protections are most needed. There is a need for shared responsibility and accountability procedures between States, insurance funds, and employers to protect workers. Different categories of workers need to be identified according to occupational profiles, needs, and risks faced.

Social insurance mechanisms that reinforce solidarity at the national level should be extended according to three guiding principles: those who can afford providing for those who cannot; active youth providing for the elderly; and enforcing through income-level based contribution rates, constantly revised to ensure financial sustainability of the schemes.

State-society relations in the region are generally characterized by distrust. Social protection is linked to social cohesion, national solidarity, State institutional capacity, and political will to achieve compromises between different interest groups. The scattering of various forms of protection among different providers and stakeholders foments social fragmentation and inequalities.

Source: Blandine Destremau's presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

States must ensure that working women receive equal pay for equal value of work, which is different from equal pay for equal work, as women and men tend to work in different occupations, with jobs where women are concentrated being significantly underpaid compared to men. In addition, working women need to receive rehabilitation after injury or after long work interruptions for care responsibilities; the period of interruption should be included in employment years for calculating work-related benefits. States should also ensure that working women are protected against unfair dismissal from employment.

Women in motherhood must not be unfairly denied the right to custody of their children and the right to open a bank account in the name of their children under their custodianship. Under the concept of equality in responsibilities, women must share family responsibilities with men to ensure equal participation in public life. In this regard, paternal leave must be introduced for fathers to have the opportunity to contribute to the care of their new-borns, children and wives. In old age, women must have income security, including pensions for retirees, and access to care, including health care, which requires the availability of appropriate social care infrastructure.

3.2.3. Changing needs and forms of provision

The region has been undergoing changes at different levels, which lead to changing social protection needs of women and men and necessitate changing ways in which the needs are met. Demographic changes, including changes in population size, fertility, life expectancy, and in the supply of labour are also influenced by the demand for labour, as women postpone marriage and childbearing for employment purposes. There must be greater awareness of the need to adapt provision to the changing size and structure of households.

Arab States in general have been revisiting existing legislation, particularly as it relates to labour, to attract investment (especially foreign investment) and receive recognition of international financial institutions, as depicted in, for instance, the World Bank's Doing Business reports. Laxer labour legislation encourages informalization of employment in the public and private sectors and raises the share of newly generated jobs that are informal. The subsequent expansion of informality of jobs further undermines social security schemes through decreasing contributions. In addition to the prescriptions of international financial institutions, such as public sector reform (lower benefits, cuts in jobs, switching to fixed-term and short-term contracts) and social security privatization, other pressures include lack of administrative awareness and inability to respond appropriately to the rise in prices on account of policy constraints.

Participants agreed that protection must be provided by securing rights through social security schemes, and not through temporary, unsustainable, and insecure assistance schemes. The main challenge, however, remained: knowing sources for funding extension of social security. Given the balance of power on the ground, the question translates into finding a space where the interests of workers, employers, and governments do not necessarily clash. It was suggested, for instance, that given the large numbers of young persons looking for a job, decreasing employers' contribution rates to social security may generate employment opportunities and economic growth, which in turn would increase funds available for social security. The argument also is related to what demographers often refer to as the 'demographic gift' with regard to large cohorts of young people reaching working age. The demographic gift, however, is not automatic: the demographic dividend, which involves increased economic growth, requires appropriate economic and social policies to generate enough jobs with at least some social security.

3.3. Statistics

3.3.1. Measurement issues

Participants discussed the importance of the availability of statistics on informal employment, and the difficulty of measuring the extent of informality in their absence. In such instances, it becomes necessary to use proxies. Since informal workers often hold multiple jobs, statistics based on primary jobs systematically underestimate the real size of informal employment. Difficulties in measurement include basic questions such as: how is informal employment measured when it is by definition not declared by the employer? Indirect measurement includes calculating the difference between employment as measured by household surveys and employment as measured by establishment surveys at a proximate period, which provides a first estimation of informal employment. Where the resources are available, direct measurement using a mixed strategy that combines household and establishment surveys can provide results that are more accurate.

How useful is it to adhere to international statistical definitions on informality of employment? One opinion was that it was not, because the category of informal employment “blurs everything”, whereby, for example, it includes ‘black labour’, which refers to illegal work, and ‘precarious work’, which refers to vulnerable work. In response, it was pointed out that as a supplement to the 1993 SNA, an international conceptual framework for the measurement of the ‘non-observed economy’ distinguishes the ‘informal sector’ from ‘underground production’, ‘illegal production’ and ‘household production for own final use’. It is hard to consider informal productive units illegal, especially in developing country contexts where the majority of the population lives in a framework where labour legislations hardly apply. In industrialized countries, it is more common to hear of people talking about enforcement. In Arab States, both arguments are used depending on the economic development contexts of the specific countries.

In this view, the complexity of non-observed production requires abiding by international statistical definitions, with operational criteria developed nationally according to data and resource available. For instance, if information on social protection coverage is absent, it becomes necessary to use another criterion for defining informality, such as absence of contract. Some case studies, such as the West Bank and Gaza Strip study pointed out that contracts were not important. If the informal work is in MSEs, this might be the case. But in public and larger private sector establishments, the contract matters a great deal. The statistics presented in the country case studies were developed by researchers in this light. The discussion pointed out how categorizing informal workers by place of work helps identify different occupational groups to target for organizing and public policy purposes. A cautionary note was placed on the meaning of statistics: employees may be considered as having protection because their employers are paying social contributions, but when they go to the hospital, they may not actually receive proper services.

3.3.2. National practices

Reviewing national practices, participants noted that the operational criteria to define the informal sector differed across countries and even within the same country across time, which puts a cautionary note with respect to comparability. The operational criteria for defining informal sector enterprises have included self-declaration as in the informal sector, lack of registration, and frequently place of work outside the premises of the employer. The studies of the regional initiative have also used the size criterion, typically less than five workers, although some countries use less than six workers.

In an assessment of statuses in employment used in official surveys in Arab States, participants remarked that the category of ‘member of producers’ cooperative’ was typically absent, and recommended its inclusion. This is especially important in terms of organizing rural women producers and encouraging collective action for rural women producers who otherwise would not have the resources and know-how for cost effective production and access to markets. Participants also noted that statistical agencies in Arab States typically used the same term in Arabic for ‘own-account work’ and ‘self-employment’, a situation creating confusion. According to ILO definitions, the self-employed include employers, own-account workers, contributing family workers, and members of producers’ cooperatives. It was noted that the use of the same term for the two concepts was prevalent in the Arabic versions of relevant United Nations documents. It was thus recommended to highlight the difference for translators and users of the texts; more particularly, through updating training materials for labour statisticians in Arab States.

