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**WOMEN'S HOUSEHOLD WORK
IN MARGINALIZED LOCATIONS IN LEBANON**

An Exploratory Research
in Six Communities of the Bekaa Valley and South Lebanon



Collective for Research and Training on Development – Action CRTD-A - 2018

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PREFACE

I am delighted to present a very special publication by the Collective for Research and Training on Development – Action (CRTD.A). This publication, *“Women’s Household Work In Marginalized Locations in Lebanon”*, represents a firsthand experience of innovative qualitative research which we hope will inspire other regions in Lebanon or CRTD.A partners in countries of the region to engage in similar experiments.

This paper is to be viewed as an example of what can be done, from which to learn lessons in order to improve the methodology and fieldwork and reinitiate implementation of this kind of qualitative research on women’s invisible work, unpaid care and domestic work.

The principal investigator, Claude Boustany Hajjar, presents the methodology used in careful details. She explains the different steps followed, difficulties encountered and the way work progressed with the intensive collaboration of members of the CRTD.A team, with the help of local partner associations. As such, we hope that this would serve as a model for future participatory research using the same methodology so that more qualitative data that could be used for comparison purposes could be produced, thus allowing generalization or ground to advocate for policies.

In doing this research, CRTD.A sought essentially to hear women’s voices, capture their perceptions, and have an insight on their day to day life, even for the description and presentation of the chosen communities, setting the background. The world as seen by these women: their community, their environment, their household, their work, their family responsibilities, the components of their domestic and care work...is an essential component of this research as well as one of its key findings.

CRTD.A chose to publish this report several years after the completion of the field research simply because we consider this research as a contribution to the study in depth of the complex relation between women and work, with special focus on gender relations and care work, challenges facing women in their contribution to the economy whether at the household or the community level.

This work was undertaken as part of CRTD.A’s regional programme entitled *“Sustainable Economic Opportunities for Women”* (SEOW). This initiative combined action oriented research (of which this publication is part), building capacities, policy dialogue and advocacy on women’s economic empowerment and on the critical issue of women’s unpaid work.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Omar Traboulsi, who conceptualised the SEOW initiative and served as its manager and technical advisor thus bringing in his invaluable insights as well as new ideas and innovations. I also want to thank the research principal investigator, Claude Boustany Hajjar. Claude has contributed her solid research experience and has led SEOW's research work over almost a decade. Claude has developed this methodology and, in doing so, has played a critical role in amplifying rural women's voices.

Lina Abou Habib
President of the Board
CRTD.A
January 2018

BACKGROUND

In the year 2000, the Collective for Research and Training on Development–Action (CRTD.A) initiated a program entitled: Women Economic Empowerment Project (WEEP) in Lebanon. The overall purpose of the project was to provide support to women and development NGOs in enhancing their organizational development and achieving long-term financial sustainability. It aimed at initiating a sustainable change in gender relations, through empowering women, and building their capacities to form or maintain their own grassroots organizations.

In 2006 a larger program: Sustainable Economic Opportunities for Women (SEOW) was created and implemented in five countries of the Middle East and North Africa region, among which Lebanon. The main goals of SEOW program were to promote women’s economic participation, raise awareness about the structural and institutional barriers that women face, and contribute to the development of better policies concerning gender and work. One of its main objectives was to make visible women’s contribution to the economy, notably their involvement in social reproduction, through activities such as childcare and education. For this purpose, a regional team was contracted in order to launch a research on the subject of “women’s household work” in the five countries. For methodological reasons, it was decided that the first stage of the research was going to consist of a large scale desk research (in each of the countries¹) in order to first identify, analyze and familiarize with key concepts, ensuing practices and policies which strengthen or otherwise challenge women’s empowerment; and second to establish a contextual analysis in the countries: main trends about the situation and status of women in the household and in the markets, including current debates around women’s household work. This stage of the research was completed at the end of 2008; among the recommendations of the regional team was the necessity of conducting an exploratory qualitative research on women’s household work, allowing further understanding of the topic through women’s own experiences and voices.

This document is the report of the exploratory field research undertaken following the above mentioned recommendations. It is entitled: “Women’s household work in marginalized locations in Lebanon; an exploratory research in six communities of the Bekaa Valley and South Lebanon”. After an introductory chapter on the purpose of the research and presenting the problem statement, a second chapter will summarize the literature review. The third chapter will be

1 The author of this report was in charge of the desk research for Lebanon. The desk research report can be considered as having set the background and the literature review supporting the choice of methodology and the selection of research questions of the present research.

dedicated to methodological issues. After a presentation of the communities under study, the findings and analysis will be presented in four parts: household and communities livelihoods; women's work and women's contribution to household income; household work: domestic tasks and care; and opportunities for empowerment. The conclusion will present the final findings, trying to correlate the different themes treated in the report and make some recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

The present research aims to shed light on issues related to women's reproductive role and their participation in the economy through a study of women's work in the household, more precisely through an exploratory qualitative field research of women's household work in marginalized communities in rural areas in Lebanon.

Household work can be defined as activities that take place within the domestic sphere. It includes domestic work – household chores to ensure the maintenance or proper functioning of the household – and social reproduction. Social reproduction includes what is known as care economy, which involves providing care to dependents such as children, the sick, or the elderly. Globally, most of this work is unpaid and undertaken in the private space of the family. It is typically perceived as a woman's obligation (gender division of labour) and is not remunerated even though it is vital for the perpetuation of society.

Women's work in the household is considered "invisible work" because it is generally unaccounted for in national statistics and budgeting. It is unpaid work, however it requires from women a large amount of time and it concerns all women: those working outside the household/domestic sphere (independently of the sector in which they work) as well as those who are not, the young and the old, in all regions... Household work is indispensable to the economy and social reproduction, yet its economic value remains unrecognized.

Women's invisible work is not usually viewed by itself as an issue for academic research, but appears in parallel in many researches, in conjunction with issues such as gender discrimination or gender violence, domestic workers' rights, lobbying for the ratification of international conventions (without reservations) and encouraging credit schemes particularly addressed to women. Women's invisible work within the household, its importance and its role (and consequences) in the feeble participation of women in the formal sector or the value that could be attributed to it (thus showing women's real contribution to the economy) are not topics specifically integrated in many of the initiatives undertaken all over the world. As such, the present research innovates and hopes to bring a new perspective to studies and interventions concerned with women's economic participation, as well as women's rights and access to equal opportunities in the labour market, and the recognition of their role in the care economy.

Research questions

The aim of this exploratory research was to gain a better understanding of women's real economic participation and recognition of women's contribution to the economy of the household (hence to the community and on a larger scale to the national economy) through what is considered women's invisible work, women's duties and roles within the household (in particular their care and reproductive role). This was examined through reviewing the following areas:

- Household livelihood (informal work, crafts, agriculture...)
- Women's work in the formal (education, health, state institutions...) and informal (small enterprises, agriculture...) sectors
- Women's role in the care economy.

The research objectives were to better understand the social reality of women (in particular rural women), but also to go past the usual representation of women's work which limits reality and puts aside an important part of women's economic contribution. More specifically, this exploratory research examined in depth women's workload, as well as the importance of women's care role, gender division of labour and support available for the tasks incumbent to women.

The research questions were the following:

- What roles do women play to fulfil their domestic and household responsibilities?
- How do women feel about these roles and obligations?
- How do women contribute to their livelihoods and that of their families?
- What are the differences between generations (women's mothers and grandmothers; daughters and granddaughters) with regard to division of labour and income generating activities within the household?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review around the subject of “Women’s Household Work in Lebanon” was undertaken within the framework of a previous project implemented by CRTD.A in 2008: a regional assessment of women’s household work. The aim of this assessment was to identify what constitutes women’s household work and its contribution to the household, local and national economy while exploring if and how this work could play a role in enhancing women’s economic chances and opportunities. This was done in five countries of the Middle East and North Africa region: Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Syria, using a common methodology: reviewing available statistical data on women’s work, household work and care economy; reviewing the legislative framework: labour laws, civil status legislation and international conventions; and finally reviewing the academic and institutional researches, published or unpublished, and establishing the state of research in the different countries. In the present section the main findings of the desk research in Lebanon will be briefly outlined².

The literature review shows that very little research has been done on women’s household work in Lebanon. When existing, most of this research does not address directly the subject: it was approached mainly from the angle of women and work (the double responsibilities of women: professional and family) and the difficulties in coping with this double burden of work. Moreover, none of the available studies used qualitative or participatory research methods, and no particular attention was given to rural women living in marginalized regions in Lebanon.

The legal and socio-cultural context

A glance at some facts about women’s economic participation in Lebanon shows that their participation is low, and that work needs to be done in order to understand the reasons explaining this situation and whether women’s other responsibilities impair their entering the economic sector.

According to a survey implemented by the “Observatoire Universitaire de la Réalité Socio-Economique” (OURSE) of the Saint-Joseph University, the percentage of women in the formal economy (that is women between 15 and 64 years old and either employed or seeking employment) was: 27.8% in 2007³.

2 The literature review for Lebanon, submitted to CRTD.A, has been the subject of an unpublished report that has been largely used and updated in Tina Wallace’s report: “Women’s Work in Lebanon: Making the Invisible Visible” (CRTD.A , 2016). The author also had access to the preliminary report of the present exploratory field research and used some of the findings in her report.

3 Observatoire Universitaire de la Réalité Socio-économique (OURSE) (2008), *L’émigration des jeunes libanais et leurs projets d’avenir*, Université Saint Joseph, Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines, Premiers résultats juin 2008, p.1.

Women's economic rate in Lebanon is low but data shows an increase in women's participation: according to the OURSE statistics records, the rate was 21.7% in 1997, 25% in 2001 and 27.8% in 2007.⁴

Among women working in the formal sector, 64.7% are concentrated in the service sector, 15.9% in commerce, 5% in agriculture (Millennium Development Report Lebanon, 2003). However, it has to be noted that statistics for agriculture are highly flawed because the unpaid work done by women in this sector is not accounted for and, as such, is considered part of the informal sector. As a general rule, statistical data varies depending on sources, sometimes even they are out of date, and until very recently are not gender disaggregated. This renders gender analysis of economic participation particularly difficult in the Lebanese context

The legal framework pertaining to women and work in Lebanon presents many challenges, including contradictions and gender discrimination in the legislation itself, as well as implementation and state accountability. Contradictions can be found both between various national laws and between international and domestic laws. For instance, working women do not always have access to social security and benefits and, when they do, their families are not considered as co-beneficiaries; child care responsibilities, as well as policies about parental leave, affect women's economic opportunities. Discrimination is rooted both in the law and in socio-cultural norms, since the two are interlinked and do influence each other mutually. Some of the socio-cultural values underlying legislation concerning women's economic opportunities assume rigid gender roles, and perpetuate stereotypes about "women's work" and "men's work." In general, women are still considered almost exclusively responsible for domestic tasks, housekeeping, raising children, and care taking for the children, the elderly, the handicapped and the sick. In addition, men are typically regarded as the head of household even in households that are headed by women in the practice.

Furthermore, both Constitutional law and personal status laws - based on religious customs - place women in dependent and vulnerable socio-economic positions. Personal status laws (from all communities) largely contribute to the reproduction of the patriarchal model of division of labour within the household. Therefore, it is crucial to bring a gender perspective to the Lebanese legal system in order to better recognize women's economic participation and revalorize the considerable "invisible" labour they perform, such as household work. Issues such as child care, equality in profit of social security benefits, parental leave (and not exclusively maternal leave) at childbirth, should be raised, and lobbying made to change labour and social security laws accordingly, in order to draw gender

4 Ibid.

reforms, and fight discrimination against women in the domain of employment and economic opportunities.

Research review

A review of a large number of academic researches on women's household work and related subject was undertaken for the literature review. Most of the available research is related to the difficult relation between household and family responsibilities, and work (in different contexts) and the need for women to find a balance between professional and family spheres. Household work is an important variable in these researches but it does not constitute the core of the studies. Household work as such is not examined in details, with the exception of the research undertaken by Habib, Nuwayhid and Yertzian (2006)⁵, no description is given of what constitutes household work, nor how many hours are dedicated to each of the tasks (when it is mentioned, the rough figures are presented), neither a description of who does what and how frequently. In their research on domestic labour in three disadvantaged suburbs of Beirut, Habib, Nuwayhid and Yertzian (2006) have used a classification of the different tasks constituting household work: 28 chores were classified in major categories: core household tasks, care giving, financial management, home management, and home/car maintenance (but no data on time spent doing these chores was presented). Among their findings: women perform most of the household labour: when there are exceptions, they can be found in the tasks that are more traditionally associated with men (home management and home/car maintenance). Results also revealed that housework is feminized, not only in adulthood, but also in the stage of childhood, setting the grounds for the reproduction of the "traditional" gender division of labour.

The main findings from the academic research around related topics⁶ (using quantitative methods on small samples) can be summarized as follow: working and non-working women, both consider home and family responsibilities as their priority. Irrespective of their professional status, women dedicate long hours to domestic work, juggling with their two "hats", as working women and as mothers. When there is a need for help, female relatives will contribute to household work (particularly for child care). When this work is shared by their husbands, it is within duties that are considered not putting in danger their gender status. Finally, when working women have the financial means, they hire domestic workers to do household chores, and be their substitute for child and elderly care.

5 HABIB, Rima, NUWAYHID, I. & YERTZIAN, Joumana (2006): "Paid work and domestic labor in disadvantaged communities on the outskirts of Beirut, Lebanon". *Sex Roles: A Journal of research*, Sept.2006

6 See the references in the bibliography

With regard to research on social values and perceptions, the family (nuclear and extended as per the patriarchal model) remains the reference, and not only conditions women's entry in the labour market, but also has as consequence that the income of working women is considered as a mere contribution to the family budget (irrespective of the amount in question). Finally, always abiding by the prevailing patriarchal social system, decision making within the family (particularly concerning decision that involve the future of the household) is mainly the husband/father's responsibility.

No statistics are available on household work, domestic and care work (invisible work), nor on informal work in general⁷ ; however, some data can be extracted from available statistics. For example, the number of housewives in Lebanon can be deduced from the statistical tables on activity by gender (women, non active and giving 'family responsibility' as reason for inactivity), according to a statistics specialist consulted by us. Concerning informal work, the data available from the Central Administration of Statistics (particularly the surveys on enterprises and economic institutions) could be analyzed by economists and contribution of this informal work to the national economy could be evaluated. No national scale survey on household work using time use budgeting has been done⁸. It remains that a specific research on household work, its different components, the gender division of labour within the household, the value attributed to this work and its implications to women's economic participation, still needs to be done in a more systematic way.

Regarding the chosen methodology, the review of the researches in relation to the subject of women's household work allows us to say that the option of undertaking a qualitative research is practically not considered. The only qualitative research reviewed is an anthropological academic research, with a relatively long fieldwork, establishing "ideal types" or patterns describing women and the way they cope with the changes undergone by their community (knowing that generalization is not possible because of the sample: 26 women in a small community in one particular region of Lebanon). No description of housework is to be found in this thesis, neither mention of time spent doing domestic chores, caring for children and elderly. However some information can be found with regard to budgeting and the women's contribution to the household economy, in

7 In 2010 there has been an initiative of the World Bank who undertook a study on informal work in Lebanon and was later looking for partners able to implement a large scale quantitative survey.

8 Time use budgeting (Enquete Budget Temps in French) is the most common tool used by researchers interested in household work. Such research has been implemented in Morocco, Tunisia and partly undertaken in Algeria in recent years. It needs the involvement of a national institution able to undertake this large scale survey.

what circumstances they participate to the budgeting, for what kind of purposes and what is their role in decision making (within the framework of the household).

With regard to the concepts and methodology used, no innovation was found. The researchers refer to theories, concepts and use a terminology that were developed in universities and schools of thought that are not of Lebanese or Arab origin. Consequently, there are no concepts specific to the Lebanese situation and those in use do not constitute a subject of debate between stakeholders, but are rather considered as taken for granted.

Finally, it is necessary to stress that this review was not exhaustive. For example, some research have been undertaken on the subject of informal work (rural informal work) but were not taken into consideration because they do not explore the situation of women in the rural informal work, nor do they include household work as part of the informal work. The same is true for research on domestic workers (particularly women migrant workers): no precise description of the work done is presented (description of tasks, hours spent, differentiation between domestic chores and care work...). However, such research could be used to estimate the monetary value of this unpaid work, hence materializing women's contribution to the economy through their household and care work.

METHODOLOGY

As presented in the previous section, research on the topic of women's household work in Lebanon is scarce or nonexistent, particularly research using qualitative and participatory techniques. From the conclusions of the desk research on "Women's household work in Lebanon" it was clear, first that a specific qualitative research still needed to be done on household work, its different components, time spent doing it, the value (as perception) attributed to it, as well as its implication on women's economic participation; and second, that no research had been undertaken on the subject in the rural and marginalized areas. Some attention has been given to gender division of labour (in the village of'Arsal, from an anthropological perspective⁹), but the topics of women's invisible work within the household and its surroundings, care and reproductive role of women, as well as their contribution to household economy, were not directly addressed. From the methodological perspective, the available research did not use qualitative and participatory approach, thus confirming the need to undertake this kind of assessment.

In order to fill this gap, CRTD.A decided to undertake a pilot exploratory research using qualitative and participatory techniques, in particular Focus Group Discussions (FGD) in several regions of Lebanon. It was considered a pilot fieldwork because it would allow the verification of the accuracy of the questions (main questions and probes) prepared for the FGDs, in particular a Time Use exercise to be used during the discussions. This innovating methodology was chosen having in mind the broader perspective of participatory approach in development and issues pertaining to women's empowerment.

The planning

The first step was to elaborate the questions' guide for the focus group discussions. From the research questions, a set of four topics were selected and questions (main and probing questions) were formulated and presented in a grid. A time line exercise was also prepared to contribute in defining the different tasks accomplished by women during a typical day and time spent doing those tasks. It could serve both to corroborate and to add information to what would appear in the discussion before the exercise, and to initiate brainstorming and introduce the last set of questions. The objective of this exercise was to initiate a reflection on behalf of participants regarding their day to day occupations, duties and tasks, as well as allowing them to have an outsider view on what a "normal day" consists of.

9 OBEID, Michelle (1998): Gender and Division of Labor in a Changing Rural Area, Irsal: A Case Study, M.A. Thesis (Anthropology), Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, , American University of Beirut, Lebanon, May 1998, 143p.

We were going to ask them to use whatever mean they found suitable to represent on a flip chart 24 hours of their life, taking an average day as an example and, if necessary, to present two different charts: one for summer time and one for winter time, since these two seasons have their specificities with regard to agricultural related work, care work (in summer for example children do not have to go to school), social activities... In the same FGD guideline, the expected outcomes were mentioned for each topic, to be used in a further stage by the field team leaders in the FGD reports.¹⁰

The second step was to select the regions to be under study and the target population. In order for this exploratory research to be as comprehensive as possible, given the various logistical and time constraints, it was decided that it would look at three different regions (in the Bekaa and South Lebanon); within these regions, it would try to cover different communities with regard to religious affiliation; the common characteristic of these rural regions being their marginalization (from the economic poles). Initially the plan was to include the North (Akkar), however, since another research had been implemented in this region not so long ago by CRTD.A (Impact of conflict on rural women's livelihoods) it was decided that this particular region was not going to be considered for the exploratory field research. This choice was made in order not to incite a feeling of saturation and overload among the population (there is a limit to what can be asked of these communities in terms of participation to focus groups discussions and participatory research).

The research was going to be implemented in 7 communities of the selected regions, each of these communities presenting different characteristics with regard to socio-cultural and religious variables. However, for analysis and comparison purposes, these communities have in common the fact that they are situated in rural and marginalized areas, their population remains for a large part in the villages the whole year around, and the number of inhabitants and type of livelihood allows qualifying these communities as villages (and not semi-urbanized rural setups). Finally, a decisive element in our choice of the communities was the presence of a partner association working in the field of development and women's economic empowerment. This would help in having access to the community and the target population in order to hold the focus group discussions.

The seven communities selected were the following:

- ♦ Ain Ata in West Bekaa (Caza Rashaya); Aita Shaab in South Lebanon (Caza Bint Jbeil); Deir Al Ahmar in North Bekaa; Deir Mimas in South Lebanon (Caza Marjeyoun); 'Arsal in North Bekaa; Joun in the Chouf (Iklim al Kharroub) and Siddiqin in South Lebanon (Caza Tyr).

¹⁰ See Annex 1 for the FGD questions and guideline

The third step was to decide on participants' profiles, the target population being rural women living in marginalized areas. The major factors to take into consideration were women's occupations; we had to agree on the type of women that we wanted to reach through these FGD: housewives, employees, informal agricultural work, working in education, unpaid work.... Knowing that each FGD session should be done with a group of 10 – 12 women, it was decided that within each community, three different focus group discussions were going to be held with: housewives (whose households should be composed of 4 members and more), young women (age between 15 and 18 years) and women having a remunerated work (formal or informal work) outside the household. With regard to this last group of women, the type of occupation was not determined "a priori" but depended on the particularity of the community (for instance, if there were several schools in the area and possibility for women to work in education, a FGD would be held with a group of women teachers or school employees). We asked our partners organizing the various FGD in the communities to contact participants living in a household of at least four persons in order for the questions evolving around housework and care work to be relevant (for example in a household composed of a couple only, the work load is not that important and there is no child care involved).¹¹

Data collection

Because the research was initiated by CRTD.A, the main researcher had easy access and benefited from a fieldwork team composed of four team leaders/moderators and four assistants in charge of note taking. The team leaders were external research assistants who had previous experience in conducting FGD with and for CRTD.A on other projects. However, each one having a different background and different professional experience, working procedures and techniques were not identical among them. Each team was in charge of conducting FGDs in at least one community, the team leader being the moderator of the FGD, assisted by the note taker (both of them needed to take field and observation notes). After the fieldwork, note takers were asked to transcribe the discussions and send the transcripts (as well as the notes and flip charts on the timeline exercise) to the researcher and to the team leader who in turn was responsible for writing the FGD report. Team leaders were asked to present a preliminary report for each FGD conducted by them, using as guideline the questions guide (in particular the third column mentioning the expected outcomes)¹². They were

11 Unfortunately, for different reasons beyond our control, we realized a little bit late in the field work that this criterion had not always been taken into consideration and it was not possible to ask those persons to withdraw from participating in the focus groups.

