



## CONCLUSION

The legal, political and socio-economic status of women in the Arab Region is characterized by

the following:

- Difficulties/reluctance to implement existing laws and provisions protecting women; particularly in countries that clearly promotes gender equality in their constitution or forbid discrimination and/or violence (e.g. FGM in Egypt, Djibouti, Sudan...),
- Contradiction between internal laws and International Conventions and agreements (CRC, CEDAW, ILO...) and International Plans of action (Vienna, Cairo, Beijing, Millennium Assembly) that have been ratified or endorsed by the Arab countries,
- Contradictions within individual legal systems: in particular between family laws on the one hand, and the constitution and others laws on the other. As a matter of fact, there is no authority guaranteeing the enforcement of constitutional equality for women. With the exception of Tunisia, recently joined Morocco (2004), the family laws of all Arab countries contradict with the constitution.
- Setbacks were suffered while attempting to reform discriminatory laws. Conservative views and positions in many countries of the region reacted to reform attempts through rejecting amendments or through amending, revising, or creating laws to counter reform attempts. The rejection of women's political participation of women in Kuwait and

decreasing the minimum marriage age<sup>69</sup> in Yemen are some of the unfortunate examples of setbacks,

- In some countries, economic difficulties have been “exploited” by some political ideologies to restrict women to reproductive roles through blaming them for high levels of male unemployment. A range of methods ranging from wide spread advocacy to terrorism against women rights supporters and gender based violence have been documented,
- NWMs (NWCs and GFPs<sup>70</sup>) lack the proper authority, and even Ministries in charge of Women and Family Affairs needs to be empowered concerning their tasks and prerogatives in terms of gender audit, budgeting, planning and gender mainstreaming,
- Politically, direct or indirect impact of international fundamentalism and its extreme movements on Democracy and woman status, participation and life<sup>71</sup>,
- Feminised poverty is prevalent in Arab countries; poor women have less access to education, health services, and economic resource than their male peers.

All Arab countries have endorsed the Millennium Declaration and committed themselves to achieve the MDGs. Nevertheless; Goal 3 of the MDG calls for promoting gender equality and empowering women, it limited targets for eliminating gender disparity to primary and secondary education. MDGs should not be used as an excuse to disregard the strategic and urgent need to economically empower Arab women. It is worth nothing that the average share of women employed in the non-agricultural sector remains modest, not exceeding

<sup>69</sup> 11 years old for girls

<sup>70</sup> National Women Machineries; National commissions on women; Gender Focal Points

<sup>71</sup> Terrorized, victimized including rape, bodily assaulted and killed-because she is female

20 per cent in most cases.

Two of the main findings of the ILO “Time for Equality at Work” report, are applicable to the region:

- a) Discrimination often traps people in low-paid, “informal” economy jobs. These people are often stuck in the worst jobs, and denied benefits, social protection, training, capital, land or credit. Women are more likely than men to be engaged in these more invisible and undercounted activities, such as paid domestic work, unpaid family work and domestic work;
- b) The failure to eradicate discrimination helps perpetuate poverty. Discrimination is harshest among the most impoverished, and poverty is more severe among women and other discriminated groups. Discrimination creates a web of poverty, forced and child labour and social exclusion. “Eliminating discrimination is indispensable to any viable strategy for poverty reduction and sustainable economic development”, according to the report.

The Arab region has been implementing Policies and programmes focusing on good governance, gender mainstreaming, improving social security systems, decentralization, and creating partnerships between civil society and the private-sector institutions. Recognizing practical and strategic interests and needs, many initiatives to empower women and increase their access to and control over resources have been implemented.

Nevertheless, occupation, internal conflict, and terrorism have posed serious challenges to development and gender equity in a number of countries such as OPT, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and Algeria. These countries have encountered aggression, political instability,

situations that disrupt basic services, displacement, and harsh economic conditions. These circumstances have negatively affected the quality of life of citizens of these countries, particularly women and children.

