



International Network for Economic, Social & Cultural Rights
Red Internacional para los Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales
Réseau international pour les droits économiques, sociaux et culturels
الشبكة العالمية للحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والثقافية



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Arab NGO Network for Development
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

WORKSHOP: ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Beirut, Lebanon, 29 August-1 September 2016

Background:

The topics of gender equality and women's empowerment received significant attention during the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹ Statements were delivered at the level of Heads of States and Government during the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action, that UN Women highlights as a "historic gathering enhancing political commitment for women's empowerment". From the Arab region, representatives from Algeria, Tunisia and Jordan were among those who took the floor, noting their achievements and undertaking further commitments towards meeting gender equality and women's empowerment. For instance, Algeria put emphasis on the Working Woman's Charter which aims to reconcile family and professional obligations and the participation of women in company management bodies as well as their representation in trade unions; Tunisia stressed the enhancement of women's participation in political work; and Jordan mentioned its commitment to empower the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) as a national mechanism capable of carrying out its mandate as well as supporting and facilitating the work of civil society organizations.

Nevertheless, despite these voluntary commitments and the long-term participation by countries in the region in the international regulatory framework concerning women's economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights, women in this region continue to be subject to serious human rights violations at all levels, often in disproportionate and differing ways. For instance, according to 2015 figures, in terms of the right to work, the overall women's participation rate in the labour force stands at only 27 percent (versus 77 percent for men) and violations in terms of wage gaps are rampant: for example, in Jordan the total gender wage gap, according to the ILO², stands at 17.0; in Egypt, among professionals, the rate is 27.1 percent. In addition, for instance in Egypt, women at work face other forms of violations: public and private workplaces violate the law and do not ensure nurseries. Moreover, women face violations in terms of maternity leave benefits; they do not receive maternity leave or maternity leave benefits actually turn into a threat to women's work since it is the employer and not the Social Security who should pay the full wages of the leave (i.e. Lebanon). Informality is on the rise: and many women resort to the informal sector, working in hazardous conditions and lacking rights or social protection. Regarding the right to health, although certain health indicators show progress (i.e. the maternal mortality rate), violations in terms of gender-based violence, including the practice of FGM, and sexual and reproductive health violations continue.³ With regard to land, housing and property rights, in addition to customary laws and practices as well as the influence of patriarchal power relations that prevent women's full enjoyment of HLP rights, additional factors such as displacement, lack of security of tenure, and

¹ See, for example: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/9/press-release-global-leaders-meeting>

² http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_446101.pdf

³ <http://css.escwa.org.lb/SDPD/3572/Goals3-5.pdf>

destruction of property and infrastructure must also be taken into consideration as factors that result in rights violations.

Many ESCR-Net members in the region, including ANND and its regional network, have also increasingly emphasized the impact of economic policy and its implications for women’s rights related to work, land and health, among other issues. Globally, many – notably social movements – are questioning the impact of dominant economic and development models on people’s lives, the impact of private actors, and the extensive influence over government processes by corporations.

UN treaty bodies – foremost the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) – have given increasing attention to women’s substantive equality and continued implementation of ESC rights, while reinforcing that human rights must guide the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs and other processes. At the same time, collective engagement by civil society advocates with treaty bodies has continued to develop this approach through dialogue, briefing papers, and related advocacy.⁴ Similarly, advocates are developing progressive understandings of, and innovative approaches towards, issues of corporate accountability and economic policy within a human rights framework.⁵

In this context, this workshop brings together leading women’s rights advocates and civil society groups working on ESC rights, economic justice and/or development, with the aim of sharing experience and building capacity in relation to the practical use of the international women’s ESC rights framework in their ongoing advocacy strategies, shaped by an understanding of the connections with economic policy and development agendas.

Focus of the workshop:

During the 3.5-day workshop, around 25 women’s rights advocates from the region will come together to discuss the advancement of women’s ESC rights, with particular discussion of:

- The current state of women’s enjoyment of their ESC rights in the region and relevant barriers to substantive equality, as well as key areas for improvement.
- The international women’s ESC rights framework (including mechanisms, standards and developments), and synergies with related human rights and development advocacy.
- Strategies to develop and enhance collective approaches to the advancement of women’s ESC rights in the region, with particular attention to the impact of economic policy and key themes of women’s rights related to work, and to housing, land and natural resources.

⁴ For example, see ESCR-Net’s recent briefing papers on the intersection of substantive equality and women’s ESC rights (focusing on health, land and work), and connections with the development agenda, at <https://www.escr-net.org/news/2016/women-and-escr-working-group-launches-briefing-papers-land-work-and-health>

⁵ For example, see ESCR-Net’s working paper on states’ extraterritorial obligations <https://www.escr-net.org/resources/human-rights-law-sources-un-pronouncements-extra-territorial-obligations> and collective member engagement to counter practices of corporate capture <https://www.escr-net.org/corporateaccountability/corporatecapture>



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Organizers:

The **Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)** is a regional network, working in 12 Arab countries with nine national networks (with an extended membership of 250 CSOs from different backgrounds) and 23 NGO members. ANND was established in 1997 and its headquarters is located in Beirut, Lebanon since 2000. ANND aims at strengthening the role of civil society, enhancing the values of democracy, respect of human rights and sustainable development in the region. ANND advocates for more sound and effective socio-economic reforms in the region, which integrate the concepts of sustainable development, gender justice, and the rights-based approach.

The **International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net)** unites over 270 NGOs, grassroots groups, and advocates across 70 countries, strengthening capacity, building solidarity, and undertaking collective advocacy to secure social and economic justice through human rights. ESCR-Net members define common strategies and advance joint action foremost through international working groups, including the Working Group on Women and ESCR which is composed of some 40 members – NGOs, social movements, and individual advocates – working across regions to advance women’s ESCR. This Working Group has advanced substantive equality at the intersection of women’s rights and economic, social and cultural rights. Through engagement with UN bodies, capacity building, and advocacy at multiple levels, the Working Group is collectively striving to ensure women’s experiences and analyses are at the center of domestic and international policy-making and legal developments.