12 See Annex 1

also asked to send a first report by community (each team leader being in charge of at least one community) along the same lines.

The process of transcribing the discussions and then writing the reports was a long process. It bore the consequences of the logistical and organizational difficulties we encountered during fieldwork. These difficulties resulted in delaying some of the planned FGDs (some of them three times in a row). This had as consequences that the teams that were attributed a determined community sometimes could not do the fieldwork, or the members changed, due to previous professional commitments from their part. In turn, this situation had as consequence the fact that, in some communities, two different teams worked; thus it was not possible to have the first report by community for all the selected locations. Finally, overrunning the planned schedule for the fieldwork and the delay note takers took to send the transcripts didn't allow the team leaders to write their reports within the time limits imposed and the main researcher started receiving the first reports quite late.

In summary, the situation of the researcher could be described by what Marilyn Porter calls "second-hand ethnography"¹³ and explains as follows: "I could not do my own ethnography. Essentially I had to depend on my research assistants to do it for me. On my field visits, I did some interviews and as much watching and listening as I could arrange. Much of this was directed at 'training' the research assistants, trying to get them to see the things I was seeing and ask the questions I would ask. What I soon found I was doing was studying my own ethnographers. Only by understanding how they saw and heard the community could I 'interpret' 'their' data." "I was dependent on *their* eyes and ears, their social experience and their interpretation of it"¹⁴. Marilyn Porter continues, explaining: "when I write about the study, I am asking the reader to trust not my ethnographic understanding of the communities, but my interpretation of my research assistants' ethnographic understanding of the communities"¹⁵.

The author of the present report based its analysis on the data collected by other researchers (research assistants who were moderators to the FGD and wrote preliminary reports) while knowing that the quality of the data gathered is intimately related to the quality of relationships the researcher is able to establish with informants in the field. However the researcher had no control on this component of the research and had to take it in consideration, as was also

13 PORTER, Marylin (1994): "Second-Hand ethnography. Some problems in analyzing a feminist project" Chapter 4, in: BRYMAN, Alan, BURGESS, Robert (1994): *Analyzing qualitative data*, pp. 67- 88, B; Routledge, London, 232p.

14 PORTER, Marylin (1994), op. cit., p.75

15 PORTER, Marylin (1994), op. cit., p.76

taken into consideration the fact that the transcripts were not done by the same person (including sometimes different persons for different FGD within the same community). Contrary to Marilyn Porter, the researcher didn't have access to their field notes or research diaries and couldn't use the researchers' notes and experiences as data of another kind to be analyzed. The researcher should have been more involved in guiding the process of data collection, in order to be able to insure that all assistants were focusing on the same themes and had the same perspective and working methods during the fieldwork. The author of the report tried to maintain, as a researcher, a research diary where notes and observations were recorded, as well as comments concerning the research process, and made use of reflexivity, an essential component in qualitative research. However this diary was not written on a regular basis; it had long intervals of silence corresponding to the period when the researcher was waiting for the transcripts and the first reports, and the time spent working in a totally different field research and writing a report for another project for CRTD.A.

The focus groups discussions (FGD) were conducted at an early stage of the research, during the months of February and March 2009; altogether, 18 FGDs were held in 6 communities in the Bekaa valley and in South Lebanon¹⁶. As it was mentioned previously, research assistants (team leaders and moderators) were asked to write a preliminary report on the three FGDs that they had conducted in the community, presenting the findings for each FGD as well as for the community (making use of the three FGD that they had undertaken). Originally the idea was to use these preliminary reports on the six selected communities and analyze their findings using them as data and writing a general report. Unfortunately, for the reasons mentioned above, the researcher was not able to use these first reports as data and had to go back to the transcripts.

Each of the focus groups discussions lasted around two hours (exact starting and finishing time were not always registered by the team¹⁷). The FGDs started with a brief presentation of CRTD.A and the purpose of the meeting, the objectives of the research and the three members of the team (team leader/moderator, assistant and representative of CRTD.A). The moderator clearly explained to the participants that they were free to choose not to participate, and that anonymity was going to be respected (none of their names appearing in the reports). The moderator also explained the process of the FGD, how the team was going to work, and the necessity to have the discussion recorded and notes taken. Participants were then asked to briefly introduce themselves before the beginning

16 Unfortunately due to circumstances beyond our control, the field work in Joun (Iklim al Kharroub) couldn't be done; we decided to limit ourselves to 6 communities in the Bekaa and South Lebanon.

17 The relevant data is presented in Annex 2: "Participants in FGDs".

of the discussion¹⁸. In Deir Al Ahmar, 9 housewives, 7 working women¹⁹ and 5 young women²⁰ participated to the FGDs. In 'Arsal: 10 housewives, 7 working women and 10 young women. In Ain Ara: 9 housewives, 6 working women and 7 young women. In Aita Shaab: 10 housewives, 10 working women and 8 young women. In Deir Mimas²¹: 6 housewives, 6 working women and 7 young women²². In Siddiqin: 17 housewives²³, 5 young women and 9 working women. Overall, we had 18 FGDs for a total of 146 participants.

All the FGDs were recorded and these recordings were then transcribed by the assistants who had taken notes during the sessions.

Data analysis

Data to be analyzed consisted of 18 transcripts of FGD and 3 first community reports (each done differently, according to the assistant researcher's way of working). One of the objectives of the time line exercise was to initiate a discussion between participants around the subjects of time use, different domestic chores and household tasks, availability of free time and potential for work and self improvement. The proceedings of the exercise were recorded in the transcripts of the FGDs and were considered as part of the data to be analyzed, contrary to

18 In some communities, the groups of housewives included one or two women who were single but lived in a large household (that of their parents) in which they played the role of "housewife" (in the sense of being responsible for their families and this is how they presented themselves).

19 In fact, 8 persons were present in this FGD, one of the working women had come with her mother, a housewife, who, after having presented herself, said that she was not going to participate in the discussion.

20 The weather was particularly bad that day, it was snowing and moving from one place to another was difficult. We were glad that these young women had come despite all that.

21 In Deir Mimas we noticed that the size of the household is generally smaller than those of the other communities We could not reach the required number of participants (around 6 participants instead of 8 to 12), the main reason being the difficulties we encountered while planning and organizing the field work.

22 In Deir Mimas, in the FGD for Young Women, three of the participants were in fact young men. This was due to the fact that there isn't a lot of young people in the village, and to a misunderstanding with our correspondent in the village who thought that we needed to have the opinion and perspective of the young (it is to be noted that Deir Mimas was the only village where CRTD.A didn't have a long history of collaboration with, hence the difficulties in organizing the FGDs). In consequence, the questions addressed to these young men were adapted and directed towards their mothers and sisters, but mainly concerned the gender division of labor and their own participation and contribution to household work.

23 The number of participants to this FGD was especially large and this did not help in the proceedings. Holding Focus Groups Discussions is a technique that usually requires a relatively small number of participants (between 8 and 12) to be effective and not considered as a "group interview". However due to the circumstances above mentioned (difficulties in organizing the FGD in a short period of time) we didn't have control on the number of participants and once the individuals presented themselves in the meeting place, it would have been considered as a lack of respect to ask them to leave and not participate to the meeting. The representative from CRTD.A also took into consideration the fact that the NGO needed to preserve good relations with the local community and thus not to take decisions or act in a way that could be misinterpreted and lead to a resentment from the part of the community.

the time line exercise's charts that have not been exploited in the present report, since time budgeting was not the main objective of the research (and is more relevant to a quantitative type of research). In consequence, these charts were used as a secondary source of information, allowing the researcher to verify (using the triangulation technique) that there was a correlation between what different participants said regarding a common topic. This exercise was particularly interesting with regard to questions such as women's workload, relations between members of the household, as well as decision making processes. Moreover, women participants to these focus group discussions often used "we" as they were speaking about themselves, or sometimes even answered in the name of a friend or a neighbour, stressing the point that in the villages, "everybody knows everybody" and that they all share the same conditions of life. This is important as it allows us generalization of the findings to the targeted community.

In order to guarantee the anonymity of the participants, each focus group discussion was attributed a number: FGD1, FGD2 etc... to FGD18²⁴. Then a list of participants was made with general information about each of them (again it was not possible to have the same type of information for all the FGDs for the reasons mentioned above) and participants were given numbers (to facilitate coding and analysis). The detailed list can be found in Annex 2, with the names removed. In the presentation of the findings and the analysis, mention will be made of the source of the quotes (participant or participants to FGD1 or FGD4 or FGD6...) without mentioning the village, or giving indication about the participant herself, unless relevant.

The researcher read the transcripts, categorizing data according to the research questions as well as the question guide that was used by the team during the FGDs. In order to do this and be able to use and quote the participants in the analysis and the present report, large parts of the transcripts had to be translated. Raw data (the transcripts) was originally in colloquial Lebanese Arabic, but the quotes used in the analysis section of the present report are in English, from the researcher's own translation. The translation tried to be as close as possible to the Arabic version of participants' expressions and voices, sometimes at the expense of the correctness of the English sentences²⁵. Thus, the data was translated in order for the researcher to code it and refine the coding, proceed with the analysis, and

24 The FGDs were not numbered in a chronological order, according to the date during which they were held, but we started with those of Deir Al Ahmar because the researcher was present during the field work and in consequence was a little familiarized with the groups and the discussions and started by reading the transcripts of this location before the others.

25 The idea was to keep women's voices as they were, to let the reader "hear" the participants talking. Significant expressions were translated literally, even if the sentence in English didn't seem to make sense.

have the quotes ready to be used in the report. It is true that this process took some time, but it allowed a better immersion in the “field” and a better understanding of the data. This was particularly necessary because the researcher did not have access to the field notes of the research team working in the field; the transcripts did not contain observations or remarks and comments from the part of the team; and in the preliminary reports, very few personal comments concerning the fieldwork were mentioned (sometimes, however, partial field notes could be deduced from the text, after comparing it to the transcripts).

Analysis was done after reading the transcripts and coding the available data. The data coding lead to themes and concepts that were thus induced from what the participants to the research had expressed during the focus groups discussions (thematic analysis). The researcher read several times the transcripts while at the same time labelling the available data according to the different themes covered during the focus group discussions. Further reading allowed elaborating subdivisions within these themes, thus inducing, from the data, analytical concepts or themes. Finally, all transcripts were compared and the recurrent concepts, themes and subthemes -that were emerging from all transcripts- were selected. This process was complicated by the fact that, as previously mentioned, the FGDs were not conducted by the same assistant researchers, or the transcripts written by the same note takers. In consequence, the questions (and probing) were not asked in the same way²⁶ and sometimes relevant data supporting the concepts and the analysis was not found in all transcripts. For these reasons, it was decided that no differentiation would be made in the analysis between participants according to their categories (housewives, working women or young women), unless their belonging to one category determined the way they answered the question (and this regardless of the community).

This process of going back and forth between the transcripts and the preliminary reports contributed to securing trustworthiness of the data that was assembled before engaging in the analysis process. Since no other qualitative research had been implemented on the subject, it was impossible to consult with, or refer to, another researcher investigating the same topic within the same perspective, in order to insure trustworthiness in the analysis phase. However, what could be done was to look at what the different teams had done with each selected community and compare the results and notes. Thus the researcher was able to corroborate the first results and conclusions that emerged from the field data. However, the triangulation technique could not be used since, once

26 This is the reason why we were not always able to get the same kind of general information (even if the question was asked by the team leader, according to the transcripts) about participants, or have details concerning the FGD (for example the exact time and length) as can be seen in Annex 2: “Participants in Focus Group Discussions”.

the fieldwork had been done, no other visits to the villages, for other FGD or interviews, was possible within the time and budget limits of the research.

Retrospectively, one can say that the fieldwork should have been done with one or two teams of well trained fieldworkers, even if this would have implied to spread the fieldwork over a longer period of time for logistical and practical purposes. This would have allowed to take into consideration the understanding of the research's objectives of a definite set of people, instead of having to adjust to several approaches and interpretations (remembering that even the simple task of transcribing the interview or the FGD's proceedings is subject to direct or indirect subjectivity from the part of the person accomplishing this task). It would also have allowed the researcher to work with a methodology closer to that of Marilyn Porter, using field notes and observations from the research assistants as data in itself.

Limitations

The main limitations of this research were related to time and budgetary constraints. In its initial plan, the research needed to be implemented within a month; thus, it needed a large team that could be divided in order to be able to have the FGDs in two regions at the same time. The constraints imposed on us did not allow having a training seminar for the selected team during which we could have tested on the team members themselves the questions guide and the time use exercise, and insure that the research tools and procedures would be the same for all. These constraints were thus reflected in the selection of the team members and the follow up of the fieldwork. Since the fieldwork needed to be done in winter, we encountered other types of obstacles: the weather being unpredictable, snow storms forced us to modify the fieldwork plan and reschedule the FGDs in some regions, which in turn had consequences on the field team, due to previous professional engagements (mention of these limitations has already been made above).

In the process of choosing the targeted communities, particularly in the data collection for the general information and socio-economic characteristics of the community (see Annex 3), the main obstacle encountered was related to the unavailability of reliable sources concerning: number of inhabitants of the villages (in winter and in summer), permanent population and registered voters. Thus we did not have solid background information on the communities, except what could be used from the personal experience of the field research team, induced by their regular sites visits to CRTD.A's local partners associations. From the methodological point of view, this research was limited by the fact that only the participatory technique of FGD was used (another consequence of the time constraints). It would have been interesting to have in-depth interviews with

women from each category and each community, as this would have permitted us to go more in depth and have a better insight at the participants' point of views and perceptions. By doing this, we would also have insured trustworthiness of the gathered data, and the analysis would have been based on thicker grounds.

Another problematic point is that not enough preparation work had been done with the team in order to be sure that the questions (that had been prepared in English and translated into Arabic) were clear enough for the assistant researchers before they went to the field. This was an important factor of misunderstanding because, from the transcripts, it appeared that the discussion around some of the themes (for example the question of the productive role of women and their indirect contribution to the household economy, or the opportunities for women's empowerment) led to wrong directions and confusion from the part of participants. This was mainly due to the way questions were asked and probing done by the research assistants.

Finally, another limitation to be considered is the fact that the main researcher and author of the present report has not been able to visit all the communities, thus not having the opportunity to live with the members of these communities and practice what anthropologists call "participant observation", mainly because of lack of time. Thus the researcher was not able to take field notes and make field observations other than what strictly concerned the focus group discussions. However, what could be considered as field experience are the previous field studies, and personal experiences, in other rural communities in which women's household work, duties and responsibilities, as well as their attitudes and perceptions regarding their workload, and the strategies adopted to cope with it, could be observed. Furthermore, an episode of the field research relevant to our subject can be brought to attention: the working team in Deir Al Ahmar was invited to have lunch at CRTD.A's partner's house. They had a family meal with this lady, her sister-in-law and another young woman (a neighbour) who were all present during the morning focus group discussion. The preparation of the meal, as well as the informal discussion during the lunch, allowed us to have an insight on the organization of everyday's tasks, and in some way, illustrate or complement what had been discussed during the morning FGD session around the topics of social entertainment and gender division of labour, as well as the functioning of the social and family network when help is needed to be able to answer household needs (in terms of care work). Observation was used to examine whether what people said was in accordance to what they did, or if there were contradictions between words and acts. This could have been done for other communities if participant observation had been done systematically during the whole fieldwork, in all communities.

BACKGROUND ON THE COMMUNITIES²⁷

Deir Al Ahmar

Deir Al Ahmar is situated in the Bekaa Valley, 12 kilometres northeast of Baalbek. Its population is around 20.000 people. In fact, the number of inhabitants fluctuates between winter and summer. *“There are 30.000 people living in the village, 10.000 expatriates, in winter we are only 3.000 and 20.000 are living in towns, they come in summer”* (Participant FGD2).

The village main economic activities are agriculture and food processing and conservation industries (fruit preserves and jams, as well as dairy products). Several nongovernmental associations have launched social development projects in the region. The village of Bechwat (where the miraculous Virgin is said to have made appearances) is not very far, however this hasn't necessarily induced the development of tourism in Deir Al Ahmar.

According to participants, the main sources of income for the village are tobacco and public services (army and Internal Security forces) for young people. These sources of revenue can barely cover their expenses. *“My father earns money once a year because he is a tobacco farmer”* (Participant FGD3). All complain about how much they are indebted with this mode of living. *“My brother who is in the army, he is not married; he contributes a little to the household expenses; it is barely sufficient for him”* (Participant FGD3). *“My husband retired from the Army, he was able to buy a tractor and he rents it, but income comes very late because of the fact that people are all indebted (people pay when they sell the harvest)”* (Participant FGD1). Many also have “a number”, meaning a license for taxi driving, but not always in use because of the fuel expenses that are high. *“My husband has a van (taxi), this constitute the regular income. He makes the taxi between the village and Beirut. Not regular income as sometimes he makes the trip with no passengers (so he does not even get the fuel expenses)”* (Participant FGD1).

Participants complained about the total lack of social services in the region, particularly in health: they said that there was no hospital close to the village (they go to Zahleh or Beirut): *“one could die before getting to a hospital; a pregnant woman could give birth on the road to the hospital”* (Participant FGD2). When inhabitants

²⁷ The background information was first constructed from the literature review but in this presentation of the communities the researcher has chosen to expose the community life as it has been presented by the participants themselves, thus making use of information gathered during the FGDs. Annex 3 presents the general data on the villages that was found in the preliminary stage of the research, when decision concerning which communities to choose had to be made. It presents some general information on the selected communities regarding population, socio-demographics, main sources of livelihoods, and the groups to be targeted in the focus group discussions.

need to consult a doctor, they do not have a lot of choice because there aren't many practicing in the village, according to what participants said. According to a participant to FGD3, there is only a dispensary. Because of all these difficulties, several families have decided to leave the village (a participant to FGD2 talks about 50 families that left the last year), mainly to be able to insure quality education for their children (university students go to Beirut or Zahleh).

The main problems faced by inhabitants are the weather and the lack of water: *"There is no water, there is no life, and this is the most important thing"* (Participant FGD2). Because of these conditions, people need to buy tanks of water in the summer (if they have enough money for that). *"There is no water in summer even if the village is very rich in water in winter, but there is no system of storing rain and snow water"* (Participant FGD3). Despite these difficulties summer remains the season when the village really lives: expatriates (from Lebanon or abroad) come back and everyone benefits from this seasonal return: *"In winter there is nobody in the village, people come in summer and that gives the village economy a new push"* (Participant FGD3).

Nothing keeps the inhabitants in the village other than their love for it: *"If it weren't for the love of our village we would all have left. Nobody would have stayed in the village because it has nothing to offer for people to be able to live; the harvest is only once a year"* (Participant, FGD1)²⁸.

'Arsal²⁹

The village of 'Arsal is located in the North Bekaa, 35 kilometres from Baalbek, and 14 kilometres from the Syrian border. Its population is of 35.000 of which 24.500 are permanent residents.³⁰ The village has a history of being active in social development projects through several institutions and non-governmental organizations. It has several schools and a vocational training institute. 'Arsal main income sources originate from agriculture (orchards) and raising livestock, trade and industries (mainly stone quarries). There are several dispensaries and private clinics but no hospital in the village.

28 In my research diary I noted my impressions during the field work in Deir al Ahmar: women of the community present their life like in a sort of dead-end, without seeing an issue. I felt a general ambiance of "we can't do anything about it".

29 There are several spellings for the village's name: Irsal, Arsal, 'Arsal, or 'Arsal. We have chosen the last one which seems to be the English transcription best corresponding to the Arabic pronunciation of the term.

30 This information is taken from "Wild edible plants: Promoting dietary diversity in poor communities in Lebanon", no author, from: http://www.wildedibleplants.org/?page=show_details&table=communities&itemId=1&tb=communities&Id=7, last accessed on August 20, 2009.

According to one of the participants to FGD6 sources of income in the village are limited: “80% of the financial resources of people living in ‘Arsal comes from the quarries and stone production”. Other main sources of income for the families are the orchards and fruit trees, mainly apricots and cherries. Both these domains offer the rare job opportunities to the young men staying in the village. “Trees and stones do not give a lot of work these days³¹. 10 years ago, people had more time; they used to help each other for the harvest. Now people, if they need help, they have to pay. Workers are all from the village, they are known, a lot of these girls come from poor houses.” (Participant FGD6)

However because of winter and difficult weather the harvest is not always generous and the income from these activities fluctuates from year to year: “Cold weather and frost sometimes spoil the season” (Participant FGD6). Most of the participants complain about the difficult economic situation, “Things today are not as they used to be” (FGD6), salaries are going down and this reflects on the economic life of the village (shops are not working; people are living on credit...). “Everybody has apricots and trees but some people are losing money because of it. These last years, we had the 2006 war and Nahr el Bared in 2007, so prices went down.” (Participant FGD6)

The other professional occupations of head of households are of the same nature as in Deir Al Ahmar: public servants (gendarmarie and army), taxi and minivan drivers and small businesses. “Shops here are different from Beirut or touristic towns. You only find groceries, clothes and shoes” (Participant FGD6).

Several participants to the three FGDs held in the village mentioned that in previous years villagers had more wealth and that this was due to the fact that the informal (and illegal) activity of smuggling was widespread (we are touching here what is called underground economy, not to be confused with informal economy). These well remunerated activities were interrupted when the frontier with Syria opened and borders control became stricter, resulting in reducing even more the income of the families that were highly dependent on these revenues. : “Before the opening of the frontiers, there was a lot of selling opportunities, now no more. With the smuggling (heating oil, cement, electrical appliances...), there was a lot of movement and a lot of people were living from it.” “Smuggling was stimulating the economy and now things are slow. There are people that lost their main income; they used to buy a lot, now they cannot” (Participants FGD6)

One of the major problems encountered in the village, beside the harsh weather in winter, is the lack of water in summer which forces the population to

31 The expression that was used in Arabic was: “Al hajar wal shajar qalil al sheghel hal iyyam”

الحجر والشجر قليل الشغل هالايام

buy water when their water supplies have ended, to be able to cope with their normal and daily needs. *“Water is too expensive to be able to cultivate vegetables”* (Participant FGD6).

Finally, for the participants, the existing social and educational services are not sufficient if not lacking: *“we have everything in the village except health services and university”* (Participant FGD4).