Participants looked into the criteria adopted by national statistical agencies to differentiate between different members of the household in their relationship to work, particularly unpaid care workers, contributing family workers, home-based workers, and domestic workers. Participants

Box 4

Measuring informal employment

Informal jobs are jobs for which “the employment relationship (...) is not subject to national labour legislation, income taxation, social protection or entitlement to certain employment benefits (such as advance notice of dismissal, severance pay, paid annual or sick leave)”. In practice, the criteria, to be determined “in accordance with national circumstances and data availability”, typically include absence of written contract and of social protection coverage.

Informal employment includes:

- Informal employment inside the informal sector, comprising the informally self-employed (informal own-account workers, employers with less than 5 workers or employees, and contributing family workers), and informal employees in enterprises with less than 5 workers or employees.
- Informal employment outside the informal sector, comprising paid employees without social protection in enterprises with 5 workers (or employees) or more, and paid domestic workers.

Informal employment may be measured through either direct or indirect methods. Direct methods are based on establishment or enterprise censuses and surveys, household surveys, especially labour force surveys, and mixed surveys. Indirect methods are based on subtracting formal sector employment from total employment: the ‘residual method’.

In Arab States, low female participation rates and small share of females in the labour force are key elements to consider. The adoption of international definitions does not necessarily imply ease of analyzing data collected from various statistical sources. In reality, the use of proxy definitions is necessary, given that none of the Arab countries has fully adopted a definition of the concepts related to informality. Nor have Arab statistical institutes come to agree on region level definitions as other regions of the world have done.

Source: Jacques Charmes’s presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

also compared national criteria for defining workers in precarious employment, and the differences in the duration of contracts to categorize workers in casual, seasonal, and short-term employment. It was noted that the production and services generated at the household unit level was critical for measuring women’s informal employment correctly.

The review opened a discussion on good statistical practices, including taking into account whether employees work with one or more employers, the order and phrasing of particular questions, and the inclusion of questions to the non-employed for identification of discouraged workers, the underemployed, and, potentially, the undeclared informal workers. In particular, some categories of informal workers such as workers in subsistence activities may be undertaking an economic activity yet still consider themselves as having no job. Participants noted the interconnectedness of different statuses: the case study on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, for instance, reported that the size of informal employment was dropping, not because of an increase in formal employment, but because of a general drop in employment.

The discussion branched out on wider issues and country examples, such as legislation forbidding the hiring of workers on precarious contracts for an extended time, parents encouraging early marriage to have young people under the age of 15 work for them or complement their household work instead of paid employees or domestic workers.

3.4. Country case studies

Participants discussed the various dimensions of informal employment, research achievements, and remaining research gaps, based on presentations of country case studies at various levels of completion. Mr. Jamil Hilal presented the first country case study of the regional initiative to be published, Unprotected employment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: a gender equality and workers' rights perspective (Hilal, Al Kafri, and Kuttub, 2008); Ms. Seiko Sugita and Mr. Basim Shannak discussed the case study. Ms. Suha Kanaan then presented the activities of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics to measure informal employment.

Ms. Maha Katta and Mr. Sattouf Al-Cheikh Hussein jointly presented the draft Syria country case study; Ms. Blandine Destremau and Mr. Mansour Omeira discussed the draft. Afterward, Mr. Basim Shannak presented the preliminary results of a survey of home-based workers in Amman, Jordan, while Ms. Nadia Rawabdeh presented the Jordanian Social Security Corporation's experience in extending social protection.

In addition, two presentations were included to provide links between the regional initiative's focus on informal employment, and other elements pertaining to gender equality and workers' rights of particular relevance to moving from the regional initiative's research outcomes to concrete action. Ms. Alia Jamal linked gender equality and the informal economy to the ratification and implementation of relevant International Labour Conventions, and Ms. Seiko Sugita presented the relationship between care needs and informality of women's employment in Lebanon based on joint work with Ms. Simel Esim.

The presentations and discussions provided participants with the opportunity to share their own experiences and identify key issues, as summarized below.

3.4.1. Continuing relevance of agricultural employment and public sector employment

Although international statistical recommendations typically permit countries to exclude agricultural employment from their estimates of informal employment, in Arab States and as it relates to gender equality it is necessary to take agricultural employment into account. As the country case studies also argued reasons include large, and often growing size of informal employment in agriculture, especially for women, a trend that runs counter to global trends, and the precarious conditions of agricultural workers and their families.

Official policy in Arab States has often ranked diminishing the size of public sector employment as a main goal. In the absence of adequate employment opportunities in the private sector, particularly for women who are overrepresented in the public sector, the consequences of such policy include informalization and defeminization of employment. The private sector absorption rate of young women workers has been much lower than that of public sector, as also demonstrated in the rising unemployment rates among young women, especially those who are educated, around Arab States. In practice, the size of public sector employment has substantially decreased only in a few countries, although the quality of benefits in the public sector has been steadily retreating.

3.4.2. Interdependence of countries in the region and the role of conflicts

Despite important differences between Arab States, they remain interdependent and face a number of common challenges, in the short and longer terms. Military conflicts are a major challenge to human security in the region, as they lead to large numbers of deaths, injuries, disabilities, refugees, and internally displaced persons, in addition to impoverishment and

allocation of resources away from development goals. Populations in conflict settings include those living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen.

Population movements resulting from conflicts, such as those of Iraqi and Palestinian refugees, add to the pressures on public services and infrastructure and labour markets or neighbouring countries. Responses need to take into account the relative permanence of such situations: for Palestinians the status of refugees has lasted some six decades. Another common challenge in the region is rising prices, with the poor especially vulnerable to the rise of food, energy, and real estate prices. Inequality in the impacts of inflation is exhibited both within and across countries of the region.

Box 5

Understanding informal employment in Syria

Syria is undergoing a shift in economic policy, towards a ‘social market economy’. Yet in 2006, the public sector covered two-thirds of women’s employment and more than a quarter of men’s, while the informal sector comprised 14 per cent of women’s employment and 38 per cent of men’s. Wage levels are highest in the public sector and lowest in the informal sector. Although men receive higher wages than women in each of the public, formal, and informal sectors, the gender gap is smallest in the public sector and biggest in the informal sector.

Concrete results of the Syria country case study are reflected in the recent inclusion of additional questions in the Syrian Labour Force Survey of 2008, such as:

- Are you registered in social security?
- Do you benefit from any type of social protection?
- Is the enterprise you work for registered, and what is its size in terms of number of workers?
- Do you benefit from paid vacation, health insurance, maternity leave, unemployment benefit, and pension?

Source: Sattouf Al-Cheikh Hussein’s presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

Because of the interdependence of countries in the region, responding to common challenges such as high unemployment and informal employment makes joint action at the regional level necessary, possibly through regional institutions. Such prospects, however, are limited by political conflicts among countries, a situation exacerbated in the past two decades.

