

Women's work in Lebanon: making the invisible visible

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	3
Executive summary	5
Introduction	7
Section 1: Understanding women’s position globally in the formal, informal and domestic economies	9
1.1 Perspectives from Europe and North America	9
1.1.1 Women in the formal sector	9
1.1.2 Women in the informal sector	11
1.1.3 Women in the domestic (care) economy	13
1.2 The current situation – a snapshot	16
1.3 Approaches to addressing issues around women’s work.....	17
1.4 Measuring women’s work and contribution to the economy	19
Section 2: Women’s formal employment in Lebanon	22
2.1 Introduction.....	22
2.2 Where are women in the formal labour force in Lebanon?.....	23
2.3 Education and formal employment.....	24
2.4 Barriers facing women in getting employment and promotion	25
2.4.1 Domestic responsibilities.....	26
2.4.2 Male attitudes and behaviour as a barrier	28
2.4.3 Lack of access to training	29
2.4.4 Many barriers face women	29
2.5 Women’s formal employment and government legislation.....	30
2.6 Women in self-employment.....	31
2.7 Unemployment	31
2.8 Conclusions	32
Section 3: Women in the informal sector	34
3.1 Introduction.....	34
3.2 Women’s informal work in Lebanon	35
3.3 Constraints facing women	38
3.3.1. Lack of access to land by women	38
3.3.2. Women face multiple challenges, for example in the cooperative sector	39
3.3.3. Women may have to work long hours to earn enough	39
3.3.4. This work is often ‘taken for granted’ including by women themselves.....	40
3.4 Conclusions	42
Section 4: Women’s domestic care work.....	45
4.1 Introduction.....	45
4.2. Women’s care work in Lebanon	46
4.3 The challenges posed by the realities of care work for women.....	49
4.4 The importance of work in the care economy.....	52
4.5 Conclusions	52
Section 5: Taking the work forward	55
Annex: Key concepts around women’s work used in this study	59
Annex: Key concepts around women’s work used in this study	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY	66

List of Abbreviations

AHDR	Arab Human Development Report (United Nations Development Programme)
AUB	American University of Beirut (Lebanon)
CAS	Central Administration of Statistics (Lebanon)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRTD.A	Collective for Research and Training on Development – Action
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
EUROMED	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (United Nations)
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure (United Nations)
GDI	Gender-related Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index (United Nations)
HDR	Human Development Report
ILO	International Labour Organization (United Nations)
INSEE	Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (France)
MDG	Millennium Development Goals (United Nations)
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs (Lebanon)
NCLW	National Commission for Lebanese Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OURSE	Observatoire Universitaire de la Réalité Socio-économique (Université Saint Joseph – Lebanon)
SEOW	Sustainable Economic Opportunities for Women (CRTD.A Project)
SIGI	Social Institution and Gender Index

SNA	System of National Accounts (International)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WEOI	Women's Economic Opportunity Index

Executive summary

This paper, written as part of CRTD.A's research work on sustainable economic opportunities for women (SEOW 2) sets out to explore women's work in Lebanon, using a conceptual framework built around women's work in the formal, paid and regulated sector of the economy; their work in informal, unregulated and uncounted jobs; and their responsibilities and work within the domestic context, the care economy.

Using the concept of these three economic spheres where women are located the paper defines the meaning of each concept, drawing on international, regional and Lebanese understandings of women's work, and how these are currently measured and recorded by international and national agencies. The dearth of instruments for recording work in the informal and care economies are highlighted and the implications of the lack of data on women's work in these areas are seen to include a lack of attention from Government and other policy makers. It is 'invisible'.

The paper then draws on research data and debates from Lebanon to describe the involvement of women in Lebanon in each of the three sectors. It explores their opportunities and the barriers they face in securing jobs in the formal sector, getting a decent wage under decent conditions in the informal sector, and managing the demands of running the household within the care economy.

While girls' education is rising in Lebanon, and in some case outstripping the formal education levels of boys, they still form less than a quarter of the formal workforce; those that are employed are clustered in the public sector and jobs in the caring professions, as well as low paid and less skilled jobs. They earn less than men for the same work and are handicapped in relation to social security payments. Once they have a job the barriers to performing and achieving well are many, including a lack of training opportunities for women, the absence of child-care and flexible working to enable women to combine their home and work responsibilities, as well as negative male attitudes towards women at work. Many leave when they marry and have children. While the quality of the statistical data about women's position in the workforce is not high and research on women's experiences is limited it is clear that women are marginalised and not performing in line with their new levels of education.

Many women fail to get access to salaried jobs and work in informal employment, often in or near their homes. This sector is marked by low wages and poverty. Women (and men) may work long hours, daily or seasonally, for low and uncertain pay. They have no legal rights to regulated hours of work or to holiday or sick pay, there is no redress if they are not paid, and jobs may be very insecure. Women's work in this sector is not recorded or counted in any way, making their contribution to both the household and the wider economy invisible. Their husbands and even the women themselves who work long hours but earn little and see their contribution as of little value, often undervalue this work. However, for many it is vital to their families' survival. The critical importance of measuring this work is highlighted so that the major challenges women face in earning an income in this sector are better understood and can be addressed. The few research studies that have been done in Lebanon all show the hard work women do, their low rewards and lack of recognition, the importance of this work for women and their families, and the need to find ways to better support women working in the informal sector.

The status of women is often judged by the way they perform their roles as wives and mothers and most women in Lebanon take the major responsibilities for running their households as well as contributing to the social structure of their communities. This work in the domestic care economy is assumed to be 'women's work' and is usually taken for

granted. Their subordinate role as wives and mothers is supported by religious beliefs among Muslims and Christians that the man is the head of the household and the provider and women are to serve and obey. The fact that family life is regulated through the 18 religious confessions in Lebanon and not secular law means that these beliefs are enshrined in the confessional law and practice that govern women's lives. The research on this area is very sparse in Lebanon but the work done to date does clearly show the gender hierarchy within the family and the multiple tasks that women do that are assumed to be their natural role. However, the time spent on the often-onerous tasks within the care economy cut across the time women have to work for an income, for study, for political participation and leisure. In some studies of both the paid informal sector and the unpaid care sector women expressed a desire to see things change. Any changes to date are slow.

The paper closes by looking in more detail at the implications of women's paid and unpaid work being largely invisible and marginalised. It summarizes the barriers women face, including the lack of jobs in the Lebanese economy and their inability to compete equally with men; the lack of laws promoting their participation in the economy and the poor provisions for women in the workforce; their relative lack of access to senior jobs or Parliament making change more difficult; the few provisions to support and improve the conditions of women working in the informal sector; and the continued relegation of women's work in the care economy to the status of their 'natural role'.

This lack of recognition of women's critical contribution to the wider economy and that of their households and their marginalisation within the three economic spheres means that women's potential is being wasted and they are not able to realise their rights to economic participation. During discussions based on the research undertaken so far by CRTD.A a number of urgent suggestions were proposed for immediate action:

- the importance of day care provision for children to free up women's time for paid work
- the need to measure, recognise and support women's work in the formal, informal and care economies
- women's need for capacity building and education in order to increase their access to formal work and improve their performance in both formal and informal jobs
- the need to address women's low awareness of their contribution and build their confidence through developing their understanding of the context and their economic contributions to the family, the community and the wider community through their formal, informal and care work
- the need for improved markets for women's products, combined with a need for them to learn new skills, access credit, enter new sectors and make products that are more marketable
- the need to encourage women to participate outside the home, economically and politically

Introduction

This paper on women's work in Lebanon is part of a regional project of CRTD.A and its partners being carried out in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Morocco, to explore and promote sustainable economic opportunities for women in the Arab countries. This project began in 2006 in order to:

- Promote awareness of women's economic participation in the region, especially in the informal and care economies where many women work;
- Raise awareness about the structural and institutional barriers that women face in accessing and sustaining employment in the formal and informal economies;
- Contribute to the development of new and better programmes and policies around gender issues and women's work, especially in the informal and care economies

This study aims to provide conceptual clarity around women's work in order to inform the research on making women's engagement in the economy more visible; the research highlights their multiple contributions through their employment in formal economy, their paid work in the informal economy and their unpaid but essential work within the household. The research is based primarily on secondary sources - statistics and written materials complemented by primary qualitative data, including recent CRTD.A fieldwork exploring women's roles and activities in informal employment in co-operatives and agricultural work and their care work (CRTD.A, 2011; Boustany-Hajjar, 2010). The research is placed in the wider international context to provide comparative data on women's work and to bring conceptual clarity to key aspects of women's work, which have been researched and discussed by academics and activists involved in development over many years.

This paper

- Presents key aspects of women's work, as defined internationally
- Identifies where women are located in formal employment in Lebanon and the opportunities and constraints they face in accessing and staying in employment
- Locates women in the informal sector, exploring the conditions under which they work, their opportunities and constraints
- Tracks information currently available about informal work in Lebanon, which highlights the need for more data
- Explores the roles and responsibilities women have for work within the household and wider extended family (their informal, unpaid care work)

- Analyses existing policies and laws, including personal status laws, to show how they shape women's work opportunities, position and status
- Explores how attitudes to women's work in the family affect their opportunities and constraints in relation to formal and informal employment

Section 1 introduces women's work in the formal, informal and domestic economies, from a global perspective, and how this work is currently defined, measured and used internationally

Section 2 provides a brief description and analysis of women's current roles in the formal economy in Lebanon, highlighting their relative absence from formal employment even though the education of women and girls has risen significantly. Areas where women's experiences are largely invisible are highlighted and the factors that inhibit women's formal employment in Lebanon are discussed.

