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# GENDER in AGRICULTURE and AGRO-PROCESSING in LEBANON

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**GENDER IN AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-PROCESSING  
IN LEBANON**



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## ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

AOAD	Arab Organization for Agricultural Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDI	gender-related development index
GDP	gross domestic product
ha	hectare
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
LAU	Lebanese American University
LL	Lebanese pound
NCLW	National Commission for Lebanese Women
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPP	purchasing power parity
SDIPD	Social Development Issues and Policies Division
SIPD	Sectoral Issues and Policies Division
UNDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

The following symbols have been used in the tables throughout the study:

Two dots (..) indicate that data is not available

A dash (—) indicates that the amount is nil or negligible.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study, implemented as part of the biennium work programme 2000-2001 of the Sectoral Issues and Policies Division (SIPD) of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) aims to assess gender inequality in agriculture and agro-food processing industries in Lebanon, inform policy development in this area and identify areas for future policy relevant research. It is based largely on existing literature and analysis of secondary data, as well as on information from relevant sources in Lebanon.

The Beijing Platform for Action (1995), an agenda for women's empowerment, calls on Governments and active players to promote a policy of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming focuses on gender equality as a goal and not women as a target group. To enable mainstreaming strategies to address gender equality issues successfully at the policy level, it is crucial that the political will exists at the highest level and that gender-disaggregated statistics be available for planning purposes. As the relationships between increased employment and income, and economic empowerment and gender equality are not straightforward, economic activity is not a sufficient condition for gender equality and therefore, not all employment is empowering.

The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) was created in 1996 as a direct outcome of the Beijing Conference with a view to mainstreaming gender perspective into all policies and plans. The Commission has already submitted a National Strategy on Lebanese Women to the Beijing Follow-up Committee in New York but has not done much in translating this plan into concrete action. Some attempts have been made through a United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNDP/UNIFEM) project to select and train gender focal points in governmental institutions and ministries so as to forge gender-sensitive policies and programmes. The constitution of Lebanon does not discriminate by gender, and the Labour Law gives men and women equal rights in the workplace. Nevertheless, traditional norms often act against the acquired basic rights of Lebanese women. The degree of participation of women in decision-making, both in the political arena and the productive sectors of the economy is low. NCLW has identified a series of obstacles facing Lebanese working women which include discrimination in the workplace, less attractive benefits packages, gender-based stereotyping in the selection of fields of specialization in higher education, and widespread cultural practices.

Inadequate gender-disaggregated data is a major constraint to a full understanding of the roles and responsibilities of women in the agricultural sector. Specifically, the data on Lebanon regarding the status of women in agriculture and agro-processing is inadequate and based largely on surveys that vary in their assumptions and use of analytical techniques. As a consequence, available statistics are often inconsistent and cannot therefore provide a reliable basis of comparison.

There is evidence to suggest that the risk of poverty is higher among rural women than among men. Usually women have a harder time coping with and overcoming poverty. Accurate data on poverty in Lebanon are not available even though some studies suggest that its incidence among rural women and female-headed households is higher than average.

There is a gender bias in access to resources in the agricultural and agro-processing sectors in the developing countries including Lebanon. In general, women do not buy land and inheriting land, especially agricultural land, is restricted for women by law and/or by social norms; land ownership is predominantly exclusive to men. Women's access to credit is restricted by the unavailability of land title as collateral. Training, extension services and technological innovations do not normally target the needs of women and women are seldom encouraged to participate. As institutional frameworks are not geared to deal with the current situation, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have stepped in with programmes tailored to respond to the needs of women.

There is general agreement that gender plays an important role in deciding how household income is dispensed. Women tend to spend more of their income on food, education and health. As traditionally women's loan repayment rate is higher than men's, donor agencies and NGOs have actively pursued female clients. Group lending has become a common venue for extending credit in both rural and urban areas especially to women. The advantages of group lending include: a reduction in institutional transaction costs;

encouragement of the poor-- women, in particular--to work in groups for financial and social reasons; and a better repayment record because of peer pressure and group solidarity.

Rural women often supplement the family income by producing dairy products and food preserves. A number of national and international NGOs are engaged in training them to improve and market their products. Mercy Corps International is one international NGO offering training in food preservation techniques and assistance in setting up cooperatives for cluster farmers. Empowering civil society by stressing participation, interaction and accountability is at the core of Mercy Corps International strategy to achieve sustainability. The project in Bebnine, in northern Lebanon, attests to the success of their strategy as the female beneficiaries feel themselves empowered and their self-esteem restored.

Despite efforts by the national women machinery, agricultural rural developments and the national and international NGOs, women still face barriers that are engrained in the psyche of both the male and female population. Roles that women have traditionally assumed in the workplace persist and breaking out of the mould remains a mammoth task for anyone concerned.

## INTRODUCTION

This study has been implemented as part of the biennium work programme 2000-2001 of SIPD of ESCWA. Its principal objective is to assess the current state of knowledge of gender inequality in agriculture and agro-food processing industries in Lebanon. The report also aims to inform the development of policy in this area and to identify areas for future policy relevant research. It is based largely on existing literature and analysis of secondary data, as well as on information collected from selected stakeholder organizations, officials in agriculture, industry ministries, private sector enterprises, international agencies and NGOs in Lebanon.

This report constitutes a base for mainstreaming gender perspectives into agriculture and agro-processing industries in Lebanon. It highlights areas where existing gender-issue databases need to be strengthened and where surveys need to be more detailed in order to gather relevant information on the actual contributions of both men and women to agriculture and agro-processing industries' performance. For these reasons, only provisional conclusions can be drawn at this stage.

Chapter I outlines the concept of gender mainstreaming and then reviews the issues of gender and food security, data gap, access to resources and services, poverty and rural development and national strategies for women in general and in agriculture, in particular. Chapter II provides a regional overview. Chapter III focuses on current economic development, agriculture, gender profile in agriculture and its institutional capacity. Gender differences in agriculture such as legal aspects, work hours, land ownership, finance and services are also highlighted. It also covers gender differences within food processing industries such as occupational concentration, income differentials (pay and benefits) and experience. The availability of training is also discussed as are some examples of women's role in selected food processing enterprises. Chapter IV draws conclusions, makes recommendations and identifies the prospective requirements for further studies.

The report was prepared by Shadan Halazoun under the supervision of staff in SIPD. A draft version was submitted at the end of 2000. This draft formed the basis for a discussion meeting convened on 5 September 2001. Participants at this meeting included rural, agricultural and agro-food processing experts working in Lebanon, as well as SIPD staff. The conclusions of the meeting discussions and list of participants are appended to this report. Adjustments to the draft report were made based on additional information provided by the participants.

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\* A report on this Meeting will be available at a later stage for distribution to concerned parties



## I. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

### A. WHAT IS GENDER MAINSTREAMING?

The Beijing Platform for Action, an outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995), is an agenda for women's empowerment. The Platform calls on "governments and active players to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively".

ESCWA's Plan of Action states that, "mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and expectations an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality".<sup>1</sup>

The Regional Platform requested Governments to develop strategies and plans of action including guidelines on its implementation. As of April 2000, Lebanon and several other ESCWA countries submitted national strategies for gender mainstreaming as a follow-up to the Beijing Conference.<sup>2</sup>

### B. GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND GENDER EQUALITY

Gender is defined as a "culturally specific set of characteristics that identifies the social behavior of women and men and the relationship between them"<sup>3</sup> and is regarded as an analytical tool in the study of the socio-economic process. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles played by women and men and assigned on the basis of their sex. Over time, these roles can change with economic and social developments. Gender equality implies inclusion and full participation of both men and women in all areas of private and public life. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to bring gender equality issues into the mainstream of decision-making. Societies tend to have an innate male bias; policies often inadvertently result in gender inequality. Differences between men and women, however, must also be respected while pursuing gender equality.

As mainstreaming focuses on gender equality as a goal rather than women as a target group, women's development is not viewed as a sector; but rather, equality issues are integrated into sectoral analysis and not confined to isolated programmes. Throughout much of the developing world, dissemination of information on Government commitments to the Platform for Action is slow. This is due to a lack of understanding of what the mainstreaming commitment entails, limited skills in sectoral ministries and inadequacies of the data available through central statistics services. The main components of an effective mainstreaming capacity include: clarity about and commitment to the goal of gender equality; incorporation of gender issues in the planning and decision-making process; and availability of gender-disaggregated data.

### C. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND GENDER EQUALITY

Economic equality is definable as "the ability of men and women to support the same standard of living for themselves over their lifetimes".<sup>4</sup> The relationship between increased employment and income,

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<sup>1</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), *Plan of Action for Gender Mainstreaming in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia: the Second Arab Meeting for Follow-up to Beijing Conference*, Beirut, 1998 (in Arabic).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, [www.un.org/womenwatch/followup](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/followup)

<sup>3</sup> Status of Women Canada, "Gender-based analysis: A guide for policy-making", working document, [www.swc.cfc.gc.ca/publi/dh/gbad/e.html](http://www.swc.cfc.gc.ca/publi/dh/gbad/e.html)

<sup>4</sup> Rachel Masika and Susan Joekes, "Employment and sustainable livelihoods: a gender perspective", *Gender development gender*, Report No. 37, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 1996, [www.ids.ac.uk/bridge](http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge)

and economic empowerment and gender equality, is not straightforward; increased income for women does not necessarily lead to an improvement in their bargaining power in decision-making. Economic activity is a necessary but insufficient condition for gender equality, as not all employment is empowering (see box 1).

#### Box 1. Gender-aware economic analysis

There are three main levels of focus of gender-aware economic analysis:

(a) At the macro-level, women's unpaid labour must be included in the measurement of the size of the economy, in order to account for the total contribution of women to economic output and to assess the opportunity cost of resource transfers between sectors.

(b) At the meso-level (Government departments, intermediary institutions, product and factor markets), there is a need to recognize that neither resource allocation processes, nor markets are gender neutral.

(c) At the micro-level, inequalities within the household regarding division of labour and decision-making constrain women's access to and control over resources and the returns of their labour.

*Source:* Sally Baden, 'Gender issues in agricultural liberalization', *Bridge: development gender*, Report No. 41, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 1998, [www.ids.ac.uk](http://www.ids.ac.uk)

#### D. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

To enable mainstreaming strategies to address gender equality issues successfully at the policy level, it is important that:

(a) Political will exists at the highest level, as Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the platform for Action;

(b) Statistics be made available for planning, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects, as methods of data collection tend to underestimate and underrate women's contributions to the economy. The framework of analysis also needs to be altered to take gender differentials into account;

(c) Gender relations be understood and their distinguishing characteristics incorporated into the analytical framework;

(d) Human and financial resources be mobilized for the advancement of women and a gender perspective integrated in the budgetary decisions and special funding earmarked for programmes promoting gender equality;

(e) Participation of men and women is ensured in public and private sectors, at all levels of the decision-making process;

(f) Institutions be equipped with the capacity required to incorporate a gender mainstreaming strategy, which includes the ability to assess policies and rules in terms of their impact on men and women, clear understanding and commitment to equality, mechanisms to make intersectoral linkages and monitor progress, developing a skill set within the ranks of organizations to facilitate the implementation of a mainstreaming strategy and ensuring the participation of women in the articulation and evaluation of policies.

<sup>17</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee, *Source: Book on Concepts and Approaches Linking Gender Equality*, Paris, 1998, [www.oecd.org/dac/gender/sourcebook.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender/sourcebook.htm)

To be effective, a gender mainstreaming strategy must be integrated into the policy-making process at all stages and designed to strengthen the quality of analysis in a comprehensive approach. In the planning phase, a gender mainstreaming perspective should be integrated at an early stage where challenges are identified and goals defined.

In the decision-making phase, a gender mainstreaming approach would ensure that women's issues are placed on the agenda. But as analysis of gender equality issues does not guarantee actions in the implementation phase, it is important to follow through with the concerned players during implementation.

Finally, in the evaluation phase, the impact of the policy implemented on gender issues is analysed.

#### E. TOOLS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

In order to eradicate the bias inherent in social attitudes and to assess the contribution of men and women to the agricultural sector, decision makers and analysts must acquire relevant skills through training in gender-sensitive analysis and participatory approaches. To make optimal use of gender-specific data, information must be generated through formal systems in which current methodologies are reviewed and new ones adopted. Tools for gender mainstreaming are specified below:

(a) Statistics – designed to include gender-disaggregated data (where relevant) and with appropriate data collection methods;

(b) Surveys – to trace current gender relations;

(c) Cost-benefit analysis – carried out with a gender perspective in order to weigh the pros and cons of the impact of policies on both sexes;

(d) Research – to identify current issues and trends in a specific area;

(e) Gender impact analysis – to pinpoint the differences in the impact of specific policies or action plans on men and women.

## II. GENDER STANCE IN AGRICULTURE

### A. ISSUES

According to the World Bank, gender is one of the factors inhibiting the increase of agricultural productivity in the developing countries. The role of men and women in agriculture differs from region to region. Gender roles shift with economic, social and technological developments. The social fabric can enhance or mitigate gender-related disparities.

#### 1. *Gender and food security*

Millions of people in the developing world lack food security and people are unable to meet their nutritional needs in some parts of the world. Reducing the bias against women in agriculture may be one way of increasing agricultural output. Based on field studies, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) maintains that women play a crucial role as producers of food, managers of natural resources and prime executors of household food security. The authors of these studies discussed the crucial role women in the developing regions play in maintaining the three pillars of food security, namely, food production, access to available food and nutritional security. Unfortunately, women often face social, cultural and economic constraints that impair their ability to carry out this role.

In food production the main factors that hinder women's full participation are insecure land tenure, inability to use land as collateral for credit, lower educational level and insufficient agricultural extension programmes geared towards women farmers. IFPRI<sup>6</sup> reports that a household's standard of living depends not only on the household income but also on who brings in that income. Because of the cultural role assigned to women as caretakers of children, women tend to spend more of their income than their male partners on food and so contribute to improving their children's health and nutrition. This highlights the necessity of improving women's resources in order to subsequently raise their income levels. Women are also central in ensuring the nutritional security of the household. This pillar of food security is determined by the quality and variety of food, and not only its quantity.