Ain Ata

The village of Ain Ata is located in West Bekaa in the caza of Rashaya. It is a small village (around 2500 inhabitants) quite far from the centre of the caza and relatively isolated, especially during the hard months of the winter season. Agriculture (olives but also pine trees and fruits) constitute the main activity in this village not well served by public transports, a fact that reinforces its isolation and reflects the general socio-economic context. Migration is important, mainly for job opportunities and studies (the absence of an efficient public transport network to towns and other villages contributing to this). Working migration is now mostly directed to the Arab countries while in the past it used to be Australia and Brazil.

From the presentations of participants to FGD8 one gets the idea that there is usually only one source of income (agriculture) and practically no money is sent to the village from migrants living and working abroad. However this monolithic image changes when one listens to what other participants have to say. Agriculture and livestock used to produce a lot before: cereals, grapes, olives, apples, cherries (limited). If agriculture remains an essential activity, it has slowed down nowadays because *“It does not give reward as much as fatigue”* (Participant FGD8). The village has also pine groves that are considered as an important source of income, the pine seeds, once harvested and after going through a long process for cleaning, are sold for a good price. Olive’s production is not very important because of Ain Ata mountain topography (no possibility to plant trees in large plots of land) according to some of the participants.

Other types of livelihood in the village revolve around the functions of soldiers and public servants (Internal security forces and army), shops (groceries and clothes) or small enterprises, as well as bus and taxi drivers. Often the income from these modest jobs is complemented by seasonal work (agricultural or related to the village’s seasonal opportunities) or second small jobs. *“He works only as a butcher in summer and in winter he drives a bus”; “My husband drives a school bus, he has a restaurant but it works only during the summer”* (Participants FGD7).

There aren't a lot of working opportunities available for women in the village: *"Work is for the young (men). Women do not have a lot of job opportunities"* (Participant FGD7). This applies especially to young women (and is the main reason for migration outside the village): *"There are a lot of educated young women but there are no working opportunities. That is why you will see that 50% and more of Ain Ata inhabitants live outside the village."* (Participant FGD8)

A characteristic of the village is that all families help each other; they collaborate and share the tasks among themselves. If a woman is overwhelmed by the amount of work she has to do, other women will come to help her, as they would help a member of the family: *"We are really a complete family". "There is a solidarity spirit in the village"* (Participants FGD7).

Aita Shaab

The village of Aita Shaab in South Lebanon (in the caza of Bint Jbeil; between 8000 and 10000 inhabitants, relatively important) has been profoundly affected by the different wars fought in the region, particularly in July-August 2006. Several families have suffered the consequences of war and seen some of their members disappear or die, thus losing main providers to their livelihood. The village (as others in the south) is also confronted with the problem of land mines that were left in the fields and its consequences (disabled population that needs to be taken care of). As observers visiting the south can testify, numerous houses and small enterprises (including the building of the cooperative centre) were destroyed during the fighting and a third of these are still in ruins. *"As soon as we had finished reconstructing our house, war came again and destroyed the houses once more"* (Participant FGD10). This situation is reflected in the participants' presentation of their village: whatever the subject of discussion (economics of the village, job opportunities or choices made by individuals....) they often began their sentences by stating how the situation was before (or in the past) and now (or after), indirectly putting the blame (for the negative and pessimistic situation) on the war. *"After the war, we began building our life again from zero"* (Participant FGD11). *"With the war, some people came back years in the past, while other improved their situation."* (Participant FGD10)

The main source of income for the villagers is tobacco. Participants to FGD11 used a significant sentence to describe the fact that the whole village takes part in tobacco related activities, even employees and people occupying management position in their official job: *"In Aita, even a director works in tobacco"*. The life of the village revolves around the tobacco, whatever the other source of income and even if it is not always the main source of revenue for the family. As such, tobacco provides a financial support, a contribution to the household economy that is

often used to reimburse the debts, pay for school fees or for extra family expenses. *“Agricultural work is very stressful and this is part of our life. If a woman cultivates (tobacco) she manages to produce for her house’s needs. A woman will cultivate to cope with her household’s needs”* (Participant FGD11).

If most people live from agricultural work (tobacco, olives, cereals, grapes and figs are the main produce) there are also civil servants (teachers, soldiers, security forces...), employees occupying small functions. Others villagers have small businesses (shops, butchers, carpenters, plumbers, mechanics, taxi driver...). There are also people abroad, especially in Arab countries, sons or husbands who work outside the country and regularly send money to sustain the families that stayed in the village. *“My husband is working abroad. He sends money, this is our only income”* (Participant FGD10). *“My brothers are in Australia, they send money regularly”* (Participant FGD12). A few families have as source of income the rental fees (house in Beirut or land in Aita Shaab). *“We have a house that we rent in Beirut. My brothers use the rent money for their expenses.”* (Participant FGD12)

The village is quite isolated and this explains the feelings of its inhabitants (particularly the young): feelings of exclusion, or being far from the market centres or from any kind of entertainment, social and cultural activities. *“The village is far from the markets of Nabatiyeh and Sour where prices are low. When it arrives here, produce is quite expensive because of transportation fees.”* (Participant FGD10)

Deir Mimas

The village of Deir Mimas in the caza of Marjeyoun (South Lebanon) is quite isolated, infrastructure and transport facilities not always available. *“Transportation from here to Marjeyoun is quite difficult”* (Participant FGD14). This leads villagers to migrate in order to find jobs and for their children to pursue higher education, a temporary migration often leading to a more permanent one. *“There are more work opportunities in Beirut than here”* (Participant FGD15). *“Here there are no universities; we have to go to Beirut”* (Participant FGD15). *“Those who come back are a small number”* (Participant FGD14). War has only aggravated the situation and one of its major consequences is on the village’s demography. There are around 1000 and 2000 people in the village (the lowest number in winter) and there aren’t a lot of young people: around 15 in winter and most of them young men according to participants to FGD15 (which explains the difficulty in setting up the focus group discussion as planned, as seen above in the methodology section).

Agriculture (olive trees) is an important element in the village’s livelihood. Several activities turn around the production of olives, oil, preserves... which make Deir Mimas’ reputation. *“3/4 of the people in the village sell olives or olive oil”* (Participant FGD15). *“I have olive harvest (as income); we all rely on the olive*

harvest” (Participant FGD14). Women in this village contribute openly to the agricultural economy: “*Something like 10% of the olive’s groves in the village is women’s property*” (Participant FGD13). “*I have a shop where I sell munch³², and my husband is an agricultural worker (paid per day)*” (Participant FGD13).

Besides agriculture and livestock the other sources of income are employments in the public services (security forces, army and teachers) as well as ownership of small shops and businesses, and a few liberal professions (engineer, doctors...). Two or more sources of income are often used in combination: “*My husband has a salary from the agricultural cooperative here in the village. We also have a small grocery store*” (Participant FGD13). “*Most of them are school teachers or retired from the army. In the village those who work in agriculture are not in big numbers (most of them contractual workers). Everybody has land with olive trees, but some more than others*” (Participant FGD13). More rarely, people have real estate that they rent: “*We have the rent fees of a house we have in Beirut*” (Participant FGD15).

Finally, an important source of income is money sent by expatriates to their families in the village. “*My husband used to be in America; he also has his retirement pension for the Army*” (Participant FGD13). “*My parents in law receive money from their children abroad for their expenses*” (Participant FGD14). “*My sister is abroad; whenever she can, she sends money*” (Participant FGD14). The difficult financial situation of the village in general is summarized by a participant to FGD14: “*In Deir Mimas, there are people that receive an income from everybody, bit by bit; there are people with no income; there are people who used to work and put some money in the bank and are now living from the interests.*”

Siddiqin

Siddiqin (caza of Sour) has suffered considerable destructions during the wars that have ravaged South Lebanon (in particular 2006) and that had repercussions on the village’s resources and economic situation³³. An important part of agricultural work was interrupted because trees and greenhouses had been damaged as a consequence, several villagers found themselves without work. In their presentation of their respective families and work situation, a large number of participants to the three focus group discussions declared that either their husbands or their fathers were unemployed since the last war. “*My husband doesn’t work. We had a greenhouse that was destroyed during the war. After the war, he was*

32 The *munch* is the food stock prepared by and for the household, using traditional techniques of conservation, usually prepared during summer and used during winter when no fresh vegetables, dairy and grains are available. Main components of the *munch* are: burghul (cracked wheat), labneh (strained salted yogurt), makdus (pickled eggplant), zaatar (mixed herbs: wild thyme, sumac, sesame seeds and salt), kishk (mix of burghul and yogurt, dried and then grinded), dried mulukhiyeh...

33 This village presents a lot of similarities with the situation of Aita Shaab.

sick and psychologically he could work anymore” (Participant FGD18). The village no more lives mainly on agriculture: *“Before it was mainly agriculture and now it is mainly trade”* (Participant FGD18). Buildings were also put down during the conflict, not only houses but also shops which had an impact on livelihoods by eliminating potential second sources of income. *“In the past, we used to have a small shop. It was destroyed during the war and now we only teach”* (Participant FGD18). *“50% of income comes from the poultry farm and 30% from tobacco. Before the war, we used to have 3 farms, but now we have only one”* (Participant FGD17). *“My husband doesn’t work. He used to have a greenhouse, but it was destroyed by the war”* (Participant FGD18). Small enterprises also have suffered from the consequences of war: *“We had bees and we used to sell honey. It was damaged during the war. We hope to be able this year to start again”* (Participant FGD18).

Life in the village of Siddiqin revolves around the culture of tobacco. Tobacco is the main source of income for most families and even when this is not the case, it constitutes a major support in the families’ livelihoods. This activity largely rests on the shoulders of women as it is considered within their responsibilities and duties. *“The village’s production and income depend on tobacco. Tobacco is a workload on women. Women need to coordinate between their children and their household’s income (breadwinning)”* (Participant FGD16). All families are more or less involved in this sector; whether or not they have their own land. It is a strenuous and unrewarding, unattractive work that gives little in return. Participants complained that even the rented farms are not giving as they used to, and there are fewer opportunities in the village. *“We all rent land (to plant tobacco) from outside the village”* (Participant FGD16).

As it is the case in most other villages, if not engaged in agricultural work (tobacco but also olives, cereals and vegetables), the inhabitants of Siddiqin are employees, teachers, and civil servants or have a small business (groceries, clothes, carpentry, ironwork, hairdresser, or snacks). *“You can find everything here: building materials and paints; Internal Security Forces employees and farm workers, artisans and trade as well as cooperatives...”* (Participant FGD18). However some participants mentioned the fact that there are very few civil servants: *“You can count them on the fingers of your hands, and not in higher positions. Few teachers, Internal Security Forces... You can say that the village is poor. Education really started with this generation. Generations before could not afford education”* (Participant FGD16). Because of its geographic situation, the village serves as commercial centre for the surrounding villages. *“The village has direct roads to all the small villages. Trade works very well here. Whatever you open, the business works... All the villages buy from here. We are the villages’ market”* (Participant FGD16).

Due to the difficult living conditions and the scarcity of work opportunities, migration is often considered as the only way to improve the quality of life. *“The percentage of emigrants is quite important, among young men and families”* (Participant FGD18). *“All emigrants do not send money to the village. They may help the mother or the father or the spouse. It is mostly young men who travel”* (Participant FGD16).

HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITIES LIVELIHOODS

Large households but one main provider

Large households seem to be the prevailing norm in most of the villages covered by our field research. Among the adult participants, the households composed of a small number of persons were in general those of participants who were single and living with their parents and unmarried siblings. Only two cases lived in a nuclear family: in one of the cases the participant, recently married (and pregnant with her first child) lived only with her husband; the second was the case of a single working woman living with her mother and father.

Participants belong to two main types of large households: those with several children whose age might vary from two years old to early twenties (see Annex 2 for details concerning household composition of participants). In one of the focus groups with housewives, one of the participants volunteered an explanation for the high number of children: *"We have no television that's why we have a lot of children! (Laughs)"* (Participant FGD1) while another specified: *"we are still living according to the traditional system!"* The second type consists of households where the family lives with the grandparents or in-laws, or extended family households. Participants in the housewives groups generally seem to be living in larger households: the number of persons composing households may vary from 9 to 14. *"I have 4 young men and 1 girl (from 6 to 27 years old), with my husband and I (7persons), and my son is married and has a child 10 months old and he lives with us with his wife, and my mother in law is also living with us"* (Participant FGD1). *"We are 11 in the household: 9 children and our parents"* (Participant FGD12).

No matter the type of household, all the members do not contribute equally to the income. With the exception of the main provider, if members of the household work or have some kind of financial resource (like a retirement pension) the money helps covering their own expenses, particularly if they are young men or women. *"My son works in the security forces (Police force), but nobody helps the father. 3 children are employed but nobody helps us (what they earn barely suffice for transportation)"* (Participant FGD1). *"Of course my husband is the main provider. He works as a carpenter and with aluminium frames, plaster and decoration. My children, young men, all work. We help them a little since their father is the main provider; the girls are still at school"* (Participant FGD6). *"Husband taxi driver, he takes care of the household expenses. My son works as a mechanic; he helps a little bit taking care of the house expenses. Another son is studying to be a doctor, he is doing his training and has a small amount (300.000 LBP), and barely sufficient to pay for transportation (he lives in Burj Hammoud in Beirut)"* (Participant FGD1).

Adult children are often still economically dependent on their parents, even if they work, what they earn being most of the time barely sufficient for them to provide for their own expenses. The situation is the same when the children get married: rare are the cases where the grown up children have a job or a small business allowing them to financially help their parents. *“My sons have a computer shop, they take care of themselves and we have less expenses”* (Participant FGD10). When children marry early it is a new burden on the household because they do not contribute financially to the family income. In some villages, when a daughter marries, she is helped by the family of her husband, while when a son marries his family must support him, build him a house and help in the new home. *“Here we help a little the daughter (who is getting married) but we help more the son. You have to help him build a house. I am worried about my children...Who is going to help them? My son has a child, if I don’t support him who will?”* (Participant FGD11)

However children are conscious of the fact that they need to help their parents, particularly when the financial situation of the household is difficult. They do their best in order to find small jobs and at least cover their own expenses and alleviate the burden on their parents. *“I give private lessons to earn some money”* (Participant FGD15). *“I had to work as a dressmaker to cover my expenses. Since I was 16 years old, I sew and I help in the household”* (Participant FGD8). *“My brothers contribute to almost half the expenses”* (Participant FGD9).

The household might be composed of several nuclear families, but the sources of income are limited and attributed to the person considered as head of household. *“My married son lives with us but he spends “on himself” and his family only (he barely has enough for his daughter’s milk). The parents take care of his food and drink expenses”* (Participant FGD1). *“My married children do not have to give us money, maybe I need a bag of flour or a barrel of oil, one of them will bring it; things like that”* (Participant FGD6). *“My husband has a van (taxi), this constitute the regular income... My father in law (living with us) plants tobacco and I help him so he doesn’t have to pay for a worker, he lives with us but there is no regular income and the expenses are on us”* (Participant FGD1). *“Two of my sons are workers; they get paid by the week. It covers their pocket money”* (Participant FGD18). The head of household contributes to the expenses of the extended family, even if they do not live under the same roof. *“Nobody helps us, my husband helps his parents”* (Participant FGD18). It is to be noted that as a general rule, the determinant fact is the regularity of the income. *“My sons are agricultural labourers (per day), they keep their money for their expenses. My husband is an employee with a monthly salary”* (Participant FGD16).

In some villages, the main provider is living abroad *“the one who contributes the most is the one living abroad”* (Participant FGD10), this person is considered as the

head of household, even if he has been out of the country for a long time. In these cases, money sent by expatriates is considered as the main source. *“For sure the money from expatriates plays a major role in the household. We have all studied thanks to this expatriate money”* (Participant FGD8). The main provider is the father, sometimes even after his death. *“My father was retired, now he is dead but he left me his pension and I live from it. I spend from it for the house, my car, telephone...”* (Participant FGD13).

Only a few cases mentioned the fact that someone other than the head of household, or his wife, contributes financially to the household livelihood: a brother sending money (*“My brother who is abroad helps financially the family”* (Participant FGD4)) and the rent of a small shop (*“My sister has a shop, she helps for the house expenses”* (Participant FGD5)). Sometimes, the contribution from outside is indirect: *“My brothers/sisters do not contribute to the household income but they bring us clothes gifts when they come, it is a way of helping the parents. My aunt sometimes sends clothes for free for my mother’s boutique”* (Participant FGD3). *“Now that my siblings found jobs there is less pressure than before. One sister in Zableh and one in Beirut, they help, but not a lot; mainly they take charge of their own expenses (less of a burden for the father). Maybe later they will be able to help us improve our situation”* (Participant FGD3).

Struggling to survive in difficult conditions

Most of the work is seasonal work: *“In winter, with this weather, there is no work”* (Participant FGD2). This was confirmed by other participants and by our own observation: the fieldwork being done during the winter season, we could see that the villages were living in slow motion, the streets didn’t show high activity and the weather itself was quite hard. In one of the villages during the first day of the fieldwork it was very cold and it snowed during the afternoon; we were not sure to be able to come back the next day for the third focus group discussions. In one FGD in particular, participants laughed showing embarrassment when talking about their living conditions and trying to explain the difficulties they had in coping with the necessities of day-to-day life, what they have as resources being barely sufficient to sustain themselves (from the researcher’s observation notes). Several participants mentioned the debts that were accumulating from year to year: *“our expenses are only for eating and drinking, nothing fancy! Between education and food, people can barely keep up.”* *“No head of household is in a comfortable financial situation.”* (Participants FGD1)

These villages are confronted with difficult economic situations and, for most of them, share the same characteristic: there is one main source of income (tobacco or olives; quarries and stones or fruit orchards) and this source is seasonal. However

there are other sources of income (however limited) since participants mentioned a small business, property of the husband and in which they collaborated (butchery, clothes store, small restaurant, bookshop...) or that the head of household worked as public servant (or had a retirement pension from), in the armed forces. *"We live on the retirement pension of my husband (from the Internal Security Forces), it is true that it is very little, but it is ok"* (Participant FGD13). Finally, many of them have a taxi driving license that they use on irregular basis, sometimes to benefit from the Social Security Fund. Participants mentioned the fact that very often their husbands need to combine several little sources of income in order to be able to sustain their families. *"My husband is retired from the army, so we have the retirement pension; and he also has a pick up that we use to transport products. My children are young, they do not work"* (Participant FGD5).

The case of 'Arsal is a little bit different because there are two main sources of income: the quarries and the orchards of fruit trees (mainly cherries and apricots). If it is not mentioned as such, it might be because the revenue it creates is available only once a year, after harvest, and is dedicated most of the time for reimbursement of credit loans and school fees. *"Paying is always done on a seasonal basis (after harvesting and selling the product)."* (Participant FGD1). *"In the shop everything works on credit, but when they get the tobacco money, they pay me."* (Participant FGD2). *"There are the orchards, but this income comes only in the summer: cherry and apricot trees. In 'Arsal in general everybody has this second source of income; even if they are all teachers, in the summer they go to work in the orchards."* (Participant FGD5)

The question of the irregularity of income and subsequent instability of the household's living conditions was brought up by participants: *"Income is on a day to day basis. When my husband works and has an income, there is no problem if the family asks for a special food, but the day he doesn't work, I will cook without meat"* *"we are all in the same situation"* (Participants, FGD1). *"Here the "olive's season" is every two years"*(Participant FGD13). *"We used to earn a lot from olive production, not anymore. Nowadays everything has changed"* (Participant FGD13). Participants to focus group discussions explained the process through which the majority goes: they work the whole year, live on credit and spent their money before even being sure to get it. Once a year they sell their harvest and receive their money, a sum that is usually automatically used to reimburse the credit loans. *"We have to take loans from the bank and we spend it on the household. We reimburse it from the tobacco (money), from year to year"* (Participant FGD16).

Participants expressed the feeling that they are in constant struggle to survive, facing financial difficulties that puts them in a vicious circle of loans, need to work and multiple sources of income in order to pay back the loans. *"We rent a land:*

5 dunums³⁴, each dunum for 100 or 150 to which you have to add fertilizers (cow manure) and the tobacco that you need to plant... If we wanted to hire the services of workers, than we would have to knock on the doors and beg for money. That's why we work, we work to eat. If we work, we eat, if we do not work, we don't eat. At the end of the year, the bank wants something from you, and the small shop wants..." (Participant FGD16). "We rely on the tobacco (for income) but this year for example we gave the product of the season and we still owe 15 million" (Participant FGD16). To this rather sombre picture one must add the fact that several families have said that they had to rebuild their houses (sometimes two or three times) during their adult life.

In order to reduce as much as possible the expenses, the head of household, when the main source of income is from agriculture, does not hire workers, even temporarily, when members of the household can do the job and not be paid for it. "If I have time to work, I help in tobacco processing" (Participant FGD1). "The main source of income is the orchards (cherry and apricot). My sister and I do the picking, my father the ploughing" (Participant FGD5). Sometimes it might be working for the extended family. "My father in law plants tobacco and I help him so he doesn't have to pay for a worker" (Participant FGD1). Nearly all young participants mentioned the fact that during the harvest, in the summer, they work in the orchards, picking fruits, and spare their parents the necessity of hiring seasonal workers.

In villages like Deir Al-Ahmar, Aita Shaab and Siddiqin, living conditions being difficult and economic survival often depending on a sole source, the women find themselves compelled to cultivate tobacco, whether they are cultivators or employees, nurses, teachers, owners of a small shop or housewives. This work is to be added to their everyday's work as mothers, caregivers and housekeepers as well as a member of a social community. "In the village, whatever one can do as savings he does" (Participant FGD7). Women prepare everything themselves and try to reduce expenses as much as possible.

The villages do not offer a lot of job opportunities for women and when possibilities exists (sometimes in remote villages), women consider that it is not in their interest to work as employees or teachers because of the low remuneration that would barely cover for their transportation. "With regard to schoolteacher, her salary is very limited. She has to suffer and go and come, having her house and her job, all this for something little. You lose your time with no results!" (Participant FGD14). "Young women can work during the olive's harvest season in Hasbaya, they work for one or two months. There are some shops in the village, clinics and nursing, all these possibilities for girls, but there is the problem of transportation" (Participant FGD8).

34 Unit of area measure inherited from the Ottoman Empire and corresponding approximately to 1000 square meters

Despite everything, participants considered that their life was not so bad and that they had nothing to envy from urban communities, especially from a financial point of view. *“You can say that families here are self-sufficient and autonomous. Village’s life is different from the city, you don’t have to pay for the rent of your house, you can go to the fields and pick what you need and prepare a meal”* (Participant FGD16). They also say that some things have improved and life is a little easier: *“in the past, we used to go to the fields on donkeys, now we go by car”* (Participant FGD16).

