



# Tackling Employment Issues, Financial Crisis Repercussions



Employment and its nemesis in the Arab world were the subjects of discussion Monday 20 April at ESCWA when Executive Secretary Bader Omar AlDafa, alongside different ESCWA officials, met with Arab Labour Organization (ALO) Director-General, Ahmad Muhammad Luqman who headed a delegation of ALO members to the headquarters of the Regional Commission. The meeting was meant for coordination and cooperation purposes, especially since a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) links both organizations since 1986 (renewed in 2008).

AlDafa praised ALO efforts in holding meetings that revitalize its main areas of interest, namely employment. For his part, Luqman noted the similarity between the areas of work

at ESCWA and ALO, touching upon potentially joint activities. In this context, conferees highlighted the issue of the economic crisis whose repercussions have extended to the social and economic strata, with obvious impact on employment and social peace and security, a matter that requires common Arab, regional and international efforts to contain these effects. Employment and poverty were also present for the first time this year as well in the Arab Summit at Kuwait held in January, which provided a legal support and expressed the clear will to work in this direction.

## Common Efforts

Luqman also underscored ESCWA participation in the meetings of ALO, which offers a framework for social dialogue. He spoke of the key role ESCWA

and ALO could play to restore balance between the private and public sectors, especially at the time being.

As there is much similarity between ESCWA and ALO areas of work, cooperation between both parties could extend to strengthening labour, economic and social statistics; forming a labour force network; writing studies on youth employment, where unemployment scores reached over 25 per cent, a percentage that could swell into 23 million people in 2011. This cooperation could also reach professional trainings; improving the capacities of workers from Arab countries; Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and empowering women in the work arena, as well as other areas.

ESCWA Secretariat made an electronic presentation during the meeting that focused on the Commission's economic and social work, with a detailed account of each division's work. The presentation also gave additional ideas for cooperation such as economic and social development under conflict, labour legislation and fighting discrimination in the work place. ■

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## National Reporting Beijing +15

ESCWA held a training workshop on "How to prepare national reports -Beijing +15", banking on the questionnaire directed at governments concerning the implementation of the Beijing + 15 Declaration and Platform for Action. In organizing the workshop, ESCWA cooperated with the League of Arab States (LAS) General Secretariat, UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Center for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR), and the Arab Women Organization. The meeting was held on 24-26 March 2009 in LAS headquarters, Cairo.

The meeting can be placed in the context of ongoing national, regional and in-



# National Reporting Beijing +15 (Cont.)

International preparations for the global review and appraisal of government efforts in implementing the resolutions of the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW), held 15 years ago. ESCWA and LAS are cooperating to draw up and issue the Arab regional report on Beijing +15.

The meeting drew a crowd of experts from national machineries and women ministries from seventeen Arab countries: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Oman, Qatar, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia, Algeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Djibouti, Morocco and Mauritania.

Following the opening ceremony, Officer in Charge of the ESCWA Center for Women (CFW) Miranda Hawa highlighted the main angles of discussions at the Fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW/ March 2009), giving an overview of the CSW resolutions, work programme and priorities for the coming 5 years. The workshop aimed at offering technical assistance to Arab



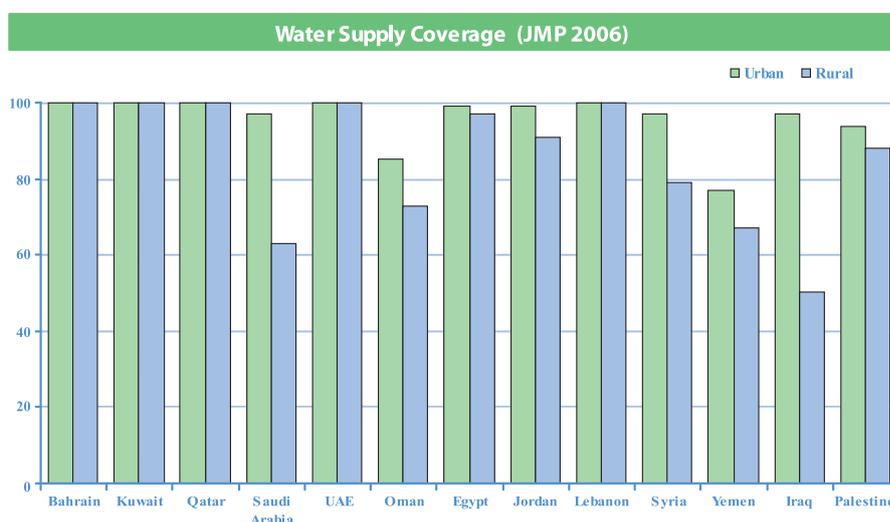
countries on filling the questionnaire; benefiting of lessons offered to identify major areas and developments on the national, regional and international levels and underscoring them in the reply to the questionnaire and national reports; and unifying results in preparations for the regional Arab report.

It is to be noted that the experts conducting the workshop came from different backgrounds related to women development and progress, the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). ■

## Facts and Figures: Water Supply

In adopting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the nations of the world pledged to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. But so far progress in meeting the MDG water and sanitation target has been fitful and slow. Radical changes and swift and resolute actions are much needed in ESCWA member countries in order to reach the set goals.

According to figures provided by the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) and information gathered from an ESCWA questionnaire, a variation exists in the percentage of water supply coverage among Arab countries. An average value of 93% is attained by the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), compared with 88% for Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, 67% for Yemen, and 82% for Iraq and Palestine. All ESCWA countries have high levels of urban access to



water supply. The regional urban population with access to drinking water is estimated at 90% compared to approximately 68% for the rural population. Rural areas lag far behind urban areas, where up to 40% of the population in some countries does not have access. ■

Source: Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation for All People, a summary of regional assessment report on the status and the achievements of ESCWA member countries towards improved water supply and sanitation, LAS, GTZ, UN-ESCWA.

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