Research confirms that total agricultural productivity increases sharply when women have the same access to inputs as men. In addition, increasing women's human capital is one effective way to reduce poverty. In a study on the determinants of poverty in Egypt, it was found that increasing the level of education from no education whatsoever to a primary level, decreases the proportion of the population below the poverty line to almost 34 per cent.<sup>7</sup>

#### 2. *Gender and data gap*

The paucity of gender-disaggregated data is a major constraint to an understanding of the full roles and responsibilities women assume in the agricultural sector. As roles differ from one region to another, the division of labour between men and women farmers is often unclear. This restricts planners in making gender-sensitive decisions ensuring the inclusion of both men and women in various programmes. With the assumption that the goals of gender equality and food security are linked, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) proposes a Strategy for Action<sup>8</sup> for optimizing the role of information. An analysis of the relation of the different roles of men and women in the food production process and of the determinants of access to resources is crucial.

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<sup>6</sup> World Bank, *Toolkit on Gender in Agriculture*, [www.worldbank.org/gender](http://www.worldbank.org/gender)

<sup>7</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 'Women: The key to food security', *Food Policy Statement No. 7*, 1995, [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)

<sup>10</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *The Role of Information: Strategy for Action*, Rome, 2000

The Strategy for Action has two goals: to increase the compilation and dissemination of gender specific information in order to allow for the formulation of gender responsive policies; and to support communication between stakeholders in order to incorporate specific measures which enhance the power of rural women in decision-making. The strategy aims to provide planners with relevant information on the contributions of both men and women to agricultural development and to identify and meet the informational needs of the rural population. It also seeks to bring to light rural women's contribution to food security and to tackle the needs of all involved by strengthening the relation between policy makers and rural women. The strategy also proposes guidelines on how to give workers in agricultural production equal access to resources.

The strategy also identifies some of the factors that contribute to increased poverty: limited access to resources; lack of focus on gender issues at the policy level; the inadequacy of existing gender-disaggregated data for the formulation and incorporation of measures which deal with gender equality issues in planning and implementation; and lack of participation of women in the decision-making process.

Macroeconomic policies such as trade liberalization, structural adjustment programmes and modernization of agriculture have prompted men to look for employment outside the agricultural sector and leave women with agriculture-related tasks and the responsibilities of heading the household.

Planning requires gender specific information and gender-disaggregated data as well as a thorough understanding of the differences in gender contributions to the productive process and in specific roles. Sources of useful data include:<sup>11</sup>

(a) Labour force surveys: these provide a snapshot of the economically active population and highlight the differences between the various sectors, but underestimate the full extent of women's representation in the agricultural sector due to measurement techniques;

(b) Poverty assessments: more women suffer from poverty than men and those tend to be in rural areas; the data provided by poverty assessments can provide further information on gender and agriculture;

(c) Household sample surveys: information in a household survey details income and expenditure tabulated by gender and economic activity of the head of the household. Policy makers can however tabulate other information from the survey;

(d) Agricultural censuses: agricultural censuses and surveys concentrate on basic characteristics relating to production technologies and land use. Recently, the FAO Programme for the World Census of Agriculture 2000<sup>12</sup> emphasized the importance of including gender-related information in agricultural activities;

(e) Other sources: studies in international journals, university thesis and research projects may be useful sources of information. Some reports on projects by NGOs and donor agencies may also be useful as their work tends to incorporate the gender dimension.

### *3. Access to resources and services*

Women play a vital role in farming households, but have limited access to resources. In "Gender differences in agricultural productivity: A survey of empirical evidence",<sup>13</sup> the author argues that with all factors equal, women farmers are as efficient as men farmers, but as they lack equal access to information, credit, extension and markets they are usually less efficient. FAO<sup>14</sup> maintains that women globally comprise

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<sup>11</sup> FAO, "Filling the data gap", Rome, 1999, [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

<sup>12</sup> FAO, [www.fao.org/docrep/X2785e](http://www.fao.org/docrep/X2785e)

<sup>13</sup> IIPRI, "Women - The key to food security", *Food Policy Statement No. 21*, [www.IIPRI.org](http://www.IIPRI.org)

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*

40 per cent of the agricultural workforce and head an increasing proportion of rural households. The recent urbanization trend has pulled rural men into urban jobs and left women behind in most developing countries. As men have higher mobility, they tend to take jobs in other sectors and this leads to the gradual feminization of agriculture. Even with an increase in the proportion of female-headed households, land reform programmes have not taken into consideration the rights of married women to joint share of agricultural land. With no land-title as collateral, it is very difficult for female farmers to secure credit. Furthermore, women do not have equal access to inputs, and extension services do not reach women directly. They also lack cash to buy the required inputs. Female farmers are rarely represented in the decision-making process and consequently their point of view and needs are not addressed. Gender analysis poses questions on the differences between men and women in terms of activities, roles and resources so as to determine needs and is a tool for creating economic and social gains, overcoming the gender barriers that hinder agricultural productivity and ensuring equal opportunity.<sup>13</sup>

Religious laws and cultural norms define the rights and obligations of women and vary widely in different regions, countries and groups. Even when legally, be it by civil or religious laws, a woman inherits agricultural land, it is often customary for her to turn over its control to a man in her family. With economic development, new pressures affect traditional relations. These pressures include new kinds of employment, migration to urban areas, resource shortages (such as land shortage), higher levels of education for women and increased responsibility for women left behind in rural areas.

Many rural women, with household responsibilities, lack decision-making powers and economic security as individuals under traditional law. Female-headed households do not often have the same access to resources. Inheritance laws and norms leave women insufficient financial resources for starting their own businesses. More equitable rights to land use and land title are needed as women form an increasing segment of the economic and social capital. As has been noted above, women tend to reinvest more resources in the family unit than men and this reinvestment improves the quality of life of their families in terms of health, nutrition and education. One of the many ways to enhance women's rights is by enacting property laws which acknowledge the diversity of family and household arrangements and ensure the participation of women in decisions concerning land.

Decision makers need to have information to assess and compare the current situation in their own country with other countries regarding gender and access to land, land tenure institutional arrangements and the design and monitoring of land tenure policies based on gender awareness.<sup>14</sup> There is consensus that equitable access to land is not sufficient and needs to be complemented by productive and institutional resources.

Agricultural extension programmes also improve food production and resource management. These programmes are traditionally geared to men farmers, and ignore the needs of women farmers. Agricultural research targets cash instead of food crops. As women farmers are more involved in food crop production, this hampers their ability to achieve food security goals.

Technology is widely recognized as a vital element in improving efficiency and productivity in agriculture. Women in most developing countries have little access to new technology, which negatively impacts the achievement of the food security goal. FAO<sup>15</sup> suggests ways for women to participate in research and extension programmes: explicitly targeting rural women; identifying women's and men's needs and constraints; designing demand-driven extension programmes; collecting gender-desegregated data on men's and women's activities; and developing training programmes that are gender-sensitive.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> FAO, "Gender Issues in Land Tenure", High Level Consultation on Rural Women and Information, Rome, 4-6 October 1999.

<sup>15</sup> FAO, Women and Population Division, Sustainable Development Department, "Women: The key to food security", [www.fao.org/docrep/s0171e](http://www.fao.org/docrep/s0171e).

#### 4. Gender, poverty and rural development

In rural areas in many developing countries, there is an increase in female-headed households, due in part, as already indicated, to the migration of males to urban centres in search of employment. Usually, female-headed households have lower incomes than male-headed households and are often classified as poor.<sup>18</sup> Farms run by women tend to suffer from lower yields as the production has been shifted to less labour-intensive crops. As these alternative crops are usually less nutritious, women's access to technology is of even greater importance.

The relationship between gender and poverty is not straightforward. Specific groups of women (rural women, women in the informal sector and female-headed households), are particularly vulnerable to becoming poor. Economic strain results in the breakdown of obligations and family ties and this, in turn, increases *de facto* and *de jure* the number of female-headed households. Although there is little data on this phenomenon *per se*, the existing literature indicates an increased vulnerability of female-headed households to poverty. Women have a more difficult time than men in coping with and overcoming poverty because policies and practices limit their access to resources and opportunities.<sup>19</sup>

Recently, the World Bank pinpointed not only income-empowerment but also opportunity and security as crucial dimensions of poverty reduction which must be addressed.<sup>20</sup> A policy research project<sup>21</sup> conducted by the World Bank on gender and development stresses the importance of gender equality in the reduction of poverty. There is also mounting evidence on the positive long-term effects of sustained economic development and income growth on gender equality. Based on this research and on its assessments, the World Bank is interested in achieving gender equality in developing countries. It maintains that gender inequalities hamper efficient economic development and have negative effects on the standard of living. An explicit focus of societies on providing the same rights for men and women and on building institutions that are gender-sensitive is a more successful strategy for narrowing the gender inequality gap than an exclusive focus on economic growth.

#### B. A REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Despite its shrinking contribution to gross domestic product (GDP), the agricultural sector remains the mainstay of a relatively high proportion of the labour force in ESCWA member countries. Food security is of paramount importance to the region's policy makers. Women's participation in agricultural activity is significant though not comprehensively documented, especially in remote rural areas. Many poor women work in agriculture. Women working in the food industries and related services in the ESCWA member countries are usually employed in work requiring less skill and training. Female workers are more willing to accept seasonal work and lower wages.

Under-reporting women's contribution in the informal sector is a common practice, as women tend to work in family businesses. Often, women's participation is necessary to run the family business but women somehow do not consider themselves working. Male family members consider women to be helping rather than working which further exacerbates the difficulty in collecting information on women's unpaid family work.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>19</sup> Johanna Sealkwyk, "Exercises in gender mainstreaming", *Gender in Development Monogram Series* 18, May 2000 [www.undp.org/gender](http://www.undp.org/gender)

<sup>20</sup> World Bank, *Advancing Gender Equality: World Bank Action Since Beijing Special Report*, [www.worldbank.org/html/punge/beijing5/specialreport/report.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/html/punge/beijing5/specialreport/report.htm).

<sup>21</sup> World Bank, "Engendering development through gender equality in rights, resources, and voice", *Policy Research Project 2000*, [www.worldbank.org/prp](http://www.worldbank.org/prp)

<sup>22</sup> Sally Baden, "The position of women in Islamic countries: possibilities, constraints and strategies for change" (*Bricks: development gender*), Report No. 4, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 1992, [www.ifs.ac.uk/bridge](http://www.ifs.ac.uk/bridge)

## 1. Gender gap and economic activity

According to *The World Women 2000*,<sup>2</sup> the economic activity rate (the proportion of the working age population in the labour force) for women in Western Asia increased from 28 per cent in 1980, to 33 per cent in 1997, and decreased over the same period for men from 80 per cent to 78 per cent. Only Northern Africa reported a lower activity rate for women of 29 per cent in 1997. Compared with Africa and Asia, women's economic activity rate remains low in the Arab World. In 1997, women's activity rate reached 60 per cent in Eastern Asia, 62 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 45 per cent in South America, all (but sub-Saharan Africa) rising above their 1980 levels.

In general, women work longer hours than men. Work is defined by *The World Women 2000*<sup>3</sup> as "the participation of individuals in productive activities for which they either receive remuneration (in cash or in kind) for their participation or are unpaid because they are contributors to a family business enterprise. It also includes subsistence production of goods for their own households and non-economic activities such as domestic work...". In Western Asia, it is estimated that 34 per cent of the female labour force are contributing family workers, and therefore unpaid, as compared with only 7 per cent of the male working force.<sup>4</sup>

The contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP varies widely from one ESCWA member country to another. In 1998,<sup>5</sup> the average contribution of the agricultural sector to the combined GDP of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries was put at roughly 4 per cent. In the more diversified economies of the ESCWA region, the contribution of agriculture to GDP averages more than 15 per cent. The agricultural sector of the Syrian Arab Republic constituted more than a quarter of GDP, the highest share for any country in the region and well above the ESCWA average of 8 per cent. This sector employs more than half the female working force.

The female participation rate in the ESCWA member countries is highest for Yemen, at 28 per cent, followed by Lebanon and Egypt both at 27 per cent. The lowest female participation rate was registered in Saudi Arabia, at 10 per cent. Among ESCWA member countries for which data are available, the percentage of the female labour force active in the agricultural sector is highest in Iraq, followed by the Syrian Arab Republic, at 68 and 60 per cent respectively. In Lebanon, 16 per cent of the female labour force was engaged in agriculture in 1994 (see table 1).

TABLE 1. WOMEN AND MEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE IN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES, 1995  
(Percentage)

Country/area	Labour force participation	Female participation	Labour force participation in agriculture	Female Labour force in agriculture 1994
Bahrain	43	17	1.6	
Egypt	33	27	33.1	8
Iraq	26	16	11.5	68
Jordan	23	14	6.9	1
Kuwait	42	23	1.2	
Lebanon	31	27	1.2	16
Oman	26	12	12.1	12
Qatar	57	11	2.6	
Saudi Arabia	31	10	13.9	16
Syrian Arab Republic	29	23	32.1	60

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Statistical Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The World's Women 2000, Trends and Statistics*, New York, 2000, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>5</sup> ESCWA, *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 1998-1999*, New York, 1999, pp. 35-36.



TABLE 1 (continued)

Country/area	Labour force participation	Female participation	Labour force participation in agriculture	Female labour force in agriculture, 1994
West Bank/Gaza Strip	38	13	13	
United Arab Emirates	51	12	7.5	
Yemen	30	28	47.5	

Source: ESCWA, *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 1998-1999*, pp. 172 and 184.