No opportunities, no horizons

After having described to the research team all the financial difficulties encountered to cope with everyday’s life, the participants were eager to share with the team their feeling of despair regarding the future of the village. This is particularly true in the village of Deir Al Ahmar (one of the participants (FGD1) expressed this feeling in strong words: *“People are living from lack of dying”*³⁵) but also present, in a lesser way, in the other villages: *“There is nothing encouraging, no perspective, I only see myself accomplished through my children”* (Participant FGD6). The limited financial means do nothing to improve the situation; a vicious circle is installed from which there is no way out. *“People live on credit, they just go from one thing to another, the credit goes for a while and people forget and lose their rights”* (Participant FGD11). *“From working the tobacco you get tired and stay awake late at night. You work 14 months for tobacco, you are indebted to the bank, you need to reimburse the bank and you ask for more credit. The product of the tobacco is for the bank. If the season was not successful, you have to put from your pocket for everything: rent, ploughing, chemicals and fertilizers... You get nothing for your hard work and you children’s hard work”* (Participant FGD16). These difficult financial situations limit the possibilities to change the household livelihood. *“My son studied to be a hairdresser and has his diploma, but we do not have money to open him a salon”* (Participant FGD16). Sometimes families need to make choices imposed on them by the work load (of several activities) and have as consequences the impossibility to improve their income. *“We had to stop planting tobacco because we couldn’t take care of the shop and agriculture”* (Participant FGD18).

When they were asked if they could improve their living conditions by contributing through small agricultural work in their garden (that is in their household premises), participants of the housewives category in most communities mentioned the main challenge they would face: the question of water. There is lack of water, particularly during the summer months, and this scarcity of a major element has a double repercussion on a potential economically productive labour: they cannot plant vegetables for everyday consumption (*“the weather and the lack*

35 The expression that was used in Arabic was: “Al ‘ayesh ‘ayesh min qalli al mawt” العايش عايش من قلة الموت

of water do not facilitate growing watermelon, tomatoes, cucumbers...”, Participant FGD1) and they can even less cultivate in order to produce the *muneh* in quantity to be able to sell their “home made products”. “We have no capital to be able to make *kishk* or pickled eggplants (*makdus*) and sell our production” “We cannot buy the raw material, it is not a question of being able to work, we are better than others for that” (Participant FGD1). “We prepare everything for the *muneh* at home (*labneh*, wine leaves, drying vegetables, tomatoes...); some things we buy when it is the season and the prices are low” (Participant FGD5). Because of this scarcity of water, no alternatives are possible, which makes it difficult for participants to think about changing their living conditions: “there is no agricultural alternative to tobacco because there is no water” (Participant FGD1).

Another challenge is the market: there are no opportunities to sell the potential products of women’s work. “The problem of apricots and cherries is the market, and the prices are in competition” (Participant FGD6). When they work in agriculture despite the difficulties (lack of water and harsh weather), women are confronted to a new problem: finding markets to be able to sell their products. “If I work, where would I sell the produce?” (Participant FGD1). “There is the problem of the market: if I prepare the *muneh* and I leave it at home (no place to sell), then what is the use?” (Participant FGD6)

The lack of working opportunities and the scarcity of entertainment and leisure activities for young people lead them to migration: they leave the villages for their studies, coming back occasionally for holidays and important events, most of the time settling in Beirut. Several participants from the different villages mentioned the fact that young people were facing an economic and social situation that induced them to leave the village not only in order to pursue their studies but because there was no working opportunities for them. This was even stronger for inhabitants of South Lebanon where war and its consequences were added to an already critical context.³⁶

The general feeling of participants with regard to their way of life can be summarized in this description: “We had just finished from the banks (loans) when part of our house was destroyed and needed renovation. The indemnities we received were not sufficient. We took a new loan from the bank. When we got married, $\frac{3}{4}$ of my husband’s salary was going to reimburse the credits and I was contributing up to 80% to household expenses. We were living in a very limited way. Even for food you could not satisfy yourself; no going out, only from your house to your work. We were living a simple life, normal life (not too much or too little)” (Participant FGD11)

36 It is also to be noted that part of the difficulties encountered in setting up our FGD with young women was due to this fact.

WOMEN'S WORK AND WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Men keep their image of main breadwinners

Whether they work outside the house or not and whatever their age group, all participants consider that the head of household is the man, whether he is the husband, the father or the brother. This is in accordance with what was found in the literature review. *"My husband is a carpenter, he is the breadwinner. My two eldest sons are engaged and they are putting aside for their marriage. They help for the expenses... What I gain from the shop, I reinvest in the business by buying material"* (Participant FGD5). *"My young brothers work but they cover their expenses, only my father spends on the house, he is the main provider, my brother helps a little"* (Participant FGD6). *"My father is the main breadwinner (he is a butcher and my mother has a boutique)"* (Participant FGD3). As previously seen, the husband and/or father are supposed to be the main provider of the household economic needs and the other members' contribution is rather a secondary source used for less important needs. *"Of course his income is more important"* (Participant FGD18). *"My brothers help us for more than half of the household expenses"* (Participant FGD9). This income is used on household expenses and not to cover individuals and personal needs. *"We used to have one main source of income: my father sending money from abroad. My father died, now there is my brother who works at the Governmental Hospital. The income is spent on the household: 15% for individual needs 90% for household expenses"* (Participant FGD8).

In some cases, the father is considered as the main provider of the family even if the mother works (and might have a regular income) because he earns more than her and because he adds several jobs in order to have an income that covers the expenses. *"It is always the man who works here and there to make a living"* (Participant FGD15). *"My mother has a fish shop... Our household relies on my father's work because my mother has associates. If my father's income diminishes, my mother helps him"* (Participant FGD17).

Rare are the women who present themselves as an important source of income and those who do, speak more of equality in contribution rather than providing a large percentage of the household income; they also share family expenses. *"Both me and my husband provide the income". "My husband and I we complete each other (50-50%) our salaries are the same"* (Participants FGD2). *"Both of us work; my husband is an employee and has a limited salary. I receive my salary at the end of the year." "The expenses for clothes for the children, books, heating oil and debts for the big expenses, all this is on me and he pays for the normal house expenses"*(Participant FGD5). The

few participants who consider being the main source of income do so because they are single: *"I contribute well, it depends on my work. In general, I put 60% and my brothers 40% of household expenses"* (Participant FGD18, she lives alone with her parents and the brothers are married). The other situation that explains women being the main source of income is when they have a regular income, which is not the case of their husband, especially if he is an agricultural worker. *"I am the main provider of the house because my salary is regular. My husband works by hours, whatever he gets paid he gives it for the house."* *"Only my salary from school, there is no other income (my salary is regular)"* (Participants FGD5). *"I pay for all the household expenses from my work. I raised 5 girls and a boy and married all of them, all from my work and my fatigue"* (Participant FGD13). Participants stressed the importance of the regularity of income in relation to the feeling of insecurity and seasonal work of their husband which makes that money "gets in" once a year, after the harvest. There are however some working women who believe that they contribute to the amount of 50% or even 70% to the economic sustainability of their families. They do not always express it frankly, as if this would discredit and put shame on their husband. *"I do not pretend to have participated as much but my "sisters" know"* (Participant FGD11). These women try to explain these exceptions by saying that they have found themselves in difficult situations that have forced them to play this role: father's death, father's illness, imprisonment or loss of employment.³⁷

When the husband is unemployed, the only income is provided by the woman, for example if she has a shop (children clothes, toys...). *"The household income is 100% from me. He doesn't work; very rarely he helps me in the shop... Everything is on me"* (Participant FGD18). Another special case: *"I am the owner of a shop where I work with my husband. I had this shop before my marriage, I kept it. My husband used to be a bus driver, now he cannot drive anymore. He stays with me in the shop, but everything is on me: I buy the things for the shop, clients come for me... He only replaces me when I have to go out; sometimes he takes care of the children"* (Participant FGD18). Finally, it might be a temporary situation: the wife's income contributes largely to the household expenses because the husband has started a new business and has credits that he needs to reimburse. *"I take money from him, he is not negative; but in general, household expenses are on me. If I am squeezed, I take money from him"* (Participant FGD18).

For housewives participants, the fact of not being able to contribute financially and be the main provider for their family might originate from the fact that they do not have the skills and that they didn't go to university (no questions were

³⁷ It is to be noted that participants in 'Arsal declared more easily that they do contribute to household income, if not in a large part, at least quasi-equally with their husbands/brothers. This state of mind could be the consequence of the long experience of the villagers with NGOs working in social development and women empowerment (and the fact that the FGD was held in the premises of CRTD.A's center).

directly asked on their level of education, however in the discussions it appeared that most of them didn't go far in their studies) in order to be able to enter the labour market. However, another important factor to take into consideration is the fact that their husbands would not have accepted this easily, as is the case of two women who used to work but stopped their paid activity once they got married, under pressure from their husbands: *"My husband has a photography studio and he is doing well. He is also member of the municipality council. I used to work before in a dispensary, but he didn't like it, he always complained and asked me to stay at home."* *"It wouldn't be possible for me to open an office (I studied interior decoration), it is a bit difficult. As a man, he doesn't accept this idea a lot, that I go out of the house a lot or out of the village, this is a bit difficult."* (Participants FGD6).

When the children help financially their parents by sending money from abroad, it is usually within the same scheme of men being financially responsible for their families since it is the sons (or brothers) who sustain their relatives. *"I have a brother abroad, he is responsible for everything, all the big expenses are on him"* (Participant FGD7). The same goes for adult single children sustaining their parents' household because they work while the father is retired or sick and disabled, thus unable to work. *"My brother is in the Army, he is the main provider"* (Participant FGD9). The exception, the case when the daughter is the main provider, occurred in a household constituted of three women (the father being deceased and the others brother and sisters married and taking care of their own households): *"I am a teacher and I am taking charge of the family... I also give private lessons"* (Participant FGD9).

Women's work: a support system

As previously seen, men contribute to a large part (some participants estimated around 70%) to the household income, however this is not always sufficient to cover all the expenses and that is why women engage in income generating activities of all sorts, in order to complement the input. In villages where a particular harvest prevails, they contribute actively to picking, treating, preparing for consumption and processing of olives, tobacco leaves, or fruits. These activities, along with the preparation of the *muneh*, are undertaken whether or not the women have already an income generating work (because the latter is never considered important enough). However, there are exceptions due to particular conditions (need to help the family, the father having died leaving small children to be taken care of) and women become the main providers. It is the case of an elder sister who started working and took charge of her family, it was considered as something new and a change in the traditional role attributed to women in the village. *"The need forced me to enter the labour market. I am the first woman to have left the village and studied more than 20 years ago"* (Participant FGD8).

Sometimes women define themselves as housewives and not working, despite the fact that they are practically the main providers of their household, their husbands being too old to work or working on irregular basis. *"I use the money (gained from selling the muneh directly or through the cooperative or exhibitions) for household expenses. When my husband did not have a salary, I used to make enough to cover all expenses. There are a lot of things that I buy for the house, the car, a lot of things"* (Participant FGD13). However this contribution is considered as temporary, mostly because the resulting income is not regular and sufficient enough to sustain the family. *"I do all kind of muneh for the house; I also tried to work from home by selling insecticides for tobacco culture, but the results were not important, nobody helped us"* (Participant FGD16). *"All this helps for the current month, but it does not give big results in the long term"* (Participant FGD16). These women's work is more considered as a support system in times of hardship rather than a regular income source: *"I used to work and the expenses were distributed between my husband and me because we were still building the house. I used to contribute because my husband didn't have a regular job"* (Participant FGD8).

Participants do not consider that they contribute to their household livelihood, and this is particularly true for housewives and young girls. They work to help their husbands or other male relatives. This form of contribution is a plus, some kind of bonus that permits the family to get to the end of the month. Often, this is also seen as a supplementary income that can be used for household's extra needs. *"I work with my husband. You can say that like this my husband saves the salary of a worker. I also work at home and in the snack."* *"Anyhow like this my husband saves the salary of a worker"* (Participants FGD2). *"The expenses for clothes for the children, books, heating oil and debts for the big expenses, all this is on me and he pays for the normal house expenses"*(Participant FGD5). It might be something that the woman is going to use herself, however to the benefit of the whole household, her income being a supplement (to the main income) that she manages as she pleases. *"I bought a car from my work earnings and I bought things that help me in household work. This is from my production. In exchange for what I do, I brought a car for me"* (Participant FGD11). When asked about the role of these income generating activities in the household economy, it appears that it is generally used for *"personal needs"* but when asked about what those needs are, it is clear that the extra money is used for special expenses of the family (sometimes even for the husband) *"Everything goes back to the family"*; *"I had barely started working in the cooperative and my husband wanted to buy something, so I gave him the money"* (Participants FGD7).

Young women who have finished or interrupted school do not always seek work outside the household or any kind of remunerated work. Rather, they stay at home, helping their mother (who might be herself working outside the

house) accomplish her duties as a housewife and a mother. Those women might somehow contribute to income generating activities undertaken by their mothers (for example baking bread that is intended to be sold, the main income source of this family), thus playing a role in the support system relying on women. In the rare case of a young woman knitting and selling the product of her work, the small revenue that she gets from it will be used to cover her own expenses and not incorporated in the household income (Participant FGD9, talking about her sister).

In all the villages where tobacco cultivation is a main activity, nearly all participants contribute and work in this agricultural field that provides an important income, even if it is not always directly cashed because they live on credit: it is only at the end of the year that they recuperate the income deriving from tobacco and the money is used to reimburse the debts. It is to be noted that tobacco farming is not considered as “work” by participants, especially by housewives: they presented themselves as housewives, not working, but in the course of the discussion it appeared that they dedicated a good amount of their time to this income producing activity that is often the main source of livelihood for the family. This is an example of the difficulty of separating what is “inside” and what is “outside” of the household and in correlation what is household work and what is remunerated work. *“My husband works in his poultry farm, my children and I in the tobacco farming. To live we rely on the tobacco (income)”* (Participant FGD16). *“When they come back from school, children help in tobacco work”* (Participant FGD16). *“Tobacco work load is on the housewife, on women”* (Participant FGD16). *“Nobody works, but all of us work for the tobacco”* (Participant FGD17). However, this work is indirectly recognized as such because women consider that they are a substitute for hiring seasonal workers, a fact that would impose supplementary expenses on the husband (meaning the household). *“For the processing of tobacco leaves (drying and packing), I work with my husband so he doesn’t have to hire a worker.”* *“I help my husband when I am free of my household work”* (Participants FGD1). *“I also had to help my father in tobacco farming during the war, every day in the afternoon. We have orchards, in summer I help collecting cherries and apricots. I do not get paid, but this saves to hire a worker”* (Participant FGD4).

Considered from this angle, tobacco is the archetype (or model) of women’s contribution in household economy. Women are responsible for cultivating tobacco in order to increase the family income (that will be used to buy a house in Beirut for the children when they migrate to continue their studies, or furnish their house, pay for school tuition ...). Women are in charge of tobacco culture but are supported in this task by the whole family. In order to stand by their responsibilities, they need sometimes to wake up at 4am to go to the fields and

when they return home they dedicate themselves to daily household chores: meal preparation, cleaning and tidying, child care and supervising children's homework... The same can be said in Deir Mimas where women play an important role in the harvest of olives (which is the main agricultural activity in the village and constitute the major element in the village's livelihood). However, they do not define themselves as "working" but rather as accomplishing their duties as housewives. During harvest, all women (of all ages) are put to contribution in this major activity.

Agricultural work is generally not considered as work by participants, even if many mentioned the orchards (fruits, olives, grapes...) as second source of income and said that they "helped" in picking the fruits and cultivating the land (vegetables, cereals...). *"I have a land with olive trees that I inherited from my mother. We harvest these trees and we have clients that are used to us. We make the oil here"* (Participant FGD13). In some villages, young women who are not married contribute largely to the agricultural work in tobacco; they often replace their mothers when the latter have a remunerated activity outside the household. *"I do not work, we plant tobacco; I harvest and hang to dry the leaves. For the tobacco, we all work together"* (Participant FGD17). This activity is not considered as work but rather as a secondary and complementary source of income that is incumbent on women (it comes under their duties as housewives). *"We have some olive trees. I pick the olives with the help of my children"* (Participant FGD18).

Participants who were the more concerned by income generating activities and their contribution to household economy were obviously those of the category of "working women". Most of them were working in the formal sector (teachers, nurses, shopkeepers...) while at the same time having a foot in the informal sector (when they "work" without being paid to help their husbands). For working participants, despite the fact that they have a remunerated activity, theirs is not the main source of income. This is reinforced by the fact that their husbands do not always accept their contribution to the household expenses and that what they earn is to be spent by and for them. *"My husband is a kind of man that refuses to take anything from a woman. If I want to spend money I do it for myself"* (Participant FGD5). There is also the fact that for some, their occupation is not considered as work but more of a hobby: *"I have a small shop for clothes, I kill the time and I earn a little"* (Participant FGD6). Within the same perspective (to be able to financially help their husbands), women try to find a small job (seasonal in agriculture, harvesting or working in a cooperative) in order to have a special fund that will be used to cover some of the expenses of the family. *"For example, in the season of olives, I go to the fields with my mother. I spare her to pay for a worker and I am sure to get good olives and oil"* (Participant FGD7). *"In the summer I have a small shop*

where I sell thing for the muneh and it works well” (Participant FGD13). “I work in the grocery store when my husband goes to the cooperative. Income is provided by my husband; I help him but I don’t have an individual work” (Participant FGD13). There are however some exceptions, participants who do consider being the main provider because they have a regular income while the head of household has a seasonal revenue. “I am in charge of the shop from morning till evening. Add to this housework and muneh. As for my contribution to the income, it is possible that I contribute to more than 60%” (Participant FGD2).

For young participants, the case is a slightly different, they are not really contributing to the household income, but by having a small paid job, they can at least cover their own personal expenses, afford little extras and consequently reduce as much as they can household expenses and the load on their parents. “I work in the cooperative during the summer but I keep the money for my expenses (in the summer I take nothing from my parents).” “For some time I worked as a telephone clerk (I used to do my homework during these hours). I was not paid but they reduced the school fees” (Participants FGD3). “I give private lessons to earn a little money” (Participant FGD9). “I help my mother in her shop which is within our house so I know when there is a client. It is a contribution by my presence only” (Participants FGD3).

A major contribution from women to the household economy is the fact that they are often in charge of managing the household budget (considered their domain because it is in direct relation with their responsibilities). “If we need to buy a gift and I give to my husband 500.000, he might buy only one gift with this amount. Men do not know how to manage money and make savings. He gives me money at the beginning of the month and I manage to go through the month with it” (Participant FGD14). It is within this field (budget management) that their real contribution can be seen.

Intangible work: the savings³⁸

Women’s contribution to household income is generally presented as being indirect: women consider that they contribute to the family’s economy (sometimes even in a significant way), but through the savings and the good management of the household’s budget, not through income generating activities. This major contribution is made by different means: it could be teaching children, or

38 At first, participants in FGD with working women did not consider the type of activity described here as work because they work outside the house and they consider these activities as something normal in the routine of the household. The moderator of the FGD had to explain her question to get answers. “If it has to be considered as income generating, it should be asked only from housewives” said one of the participants of FGD2.

preparing *muneh* but also manual work such as knitting, sewing or embroideries and knowing how to manage on a tight budget.

The main income producing activity (even in an indirect way) that was talked about by the majority of participants is the preparation of the *muneh*³⁹. In this domain, close to the informal economy (but not totally identical because not always remunerated), all categories of participants are concerned, whether they have an income generating work or not. “I buy the vegetable (eggplants, tomatoes...) during summer when the prices are low and I preserve them in jar. In winter vegetables are expensive” (Participant FGD1). “I prepare jams from figs and apricots (from my parents’ trees), preserved eggplants and green beans, burghul, kishk, and zaatar. My sister in law has milk, so I make labneh and cheese. I also plant parsley and mint” (Participant FGD6). “I make bread on the tannur (I never buy bread), burghul, kishk, the *muneh* for the house (makdus, pickles, lentils...) so I buy nothing in winter; apricots and cherries are made in jams, all for the house, unless someone needs some and then I give it as a gift.” “I know how to sew and I take nothing to the dressmaker.” “Everything I need I do it at home” (Participant FGD5). “I like to help preparing the *muneh*, when my mother does it I stay with her” (Participant FGD3).

Muneh is the main mean of cutting corners, saving money for the household. It is not considered as “real work”, particularly because it is not remunerated, and as such it might be considered as the archetype of invisible work, especially when it is not sold, and doesn’t have a money value attributed to it. All participants in the focus groups that were held with housewives made mention of the fact that they all prepared the *muneh* for internal consumption in the household. “Everybody prepares the *muneh* for the household, but nobody sells it” (Participant FGD1). “We make jams: figs, cherries, peaches and burghul. We do not sell; it is only for the house” (Participant FGD4). “I prepare the basic *muneh*: pickles, makdus, tomatoes... not kishk” “My parents in law have a goat so they provide us with dairy products and this helps me save money” (Participant FGD5). “My mother makes everything at home, not for sale” (Participant FGD8). Usually what might be sold is the surplus *muneh* produced, in some sort it is a by-product of the household economy and not a voluntary decision to produce in order to sell. “If we have a surplus we sell” (Participant FGD6). Often this task is shared with women friends or neighbours; they help each other, sometimes going to different houses in order to help each housewife in the preparation of her *muneh*, and daughters are also put to contribution. “Most of the work that I do with my mother consists in helping her to make labneh or preparing the eggplant. I also make sweets at home” (Participant FGD9).

39 Even in Deir al Ahmar where women are confronted to scarcity of water and consequent difficulties in growing vegetables.

All the basics are being made at home, usually from what has been harvested in the groves or in the kitchen garden. *“Almost every house prepares the muneh for household consumption. Every year we also make labneh (dried and preserved in olive oil). Our houses in winter look empty if we do not have burghul, kishk and zaatar.”* *“For example now it is the lemon season. We make juice and then syrup so in summer we do not have to buy from the market”* (Participants FGD13). *“We prepare also the plants for infusions and herbal teas... People go and pick the herbs in the wild fields, we all do”* (Participant FGD13). In this category of activity we can also include making bread and baking cakes. *“Homemade bread is cheaper; I plant vegetables for the house, not to sell, and I am self-sufficient, for me and my brothers”* (Participant FGD8). *“I bake cakes at home”* (Participant FGD9). Every effort is made in order to save money while at the same time offering proper food to the family on a tight budget: *“Instead of buying two kilos of meat for cooking, you manage to prepare the meal for the family with half a kilo”* (Participant FGD11). Part of the savings and good management of the household budget consists in preparing meals and food provisions for the children living in Beirut for their studies. This will allow the children to have healthy meals and at the same time spend less during their stay in the capital, thus putting less strain on the family’s budget.