3.4.3. Deficits in legislation, inconsistent application and enforcement

Labour legislation in Arab States continues to exclude large numbers of workers from legal and social protection, including agricultural workers, domestic workers, and workers in precarious employment. Although general legislation, such as constitutions are often more inclusive and have higher priority, in practice specific legislation, such as labour laws often takes precedence, and leads to unfair and inefficient practices.

‘Good’ legislation is often not implemented because it challenges the interests of powerful groups, and implementation mechanisms are often absent. Such a situation is sometimes a response by States to popular and international pressure to reform legislation: while legislation officially changes, past practices persist. Workers find themselves obliged to adapt to the changing incentives,

which sometimes leads to atypical employment contracts. An illustrative example is that of teachers having to resign after nine months of work to have the possibility to regain their job in the following academic year. Atypical contracts are common in private sector employment in the form of temporary contracts, but are also being used more frequently in public sector employment arrangements.

How can legislation be changed? The time factor is particularly important and has various dimensions. Changing the Tunisian health insurance law necessitated 16 years, while work on changing the Jordanian social security law required about a year. In situations of “good legislation and bad implementation”, workers often are not familiar with their rights, so better education and

Box 6

Identifying key groups of informal workers in Syria

In Syria, groups of workers in informal employment that require specific attention include:

- Self-employed women, who face considerable financial and technical challenges;
- Migrant workers, particularly women migrant domestic workers who are excluded from the labour law and commonly suffer violations of their basic human rights;
- Women agricultural workers, prone to early marriage, polygamy, illiteracy, high dowry prices, inheritance customs, unpaid care work, and high levels of mortality;
- Iraqi refugees, who suffer from discrimination and are denied basic rights such as decent housing, work permits and social protection;
- Palestinian refugees, particularly women, who face poor working conditions and low wages.

Source: Maha Katta’s presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

awareness campaigns can help in this regard. Formal mechanisms suggested to tackle situations where legislation is not respected include improved labour administration, labour inspections, capacitating labour courts, and the formation of ombudsmen for labour dispute resolutions.

3.4.4. Persistence of patriarchal social norms

Patriarchal social norms persist in the region, and determine to an extent gender differences in access to education and employment. Restrictions on the physical mobility of women of reproductive age lead to educational and occupational segregation, and negatively affect their access to employment. For instance, harsh conditions of work that prevail in the labour market, including sexual harassment, are often used as an argument by parents to restrict their daughters’ from taking jobs. Many employers in the private sector prefer to hire men on account of male bread winner biases and in order to avoid paying maternity benefits, which are discriminatory labour practices that contradict the law. The recognition that social norms matter for the extent and nature of women and men’s employment, however, is a necessary but not sufficient element of the analysis.

Investigators need to look further into the reason for the persistence of traditional social norms, and ways to overcome them in order to shed more light into gender inequalities in the world of work. A question worth asking is the different reasons that men and women may choose to work from home. Quantitative outcomes typically fail to allow the differentiation between choice and

necessity, a matter that may be investigated qualitatively. In addition, the analysis needs to take into account the agency of individuals, as well as the interaction between formal and informal institutions.

Box 7

Extending social security in Jordan

More than a third of the employed population in Jordan is excluded from social security, and the majority of retirees are still not covered by health insurance. Unemployment rates reached 12.5 per cent for men, and 25 per cent for women, while the share of women's employment reached 12 per cent in the private sector, and 37 per cent in the public sector. In addition, 87 per cent of covered women are in the 18-42 age group.

In tackling such deficits, Jordan's Social Security Corporation adopted a strategy of publishing the results of actuarial studies, launching a national dialogue on the issue, and holding comparative studies, identifying international good practices. The proposed new social security law includes:

- Extending of social security coverage, to include employers, own-account workers, and homemakers, in addition to future inclusion of agricultural workers and the specification of wage brackets for inclusion;
- Supporting and fostering current benefits, including old-age, invalidity, and survivors' benefits and work injury benefits;
- Introducing new benefits:
 - Unemployment fund, with contributions of 0.5 per cent of workers' wages paid by the employer, and 1 per cent by the worker;
 - Maternity benefit aiming to encourage women's employment on the supply and demand sides, with contributions of 0.5 per cent of workers' wages paid by the employer, and 0.25 per cent by the worker;
 - Health insurance, according to a scheme issued by the council of ministers allowing enterprises to apply health insurance individually or in cooperation with specialized institutions and actors.

Source: Nadia Rawabdeh's presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

3.4.5. Social care infrastructure and women's employment

While women's access to employment is often restricted by traditional social norms, another contributing factor is the absence of adequate social care infrastructure. Consequently, women have to take care of children, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled. Employed women have to juggle schedules between responsibilities at home and at work.

3.4.6. Multiplicity of statuses across non-employment, informal, and formal employment

Given the diversity of activities in the world of work, the differences between informality and formality are not clear cut. Informality and formality do not exist in duality. There is in fact a multiplicity of statuses across formality and informality, which can be extended to include non-employment, including unemployment, discouraged workers, and unpaid care work. Such an

extension is especially needed given the high rates of transition between statuses because of the deficits in quantity and quality of jobs available. The deficits and the transitions are further exacerbated in conflict settings.

In addition, occupational groups of informal workers need to be identified, for instance according to place of work, nationality, employer's institutional sector (to cover domestic workers employed by households), and branch of economic activity (to identify agricultural workers, for examples) to better orient policy and organizing initiatives.

Box 8

Women and men home-based workers in Jordan

The Jordanian Department of Statistics has recently conducted a survey of home-based workers in Amman, in cooperation with the World Bank and the National Women's Committee. Preliminary results show that home-based workers constitute 8 per cent of total employment, 6.1 per cent among men and 2.3 per cent among women. Marital status contributed to gender differences in home-based workers, which constituted 7.8 per cent of employed married men, and 10.1 per cent of employed widows, divorced, and separated women.

The majority of women home-based workers fall in the 45-54 age group. The average years of experience for home-based workers is 10.1 for men, and 5.3 for women. Two out of three home-based workers do not wish to change their status; 86 per cent of men home-based workers' income is spent on the household, compared to 57.6 per cent of women home-based workers.

Men typically engage in home-based work because of the lower costs of operations, and the more flexible time arrangements. While these reasons are also important for women home-based workers, even more important are convenience to caring for children and other family members.

Source: Basim Shannak's presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

3.4.7. Normative power of international labour standards

The ratification of International Labour Conventions can be a step forward in tackling informality of employment, as human rights instruments they are characterized by principles of indivisibility and flexibility. In practice, Decent Work Country Programmes can provide a useful blue print for countries. Participants expressed the view that since issues related to informality are not restricted to specific countries, the development of a decent work programme at the regional level may be a good idea for governments and the ILO to look into.