Section 3 presents women's work in the paid informal sector, where they work in unregulated jobs for low pay. It explores what is known about women's work in the informal economy in Lebanon and highlights how limited research has been in the Arab region to date. It discusses why making their work visible matters for women as well as the wider economy and explores factors that can support and promote women's income and welfare within informal employment; it discusses the many barriers women face.

Section 4 explores women's unpaid work within the domestic economic, now often described as 'the care economy'. This work is largely unrecognized and uncouned in most countries, including Lebanon, where research and debate remain extremely limited. The critical role of care work within the household is discussed and ways in which these responsibilities affect women's access to paid work are highlighted along with the challenges women face in getting this work properly recognised

Section 5 closes the report by briefly reviewing attitudes towards women's work in Lebanon as seen through the lenses of policy, law and research, and argues for the importance of making visible all women's work in the formal, informal and care economies. Practical proposals for taking the work forward end the report.

Section 1: Understanding women's position globally in the formal, informal and domestic economies

1.1 Perspectives from Europe and North America

1.1.1 Women in the formal sector

During the twentieth century in Western economies there were major changes in the composition of the labour force. In the early twentieth century men dominated formal employment, especially at the higher levels: in business, the professions and political arenas. Upper and middle-class had little access to higher education and were largely excluded from many areas of formal employment; the ideal was for women to be looked after by their husbands and look after the home. The women who worked for wages were predominantly lower class and clustered in low paid work in factories, agriculture and working in domestic work as paid servants.

During the course of the century there were two world wars, which curtailed the male supply of labour and brought many women into the formal workforce for the first time. While each time, following the end of the war, women were returned 'to the kitchen' in large numbers, many women stayed in the workforce and struggles for women's rights (including the right to work) gathered pace. Major changes included a rapid rise in girls' access to formal education, women's right to vote and women's increasing participation in the formal economy. They started in the 'caring professions' such as nursing, teaching and care for children but over the century expanded into most areas of the economy, in both the private and public sectors, as employees, bosses and self employed women running their own businesses.

However, persistent gender inequalities continued in all areas of life, including employment. In the twenty first century the Gender Gap reports (World Economic Forum, 2012) show considerable but slow progress for women and in spite of gender equality legislation women globally still do not receive equal pay for equal work. In many countries they are not found in any significant numbers at senior levels of organisations or on trustee boards and they struggle to get promotion beyond a certain level; many continue to find it hard to combine the demands of work with those of family responsibilities. Inequalities continue and in times of economic crisis women's care burdens certainly rise: while research shows variable

patterns around women's unemployment during times of recession in the richer economies 'women's unpaid household work, however, is an arena where they can be forced to "take up the slack" in the economy during crises' (Milkman, 1976:73).

One region where the gender gap in employment has decreased considerably is the Nordic countries, where a multitude of policies have been put in place to support women in many aspects of life, including in formal employment:

The labour force participation rates for women are among the highest in the world; salary gaps between women and men are among the lowest in the world, although not nonexistent; and women have abundant opportunities to rise to positions of leadership. These patterns vary across the Nordic countries, but, on the whole, these economies have made it possible for parents to combine work and family, resulting in high female employment participation rates, more shared participation in childcare, more equitable distribution of labour at home, better work-life balance for both women and men and in some cases a boost to declining fertility rates. Policies in these countries include mandatory paternal leave in combination with maternity leave, generous federally mandated parental leave benefits provided by a combination of social insurance funds and employers, tax incentives and post-maternity re-entry programmes. (Global Gender Gap Report, 2012: 22)

Many other countries in Europe, Japan and the Western world fare far less well, with some like Japan having a very high rate of exclusion of women from the formal labour force, especially at senior levels. Globally the data show that women, while their education levels are slowly rising and in some countries they are the majority workforce in e.g. the delivery of education and health care, they often are seriously under-represented at the management and planning levels (Fawcett Society, 2010). For example, in education where women outnumber men at the lower levels of employment:

Comparatively fewer women than men have reached senior management positionsthere is no gender parity, let alone gender equality (Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan and Ballenge, 2007; Furst and Reeves, 2008). The global reality is that the numbers of women in senior educational management (and administration) have remained small compared to the number of men. Even in countries where women are well educated, excellently trained and prepared, have high aspirations and are motivated to get senior jobs, they are seriously under-represented (Coleman, 2007). (Wallace and Banos Smith, 2011:16)¹

In its Action Plan for Gender 2007 -10 the World Bank acknowledged that although women's abilities are often high their economic opportunities remain disproportionately low, leaving them marginalised and vulnerable economically. While increasing girl's education is important it is clearly not, on its own, the route to increasing women's participation in the formal workforce and it does not ensure that they are adequately paid or employed at senior

¹ The paper looked globally at women's positions in senior management and drew on first hand research from Kenya, Vietnam and Argentina. All the references quoted are in the bibliography of that paper.

levels. For example, in Canada a newspaper, Globe and Mail reported that while women comprise nearly half of Canada's labour force new evidence suggests they have made virtually no progress in reaching senior management levels. The proportion of female senior managers barely budged between 1987 and 2009 (Globe and Mail, Aug 31st 2011).

1.1.2 Women in the informal sector

The concept of the informal sector was first formally recognised by the ILO in 1971 (ILO, 2002). It was developed from the experiences of international researchers and development agencies working across the world who realised that the formal sectors of employment were small in many less developed and emerging economies and yet people were working hard and earning an income. The concept was defined first on the basis of work in Africa in late 1960's², where it was seen that poor and less educated people were surviving on an income made from a wide range of activities including small scale agriculture, petty trading, unregulated construction, hair dressing, tailoring, carrying loads, unregulated transport and much more. This work had been completely overlooked previously; it was not counted in the employment statistics and was not regulated in any way by Governments or international conventions. People employed in the informal sector were usually defined as unemployed, even though many worked very long hours every day and this work was the source of their income.

Since then there have been many studies and debates about the nature of the informal sector in different countries, in its contribution to the GDP, and its potential for poverty alleviation. Recently, international agencies have recognised that girls and women are clustered in the informal sector, which is characterised by poverty and lack of rights. Under the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to address poverty, especially Goal 1 to reduce poverty and Goal 3 to promote gender equality, there was a commitment to assist girls from education into work, because women's under-employment and low productivity is understood now as a brake on development. Much of the work that girls do is in the informal sector, including informal work in agriculture, tailoring, hairdressing, trading and a variety of small businesses, supported through savings and credit, micro-finance, and vocational

² This was a concept developed in 1970s initially from research in Africa that showed that far from people being massively unemployed as the formal statistics showed, people in rural and urban areas were earning an income from a range of activities that were undertaken outside the formal economy. They were not counted or recognised, not able to access loans from the bank but did provide viable living – or very marginal incomes for some- to large numbers of the population, previously described as unemployed. Keith Hart coined the term in 1973 (Hart, K., 1973. "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11, 1, pp 61-89).

training. The World Bank (WB) now stresses the importance of promoting gender equality in order to get girls from education into work (World Bank Gender Action Plan, 2006); this has been a neglected area and the figures show the difficulties many have in finding a way to earn an income. This approach to the employment of women and girls is called 'Smart economics'³ and Nike, working within the Department for International Development (DFID) in UK, see keeping girls in education for longer and getting girls into informal employment as key to addressing their poverty and also the poverty of their communities, families and even countries; this is called 'the girl effect'⁴.

This work, however, is highly instrumental and focuses on addressing poverty through promoting girls to work largely in the informal sector. The initiatives underway to promote girls into work do not address their rights to formal employment or their rights within informal employment; there is little work on employment creation for women and girls undertaken by the global agencies. Within the work on informal employment little attention is paid to issues such as the need for childcare, minimum wages, the right to organise and bargain for better conditions, for social protection including holidays with pay, sick leave, decent working hours even though ILO 2002 in a paper on 'decent employment' in the informal economy stated that rights, applicable to formal employment, should also apply to work in the informal sector. The international drive to get girls into education and employment is not focused on work in the formal sector but on finding ways to support girls and women in the informal economy.

Women's organisations in Europe are lobbying the donor agencies promoting this agenda to focus on women's rights to work and to decent work. Yet it remains the case that a significant percentage of employment opportunities in many transition and developing economies are found in 'the informal sector', which remains unregulated, unrecognized in statistics, and outside the formal employment sector over which men presided; it is dominated by women and economically essential to them, their families and the wider economy.

³ World Bank, Gender Equality as Smart Economics : 'This Action Plan seeks to advance women's economic empowerment in the World Bank Group's client countries in order to promote shared growth and accelerate the implementation of Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3 - promoting gender equality and women's empowerment)' .p1. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/GAPNov2.pdf>

⁴ www.girleffect.org/

The girl effect is alive. Across the world, girls are finding their voices. If we listen to them, we can do something amazing. We can end global poverty – forever.