This report is a critical analysis of the status of women in Arab States, and the performance of NGOs and civil society in the period since the Beijing Conference. Positive international actions towards women, the role and contribution of NGOs to development, and support from governments and international organizations have been discussed.

This report recommends that strategic planning for the period 2005-2009 in the Arab region should serve to strengthen democratization, human security and a culture of peace in the region through the political, economic and social empowerment of women. In particular, Governments, Civil Society and International Organizations need to focus their interventions and resources on five key areas:

1. Women’s Participation in Governance and Leadership,
2. Women’s Access to ICTs for Development,
3. Women’s Human Rights including Reproductive Rights,
4. Women’s Participation and Contribution to Peace,
5. Women’s Economic Security.

It is important that governments and international governmental organizations recognize and support the role of civil society, and continue to establish partnerships with effective and transparent NGOs that have considerable outreach, and visible impact on the quality of life of local communities. In addition, governments need to grant civil society the necessary freedom to operate effectively and innovatively.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> The Political Declaration: the 23rd United Nations National Assembly for Women in the Year 2000, New York June 5-9, 2000.

In order for NGO's to enhance their role in society as developmental organizations, and as a conduit for economic, social and political participation, they need to accept change and live up to the challenges of the coming era. NGOs can assume their anticipated role through building their organizational structure and skills, professionalizing their institutional and individual capacities, mobilizing volunteers, youth, and high profile champions, and adopting strategic and sustainability planning and accountability concepts.





## ANNEXES

### ANNEX I: ACRONYMS

NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fun for Women
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Division for Western Asia
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
CAWTAR	Arab Women Center for Training and Research
CEDAW	Convention to eliminate all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
WNM/WNC	Women National Machineries
GFP	Gender Focal Points
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
CRC	Convention of Child Rights
CLI	Cisco Learning Institute
CR	Contraception Rate
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
GBV	Gender Based Violence
FGM/FGC	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
VAW	Violence Against Women
GEEEW	Gender Equality, Equity & Empowerment of Women
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
HIV/AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
PAPCHILD	Regional survey
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
IUD	Intra-uterine Device
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ILO	International Labour Organization
NWM	National Women Machineries
KCRO	Kurdish Civil Rights Organization
ADEW	Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women
CST	Country Technical Services Team for Arab State ( UNFPA)

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(الراصد: مجلة تصدر عن المشروع الإقليمي للوصول والمعلومات حول قضايا المرأة و المجتمع والتنمية)  
( في منطقتي المشرق والمغرب (2002/10) )

#### CIVIL SOCIETY & NGOS AND OTHERS

1. Mrs. Fawzia Al-Sindi (Writer & Researcher) Bahrain.
2. Bisan Center for Research and Development, Occupied Palestinian Territory.
3. The National Committee for the Follow Up of Women's Issues, Lebanon.
4. HIV-AIDs Association, Algeria.
5. Kurdistan Civil Right Organization (KCRO).
6. UNDP-Bahrain.
7. Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women (ADEW), Egypt.
8. The Mauritanian Association for Welfare and Protection of Child and Mother, Mauritania
9. The Civil Committee for the follow up on Women's issues, Lebanon
10. The Bisan Center, Palestine
11. Alliance for Syrian Women, Syria
12. Alliance for Arab Women, Egypt
13. Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling, Jerusalem
14. Al-Nahda Bahraini Society for Women, Bahrain
15. Arab Network For Gender And Development (ANGAD)



**BEIJING +10: THE NGOs CONTRIBUTION.****The questionnaire**

With Beijing +10 around the corner, organizations all over the world are focusing their attention on the progress made with respect to the important documents stemming from the original conference; the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action.

As part of this effort, UNIFEM in the Arab States in collaboration with UNFPA-CST are assessing the role of NGOs in the Arab world. The assessment focuses on four areas of concern derived from the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action:

- Women political participation,
- Health and reproductive Health,
- Economic Security, and the
- Status of Women.