Some participants told that they prepare the products with the intention of selling it: *“I prepare kishk and sell it because people ask for it... When the times are difficult, for the Eid I also prepare maamoul⁴⁰ and sell them to houses; I could cover the expenses of the Eid. I bake bread and sometimes I also sell bread”* (Participant FGD5). *“I take the vegetables from my land and I prepare them, and I sell what I can, the rest is offered as gifts for visitors (from outside the village)”* (Participant FGD8). Offering a gift that has been handmade can also be considered as a saving (saving the money to buy the gift): *“If necessary I offer what I have made, but to a special person, someone who would really appreciate it”* (Participant FGD7). *“We distribute our small honey production among relatives or as gifts”* (Participant FGD18).

When the conditions allow it, participants (particularly housewives) have a small plot of land, generally in their garden, where they plant vegetables that are used on a day to day basis: onions, mint, parsley, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc...; they also try to save on dairy products if they, or one of their relatives, have cows or goats. *“I also plant mint, parsley, tomatoes, but I need to buy water so I find it less expensive to buy these vegetables”* (Participant FGD6). *“I save on the expenses of dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese) with the cow that I own. However this is not profitable because feeding the cow costs now the double than before”* (Participant FGD1). This,

40 *Maamoul* is a pastry traditionally prepared for religious celebrations (Easter, Eid el Fitr, Eid el Adha...). It consists of a shortbread paste (from semolina) filled with a mix of nuts and sugar or dates (perfumed with rosewater and orange blossom water), and molded in domes (in wooden molds or by hand) before being cooked in the oven.

along with bread, consist the basis of the household food consumption. *“The raw products such as wheat I take from my father in law, I help him during harvest and he gives me wheat. I also make bread, once a month or every 15 days. I have a small plot with mint, it covers my needs and I give to all my friends”* (Participant FGD6). *“When I have a bag of flour, I make bread; I economize (for my husband) the price of the bag of bread”* (Participant FGD1). *“We plant wheat and with that we do the burghul and kishk. We do everything on wood fire, we also do apricot and cherry jams (from our trees)”* (Participant FGD6). *“In general, we grow tomatoes, chickpeas... but we don’t sell”* (Participant FGD7). All this small agricultural work is done with the objective of sparing the household part of the expenses to cover basic needs, and the produce might be shared with the extended family. *“I used to do everything: plant mulukhieh and dry the leaves, the same with parsley, mint, coriander and figs, preserves of wine leaves... I used to give to my parents and the neighbours. I did all this to save and avoid buying from the market. It was for household consumption and not for sale”* (Participant FGD16). *“It’s been a little more than a month since I last bought parsley. There are little things to which people do not give importance, but that are savings”* (Participant FGD7). *“We all plant tomatoes, mint, green onions, whatever. I plant with my two sisters-in-law and we harvest for the whole household, we eat and we give to eat”* (Participant FGD7). Most of the participants stressed the importance of having this plot of land and using it to grow produce that would be used by the family, even if in some cases the expenses involved with tending to this small plot are more than the potential income: *“sometimes we pay for these produce more than we actually harvest”* (Participant FGD10).

As far as small manual activities are concerned, not all participants know how to sew and knit, but most of them use these skills (when they have them) to do small repairs, make a pullover for the children, or create a piece that will serve as a small gift, all this resulting in savings for the family (no need to go to the dressmaker). *“I know how to sew, but I only use it for myself and the house (repairing things), not for people.”* *“I have followed training in sewing so if I need I can sew a small thing, curtains for the house, covers for chairs and even bags or trousers for my children”* (Participants FGD6). *“I knit but I don’t have the means to buy a knitting machine. I also learned how to sew, but cannot buy a sewing machine. Anyhow, nobody asks for handmade clothes anymore, they all buy readymade because it is less expensive”* (Participant FGD1). *“For example I do crochet and embroidery, I don’t sell, I do what I need for the house, I also make sweets for the house”* (Participant FGD7). These activities are also considered as savings and, as such, contribution to a good management of the family’s budget. What needs to be noted here is that in Deir Al Ahmar, the young generation is slowly loosing the know-how and in consequence is less inclined to consider these skills as “normal knowledge”, but rather ask for training sessions to reclaim what their grandmothers knew and mastered. In

general young participants considered that they had some artisanal techniques, however, they didn't use it for commercial purposes: *"I make gloves and kilts, for me and my brothers."* *"We have a sewing machine, if we need it we don't need to go to the dressmaker"* (Participants FGD4). *"We all sew by hand: pillowcases, cushions, quilts... we avoid asking from an artisan and like this we save money for our children"* (Participant FGD16).

It is interesting to note that when talking about the savings (whatever the form of these savings), women participants present it as savings for their husbands, they do not mention the household; confirming, if need be, in an indirect way that man is the main provider of the household and that this point of view is totally assimilated and translated in women's own perceptions. *"This is the way I economize for my husband (there are less expenses for my husband)"* (Participant FGD1). *"If the wife buys something for the house (ex. vegetables), it can be considered as a form of saving for the husband (because she will not ask money from him)"* (Participant FGD5). *"When we make lemon juice and syrup, it is true that we have to pay for the sugar, but in the end it is cheaper and healthier than offering juice that has been bought for guests"* (Participant FGD13). The will to save as much money as possible goes sometimes quite far: *"When I iron in winter I use an iron heated with wood, it saves money"* (Participant FGD7), but it can also be accomplished through simple acts: not going to the hairdresser or beauty salon and having the hair or manicure done at home. *"We all do our own washing, brushing and straightening our hair at home"* (Participant FGD9). By doing that, they are saving money and some young women consider that this is their contribution to the family's budget (Participants FGD15). Young women contribute largely to these savings, even if it is not considered as such by the participants themselves, because in their views they only assist their mothers in the preparation of their everyday tasks. It is to be noted that not all young women have the capacities for helping their mothers in all these "saving activities", the knowhow being lost and not transmitted from generation to generation (thus it all depends on the individuals interests).

Finally, participants often mentioned the fact that all these savings, all these indirect contributions to the household budgeting, were something innate for them as mothers and housewives (whether working or not) and mostly done for the benefit of their children. *"Saving is a natural process (that is part of us)"* (Participant FGD2). *"We all do something. If we need something for the house, we do not consider ourselves first when we have a young man or young woman in the house, we have to provide them with the maximum"* (Participant FGD6). *"We save on our personal expenses because the most important thing is to be able to provide food to our children and that they lack of nothing"* (Participant FGD1). *"I am a housewife like all women. We like to limit our expenses, for example instead of buying burghul, we prepare*

it ourselves; the same goes for zaatar, oil... Sometimes we go to the fields and pick wild herbs and vegetables and in the summer we plant some vegetables.”(Participant FGD16)

‘Arsal particularity: the common fund, an initiative allowing flexibility in the budget

The focus groups that were held in ‘Arsal revealed a particularity of the village (as compared to the others communities under study) with regard to financial means and women: the system of a common fund from which each member benefits in turn. This system represents for most of the women their “secret fund” that they manage as they wish; it was mainly mentioned when participants were asked what their strategies were to help improve their household’s livelihood and if there was other source of income. *“I participate in an association; we give 100.000 LBP and in two years we get 2 million. As soon as I get them, I give it for the schools fees”* (Participant FGD6). This system is apparently commonly used in the village: *“In general in ‘Arsal we participate in these associations. I do not have money in the bank and I can buy something that pleases me for the house when I want to.”* (Participant FGD6).

This is not work per se but is directly related to household work since the money used as input in the fund by these women (only housewives) is money that is under their control because it is taken from the house budget (it consists of savings or money gained selling surplus of *muneh* or bread or *maamoul*): *“This is house money, he has nothing to do with it”*(Participant, FGD6), plus the money is being reinvested in the household, directly or indirectly (construction work, marriage of one of the children...). Taken as such, it is close in nature to the situation of working women and the way they use the money earned by them. *“I always follow this system of common fund, but I don’t want my husband to know because we are building a house... When I received the sum of money, I gave it to the workers doing the tiling. I am contributing to the house with money from the house expenses. This does not concern my husband”* (Participant FGD6). *“We have a small bread oven in front of the house that we rent for 200USD per month. I was also a member of an association before. We assemble a certain sum and at the end of the year we buy gold and we use it when a child gets married (gift). I did this for my children”* (Participant FGD6).

HOUSEHOLD WORK: DOMESTIC TASKS AND CARE

Domestic tasks: an everyday burden for women

Women (mothers, daughters or grandmothers) are generally considered responsible of all housework: ironing, dishwashing, laundry, sweeping, dusting... as well as preparing meals and *muneh*. For all participants, housework is primarily the responsibility of women; whether they are housewives [*“My husband doesn’t help me at all at home. All the workload is on me because my children are studying (school or university): feeding them, cleaning...”* (Participant FGD1). *“I do the housework. My mother, thank God, is in good health and she can still help us. We help each other if we need something from the market; I help my mother in housework and cooking”*(Participant FGD6)]; working women [*“Nobody helps me with the housework. Sometimes my daughters might take care of their rooms and make their beds, but the rest is all for me, they have their own activities”* (Participant FGD2). *“In the house, I do almost everything: muneh, work, cleaning, cooking”* (Participant FGD9)]; or young women [*“We are 5 girls; all of us do some housework”* (Participant FGD4); *“my sister and I do practically all the housework (dishwashing, cleaning and laundry) because our parents are in the store. We work early, before going to school. If something is left we do it when we come back”* (Participant FGD4). *“Concerning housework, I am with her (the mother) at home, inevitably it is me who helps her”* (Participant FGD9)]. These tasks are mainly attributed to mothers and housewives, one of the participants complains when her mother is not up to the job: *“The role of the mother is in the house, taking care of the children, particularly the girls. I have to clean and stay with my brothers, make them study while my brother does nothing, not even his bed”* (Participant FGD3). Single women living with their parents can also be in charge and responsible of the household, playing the role of the housewife, even if their mother is still alive (this is usually the case when the parents are old and the wife cannot accomplish her role and function): *“I am single but in reality I have the whole responsibility of the household”* (Participant FGD7).

Men will contribute to domestic tasks under special circumstances: if the wife is sick, if she is really overwhelmed by her duties or if she helps him in his work. *“My husband helps me when I help him for the tobacco processing and I need to stay with him from morning to night, so I am behind on my household work.... He helps me for the cooking, laundry, putting things in order...”* *“The same way I help him, he helps me”* (Participant FGD1); *“I do all the housework. But now with my pregnancy he helps me, washes dishes, and sweeps the floor. I do the ironing”* (Participant FGD5). They will also help when the housewife is away for family reasons: *“He was responsible for the children, for the house. He didn’t allow anybody to come to our house to do something (cooking, washing, bath, school)”* (Participant FGD7). *“If I am sick, both*

my children help me, my husband helps me a lot in everything" (Participant FGD13). This help is not always accepted by the women themselves because of the image it gives of the husband: *"I don't like that man works. He has his work in his hands. I don't like that people see him moving a carpet; but when I am alone with him, I don't have a problem"* (Participant FGD13). Whatever the nature of men's contribution, it is generally not asked for but constitutes a choice made by them. *"My husband has diabetes and heart disease. I cannot ask something from him. If he wants to help me he does. If he doesn't, I will not call him"* (Participant FGD18).

Men's contribution to domestic tasks is limited to a certain type of tasks, involving more physical strength, and not of the type done on a regular basis but rather seasonal (during the "spring cleaning"): cleaning carpets, the heating stove, washing the walls... *"He helps me sweep and clean the floor for holidays and special events. He also helps me washing the walls, the carpets, the stove..."* "Concerning the stove, men bring the wood and the heating oil and the women clean it" (Participants FGD6). *"My father takes the stove out because my mother cannot carry it. Anything heavy, my father will carry for her. If he is alone at home, he will heat the food, but not if we are at home"* (Participant FGD17). *"My husband works, does housework: carpets and walls"* (Participant FGD8). *"I clean the house on my own. If he does something, it will be throwing water on the floor"* (Participant FGD13). *"My mother does the ironing, my father washes the carpets. He wants me to do some ironing"* (Participant FGD9). These tasks can be considered as men's tasks within the household. Rare are the participants who mentioned that their husbands or brothers or fathers contributed actively and regularly to the daily domestic tasks. *"My husband helps me a little for the housework, cleaning the house. My daughter also helps me. I do the cooking at night"* (Participant FGD5). *"We help each other inside and outside the house. When my husband has no work he helps me: he heats the meal and sets the table for the children, sometimes puts the washing machine"* (Participant FGD2). *"My husband and my son help me sweeping and cleaning floors"* (Participant FGD1). Shopping for household needs is also the most common task that is shared or done by men: *"For shopping, we all participate when we need something from outside"* (Participant FGD5). *"Sometimes my father does the shopping."* *"My brother, when he wants to help does the shopping"* (Participants FGD4). *"Of course he buys and brings things for the household. Only shopping; housework and cleaning are for us (women)"* (Participant FGD13). However in some families, even this task is included in women's duties. *"To buy clothes we go with our mother. All the shopping is done by my mother"* (Participant FGD17).

When their mothers are occupied (working or helping the head of household in his work), the responsibility incumbent on women to do domestic tasks (sweeping, mopping, dishwashing, laundry and ironing) rest upon their daughters,

particularly the eldest among the daughters. *"I do everything in the house because my mother helps my father in the fields"* (Participant FGD9). *"Sometimes I take care of the laundry or I wash dishes, but grandma and mother are the ones to work the most at home"* (Participant FGD9). *"I do the housework; my mother is in the shop. My mother helps me a little for the cooking and for taking care of my brothers"* (Participant FGD17). Domestic tasks follow the same scheme between brothers and sisters as between husbands and wives: when they help, the brothers accomplish the tasks generally attributed to men (such as helping with cleaning carpets and walls, or small tasks such as putting the table or preparing snacks).

Young men reproduce the model presented by their fathers and elders; they are very rarely involved in domestic chores: *"There is always a woman in the house, so brothers rely on them"* (Participant FGD8). *"My brothers sometimes help: they set the table, sometimes they help with the laundry..."* (Participant FGD9). *"My brother takes care of the stove, and the shopping, my father no... Cleaning, cooking and ironing are for my mother. Everything in the house is my mother"* (Participant FGD8). *"My son helps me; he goes to the vegetable market and buys for me what I need"* (Participant FGD13). The few exceptions show a beginning of change in prevailing attitudes: *"The fact that my brother has started to do some dishwashing is something new"* (Participant FGD8).

Cooking seems to represent women's domain of predilection. As a matter of fact, all participants receiving help from other members of the household insisted on specifying that cooking activity was never delegated. *"My children also help me but for cooking they wait for me"* (Participant FGD6). *"When I work and help my husband, I have to cook the night before"* (Participant FGD2). *"I help my mother cleaning, but my mother cooks"* (Participant FGD4). *"My daughter helps me in the house, she sweeps and cleans the floor, removes the dust but I cook, I cannot rely a lot on her"* (Participant FGD18). This was stressed also by participants to FGD12 who insisted on the fact that even if they contribute largely to housework, cooking remains in the hands of the mother. This task can however be delegated to another housewife: *"My daughter in law's work is the house. My daughters and I take care of the tobacco work and she cooks and does the housework"* (Participant FGD16). When they are absent and someone helps for the meals, it is usually simply a question of putting the table and heating a meal that was already prepared the night before or preparing a simple meal. The few men that cook do it because they like it and not because they have to ensure a proper meal to their family. *"My father also helps my mother cooking because he likes cooking. My mother doesn't let him help her for other things"* (Participant FGD4) *"My father helps a lot my mother: he prepares sandwiches, takes us to school..."* (Participant FGD9). *"As for cooking, my husband makes pizzas"*

and salads, he has no problem; he does very well in the kitchen" (Participant FGD13). *"My father cooks but "guards/soldiers food" (eggs and tomatoes)"* (Participant FGD9).

For all these reasons, working women participants can be said to have double shifts: working hours and household hours; they organize their day according to these two schedules, most often stretching the working hours until late at night and waking up very early in the morning to be able to be up to their responsibilities. *"I come back home at 2pm and I do the housework, preparing food, cleaning, muneh and repairing clothes instead of sending it to the dressmaker; this is saving and the need imposes it on you"* (Participant FGD 2). *"I do all the domestic work. My parents are old; I do everything in the morning before going to school or at night. I do the cooking and the cleaning, sometimes my father helps me, and brings to me what I need. My sister who lives next door helps me also when I need it"* (Participant FGD5).

Unequal sharing of care work

Women not only are responsible of all housework but they are also in charge of children's education (teaching after school and daily attention), assistance to elderly and are active participants in the communities' social life (births, deaths, marriage ...). This can be observed at the level of the distribution of everyday's tasks and duties accomplished by women and it is also translated in the decision making processes revolving around household's life choices.

All participants made it clear that caring for the children and their education is one of the important responsibilities incumbent on women: *"I am also the one to take care of the children when they are sick: I take them to the doctor"* (Participant FGD5). *"Generally making children study is the woman's responsibility"* (Participant FGD6). *"My mother takes care of food, meetings at schools, children"* (Participant FGD3). *"I only raise my children; I don't know how to work outside the house"* (Participant FGD10). In this domain however there is more sharing than for domestic tasks: *"If I am overwhelmed or the child is sick, he takes him to the doctor, gives him medicine. If I need to go out, I leave him (he is two years old) with his father"* (Participant FGD10). *"My husband helps me when I am taking care of the children and their homework"* (Participant FGD1). This type of duty includes helping children in their homework and studies. Women consider that they are helping their families by saving the fees of a private teacher when they help themselves their children with their homework: *"When I help my children with their homework, I save the money of a teacher for the house"* (Participant FGD10).

Rarely do men lead and manage this work, usually it is a punctual help provided when the mother doesn't have the particular required knowledge (for example for a foreign language). *"I help the children in their studies in the afternoon, my husband for the language (foreign), but the children do not study with him"* (Participant FGD7).

“Parents’ meeting at school I go; I also buy their clothes, but it is my husband who goes to register the children for school” (Participant FGD18). The father’s intervention is limited and concerns specific types of activities. *“My husband takes the children to school because I don’t drive”* (Participant FGD2). *“I supervise my son’s homework. My husband helps me a little with the children, they eat with him, they go out together, he might prepare the bottle for the baby and he gives them their medicine; no more than that, he doesn’t give them the bath”* (Participant FGD5). Exceptionally, the head of household plays the role of the caretaker: *“He takes care of me when I am sick and takes me to the doctor”* (Participant FGD6).

Care duties are always given priority over professional duties; this is particularly true for women who are considered as primary persons in charge of these duties. They sometimes have to resign from work or refuse a work opportunity to take care of family members. *“My brother was making me a visa to work in Saudi Arabia, my mother got sick and I couldn’t go anymore, I had to take care of her, to do my duty, to serve her”* (Participant FGD7). It is also true for men, though in a different way: for them it is a question of taking care of the finance and providing for the families (extended family) care expenses (medical insurance, doctor’s visit, medicine...) *“My brothers take my parents to the doctor and pay for the medicines; I take care of them”* (Participant FGD18).

Children’s health care is another women’s responsibility and men participate only when they are unable to cope with all the work. *“When I am here, my husband relies on me, but when I am not, he takes care of everything”* (Participant FGD7). *“If someone is sick, my father, if he is at home, takes him to the doctor. Most of the time it is my mother who does it”* (Participant FGD17). *“If one of the children gets sick, I take him to the doctor because my husband doesn’t want to do it, only if I am busy (with work)”* (Participant FGD18). *“Generally health care is for the mother: she stays late at night for it and she endures and worries more”* (Participant FGD13). In some families however, health care is considered as a shared responsibility for both parents. *“My husband and I we take the children to the doctor. When they are sick, I take them with me to work (shop). If the youngest needs to go to the hospital, I will stay with him and put the eldest with my mother in law. My husband will keep the shop for me while I am at the hospital”* (Participant FGD18).

Participants to the various FGDs mentioned the fact that they had also to take care of the elder relatives and of those who are sick, particularly if they were members of the same household. *“I go to my parents’ because they have nobody to cook, clean the house and help them”* (Participant FGD2). *“My mother in law was living with us; she lived for years bedridden because of osteoporosis. My husband and I were taking care of her”* (Participant FGD13). This is mainly a task for the woman in charge of the household, but it can sometimes be delegated to other women

(generally the daughters or younger sisters) of the family. *“My father in law is paralyzed; my mother in law cannot take care of him by herself, and we all need to serve him”* (Participant FGD1). *“I do not work; I stay at home, at the service of my father in law”*. *“My mother in law lives with us. I wash her, bath her”* (Participant FGD1). *“I take care of my mother (she cannot move), my sister replaces me when I am not here”* (Participant FGD5). *“Whenever she (mother in law) needs a bath, I give her a bath; if she wants to eat, I prepare a meal for her. In the afternoon, my daughter gives her to eat”* (Participant FGD18). Caring for elder people is a difficult and strenuous work, particularly if they are physically handicapped and need to be helped for everyday’s needs: caregivers give them the medicine, the bath, prepare a meal and give them to eat. Participants expressed sometimes the feeling that they endure both a physical and psychological burden: *“My sister and I play the role of a nurse at home. It’s a psychological more than a physical burden”* (Participant FGD7). *“During 5 years I took care of my late father at home, like a doctor, but my brother is in charge for doctors”* (Participant FGD8).