It was recommended not to limit the approach to a consideration of freedom of association conventions and gender equality conventions separately, and inquire instead into gender equality in freedom of association. The efforts leading to an expected ILO Convention on domestic workers are crucial for setting a standard for a category of informal workers that often lives under the most difficult conditions.

International Labour Conventions typically allow for States to exclude categories of workers from coverage under the Convention; informal workers often lie in those exclusions. Ratification of international labour standards and respect of workers' rights do not always correspond.

Box 9

Social care and women's access to employment in Lebanon

In 2004, women's labour participation rate in Lebanon was at 22.3 per cent. The changing demography and nuclear family settings have resulted in increasing care needs.

Yet there is no proper legal framework for workers with family responsibilities, and a lack of awareness on the policy implication of social care. In addition, conflict situations and the limited social role of the State have led to increasingly unmet care needs.

Social care is provided by various actors, including public (Ministry of Social Affairs), private, and non-profit institutions, as well as unpaid care workers, migrant domestic workers, and other informal women workers.

Accessibility to quality social care services is limited due to high price and geographical distribution. There is lack of coordination by the State, and limited control mechanism of services, care providers, and care recipients.

As women are typically in charge of care work, whether paid or unpaid, they have to struggle daily to reconcile work and family responsibilities.

Source: Seiko Sugita's presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

3.4.8. Triangulation

The regional initiative adopted 'triangulation' as a research strategy combining qualitative and quantitative methods, which was particularly beneficial to generating knowledge on informality of employment conducive for action. The research was also multidisciplinary in nature, undertaken as collaborative work by investigators from different backgrounds, including economists, sociologists, statisticians, and gender specialists. While the research teams presented data through quantitative

Box 10

Workers' rights deficits in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Estimates of informal employment need to take into account the size of unemployment, discouraged workers, unpaid care work, as well as agricultural employment and informalization of public sector jobs, particularly in conflict settings.

There is a need to improve Palestinian labour legislation and devise mechanisms for its actual implementation. Deficits in the current legislative framework include absence of minimum wage legislation and indexing of wages to cost of living, absence of pension schemes as only a lump-sum is available, no obligation for employers to provide their employees with health insurance, no full protection against unfair dismissal, exclusion of certain categories of workers such as own-account workers, domestic workers, unpaid care workers, and agricultural workers, and finally, the absence of specialized labour courts, in addition to the weakness of trade unions.

The Palestinian social insurance law of 2003 has been frozen at the proposal of donor agencies, which recommended given limited resources to focus on poverty alleviation. Palestinian society lives in complete vulnerability, and needs the protection the revival of the law can provide.

Source: Jamil Hilal's presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

methods, they also combined insights from qualitative research methods including literature reviews, institutional interviews, focus group and individual discussions.

3.5. Organizing

3.5.1. Defining workers

Participants adopted a broad understanding of workers, meaning persons engaged in economic activities, which includes employees, employers, and other statuses in employment. They considered such a broad understanding necessary in light of the changes affecting the traditional employment relationship. They also discussed the need to give persons engaged in non-economic activities, such as unpaid care workers, greater visibility.

Although there was no direct discussion of means to organize unpaid care workers, the discussion covered them with the underlying assumption that they are typically women, whose rights are promoted by gender advocates. The participants also called for raising awareness on a more balanced sharing of care responsibilities between women and men.

Box 11

International labour standards, gender equality, and informality

International Labour Conventions and Recommendations of particular relevance to gender and informality include:

- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87);
- Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98);
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100);
- Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102);
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111);
- Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122);
- Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131);
- Rural Workers' Organizations Convention, 1975 (No. 141);
- Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143);
- Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155);
- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156);
- Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160);
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169);
- Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177);
- Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181);
- Job Creation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Recommendation, 1998 (No. 189);
- Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183);
- Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184);
- Domestic Work Convention, forthcoming.

Source: Alia Jamal's presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

Table 2. Sample ratifications on key conventions

	C87	C98	C100	C111	C156	C183	C102	C160
Egypt	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Sudan	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Tunis	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Libya	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
Morocco	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Algeria	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Yemen	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Lebanon	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Syria	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Jordan	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO

Source: Alia Jamal's presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

Participants noted that in the face of neo-liberal globalization and subsequent retreat of states, civil society organizations have been given a larger role. While the trade unions' view of these non-membership based organizations is bleak, there are instances of civil society organizations and trade unions working together. A consensus among participants was that trade unions "do not have to be alone in organizing workers". Associations, civil society, community, and non-governmental organizations also have a role to play.

Participants emphasized that although their assessment of the situation of trade unions may be austere, ongoing initiatives are a source of optimism and follow up with adaptations and plans. Some trade unions have elaborated mechanisms enabling them to regain their roles, through revising their bylaws and recognizing the importance of empowering women and youth, and building bridges with other actors.

3.5.2. Challenges to organizing

Participants recognized organizing in trade unions as the key to pressuring for formalization and securing workers' rights. They agreed that the key question was whether trade unions in Arab States were willing and able to integrate informal workers into their existing structures. Elaborating an answer to the question required a better understanding of the evolution of trade unions in the region and the challenges they continue to face. Trade unions in Arab States were originally established mainly within the public sector. With the changing role of the State in the past two decades, particularly under structural adjustment programmes induced by international financial institutions with privatization and smaller public expenditures as their main tenants, trade unions have faced an economic context they had never experienced before. On the other hand, trade liberalization has meant increase in cheaper imports displacing local producers, enterprises and workers and exports not quite managing to cancel out the negative effects in most of the countries of the region.

Box 12

Improving informal employment statistics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics has to date undertaken measurements of the informal sector through three surveys:

- Existing Building Survey, which aims to measure the productivity of informal sector employees engaged in construction activities via addressing building owners directly;
- Transport Survey, where the informal sector involves land transport of both persons and goods carried out by vehicles not belonging to permanent economic establishments;
- Informal Sector Survey of 2003, which covers households and establishments.

Ongoing work involves the measurement of informal employment and the informal sector through a 1-2 survey approach, which involves data collected through two phases:

First phase—labour force survey (LFS) as based on household survey

- Add questions to LFS to collect data on informal employment;
- Add questions to LFS to identify informal sector enterprises or household unincorporated enterprises with at least some market production (HUEMs);
- Collect data on employment, including informal employment;
- Collect data on characteristics to be able to identify HUEMs.

Second phase

- Use first phase data to construct sampling frame of HUEMs;
- Conduct HUEM survey to collect data on HUEMs (sample of HUEMs or all HUEMs).