There are far fewer jobs in the informal economy in most Western economies – though they certainly exist - where the focus of the Trade Unions and Government legislation over many years has been on creating formal job opportunities and regulating the terms and conditions under which people, men and women, work. The conditions may be very poor in many formal sector jobs, and in the current recession many gains around good working conditions are being lost as unemployment rises and working people are forced to compromise of e.g. the nature of their contracts, pensions, holidays but nevertheless most work is registered, regulated and covered by minimum wage legislation. The ‘black economy’ is an informal economy within these countries and largely dominated by migrant labour; the most vulnerable in the society have little choice but to work for low pay in illegal conditions and the women who work in this sector in these economies have few or no rights, low pay and little social protection.

1.1.3 Women in the domestic (care) economy

The issue of women’s place within the workforce and the domestic economy has been the subject of debate and political activity for many years in Europe and North America. Until the mid twentieth century women’s work within the household was ‘taken for granted’ and not seen as having an economic value or as being critical to the future of the society and its development. While attitudes are changing in many countries and some female roles within the home are now supported by Government interventions - such as child support and pensions for the elderly - women still carry the major share of domestic work and their domestic and caring work continues to be excluded from all national and international economic statistics.

Debates continue about how to divide the responsibilities for the reproduction of the next generation (of workers, carers, thinkers etc) between the Government and the individual family. There is recognition that the future of the society depends on this work being done well, and different countries have different policy regimes around supporting this essential care work. In the Arab region Governments largely see care responsibilities as belonging to women and individual families, while in other countries such as those in Scandinavia there is a clear recognition that the country benefits from the reproduction of children and the future labour force and they provide a wide range of support to individual families and women (as shown earlier in this report), including child care facilities, flexible work time for women in employment, financial child benefits and paid maternity and paternity leave.

It was in the 1960s and 70s that female writers and activists in Europe and North America - such as Ann Oakley (Oakley, 1972) - started challenging the norms that defined the man (husband) as the head of the household and the breadwinner in the family. Women were characterised as economic and non-productive dependents, responsible primarily for domestic work in the home. They were 'housewives' and their work had little status and was unpaid. Yet research showed that women did many hours of 'invisible' work everyday – in the house – which was essential for the reproduction of the society and for supporting those in work and education as well as those who were sick, young or vulnerable. This essential work was unrecognized, uncounted and attributed no economic value.

In Europe, Oakley (1974) focused on the invisibility of women's work in the household noting that it is unrecognized because it is seen 'as a normal part of women's role in life'. She talked of the 'double burden' women face when trying to manage housework and do paid work outside. Men do not usually put in the hours that women do in the house, because they are defined as the breadwinner and the provider, doing economic work outside the home. When women also go out to work to earn money and cannot manage the housework obligations they may bring in another woman, a relative or a woman on very low pay, to carry out these essential domestic tasks for her. While in some richer societies attitudes towards housework are changing and men are undertaking more household tasks time use surveys show that women still put in the longest hours and undertake the management of this domestic work. This unpaid work includes bearing and raising children, teaching them, nursing them, training them; caring for the sick and elderly; and the daily chores of household management including cooking, cleaning and washing for the household.

Oakley argued that the stereotype of the nuclear family headed by a man as the breadwinner was irrelevant in many countries around the world, where gender roles and family structures were quite different; it was also misleading in Europe because it ignored women's economic contributions both within and outside the home. While 'the ideal type' of the family following the Second World War was that women should return to the kitchen and men should run public affairs and earn the money, in reality many women had to go out to work to support their families or themselves, yet this was largely unacknowledged. In many women headed households they were in fact the sole breadwinner for the family, while many poorer households relied on two incomes – the man and the woman's -for survival. Also, some women chose to go out to work in order to realize their potential and be economically independent. In addition women were running the household and putting in hours of labour. Given these complex and diverse realities the concept of the man as the sole or main provider for the family was misleading and ignored women's essential economic

contribution, both inside and outside the home. The author argued strongly that the invisibility of their work contributed to women's continued inequality.

Work on these issues undertaken a little later in the developing economies of Africa, Middle East, Asia and Latin America raised different challenges to the dominant Western characterization of the household as made up of the male breadwinner supporting all the members of the household and defined as a 'nuclear household of one man, one wife and some dependent children'. These challenges included the reality that:

- in many societies and communities polygamy is permitted; men may have more than one wife and the way households are run and responsibilities attributed can vary significantly;
- in some societies women have major responsibilities for food production and food security, providing food for household consumption and sale, as well as providing essential labour for the major cash crops usually controlled by the men;
- poverty often meant that all able bodied members of the household, including women and children, were engaged in productive work and income generation whenever possible

The significant numbers of people living in poverty, the small size of the formal employment sector and the lack of resources that characterized the majority of countries in Africa, Middle East, Asia and Latin America– issues rooted in global economic inequality - meant that the way households were constituted and operated in order to survive were very diverse. Imposing Western constructs and definitions meant that many characteristics of households in different contexts, cultures and economies were poorly understood, especially multiple responsibilities women undertook. Women often actively contributed to sustaining their local communities, as well as their households, through time and resources given to activities that support essential relationships and build social and economic networks around births, weddings, funerals, local celebrations, religious festivals and during times of community crisis. This work is essential to building reciprocal relations, critical in times of crisis, and which also actively contributes to the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

Nancy Folbre, an American writer, has done extensive research on the importance of the care economy to women, their families and the wider society and argues for the need to have a wide definition of care work (Folbre, 2006): the term needs to be disaggregated with each element properly defined. She explores the value of care work in relation to the market showing the importance of unpaid care work in providing essential care within the household (housework), meeting essential subsistence needs (growing, preserving and conserving food), and occasionally selling or bartering small surpluses in the market to contribute to the

household. She argues strongly that care work is so essential and valuable to the society, it underpins the welfare and well-being of all members of society, so it should be measured. The latest revision of the International System of National Accounts (SNA) states ‘these activities deserve special attention because they should, in principle, be included in measures of Gross Domestic Product, but are poorly measured by most surveys’ (quoted in Folbre, 2006:183)

1.2 The current situation – a snapshot

Since the early debates and discussions there have been long struggles to get Governments around the world, and even local populations, to recognise that:

- Definitions of the family and the associated gender roles and responsibilities vary between countries and cultures; work within households always needs to be carefully disaggregated and the specific roles and work of women and men clearly distinguished and understood. At present women’s care work in the household remains largely invisible.
- Almost universally women undertake the domestic care work essential to family survival without pay. Most women around the world do several hours of work every day within their own households, producing and raising children, looking after the sick and elderly, cooking and cleaning for household members, undertaking informal education on e.g. religion, culture, cooking and codes of acceptable behaviour. This arduous work has largely not been counted and in spite of advocacy work remains largely unrecognized. It is taken for granted as ‘women’s role’
- In every country some women do work in the formal economy, albeit often in part-time or low paid work and often in the ‘caring sectors’ such as teaching, nursing, domestic service. Their work in the formal economy has not been properly valued: in the majority of contexts women still hit ‘the glass ceiling’ and do not get into the highest jobs in significant numbers and globally women still earn less than men for equivalent work. Many of the barriers facing women in the formal economy remain hidden and unaddressed
- Many women, especially in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, and female migrant labour to Europe and North America, work in the ‘informal economy’, which is largely uncounted, unrecognized, and unregulated. This work is on family farms, working in production within the household or small businesses, petty trading, running small stalls, shops or eating places, low paid unregulated domestic work in the households of other people, seasonal agricultural or construction labour. The pay

is low or erratic, untaxed and the work provides no statutory benefits or social protection. Their contribution to national and the household economies through informal work is important but invisible.

- Women also make a considerable contribution to ‘the social capital’⁵ of their extended families, communities and the wider society through their work in organising, supporting, and even funding critical social events, including weddings, funerals, and e.g. soup kitchens in times of crisis. This engagement builds social networks of reciprocity and creates social relationships that people, especially the poor who lack any economic safety nets, can call/depend on in times of needs. It also keeps associational life alive.

1.3 Approaches to addressing issues around women’s work

Many writers have contributed to developing these debates around women’s work and its complexities over the years. Many issues requiring legal and policy reform have been identified and taken up within different parts of the world and different economies. For example, there have been campaigns and specific activities on:

For the formal sector:

Maternity and paternity pay for those working in the formal sector, promoted by the ILO and implemented in variable ways across much of the world that enable women to have children, care for them when they are born and then return to work. Equal pay for equal work is an agreed goal in many countries now though not yet achieved – policies are more successful in some places than others. Equal rights at work for women and men are enshrined in some countries now in their equality legislation.

For the informal sector:

While little work has been done to bring in regulatory laws and policies governing the informal sector, support to women working in the sector is now offered in the form of vocational and technical training in many contexts, micro-finance often provided through the NGO sector, and work on improving markets. Most initiatives around improving the conditions and rewards of women’s informal work are undertaken by the non-government sector through e.g. lobbying for better agricultural extension support for women, improving access to markets, and through the practical provision of training and financial support.