Sometimes care work is provided outside the premises of the household, but because it concerns close relatives of the participants it can be considered as household work. *“I go to my parents’ because they have nobody to cook, clean the house and help them. Then I come back home, finish my work, prepare lunch and go back to help my husband midday”* (Participant FGD2). *“My aunt lived with us during 4 years and I used to take care of her. When my mother in law went for the Hajj, I left my family to stay with him (father in law)”* (Participant FGD5). Help is particularly provided to parents, old people, because the idea of putting them in a nursing home is not accepted. Medical expenses are covered by the Social Security, but the women of the family provide food, daily care, and hygiene (even if the relatives live in another house). *“The young are employees, they subscribe for their parents for Social Security”*. *“Nobody goes to the nursing home. This is totally forbidden, even if it is her in-laws; she (the woman) has to do her duty.”* *“This is a religious duty also”* (Participants FGD7). *“For example X goes every evening to her parent’s house because they need somebody to take care of them, she spends the whole night there”* (Participant FGD8). Young women also contribute to this care work: *“My aunt recently gave birth, we help her in her house, and we receive and take care of the guests who come. My mother also goes and helps”* (Participant FGD17). Sometimes, the help extends to the brother who lives in another house: *“My brothers, when they have guests or a special social occasion, they call me and I go to help and prepare food”* (Participant FGD7).

Care work can also be delegated to other members of the household, most often the daughters or female close relatives living in the same house. *“When I am not home, my daughters help me during their free time (Saturday and Sunday)”*

(Participant FGD5). *“My daughter would help me if I had another productive and useful work”* (Participant FGD2). *“My mother in law lives with us and she does everything”* (Participant FGD2). *“I need to help my mother at home so she can go and work in the fields”* (Participant FGD12). Most often, mothers or mothers in law living in the household play the role of maternal assistant and support for housewives. If their health allows it, grandmothers will share a good part of these duties, particularly if the mother just gave birth to another child or if she is occupied by income generating activities. They will help by watching over small children or a sick member of the family or helping preparing the meal: *“the mother is a good help when we give birth”* (Participant FGD10); *“she does whatever she can do to help prepare the meal: trimming green beans, cleaning parsley...”* (Participants FGD7). Women without daughters either have no help or involve their sons in their responsibilities *“Those who have daughter in their house, she helps a little: washing dishes, sweeping... I don’t have a daughter; nobody helps me”* (Participant FGD6). *“My son helps me because I have no daughters. He sweeps the floor and says to me that there is no shame in helping his mother”* (Participant FGD1).

It is to be noted that the fact that young women take the role and tasks of their mothers when the latter are overwhelmed is particularly true for care work and helping the younger brother and sisters with their homework (a task which is sometimes difficult to accomplish by the mother if she herself has left school at an early age). *“I teach my brothers because my mother doesn’t know how”* (Participant FGD9). *“When we come back from school, my sister and I do the housework, one does the dishwashing at noon and the other at night; one takes care of sweeping, cleaning, laundry and the other helps our brothers for their studies... Our grandparents live upstairs and my sister or I (depending on who is free) do the housework for them”* (Participant FGD17). Usually during school days, the young girls are not asked too much, and their contribution to household work is concentrated during weekends or holidays. *“My mother prefers that I study during school days, but what is important is that I teach my little sister. On holidays, I do the cleaning and my mother cooks”* (Participant FGD12). *“Last year, during the summer, my mother used to go to the fields at 4 in the morning and left my little sister with me. I had to give her the bottle, change her diapers... But during school days, she takes care of her”* (Participant FGD12). *“We are really asked to help in housework during school holidays”* (Participant FGD15).

The fact that care work is attributed to women is reflected at the level of decision making within the household: women have decision making power for decisions regarding their specialized field: domestic work, teaching children and school. This represents their share in the decision making process. *“It depends on the type of decision; sometimes it is the mother who decides, especially for the subject of*

children. The father gives his opinion, if the child is sick, it is the mother who knows if he needs a doctor or not. If it concerns the school, both participate in the decision” (Participant FGD7). “For decision to buy things like a car for the household, it is my father; for things for the house, it is my mother” (Participant FGD9). As such, decision making processes are linked to gender distribution of labour: “In the end it is consultation between my husband and me. Decision is taken by the most qualified. Decision linked to my family: me” (Participant FGD8). “For decisions: it is the brother (if no father). This is normal; he is the “man” for everything” (Participant FGD8). It is to be noted that when both spouses share the decision, it is more a question of respect than a right to participate in the decision making process that is expressed: “We have respect for women: if her husband lets her take part in the decision, it is out of respect for her” (Participant FGD7). For some participants decisions are taken after consultation with the spouse and this is true for both parties, even if the money is in the hands of the woman (when her husband doesn’t work). “We take the decision together. If I want to buy something, I tell him and explain why it is important and convenient to work for this. If he has no problem with it he tells me ok. The same goes if he wants to do something” (Participant FGD18).

If care work is so important for these women it is because it gives them a position, a status in the community, because taking care of the family, cleaning the house and receiving in a proper way neighbours and guests is considered as a productive activity, in the sense that it is part of being an active member of the society. “The whole responsibility of the household relies on me: taking care of the house, the muneh, receptions... We are living in a village and in the village there is a lot of social activities, so each one of us does an incredible amount of work”(Participant FGD7). “It doesn’t matter if you produce anything, but you really have a very important position” (Participant FGD7).

Heavy load, double or triple burden on working women

All these responsibilities and duties fall to women in general, but coping with it is particularly difficult for working women (whether in the formal or informal sector) who need to be “on all fronts” at the same time and find equilibrium between their household responsibilities and the time needed for their income generating activities. The general impression drawn from the FGDs held with working women was that participants felt that they were overwhelmed with the amount of duties that are imposed on them. “Woman bears a lot, she has very big responsibilities even if the husband is productive and employed. Woman carries the work load and the house load. Both of them are at work in the morning and in the afternoon they come back; he sits and rests and she has to work” (Participant FGD11). A good number of them combine an employment, agricultural work (particularly in the villages where tobacco culture is essential), child care and social responsibilities. To all this

they have sometimes to add preparation of the *muneh* or supervising agricultural workers in place of their husbands. *"I feel exhausted by the fact that I have to work inside and outside the house"* (Participant FGD11).

As shown in the previous sections, working housewives are responsible of all housework, domestic and care work (in all their components) and this despite the fact that they are working outside, like male members of their household. In order to do that, these women need to organize themselves and find time for the different tasks through innovative ways. *"I do the housework: at night I do the laundry, sweep the floors, wash everything and iron... I cook in the shop where I have made a small kitchen. In the shop I have also arranged a small corner for the children so they can stay with me"* (Participant FGD18). *"When I gave birth to my daughter, I just got her out from the maternity but I took her with me to the tobacco fields, with her brother and sister"* (Participant FGD16). *"I cook in the shop; otherwise I don't have the time. I clean the house in the morning and I go to the shop. I cook in the shop and at night I go back home. My younger child is with me, the eldest in the nursery"* (Participant FGD18).

If needed, working women make use of the little help provided by their husbands. *"My husband stays in my place in the shop so that I can finish housework. He takes me to the field (tobacco) and I harvest and hang the leaves to dry. He helps me a little: he piles them (the leaves) up, I don't know how"* (Participant FGD18). Another option is the distribution of tasks among female members of the household. *"I have 4 daughters, we work in the tobacco fields, when we come back, one takes care of the housework, and the three others and I work on the leaves processing"* (Participant FGD16).

Women cope with difficulty with all these responsibilities and double workload, leading to constant stress and weariness. *"When my children were young and I had the small shop, life was hell!"* (Participant FGD18). *"You are always tired, the whole day you are by your sewing machine, you go back home tired and you go to work at home"* (Participant FGD18). *"At the end of the day I feel like even my children I cannot look at them anymore. The whole day I work for the others. I feel like doing something for myself"* (Participant FGD11). One of the participants summarized her situation by saying: *"if I wanted to do something for me personally, then I would need to cut myself in two"*, meaning by that that it would be impossible for her to find time for herself. Another explained in simple words that, as a working woman, she has no time at all for herself, to the point that even something as important as prayer needs to be put aside. *"The woman who has a shop has a full schedule. There is no more time for small agriculture or muneh. I have to sew and I have a small child. Sometimes I prepare a cup of tea and I don't even drink it because I am interrupted"*

20 times. Sometimes even, I want to go upstairs (home) to pray and I cannot because a client came in and delayed me” (Participant FGD18).

Gender division of labour: a strongly rooted situation accepted by women (“natural” division)

Gender division of labour in the participants’ households follows the traditional division, with some nuances that are mostly consequences of the need for help. *“When the woman cannot cope with it (her duties) by necessity someone has to help her, of course. Her husband has to stand by her. He helps me with the carpets and the stove”* (Participant FGD13). As previously seen, the ‘incursions’ of men in what is generally considered as women’s domain are the consequences of the fact that women help their husbands in their own work, without being remunerated, and are replacing a potential paid worker. The moderate involvement of men in household work is always conditional: linked to an exchange of help, if women are working outside the household for the benefit of relatives, or sickness. It is something to be considered as a bonus, because it is not men’s role. *“Men, may God be merciful, are not like women”* (Participant FGD18 when asked if her husband helps for housework).

Concerning the social activities and consequent work that might derive from it, participants usually consider that these obligations are shared by the couple: *“These duties are shared by husband and wife. There is solidarity between neighbours, everybody participates”* (Participant FGD1). *“Marriage celebrations are occasions when cooperation is asked from the villagers.”* (Participant FGD2). However there are some specific duties (with relatives or friends) that only women would do, such as paying a visit to a woman who has just given birth. *“We go to social gatherings and duties together; I only go on my own when someone has given birth”* *“I go on my own if it concerns someone particular to me: my mother, a friend, a colleague from work”* (Participants FGD5). *“For weddings or condolences, usually my mother goes and if she is busy I replace her. I help in offering things to the guests, I make coffee or tea and I distribute paper napkins”* (Participant FGD17). Obligations are shared, but the type of contribution will differ: women will contribute by cooking and washing dishes for the special meal to be offered for marriages or during funerals (*“For Funerals, we sacrifice an animal and we feed people. Our table will be served and people would come to us. Cooking and dishwashing is women’s work”* (Participant FGD5)) while men will participate in a more formal way by receiving guests, purchasing what is needed and coordinating the events. *“If there is a marriage in a family of close relatives, we help for the cooking and washing dishes; for a funeral also we help. Men offer coffee and accept condolences”* (Participant FGD6). *“Concerning death and funerals, it is more of a duty for men than for women”* (Participant FGD1). *“Men will prepare the chairs and invitations as well as the tomb in the cemetery. Women will*

take care of reception, condolences ceremony and food" (Participant FGD8). During a celebration, men will do the "hard work" lifting and carrying tables and chairs, while women will clean the tables and chairs and prepare the food. "*Men will take care of the barbecue and women will clean after*" (Participant FGD15). However nowadays things have changed because of lack of time, people are not always available to accomplish these social obligations as they used to. "*These days (with all the work I have) I cannot help anyone anymore. I used to stay with the bereaved family, not leaving them for a minute, helping them with the coffee, food, mourning... everything. If my neighbour was sick, I would take him to the hospital. But now my situation is different*" (Participant FGD18). These social obligations remain important despite the fact that things are different from the past; ceremonies are simpler and demand less work. "*In fact there is no more preparation and participation. You just go and present your condolences or congratulate the newlyweds*" (Participant FGD18). "*Things have changed, the bride goes to the beauty salon and food is catered for*" (Participant FGD18).

From participants' words and their reaction to the subject of gender division of labour in the household, it appears that they consider this division of tasks as "natural", some tasks being specific to men and others to women. "*Not at all, what can a man do (work) in the house? He doesn't help at all!*" (Participant FGD18). Men work and are the main source of revenue for the family, while women are considered as "non productive" because they do not provide a visible income for the household and should take care of all that concerns (and is done within) the household, along the prevailing dichotomy: men-outside / women-inside. This is being translated in the justifications participants presented for the little involvement of men in household work: too much work, too tired or health problems. "*The man goes to work and comes back tired, he is not also going to come back home to work!*" (Participant FGD10). "*Men go to work, come back, eat and rest. Nothing is asked from them*" (Participant FGD14). Sometimes no justification is even given, it is just: "*he doesn't like, like a lot of men*" (arguments that came up in all FGDs). In one of the FGDs, a participant justified as follows the fact that she was the only woman present whose husband helped in daily domestic work, as if this reflected negatively on his masculinity: "*My mother in law lives with us but she cannot help me because she's an old lady. My daughter in law is very busy with her baby... My husband is my hands and my feet in the house*" (Participant FGD6). Finally, an important factor obstructing men's participation in household work is the image and the stereotypes around men and manhood, as well as the role of women as mothers. "*A man that washes dishes is not a man*" (Participant FGD18). "*A man who helps in household work is not a man!*" (Participant FGD11). "*A woman who wants to get married and have children has to be responsible of her household. She has to be responsible of her children's education, personality's development and studies*" (Participant FGD18). Participants underlined the fact that men who

are seen helping their wives in domestic tasks are laughed at in the village. This is the reason why, according to participants to FGD10 and FGD11, when men undertake some of the domestic tasks (within the limits above mentioned) they do so in the protection of the house, so as not to be seen by others. This gender division of labour can also be seen within a particular type of women's work: tobacco culture. This agricultural work is considered as part of household work in the communities where tobacco is an essential income generating activity and the same stereotypes are used by participants when talking about the division of labour within this field of work. *"Men take the tobacco leaves to the company. The company weights the leaves and men just watch and sign. Work is on us (women) and payment is for them (men)"* (Participant FGD18).

What is at work here is the traditional division of labour following the simple scheme: man works and generates income for the household while woman doesn't work and produces no income but she takes care of everything inside the house. This is translated in the desire (from both sides) to delineate each one's territory. *"My husband forbids me to work outside the household"* (Participant FGD10) while another participant to the same FGD expresses her compliance to the prevailing division of labour by reacting to it: *"If he (the husband) wants to hang the laundry, I will forbid it"*. Each domain is strictly reserved to men or women and defended respectively by them, and this applies to the younger generation as well. *"Boys do not consider housework as real work"; "My father says: boys should not work in the house"* (Participants FGD12). *"Until 10-12 years old, you can ask your son to do such and such things. But you cannot ask from him to do the dish washing, or the laundry. He would say that there is a girl in the house and that he needs to study or to go to work"* (Participant FGD16). *"My brothers never do a thing! They know that I am here and that I do everything. Even a glass of water they will ask from me!"* (Participant FGD17). One of the participants summarized the relations between husbands and wives and the fact that nearly all household work remains women's work, even if they work outside the household, by saying: *"we have pampered our husbands"* (Participant FGD18), indirectly admitting that they contribute to the status quo at the level of gender division of labour within the household.

Among participants, it is less a question of contesting the status quo in gender division of labour than trying to find ways to alleviate the burdens of everyday work. As already mentioned, women delegate their duties to other women of the family (daughters, mothers in law...). This delegation of duties can also be addressed to foreign domestic women workers when the household has the financial means to do so. *"I go to my parents in the morning to help them; my father takes care of their expenses. Now they have brought a foreign domestic worker (Sri Lankan), she has taken a heavy load off my shoulders, but I am the one to cook for them"* (Participant

FGD2). *“I have a domestic worker to help me”* (Participant FGD10). However this delegation does not imply that the responsibility of household work no longer remains in women’s hands. They are still responsible, but they find ways of having “extra hands” to be able to cope with all duties. A participant even considered that she could alleviate her charges by buying an electrical appliance. *“I think I will buy a dishwasher so I won’t have to wash the dishes”* (Participant FGD10).

The participants who contested this gender division of labour were mainly young women (with the exception of one participant to FGD2: *“Why should she help him in everything and not receive help in return?”*). They considered that household work should be shared by men and women alike, particularly if the wife works. *“We all have the wrong idea that even if the woman works and helps her husband, the man has more reason to get tired and he doesn’t have to help her. He doesn’t think that raising children is more tiresome than working in the fields... For me the mother does hard work and there should be equality”. “The mother helps the father so why the father wouldn’t help her? He doesn’t do anything; she has to prepare meals for him. Both of them work and are tired”* (Participants FGD3).

This social division is sometimes translated at another level for young women who feel that they have less opportunities and possibilities for social gathering because of social norms imposed on them. *“If we (as girls) want to go to internet shop, we go to Deir al Ahmar, because here in the village, there are a lot of young men and they talk”* (Participant FGD9). *“If we go out on our own, we have to come back at 8 o’clock. If we are with our brothers, we come back whenever we want”* (Participant FGD9). Young men are considered to have more liberty of movement than young women: *“they can go out whenever they want to, with whom they want and until whatever time they want!”* (Participant FGD15). *“I would like to go to an internet shop, but I cannot because there are only young men”* (Participant FGD17).

In a way, maintaining the prevalent gender division of labour within the household contributes to protecting manhood as a value, the image of men’s role being essential to maintain the society’s patriarchal order. This is to be put in relation with one of the findings of Habib, Nuwayhid and Yeretziyan (2006): unemployed men are less willing to contribute to household work, particularly if their wives are working. In our case, the protection of manhood is expressed through the justifications given by participants for the fact that their husbands do not (and are not asked to) share household work, in particular domestic tasks.

Children’s contribution to work: reproduction of the gender division of labour

From what participants said with regard to their children’s contribution to work (remunerated or not, within the household or not) it appears that the

reproduction of this gender division of labour is functioning at all levels. Children often contribute to the main income producing activity (*"My children are still at school, they help a little for the tobacco (culture)... They pick the leaves and prepare them. If it is too much work, they hire a labourer"*, Participant FGD18), helping for the harvest during the high season for tobacco or fruits (sometimes schools give them days off recognizing the importance of this work), or helping their parents in their business as well as to household work, care and domestic tasks. However they do not participate in the same category of activities and to simplify one can say that boys will do as their fathers and girls as their mothers.

Young women have their share of household work (this was developed in previous sections) but what needs to be stressed is that young girls are also taught from an early age the path that they need to follow to abide with society's norms and values. The daughter will help her mother at home either by taking care of her brothers and sisters or helping them in their homework, or by accomplishing domestic tasks; she will also help her in her agricultural work. *"I am the eldest, sometimes I help in housework and sometimes I teach my brother and sisters"* (Participant FGD12). *"I help my mother in her agricultural work and for housework"* (Participant FGD12). *"I prefer that my daughter studies during school days, but the most important thing is for her to teach her little sister. During holidays, she cleans the house and I prepare the meals"* (Participant FGD10). Not only does the daughter help her mother, but sometimes she practically replaces her. *"Last summer, my mother used to wake up very early to go to the fields and she left my baby sister with me. I had to give her the bottle, change her..."* (Participant FGD12). *"I take care of everything at home because my mother is helping my father in the fields"* (Participant FGD9). Mothers play a major role in the perpetuation of this model because when they need help, they will refer to their daughters, rather than to a male member of the family, and they are proud to have daughters capable of accomplishing these tasks. *"My daughter is 9 years old, she washes dishes, cleans and puts everything in place in the kitchen, I taught her. If we go out for two hours, she stays with her little sister and brother"* (Participant FGD7). *"When a girl is 6 years old, the mother gives her responsibilities because she is very tired. We try to teach them so they can take part of the load from us"* (Participant FGD16). *"I work from 7am till 10pm, I cannot work in the house, but I have my daughter at home who does everything: washing, laundry, ironing and even cooks"* (Participant FGD18). *"My children were everything at home; my daughters used to finish all household work, even when they were at university!"* (Participant FGD13).

During the focus groups, the question of boys' work was not directly addressed and when asked if their children helped them, the participants automatically talked about their daughters, but not so much about their sons. Little girls are

taught since an early age to take care of the family and fill the gap when the mother has to go out, but boys are left the choice and they generally follow the example given by their fathers. *"Boys do not consider that housework is real work" and their fathers do not help in changing this attitude: "my father says that boys should not work at home"* (Participants FGD12). *"My eldest son has finished school; he helps his father in the shop. The others help their father during school holidays or in the afternoon when they come back from school... I have a daughter who can help me with housework"* (Participant FGD18). Young sons will participate to household work as little as possible and usually, like their fathers, in special circumstances. *"My sons, the maximum they will do will be to make their beds!"* (Participant FGD14). *"He prepared the meals for his brother and sister when his mother was sick"* (Participant FGD15). If in general a distinction is made between boys and girls in the education they receive, a mother claimed that she didn't make any difference and that this could be the way to start changes in people's perceptions. *"I make no difference in my education between boys and girls. I teach them how to work, both in the same way and I distribute the tasks between them"* (Participant FGD11).

Finally, the reproduction of gender division of labour within the household can be examined through income generating activities. In this area also a child will usually follow what the parent of the same gender does. *"When they come back from school and after I have given their lunch my brothers go to my father's workshop to help him. I go to the fish shop to help my mother"* (Participant FGD17). *"The girls pick the tobacco leaves and prepare them for hanging. Boys transport the batches and weight them... Boys have other jobs that are specific to them"* (Participant FGD16). *"Girls help more in preparing the muneh... Boys help their father with the car or in the fields, and the girls help their mothers"* (Participant FGD15). This is particularly true for daughters who, like their elders, start quite early to have double shifts (or more) if school and studies are considered as their main duties. *"Of course I help for housework... My aunt has a shop and sometimes I replace her"* (Participant FGD17). *"My mother and I, we work in the tobacco fields and my younger sister does the housework"* (Participant FGD17).

WOMEN'S VISION FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THEIR SITUATION (POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPOWERMENT)

We need to find time!! We will find time to work!!

Housewives participants expressed their desire to improve their living conditions by working (to provide their household with a second income) but they considered that they didn't have enough time for all their obligations and work: "At 2 o'clock when they (children) come back, I make them eat and study and this takes me almost to 7pm. This way I am saving the salary of a private teacher. But with this I cannot work, there is no time" (Participant FGD1). "Too much work to be able even to take a coffee with someone! Let alone have time for knitting!" (Participant FGD2) The situation is not very different for working participants: because of work, they prefer not to spend time receiving guests for example, since they are already overwhelmed and all their time is taken, they have no time for extra activities⁴¹: "Time that is outside work I feel like it is wasted time for me. This could represent 2 hours less for me and this means more stress on me, I need to go to work early and I need to prepare everything beforehand" (Participant FGD2). "Women who plant tobacco have no time at all for sewing and knitting" (Participant FGD16). In contradiction to this however, a majority of participants considered that they would find time to work if they had the opportunity, having in mind their children, their future and the potential of being able to provide them with all their needs, the sacrifice would then be worth the effort. "More workload for more income creates internal happiness" (Participant FGD1). "If there is work one organizes himself, but there isn't, so we do not think about it" (Participant FGD2).

