

Round Table Discussion:

***How can indicators measure women's economic rights and participation?
Which ideologies underline classical indicators?
What is women's work?***

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Venue: YWCA of Lebanon, Ain Mraisseh - Rustom Pasha Str. Beirut - Lebanon

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General Introduction

Since 2003, **CRTD.A** has been working on promoting economic empowerment of women as part of its commitment to mainstreaming gender into the economy.

Despite a relative gain in social entitlements to health and education (notwithstanding regional and other disparities), the level of women's economic participation is poor. Positive changes in education and health have not been translated into economic participation or public and political leadership for women or for that matter at the level of gender based oppression and discrimination.

Moreover, **CRTD.A** observes that the main approach taken is a 'direct assistance' approach where the initiatives are devised on local, problem-by-problem, short-term basis, aiming to solve given problems as they come. However, there has been no holistic and right-based approach that has tried to look at the 'whole picture'. As such, mainstream economy models tend to occult women's invisible work at the individual, family and institutional level and at the macroeconomic level. There is an absence of a vision to transforming gender relations, addressing gender discrimination within the economy and upholding gender and social and economic rights.

Women's participation in the economy is unaccounted for in national statistics and lacks social value and recognition. Indeed, for example, mainstream macro-economical indicators such as women's activity rate that most policy-making and research entities work on leave behind the whole spectrum of women's economic activity in the informal sector and of women's unpaid work.

For example, in Lebanon, the official women activity rate was 23%¹ in 2009. This figure does not take into account all the unpaid domestic and care work Lebanese women do, nor does it take into account women occupying informal positions, be it in formal or informal structures. This contributes to depicting a flawed situation of women in the

¹ The Labor Market in Lebanon, Central Administration of Statistics, October 2011

economy as many studies report that women in the Middle East form the bulk of the informal workforce.

Since women working in the informal and care economy are not to be found in national statistics, they are rarely targeted by formal development projects, thus seldom benefiting from any public investment (in training, education or health), although NGOs are largely active with them, especially at the micro level. On the other hand, because of their “invisibility”, these women tend to largely be left behind by women’s advocacy NGOs, who generally tend to take up more visible causes. Moreover, laws need to be reviewed and reformed in order to guarantee and protect women’s economic rights from discrimination and to reinforce women’s economic rights and programmes.

Within this framework, CRTD.A is organising, for the occasion of International Women’s Day, a round table discussion which will look critically at mainstream models of indicators of women’s economic participation.

Round Table Objectives

This round table discussion seeks to consolidate discussion and dialogue on women’s work and their role in the economy for the purpose of contributing to a positive change in women’s lives and in bridging the gender gap in economic policies.

The round table discussion will group experts and activists in various fields notably women economic rights and participation.

Round Table Proceedings

Following a critical review of key mainstream gender indicators, participants will be invited to discuss the ideology that determines and shapes such indicators notably the ways in which “work” is defined and quantified. The discussion will also look at current public policies which use such definitions of “work” and their impact on women’s economic rights, participation and empowerment. Finally, the discussion will seek to identify entry points for interventions which would broaden this debate at a national level.

For this purpose, **CRTD.A** will be preparing a concept note which includes a critical review of the key issues at hand to aid in the debate.