⁵ This was a concept defined and made popular by Robert Puttnam, for example in his article Social capital: Measurement and consequences, Canadian Journal of Policy Research, 2001

For the care sector:

There were attempts to get wages for housework, which did not succeed anywhere. However, much more successful have been campaigns and policies in many countries to recognize the need for women to have financial inputs (cash benefits) to support their care of children. In many countries this has resulted in the provision of regular child benefits paid directly to women. Elsewhere, especially in Latin America, poor women are now often recipients of cash transfers to help them to keep their children in school, especially girls who would otherwise have to stay home to help their mothers with their household work (Molyneux, 2010).⁶

The need for day care support for children has been recognised in many places, so that women can work outside the home; this has been successfully provided in some countries of the north, though provision is patchy and often very costly. In most developing economies childcare is largely provided through the extended family, or privately. Childcare is often provided in an 'informal' unregulated way in these countries. In addition support for the disabled and elderly (in the form of universal Government benefits or pensions), while common in some richer countries remains rare elsewhere, although there is a rise in the use of e.g. universal old age pensions in countries such as South Africa and this is now being discussed in other countries such as Kenya and Namibia.

Overall, the response to demands for support for, and recognition of women in all their work roles has been patchy even in wealthier countries. The struggles continue everywhere to secure equal pay for women in the formal sector, to get proper pay and conditions for women who work in the informal sector, and to provide ways for women to combine their care work within the household with the work outside the home, in the formal and informal economic sectors. Women globally still lack proper recognition and support for the critical roles they play in the domestic care economy, although in some societies men are participating by taking on some of the roles around childcare, household cleaning, shopping.

The current global economic crisis is seeing some reversals of gains made by women in Europe, for example, as Governments cut public sector spending including education, health and social welfare budgets. Women are highly dependent on these provisions for providing

⁶ Molyneux analysed almost a hundred cash transfer programmes for women in Latin America, reaching millions of women and children.

education, healthcare and social benefits for family members and are now being expected to take responsibility for meeting the needs of their families through taking on extra work. Related debates about the impact of the global economic crisis on women and their roles are ongoing in different countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. For example, a recent volume of Gender and Development (2010) focusing on Crisis, Care and Childhood, looked at the impact of the global economic crisis on the poor in the poorest countries of the world and found that while caring for children and other dependents is crucial to human well-being and to development, most national and international policy makers appear persistently blind to this. The economic crisis has highlighted the inadequate attention being paid to the care economy and the many responsibilities women carry. The authors concluded that lack of support for poor women in their role as carers results in serious risks to children's education, development, health and protection because they cannot manage all the work responsibilities laid on them. In addition the costs to women's health and opportunities of their heavy domestic workloads remain high.

1.4 Measuring women's work and contribution to the economy

In recent years there has been a focus on addressing gender inequalities, including those around work, and several global scales for measuring women's progress in education, politics, health and well-being have been developed; few exist yet to measure women's involvement in work, and only some of these go beyond looking at women's involvement in formal employment. This means that the range of work that women do in the informal and care economies, and their economic and social contribution to the society and the national economy remain largely invisible and therefore ignored. Without measurements it is hard to describe or understand the extent of women's involvement in work, formal and informal, paid and unpaid, within and outside the home. It also becomes difficult to assess their economic contribution or to research and analyse the barriers they face to becoming more actively involved in formal, paid work.

This is especially important for Lebanon and the Middle East where women's involvement in the formal economy is very low. Currently because women's informal and home based work as well as their work in the care economy is not recognised there are no scales for measuring or reporting this work or for estimating the economic contribution it makes. This also means that this work receives no policy attention.

A recent concept paper for CRTD.A (Allaert, 2012) looked at the available international gender scales and measurements in detail, and highlighted the lack of appropriate measures

for much of the work that women do. The most pertinent points relating to measuring women's work, drawn from that paper, are discussed here.

The most commonly used scales for international comparative purposes measure women's involvement only in the formal economy. For example, the Human Development Report (HDR) – which now includes the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) to monitor international progress around the women's development – includes assessment on women's participation in activities traditionally dominated by men, including their involvement in formal paid employment. They focus especially on professional and managerial jobs, as well as their access to parliamentary seats. These scales have recently been combined into the Gender Inequality Index (GII) in 2010, which looks a little more comprehensively at discrimination against women, including their lack of access to senior jobs in the formal sector, as well as rates of maternal mortality and adolescent fertility.

In the 2011 HDR the Arab states clearly scored low overall in relation to women, with only 12% of seats in parliament taken by women; 32% of girls and women having secondary education and only 26% of women in the formal labour force compared to 77% of men (UNDP, 2011). Lebanon is ranked 76 on the gender inequality index.

The GEM scale (UNDP, 1995), which was designed to measure whether women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision-making, uses three basic indicators: proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, percentage of women in economic decision making positions (including administrative, managerial, professional and technical occupations) and female share of income (earned incomes of males vs. females)⁷.

The Women's Economic Opportunity Index, introduced in 2010, was the first scale to look at informal and care work of women as well as their work in the formal sector. It employs time use surveys to present the work women do in both paid and unpaid work, and together with the SIGI (Social Institutions and Gender Index produced by OECD) are the only measures attempting to show how actively women are participating in all areas of the economy. In 2010 Lebanon was ranked 25th out of 33 countries in Asia for women's economic participation, a low ranking. Morocco is one of the few countries in the region (along with e.g. Iraq and Tunisia) to have carried out time use surveys and there are extremely limited data

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_Empowerment_Measure - cite note-What-1

(largely case studies or small University research studies) about the time women spend on care work and work in the informal economy across the region.

There are as yet no other recognised measures for quantifying or describing the burdens imposed on women - both financial and time- by the responsibilities involved in the care of their dependents. Only two of the existing scales say anything about women's participation in the care economy or capture anything about women's work in the informal economy. They are not currently being used much across the Arab region.

Adequate ways of measuring women's paid and unpaid work, their involvement in formal and informal employment, and their degree of access to key resources have yet to be developed or widely used. In spite of pressures since Beijing 1995 and strong lobbying by women's organisations over many years most scales still ignore women's informal and care work, and much data even on formal employment is often not disaggregated by gender. Effectively these issues are largely omitted in statistics and consequently are ignored by international and national policy makers who continue to deny the activities, value and validity of women's contribution to the economy through their paid work (formal and informal) and their unpaid work as e.g. mothers, housewives, carers and community supporters.

The lack of attention to defining and describing women's work, to measuring and putting an economic value on it contributes to women's invisibility in the society and perpetuates their low status as 'dependents'. Their absence from formal statistics, both nationally and internationally, prevents appropriate policies being developed to support them in the multiple, essential roles they play within the economy:

Women's participation in the economy is unaccounted for in national statistics and lacks social value and recognition. Since women working in the informal and care economy are not to be found in national statistics, they are rarely targeted by formal development projects, thus seldom benefiting from any public investment (in training, education or health), although NGOs are largely active with them, especially at the micro level. (Allaert, 2012:1)

This paper recommended the need to find ways to measure women's income from both the formal and informal sectors and to undertake time use studies of women's paid and unpaid work in order to properly describe and understand women's role and contribution in the economy.

Section 2: Women's formal employment in Lebanon

2.1 Introduction

The economy of Lebanon, since the war, has experienced growth, especially in the areas of trade, finance, banking and tourism, though this has slowed recently. In recent years the Government has focused on reducing the deficit, containing debt and maintaining monetary stability. It is a strongly privatized economy, with 931,000 employed in the private sector and 176,000 in the public sector⁸, and continues a privatisation programme while looking to increase the cost effectiveness of the public sector. The macro-economic approach can be characterized as one of liberalisation of trade, privatisation, and economic growth. There has been limited focus on issues such as employment creation within the economic strategy and Lebanon continues to be an area of high outward migration, especially for men.

There is data from international sources, but this is patchy and often not very consistent. However the HDI score (referred to earlier) shows that Lebanon scores better than other Arab states on maternal mortality and anti natal care, but extremely poorly on women's representation in parliament in 2011 with only 3.1% of women having seats. While the education statistics are good for the under 25s, for the over 25s only a little over 30% of both women and men have completed secondary education. Girls in Lebanon are now exceeding boys in secondary and tertiary attendance but in spite of these rising rates of education for girls only 22% of women are employed in the formal workforce (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011).

Recent research by CRTD.A (Boustany- Hajjar, 2010; CRTD.A, 2011) supports the finding that there is a dearth of reliable national information about women's participation within the formal economy and the available data are inconsistent. Overall, the figures show women's participation in the formal economy is very low and broadly in line with figures for female economic participation rates in the Arab countries (26% according to UNESCO - the lowest in the world).

⁸N. Yaacoub and L. Badre, 2011. The labour market in Lebanon: Statistics in Focus, CAS. Beirut, Lebanon. It should be noted that the many different sources of figures on the working population all provide different figures, but where possible this paper is using CAS figures for 2011. For example, research done by OURSE (Observatoire Universitaire de la Réalité Socio-Economique, Saint Joseph's University, Beirut) that looked at women's share in the workforce suggested that while 21.7% of the workforce was female in 1997 the figure increased to 25% in 2001 and 27.8% in 2007 suggesting that change is occurring but slowly. Their figures are, however, higher than those collected by CAS.

From another source (El Solh and Hijab, 2008) it is clear that Lebanon has poor political representation for women and it has provided very limited data on women's participation at senior levels in the economy; recently it came 124th worldwide for economic participation and opportunities for women, with only .09 women for every man employed at senior management levels in the formal economy. Women earned .33 of what men earn in the formal economy. While the figures for girls' education are improving the figures for women's public engagement in politics and the formal economy remain very low.