Despite their responsibilities, and for the benefit of improving their lives, participants claimed to be able to find time if this proved necessary, face their responsibilities, and reorganize their day; for example they could put the children earlier to bed and do their domestic tasks at night in order to be able to work. "If I didn't have to help my husband, I could work; I could manage my time for the children and the housework" (Participant FGD1). However, their household responsibilities remain their main concern and, even if it was not expressed directly by participants, some of them did say that they would prefer a part time job or a home based work, such as making *muneh* or handcrafts. "But the work needs to be home based so that we work when we are free" (Participant FGD1); "Women are ashamed to work outside the house, they prefer working from home" (Participant FGD2).

41 For more details reference can be made to the previous section "Heavy load, double or triple burden on working women".

Finding a second work was also a concern for working women, and in their case the challenge presented by the lack of time and coping with the existing double schedule (work and household) was even stronger. But participants declared being able to make more sacrifice if they had the opportunity and if this meant that their financial situation would improve: *“if there was work, in spite of everything we would do something”* (Participant FGD2). Some of the participants among working women mentioned the fact that they would have more time, in order to have new activities allowing them to improve their family wellbeing and their self satisfaction, if they could have some kind of help. However this help they seek is not from the male members of the family, nor is it from within the household; they would like to hire the services of a migrant woman domestic worker (using the name “Sri Lankan woman” in Arabic⁴²) who would relieve them from their domestic responsibilities and allow them to have more time for their other activities (or create new ones). *“If my situation was better, I would like to have a Sri Lankan... If I had someone to help me, I would be in a better situation”* (Participant FGD5). Working women participants are conscious of the need to improve their working situation and for them even more than for the others, the question of time is crucial, as well as having the financial means to initiate a change. *“For example, I would like to improve my work. Instead of a small shop I would like to have a small enterprise and be responsible of it”* (Participant FGD18).

Two conditions are needed for women’s empowerment: time and education. The latter poses a problem since sometimes women have interrupted their studies at an early age and that is the reason why their current jobs are not satisfying. *“I couldn’t pursue my university studies; it would really have been my dream to continue. But I had an opportunity with this work as an employee”* (Participant FGD8). They do not seek any kind of work, but something stable with a regular income or a small business where the owner would be self employed and independent: *“I would like to have a permanent work, not something seasonal, something that would fill my time, like opening a mini market or a restaurant in the village”* (Participant FGD8). *“I would like to open a beauty salon where I would be responsible of my schedule”* (Participant FGD14). Some of the participants have a larger vision and would like to improve not only their situation but also that of future generations of their village’s women. *“I would like to open a beauty salon, a technical school where women from the village could study. I would put my children in a nursery school. Like this I could be helping my husband and at the same time not have the load of tobacco work”* (Participant FGD16).

42 Since many migrant women domestic workers coming to Lebanon are from Sri Lanka, the word is now associated, in the mind of many Lebanese, to the function of domestic worker. “Sri Lankan” is often used to talk about any foreign domestic worker, no matter from which nationality they are, and it is also always used in the feminine form *Srilankiyeh*.

The problem of the lack of time in order to acquire new skills was recurrent among all participants, whether they “worked” or not. Time is missing because of all the tasks they need to accomplish in and for their households and that is what hinders their access to new qualifications leading to new opportunities. *“If my mother finds another work (other than agriculture), then she will have a better income and have more time”* (Participant FGD12). This woman would thus allow herself and her daughter (who shares her workload) access to new opportunities. The time line exercise for FGD10 and FGD11 confirms this: it shows that three quarters of the time is dedicated to housework and care work, the last quarter being used for rest, prayer and social visits. For working women, even this small “personal time” is not available. Leisure and free time is very rare. It is affordable only when all household work has been done. During school days, the afternoon is dedicated to the children (their studies, their bath, their meals...) not for visits or going out to spend some free time. As for finding time to work, possibilities exist in order to clear up time for self improvement and personal development. *“We could change our program, wake up earlier and finish our work earlier. Then we would have more free time”* (Participant FGD17). However most of the participants continued to show selflessness in favour of their household responsibilities to explain the lack of time available for themselves: *“Women who work as much as we work do not think anymore of themselves”* (Participant FGD18). *“We don’t think for ourselves because we know that we don’t have the time”* (Participant FGD18). Working implies for women a non enviable situation in which they have no spare moment and are in a constant struggle. Rather than seeing in working an act leading to potential empowerment, women see it as a burden, a constant struggle between two worlds and their only wish is to have an easier life. *“I wish I could be just a housewife. Because once you get married, you need to be a housewife for your house and your children, for your children’s education. If you work inside and outside, you just get tired and your children get tired with you.... It would be nice to work for 3-4 hours so you fill your free time. Working from dawn to dusk just to bring a piece of bread to eat for herself and her children, this is not a nice life”* (Participant FGD8).

Change in the distribution of labour within the household is an element that appears mostly among young participants, when asked if they see a way that could contribute to allow more time for women, in order for them to explore new domains. This change can only be brought up through awareness at the level of children’s education. *“It is the responsibility of our parents, they should teach them to do these things”* (Participant FGD12 talking about the fact that boys contribute much less than girls to housework and domestic chores). Rare are the participants who said that they were educating their children to share household duties while at the same time many were conscious of the fact that the only way to improve the situation (time scarcity) would be to work on more cooperation between men and

women within the household, and that this should be done through the change of people's mentality and through training sessions addressed to men and women (this particular point appeared during the discussion after the timeline exercise FGD11). *"We need conferences, seminars, and special awareness for women. There are things women need to know, awareness is important and also awareness for the teachers, schools and parents"* (Participant FGD7). Change and awareness are needed at all levels, particularly among parents and school teachers in order to better raise children. *"Everybody should be independent. There is a need for awareness for the parents, there should be conferences and meeting discussions"* (Participant FGD9). Some women recognize that things have changed and women are beginning to see differences in attitudes. *"Now things have changed. They used to say that a woman who works is a woman "who gets out"⁴³. In the past I had an opportunity to work in the post office, my husband said to me: "how can you be an employee and go out?" He felt like dishonoured if I was employed and went to another region. Now he has changed and the whole world has changed, of course women's situation has changed"* (Participant FGD18).

What would they do if they had the time and received appropriate training? Participants didn't have clear ideas for self improvement, besides finding new income generating activities. Young participants just answered by throwing ideas of what are the things that they like, what they wish they could do to reach a level of self satisfaction, sometimes thinking of the development of their inner gifts. *"The whole day long I work for the others; I would like to do something for myself"* (Participant FGD11). *"I would like to do some manual work: sewing, embroidery or painting but for me, not to sell. I would have liked to be a hairdresser"* (Participant FGD17). *"I like sewing and writing poems. I would do that if someone helps me in the house"* (Participant FGD12). Here are, in disorder, the types of activities that appeared with recurrence in the various FGDs: painting, reading, listening to music, floral art, gardening, swimming, sculpting wood, writing songs in English, walking in the nature...

No real vision but one leitmotiv: "the village needs..." "No market"

The general impression coming out of the majority of FGDs was that participants have a limited horizon for improvement of their situation. Most of the participants didn't show that they had any aspirations to change their household livelihoods or rather they didn't see opportunities for self improvement. However, some of the mothers among them (that is participants of the category of housewives and/or working women) did see the realization of their aspirations

43 In the negative sense, meaning a woman who goes out of the house without a chaperon or male consent. In other words a woman with no traditional values; who does not stay where she should: in the private domain of her household.

through their daughters. *"We didn't have the opportunity to pursue our studies, as our children have now"* (Participant FGD6). *"My ambitions are for my children; it is their right to be happy and to live"* (Participant FGD5). *"I would like that my children achieve something important, what I couldn't achieve myself"* (Participant FGD18). Women consider their self improvement through the lens of their children's wellbeing and progress, asking for training session in language or computer, in order to be able to help their children in their studies: *"Like the others said, if there was a training session in English or computer, even for those who didn't work, to have the possibility to teach at home. This is more important than working outside the house"* (Participant FGD7). If the need for training is expressed by these women, it is in relation with what they consider as being within their responsibilities: care of children and older people (other topics for training that were suggested: primary health care, elderly care, child care and child psychology).

Some participants however have an idea of how to make a move towards self improvement and the challenges that they will meet on their road: *"Nowadays to teach in schools you need a diploma. I still need one year to have my diploma in Arab literature. I am thinking of going back to university next year and come back to teaching"* (Participant FGD6). *"Relatives of my husband have a school, they asked me if I wanted to work but my husband will not accept. I used to be a teacher and I would have liked to continue in this field. The problem was the absence of day care centre in the village"* (Participant FGD6).

Participants mentioned the need for infrastructure and institutions offering more working opportunities (factories, restaurants...): *"we are not in a city to be able to find work, here there is nothing."*; *"Maybe if there was work opportunities, we would have worked (even despite ourselves)"* (Participant FGD2). *"It would be nice if there was a fabric or something where the young women could work"* (Participant FGD10). The objective remains to be able to improve family wellbeing and financially support the head of household. *"We need that someone makes something where we could work in order for us help our men"* (Participant FGD1). *"We need more working opportunities, so we can expand our income"* (Participant FGD14). Participants considered essential to have enterprises offering work opportunities for the young (so they can be employees, which means having a regular income). In their views, most of the young people leave the villages because there is no working opportunities, no entertainment, recreation centres... *"How can a village be alive and attractive if there are no opportunities to come back and find a job?"* (Participant FGD14).

Not all young women participants did have a clear idea of what they wanted for their future, however some of them were very explicit: *"I would like to develop my talent and get into acting and directing. The problem is that nobody thinks on the*

long term: they finish school, go to Beirut, graduate from university and start working there; people are leaving the village. Even if I leave the village, I would like to return and do development projects for the young people without work or having left schools”; “I would like to finish my studies and be a doctor. Of course I like a lot my village, but I think that my future is not here. I would leave and come back for visits, during holidays and summer” (Participants FGD3). More than ideas for their future, young participants expressed the need for recreation centres, sports clubs... for personal development, and encouragement of their gifts through training sessions (computer, manual activities, foreign languages...). “We would like to have places for leisure activities, a club, swimming pool, and training sessions in computer or English...” (Participant FGD16). “We need a swimming pool for women, a sports club, and internet café” (Participants FGD12). It is not that they are rejecting their village, but it is rather the way of life that seems limited to them. Sometimes, love for the village but lack of opportunities was expressed in the same sentence: “I love the village but I would be difficult for me to work here because there are no working opportunities” (Participant FGD3 and FGD4)⁴⁴. Nearly all participants said that they didn’t see how they could accomplish their dreams in their village. “I would like to get out from the village more often, see what there is outside, go to the movies...” (Participant FGD14)

A recurrent theme appeared during the FGDs when the participants were asked about the different potential productive activities that they could take on, in order to improve their household livelihood: the limitation of the local market and the quasi impossibility to sell the products of these activities, whether *muneh* or handcrafts. “My hobby is preparing *muneh*; I opened a small shop when there was the apparition of the Lady of Bechwat. It used to work well. Now I have no capital and I cannot go to Beirut (to sell the production), I have some clients who order by phone, but it is not enough” (Participant FGD1). “I also have the problem of the market for the *muneh*” “I like a lot to do manual work, sewing, embroidery, but there is no market” (Participants FGD6). “We do some crochet work, embroidery... but it is not sufficient as income generating because the work is not valued. People will buy from outside, industrial work is cheaper” (Participant FGD8). For women engaged in income producing activities (or potentially income producing), the most important need to improve their livelihoods is to find new markets for the surplus of goods that are initially made for household consumption: “If I make 20 kilos of *kishk*, who will sell this? Is there a market in the village? We need to see with all the villages around” (Participant FGD8). “We have pine trees, but nobody will take the pine nuts... we take it to the cooperative” (Participant FGD8). “Problem of the market: the village is not sufficient, we have to go out, to exhibitions, to Beirut and other towns” (Participant

44 Both participants, while taking part to different FGDs used the same sentence when talking about the lack of opportunities offered by their respective villages.

FGD8). Even women who are used to sell the products they fabricate (different kinds of *muneh* and manual work such as crochet or embroidery) consider that the current and local market is not sufficient. They try to establish new networks of clients either from word of mouth, starting with the regular clients who come back to have the same type of product (once they know the quality), or from fairs in Beirut or other cities. *"I am not very satisfied with the local market because work here is very slow. I tried expositions, but work is also slow."* *"When I started, I was preparing the muneh from home, now sometimes in the cooperative; I also participate sometimes in fairs and expositions. When I go there, I have friends who buy from me and now they even come to my house"* (Participants FGD13).

Finally, another element should be taken into consideration while reviewing participants' difficulties in setting ways to improve their lives and envision new opportunities: the prevailing social representation of women and their reproductive role. These representations explain the strength of parents' opposition faced by some young women when they reach an age when they have to make life choices. *"I would have like to be a stewardess, but my mother says that I cannot choose whatever pleases me"* (Participant FGD9). *"I wanted to get into the army, my parents were opposed to the idea; there is only one woman from the village in the army"* (Participant FGD9). Parents propose to their daughters professions that would be socially accepted, often using an indirect way, talking about themselves and showing what is socially accepted and what is not (often in relation to women's reproductive role). *"I am a teacher and I am pleased with this work. It is accepted socially and there is social security"* (Participant FGD10). *"The parents say: be a teacher or a nurse because you can go by bus to school and from school back to home"* (Participant FGD9). Difficulties in coping with the double (or triple) responsibilities that they have lead participants into thinking that their daughters should be careful when choosing a career, or deciding for particular work, because it will have its effect on their status and a potential marriage. *"You will notice that women teachers or dressmaker grow quite old before they marry."* *"Here, a first class teacher when she wants to get married, she wants to do it the way she likes."* *"When I say to my daughter that I want her to be a dressmaker she says no because then I will not marry"* (Participants FGD18).

It is true that sometimes the daughters themselves have integrated the prevailing gender division of labour: what they wish for translates the social perceptions (of types of work considered as suitable for women): *"I would like to be able to be a nurse, it would allow me stop cultivating tobacco"; "I like to bake cakes, I could sell..."* (Participants FGD10). Some young people showed signs of disenchantment with the life they lead and the future they see in front of them. *"I would like to do something useful. What is the use of working in the tobacco? What is the use of*

housework:" (Participant FGD12). Several young participants expressed their bitterness in view of the social etiquette, values and principles that are imposed on them and which limit their opportunities and their freedom of movement. "There are no opportunities for young women; there are more for young men. Young women have to stay at home while young men do whatever they want. What people will say is not important for them" (Participant FGD9). "I would like to be able to open something that I would benefit of. I would like to be a normal person in the society, not a burden on anyone" (Participant FGD8). "I would like to learn to drive and be able to come and go without having to depend on someone" (Participant FGD13). In their views, things should change and for that work should be done at the level of the adults. "Everyone should have its independence. Awareness rising for the parents should be with expert conferences and discussion meetings" (Participant FGD9).

CONCLUSION

Despite the socio-economic differences between the communities, participants have shown similarities in their presentation of the work load, their duties and responsibilities, the mechanisms they put in place to cope with it, as well as their general aspirations and desire to see change for their children.

Women's contribution to the household economy through domestic and care work in the villages under study is quite considerable if one takes into account all the savings, direct or indirect, that are the result of their management of the family expenses. Work outside the household is considered as contributing to the family's livelihood while all the daily work and tasks within the household are not considered as such. Confronted with difficult living conditions and an environment that offers little opportunities, women find ways to cope in their everyday life, even if they are not always aware of the fact that their small savings, the care they provide to the members of the family (and the extended family), what they consider as their normal duties as mothers, housewives, daughters and sisters, represents work, unpaid work, invisible work but work nonetheless. Women recognize the social value of this work without considering it as an income generating activity to which a money value could be attributed.

With regard to household work, one cannot but recognize the importance of its invisibility: invisibility of women's contribution through their supplying of free of charge work, work that otherwise would be remunerated; invisibility due to the system of "exchange of help" ("productive work" v/s "domestic work") and invisibility of women's contribution to the household expenses (through their "secret fund", by saving from the house budget or by producing goods for internal consumption).

Providing the household with the basics without having to go out and without paying for it constitutes an important part of the care work assumed by the mother (whether she is a housewife or a working woman). It can be put in relation to her other main task as care provider: cooking and preparing meals. The preparation of the *muneh* establishes another link between the two aspects of the mother/care provider: she gives herself the means to insure that proper nutrition is given to her "dependents" with minimum costs. We can also see this relation from another perspective: women's ambitions are realized through their children (in particular the daughters) which can be seen as a prolongation of the care responsibilities: getting them to the top and allowing them to fulfil their dreams is part of their job as mothers.

With regard to gender distribution of labour within the household, the emerging scheme is in concordance with the general gender division of labour in a patriarchal society: men as providers, working outside the house and women as care taker working inside, in the domestic sphere. When they contribute to the expenses, women usually pay for the daily house expenses, so there is no contradiction, the house being their domain, the domestic sphere. When existing, sharing of the expenses follows the traditional, patriarchal system: men must remain the main breadwinner, even if in reality the regular income comes from women (for example when they are employees). In the communities under study, greater economic involvement at the level of the household did not necessarily lead to a different gender division of labour in the household. The incursion of one or the other in the other's domain is punctual and addresses specific needs (helping for a task that needs physical strength, insuring a regular and steady income to the household when the main source is seasonal and irregular). In the current state of things, women (of all generations) are the only care givers in the household and this is the main cause for what appears to be the common denominator of participants (working women or not): time poverty and the need to struggle against it.

The solidarity system within the communities is disappearing without substitution, the same goes for care work within the household: more people from outside the household are asked to accomplish these tasks, however this has no repercussions on the gender division of labour because women remain in charge of all domestic and care work, they just delegate to other women their tasks and responsibilities. What might be interesting to pursue with regard to the distribution of tasks and duties within the household is the case of women headed households (due to internal or external migration of men in search of better working opportunities, the number of women headed households has increased these last years, even in rural areas) and the way their situation affects household work and the gender division of labour within the family.

A few recommendations can be made in view of the aforementioned:

Organize awareness and capacity building sessions shedding light on the importance and the amount of work undertaken by women in their household; showing "non working" women that their everyday activities are "real work" that can be valued (amount of savings or remuneration of the same work done by someone external to the household).

Exploring and detecting new markets and establishing a network of clients and potential clients in order to help women wishing to get more involved in income producing activities find a way to sell their production.

Work with young men and women, organizing sessions and initiating discussions around gender division of labour and its reproduction, in order to capitalize on the slight changes that are slowly appearing.

Organizing capacity building in time management as well as budget management, since these are domains that women master “instinctively” and that could be used in a more systematic way, to stress the importance of their invisible (time and money wise) work.

Finally, as an anthropologist having done some research during her studies on African economic system of “tontine” (largely used in economic anthropology), personal and professional interest were stimulated by the experience of ‘Arsal women and the common fund system used by them to support and contribute to their household economy. It would be of value, at some point in time, to initiate another qualitative research on this particular topic that could be of interest for those working in social development, micro credit systems, women economic empowerment and solidarity funds emerging from the communities themselves and not related to any kind of formal institution.

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Annex 1: Questions guide for the Focus Group Discussions

GENERAL QUESTIONS	PROBING QUESTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
<p>Household livelihood : What are your main sources of livelihood and those of your village?</p>	<p>1) What are the roles of each member of the household? - yourself - husband / father - children - elders - other adults living in the household</p> <p>2) What are the other sources of economic assistance/ support for your household?</p> <p>3) How would you estimate your household income and each member's participation (percentage) to this income?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typology of livelihoods in the village • Differential economic role of each member of the family
<p>Production roles of women (at all levels) What are the various productive roles which you are involved in and which contribute to the household livelihood?</p>	<p>1) What are your activities that generate income? - inside the household - outside the household</p> <p>2) What are your other activities that economically sustain your family? - Food production for internal use ("muneh", bread...) - Sewing, knitting, clothes confection... - labour in agriculture production (family garden) - crafts for internal use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typology of income generating activities (external and domestic), formal and informal economy • Typology of productive activities for internal consumption
<p>Care and domestic economy What are the main care and domestic tasks, household responsibilities and who does what?</p>	<p>1) What are the daily tasks necessary for the household maintenance, care of children and elderly, food production and preparation (for self consumption)?</p> <p>2) How is this work distributed among the household members? (this applies to the women themselves, the husband/father, grown-up children, other adults living in the household, any other help) - Cooking, cleaning, ironing... - Children well being and education - Shopping for groceries and family needs - Health care for children and elderly (or other dependents) - Services related to social relations and community (marriage, death...)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of chores between members of the household • Differential work load between women, men and children (stress load on women)

<p>Women's Timeline (Activity/Exercise)</p> <p>Please describe your daily activities (an average day) giving information on how much time is dedicated to these activities</p>	<p>1) How much time do you spend doing your daily tasks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Household chores - Care work - Remunerated work (if relevant) - Social activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timeline (chart)
<p>Prospects for self development</p> <p>What do you need to do in order to have more time so you can help yourself to be able to improve your family livelihood and wellbeing?</p>	<p>1) In view of the above, what is the time left available?</p> <p>2) If time is available, how do you use it?</p> <p>3) What could you do to improve your family livelihood?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of time • Whether or not women have thought about changing roles and sharing burdens • Self improvement suggestions

Topics to probe:

- Daily production activities
- management of household budget
- men's (husband's) contribution to housework
- women's perception of their work and its value

After each focus group session the facilitator and person recording should meet to review and **complete the notes** taken during the meeting. This is the right moment to **evaluate** how the focus group went and what changes might be made in the topics when facilitating the next focus group.

Immediately afterwards a full report of the discussion should be prepared which reflects the discussion as completely as possible, using the participants' own words. List the key statements, ideas, and attitudes expressed for each topic of discussion.

Annex 2: Participants in Focus Group Discussions

(names removed)

FGD 1: Housewives, Deir al Ahmar.

Friday February 27, 2009 (10:05-12:15)

- H1:** 46 years, 6 sons (13 to 27 years). Sister in law is living with them. 10 persons are living in the household.
- H2:** 4 sons (7 to 27 years). Four sisters in laws and a cousin are living with them. 12 persons are living in the household.
- H3:** 6 daughters (7 to 23 years). The eldest is working in Zahle.
- H4:** 3 sons and a daughter (2 to 12 years). 4 sisters in laws, 10 persons are living in the household.
- H5:** 9 children (7 daughters, 2 sons) (3 months to 20 years). The family in law is living with them (2 brothers in laws and 2 sisters in laws).
- H6:** 5 children (3 girls and 2 boys) (3 years to 22 years). The parents in laws live in the same household.
- H7:** 4 sons and 1 daughter (from 6 to 27 years): family of 7 persons, plus a married son and his wife and child and the mother in law.
- H8:** 4 sons (5 to 11 years) and the parents in laws.
- H9:** 2 children (1 boy, 1 girl) (from 6 to 8 years). The parents in law and the brother in law live in the household. 14 people overall.

