

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Expert Group Meeting on
“Barriers Hindering Women Economic Participation in the ESCWA Region”
Beirut, 26-27 June 2012

INFORMATION NOTE**A. BACKGROUND**

The narrow level of economic participation of women in the ESCWA region currently reaches 20 per cent of the total labor force, according to the latest available statistics for 2011. This rate is the lowest if compared to the rest of the regions in the world. This narrow economic participation of women remains a major challenge and concern for decision makers responsible for the advancement of women, as well as for the development process itself, where the production capacities of women are minor or being undermined. Concerns were raised against the limitations of women employment and economic empowerment, as well as the existing frustration due to poor correlation and the reflection of the progress made in the health and education indicators on the extent and size of women’s participation in both economic and political spheres.

Difficulties and burdens of the economic situation in the region face both men and women. One of the most prominent and important challenges is the high level of unemployment, especially the youth, and the diminishing investment opportunities and the remaining of the negative repercussions of the global financial crisis on the economic performance from the local and regional levels. Women suffer more than men, the severity of unemployment, in addition to being directly affected by the contraction of the government sector, which she is present more than men, due to the challenges of globalization and privatization in the region as a whole.

Hence, this study seeks to consider and address a range of barriers, resulting basically from structural instability and poor balance between assumed gender roles of both men and women and the incompatibility of power relationships between them. The precedent will continuously and systematically, lead to decreasing determination and potential of women in all forms of economic participation and place her on unequal footing with men. The most important of these barriers lie in the curriculums and the educational systems, as well as in the existing discriminatory laws (labour laws and personal status laws) and incompatibility between plans and policies.

B. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The meeting aims to achieve the following:

- (a) Provide a sound and inter-disciplinary peer review of the draft study on “*Barriers hindering women economic participation in the ESCWA Region*”;
- (b) Serve as an interactive forum to exchange updated knowledge and best practices among the expert community in the area of advancing women’s economic participation.

C. PROVISIONAL AGENDA

The document E/ESCWA/ECW/2012/WG.1/L.1 presents the provisional agenda of the meeting.

D. MEETING DOCUMENTATION

A number of meeting documents will be available in the documents distribution desk. More documents will be posted on the meeting webpage on ESCWA Internet site: <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=1865E>.

Participants wishing to submit documents for distribution must hand them to the coordinator of the meeting, knowing that they may not distribute any documents other than United Nations documents within the meeting room.

E. PARTICIPANTS

Participants in this meeting are experts in economics, education and gender studies from several universities and institutes, international organizations, national councils as well as from a number of specialized agencies and UN organizations.

ESCWA will cover the expenses of travel and accommodation of experts in order to participate in the meeting.

F. TIME, PLACE AND REGISTRATION

The Expert Group Meeting will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut, on Tuesday 26 June and Wednesday 27 June, 2012. Registration starts at eight thirty on Tuesday, 26 June; and the opening will be at 9 am in Committee Room I, B1 level. Upon registration, participants will be provided with badges, which we request them to display throughout the meeting.

G. LANGUAGE OF THE MEETING

The official language of the meeting is English. Translation services for English and Arabic will be made available.

H. ENTRY VISAS FOR PARTICIPANTS FROM OUTSIDE LEBANON

The Secretariat is responsible for making travel reservations and issuing tickets for participants. Participants are requested to send a coloured copy of his/her passport along with contact details (telephone and fax numbers and e-mail) to the attention of Ms. Ghya Baccar on baccar@un.org no later than Thursday, May 31, 2012.

Very important notice: Please do not purchase your own tickets because the organization cannot reimburse self tickets

Participants can issue a visa to Lebanon from the Lebanese Embassy in their countries. In case they could not get a visa for any reason (in case there is no embassy in the country, for example), ESCWA may assist the participant to issue a visa, on the condition of providing a coloured copy of passport by May 31, 2012, latest.

I. ACCOMMODATION (FOR PARTICIPANTS FROM OUTSIDE LEBANON ONLY)

ESCWA proposes that the participants book their stay at a hotel in Beirut, where the Secretariat has taken the necessary arrangements to provide accommodation at discounted prices. You can find a comprehensive list of hotels in Beirut on the following link: <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetailsar.asp?referenceNum=8070A>.

(We recommend to you a two minutes walk hotel from the UN-House: MARKAZIA HOTEL)

Participants can contact the hotel directly for reservations as desired, and indicate that they participate in an expert meeting at ESCWA, to get the reduced price.

According to UN rules and regulations, ESCWA pledged a daily allowance of US\$268 per participant during the period of the meeting to cover accommodation and incidentals in addition to US\$152 to cover miscellaneous costs of transportation to and from the airport. Transportation arrangements to and from the airport is made by the participants themselves (We suggest you some carriers adopted: Trust Taxi 00961-1-613398, Allo Taxi 00961-1-366661).

Participants are responsible for settling their hotel bill, including accommodation and other expenses directly with the hotel before departure.

Daily subsistence allowance and terminal expenses will be paid to the experts in Beirut on the second day of the meeting. **Participants are urged to present at the registration desk, their passport and original Boarding Pass to Ms. Ghya Baccar**, in order to process their allowances which will be issued in Lebanese pounds.

J. CORRESPONDENCE

Please direct all correspondence related to this meeting to:

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|----------------------------|--|--|----------------|
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