This section will explore what enables women's participation in the formal labour force and what factors limit their involvement, including the often invisible biases against them through promotion policies, lack of flexible working hours, expectations that women will leave formal employment when they become mothers and the challenges of combining work and home responsibilities.

2.2 Where are women in the formal labour force in Lebanon?

The data is inconsistent, Yaacoub and Badre (2011) talk of women forming 22% of the workforce (307,000 to 842,000 men) while other sources said women formed 27% of the formal labour force⁹. The majority of working women are young, with the highest percentage being under 35 (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011); many are either in their 20s, or over the age of childbearing. It is still common for women to leave formal employment once they marry or have children. According to the authors, women's economic participation in formal employment varies from region to region (unlike that of men), with the highest rates in Beirut and the lowest rates in the poorer regions of the North, the Bekaa, and the South.

63% of women work in the service sector comprised of banking, trade, tourism, health and education compared to 33% of men (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011). Women tend to cluster in the lower paid jobs, often on contracts rather than in established posts, and very few reach positions of management or senior posts.

Women find it easier to secure jobs in the public sector and over 70% of teachers in Lebanon are female. There are many reasons for this: under the macro-economic stabilization measures money for public services has been cut and many establishment posts have been frozen or cut and there has been a shift away from permanent posts to

⁹ See for example: Observatoire Universitaire de la Réalité Socio-économique (OURSE), *L'émigration des jeunes libanais et leurs projets d'avenir*, Université Saint Joseph, Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines, Premiers résultats juin 2008. (Unpublished document)

contractual work, which do not include holiday pay or other normal entitlements. Men are moving out because of poor conditions and low pay leaving women to fill the gaps. Women appear willing to take these often temporary and insecure jobs in teaching, for example, because the teaching timetable enables them to meet their home responsibilities, thus allowing them to combine their formal and domestic care work.

In spite of the Labour Law, which establishes the principle of equal pay for equal work in Lebanon, there is a significant wage gap between men and women, in favour of men. Figures for 1997, while out of date, show that men were paid more than women in 12 out of the 13 job categories assessed and women earned two thirds of the wage paid to the men (CRTD.A, 2006). The CAS study (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011) figures suggest that women earn 50,000 LBP less per month than men; this is an aggregated figure across a wide range of jobs. Women's low pay is exacerbated by the fact that they tend to stay in junior positions and do not get promoted. The figures in Lebanon broadly reflect those found by the international scales, such as the GEM scale, which show women globally earn as little as one third of male earnings because of their low status in the job market and the poor rates of pay.

Women remain underrepresented in the Trade Unions especially in executive positions and by 2000 there was only one woman in the executive Council of the General Trades Union, which encompasses all trade unions and claims it is concerned about women's issues. Even in teaching, where women do find employment, there was only one woman out of 12 members of the executive office and one woman out of 44 members on the executive Council (CRTD.A, 2006). This could explain the difficulties encountered by women when bringing their work issues to the state level and the problems they face in undertaking advocacy around women's employment.

2.3 Education and formal employment

In Lebanon the education statistics for girls have improved and are relatively good. While there are slightly fewer girls enrolled than boys at primary level, over 90% of both boys and girls go to primary school and from secondary school onwards girls outnumber boys. While the exact figures and percentages vary between different sources such as CAS, UN agencies (for example UNESCO), and other databases, the trend is clear: girls are getting more education than boys at secondary school and over 70% of both boys and girls complete secondary education now, a real contrast with earlier generations.

From 2000 to 2001 47.4% of university graduates were women and the proportion rose to 51% in 2006 (UNESCO, 2008) yet they remain seriously underrepresented in the workforce and at senior levels in the workforce. While education is certainly a prerequisite for entering formal employment it is not a sufficient factor to guarantee entry into good jobs and secure employment.

While the absorptive capacity of the formal sector in Lebanon is limited, forcing many (mainly men) to migrate or to seek work in the informal sector, it is clear that women find less opportunities than men, even when they have education and qualifications. Currently women represent an underutilized but relatively well-qualified segment of the Lebanese labour force:

Despite that female labour force participation brings benefits at micro and macro levels, the rate of women's labour force participation in the Arab (countries remains the lowest in the world (AHDR, 2005; ILO, 2008). While education and skills enhance the productivity of both women and men and increase the opportunity for paid employment in the formal sector (ILO, 2008), growing educational attainments of women in the MENA region did not lead to a proportional increase in the female labour force participation rate (World Bank, 2006). The reasons for this phenomenon have not been fully researched (ILO, 2009), nor has there been any concerted effort at designing and implementing appropriate public policies to curve its negative consequences (Kabbanji, 2010). The high levels of women non- participation in the labour market and their corresponding rates of unemployment lead to serious wastes of resources invested in their education. (UNESCO, 2012:2)

It is not only gender that results in employment inequalities; it is clear from the statistics that women and men from poorer families and regions are less able to complete their education and so access formal employment. While illiteracy is falling, women are twice as likely to be illiterate as men (16% for women and 8% for men according to CAS (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011); those from poor rural areas have higher rates still. The chances of accessing the formal sector and good jobs in the formal sector are highly correlated with poverty, where a person comes from (rural or urban), the educational opportunities and the quality of education available in the area, as well as whether applicants are male or female.

2.4 Barriers facing women in getting employment and promotion

There are many recognised and well document barriers preventing women from realising their potential within the formal workforce; these are also seen in the Lebanese context.

2.4.1 Domestic responsibilities

The most universal barriers affecting access and performance within the formal sector relate to women's domestic responsibilities. The expectation is that women will fulfil all their domestic and reproductive roles and their value and status is related to how well they perform these roles; this cuts across their availability for paid work. Globally it is: '...women and girls who take on the burden of unpaid care work have less time for education, paid work, leisure and civic engagement' (Harcourt, 2010:2). Razavi (2007) found that the divisions of care work are deeply uneven between women and men, rich and poor and highlighted the reality that studies show that it is women and girls, especially those in poor households, who bear the cost of care work.

In relation to promotion it is clear from the global research that many women continue to find their employers inflexible and unsympathetic to the demands made on them in relation to e.g. childcare, and that balancing the demands of home and work is a constant strain. It is a major barrier preventing many women rising up the promotion ladder:

Globally women are not accessing senior positions in the public or private sectors in the numbers expected given their increased education and work experience. Gender legislation is still not enabling women to achieve equal pay or reach positions of decision-making and power in significant numbers. A number of obstacles have been identified including: the tensions between women's public and private domestic lives and the need to manage domestic responsibilities including child care. (Wallace and Banos Smith, 2011: 30).

The World Bank recently formally recognised this and said there is an urgent need to find ways to increase the compatibility between women's productive and reproductive roles in order to empower women economically. They accept that, to date, most women around the world have to find ways to try and balance the demands of their work in the formal sector with their domestic responsibilities within the household. At a World Bank round table it was stressed...

That [the fact that] women must spend such long hours in unpaid family work is strongly related to their availability for paid economic activities. Family responsibilities affect whether women can undertake paid work, what type of work, for how long and where. (Cassirer, 2009:7)

A recent survey of 241 senior women working in public sector jobs from around the world, and came to the UK to discuss issues facing them at work, mirrors these findings. Women from both developed and emerging economies cited domestic responsibilities as the number one factor affecting women's access to good formal sector jobs and limiting their progression into senior leadership roles in the public sector (Manning, 2007).

These domestic responsibilities are strongly adhered to in Lebanon where religious codes reinforce the importance of women's roles in the home and family and where women are often expected to be dependent or reliant on the male household head for financial support. The religious texts stress women's role as dependents while the male role is as provider; these beliefs affect women's access to employment and to promotion.

A survey of women and their employers in Lebanon (El Solh and Hijab, 2008) said they found it hard to reconcile their work with family responsibilities and worried about this work/life balance. Some found it hard to take initiative because they felt their traditional female roles within the society were 'pre-destined' and they valued their paid work less than their other roles. Employers said they had concerns about employing women because of the costs of maternity leave and having to let women take time off for childcare. It was a challenge for them to accept women as senior managers because they felt women lacked confidence and the networks for such promotion. They gave these as reasons why women earn low wages, receive little promotion and are concentrated in lower level and temporary jobs.

A recent UNESCO study in Lebanon found that family restrictions curtailed the choices young women have in terms of the type and location of work; these restrictions include the expectations about women's role within the family and define what is appropriate for girls to do in terms of choice of study and places of work. Only half of the women graduates interviewed expected to continue to work after marriage because of these expectations¹⁰.