Source: Suha Kanaan's presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

A recognition of the changing nature of work, and the smaller share of workers engaged according to the traditional employment relationship, with increasing numbers of own-account workers, but also outsourcing and trafficking in persons, poses additional challenges to workers. For example, people who own even a small capital can become self-employed, and become vulnerable to new types of risks they are not prepared to cope with. In addition, State repression of independent union activity has formed a major obstacle to meaningful independent organizing of workers. In Arab countries where trade unions exist, their accounts are often monitored by the state; the decision on strikes is often not in the hands of trade unions but the Ministers of Labour. Legal impediments include the large size requirements for trade union registration of workers in enterprises, collective bargaining, and union recognition, as well as exclusion of workers from labour and social security legislation.

Economic impediments include the lack of job opportunities in general, with informal employment absorbing the unemployed, leading to growth of jobs featuring precariousness and lack of social protection. Participants also emphasized the responsibility of both States and employers in the growth of informal employment, and a trend of employers participating with the State in shaping economic development, but without mechanisms for the communities to participate. They also highlighted that sometimes specific groups of people control segments of the informal

economy, and they may have their own associations. Other external factors have included wars and instability in product, labour markets and financial markets, and fluctuating incomes.

Yet the participants noted that challenges to effective organizing are also internal to the trade unions themselves. Trade unions had failed to change their leadership regularly by practicing internal democracy and holding the leadership accountable to its constituents, a situation mimicking the lack of democracy at the State level. The lack of democracy came in parallel with shrinking membership, as trade union leaders found it necessary to preserve their powers and closing the door to new membership from women, youth, migrant and informal economy workers. As a result non-unionized workers' incentives to join unions decreased. Participants also noted the self-perceived political marginalization of trade unions resulting from their decreasing power to effect change; recognition of their reduced bargaining power, however, has led many trade unions to shift their focus from effective promotion of workers' rights to general rhetorical support and personal fights over union leadership.

Another factor related to both union structure and official legislation is the lack of union pluralism, as legislation designates by name the officially recognized representative organizations. Dealing with the reasons of the emergence of informality, the question becomes one of regulation, including integration of non-unionized workers, and recognition of the experience of the self-employed and other informal workers for calculating social security benefits.

In light of the general context of low levels of trust in both trade unions and States, some participants went as far as to suggest State control over trade union structures, despite the State's lack of democratic considerations. Illustrations included trade unions' general lack of recognition of informal workers, including migrant workers, as testified by lack of action to represent them, and the fact that with respect to international labour standards, trade unions in general do not start applying them before official government approval of them.

Participants voiced the view that governments needed to understand that free trade unions can enable them to govern better, and warned that the downward trend in working conditions could lead to instability if workers refused to continue working under poor circumstances. Some cautioned that if workers' reaction is not institutionalized through social dialogue platforms, it could "lead to chaos".

3.5.3. Promising experiences

Participants shared the view that the factors underlying informalization are disputed among different frameworks and approaches, each from its own perspective and with certain interests in mind, which affects the way responses to informality are developed. In addition, there are two separate approaches to what the desirable goals are: one emphasizes competitiveness and economic efficiency, and the other emphasizes decent work for all. How can the two approaches be reconciled? As long as there is no agreement on the desirable goals, there can be no consensus on the factors underlying informality and the actions needed to reverse informalization.

Others objected to presenting the issue in terms of such a duality. They noted the need for comprehensive active employment policies through social dialogue platforms where the workers' rights and economic growth and development aspects are balanced. ILO's Employment Policy Convention (No. 122) specifies that "[w]ith a view to stimulating economic growth and development, raising levels of living, meeting [hu]manpower requirements and overcoming unemployment and under-employment, each Member shall declare and pursue, as a major goal, an

active policy designed to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment”. Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen are among the States that have ratified this convention.

Participants exchanged experiences in organizing informal workers. In particular, the Tunisian experience was highlighted and discussed, given the success it has achieved in organizing different segments of the workforce. Other examples included organizing the unemployed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the progress related to women’s national machineries in Yemen, as women now constitute 20 per cent of trade union trainers in Yemen through an ILO supported tripartite workers’ rights training program. In addition to sharing national experiences, participants discussed ways to

Box 13

Fragmentation of the trade union movement in Arab States

There is no single trade union movement for Arab States. Trade unions are prohibited in Gulf States except for Bahrain and Kuwait. Where they are allowed, the trade union movement is struggling. Circumstances impeding the development of a genuine trade union movement include subversion to ruling regimes, with unions acting as a one-way transmission mechanism from top to bottom, and constitutions or bylaws hindering trade unions’ role, like a minimum membership requirement of 50 or even 100. Since informal sector enterprises typically have less than five workers, the membership requirement poses a serious challenge to organizing workers in informal sector enterprises.

In general, trade unions in the region may feature one or more of the following: lack of freedom of association; trade union monopoly given by labour legislation to a specific trade union federation, with the prohibition of other organizations; lack of internal democracy, with leaders appointed and not elected, which is a major reason for the discouragement of the new generation of workers, who has different conditions and backgrounds, from joining the unions; outdated discourse; territorial mind sets; political party capture of union leadership; lack of change in leadership, which is restricted to older men, as youth and women are rarely found in trade union leadership positions, despite the growth in women’s labour force participation and pressing youth employment issues.

Source: Abdesattar Mansour’s presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

learn from international experiences in organizing informal workers, such as the Self-Employed Women’s Association, the StreetNet International Alliance of Street Vendors, and HomeNet, a global network of home-based women workers with regional and national advocacy.

3.5.4. Trade unions and the ILO

Some participants noted that the ILO was not responsive enough to workers’ concerns, and suggested that the concept of the ‘informal economy’ was not useful to advancing workers’ interests. In response, it was pointed out that workers’ organizations are constituents of the ILO and represented at its Governing Body. The discussion then shifted to the nature of the contribution of workers’ organizations to ILO activities. Some remarked that workers’ representatives to ILO conferences have often lacked the capacity to contribute effectively to the conferences, a situation that has further undermined the situation of workers. Better selection and preparation of representatives were therefore judged necessary.

The link between the weakening of trade unions and the weakening of the ILO's normative power was also emphasized. It was asked whether trade unions really are willing to endorse issues of workers in the informal economy, and if so, whether they have the capacity to do so. There is ongoing work by the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) to compile cases of workers organizing in the informal economy. There is also a toolkit on organizing workers in the informal economy, and ongoing training on the issue at the ILO International Training Centre in Turin. It was also suggested that Decent Work Country Programmes were an appropriate entry point for bringing the issue of organizing informal workers to the forefront of ILO's work with the constituents in the region.

Box 14

Organizing informal workers in Tunisia

Informal employment induces a division among workers on the level of social solidarity, between workers who have social security coverage and legal protection; and those who lack good working conditions and protection against contingencies.

Such a division does not enable unions to renew themselves. The phenomenon has to be linked to inequality in access to the labour market, dismantling of traditional relationships as a result of globalization, and the failure or changing role of the state and its retreat from employment and production in favour of the private sector, which did not show its ability to do so, since the public sector was dismantled without enabling the private sector.

