

Tax Justice in the Arab Region

Experts meeting

August 24th and 25th-

Hotel- Amman, Jordan

Concept Paper and Agenda

The tax systems in the Arab Region suffer from clear structural and fiscal deficiencies that stand in the way of achieving the various economic and social objectives of taxation, such as the redistribution of resources, providing public services and social protection, and achieving equality among the different groups of society. Arab tax systems are characterized by a low level of progressivity and lack of support of equal opportunity between companies. Arab tax systems are also very complicated, which makes tax administration more difficult. The multiplicity of tax exemptions and tax rates often leads to limit the justice in the management of these systems. The concentration of taxes on personal income and trade also leads to a reduction in their ability to redistribute the income, while wealth taxes- such as property taxes- play only a limited role in mobilizing the financial resources of these countries. Moreover, tax burdens are not proportionately distributed on all economic activities and all segments of society, including men and women, and that is due to the absence of necessary methods during the process of policy-making, such as gender responsive budgeting. This compounds the imbalance in gender justice. Tax revenues in Arab countries averaged about 13% of the GDP in 2013-2016; the highest percentage was in Palestine with 23%, and the lowest in Egypt (11%). In Jordan and Lebanon, the percentage was about 15%, which is below the average of 17% in emerging markets and other developing countries. This indicates a fundamental imbalance in efficiency and that the tax burden is less than the potential tax of the economies of these countries. In addition, tax systems in the Arab countries suffer from the dominance of indirect taxes on revenues, unorganized taxes on purchases and excise taxes and their provision for limited revenues, the variance in the structure of customs tariff with regard to taxes on international trade, the non-comprehensiveness of the tax base, the problem of tax evasion and tax avoidance and its different forms, multiple taxation- especially corporate income taxes- and the breadth of tax expenses, etc.

This is demonstrated by recent studies conducted by ANND on the topic of tax justice in the Arab region, with figures, in-depth analyzes, and field research. It led ANND to launch the program under which these studies were conducted in collaboration with Christian Aid and with the support of Ford Foundation. As part of this program, ANND, in collaboration with the first partner organization, will hold an expert group meeting and project workers in various countries (Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco) in Amman, Jordan on the 24th and 25th of August 2017, in order to conduct a

critical review of the first draft of the regional report and the accompanying national reports, in addition to a critical review of the first draft of the tax justice manual, which we look forward to use in our next in our upcoming training and empowerment activities. The meeting will also help to discuss political papers from the aforementioned countries. The papers highlight the latest updates and the most important issues related to these countries' tax systems and written as preparation for the launching of advocacy campaigns. The meeting will also discuss tax campaigns, training workshops, the formation of local networks that work to achieve tax justice, and in particular the way and how to implement the regional alliance for tax justice, which was launched during a regional workshop held in Amman, Jordan last March. Accordingly, the preliminary agenda for this meeting is as follows:

Agenda

First day: Thursday, August 24, 2017	9:00- 9:30	Registration
	9:30- 9:45	Introductory Notes: Arab NGO Network for Development
	9:45- 11:00	Discussion of the political papers Egypt: Omar Ghannam (15 minutes) Jordan: Ahmad Awad (15 minutes) Palestine: Iyad Al- Riyahi (15 minutes) Morocco (Gendered Tax): Khadija al-Rabah (15 minutes) Open Discussion (45 minutes) (Moderator: <u>Salma Hussein</u>)
	11:00- 11:30	Coffee break
	11:30- 13:00	A critical review of the regional report on tax justice (Author: Dr. Naser Abdelkarim) - Presentation of the report: Dr. Naser Abdelkarim (15 min) - Discussion of the report: Farah al-Shami and Nabil Abdo (30 min) Open discussion (30 min)

	(Moderator: Dr. Ibtesam Al-Atiyat)
13:00- 14:00	Lunch break
14:00- 15:30	<p>A critical review of the tax justice manual (Author: Mr. Khaled Ali)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of the manual: Khaled Ali (15 min) - Discussion of the manual: Salwa Trabelsi and Dr. Ayman Abdel Majid (30 min) <p>Open discussion (45 min)</p> <p>(Moderator: Ahmad Awad)</p>
Second day: Friday, August 25, 2017	
9:30- 10:30	<p>Local and regional advocacy and support campaigns (strategy, methods, and objectives...)</p> <p>Speaker: Iyad Al-Riyahi (20 min)</p> <p>Open discussion (40 minutes)</p> <p>(Moderator: Dr. Naser Abdelkarim))</p>
10:30- 11:00	Coffee break
11:00- 12:00	<p>National training workshops and how to use the manual:</p> <p>Speaker: Nabil Abdo (20 min)</p> <p>Open discussion (40 min)</p> <p>(Moderator: Khaled Ali)</p>
12:00- 13:00	Lunch break
13:00- 14:00	<p>Regional Alliance for Tax Justice-operational (National networks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lebanon: Farah Alshami (5 min) - Morocco: Abdel Nabi Talousht (5 min) - Egypt: Omar Ghannam (5 min) - Jordan: Ahmad Awad (5 min) - Palestine: Iyad Al-Riyahi (5 min) - Tunisia: Chafik Ben Rouine (5 min) <p>Open discussion (30 min)</p> <p>(Moderator: Dr. Randa al-Khalidi)</p>
14:00- 14:30	Coffee break

14:30- 15:45

**Regional Alliance for tax justice-
Operationally and regionally**

- Presentation and Moderation: Ziad Abdel Samad (5 min)
- ATUC (TBA) (10 min)
- Palestine: Iyad Riyahi (5 min)
- Jordan: Ahmad Awad (5 min)
- Egypt: Khaled Ali (5 min)
- Open discussion (45 min)
- Closing Remarks: Ziad Abdel Samad