One study undertaken in Beirut (Habib et al, 2006) looked at what happened to women when they entered the workforce in relation to their housework. What they found was that when women enter the formal labour market they carry the burden of two jobs simultaneously, one outside the home and the other inside. This was true of all working women although married women carried the greatest burden. Those with more education, however, undertook less responsibility for all the household chores and they shared these with others, including children. The study found there has been limited social change in attitudes towards working women and what it is expected of them in the household, reflecting the general condition of women in Lebanese society. The potential economic independence acquired through work did not automatically translate into a different position within the family or changes in social expectations around their roles as mothers,

¹⁰ See UNESCO research report (2011) 'Supporting Gender Equality in Education in Lebanon', funded by the Government of Italy in cooperation with the UNESCO Office in Beirut and UNESCO, 2012, Policy brief. School to work transition of young women in Lebanon

housewives, and caregivers. These women still considered themselves responsible for the living conditions of their families: 74% of the women in the survey viewed domestic work as obligatory even when they work outside the home, and this figure rose for married women and older women. There were signs that some younger, educated women were questioning this, but still 70% think working women should also do the housework. Men continue to be defined as providers and 85.1% of men agreed that 'the normal of role of the woman is at home and she cannot do some of the works outside the borders of the home'.

Women researchers believe that addressing this issue is essential if women are to compete equally for work with men.

'The demands of unpaid work remain a major source of women's disadvantage in the world of work'... (so)... distributing the responsibilities for the care and maintenance of society's members more equally between the state and families, between women and men [would] provide a basis for equality and opportunity for men and women in all spheres of public and private life.' (Cassirer, 2009:13)

2.4.2 Male attitudes and behaviour as a barrier

Women from around the world in the survey cited above (Manning, 2007) listed a range of other factors affecting their employment opportunities, including: organisational cultures that are male dominated and often experienced as unfriendly to women; women's own need to be good mothers as well as good workers; their reluctance to work in often hostile male environments; and a lack of confidence/bravado that are needed when applying for senior posts

The most urgent organisational barriers identified in a range of research from Africa, Asia and Europe and US are the long working hours and male dominated culture¹¹. In addition women often do not feel comfortable in male dominated teams, and there is ample evidence globally of the extent and degree of sexual harassment many women experience at work.

Studies in Lebanon show similar findings. In the UNESCO study (2012) women graduates expressed their concerns regarding the poor recruitment mechanisms and noted that recruitment practices continue to rely heavily on nepotism, personal and family connections. There is a serious lack of job opportunities coupled with work conditions (long working hours, etc) that are not supportive of women's participation. Kabbanji 2010 (quoted in the UNESCO 2012 report) showed that in his study 57% of the women interviewed did not feel that Lebanese society encouraged them to get on or get ahead and 73% saw no chance of

¹¹ These are summarised in Wallace, T and Banos Smith, H. 2011.

equality with men, even though their income was often essential to the maintenance and well being of the family. Their education was not leading to better employment because of the negative attitudes towards them and the lack of Government policies to end discrimination.

2.4.3 Lack of access to training

Women are often not offered equal access to training opportunities; training may be at times that conflict with their home responsibilities or required them to travel, which can be culturally unacceptable or difficult. Their specific training needs are often not met by their employers¹². This impacts heavily on women's chances of promotion or improving their work situation; they are handicapped in seeking promotion or changing jobs when competing with men who have experienced a range of training opportunities.

2.4.4 Many barriers face women

There are clearly many barriers to women entering the formal labour market rooted in attitudes towards women based on beliefs around the primacy of the husband or the male as the breadwinner and the subsidiary role of women in the household. Many men do not accept "their women" going into public spaces to work and may feel undermined by a woman who earns more than themselves. The lack of attention to policies to support women to be able to combine their work and domestic roles results in their low participation even when they have qualifications. Workplaces are male dominated, often difficult for women to work in, with long working hours, negative attitudes towards women employees, and lack of support for their training. There are serious issues around sexual harassment. The figures in Lebanon reflect these realities: in addition the formal sector is small in Lebanon and has not keep pace with the supply of educated labour, forcing many men to emigrate and keeping many women out of jobs altogether.

Little attention is currently paid by the state or employers to issues such as job creation, good maternity leave, flexible working times, provision of support for childcare, good policies on equal opportunities in recruitment, retention and promotion, or ensuring social benefits for women. Rather the norm appears to be that women can participate in the formal workforce before they are married or after they have brought up their families, and they have to take

¹² These findings are common across many studies and are summarised in Wallace and Banos Smith, 2011 and were raised in the conference in London, Manning 2007.

full responsibility, without Government or workplace support, for managing their care responsibilities.

2.5 Women's formal employment and government legislation

CRTD.A has studied in detail the legislation affecting women's right to work and related legislation and policy initiatives (Torres Tailfer, 2010), looking at legislation from the international to the national level down to the personal status laws defined by each confession (of which there are 18) in Lebanon. The laws of each confession cover all aspects of personal status including marriage, divorce, children, property and inheritance. It is these laws that are powerful in shaping the expectations of the roles, responsibilities and behaviour of men and women within the home and the wider society and they often over-rule civil law and international conventions that Lebanon has signed up to (Torres Tailfer, 2010: 63).

The personal status laws are paramount and women in Lebanon get only limited support from workplace or national policies. While Lebanon has signed up to international conventions on gender equality and enacted some laws guaranteeing non-discrimination against women, including the Labour Law 1964, CEDAW 1979 and ILO conventions on equal rights for women and the need to promote gender equality, they have opted out of many clauses including those on maternity leave (recently this has been set at ten weeks), family allowances, sexual harassment at work, and rules governing part time and home work including farming and home based businesses. In relation to CEDAW, the commitment to equality and non-discrimination at work is undermined by the lack of political will reflected in the reservations made by Lebanon, based especially around the primacy of personal laws. The fact that family life in Lebanon is governed by religious/confessional laws and not national laws results in discrimination against women; these laws are inherently discriminatory and enshrine the principles of a gendered division of labour with men as heads of households and providers and women as obedient and carers of the family. Consequently, for example, men receive family allowances while women often do not, a man may ask his wife to leave work if it is deemed to interfere with her family duties, and some regulate their wives' mobility.

The legal codes enacted to date, while some are positive, do not yet enshrine the principles of equality of opportunity for women or their employment rights (Torres Tailfer, 2010) and the state has shown limited commitment or capacity in implementing them.

2.6 Women in self-employment

The involvement of women in self-employment - as entrepreneurs - is low in Lebanon. Only 16% of women working outside of the agricultural sector were declared self-employed compared to 39% of men (ILO, 2008). Women who want to start businesses face compound challenges including a lack of experience and training, restricted access to credit from the banks, and the need to ensure they get their house work done as well as meeting all the demands of running a business. Access to finance, markets and social and financial networks (all seen as critical to building a successful business) is limited and although access to microcredit provided outside banking channels (i.e. through donors or NGOs) has increased from 36% in 1997 to 60%, in 2003 in Lebanon only 35% of these loans go to women.

Women in Lebanon are less likely to register their businesses than men because of the high costs of the registration process and also because of the multiple difficulties encountered during the process; women's lack of networks makes it hard for them to navigate the bureaucratic complexities. Impermeable male dominated business networks restrict women's access to support and valuable connections. It is hard for women to build cross regional networks.

2.7 Unemployment

Definitions and statistics on unemployment are flawed; the unemployment statistics recorded for women are very low in Lebanon, at 10% in the 2011 CAS report (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011). However, there is 'disguised unemployment' according to the National Commission for Lebanese Women (2000) and many women who might, in other countries, be recorded as unemployed do not declare themselves as such and instead register as 'housewives'. The definition used by CAS is 'those seeking work and available for work' so all women who are not seeking work because of their domestic role are not seen as an active part of the workforce and not classified as unemployed. They are recorded as 'inactive', which completely ignores the paid and unpaid work they do in the household and within the informal sector.

2.8 Conclusions

Women clearly face gender discrimination at many levels within the formal employment sector in spite of significantly rising levels of secondary and tertiary education for girls. Much of this appears largely invisible and is not discussed or addressed through policy initiatives. Consequently, women remain concentrated in certain sectors of the economy, especially the service sector, and even those with good education face discrimination from recruitment to promotion, leaving many in lower paid, temporary jobs lacking benefits. Many women leave the workforce during their child bearing years and after marriage.

There are clear and strong gender biases in the workforce in Lebanon, rooted in a wide range of factors:

- the deeply entrenched gender division of labour around domestic and care work, upheld by the personal status laws
- a strong, deeply rooted culture of the man being the breadwinner and women's roles in the economy being those of support
- the difficulties for women of combining their traditional care roles with work outside the home because of the lack of support from their husbands, employers and Government policy
- male prejudice about women's roles and abilities within the formal workforce
- male attitudes and behaviour in the workplace, including sexual harassment and bias against women from recruitment to promotion- the latter is often referred to as 'the glass ceiling'
- women's own lack of confidence and support to enable them to assert themselves in formal employment
- Limited state intervention to promote job creation and support women into work through specific policies designed to meet their needs. Macro-economic policies do not promote job creation and even limit job opportunities for women through the privatisation agenda, because women are often employed in the public sector.
- The lack of a national policy on women's employment, meaning that initiatives of non-state actors are fragmented and scattered. There is a lack of frameworks to support women into jobs and address their discrimination.
- Lack of laws on key issues affecting women at work. There is a lack of appropriate legislation that recognises the specific needs of women at work including laws to meet ILO basic standards on maternity leave to ensure equality between men and women on social benefits, family allowances, and tax.