## 2. National strategies for women

The national strategies submitted by Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Platform for Action target rural women in different contexts. The National Strategy for Women in the Syrian Arab Republic calls for increased focus on rural development projects and a boost in rural women's status achieved through educational, legal, social, health and economic improvements. Its aim is also to encourage local community projects which generate job opportunities for women living in rural areas, thus promoting their participation in food production and improving their efficiency in food security. The plan also aims to provide equal access and opportunity to land ownership and introduce modern agricultural services to rural women.

The Lebanese plan (see box 3), on the other hand, targets the promotion of income generation and vocational training for rural women and seeks to protect women in the informal sector. It also encourages special programmes to create new opportunities prioritizing certain groups including women living in rural areas.

One of the primary objectives of The Jordanian National Strategy for Women is to increase the participation rate of women in the labour force. Its strategy is to provide support services to attract women into the labour market and keep them there and, at the same time, encourage equal pay for equal work. Specifically, the strategy aims to support women in rural areas in farm production and animal husbandry by urging local associations to provide financial, technical and administrative assistance. Another measure involves encouraging women's roles in planning and implementing food security programmes and in defining clear action plans to achieve this goal within the framework of a national food security policy. This boosts women's self-reliance in food production areas and fosters women's role in food security programmes.

## 3. The role of women in agriculture<sup>27</sup>

In the more diversified economies of the ESCWA region, women in the agricultural sector spend long hours performing labour-intensive and time-consuming agricultural tasks. They are also responsible for household chores such as childcare, cleaning, cooking, baking and fetching water and fuel for their homes.

The extent to which rural women are engaged in agricultural production depends on several factors such as the degree of mechanization used on the farm, farm size, available male workers and their economic and social status within the household. There are proportionately fewer women engaged in highly mechanized farms while more women work on smaller farms. Men often work on a part-time basis, especially on small farms, while simultaneously employed elsewhere.

The division of labour in crop production varies from country to country. The involvement of women in agriculture varies among ESCWA member countries with regards to tasks (see box 2). For example women are involved in all stages of crop production in Yemen whereas in Iraq, their work is limited to

<sup>27</sup> This section is based on FAO, "Women, agriculture and rural development: a synthesis report of the Near East region", Rome, 1995.

weeding and post-harvest processing. In Lebanon, women are engaged in sowing, weeding, harvesting and processing. Furthermore, women shoulder virtually all the work in the tobacco growing industry.

In Egypt, men are responsible for land preparation and pest control, whereas women are engaged in all other stages of crop production. Women are also engaged in marketing activities. In the Syrian Arab Republic, women are involved in sowing, thinning and weeding. In Jordan, women work in planting, weeding, thinning, harvesting and packing.

Activities of women in livestock production also vary from country to country. In Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic, women are responsible for milking and milk processing. Although segregation is still prevalent in Yemen, women are nonetheless involved in livestock production.

Most of women's labour is unpaid and usually the fruit of their labour is channelled directly into their household for the household's consumption and does not enter into a market cycle. As a result, women's contribution to agriculture is underestimated and their role unacknowledged. Women work longer hours than men. They spend up to 15 hours daily in Jordan, and 14 in Lebanon, on agricultural tasks and domestic chores. In Yemen, women often work up to 16 hours while men work up to 12.

**Box 2. The role of women in selected ESCWA member countries in agriculture**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Crop production</i>	<i>Livestock production</i>
Egypt	Surveys show that with the exception of land preparation and pest control, women are active in all stages of crop production. Women are also involved in storage and marketing in the production of wheat, maize, rice and clover.	Women are more involved than men in milking and in the marketing and processing of milk and animal products.
Iraq	Female farmers are involved in weeding and post-harvest processing.	Work in livestock production is shared between men and women.
Jordan	Women work in planting, weeding, thinning, fertilizer application, picking, harvesting and packing.	
Lebanon	Women are responsible for sowing, weeding, harvesting and processing. Women are the backbone of tobacco growing (seed preparation, planting, irrigating, weeding and harvesting). They are also heavily involved in fruit and olive tree growing and vegetable greenhouses.	With the exception of health care and marketing, the rest of activities in livestock production are the responsibility of women. About 80 per cent of animal products are for home consumption.
Oman	Women are becoming increasingly involved in weeding, packing, processing, threshing and storage.	Women are primarily responsible for raising livestock. Women and men are both involved in herding sheep and goat.
Syrian Arab Republic	Women are involved in sowing, thinning and weeding.	Women are responsible for milking, feeding, watering and cleaning barns. Men are involved in vaccination and trimming.
Yemen	Women contribute in more than 50 per cent of agricultural production.	Women herd cows, while both women and men herd sheep and goat. Women are responsible for almost 90 per cent of livestock production. Men get more involved at the marketing stage.

Source: FAO, 'Women, agriculture and rural development: A synthetic report of the Near East region', Rome, 1995.

### Box 3. Summary of the Lebanese National Strategy on Women

Authored by: The National Commission for Women (established in 1996) and the Committee of Women Issues (NGO) in cooperation with UNIFEM

Adoption: Not available

Planning process:

The National Commission for Women and the NGO Committee of Women Issues elaborated the Lebanese National Strategy for Women. These organizations also received feedback from academics, representatives of United Nations and other international organizations, as well as from NGOs and various ministries.

Support for planning process:

Other civil institutions, NGOs and academic institutions provided support during the planning process. The collective approach reflects a strong belief in the adoption of a unified strategic vision and the implementation of complementary activities.

Critical areas of concern:

(a) Legislation – promote international conventions pertinent to women and waive all reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

(b) Decision-making – increase women's participation in power structures to 30 per cent by the year 2000.

(c) Economics – promote income generation and vocational training for rural women. Guarantee women's right to work, and provide access to and opportunity for employment. Protect women in the informal sector and encourage participation in labour and vocational syndicates.

(d) Social dimension – provide social security for elderly women, and respect the rights of the girl child.

(e) Education – improve the quality of primary level education, provide ongoing vocational and professional training, remove stereotyping from curricula, and promote adult literacy.

(f) Health – ensure primary and preventive health, establish mother/child centres in rural areas, and incorporate sex and nutritional education in school curricula.

(g) Environment – raise awareness on environmental dangers and encourage women to use recyclable products.

(h) Media – ensure that women reach decision-making positions, and use media to promote gender equality.

(i) Women under occupation – assist women living under occupation by providing shelters, hospitals, schools and other facilities, ratifying agreements opposing torture, establishing agricultural projects, organizing campaigns to have United Nations resolution 125 respected and assist handicapped women and political prisoners.

Institutional arrangements:

The Lebanese National Commission for Women and the NGO Committee of Women Issues are to formulate and coordinate the plan of action with public institutions and NGOs. The respective work plans will be devised in accordance with the status, duties and available resources of each of these two organizations.

Allocation of national resources: Not available

International support: Not available

Source: [www.un.org/womenwatch/followup-national/lebanon/up.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/followup-national/lebanon/up.htm)

A sample survey conducted by the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs in 1997, tallied the total population of Lebanon at 4,005,025 of which 49.8 per cent was female. The female to male ratio was 0.99.<sup>28</sup> About 20 per cent of Lebanon's population was estimated to be situated in rural areas in 1996.<sup>29</sup> There is, however, no information on the ratio of women to men in rural areas. The last records dated from 1970 with a total of 848,295 people in rural areas as compared to 1,278,030 in urban areas. At that time, the female to male ratio was 0.97.<sup>30</sup>

The female participation rate in the labour force was 27 per cent for the years 1998 and 1999.<sup>31</sup> Since the female/male ratio in Lebanon's population is nearly one to one numerically, women can contribute substantially to the labour force provided they are motivated and given opportunities. This small percentage of women in the labour force indicates that Lebanon's human resources are being wasted. The Government needs to make greater efforts to attract these potential workers into the labour force, which would ultimately enhance the Lebanese economy. With a larger labour force, Lebanon would be able to locally produce demanded goods and reduce imports. Other positive effects would be psychological (boosting morale), and social (raising the standard of living and education).

In 1998, the Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat estimated that in the year 2000, the urban population in Lebanon would account for 90 per cent of its total population.<sup>32</sup> It is difficult to assess the accuracy of this information, as the demarcations between rural and urban areas are not distinct.

There are no statistics on the number of rural dwelling women employed in Lebanon, nor on how many women commute to urban areas for work. This lack of statistical information has made it difficult to demonstrate numerically the apparent state of poverty, underdevelopment and lack of attention from which the Lebanese rural areas are currently suffering.

As regards education, women constituted 51.9 per cent of total student enrolment (87,330) in universities for the academic year 1997/98. The female to male ratio was 1.08. There is no information on the place of residence of students and whether they commute from rural areas to attend university. The number of female students has increased by 25.7 per cent from 1991/92 to 1997/98 which is encouraging.<sup>33</sup>

At the bachelor's degree level, 394 women students were studying agriculture in the academic year 1995/96. This group accounted for 1.3 per cent of total women bachelor's degree students.<sup>34</sup> According to another source, 9 per cent of female students were studying agriculture in 1996.<sup>35</sup> Only 0.4 per cent of the 511,660 total students in the Lebanese University were studying agriculture in the academic year 1997/98,<sup>36</sup> how many of these students were women is unspecified.

Women graduates accounted for 49.8 per cent of total university graduates in 1992/93. The number of students who graduated with a degree in agriculture accounted for 0.3 per cent of the 9,758 total of university graduates. Of these, 33.6 per cent were women. Women comprised 51.5 per cent of the 11,122 university

<sup>28</sup> United Nations, ESCWA, *Statistical Abstract of the ESCWA Region 2000*, twentieth issue, New York, 2000.

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *The National Human Development Report Lebanon 1998*, Beirut, November 1998.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations, *Statistical Abstract of the ESCWA Region 2000*, twentieth issue, New York, 2000.

<sup>31</sup> United Nations, ESCWA, *Application of Sustainable Development Indicators in the ESCWA Member Countries - Analysis of Results*, New York, 2000.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations, Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The World's Women 2000 Trends and Statistics*, New York, 2000.

<sup>33</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Higher Education Systems in the Arab States: Developments of Science and Technology Indicators 1998*.

<sup>34</sup> United Nations, *Men and Women in Lebanon 2000: Statistical Profile*, Beirut, 2000 (in Arabic).

<sup>35</sup> United Nations, ESCWA, *Statistical Abstract of the ESCWA Region 2000*, twentieth issue, New York, 2000.

graduates in the academic year 1997/98, but there is no information on how many students (men or women) graduated with a degree in agriculture for that year.<sup>36</sup>

In 1996, four universities (the American University of Beirut, Lebanese University, Saint Joseph University and Saint Esprit University) had faculties of Agricultural Sciences and a B.S. programme in agriculture. Only the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences at the American University of Beirut offers the M.S. degree.<sup>37</sup> There was a total of 24 universities in Lebanon by 1997/98, of which 23 were private.<sup>38</sup> There is no information on how many of the other 20 universities in Lebanon offer a degree in agriculture.

About 70 per cent of student enrolment occurs at universities located in the Greater Beirut area, where the bulk of quality education is located. Educational institution enrolment rates for women have improved from 1970 to 1996, but the rural-urban gap persists. While about 76 per cent of women (6-24 years of age) were enrolled in some educational institutions in Beirut in 1996, 63 per cent were enrolled in Northern Lebanon, 66 per cent each in Southern Lebanon and the Bekaa and 71 per cent in Mount Lebanon.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> UNESCO, *Higher Education Systems in the Arab States: Development of Science and Technology Indicators*, 1998 and Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon – Agricultural Research Institute, Lebanese Agricultural Research Strategy (LARS), 1996.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations, ESCWA, *Statistical Abstract of the ESCWA Region 2000*, twentieth issue (New York, 2000).

<sup>39</sup> UNDP, *The National Human Development Report Lebanon 1998*, Beirut, November 1998.

### III. THE CASE OF LEBANON

#### A. CURRENT CONTEXT

##### 1. *Economic developments*

Undoubtedly, the civil war that started in 1975 interrupted Lebanon's development and precipitated structural and social problems. The Lebanese economy has always been dominated by the services sector which contributes more than 60 per cent of GDP. Of these services, trade and financial services have persistently constituted the largest share of the economy over the last two decades. While the share of other services, such as transport, construction and housing has been falling over the same time period.

The war adversely affected the productive sectors of the economy, negatively impacting production, productivity and real wages. Per capita income declined throughout the conflict and reached as little as US\$ 1,000 in 1990,<sup>40</sup> the national currency lost much of its value under sustained pressure and inflation reached 400 per cent in 1987.

With the end of the conflict in 1990, the Government's efforts were concentrated on reconstruction, namely rebuilding the shattered physical infrastructure and restoring monetary stability. In 1992, confidence in the economy was restored and growth picked up. Again, it was the services sector that propelled growth and again, agriculture and industry remained low priorities in the developmental plans. Currently, most bank credit extended to the private sector is geared to trade activities and construction, while agriculture and industry receive a very small proportion of financing. The regional competitive advantage for some Lebanese agricultural and agro-processed products is not yet fully explored.

Incomes have risen at a very slow pace since the end of the war. According to an ESCWA 1996 report,<sup>41</sup> approximately a quarter of the population lives in poverty. The poverty line for a family of five is US\$ 618 per month. There are approximately 250,000 people living in abject poverty – defined as a family of five living on approximately US\$ 306 monthly. Regional disparities between rural and urban areas have persisted and may have even worsened in the past decade due to the emphasis and concentration on reconstruction activities in the capital.

The dominant service sector accounts for 61 per cent of Lebanon's GDP (\$17,229 million USD in 1998). And while the industry and manufacturing sectors account for 27 per cent and 17 per cent of GDP respectively, the agricultural sector continues to be the weakest contributor to Lebanon's output, accounting for 12 per cent of GDP.<sup>42</sup>

Another trend which affects agriculture in Lebanon is the steady migration of rural population to urban areas. In 1998, rural population accounted for 41 per cent of Lebanon's total population. The agriculture sector in Lebanon suffered from the civil war, because a great number of civilians migrated from their lands in search of safety. This trend continued in west Bekaa and south Lebanon until 1999, because of the Israeli occupation there. The economic hardship that Lebanon was experiencing during those years compelled farmers to leave their lands in search of other forms of employment.