Recognizing that States should not use competitive advantages by pressuring wages down, trade unions need to work on compensating for the lack of national and regional strategy in economic adaptation, training, development of human resources.

Tunisia provides rich examples of successful organizing of informal workers, such as guards, women cleaning workers, transport workers, and workers in cafés and small restaurants. Efforts are ongoing to organize call centre workers and raise awareness on women cleaning workers, as well as other steps targeting driving teachers and other workers. It is hard to organize hundreds of workers, such as street vendors. Trade unions, however, do not hold a monopoly over organizing; associations and civil society also have an essential role to play.

Source: Mongi Amami's presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

3.6. Economic policy

3.6.1. Enterprise formalization and workers' social protection

Participants discussed the question of prioritization of formalizing the informal sector or providing protection in the informal sector. They noted that the job-based definition of informality allows for the protection of workers in the informal sector, even before enterprises themselves are formalized. They also underlined that the availability of decent jobs typically contributes to employment generation and economic growth.

The changing nature of the global economy has significantly transformed the nature of work and the nature of enterprises. Participants noted how globalization is leading both to global markets and to local markets where the poor sell to the poor, as enterprises cut costs and subcontract to the informal economy. Effective social and economic policies therefore need to be grounded in value-

chain analysis. Production in the informal economy allows for lower prices of products which are more affordable for low income households. However, some argue that these lower priced products then compete and displace products of the formal economy. Accordingly, global economic competition foments a ‘race to the bottom’ in working conditions, with poor workers competing with each other, in what employers often refer to as unfair competition. It was noted how branding products can improve the quality of working conditions, not for the sake of workers, but out of concern of products possibly getting spoiled.

Box 15

Women’s economic empowerment in Yemen

Women in Yemen have traditionally had limited physical mobility, as they were restricted to staying at home and prohibited from moving freely outside the home and community. The situation is gradually changing, as more and more women find employment in the public, private, and non-profit sectors despite prevailing negative perceptions on working women.

There is also some diversification in occupations where women are found. They are not strictly confined to the traditional roles of contributing family workers in agriculture or teachers and healthcare workers in public sector. Employment has allowed women to purchase their own private property, contributes to their freedom of decision and autonomy, and boosts their self-confidence.

Challenges to women’s employment include limited access to finance, which typically requires ownership to provide as collateral and low levels of educational attainment and skills preparation for the labour market. Employers’ biases against hiring women, main reason being given as maternity benefits, continue to pose a challenge to their employment especially in the private sector.

Source: Azal Al-Rabahi’s presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

3.6.2. From survivalist activities to entrepreneurship

A key challenge for policymakers is finding ways in which the informally self-employed can move from survivalist economic activities to more entrepreneurial activities with higher returns and value added. It was suggested that Arab States should document successes in enterprise formalization into one comprehensive framework with the appropriate pathways for the region. As enterprises grow, they can opt to abide by ISO standards and become more sustainable. When labour legislation specifies size thresholds for contribution to social security, collective bargaining, and other issues, enterprises have incentives not to hire additional worker or not to declare additional workers hired, which restricts enterprises’ potential for formalization and growth.

Some participants suggested that creating employment opportunities in the informal sector may come at the cost of social protection for workers who need it most, when legal and institutional frameworks are inadequate. In implementation of legislation, authorities need to make sure that they remain flexible, because if they exert too much pressure on employers they will force them to close or downsize their enterprises, leading to workers losing their jobs.

3.6.3. Financing employment and social protection

People in informal self-employment face major obstacles in expanding their enterprises, foremost the access to finance. As they are typically poor, they lack the collateral requirements that banks expect when providing funding. Is microfinance a good way to alleviate poverty? The discussion suggested that microfinance has yielded limited results, and monies are often used for consumption rather than production purposes. While it can overcome obstacles to accessing finance, particularly for women, recipients often lack the skills and training necessary to improve, diversify, package and target their products to market demand. In addition to issues around market know-how, they face limitations in establishing market links including transport. Often they overproduce and fail to sell.

ILO has several tools that address such market challenges. GET Ahead for Women in Enterprise is one of these tools that mainly targets rural women producers. As applied in Arab States, it emphasizes rural women cooperatives and economic literacy aspects for the intermediaries that can provide direct support to the producers.

Participants also noted that there are many enterprise development tools and strategies from different United Nations and donor agencies. ILO's niche as it relates to enterprise development, therefore, has to be based on the principles of workers' rights, social dialogue and organizing. The Know Your Business initiative targeting young people to encourage and orient them towards entrepreneurship was also cited as an example of engaging effectively on youth entrepreneurship development as one of the response strategies for reducing youth unemployment, which is especially prevalent among young educated women.

Another key challenge for States is financing social protection. States can provide group-based social protection on a consumptive or on a productive basis. It was pointed out that States from other regions may have strong incentives to contribute to the financing, as witnessed by the substantial European Union financial support for social security institutions in Arab States. The participants noted that one underlying motive to such interventions is limiting labour migration from Arab States to Europe.

3.6.4. Policy recommendations for a range of actors

Participants acknowledged the importance of the informal economy in poverty reduction, and the need to support informal workers and focus on activities with large employment elasticity for women and men. The approach needed is based on the understanding of complexity of informality, the costs and benefits of different strategies, and the role civil society organizations play in increasing small enterprises from home.

The participants put the transition from informality to formality through social protection within the context of the responsibility of all for equity. They identified key actors as being governments, workers' and employers' organizations, civil society organizations, international institutions, and community based initiatives.

Primary responsibility for employment generation and extension of social protection lies with the governments. Participants deemed that for governments to be credible, they need to keep rhetoric and action in tune: promoting women's employment requires developing social care

Box 16

Evolving ILO policy thinking on informality

In the International Labour Conference of 2002, informality was understood as a governance issue, mainly related to enterprises not complying with regulatory requirements. In 2006, the Economic and Social Policy Committee (ESP) of the ILO Governing Body emphasized the importance of applying labour legislation in MSEs, and recommended working on finding a ‘win-win strategy’ combining enterprise growth and workers’ protection.

In November 2007, an economic social policy paper to the Governing Body of the ILO observed that productivity and workers’ protection remain critical for creating decent jobs and further recommended to focus on reducing the formal-informal gap. The role of ILO constituents remains critical in creating an enabling environment, in organizing the informal workers and owners, and in upgrading the value chain linkages of small enterprises.

Reducing the gap requires legal recognition, with empowerment as a first priority; tackling the disconnect between formal and informal enterprises; promoting business linkages between large firms and MSEs; target lead firms, working with vendors and franchisees along the supply chain; association building through advocacy, protection and up-scaling, and fostering the role of social partners.