Your organization has been chosen to provide expert opinion on the contribution of NGOs in your country/region vis-à-vis the above topics.

The assessment process has created a good opportunity for our organizations to better understand the status and needs of NGOs, and we assure you that the information you submit is critical to the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the report. Due to constraints of time, we would be grateful if you could fill out this questionnaire by Monday, December 20, 2004, and email it to:

mailto:beijing10@unifem.org.jo  
 benhadid@cstamman.org.jo  
 cawtar@planet.tn

1. Name of Organization:

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2. Brief Description of mission and objectives:

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3. Kindly comment on the status (legislation, obligations and rights....) of civil society in your country/ region.

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4. In this section, kindly summarize success stories for the areas of concern. We would be grateful if you could elaborate on successful partnerships within the civil society or across the different governmental and private sectors in your country/region:

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a. Topic: Women's political participation

Sub topics: Executive and legislative participation including campaign, capacity building on leadership..., participation in partisanship, political reform,

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Kindly Describe the objective of work (with respect to constraints, challenges, and opportunities) :

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Kindly describe the results: (legislation amendment, ratifications, increased participation....etc.)

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b. Topic: Status of women

Sub topics: Role/Impact of NGOs on sensitization, advocacy and/or change in relation to Gender and Legal issues & concerns, gender-based violence...

Kindly describe the objective of work (with respect to constraints, challenges, opportunities):

---

Kindly describe the results: (legislation amendment, ratifications, increased participation....

No of Women in the Parliament:	
No of Women in the government and ministry:	
No of women in high level decision making position:	
Others	

c. Topic: Women's Health and Reproductive Health<sup>73</sup>  
 Sub topics: Services, Contribution to Policies, Advocacy for, Health and Reproductive rights, women's access to and control over health resources (economic, services, information, decision making...)

Kindly describe the objective of successful initiative(s) (with respect to constraints, challenges, and opportunities):

Kindly describe action taken, and in cooperation with who:

Kindly describe the results: (e.g. Increased awareness, improved health services, lower disease victims, protection of women and girls child against violence, shelters, legal assistance, counseling.....etc.)

d. Topic: Economic Security  
 Sub topics: Effect of globalization and economic reform policies on women, feminized poverty, micro finance, access to and control over economic resources.

Kindly Describe the objective of work (with respect to constraints, challenges, and opportunities) :

Kindly describe the results: (gender sensitization of economic policy or data, increased women access to and control over resources, more women employed...etc.)

5. Do you know of any studies conducted on civil society in your country/region? If yes kindly write the name of the studies and how we can obtain a copy.

Study 1:  
 Method of acquisition: \_\_\_\_\_

Study 2:  
 Method of acquisition: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Kindly use the space below to incorporate any information not covered above that you believe contributes to the scope of the assessment of the role of NGOs in your country/region.

7. According to your experience, quote, in order of importance, three priorities to work on for the next five years in your country

Thank you

<sup>73</sup>For Instance: Maternal Health, Family Planning, HIV-AIDS, Adolescent and youth Reproductive Health ...

**Some of the priorities identified by the NGOs (as above summarized)**

1. Change of all discriminatory laws against women specifically personal status laws
2. Women's health and safety
3. Education, training and job creation for women and girls
4. Good Governance related areas
5. Sustainable development
6. Youth & Employment
7. Participation of women in community development and political issues
8. Health promotion particularly reproductive and psychological due to increase number of suicide by burning themselves
9. Violence against women
10. Women Civil Law.
11. Separating Religion from the Country.
12. Awarding women more positions in the Economy.
13. Separating the Legislative, Judicial and Executive Power.
14. Initiatives to promote women's economic independence and ensure their active participation in the economy.
15. Increase in the political representation of women, and the presence of women in decision making positions.
16. Amendment of Personal Status laws and Citizenship laws to better ensure women's rights based on legal equality.
17. Work towards changing or altering laws discriminating against women
18. Increasing participation of women in political life and decision making
19. Decreasing gender gap at all levels