Lebanon suffers from numerous problems in selling agricultural produce (especially after the civil war, when the costs of production increased) for the following reasons:<sup>43</sup>

- (a) High cost of land rental (which could reach US\$ 200 per year per dunum);

<sup>40</sup> United Nations Resident System Coordinator in Lebanon, "Common country assessment report", [www.un.org/ib/data/cca/overview.htm](http://www.un.org/ib/data/cca/overview.htm)

<sup>41</sup> ESCWA, "Poverty in Lebanon", 1996, pp. 1-2 (in Arabic).

<sup>42</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2000*.

<sup>43</sup> الجمهورية اللبنانية، التقرير السنوي للمؤشرات التنموية التي أعدته في لبنان لعام ٢٠٠٠ (بيروت، ٢٠٠٠).

- (b) High cost of Lebanese labour, as compared to other countries in the region;
- (c) High cost of irrigation;
- (d) High cost of agricultural inputs (seeds, pesticides, and so on), compared with other countries in the region;
- (e) Low productivity in every agricultural unit;
- (f) Unavailability of agricultural loans;
- (g) Excess production in high seasons.

A study conducted on poverty in the Baalbeck-Hermel region sheds some light on the daily life of rural women and men.<sup>43</sup> The study indicated the following: firstly, the dependency ratio is higher than the national average in areas such as Baalbeck-Hermel because families are large and each generation has many children; secondly, as regards employment and gender, traditional feminized occupations such as training and teaching consume the highest share of the female labour force; thirdly, a considerable percentage of women workers are also employed in agriculture; and lastly, female employment is highly associated with seasonal irregular work and unpaid productive family employment.

Individual and household incomes are low in areas such as Baalbeck-Hermel. It was found that food-related expenses are allocated the highest share of total family expenditure. The lower poverty line for the region of Baalbeck-Hermel is equivalent to US\$ 330 (498,591 Lebanese pounds [L.L.]) per month for an average household of 5.26 members. The upper poverty line for the region is equivalent to US\$ 693 (1 L. 977,630) per month for an average household of 5.26 members. The headcount index places 25.5 per cent of the households in the region below the poverty line, and 58 per cent below the upper poverty line. Agriculture constitutes the major source of livelihood for the poor. In poor families, more female children are enrolled in public schools than male children.

A higher proportion of women workers are employed as seasonal workers and unpaid family aid in areas such as Baalbeck-Hermel. Women workers are concentrated in economic sectors of low productivity and lower economic returns: in agriculture and small-scale unskilled employment. Women heads of households are affected by poverty more than the rest of the population in the region of Baalbeck-Hermel. Most of these women are widowed, illiterate and live on incomes less than the minimum wage rate designated by the Government.

Ownership of assets is male dominated and females have extremely restricted control over physical and financial assets. Women family members are primarily responsible for reproductive roles (food preparation, childcare, and house cleaning), while men members are primarily involved in productive and remunerative employment. Even when employed, women have little control over their income. Decision-making by women within the family is observed to be extremely limited and is affected by the lines of authority within the household. These findings clearly illustrate the hardship that rural women in Lebanon are facing.

## *2. The agricultural sector*

Lebanon is endowed with good agricultural land along the coast, in the Akkar plain in the north of the country and in the Beqaa Valley. The country farms 200,000 of the 260,000 hectares (ha) of arable land (see table 2).<sup>45</sup> Only one quarter of the arable land is under irrigation despite relatively abundant water resources.

The agricultural sector contributes almost 12 per cent to GDP<sup>46</sup> and provides a large share of rural employment. A recent study suggests that more than 200,000 workers are employed in the agricultural

<sup>43</sup> UNDP, The Consultation and Research Institute, "Poverty and gender profile in the Baalbeck-Hermel region", Beirut, April 1998.

<sup>44</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), "Country profile: Lebanon 1999-2000", United Kingdom, www.eiu.com

<sup>45</sup> ESCWA, *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 1998-1999*, New York, 1999, p. 36.

sector, supporting almost a quarter of the population.<sup>47</sup> The sector suffers from persistent structural problems, notably in marketing. In Lebanon, as well as in destination markets, wholesalers usually set the price and inputs (labour, water and fertilizer) are not competitively priced, thus making survival in the regional markets difficult. Lebanon grows fruit (grapes, apples and citrus fruit) and vegetables (tomatoes and potatoes) that have traditionally been exported to the GCC countries, notably Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

TABLE 2. LEBANON: PARAMETERS OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Parameter	Year	Indicators
Agriculture as percentage of GDP	1995	12.6
Food and live animals as percentage of exports	1997	13.8
Estimated labour force employed in agriculture (percentage)	1995	9
Rural population as percentage of total	1995	12.5
Average annual change in rural population (percentage)	1995-2000	-2.2
Arable land	1996	260,000 ha
Arable land total land (percentage)	1996	26
Main agricultural produce		Potatoes, tomatoes, grapes, apples, oranges and wheat

Sources: Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) "Country profile Lebanon 1999-2000", [www.eiu.com](http://www.eiu.com), and ESCWA, *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 1998-1999*.

### 3. Gender profile

Over the past few decades, there has been an improvement in the status of women in Lebanon, especially regarding their health care and education. The life expectancy at birth for males and females is approximately 68 years and 72 years respectively (see table 3). However, over the same time period, there has been a less significant improvement in the inclusion of women in the economy and almost no measurable progress in their participation in the political arena.

According to the *World Development Indicators 2000*, the status of women in Lebanon has been improving. There has been a significant decline in the female adult illiteracy rate and, the female to male labour force participation ratio has risen from 0.2 in 1970 to 0.4 in 1998. Although this is an encouraging development, there is still a great difference between the incomes of men and women in Lebanon. The *Human Development Report 2001* indicated that, on average, men earn almost three times more than women.<sup>48</sup>

Even though the female participation rate is relatively high as compared with the countries of the ESCWA region, there is a significant potential for its improvement given the high female enrolment rate in educational institutions. The gross enrolment ratio (primary, secondary and tertiary) was estimated at 76 per cent for males and 77 per cent for females in 1997 (see table 3). The official employment rate may be lower than the actual rate as it does not include women employed in the informal sector or in family enterprises.

In the 1998 gender-related development index (GDI) developed by UNDP, Lebanon ranked 74 among 174 countries and fared on average better than other Arab States. The GDI is a composite index outlining each country in terms of life expectancy, educational attainment and income and taking into account the disparities between men and women.

<sup>47</sup> *Al-Nahar*, 23 August 2000, p. 6 (in Arabic).

<sup>48</sup> UNDP, *Human Development Report 2001*, New York.



TABLE 3. LEBANON: SOCIO-ECONOMIC GENDER PROFILE

Indices	Year	Indicators
Human development index	1998	0.735
Rank (174 countries)	1998	8 <sup>th</sup>
Gender-related development index (GDI)	1998	0.718
Rank (174 countries)	1998	7 <sup>th</sup>
GDI average for Arab States	1998	0.612
Population	1998	3.4 million
Life expectancy at birth	1998	Male: 68.3 Female: 71.9
Adult literacy rate (15+) (percentage)	1998	Male: 94.5 Female: 79.1
Gross enrolment ratio (percentage) (Primary, secondary and university)	1997	Male: 76 Female: 77
GDP per capita (PPP US\$)	1998	Male: 6,777 Female: 1,985

Sources: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2000*, New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, and ESCWA, *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 1998-1999*

#### 4. Legislation

The Constitution of Lebanon gives men and women equal rights under the Law without explicitly citing equality per se. Lebanon has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women with two reservations relating to nationality and the nuclear family; a father only has the right to give Lebanese nationality to his children and women do not have the same rights as men over their children in custody, adoption and family name. Some clauses in the civil code are applicable to all Lebanese citizens while others differ among the religious faiths in Lebanon. Lebanon does not allow civil marriage, however, Lebanese authorities acknowledge civil marriages registered abroad and in cases of legal disputes, local courts resort to the laws of the foreign country where the marriage contract was initially registered. The Lebanese penal code discriminates against women in crimes of honour, abortion and adultery.

### B. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

#### 1. The National Commission for Lebanese Women

The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) was established in 1996 by the Council of Ministers and is a direct outcome of the 1995 Beijing Declaration in which Governments were called upon to establish a national mechanism for gender equality. Its mandate includes advocacy, national priority setting, awareness raising, policy analysis, research and training. NCLW has an eight-member executive board (volunteers active in gender issues) elected by a 22-member General Assembly. The Prime Minister appoints the treasurer. The Commission has set up working subcommittees of competent members to deal with a variety of issues including information and media, legislation, political participation, health, labour and economy.

Some progress has been reported in institutionalizing gender at the national level, even though efforts to mainstream a gender perspective remain limited and, in general, the benefits to women are not concrete. Mainstreaming initiatives are more easily integrated in the fast paced process of producing policies, frameworks and statistics than in the more slow paced processes of cultural change.

UNIFEM is implementing a project entitled Post Beijing Follow-up Operations Phase II with the National Commission for Lebanese Women and the NGO Committee. The long-term goal of the project is to "contribute to a sustainable and engendered development by strengthening the role of national machineries and NGO committees in developing national capacity for gender mainstreaming". The three objectives of the

project<sup>49</sup> are institution building, initiating the process of gender mainstreaming at the macro and micro levels and formulating a resource mobilization strategy. As gender focal points are a proven effective mechanism to mainstream gender in the policies, programmes and projects of those Government institutions, prompting a process to mainstream a gender perspective in their plans,<sup>50</sup> one activity of the project is to support a network of gender focal points in ministries. About 25 gender focal points participated in the training organized by UNIFEM. Some institutions appointed a small committee while others such as the Ministries of Agriculture, Industry and Economy and Trade, have not recommended any of their staff members for the training.

The national mechanism works by having gender focal points educate their colleagues, often informally, on gender issues. To supplement their capacity-building efforts, in line with ministries and Government institutions, UNIFEM dispatched gender kits in Arabic to Director Generals explaining concepts and tools for gender mainstreaming. There was no immediate reaction to the kit, nor indication of dissemination of information within their offices.

## *2. The Ministry of Agriculture*

In the early nineties, the Ministry drew up plans to increase the number of women in its ranks, highlight rural women's programmes and projects, and assess the needs of rural women through comprehensive surveys in effect, mainstreaming women's issues into policies and practice. The Ministry is currently involved in several projects targeting women, among them a World Bank project and an International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) project. The World Bank activity, Development for Women, falls within the Irrigation, Rehabilitation and Modernization Project. The sub-activity aims to improve the technical capacity of the Ministry to target women and to finance training and extension programmes in order to increase agricultural productivity.

There are currently two women in the Ministry of Agriculture, both of whom are Department Managers. The Ministry has recently contracted several female engineers and appointed a man as a gender focal point to head Extension Services. Unfortunately, the focal point has thus far not been active.

Recent documents produced by the Ministry of Agriculture indicate limited gender perspective reference<sup>51</sup> and exposure in any policy analysis, programming or projects initiated or promoted by the ministry. The results of the Agriculture Statistical Survey also do not provide adequate information for a gender-based analysis, nor does the methodology of the survey indicate any relevant highlighting of gender specific indicators. The only tables that elaborate on gender desegregated data are the labour force and land exploitation tables. An opportunity to estimate the different contributions of women and men has been missed, as agricultural census marks the first general statistical survey since 1961. Yet, no conclusions can be reached from it on the differences between men and women in land use, land ownership, distribution of crops, mechanization, use of fertilizers, investment and loans. Of 53 statistical tables, only six expose gender differences. It is clear that in order to analyse and evaluate impact, gender specific studies must be conducted by experts.

### **C. A GENDERED PROFILE OF THE LABOUR FORCE**

The Lebanese laws have been reformed to ensure women equal rights in the work place and the Constitution of Lebanon does not discriminate by gender. Nevertheless, as already stated, traditional norms often act against the acquired basic rights of Lebanese women. The level of participation of women in decision-making, both in the political arena and in the productive sectors, is low.

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<sup>49</sup> National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), [www.nclw.org.lb/strength.htm](http://www.nclw.org.lb/strength.htm)

<sup>50</sup> United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), "Al-kashaf in gender and development: reference toolkit", Western Asia Regional Office, Amman, 1999, p. 39 (in Arabic).

<sup>51</sup> Lebanon: Ministry of Agriculture, "Reultats globaux du recensement agricole", Beirut, June 2000 (in French).

The National Commission for Lebanese Women has identified<sup>52</sup> a series of obstacles facing Lebanese working women including:

- (a) Discrimination: women face many forms of discrimination including work conditions and stereotyping;
- (b) Benefits: in the private sector, women are usually offered a less attractive benefits package than their male counterparts;
- (c) Education: despite the high female enrolment rate, bias remains in choosing fields of specialization. Men are dominant in more remunerative fields;
- (d) Decision-making: women are not encouraged to participate in policy-making or decision-making for cultural reasons;
- (e) Lower incomes: according to various surveys and studies, the salaries of women are lower than their male counterparts;
- (f) Economic activity: despite the relatively high educational level attained by a considerable percentage of women, some remain reluctant to participate in the economy due to social pressures;
- (g) Social network: women are hesitant to take advantage of social programmes available to them;
- (h) Legal oversight: even though the Lebanese Labour Law does not discriminate against women, there is no mechanism for legal action in discrimination cases;
- (i) Marriage: a relatively large proportion of women do not remain in the labour force after marriage and especially after giving birth;
- (j) Career development: promotion and advancement are less likely for women than for men. This is in part due to social factors such as unwillingness to travel or to work overtime.