- Lack of implementation of laws, for example on equal pay; the pay gap for women in Lebanon is significant
- Women's poor representation in parliament, with less than 4% of seats held by women in 2010. This means women have little voice in legislation programmes
- Little attention to women's promotion, training and wider opportunities means that women are concentrated in the lowest paid jobs, temporary jobs
- Women themselves feel very pessimistic about their opportunities and ability to change things, as seen in the research referred to in this section
- There are few senior women role models, and little is done to promote women's leadership or to build their confidence

There are, however, some initiatives that are enabling a slow rise in the numbers of women employed in the formal sector in Lebanon. These include:

- *The rise in girls education*, meaning there are more women and girls available and qualified to work in the formal sector.
- *Commitment to international conventions*, the Lebanese government has signed up to conventions on women's and girl's equality and rights, including the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, and the MDGs with MDG 3 committing countries to promoting gender equality albeit with several reservations. Some of these reservations continue to represent serious barriers for women accessing formal employment.
- *Some laws on gender equality have been passed in Lebanon*, including laws on e.g. women and night work, equal pay for women and men, 10 weeks maternity leave and women may not be sacked when they are pregnant
- *Activities of donors and international and local NGOs* to promote women in work, for example an Italian funded programme on promoting women's public participation; training for women politicians in a range of skills; and the development of a business women's network by a local NGO.
- *Women themselves are becoming role models*, and in some sectors, e.g. law, women are reaching senior positions.

Section 3: Women in the informal sector

3.1 Introduction

The concept of 'the informal sector' initially came out of a range of research being undertaken in East and West Africa. The first person to publish material using the term was Keith Hart (1973) and it was taken up by the ILO soon after. At the time there was massive concern about high levels of unemployment in many African countries and researchers started to look at how people without formal employment were surviving. From both rural and urban research it became clear that in reality many people were working in uncounted, unrecognized jobs, which were essential to their managing day to day. While the work was not subject to any legal regulation or acknowledged in the national statistics it was a critical source of activity and income for large numbers of people, both women and men. The wide range of activities, from agricultural labour to brick making, repairs to food processing, crafts to petty trading was collectively termed 'the informal sector'. In emerging economies the informal sector remains a place where large numbers of people earn a living and manage their survival; Lebanon is no exception and the specific shape of the informal sector reflects the wider economic position of Lebanon, the existing gender division of labour and the economic opportunities available.

While there are many different definitions in use to describe the informal sector the key elements that characterise informal work are that:

- it is work that is done for pay;
- it is small scale;
- it is work not covered by legal regulations and undertaken without government or legal oversight
- it is not taxed
- those in the informal sector rarely have collateral to use with the banks and are excluded from formal credit and loans systems

Since the 1970s the informal sector has been widely studied by researchers and there are now policies and programmes relating to work in this sector in some countries. It is still poorly counted in the global statistics and data on the informal sector is often not gender disaggregated. It is, however, an issue of great concern to ILO and civil society organisations; many NGOs run programmes to support those working in the informal sector through e.g. the provision of vocational training, credit for buying basic tools, savings and credit group formation, promoting cooperatives, and requesting Governments to address the

terms and conditions under which men and women work in this sector. Work in the informal sector is increasingly seen by international organisations as part of a livelihoods portfolio, recognising that the poor – and those excluded from formal employment - in most emerging economies work in this sector, often combining a range of jobs to earn a viable living to support their families with basic food and other security.

Work in this sector can be done by the self-employed, i.e. people doing this work for themselves, or for unregistered employers. It is often very poorly remunerated and workers can be open to exploitation; pay is often erratic or seasonal. The work is usually - but not always - done from home or in the local neighbourhood, though many also migrate to urban centres to find work in the slums and other informal settlements or to carry out trading on the streets. The patterns of informal employment are closely related to the wider economic context, so in rural areas much of this work is based on farms or household land and agriculturally related, while in the urban areas it is more based on trading, repairs and food processing. Work in the informal sector is highly gendered, with women usually working closer to home in food processing, agriculture and crafts, while men are more likely to migrate to seek out opportunities in town or wealthier parts of the country, or even abroad; they work in construction, trading, agriculture and small businesses.

3.2 Women's informal work in Lebanon

There is limited literature available on this sector in Lebanon and very little research has been done on women's work in the informal sector in Lebanon: NCLW noted that statistics on employment in the marginal sector are largely unavailable in Lebanon and yet this sector provides work for many low income families (NCLW, 2000). Others agree:

Certain restrictions inhibit the collection of accurate data on the participation of women in the labour market, foremost among which is the invisibility of women's contribution particularly in the agricultural sector and in family enterprises. Moreover, the activities of the informal sector are often not accurately reflected in the statistics, particularly economic activities performed by women at home. In conclusion, the definition of work is biased against women and contributes to the prevalent culture of neglecting some economic and production activities and excluding them from measuring women's contribution in work and economic activities. (El Solh and Hijab, 2008: 15)

There is precious little information about this sector or these women in terms of what challenges they face, their demographic make-up, what if any assistance they receive and how they could best be supported. (CRTDA, 2006: 9)

A few sources of information have been identified and include the ILO report (Country brief, 2008) on women in the informal sector, recent reports on women in the food industry and women in the Bekaa valley and South Lebanon (Boustany-Hajjar, 2010), rural research in 1998 in the Bekaa valley (Obeid, 1998), research by Al-Atat and Kabanji (1997), El Solh and Hajib (2008) and Habib et al from AUB in 2006 on women's work more broadly. There are also a few references to women's informal work in the statistics collected by e.g. UNESCO, UNESCWA and UNDP. It is clear from these few existing international and national studies that many women in Lebanon (rural and urban) do earn an income working in the informal sector, both in the home and in the community, though the numbers involved vary according to which agency is reporting. CRTDA (2012) estimate that as many women work in paid informal employment as in formal employment (about 20%). Using wider definitions of informal work that appear to include women's unpaid care work as well as their paid work in the informal sector¹³ UNESCWA estimates about 60% of women in Lebanon work in the informal sector (UNDP report 2007) and the regional ILO (2008) report found that 57.8% of women work in the informal sector without economic, social or legal security and protection.

In Lebanon there are many issues to be untangled when trying to analyse the work women do in the informal sector:

- There is no one agreed definition of the term; sometimes it includes women's unpaid work and sometimes only their paid work outside the formal economy - this second definition is the definition used in this paper
- Informal workers - male and female -are not included in Government statistics and the work is not formally acknowledged, so understanding the size of the sector and its contribution to household and national income is not easy to do
- Women and men themselves do not necessarily view this kind of work in the same way as formal paid work, and often do not define it as work in some of the studies referenced. It can be seen as a normal part of women's roles and responsibilities, expected and largely unacknowledged
- It is not clear how many women choose to work in the informal sector because it fits well with their other tasks, and how many have to seek work there because their opportunities are so curtailed in the formal sector (discussed recently by UNESCO, 2012)

¹³ Definitions are at times confusing and often vague in different documents. In this paper we are defining the informal sector as work done outside the formal sector for pay but some agencies combine women's paid and unpaid informal work into one category.

- There have been no time use studies in Lebanon so there is little hard data on how much time women or girls spend on generating an income through work in the home, on the farm, in small unregistered businesses or working for local employers in unregistered businesses
- From discussions across the region at CRTD.A workshops it is clear that some NGOs are grappling to understand the size, scope and definition of the informal sector in their context. For example, some see that work in export or free trade zones in their countries is carried out under poor conditions, where workers (male and female) have few rights, and conclude that this is informal work. However, this work is regulated and carried out under agreements with Governments, and while the terms and conditions may be very poor the work remains firmly within the formal, registered, recorded and regulated economy
- Similarly NGO staff, as well as women themselves, often find it hard to draw a firm line between informal work that women do for often very little pay and their unpaid care work within the household. There are areas of overlap, where for example a woman works for her husband on the land but does not get paid for this work, or where she does domestic work for another household but on very low pay. The definitions need to be discussed and used in ways which clarify where the dividing line comes in each context, using as a key criteria whether the work is undertaken for pay, however low or erratic¹⁴.

For women themselves, work in the informal sector and work in the home do tend to merge and many women see no clear distinction between their paid and unpaid work. Their yardstick is how far they are able to contribute to supporting their families and ensuring survival and all their activities, whether income-generating or not, are important in order to ensure food security and family well being (Obeid, 1998; Boustany-Hajjar, 2010). However, for the sake of clarity here women's paid and unpaid work are defined and discussed separately, and keeping them separate as far as possible during research will help to increase the understanding of women's income earning activities and their unpaid household and care work and how much time and energy they spend on each.

In Lebanon, as elsewhere, women's informal paid work is undertaken on a small scale, not formally recorded or taxed, with little or no social protection or rights for the workers, no inspection and no regulation. Much of the work is done within the household, the households

¹⁴ It is recognised however that in some religious groups women may be paid for domestic care work such as breastfeeding, but this would usually still be defined as work in the care economy and not in the informal economy.

of other people, or in small businesses. Many women are employed in the agricultural sector, where the Lebanese Labour Laws do not apply; Article 7 of the labour law excludes agricultural and domestic work (NCLW, 2000), yet these are areas that constitute the place 'where many women and more specifically those with low education and skill levels, work and derive some income' (El Solh and Hijab, 2008). Kabbanji 2010 (quoted in the UNESCO 2012 report), estimates that 34% of unpaid family labour in agriculture is provided by women working on small scale, low technology farms producing staples and cash crops such as tobacco, olives and olive oil. They have no ownership rights, earn low wages, lack credit facilities and work in contexts where 'men like being the decision makers'.