The ILO is engaged in developing and testing global products related to informality, including a Labour Law Resource Tool for dialogue between the social partners, a Resource Guide on Upgrading MSEs currently being developed, social marketing and mass media strategies, and promotion of community-based enterprise development and local economic development.

Source: Gopal Joshi’s presentation at the regional meeting of experts.

infrastructure; and promoting youth employment requires generating jobs with basic security coverage. Governments need to review laws, regulations, and taxes in light of the difficulty to transit from informality to formality to identify ways to support informal workers, and allocate required costs to provide social protection in public budgets. To identify workers excluded from coverage, national statistical offices must integrate informality in their censuses and surveys. Governments need to take the lead in involving legislators in the process, and cooperation with organizations such as Transparency International can help monitor performance and progress.

In recent years, labour flexibilization has been encouraged in public sector reform and civil service reform. In light of such evolution, labour governance institutions need to use social dialogue platforms to engage in more strategic manner in these matters. In particular, labour inspectors need to be oriented to better respond to informality and informalization trends. Labour courts need to be strengthened and oriented to better deal with unlawful practices. More generally, time-limited contract use should be restricted to specific categories of workers and not extended indefinitely without benefits. Inclusion of all stakeholders in the process requires the establishment of forums of dialogue including workers’ and employers’ organizations as well as civil society organizations to find the best ways for moving forward.

Employers’ and workers’ organizations need to expand their membership to become more inclusive of workers in the informal economy, including migrant workers. They can provide skills

training for expanding enterprises while respecting workers' rights, and mobilize constituencies to pressure for public policies that are favourable to formalization. Foreign employers need to follow national labour law guidelines and be discouraged from engaging in informal employment relationships. Workers need to be made aware of their rights to protection and their courses of action, including in terms of accessing justice when their rights are trampled upon. The effectiveness of employers' and workers' organizations will depend to a large extent on their ability to transform themselves and adapt to the political and economic contexts they face, and become more democratic and inclusive. As acknowledged by trade union representatives, organizing informal workers will require collaboration with relevant civil society organizations.

Relevant civil society organizations include think tanks, women's organizations, and human rights organizations. They need to develop a knowledge base on good practices related to workers' rights and social protection in the region, including learning from organizations that already provide services for formalizing enterprises. Based on the knowledge gathered, alternative means of social protection can be elaborated. The promotion of a rights-based culture of social protection at the level of their constituencies, including local government, central government, and the private sector is necessary to mobilize resources. Possible steps include linking up social protection with globalization and trade agreements, producing policy briefs, and influencing officials through highly visible media campaigns.

The international community can play a catalyst role in building platform and trust between governments, employers' and workers' organizations, and civil society organizations. It should support governments to integrate more analysis on social protection in gender-responsive surveys. They should identify national partners, including women's organizations, to work closely with them on gender equality and workers' rights. Activities may include wide disseminating of relevant international conventions to various actors, including civil society organizations, financially and technically supporting governments to extend social protection, and funding and promoting studies on informality, highlighting the situation of specific groups.

Finally, the community level initiatives have to be a part of creating a conducive environment with citizenship rights, to organize the unorganized, and to support linking up with constituencies to make their voices heard, particularly voices of women who are often absent from leadership positions at local and national levels of governments, workers' and employers' organizations.

4. Conclusions and next steps

4.1. Improving statistics

The regional initiative on Gender Equality and Workers' Rights in the Informal Economies of Arab States has highlighted some areas for improving statistics. For instance, surveys are needed for better capturing migrant workers in general and migrant domestic workers in particular. The nature and extent of home-based work also need to be better captured through household surveys. The engagement of the regional initiative with resource people from the national statistical agencies has already started bearing its fruits in national practices. The Central Administration for Statistics in Lebanon has integrated new questions to capture informality in its surveys. Syria has already included additional questions on working conditions to their labour force surveys to identify the type of social protection deficits facing workers.

4.2. Further areas of research

While the regional initiative has contributed to knowledge on informality in the region, there are many links and explorations that need to be pursued in follow up including: links between formality, informality and illegality of work; informality in the form of atypical employment contracts; community-based social protection methods in use in Arab States and possible links with formal social security systems; informality, poverty, and inequality linkages; and gender, labour, and informality implications of economic, financial, and trade policies in the region, among others.

4.3. Engaging at the policy level

Employment policy reviews, assistance to formulation and implementation of employment strategies and policies, in-depth analysis of labour market policies, undertaking employment intensive investment programmes, and developing pro-active policies for promoting gender equality are areas of work that the ILO can engage with its constituents in Arab States in integrating the rights, needs, and concerns of workers in the informal economy. In addition to ILO's tripartite constituents, research institutions, donor agencies and civil society organizations need to be made aware of the workers' rights and gender equality perspective that needs to be included in framing policy, legal, and programmatic interventions targeting informal workers.

4.4. Cooperation and coordination with other United Nations agencies

Building on the regional initiative, ILO RO-Beirut is establishing links with other global and regional initiatives, such as WIEGO statistics program, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) social exclusion research, and ESCWA activities on informal employment statistics. ILO RO-Beirut was also asked to participate in the ESCWA's Expert Group Meeting on Social Exclusion and its manifestations in the region, to share the findings from the Regional Initiative on Informal Economies of Arab States from a Gender Equality and Workers' Rights Perspective.

The meeting showed the importance of linkages between deficits in care provision, women's paid and unpaid care work, and informality of employment in the region. ILO RO-Beirut is also taking the lead in expanding on the parallel initiative to this work on social care deficits as an impediment to women's labour force participation in Arab States. Initial work has been completed in Lebanon, and further work will take place in other countries, starting with Jordan, will take place in partnership with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

4.5. Sharing knowledge

All the research produced in the research phase of the regional initiative will be widely disseminated electronically and in print, while the papers will be showcased in key regional and international conferences. The issue and policy briefs produced based on the research papers will be used for in-country policy advocacy through policy round tables with the participation of relevant national stakeholders. The regional report will be published in English and Arabic. Select international publishing houses will be approached for publishing the regional report for wider dissemination to international audiences.

Regional and national launches for research outputs will include contributions through the Arab Network for Gender and Development (NGED), as well as a global launch through the International Labour Conference 2009 and the Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work campaign. In addition, the dissemination phase will include contributions to regional and international websites

of development, research institutions, media, and academic journals, in English and Arabic. A curriculum will be developed on gender and employment in Arab States with a large section based on the publications from the regional initiative targeting women's studies, economics and sociology departments of universities in the region.

Oxfam United Kingdom offered cooperation with ILO RO-Beirut to carry the message from the regional initiative to civil society and the NGO communities in the region. An initial step includes sharing the gender equality and workers' rights perspective to informality with members of the Arab NGO network starting with Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan, West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Syria.