#### 1. Data

As different sources report seemingly inconsistent data, it is difficult to get a precise picture of the status of men and women in the productive sectors in Lebanon. The discrepancies in data sets can be attributed to the use of different data sources, based on different surveys and varying parameters. The indicators may not be identically defined and the framework of analysis is underpinned by different assumptions.

#### 2. Sectoral distribution

A sample survey of the labour force conducted in 1997 by the Lebanese Central Administration of Statistics produced estimates that 10 per cent of the male and 5 per cent of the female labour force are engaged in the agricultural sector (see table 4). The industrial sector employs roughly 15 and 12 per cent of the male and female labour force respectively. Almost 67 per cent of the female labour force works in the services sector.

TABLE 4. SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF LABOUR FORCE BY GENDER, 1997

Sector	Men	Women	Total
Agriculture	10.1	5.0	9.0
Industry	15.5	11.6	14.7
Construction	14.1	0.8	11.2
Trade	24.1	13.9	22.3
Services	36.2	66.7	42.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Lebanon, Central Administration of Statistics, *Labor Force in 1997*, August 1998, No. 12, p. 14 (in French and Arabic).

<sup>52</sup> National Commission for Lebanese Women, 'The national CIDA/W report', 1998, [www.nclw.org.lb/research.htm](http://www.nclw.org.lb/research.htm) (Arabic).

Female land owners account for 7 per cent of the total number of land owners.<sup>53</sup> Most of these women are over the age of 35. Women own only 3.5 per cent of the total useable agriculture area.<sup>54</sup> In larger lots of agricultural land (over 20 dunums), there is a large number of women seasonal workers, as compared into men.<sup>55</sup> The majority of seasonal workers reside in the village of the land owner for whom they work. There are more male seasonal workers who come from cities and abroad than female.<sup>56</sup>

Of all those who cultivate land in Lebanon, 83 per cent use some sort of agricultural machinery and own 94 per cent of cultivated land. No information is given on what percentage of these cultivators are women. Both public and private agricultural sectors in Lebanon depend on foreign workers.<sup>57</sup> The daily wage is about US\$ 10 for private employees and about US\$ 25 - US\$ 30 for public employees.<sup>58</sup> Their tasks are pruning, sorting, planting and so on.

### 3. Remuneration

Table 5 reveals that only 2 per cent of employed women work in agriculture. Of the total pool of workers in agriculture, only 9 per cent are women. Based on a small sample of institutions, table 6 shows surprisingly that women earn, on average, more than men in agricultural enterprises: L.L. 568,000 as compared with L.L. 493,000 - a 15 per cent differential. The female workers reported in this survey are probably more skilled and are not working the land. As far as other roles are concerned, women earn, on average, consistently less than men: L.L. 477,000 as compared with L.L. 606,000 - a difference of 21 per cent.

Of the total women engaged in agricultural activities (see table 7), more than half (58 per cent) earn between L.L. 300,000 and L.L. 500,000. Some 13 per cent earn less than L.L. 300,000 and almost 29 per cent earn between L.L. 500,000 and L.L. 1,000,000. There are no women earning more than L.L. 1,000,000 per month. The majority of women (87 per cent) working in assembly lines earn less than L.L. 500,000 per month and the rest earn between L.L. 500,000 and L.L. 1,000,000. There are also no women earning more than L.L. 1,000,000 in this job category.

TABLE 5. DISTRIBUTION OF LABOUR FORCE BY GENDER AND ACTIVITY, 1997  
(Percentage)

Occupational level	Employed in occupational group			Total employed males	Total employed females
	Male	Female	Total		
High-level management	91	9	100	11	5
Specialists	55	45	100	3	21
Middle managers	80	20	100	4	11
Managerial staff	62	38	100	7	15
Workers in services and sales	71	29	100	9	13
Agriculture and fishing	91	9	100	6	2
Skilled labour	95	5	100	26	8
Machine operators and drivers	91	9	100	10	4
Unskilled workers	67	33	100	12	22
Army	99	1	100	5	
Unspecified	85	15	100		
Total average	78	22	100	100	100

Source: NCFW and FSCWA, *Men and Women in Lebanon: Statistical Profile 2000* (in Arabic), p. 82

<sup>53</sup> Lebanon, Ministry of Agriculture, "Résultats globaux du recensement agricole", June 2000 (in French and Arabic)

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Lebanon, "Preliminary study of agriculture productive and marketing structures in Lebanon", Beirut, 1999

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

TABLE 6. AVERAGE MONTHLY WAGE FOR MEN AND WOMEN FOR  
SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL, 1997  
(Thousands of Lebanese pounds)

Occupational level	Women	Men	Average
High-level management	874	1 179	1 134
Managers of small enterprises	605	808	742
Scientists	609	932	842
Specialized teachers	464	702	528
Technical mid-level workers	651	721	709
Office workers	504	580	537
Salespeople	430	535	498
Agriculturalists	568	493	503
Artisans	375	488	460
Unskilled workers	325	443	422
Average	477	606	561

Source: NCTW and ESCWA, *Men and Women in Lebanon, Statistical Profile 2000* (in Arabic), p. 84

TABLE 7. SALARY DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN WORKERS, 1997  
(Percentage)

Salary range in Lebanese pounds	Mid-level	Administrative	Service	Agricultural	Skilled	Assembly line	Unskilled
Less than 300,000	3.1	3.5	6.8	13.1	8.3	10.9	22.1
300,000-500,000	51.0	54.9	68.4	58.1	61.7	76.4	68.2
500,000-1,000,000	40.6	36.0	19.8	28.8	21.4	12.7	7.8
1,000,000-1,500,000	4.0	4.2	2.5		1.7		1.1
Over 1,500,000	1.3	1.4	2.5		0.9		0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: "Female working force in Lebanon", IAU Women Studies Center, *Al-Ranki* Volume XV, No. 82, Summer 1998, p. 48

#### 4. The agricultural sector

Table 8 reveals that almost 44 per cent of female agricultural workers are illiterate as compared with 27 per cent of male workers. More than 34 per cent of male workers and close to 28 per cent of female workers have only primary school education. More than 11 per cent of male workers have reached the secondary school level.

TABLE 8. DISTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, 1997  
(Percentage)

Educational level	Men	Women	Men and women
Illiterate	27.1	43.5	28.7
Read and write	22.0	..	21.2
Primary	34.4	27.8	33.8
Intermediate	11.3	..	11.5
Secondary	4.6	..	4.3
University	..	..	..

Source: Lebanon, Central Administration of Statistics, *The Labor Force in 1997*, August 1998, No. 12, pp. 50-53 (in French and Arabic)

Due to the nature of agricultural activity, 46 per cent of the total number of agricultural workers are employed on a seasonal basis and almost 23 per cent are temporary workers (see table 9). More than half of the women (almost 56 per cent) are employed on a seasonal basis whereas over one fifth (19 per cent) have temporary, contractual agreements. Almost 30 per cent of women employed in agricultural work are

considered as helpers in family business as compared with 7 per cent of men. More than 43 per cent of the males in the agricultural sector are self-employed as compared with 23 per cent of the females (see table 10).

TABLE 9. TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND FISHING, 1997  
(Percentage)

Type of employment	Men	Women	Men and women
Permanent	32.0	25.0	31.1
Seasonal	44.7	55.9	46.1
Temporary	23.3	19.1	22.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Lebanon, Central Administration of Statistics, *The Labor Force in 1997*, August 1998, No. 12, pp. 77-79 (in French and Arabic)

TABLE 10. EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES IN AGRICULTURE AND FISHING, 1997  
(Percentage)

Employment category	Men	Women	Men and women
Self-employed	43.3	23.2	40.9
Manager	8.8	..	7.9
Worker employee	41.0	45.6	41.6
Family help	6.9	29.8	9.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Lebanon, Central Administration of Statistics, *The Labor Force in 1997*, August 1998, No. 12, pp. 65-67 (in French and Arabic)

#### D. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN AGRICULTURE

##### 1. Legal aspects

There is no specific legislation pertaining to rural women in the Lebanese Labour Law. The provisions of the Labour Law exclude both men and women working in the agricultural sector. Agricultural workers are eligible for the National Social Security Fund only if they are permanent agricultural employees. As almost 75 per cent (see table 9) of the female workers in agriculture are hired on a seasonal or temporary basis, they are not eligible for benefits. Job security is also an issue and many find work through an agent.

The Government's development plans do not specifically target rural women. The female participation rate in agriculture has been limited by the general low performance of the sector. Rural women are rarely represented or consulted in the decision-making process and are usually not aware of their legal rights.

##### 2. Time

Rural women spend up to 14 hours daily on agricultural tasks and domestic chores.<sup>39</sup> As already stated, women in agricultural households play an important role in the agricultural production process but their input is often underestimated or not accounted for at all. Water is often not available through proper channels and almost 40 per cent of remote areas have no proper access to water. It is often women who bring water from local springs or wells.<sup>40</sup>

##### 3. Land

Inheritance laws in Lebanon depend on religious norms. Women are allowed to own land though it is not customary for them to buy their own land. Women's access to land is also constrained under Islamic inheritance norms in which women are entitled to less land than are their male relatives. Although this is not

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>40</sup> NCIW, "The national CI DAW report", 1998, [www.nciw.org.lb/resource.htm](http://www.nciw.org.lb/resource.htm) (in Arabic).

explicitly the case for women of other faiths in Lebanon, it is nonetheless common practice for women who have inherited agricultural land to hand it over to their male relatives. To avoid potential problems, fathers sometimes register land in their name or names of their male offspring.

Access to land is a major resource constraint that impedes the increase in productivity and efficiency of the agricultural sector. A household survey<sup>61</sup> carried out in Bebnine, a village in Akkar, shows that only about 17 per cent of the families surveyed (that is, 52 of the 296 families) own land. Some 94 per cent of those sampled own plots that are less than one ha in size and 20 per cent own less than one dunum. Owing to no land or only small plots of land prohibits the majority from carrying out economically viable agricultural production projects. The survey also shows that women have less access to land than men. Only 9 wives reported that they owned land as compared with 40 husbands.

Limited female land ownership is not confined to this particular village or to the northern region of Lebanon.<sup>62</sup> Participatory Rural Appraisal Surveys were conducted in 9 villages around the country. Local residents assisted by outsiders, collected data and analysed them. Their results showed the reluctance of family heads to leave agricultural land to their female legal heirs.

#### 4. Finance

Women working in agriculture have little access to financial resources and services that enable them to improve productivity.<sup>63</sup> Women's limited access to credit is exacerbated by their limited access to land, gender bias in rural services and the concentration of subsistence agriculture and/or unreported activities in the family business (see box 4)

##### **Box 4. Gender-based differences in agriculture**

Land title and tenure tend to be vested in men, either legally or by sociocultural norms. Land shortage is common among women. Compared to men, women farm smaller and more dispersed plots and are less likely to hold title, secure tenure, or the same rights to use, improve, or dispose of land.

Women farmers have less contact with extension services than men. Extension is often provided by male agents to men farmers, often ignoring the unique workload, responsibilities and constraints facing women farmers.

Women generally use lower levels of technology because of difficulties in access, cultural restrictions on use or disregard for women's crops and livestock as low research priorities.

Women have less access to formal financial services because of high transaction costs, limited education and mobility, social and cultural barriers, the nature of their businesses and their inability to provide collateral requirements, such as land title.

Women face far greater time constraints than men. They may spend less time on the farm but work longer total hours on productive and household work, both paid and unpaid, due to the gender-based division of labour in childcare and household responsibilities.

Women are less mobile than men, because of both their childcare and household responsibilities and because of socio-cultural norms which limit their mobility.

Women are less educated in parts of the Middle East. Illiteracy hampers their access and ability to understand technical information. Worldwide, women have less access to education and training in agricultural subjects.

Source: The World Bank, *Toolkit on Gender in Agriculture*, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

<sup>61</sup> I SCWA and Mercy Corps International, "Bebnine household survey", 9 June 2000, p. 30, unpublished.

<sup>62</sup> Lebanon, Ministry of Agriculture, "Women in agriculture in Lebanon", National Report, 1994, p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> Lebanon, Ministry of Agriculture, "Women in agriculture in Lebanon", National Report, 1994, p. 16.

In Lebanon, credit for use in the agricultural sector is hard to obtain, irrespective of gender, and collateral is often required. Commercial banks seldom finance this sector and agricultural loans account for only 2 per cent of total bank loans.<sup>61</sup> The World Bank report *Advancing Gender Equality*<sup>62</sup> underscores access to financial services as crucial to fighting poverty and including women in the development process.

Providing access to microcredit is viewed as a viable intervention in poverty alleviation and employment creation programmes. Many national and international NGOs involved in rural development are active in offering credit, extension and cooperatives programmes for both men and women and more than half specifically target the needs of women. A survey of 21 such facilities<sup>63</sup> revealed that most (17) were established after 1990 and extend small loans ranging from US\$ 200 up to US\$ 3,000. One example, Al-Majmoua, an independent Lebanese non-profit organization, funded with grants from Save the Children Federation and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was set up in 1997 to give women micro-entrepreneurs access to financial resources. Services are available in both urban and rural areas of South and North Lebanon, Beirut and its suburbs and the Bekaa. The loans are to be used for working capital and are of short-term maturity. They range from as little as US\$ 250 to thousands of dollars, depending on the record of the client. No collateral is required; however, a pool of borrowers (8-15) working on principles of solidarity must guarantee each other. A high interest rate of about 20 per cent, is levied on the loans and the group members are called upon in case of default. The repayment record was over 95 per cent, until the recent economic slowdown which caused the default rate to rise in 2000.

The absence of long-term credit facilities tends to perpetuate the cycle of poverty for farmers and increase the volume of rural-urban migration. The sample survey of Bebnine reveals that farmers are constantly in debt because they have no resources of their own to start with and no access to long term credit to finance their agricultural projects.<sup>64</sup> Farmers are in constant need of cash due to the kind of crops they plant.