FGD 2: Working women, Deir Al Ahmar.

Friday February 27, 2009 (15:10-17:05)

- W1:** Shop owner (lingerie), husband work as painter (contractor). 2 children: a boy (12 years) and a girl (9 years). Household composed of 4 persons.
- W2:** Husband has a small shop; 2 children: 2 girls (15 and 13 years). Living on their own in winter, in summer the household is larger, the parents in law come from Beirut. Her work: preparing pastries and cake on demand.
- W3:** Teacher in the private school run by nuns; husband in the army. 1 girl (4 years old) and expecting another child. They are living with the in laws (father and mother).
- W4:** Teacher in the nuns school, she lives with her mother and two brothers (has 4 other married brothers and a married sister).
- W5:** 5 children from 2 to 17 years old. They have a snack and traditional oven (*tannur*); she works with her husband and they live on their own.

W6: 6 children (from 11 to 24 years old), 4 girls and 2 boys. The husband has a butchery and she has a shop (selling clothes). The family is divided: 3 in Jounieh for university, a daughter working in a shop (also selling clothes) and 3 in the village, working.

W7: Nurse, she has 4 children, her husband is a farmer and she also has a shop (selling clothes)

FGD 3: Young women, Deir Al Abmar.

February 28, 2009 (10:15-12:15)

Y1: 18 years old, last year of school, eldest in the family: after her 2 girls and a boy (8 years). Household composed of parents and children.

Y2: 18 years old, last year of school (Terminale Economique et Sociale), household composed of the parents and 5 children, 4 girls and a boy (from 7 to 28 years old).

Y3: 17 years old, going to school (Classe de Seconde). Household composed of 6 children (4 girls and 2 boys) from 11 to 25 years, not all living in the house: 3 of the children are in Beirut. Nobody else is living in the household.

Y4: 15 years, going to school (Classe de Seconde). Sister of Y1.

Y5: 16 years old, going to school (Classe de Seconde). 6 girls but now in the household 4 girls (2 are not here, they work). The eldest is 23 years old, she lives in Zahleh, and the second is in the army (administrative staff). She is the eldest living in the house, nobody else (other than the parents) lives with them.

FGD 4: Young women, 'Arsal.

February 20, 2009 (11:00-13:00)

Y1: Student, 4 persons in the household. The father is a teacher.

Y2: Student, 15 persons in the household (including the paternal grandparents and the paternal uncle and aunt). Father has a small shop. One of the brothers studies and works at the same time (Private lessons).

Y3: Student, 7 persons in the household. Father and mother have a small shop and a snack.

Y4: Student, 7 persons in the household. The father owns a sawmill.

Y5: Student, 5 persons in the household. The father has a small shop.

Y6: Student, 5 persons in the household. The father is a carpenter.

Y7: Student, 5 persons in the household.

Y8: Student, 6 persons in the household. The father works in trade.

Y9: (arrived late, no information)

Y10: (arrived late, no information)

FGD 5: Working women, 'Arsal.

February 20, 2009 (14:00-16:00)

Y1: Mother of two children, school teacher

Y2: 4 children (3 girls and 1 boy), school teacher and housewife

Y3: Single, school teacher, 3 persons in the household (with mother and father)

Y4: 4 children, school teacher

Y5: 5 children (3 sons and 2 daughters), 2 sons engaged, has a shop for house ware

Y6: Single, 6 persons in the household: 3 girls, a boy, father and mother. Works in the house and helps in her sister's shop.

Y7: School teacher, pregnant with her first child..

FGD 6: Housewives, 'Arsal.

February 25, 2009 (10:30-12:30)

H1: Married, 3 children, 5 persons in the household

H2: Married, 7 persons in the household (5 children)

H3: Married, no children, only her husband and herself in the household

H4: Married, 9 persons in the household (7 children, 5 of them married, 2 young men living in the house)

H5: Married, 3 persons in the household (1 child)

H6: Married, 6 persons in the household (4 children)

H7: Married, 7 persons in the household (5 children)

H8: Married, 7 persons in the household (5 children)

H9: Single, 9 persons in the household (parents, 3 girls and 4 boys)

H10: Married, pregnant, 2 daughters, 5 persons in the household (including the mother in law)

FGD 7: Housewives, Ain Ata. Friday

February 20, 2009 (10:45-12:45).

H1: Housewife, 2 children, husband works as butcher, father and mother in law live in the same house.

- H2:** Married, 3 young girls, husband public servant, nobody else lives with them.
- H3:** Married, 5 children, husband retired (was in the army), mother in law lives with them.
- H4:** Single, lives with her father.
- H5:** Single, has a training in “maquillage and coiffeur”, lives with her parents, as well as her sister and brother. She has a brother travelling; he lives with them with his family (when he is here).
- H6:** Single, she is from the municipality and was always present during the FGDs in the village.
(The two single ladies are present because they are responsible of their households)
- H7:** Single, lives with her mother and her brother’s family (they come and go, not always in the house).
- H8:** Married, 3 children (2 girls and 1 boy). Her husband is in the Internal Security Forces (officer), nobody else lives with them.
- H9:** Married with 2 children. The husband is independent worker.

FGD 8: Working Women, Ain Ata.

Friday March 13, 2009 (14:00-16:00).

- W1:** She used to be a teacher (stopped a month ago), now she is at home and has a daughter. We live together my husband, my daughter and I.
- W2:** Employee in the municipality and student. She lives with her mother, father and her brother.
- W3:** She lives with her mother and 2 brothers. She has a small shop (house ware) that she would like to develop.
- W4:** Teacher in a public school. She is living with her mother, sister and brother.
- W5:** Teacher in a public school. She lives with her mother; her brother’s daughter and son also live with them.
- W6:** Seamstress and she give sewing lessons. She lives with her sister.

FGD 9: Young Women Ain Ata.

Friday March 13, 2009 (16:30-18:15).

- Y1:** 26 years old, finished school (Terminale) and now she is at home. 4 girls and a boy and no relative lives with them.

- Y2:** Last year of school (Terminale). They are 3 girls and 6 boys living with their mother and father. Nobody else lives with them. Two of the girls are married.
- Y3:** Second year of secondary school. She has a younger sister and an older brother; they live with their parents and no other relative lives in their household.
- Y4:** In secondary school. She lives with her mother and her grandparents in their house. She has a brother who lives with her father abroad.
- Y5:** She is in last year of school. There are 5 persons in the household: her parents, 2 girls and a boy.
- Y6:** At school (Seconde), there are 3 girls and 3 boys at home and nobody else lives with them.
- Y7:** She has a degree in History and she is a school teacher. She is the only girl with 6 brothers. Her brothers are married and nobody lives with them at home. She lives with her mother and her older sister.

FGD 10: Housewives, Aita Shaab. Friday

February 13, 2009 (10:45-14:15).

- H1:** Husband has a grocery store and they have 6 children (from 2 to 18 years old)
- H2:** Husband works in the Security Forces; they have 3 children (the eldest is 7 years old)
- H3:** Husband is a driver (a van for school children transport) and he does small work (painting, electricity, mechanics...). 2 children: a boy and a girl
- H4:** Husband is abroad, 4 children (three boys from 16 to 23 years old) and a married daughter. The children have a small computer shop
- H5:** Husband used to be abroad, now he came back and opened a small shop. They planted tobacco to be able to send their children to school, they have 3 children.
- H6:** Husband is abroad (the only source of income), 4 children (3 boys and a girl)
- H7:** Husband is a taxi driver; 4 children (2 girls and 2 boys) (from 7 to 19 years old)
- H8:** She helps in the tobacco planting and processing. 4 children (the eldest is 11 years old)
- H9:** Husband has a small shop (sanitary ware), 5 children: 4 boys from 5 to 18 years old) and a girl (13 years). The eldest is studying in Beirut.
- H10:** Husband is a butcher, they have 4 children; the eldest girl has 16 years

FGD 11: Working Women, Aita Shaab.

Friday February 13, 2009 (15:30-18:00).

- W1:** Education responsible in the school and director of a nursery “x”, social psychologist, she still has one year before retirement. Married, she has a son and a daughter.
- W2:** Teacher in the public school, also a housewife. President of the agricultural cooperative she co-founded and has 4 children.
- W3:** She presented herself as being also a housewife, a seamstress and she also works in agriculture (tobacco). 3 children; a daughter married and the son soon to be.
- W4:** Nurse in a dispensary in Aita, also studying for a technical diploma. She is married with 3 children (under 10 years old).
- W5:** Housewife, works in agriculture (tobacco), participated in a training session on agriculture; 5 children.
- W6:** Educator in the school, single.
- W7:** Teacher at the village secondary school. Married and has 3 daughters.
- W8:** MA in Arabic literature and diploma in psychology and several training sessions. She is the headmistress in the public secondary school in Aita Shaab; 4 children.
- W9:** She presented herself as housewife, followed training session in agriculture, member of a group producing laurel soap. She also grows vegetables and works as a seamstress. She has 6 children.
- W10:** Housewife and works in agriculture (tobacco). She has 6 children.

FGD 12: Young Women, Aita Shaab.

Saturday February 14, 2009 (11:30-14:00).

- Y1:** 16 years old, first year of secondary school (public school). Father is a butcher. There are 3 girls and a boy in the family.
- Y2:** 16 years old, class of Brevet, public school. There are 3 girls and 3 boys in the family. They plant tobacco
- Y3:** 16 years old, class of Brevet, public school. The father is a carpenter, they are 11 children: 6 girls and 5 boys. Two of her brothers live in Australia
- Y4:** 16 years old, class of Brevet, Public school. The father is a teacher; they are 9 children, 4 boys and 5 girls. Three girls are married. One of the brothers is studying in Beirut.
- Y5:** 17 years old, studying to be a beautician (second year) in a technical school in Bint Jbeil. The father is a school teacher, they are 8 children, 4 of them are married.

Y6: 17 years old, BT2 in accounting in a technical school in Bint Jbeil. The father has a digger and the mother plants tobacco. She has two sisters in universities in Beirut. In the household they are three girls still at school. She helps her mother in her agricultural work.

Y7: 17 years old, studying third grade in a religious school in the region. The father works as a van taxi driver. There are 4 children in the family (2 boys and 2 girls). The oldest brother studies in Beirut.

Y8: 15 years old, first year of secondary school (public school). The father is a school teacher, 9 persons in the household.

FGD 13: Housewives, Deir Mimas.

Friday March 13, 2009 (10:10-11:40).

H1: Housewife and in the Women's Committee, she work in her house and also prepares muneh. Household of 4 people: she has a daughter and a son, her husband is retired.

H2: She has a daughter 20 years old and nobody else lives with them (her husband, her daughter and herself).

H3: She has a small shop where she sells local muneh prepared by her. She is also a member of the Women's Committee. She has 5 daughters and a son, all of them are married and her husband and her are living in the house alone.

H4: 46 years old, single, active in the committee and member in all kinds of associations (Caritas, women committee...), she works on a voluntary basis. She lives with her brother and his wife.

H5: She does not work (and she is not a member of an association). She lives with her husband, all the children are adults and nobody lives with them. Her husband has children, she has none.

H6: She does not work; she helps her husband in his grocery shop in the village. She has no children.

FGD 14: Working Women, Deir Mimas.

Saturday March 14, 2009 (11:30-13:00).

W1: Husband retired from the army, her brother-in-law is very old and she takes care of him. They have a domestic worker. (She declared that she was here just to have a look and participate to the meeting)

W2: Single, living with her mother. She works in the old people hospice. All my married siblings live with their families; they do not help in the household expenses.

W3: Married with 4 children (3 daughters and a son), She works in the old people hospice. Her husband has goats (summer activity).

W4: 18 years old, she works in a clothing store in Ibl Saqi.

W5: Cleaning worker in Deir Mimas School in winter, no fixed contract. Husband is a farmer; they have 2 daughters (19 and 14 years old) and a son. The eldest daughter has started working recently; her income is strictly for her because she is planning to marry. The eldest helps her to pay for the school bus fees (it is not much).

W6: Married with 2 sons. She works in the hospice as a director and she works as a volunteer in the municipal dispensary. Her husband is the school director.

FGD 15: Young Women, Deir Mimas.

Saturday March 14, 2009 (15:30-17:30).

Notes: Y3, Y4 and Y6 are young men. Y6 and Y7 arrived late in the FGD

Y1: 1st year university, Translation, AUST University in Beirut, she live in a foyer. She is the only child in her family. Father retired from the security forces.

Y2: Brevet year at school. The family is composed of the parents and 2 children. Father public servant and mother has a small shop

Y3: Last year English literature, Lebanese University in Fanar. He lives in Beirut with his brother (first year university). There are only 2 children in the household. Father has a gas station.

Y4: Secondary school (Premiere) in Public school in Marjeyoun. The family has 3 children. Father is a public servant. The mother works in a small shop selling muneh. They have a house (which they rent) in Beirut.

Y5: Secondary school (Terminale) in Marjeyoun. There are three children in the family: her 2 brothers and herself. Mother is a public servant and father bus driver.

Y6: Y3's brother, same information.

Y7: Y3's sister. No more information

FGD 16: Housewives, Siddiqin.

Thursday February 19, 2009 (10:45-13:55).

H1: Husband worker in the municipality. Work in tobacco, 8 children.

H2: 8 children (the eldest 15 years old) all at school, nobody lives with them. Work in tobacco

H3: 3 children. Husband works in a gas station. Work in tobacco.

H4: 6 children (2 to 16 years old). Husband works in agriculture and tobacco.

H5: Children: 4 sons (three are married) not working and 4 daughters (18 to 27 years old). The husband is unemployed. Work in Tobacco

- H6:** Husband has 7 children, 2 are living with them and go to school. Work in tobacco; the husband is also a taxi driver.
- H7:** Husband agricultural worker, 5 sons and 3 children at school.
- H8:** 6 children from 5 to 19 years old (eldest girl is married). Work in tobacco. Husband works in Angola.
- H9:** Widow. She raised 6 children: 2 sons and 4 daughters; , agricultural work.. One of the sons works to be able to marry. 3 daughters are married.
- H10:** 4 children at school (3 to 10 years old). Work in tobacco. The husband owns and manages a compressor.
- H11:** 7 persons in the household. 5 children: 2 daughters and 3 sons. Husband is a construction worker (paid per day). Work in tobacco
- H12:** 6 daughters and 2 sons. 3 girls and a boy are still living with the parents. Husband works in tobacco. 2 daughters finished school (15 and 17 years old). One son is married, agricultural worker. Work in tobacco.
- H13:** 3 children (2 boys, 1 girl). Husband has an agricultural tractor. Work in Tobacco
- H14:** 9 children. 4 daughters are married. One of the daughters lives with them (she has 2 children) without her husband. One of the daughters lives also in the household. 4 sons: one is married, one works, one is at school and one is sick. Husband is unemployed. Work in tobacco. There are 5 persons in the household.
- H15:** 6 children (11 to 18 years old). Husband owns a tractor, agricultural work, tobacco
- H16:** Divorced, she lives with her parents. She has a daughter. Work in tobacco.
- H17:** 4 children (from 1 to 5 years old). Husband is a worker.

FGD 17: *Young Women, Siddiqin.*

Thursday February 19, 2009 (16:30-18:30).

- Y1:** Going to school in the village of Cana (4eme) 15 years old. In the household: 6 children (from 2 to 16 years old), her father works in a poultry farm.
- Y2:** Going to school in the village of Cana (4eme) 15 years old. Father works in a tile factory and he plants tobacco. The mother doesn't work. There are 6 children in the family (from 4 to 16 years old), all at school.
- Y3:** School in Siddiqin (5eme), 14 years old. There are 5 children (from 3 to 14 years old) in the household. Father owns a pick up and transports merchandises. Nobody else lives with them.

Y4: Not going to school, not working 17 years old, engaged to be married. 3 girls and 2 boys at home (from 13 to 21 years old). aFther is re-married and doesn't contribute financially. Mother works in the health department.

Y5: At home, 20 years old. There are 8 persons in our household. Father is a plaster artisan, and the mother has a fish shop.

FGD 18: Working Women, Siddiqin.

Friday February 20, 2009 (10:55-12:50).

W1: School teacher. 4 persons in the household (2 children, 1 and 3 years old)

W2: 3 persons in the household: husband, daughter and herself. She has 8 children, 7 are married. She has a small shop (toys and house ware) and works in tobacco.

W3: 12 children (10 sons and 2 daughters). There are 12 persons in the household (10 children). She has a fish shop, husband is an artisan.

W4: Family has a grocery and vegetable shop. 8 children (from 10 to 21 years old), so 10 persons in the household

W5: She has a clothes shop, and lives with her parents, 3 persons in the household.

W6: 4 persons in the household. 2 children: 3 and 1 year old. She has a shop (children's clothes and toys), the husband is unemployed. My in-laws live with them (6 persons)

W7: She has a shop for house ware and also sews curtains and covers. There are 3 persons in the household.

W8: 6 persons in the household. There are 5 children at home (3 boys and 2 girls) and a married daughter. She has a clothes shop, the husband is an electrical technician. They also work in tobacco.

W9: 7 children, 4 are married. In the household: 2 daughters (22 and 26 years old) and the mother in law. One of the sons is abroad. She has a small shop, and her husband works with her.

Annex 3: General information on the selected communities

Annex 3 presents the first general data on the villages that was found at the preliminary stage of the research, when decision concerning which communities to choose had to be made. It presents some very general information on the selected communities regarding population, socio-demographics, main sources of livelihoods, and the groups to be targeted in the focus group discussions. The information found (different sources, mainly from previous CRTD.A's projects and researches) is presented here in its original form; no update was made later on in the research, or before the publication of the report.

Deir Al Abmar

Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35,000 voters (around 9,000 in winter) (Localiban: 5,500 – 10,100 registered voters, 2004)
Socio-demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian Maronites (only 2 Greek catholic families having settled in the village but originally from other villages in the area) • Important migration (ACGEN) • Administrative and commercial centre for the neighbouring villages (ACGEN) • Many associations (ACGEN) • 3 public schools (elementary, intermediate and secondary) • 1 private school (elementary) run by the Sister of the Holy Family • 1 dispensary (Coordination MOSA and a FBO)
Main source of livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture • Stone production and tourism (near Bechwat) (ACGEN)
Target group for FGD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's cooperative (WEEP)

'Arsal

Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30,000 24.500 permanent resident (Localiban: 13,500 – 20,800 registered voters, 2004)
Socio-demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim Sunni • Work Migration to Beirut • 5 public schools (4 (ACGEN): 1 elementary, 3 intermediate) and 7 private schools (6: ACGEN) • 1 vocational centre (public) • MOSA centre • 5 dispensaries (1 MOSA) 1 polyclinic and several doctor clinics (ACGEN) • 7 associations and 1 cooperative for food production (ACGEN) • 30 enterprises of more than 5 employees

Main source of livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment in armed forces • Quarries and stone production • Mainly agriculture Rain-fed agriculture (cherries, apricots...) and cereals as well as cattle (ACGEN) • Little small enterprises and crafts (carpets) (ACGEN)
Target group for FGD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women association established 2 years ago • Via 'Arsal Women's Cooperative Association

Ain Aata

Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around 1,500 (2,500 in summer) (Localiban: 1,400 – 2,700 registered voters)
Socio-demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Druze • Migration due to lack of job opportunities and for studying purposes (ACGEN) • 2 schools (public, elementary and complementary) (ACGEN: no schools) • No health centre • Lack of public transports (except early morning) to Zahleh or Beirut • Sports and cultural club • Important migration (internal to Beirut and external)
Main source of livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees (public servants in security forces , army and education) • Agriculture (Olives, Pine trees, almonds) (and grapes, cherries, figs and cereals (ACGEN)) • Women's work: education, nursing and small work (used as complement, not main source of income)
Target group for FGD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via the Women's Cooperative (Ain El Loz) or the Municipality

Aita Shaab

Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13,000 9,000 (summer 10,000) (Localiban: 2,500 – 6,200 registered voters, 2004) (ACGEN: 8,000 in winter 10,500 in summer)
Socio-demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim Shiite • Little migration (Beirut and foreign countries) • 10% employees (private and public sector) (outside the village) • 2 public schools (complementary and secondary level) and 2 private schools (complementary level) (ACGEN: 3 public schools (2 intermediate and 1 secondary) and 1 private intermediate and 1 school for children with special needs) • Problems of mines, disabled population. Only 1 private school (for children with special needs) Cooperative centre was destroyed (2006) • 2 medical centres (1 NGO and 1 MOSA) (ACGEN) • Social and cultural association, 1 association for the handicapped (related to the school) and Civil Defence centre

Main source of livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture (tobacco and cereals) 85% (wheat, tobacco, fruits) ACGEN: tobacco (90%), olives, grapes, figs • ACGEN: laurel production • Small enterprises (commercial) in the village
Target group for FGD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via Association for handicapped children

Deir Mimas

Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around 800 (2,000 in summer) (Localiban: 1,100 – 4,600 registered voters 2004)
Socio-demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian (Greek Orthodox, Maronites, Catholics) • Important migration • 1 public school (elementary) • High level of education among the population • Medical centre (weak capabilities) and mobile medical clinic. Water sanitation needs to be improved. Problem of mines and destruction (2006, school)
Main source of livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture (mainly olives) 80% • Public servants (mainly in the education sector)
Target group for FGD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via the Women's Association of Deir Mimas (social and educational activities) production of organically preserved food.

Siddiqin

Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around 5,000 (1,800 – 3,300 Localiban)
Socio-demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim Shiite • Little migration • 5% employees (private and public sector- Tyr, Beirut) • 1 public school (intermediate). Private schools in neighboring villages) • 2 dispensaries (NGOs) • A lot of destruction from 2006 war (200 shops and 350 houses). Small medical centre in the municipality building
Main source of livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly agriculture (tobacco , wheat, olives, vegetables) • Small enterprises (commercial) and employees • Working women: teachers (around 20), shop owners and employees (between 80 and 100). The majority of women work in their home and in agriculture
Target group for FGD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via CRTD.A centre (Women's Economic Empowerment), women beneficiaries