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Annex 1: Programme of the regional meeting of experts

Day 1: 15 July, 2008	
9:00 - 9:30	Welcome notes Ms. Nada Al-Nashif - ILO - Regional Office for Arab States Ms. Soukeina Bouraoui - Center of Arab Women for Training and Research Ms. Rawwida Baksh - International Development Research Center
9:30 - 10:00	Introduction to the regional initiative on "Gender Equality and Workers' Rights in the Informal Economies of Arab States" Presenter: Ms. Simel Esim
10:00 - 10:45	Social protection and informality in Arab States Presenter: Ms. Blandine Destremau
10:45 - 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 - 11:45	Informal employment statistics in Arab States Presenter: Mr. Jacques Charmes
11:45 - 13:00	Discussion
13:00 - 14:30	Lunch break
14:30 - 15:00	Concepts and terms on informality Presenter: Mr. Mansour Omeira
15:00 - 16:30	Arabic and English working groups on concepts and terms
16:30 - 17:00	Presentations from the working groups
18:00 - 22:00	Field visit and group dinner
Day 2: 16 July, 2008	
9:00 - 9:15	Summary of day 1
9:15 - 9:30	Feedback on summary of day 1
9:30 - 11:00	Highlights from country case studies: West Bank and Gaza Strip Presenters: Mr. Jamil Hilal; Ms. Suha Kanaan Discussants: Ms. Seiko Sugita; Mr. Basim Shannak Syria Presenters: Ms. Maha Katta; Mr. Sattouf Al Cheikh-Hussein Discussants: Ms. Blandine Destremau; Mr. Mansour Omeira
11:00 - 11:15	Coffee break
11:15 - 11:45	Other Countries: Jordan Presenters: Mr. Basim Shannak; Ms. Nadia Rawabdeh
11:45 - 12:30	Discussion
12:30 - 13:00	Care Needs and Provision in Lebanon: Links to Informality Presenter: Ms. Seiko Sugita
13:00 - 15:00	Lunch break
15:00 - 16:30	Working Groups on Social Protection and Statistics
16:30 - 17:00	Presentations from the Working Groups
18:00 - 22:00	Field Visit and Group Dinner
Day 3: 17 July, 2008	
9:00 - 9:15	Summary of day 2
9:15 - 9:30	Feedback on summary of day 2
9:30 - 10:15	Economic Policy/Employment Generation and Informality Presenter: Mr. Gopal Joshi
10:15 - 11:00	Organizing informal workers: Experiences from the Region -Yemen, Presenter: Ms. Azal Al-Rabahi -Tunisia, Presenter: Mr. Mongi Amami
11:00 - 11:15	Coffee break
11:15 - 11:30	Introduction to working groups on Economic Policy and Organizing
11:30 - 12:30	Working groups on Economic Policy and Organizing
12:30 - 13:00	Presentations from the working groups
13:00 - 13:30	Discussion
13:30 - 14:30	Lunch break
14:30 - 15:00	Conclusions and next steps

Annex 2: List of participants

Title	Surname	First name	Organization	Job title
LEBANON				
Mr.	Khatib	Nabil	Ministry of Labour	Consultant for the Ministry of Labour
Ms.	Sugita	Seiko	UNESCO	Programme Specialist
Mr.	Omeira	Mansour	ILO RO-Beirut	Research Consultant
YEMEN				
Mr.	Thabet	Fadel	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour	General Manager LMIS
Ms.	Al Matari	Suaad	Federation of Yemen Chambers of Commerce & Industry	Business Woman
Ms.	Al Rabahi	Azal	The General Federation of Yemen Workers' Trade Union	Assistant Secretary-General
SYRIA				
Mr.	Salakhoo	Adnan	Damascus Chamber of Industry	Deputy Director
Mr.	Al Darweesh	Taim	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour	Coordinator
Mr.	Abdesattar	Mansour	ICATU	Secretary of Worker Culture and Training
Mr.	Jiblawi	Bassam	General Federation of Trade Unions in Syria	Institution Manager
Ms.	Kattaa	Maha	Higher Institute of Business Administration	Head of Administration & Organization Department
Mr.	Al-Cheikh Hussein	Sattouf	UNDP	Consultant
WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP				
Ms.	Salah Assaf	Iman	Ministry of Labour	Manager of Labour Inspection Dept.
Ms.	Hussein	Dalia	Beit Lahm Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Coordinator
Ms.	Zidan	Naima	Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions	Committee Member
Ms.	Kanaan	Suha	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics	Program Manager
Mr.	Hilal	Jamil		Independent Researcher
JORDAN				
Mr.	Abu Nijmeh	Hamada	Ministry of Labour	Manager
Ms.	Taha	Samar	Jordan Chamber of Industry	Assistant Manager
Mr.	Al Harasees	Mohammad	General Federation of Jordanian Trade Union	Chief Electricity Committee
Mr.	Shannak	Basim	General Statistics Department	Chief Manpower Department
Ms.	Rawabdeh	Nadia	Social Security Corporation	Pension Department Manager
Ms.	Al Majali	Nancy	Social Security Corporation	Finance Department
Ms.	Abu Rajouh	Nancy	Social Security Corporation	North Amman Branch
Ms.	Dahboor	Nahida	Social Security Corporation	South Amman Branch
TUNISIA				
Mr.	Amami	Mongi	Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT)	Executive Director, Research and Documentation Department
Mr.	Kchaou	Mohammad	Arab Center for Labour Administration and Employment	Director
Mr.	Mizouri	Salem	Arab Center for Labour Administration and Employment	Vice-President
Ms.	Ben Abdallah	Bahija	ENDA INTER-ARABE	Research and Development
Ms.	Missaoui	Hanan	ENDA INTER-ARABE	Responsible for Products
Mr.	Boughanmi	Akri	University of Manouba - Tunis	Associate Professor of Economics
OTHER RESOURCE PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS				
Mr.	Charmes	Jacques	IRD/Department DSS France	Director
Ms.	Destrameau	Blandine	Sorbonne University of Paris	Socio- Economist
Ms.	Baksh	Rawwida	IDRC	Programme Leader, Women's Rights and Citizenship
Ms.	Al-Nashif	Nada	ILO RO Beirut	Regional Director
Ms.	Esim	Simel	ILO RO-Beirut	Regional Gender Specialist
Ms.	Pozzan	Emanuela	ILO RO-Beirut	Gender Expert
Mr.	Gopal	Joshi	ILO Geneva	Employment Specialist
Ms.	Sanousi	Magda	OXFAM UK	Regional Director
Ms.	Jamal	Alia	ILO SRO-Cairo	Standard Specialist
Mr.	Nazmi	Ahmed	Ministry of Labour Egypt	Researcher
Ms.	Bouraoui	Soukaina	CAWTAR	Director
Ms.	Mellouli	Khadouja	CAWTAR	Project Coordinator
Mr.	Hatira	Yousef	CAWTAR	Project Assistant