#### 5. Services

There is consensus in the existing literature that microcredit is not effective without training, access to other resources and provision of affordable raw materials and appropriate technology.<sup>65</sup> Some NGOs working in Lebanon support rural Lebanese women who supplement the family income through the production and sale of dairy products and food preserves. Mercy Corps International, funded by USAID, tries to help these women by training them in food preservation techniques and assisting them in the setting up of cooperatives for cluster farmers to sell their produce. Men and women benefit from training offered at the Integrated Demonstration Parks in Bebnine and Hasbaya/Kham. Empowering civil society is at the core of Mercy Corps International's strategy for achieving sustainability. Its training programmes stress the principles of participation, interaction and accountability. Increasing women's economic activity through training in innovative and marketable income generating activities is at the base of Mercy Corps International's strategy for the empowerment of women.

Mercy Corps International's has outlined a four-step strategy for starting a cooperative. First, a household survey must be conducted to determine household income, its sources, the share of contribution of each household member and other resources available, such as land and cattle. As a second step, candidates for forming a cooperative are identified and their strengths and weaknesses formally analysed. Then candidates are trained in problem-solving, management skills, marketing skills, cash bookkeeping and

<sup>61</sup> IFC, "Lebanon country profile", 1999-2000, [www.ifc.com](http://www.ifc.com)

<sup>62</sup> World Bank, *Advancing Gender Equality: World Bank Action Since Beijing, Special Report*, [www.worldbank.org/html/prncje/beijing5-specialreport/reprpt.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/html/prncje/beijing5-specialreport/reprpt.htm)

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15

<sup>64</sup> IFCWA and Mercy Corps International, "Bebnine household survey", 9 June 2000, unpublished

<sup>65</sup> IFCWA, *Feasibility and Operationalization of Microcredit Livelihood Facilities Targeting Poor Women in Urban and Rural Areas in Selected Arab Countries: Theoretical Perspectives and Practical Considerations* (I-FCWA/SD-WOM 1999-1), New York, 1999, pp. 2-3



costing. Finally, they are assisted in completing the Government administrative procedures of registering a cooperative. Financial assistance for seed buying and activity monitoring is provided to make the operation sustainable.

#### *6. Programmes, projects, and initiatives in support of women in agriculture<sup>17</sup>*

Among the statistical data lacking in Lebanon, is a comprehensive directory of all local and international non-governmental institutions, their activities, target groups and implementations plans. Lebanon also lacks formally defined units dealing with women in agriculture. Since 1990, the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences at the Lebanese University has been active in providing agricultural extension services to farmers in rural areas in the form of orientation workshops. The Faculty has also conducted several specialized training courses in the various fields of agriculture and in related subjects. It is worth noting that when such courses were farmer-oriented, participants were primarily all male and female enrolment was very low. However, when they were specialized, female enrolment was higher and even surpassed that of men. The participating farmers and trainees suggested replication of this training in rural areas using a gender approach.

NGOs in Lebanon have been very active in the past thirty years. In 1978, their number was estimated to be around 1,302, of which only 6 per cent were women's organizations. Most NGOs are located in urban or pre-urban settings, and their activities focus mainly on vocational training, education and health care. The services they provide to women are in most cases, general, and not specialized in agriculture. Local NGOs are limited in size, number of beneficiaries, and intervention areas, but there have been effective interventions for women in agriculture at this level.

One of them, the Village Welfare Society established three pioneering projects in the rural areas of Mount Lebanon, targeting women working in agriculture. Although these projects proved to be very successful, they were discontinued because of the civil war. They are as follows:

(a) Establishing an agricultural cooperative in the rural village of Aabadyieh in 1973 which assisted women farmers to market their agricultural output, acquire agricultural inputs at subsidized prices, provide credit, and conduct agricultural extension courses;

(b) Organizing yearly agricultural exhibitions where in ten rural villages, women marketed their agricultural produce;

(c) Establishing a training centre for women, specifically for teaching the techniques of bee-keeping and poultry production.

Among the pioneering activities of international NGOs in agricultural development are the following two types of projects:

(a) Rehabilitation of basic agricultural infrastructure, such as agricultural roads and irrigation canals. These projects proved to be particularly beneficial in assisting rural families to decrease their poverty level by increasing their agricultural output, but they did not, however, prioritize women farmers;

(b) Provision of credit to small scale farmers. Among international NGOs providing credit were Save the Children, Caritas, Catholic Relief Services, Middle East Council of Churches and Mouvement Social. Projects consisted of providing loans to rural farmers against a simple collateral, repaid on a long-term basis. Greenhouses, animal husbandry, and poultry production figure among the projects financed. However, women farmers were not prioritized as primary beneficiaries, and in most cases men farmers constituted the main body of borrowers. Projects like these could facilitate access of rural women to credit and have a potential for replication.

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<sup>17</sup> Summary from "Women in agriculture in Lebanon", National Report, Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon, 1994.

At both governmental and non-governmental levels, more emphasis should be placed on women in agriculture. Local organizations can play a fundamental role in the context of countrywide outreach, especially to rural areas, with activities involving both women and men as target groups.

When initiating new programme activities targeting rural areas, examining the important lessons learned from the previously described programmes is beneficial. Agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation canals, roads, and improved machinery, are basic prerequisites for agricultural development. Gender issues should be incorporated in the planning stage of the introduction of new projects to rural areas. This is especially crucial when new technologies or improvements on old ones are being integrated.

Training sessions should be conducted on food processing and other productive skills and be followed by exhibitions to facilitate marketing the produce. Permanent agro-processing centres to accommodate the trained labourers should be established.

### *7. International support*

The agricultural sector is receiving its share from the international community. Various technical cooperation programmes and developmental projects are being implemented and the Ministry of Agriculture has been continuously receiving assistance from international and regional experts.

Cooperation and support are channelled mainly through United Nations agencies such as UNDP and FAO, through the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) and through regional organizations, such as the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), Arab Fund for Development and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

The agricultural sector has been receiving generous assistance through FAO initiatives and other United Nations agencies and international organizations. This assistance has taken the form of support to the main agricultural productions, food control programmes, and general operational services and technical cooperation programmes with the Ministry of Agriculture. The assistance which the agricultural sector receives is still, however, below its actual need. Furthermore, the international support has been marginalizing human resources in the agricultural sector. Lebanese male farmers have seldom been addressed, and women farmers have never been addressed directly.

Two main developmental projects are being undertaken at the Ministry of Agriculture with special consideration to women. Both projects will be implemented in the Beqaa region, the main agricultural area in the country, where women constitute 20 per cent of the agricultural labour force. The two projects are:

(a) The Baalbeck-Hermel Integrated Rural Development Programme: funded by UNDP, United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and FAO, it began in January 1994. The project document states that "rural women are marginalized and under-served". The role of women in the project was developed through the provision of credit for household projects and for specialized training for women in the promotion of cottage industries and the appointment of a woman as development specialist to facilitate implementation of projects for women;

(b) The Small Holder Livestock Rehabilitation Project: funded by IFAD, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Fund for International Development and the Lebanese Government, it began in spring 1994. It aims at improving livestock production, rehabilitating extension services, and increasing the income of poor farm families including women, who derive most of their income from livestock and livestock related activities. A 2001 progress report on the implementation of this activity indicates success among women farmers as they established over 15 cooperatives which provide women agriculturalists with loans, training and marketing facilities.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Nayla Shunari, "The role of investment funds in rural development", paper presented in Regional Workshop (ورشة عمل الخبراء الإقليميين 'دور مساهمة الاستثمار في التنمية الريفية'), Beirut, 9-10 April 2001 (in Arabic).

Save the Children Federation undertook a base line survey to allocate the needs of a credit project in which women farmers are direct beneficiaries. The benefits to women, in terms of the expected impact, would derive from accessibility to credit for both the on-farm and off-farm income-generating activity components of some of the projects. Women would also benefit from the inclusion of female extension workers and guaranteed access to training.

## E. AGRO-PROCESSING IN LEBANON

Industry is a significant part of the Lebanese economy. In 1998, it provided output worth US\$ 5,229.7 million and employed 168,789 workers in a total of 22,107 companies.<sup>71</sup> According to the preliminary findings of the 1998 survey conducted by the Ministry of Industry, 4,480 establishments were engaged in food and beverage production, accounting for more than 20 per cent of the total number of firms in Lebanon.

Of all manufacturing industries, food processing is the main contributor to Lebanon's GDP and provided output worth US\$ 1,400 million in 1998, while employing a total of 40,210 workers.<sup>72</sup> The food, beverage and tobacco industries have the largest number of employees of all the manufacturing industries in Lebanon, employing 23.8 per cent of the total industrial workforce. The agro-processing sector is largely composed of micro enterprises in the informal economy. Only 10 firms employ more than 100 people and 7 firms employ more than 250 people.<sup>73</sup> More than 55 per cent of seasonal workers are engaged in micro enterprises (less than 5 people).

The food, beverage and tobacco industries offer high wages and salaries compared to other manufacturing industries in Lebanon. The food, beverage and tobacco industries paid a total of US\$ 170 million in wages and salaries in 1998, which accounted for 26.2 per cent of the total wages and salaries paid by manufacturing industries that year.<sup>74</sup>

During the period 1985-1999, the value of Lebanon's exports mounted to a fifth of the value of its imports.<sup>75</sup> Agricultural products accounted for 8 per cent of Lebanon's GDP (US\$ 9.2 billion) in 1994.<sup>76</sup> Food and beverage products accounted for about 20 per cent of the total US\$ 6.12 million generated by Lebanese exports in 1997.<sup>77</sup> Of the total US\$ 7,455 million spent by the Lebanese Government on imports in 1997, about 20 per cent was spent on food, live animals, beverages, tobacco and animal and vegetable oil and fats.<sup>78</sup> As these goods are the second highest absorber of Government import expenditure, a considerable sum of money could be saved by locally producing the demanded food and beverage products. In addition, job opportunities would increase if goods were produced locally. The total value of total Lebanese exports was L.L. 1,088,124 million in 1998, with agricultural exports accounting for 20 per cent of this figure.<sup>79</sup> GDP per capita was US\$ 5,130 for the same year. The agricultural revenue per capita was US\$ 616.

However, studies indicate that employment in the manufacturing sector in Lebanon and in agriculture, construction, commerce, tourism, transportation and public service is male dominated<sup>80</sup> while other sectors of the economy, such as education, health and social services employ more women. Furthermore, studies

<sup>71</sup> United Nations, ESCWA, *Statistical Abstract of the ESCWA Region 2000*, twentieth issue, New York, 2000.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> ESCWA, *Productivity and Development of Food Industries in Selected Countries of the ESCWA Region*, New York, 1999, p. 73 (in Arabic).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Lebanon, "Preliminary study of agriculture productive and marketing structures in Lebanon", Beirut, 1999 (in Arabic).

<sup>77</sup> United Nations, ESCWA, *Statistical Abstract of the ESCWA Region 2000*, twentieth issue, New York, 2000.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Lebanon, *CFDAW: The Convention On the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*, Beirut, January, 2000.

<sup>80</sup> Central Administration of Statistics Lebanon, "The labour force", August 1998 (in Arabic and French).

indicate a male majority not only by economic sector, but also by profession, as most people working as decision makers, mid-level managers, administrative employees, skilled workers, machine operators, unskilled workers and military personnel are men.<sup>81</sup>

#### E. GENDER ISSUES IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR<sup>82</sup>

An expert group meeting organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in 1995 classified the issues relating to women's participation in the industrial sector into three levels:

(a) The macroeconomic policy level. Macroeconomic policies are gender blind. As they do not address the needs of female workers, they lead to direct and indirect biases against women. This is manifested in the low degree of participation of women in decision-making positions, their skewed access to resources and their limited employment opportunities. Globalization requires specific skills both adaptable and of value to the changing world. Women are usually at a disadvantage to compete in this new reality and globalization can adversely affect certain groups of women, in subcontracting, for example, where women can be exploited by large organizations;

(b) The enterprise and factory level. The main issues of note are gender division of labour, both vertical and horizontal and lack of gender-sensitivity among entrepreneurs, unions and worker organization leaders. The low productivity of female workers due to limited access to resources such as credit, technology, training and information is another constraint. In addition, family support services which allow men and women to participate equally in paid employment are usually not available. Such support services include childcare facilities, flexible working hours and family leave;

(c) The household and community level. The structure of relations within a society is culturally and historically determined. Role stereotyping is engrained in the psyche of male and female members of a society. The role of women is undermined and their participation in the industrialization process is curtailed.

##### 1. *Issues in the ESCWA region*<sup>83</sup>

###### (a) *Data gap*

Gender-desegregated statistical data is generally unavailable, especially on the micro level. Employment statistics refer to paid permanent jobs and may not accurately include seasonal, temporary and part time workers. Home-based work, which is popular with women, is also not accurately calculated.

###### (b) *Wages and benefits*

Industrial enterprises are usually reluctant to hire women on a permanent full time basis due to the added costs relating to maternity and family leave. In general, women start working before getting married and leave work after giving birth. Most employed women are between the ages of 20 and 39. Even though enterprises report equal pay for equal jobs for men and women, there are usually discrepancies in their benefit packages and working conditions.

###### (c) *Empowerment*

The majority of working women have not forged a link between their contribution to family income and the degree of decision-making in the household.

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>82</sup> Information in this section is extracted from UNIDO, *Final Report of Expert Group Meeting on Women in Industry*, 10-12 July 1995, Vienna (US GLO 95 077), 1996.

<sup>83</sup> Information in this section is based on ESCWA, "Arab women in the manufacturing industries", in *Studies on Women and Development*, No. 19, New York, 1995.

## G. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN AGRO-PROCESSING

It is important to compare and question the differences between participation roles of economically active women and men. Studies reveal that participation rates for women above the age of 15 have risen over the past three decades (from 10.2 per cent in 1970 to 21.7 per cent in 1997), while participation rates for men have risen from 43.8 per cent in 1970 to 77.3 per cent in 1997.<sup>81</sup> The 1997 female participation rate in Lebanon is among the highest in the region, but it is still very low when compared with industrialized countries, and the reasons for this must be weighed. Women constitute 12.4 per cent of the total industrial workforce (see table 11) and 15.4 per cent of the total workforce in the food processing and tobacco industries. Of the total female workforce, 30.4 per cent is employed in the food processing and tobacco industries, while the figure for men is 24 per cent.

TABLE 11. DISTRIBUTION OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKFORCE IN LEBANON BY GENDER, CATEGORY AND AGRO-PROCESSING ACTIVITY, 1998-1999  
(Numbers and percentage)

Economic activity	Total workforce <sup>a</sup>				Paid workers			Seasonal workers		
	Total	Male	Female	Percentage female	Male	Female	Percentage female	Male	Female	Percentage female
Food and beverages	26 390	22 750	3 641	13.8	15 848	2 506	13.2	8 366	1 412	11.4
Tobacco	1 589	912	677	42.6	912	677	42.6			
Total	27 979	23 662	4 318	15.4	16 760	3 183	16.0	8 366	1 412	11.4
Other industrial sectors	86 199	76 913	9 286	11.8	81 191	7 513	12.8	16 132	1 891	19.5
Grand total	114 108	99 964	14 204	13.4	67 941	19 696	13.6	24 508	3 306	11.9

Source: Lebanon, compiled from the Ministry of Industry, "A report on industry in Lebanon 1998-1999".

a/ Total workforce excludes seasonal workers.

More than 35 per cent of workers in the food and beverage industry and 12 per cent of seasonal workers are women. More than 14 per cent of all female seasonal workers are in the food and beverage sector.

While this industrial survey provides various statistics,<sup>82</sup> the only tables that reflect gender specific indicators are those on the distribution of the workforce by economic activity and enterprise size. None of the other tables (over 80 pages) provide any gender specific information. The survey concludes that male and female workers represent 88 and 12 per cent respectively, of the total workforce and male and female workers make up roughly 86 and 13 per cent respectively, of paid workers.

An analysis of the handicraft survey<sup>86</sup> of the year 2000 (covering 1998), shows 10 of 53 tables having gender-desegregated data and indicators, making this analysis of the handicraft sector extremely gender-sensitive. Gender differences cover occupations, age groups, education, regions and size of workshop. There is a total of 8,792 handicrafts workers, of which 74 per cent are women. Their jobs include preparing kusk, beverages, jams, pickles and other products. The agricultural raw material handicraft constitutes the second most dominant handicraft occupation after the garment sector. There are 7,200 handicraft workshops in Lebanon, of which 16 per cent are of food processing raw materials.

There is a need to examine the various factors affecting women's choices, options and opportunities in their profession and in the economic sector. These factors include occupational concentration, fields of study, income differentials, years of work experience, and training availability in each sector. There is very

<sup>81</sup> United Nations, ESCWA, *Statistical Abstract of the ESCWA Region 2000*, twentieth issue, New York, 2000.

<sup>82</sup> Lebanon, Ministry of Industry, "Report on industry in Lebanon, 1998-1999: statistics and findings", 1999.

<sup>86</sup> Lebanon, Ministry of Social Affairs, "Statistical survey of handicrafts in Lebanon", 2000 (in Arabic).

little information on gender-related issues in the food processing industry in Lebanon, which limits gender impact analysis. Studies that do provide information focus on the industrial and manufacturing sector in general, rather than on the food processing industry. Gender-desegregated data is not provided. To supplement the existing data, a look will be taken at the results of a questionnaire distributed to twelve food processing enterprises in Lebanon in 1998-1999, of which five responded and only partially.

### 1. Occupational concentration

Of the various studies that provide partial information on occupational concentration, one study sampling 1,956 working women, including Lebanese and non-Lebanese citizens, revealed that only 0.5 per cent of the women working in manufacturing and crafts, are in upper-level management positions, 13.45 per cent are mid-level or technical workers, 19 per cent are self-employed and 66 per cent work in production or in services to manufacturing companies.<sup>85</sup> This study does not provide information pertinent to the food processing industries since it combines industry and crafts as one category. It reveals nothing about the food processing industry and includes no statistics on the separate category of services to manufacturing companies.

A more pertinent study conducted in 1998 shows that men constitute 91.5 per cent of decision makers in all kinds of organizations, 72 per cent of specialists in all fields and 81 per cent of all salespeople.<sup>86</sup> It is reasonable to conclude that women working in manufacturing and in food processing specifically, will not be found in higher decision-making ranks or in mid-level specialist ranks, but rather, with more likelihood in production ranks. However, this conclusion is still of a very general nature and more relevant data is needed.

Another study provides comparative data on occupational concentration by gender in 1970 and in 1995.<sup>87</sup> The study first cautions that it is hard to pinpoint the changes that have occurred from 1970 to 1995 because the terms used to classify jobs in various studies have changed. In the 1995 survey, new terms combining various categories used in 1970 were introduced. Despite this, a clear change is noticed in the distribution of occupations of working women from the period 1970-1995 from jobs that do not require special skills or qualifications to jobs that require relatively high levels of education. In 1970, only 0.7 per cent of working women had executive positions, versus 1.9 per cent in 1995. In 1970, 4.8 per cent of working women were self-employed (usually in the specialist professions of law, medicine and engineering), compared with 8.4 per cent in 1995. In 1995, 12 per cent of working women were administrative workers (no data are reported for 1970, possibly due to the change in job classifications noted above) and 13 per cent of working women held mid-level positions in 1995 (again, no data for 1970). In 1990, 19 per cent of working women held positions in services and sales, and 7.7 per cent of working women held positions in industry, manufacturing, and construction.

Although this study signals the low percentage of women in manufacturing, it provides no specific information on occupational distribution by gender in manufacturing and in food processing specifically. Another relevant study (1998) surveyed 2,112 women in all regions of Lebanon, randomly selecting a sample of 567 companies that employ women and analysing its findings to provide a profile of working women in Lebanon and to specify employer's preferences. The study is important because it systematically targets companies that employ women and presents the most recurrent characteristics of these companies. Food processing does not show up as either a major or minor sector that employs women, prompting the conclusion that if women are working in the food processing sector, it must be either as temporary or seasonal workers (who are not observed), or in negligibly small numbers. Furthermore, the study points out that 81 per cent of working women work in services, while 15 per cent are employed in manufacturing and 4

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<sup>85</sup> ESCWA study on "Productivity and Development of Food Processing Industries in Selected ESCWA Countries" (ESCWA/D/1999/11) (in Arabic)

<sup>86</sup> Lebanese American University (LAU), "Women in the labor force", *Al-Ra'ida*, vol. XV, No. 82, Summer 1998

<sup>87</sup> Naguib Usa, *Diversity in Economic Activity in Lebanon*, 1998 (in Arabic)

<sup>88</sup> ESCWA, Industrial Unit's compilation of statistics on manufacturing in Lebanon for 1994, based on the 1995 report by the Lebanese Ministry of Industry and Petroleum and the Directorate of Industry, "Report on industrial census", 1994

per cent in agriculture. This study, like previous ones, shows that although there are some women in manufacturing, no gender-desegregated data is present for the food processing industries.

The same study reports on the occupational categories of working women in Lebanon: only 8.9 per cent are in upper management; 25 per cent are specialists (1.7 per cent in the sciences and 3 per cent in health fields); around 25 per cent in mid-level positions (0.9 per cent in technical fields and 3.5 per cent in the health sciences); 11.4 per cent in administrative work; 12.3 per cent in the services sector; 0.8 per cent in agriculture; 9.5 per cent are skilled workers (4.5 per cent classified as skilled workers in the textile industry and 4.75 per cent classified as skilled in other fields); and 7.7 per cent are unskilled workers.

As with other studies, this study remains inconclusive regarding women's occupational concentrations in manufacturing, in general, and in the food processing industry, in particular. More field surveys are needed to provide specific information in this area.

## 2. *Fields of education*

There are various studies that indicate the level and selected fields of education for working women in Lebanon. The 1998 Lebanese American University (LAU) study indicates that 34.6 per cent of working women have completed their secondary education; 25 per cent have university degrees (though there is not enough diversity in majors as 30 per cent have degrees in the humanities and social sciences, 18 per cent in economics and business, 7.9 per cent in the sciences, and 14.8 per cent in the health sciences), and 21 per cent have vocational degrees (20.5 per cent of whom are specialized in secretarial work, 14.6 per cent in computers and accounting, and 31.1 per cent in nursing).<sup>91</sup>

The 1998 study conducted by Issa again indicates that there is a direct relationship between the participation rate and educational level of women and that these increase together. At the end of 1995, only 8 per cent of women with an elementary education participated in the workforce, while this figure rose to 13.8 per cent for women with an intermediate education, 30 per cent for women with a secondary education, 60 per cent for women with university degrees and 73 per cent for women with higher university degrees. These figures show that by 1995, women's work had become concentrated in areas that require advanced educational levels.<sup>92</sup>

Another study (1996) examines the marked change in women's preferences for academic specializations from 1970 to 1996. While only 9.2 per cent of all graduates in business administration in 1970 were women, the figure in 1996 was 45 per cent. While only 13.7 per cent of all graduates in medical or agricultural studies in 1970 were women, this figure rose to 51.4 per cent in 1996. While only 4 per cent of all graduates in technical and engineering fields in 1970 were women, this figure rose to 24 per cent in 1996.<sup>93</sup>

These statistics document the growth in the number of women with technical or business specializations. If appropriate jobs were created in the food processing industry, with commensurate pay and benefits, more qualified women might be interested in working in this industry. It is also possible that women are already employed in services related to industry, but these related services are not covered by the available studies on Lebanon.

## 3. *Income differentials, pay and benefits*

The information available in this area is of a general nature and does not relate specifically to differentials in manufacturing or in food processing specifically. The LAU 1998 study on working women, which surveyed working women in general (regardless of sector), showed that the average working woman

<sup>91</sup> LAU, "Women in the labor force", *Al-Raida*, vol. XV, No. 82, 1988.

<sup>92</sup> Naguib Issa, *Diversity in Economic Activity in Lebanon 1998* (in Arabic).

<sup>93</sup> IFCWA, Statistical Unit, "The situation of men and women in Lebanon: a comparative statistical study", 1996.

in Lebanon earns L.L. 300,000-500,000 per month. Only 11 per cent of working women earn over L.L. 1,000,000 per month. Pay varies according to level of education and is notably lower for those with vocational education.<sup>91</sup> Tables 6 and 7 indicate various occupations in different productive and services sectors and their corresponding wage averages.

The same study reports 39 per cent of respondents citing low pay as an obstacle to increasing the female workforce, 18 per cent reporting low promotion opportunities as an obstacle and 16 per cent reporting limited benefits as an obstacle. Answering a question about their motivation to work, 35 per cent reported economic need as a major motive, 21 per cent reported financial independence as a motive, and 20 per cent reported self-fulfillment as a motive. Many women reported their expectations regarding gender discrimination in certain jobs as important in their selection of their work environment.<sup>92</sup>

This information signals the importance of studying pay, job structure and working conditions in the food processing industries and comparing them to conditions in other sectors. From such comparisons conclusions might be drawn regarding the reasons women tend to avoid work in the food processing sector, especially at mid-level or at the level of specialist.

A second study provides more pertinent information, as it reports wage differentials in manufacturing and industry, without specifying information on sectors within manufacturing.<sup>93</sup> This 1998 study shows that men's wages exceed those of women by 100 per cent in agriculture, 60 per cent in industry, 65 per cent in commerce and 67 per cent in services. Furthermore, wage differentials increase as women climb the career ladder: male skilled workers earn 17 per cent more than their female counterparts; male administrative workers earn 80 per cent more than their female counterparts; and male executives earn 51 per cent more than their female counterparts. However, this study draws no conclusions as to whether these wage differentials are the result of overt discrimination in the labour market or whether they can be attributed to other factors such as seniority, work experience, and chosen field of specialty. More information is needed for a full assessment of the data.

#### 4. *Years of experience*

The only information available in this category is indirect and relies on statistics regarding the age groups of working women. The Issa study reports that women have been delaying their entry into the labour market. The number of women of ages 15 to 19 years entering the labour market decreased from 15.6 per cent of working women in 1970 to 4.2 per cent in 1995. Women between the ages of 20 and 24 years decreased from 19.1 per cent to 16.1 per cent, while the percentage between the ages of 25 and 49 increased from 46.8 per cent to 68 per cent.

The same study also shows that working women are younger than working men, with 82 per cent of working women under the age of 45, while the figure for men is only 68 per cent. The study suggests that this may be because many working women leave the workplace upon marriage.<sup>94</sup>

The handicraft survey does indicate that the majority of women workers have less than 10 years of work experience, but that, in general, women in the handicrafts sector have more years of experience than men.<sup>95</sup>

The study allows us to make only inconclusive generalizations regarding years of experience of working women as a general category, and provides no direct information on working women in manufacturing or in food processing. More information should be collected on this question.

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<sup>91</sup> IAC, "Women in the labor force", *Al-Ranki*, vol. XV, No. 82, 1998.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Naguib Issa, *Diversity in Economic Activity in Lebanon, 1998* (in Arabic).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Lebanon, Ministry of Social Affairs, "Statistical survey of handicrafts in Lebanon", Beirut, 2000 (in Arabic).



## 5. *Agro-processing training*

The studies reviewed in this paper contain almost no information on agro-processing training. Even the 1999 ESCWA field survey on the food processing industry provides little information on training. Follow-up studies should be conducted on training availability.

Four of the five food processing companies that responded to ESCWA's questionnaire in 1998 were canning companies and one was a grainery. Regarding gender and employment issues, the following information was derived from the questionnaires:

*On gender participation:* managers filling out the questionnaire reported that at least 40-55 per cent of the workers in three of the companies were women. The fourth company reported that only 2.8 per cent of its workers were women and the fifth company provided no information;

*On occupational concentration:* only three companies provided information showing where female employees are located by occupational position. Responding on male/female distribution of ownership and upper level management positions, one company reported having only one male owner and the two other companies reported that the rates of women were 40-55 per cent;

*In the category of technical specialists and professionals:* the rates varied from equal numbers of men and women in one company, to 60 per cent of women in the second company and 10 per cent men in the third. In administrative and sales positions, the percentage of women workers varied from 45 per cent in the first company, to 53 per cent in the second company and 63 per cent in the third one;

*On productivity:* respondents were asked to rank various factors that affect productivity rates and the significant of local and foreign competition as well as the impact of lack of expertise and inability to tap into the local productive workforce;

*On training:* respondents ranked various steps to be taken to increase productivity rates. Managers ranked "training employees to improve their skills" and "updating and developing equipment in the enterprise" high.

## 6. *Gender in agro-processing companies<sup>99</sup>*

Conserves Modernes Chitaura is a private sector company established in 1961 which has developed a strong food processing enterprise in Lebanon. A closer look at this organization gives an idea of what the working environment for women and men in food processing is. Overall, 25 per cent of its staff is female. Management claims that men and women receive equal pay for their work and that there are no differences between men and women regarding work hours. The marketing department and the quality control department (two of the six departments) are managed by women.

Certain production lines such as pickles have been traditionally operated exclusively by women as they are considered to require "traditional" female skills. The work is tedious and women stand all day filling jars with pickles or removing extra skin from carrots that have been machine-peeled. No men are engaged in this sort of work.

Although the company adheres to the Lebanese Labour Law regarding maternity leave and benefits, there is, nonetheless, a tendency for women to leave work after marriage. This practice and the fact that most of the female workforce is comprised predominantly of seasonal and production line workers, who are often illiterate and unskilled, explain the limitation of promotion opportunities for female workers.

Mymoune, a food processing enterprise founded in 1989, offers an interesting example of women's role in food processing. At the height of the civil strife in Lebanon, two sisters from the village Ain El-Kabo

<sup>99</sup> Summary based on interviews with managers of both companies.

began thinking about a project that would engage the village residents who were unemployed because of the difficulty of commuting to places where work was offered. The sisters came up with the idea of processing food in a home-made style. They converted the basement of their parent's house into a working area and took recipes from village elders. A professor in food technology also helped the two entrepreneurs bring Mymoune to life.

Believing that only women have the patience and know-how for food production of this kind, the sisters hired women for their project. With the exception of two drivers, all the permanent employees of Mymoune, in both the administration and the workshop are women. The salaries of the permanent staff conform to the Lebanese Labor Law standards and full benefits are provided.

The majority of the female staff are single and live in the vicinity. Upon marriage, a woman usually leaves her work either because she moves with her husband to a different region or because she is prompted by sociocultural norms to stay at home. However, there have been few cases in which women have returned to work after marriage and childbirth, to supplement the household income. There are no children's facilities on the premises. Two disabled women were trained and are part of the production line staff of Mymoune. The women entrepreneurs of Mymoune were able to combine social responsibility with profit-making.

There remain many gaps in the information available on employment conditions in the manufacturing sector in Lebanon. Even less information is available on the food processing industry and on gender-related issues. Preliminary studies have revealed that there is a substantial number of women (4,318) working in this industry. More detailed field surveys are needed to define the factors that draw women into certain types of jobs in this industry over others, such as technical or administrative jobs. Further studies on industry-related services might reveal whether women are drawn into technical and administrative positions in this sector and what their employment conditions are (see annex).

## IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. CONCLUSIONS

Even though Lebanon has a national strategy for gender mainstreaming as follow-up to the Beijing Conference, the political will remains weak. Gender mainstreaming has not been concretized and the implementation of the national plan and strategy has been very slow. Information is of crucial importance to policy makers in their goal to mainstream a gender perspective in their activities and programmes. Accurate, consistent and comparable gender-desegregated data is not available for Lebanon, in general, and for agriculture, in particular and does not reflect the full extent of women's contribution to the economy.

NCLW is more involved in setting policy, strategies and frameworks of analysis than in altering the cultural norms and mindset of the general public. Institutions in both the public and private sectors are not yet equipped with the capacity necessary to integrate a gender mainstreaming strategy in their planning and decision-making phases. Linkages between ministerial gender focal points or committees and NCLW are weak and, therefore, ineffective in addressing a specific priority subject or sectoral issue.

Some of the problems faced by men and women working in the Lebanese agricultural sector are structural and are due to the persistent neglect of the sector in governmental plans and policies.

Limited access to resources is a major constraint for both men and women in the agricultural sector. However, these constraints are more pronounced for women. Limited access to credit by women is exacerbated by the lack of possession of land title as collateral. Extension programmes are not usually geared to the needs of female workers.

Although the Lebanese Labour Law does not discriminate by gender, traditional norms often act against the acquired basic rights of women.

The concentration of women in seasonal and temporary jobs and in unpaid family employment suggests that economic activity per se is not necessarily empowering. Only women heads of household are sole breadwinners. Women who are more highly educated have a relatively higher degree of decision-making power in their households.

The available employment data indicates that a large proportion of Lebanese working women earn a relatively low income in the private sector and are unable to sustain their livelihoods.

There is evidence in the literature to suggest that the risk of poverty is particularly high among women. Usually women have a harder time surviving and overcoming poverty. Although accurate data on poverty in Lebanon is not available, some studies suggest that rural women and female-headed households are more susceptible to poverty than men in similar circumstances.

### B. RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. *General*

1. Raise awareness of gender equality in order to change attitudes of staff in both the public and private sectors regarding gender relations through, for example, the gender focal point mechanism and the revision of operating procedures to improve women's rate of participation.
2. Provide extension and training programmes by the Ministries of Agriculture and Industry and other agencies for women farmers and workers that match women's needs and circumstances.
3. Carry out agricultural and industrial research in order to understand and address women's constraints and issues so as to improve their efficiency and increase agricultural and manufacturing production.
4. Explore the linkages between the agricultural sector, the agro-processing informal sector and the agro-industrial sector in order to understand and enhance the role of women.

## 2. *Specific*<sup>100</sup>

### (a) *Income-generating activities*

Alternative sources of income to improve productivity of women in rural areas are recommended:

- (i) Animal production projects such as chicken, livestock, and silkworm raising and bee keeping.
- (ii) Crop production including vegetable and fruit gardening, and greenhouse cultivation.
- (iii) Cottage industry, such as food processing and dairy products.

Such activities should be preceded by surveys and feasibility studies specifically designed to assess the actual needs and priorities at the community level and followed by identifying specific projects for each area and implementing one or two pilot projects. Active local NGOs could be contacted for implementation and follow-up. However, to ensure efficient operation of any programme, a monitoring and evaluation unit should be established at the Ministry of Agriculture or another concerned ministry or institute for technical supervision and advice on ongoing projects.

### (b) *Women's workload*

As women's workload may constitute a constraint on higher productivity and adequate childcare and pose health risks to women themselves, the introduction of labour saving technology and tools for women food production, post harvest food processing, conservation and food preparation would alleviate their workload.

### (c) *Cooperative activities*

In cooperative programmes and organized projects such as women's clubs, women's efforts can be pooled for certain tasks in the food chain; in the use of post harvest machinery on a cooperative basis; in securing access to land for women, and in improving marketing opportunities, access to extension services, tools, and alternative cropping patterns.

### (d) *Extension programmes*

Agricultural extension programmes should be designed on a gender approach basis involving both women and men and giving female agricultural engineers the opportunity to work as extension agents.

### (e) *Childcare facilities*

Subsidized childcare facilities, either formal or on a cooperative basis among women, can alleviate much of a woman's burden, especially one working in the fields.

### (f) *Seasonal variations*

Developmental efforts should build on strategies to examine the potentials of:

- (i) Introducing income-generating crops (available in lean seasons) which are easily stored, multipurpose, nutritionally adequate and relatively less labour-intensive.
- (ii) Improving preservation and storage techniques such as food stock which are essential for a household's ability to counteract seasonal variations as they represent not only a surplus which can be consumed during lean periods, but also a potential for cash earnings in times of need.

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<sup>100</sup> Summarized from a report prepared by NCFW, 1994.

- (iii) Establishing community cash funds or food stocks such as “cereal banks” (to safeguard women in times of food shortages) which could be done at a community level, in either formal or informal institutions;
- (iv) Providing nutritional education programmes for women in a food production, processing and preparation pattern chain which would enable them to combine inexpensive and nutritionally adequate food.

(g) *Lack of legal provisions*

Efforts should be made to overcome the lack of legal provisions governing employment in agriculture; social legislation should be widened in scope and new provisions made to organize employment in the agricultural sector and provide equitable insurance for all employees in the productive sectors. The National Social Security Law concerning maternity leave and health security should be enforced (presently, employers are responsible for their provision and can avoid employing women because of them), and should also cover seasonal labourers and those working in agriculture at the household level on a per diem basis.

(h) *The status of women*

As most often men are the legal owners of land and women have only usufruct rights or can work only with the permission of their husbands, changes in the laws pertaining to land ownership, inheritance and land-use rights must be made and ways and means found to bring about attitudinal changes among men and women.

### 3. *Information-related*

The data gap on women’s contribution to agricultural production can be filled by:

- (a) Articulating a strategy for action to improve the production and dissemination of gender-desegregated data for decision makers;
- (b) Developing a framework for participatory rural appraisal that propels gender responsive planning;
- (c) Conducting gender-sensitive surveys of the informal sector to quantify its contribution to the economy with gender-desegregated data;
- (d) Conducting surveys and participatory rural appraisals of the various agricultural areas of Lebanon in order to assess gender-sensitive roles and resource needs in the design of client oriented interventions by governmental and other agencies involved in agricultural development;
- (e) Conducting a survey of female-headed households in rural areas and the informal sector;
- (f) Ensuring that all surveys incorporate a monitoring system for analysis of the contribution of women to the national economy and assess the needs of women in terms of income, credit, and investment.

### 4. *Institution-related*

The role of existing institutions can be strengthened by:

- (a) Improving the capacity of the national women machinery and the ministries of agriculture and industry to mainstream a gender perspective into their programmes and plans of action;
- (b) Training Ministry of Agriculture staff in participatory rural appraisal methodology and techniques to ensure the provision of client oriented extension and other programmes;
- (c) Encouraging the appointment of more women to leadership positions in agriculture and industrial governmental councils, committees and institutions.

## Annex

### **GUIDELINES FOR COLLECTING GENDER-RELATED INFORMATION FROM AGRO-PROCESSING ENTERPRISES**

#### **A. BACKGROUND COMPANY DATA**

- (a) Products and markets
- (b) Company evolution
- (c) Company objectives

#### **B. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

- (a) Type of management
- (b) Description of the basis of employment of the labour force (permanent, temporary, or seasonal) and by gender

#### **C. DESCRIPTION OF THE OPERATION**

- (a) Size
- (b) Location
- (c) Products

#### **D. DESCRIPTION OF THE PHYSICAL PLANT, MACHINERY AND NATURE OF WORKERS' ACTIVITIES (GENDER SPECIFIC IF POSSIBLE)**

##### **D.1. COMPANY WORKING CONDITIONS FOR EMPLOYEES (GENERAL AND BY GENDER)**

##### **D.1.1. SPECIFIC OPERATION (FOR EXAMPLE, OPERATION WITH HIGH FEMALE PARTICIPATION)**

#### **G. WORKING CONDITIONS FOR EMPLOYEES BY GENDER**

##### *1. Personnel*

- (a) Size and structure of the labour force
- (b) Number of people in management by gender, ratio of managers to employees
- (c) Proportions of permanent, seasonal and temporary labour force, by gender
- (d) Nationality and permanent residence of the labour force, by gender
- (e) Qualifications (education, training, and physical strength)

##### *2. Hours of work*

- (a) Length of shifts, rest periods, night work, and work day
- (b) Lunch break: length, paid or unpaid
- (c) Overtime: availability, optional, or compulsory
- (d) Length of workweek: total weekly hours
- (e) Comparative analysis of lengths of shifts and payment modalities of permanent and temporary employees

##### *3. Employment and compensation rules and practices*

- (a) Policies on the employment of women
- (b) Policies on minimum and maximum age; gender differences and contractual differences
- (c) Policies on married women and pregnant women
- (d) Policies on women's dual-work burden (allowances for family leave, flex time, and on-site childcare)
- (e) Benefits: holiday leave with pay, sick leave with pay and maternity leave with pay

#### 4. *Supervision/labour relations*

- (a) Form of worker contracts or agreements
- (b) Rights of workers to form organizations and comparative role of women to assemble; to elect a representative
- (c) Degree of supervision
- (d) Amount of training provided to workers
- (e) Interaction between staff and supervisor: style and mode of communication
- (f) Promotion availability by gender

#### 5. *Physical plant conditions: health and safety (by gender)*

- (a) Safety inspections
- (b) Hygiene: access to bathroom facilities and first-aid
- (c) Safety: frequency of accidents and measures taken to prevent them; conditions of bathrooms facilities
- (d) Job related illnesses

#### 6. *Location of physical plant relative to employees' homes*

- (a) Means of transportation
- (b) Amount of time required to commute
- (c) Expenses

#### 7. *Women in the work environment*

- (a) Problems and their nature
- (b) Their suggested changes or improvements
- (c) Other income-generating work
- (d) How they spend their earnings

#### 8. *Women's opportunities for career development within the firm and their mobility to other enterprises*

Based on "Gender in agribusiness project", University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, [www.uiuc.edu/ips/wid/gap](http://www.uiuc.edu/ips/wid/gap); and UNIDO, *Final Report on Expert Group Meeting on Women in Industry*, 1996.

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