Their often arduous work is not covered by legal regulations as El-Solh and Hijab (2008) emphasize, stressing that one of the most serious issues regarding many of the labour laws as they stand is that they do not provide sufficient protection for areas of the informal sector in which women are heavily engaged. ILO conventions that have not been ratified by Lebanon include those that cover part time and home work, including farmers and small home based businesses.

3.3 Constraints facing women

Women face many constraints in earning an income in the informal sector. While this work is often undertaken in or near their homes, which enables them to combine their domestic household and care work with informal paid work and their hours of work can often be adjusted to fit their family duties, they face many barriers.

3.3.1. Lack of access to land by women

Only 7% of women own land in Lebanon and only 3.5% of women own good land for farming. The reasons for women's lack of access to land are multiple including the rules of inheritance, governed by each confession, which favour male children (Torres Tailfer, 2010). Even when women do inherit land the cultural norms mean that they are expected to give the land to their brothers or husbands to control and few women buy land in their own right even though they are entitled to. This lack of land ownership or title makes it difficult for women to access credit or extension services from the banks so their agricultural work is often limited in scope and characterized by the use of low technology, manual labour and few modern inputs. This is highlighted in a UN ESCWA (2001) report:

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 programs are not usually geared to the needs of female workers (p36).

3.3.2. Women face multiple challenges, for example in the cooperative sector

The challenges facing women in their informal rural agricultural employment are well documented in a recent review by CRTD.A on women and rural co-operatives (CRTD.A 2011). The constraints identified included:

- Isolation from the largely more mainstream male co-operatives and policy making
- Limited physical mobility, due to both economic and cultural constraints
- Multiple roles and responsibilities and the heavy burdens of household and reproductive (care) work
- Little knowledge or awareness of markets, price trends, or economic policies
- Limited access to financial services, leaving them totally dependent on a male sponsor for accessing credit for expanding their work
- Limited access to social services or good infrastructure increasing the workloads in their house
- Traditions that limit their participation in decision making and their access to resources, including knowledge

In spite of these barriers women are finding ways to work together and overcome them in some of the women's cooperatives CRTD.A works with and a few, out of the 151 that exist in Lebanon, plan to become independent entities in the near future.

3.3.3. Women may have to work long hours to earn enough

Women may be engaged in a number of activities to earn money at the same time as they are carrying all the responsibilities for food security and provision, cleaning, childcare and care for the sick and elderly within the home. Combining earning money in agricultural labour, food processing, running a small shop, making crafts and other activities with household and domestic responsibilities often requires them to work long hours. (Boustany – Hajjar, 2010; Obeid, 1998):

Women cope with difficulty to all these responsibilities and double workload, leading to constant stress and weariness. *“When my children were young and I had the small shop, life was hell!”* (Participant FGD18). *“You are always tired, the whole day you are by your sewing machine, you go back home tired and you go to work at home.”* (Participant FGD18). ...Another explained in simple words that as a working woman she has no time at all for herself to the point that even something as important as prayer needs to be put aside. *“The woman who has a shop has a full schedule. There is no more time for small agriculture or muneh. I have to sew and I have a*

small child. Sometimes I prepare a cup of tea and I don't even drink it because I am interrupted 20 times. Sometimes even I want to go upstairs (home) to pray and I cannot because a client came in and delayed me." (Participant FGD18) (Boustany-Hajjar, 2010:47)

The general impression from the FGD held with working women was that participants felt that they were overwhelmed with the amount of duties that are imposed on them. *"Woman bears a lot, she has very big responsibilities even if the husband is productive and employed. Woman carries the work load and the house load. Both of them are at work in the morning and in the afternoon they come back; he sits and rests and she has to work."* (Participant FGD11). A good number of them combine an employment, agricultural work (particularly in the villages where tobacco culture is essential), child care and social responsibilities. To all this they have sometimes to add preparation of the *muneh* or supervising agricultural workers in place of their husbands. *"I feel exhausted by the fact that I have to work inside and outside the house."* (Participant FGD11). (Boustany-Hajjar, 2010:46)

The reality of women's heavy workloads in the informal and care economies means that women often lack time for themselves, and for other activities such as training or participating in groups outside the home. It curtails their opportunities and limits their horizons as the Boustany-Hajjar research highlights. They appear often tired and disheartened with low expectations of their lives, although they have more aspirations for their children.

3.3.4. This work is often 'taken for granted' including by women themselves

This informal work enables women to bring in money to subsidise household costs and share expenses. However, even women who bring in quite regular or substantial income (e.g. from teaching or a paid job in the formal sector) often play down their financial contribution because neither men nor women see women as breadwinners in the family. The CRTD.A research in the Bekaa Valley and South Lebanon (Boustany-Hajjar, 2010) showed that many rural women see their role as income earners as subordinate to the work of men, even though they may be helping with fruit cultivation, growing and working with tobacco, preserving dairy and fruit products for use in the home and selling the surplus, sewing, weeding, harvesting for long hours on the small plots of land where the family grow both subsistence and cash crops.

The belief that men are the providers and women only provide subsidiary support is deeply rooted:

Men work and are the main source of revenue for the family while women are considered as "non productive" because they do not provide a visible income for the household and should take care of all that concerns and is done within the household (along the prevailing dichotomy: men-outside / women-inside) ...What is at work here is the traditional division of labour following the simple scheme: man works and

generates income for the household and woman doesn't work and produces no income but she takes care of everything inside the house. (Boustany- Hajjar, 2010: 48-9)

Research by Mona Khalaf similarly found that women undervalue their contribution to the household income:

52% of the women with an income generating activity did not consider themselves as "economically active" even if working from 3am to 6 pm in the fields, preparing food preserves and taking care of all the household chores. If asked "do you work?" the answer was "When do you want me to work? I do not have any free time to do so" (Khalaf, 1998:304)

Given the realities of post-conflict in Lebanon and the numbers of women headed households, running at over 10%, many women in fact have to earn an income to keep their families afloat. This reality is not much discussed in the literature or policy debates, neither is the position and role of divorced or wives in polygamous households, who many not be able to depend on support from their husbands or ex-husbands. Their income is often essential, especially for poorer families. In addition women play a critical role as food producers, in managing natural resources, and ensuring food security for their families.

Even the work women do that does produce an income may not be called work but seen part of their wider domestic responsibilities; one example was a woman who worked hard and long hours on tobacco growing yet defined this as 'inside work' (Boustany-Hajjar, 2010: 163). Other rural women interview by Obeid (1998) simply did not define their work in agriculture, small shops, food processing as work but rather saw it as part of their natural home-making role.

Some food processing work may be undertaken without pay to supplement household food supplies, yet if this food preserving and processing produces a surplus this may sometimes be sold for cash. This work forms an overlap between women's informal paid work and their household care work insofar as sometimes it is done by women solely for household use and sometimes it can be sold to make an income: this is especially true for women who do this work to sell the final products through co-operatives. These activities are widely practised in rural Lebanon:

The main income producing activity (even in an indirect way) that was talked about by the majority of participants is the preparation of the *muneh*. In this domain that is close to the informal economy (but not totally identical because not always remunerated), all categories of participants are concerned, whether they have an income generating work or not. (Boustany- Hajjar, 2010:36)

This work involves food preserving and processing: fruit, vegetables, milk into cheese; making bread. While for some it is 'domestic work' for home consumption only, for others they sell the surplus and directly contribute to the household income this way.

3.4 Conclusions

It is clear that the definitions of informal work in Lebanon are not clear or consistent between different researchers and agencies. For this research the definition used is that informal work is paid work outside the formal registered and regulated economy; it is highly gendered with women and men playing different roles and undertaking different work within the informal sector, with women working - often but not always - in or near the home or on the farm. There is no provision for social protection or support and work in this sector is not recognised by the formal banking systems, which provide business credit, or by Governments who omit informal work from their statistics. The work is not regulated by government legislation about e.g. minimum wages, numbers of hours to be worked, maternity and sickness rights and benefits, entitlement to holiday pay, pensions or social security.

Three issues are so striking about women's paid work in the informal sector in Lebanon they are worth emphasising. The first is that there is so little statistical data or research available about this work. The existing data are patchy and almost non-existent: UN ESCWA 2001 noted that a key research challenge in Lebanon is a general lack of reliable statistics. The unreliability of techniques used, the incomparability of data as well as the lack gender-desegregated data, makes analysing women's role in the economy particularly challenging.

The second is that the current measurement methods used to measure the economy exclude this sector, which means that the contribution of women to the overall national and household economies is seriously underestimated. Lebanon has not carried out any time use surveys that would enable statisticians to understand how women spend their time in the three sectors of the economy (formal, informal and care economies); definitions remain inconsistent between the few documents that do address women's work in the informal sector; and research is limited.

The third issue is the fact that women themselves often do not recognise the value of their work in the informal sector and appear to play down or gloss over their essential contributions to household income. This is seen in several research articles done over the past 15 years. Informal work is often assumed to be part of 'women's role' and talking too

much about women's income from this work can be undermining for men who are unable to provide everything needed for the household, as tradition expects. Women often prefer to avoid such conversations.

These factors mean that there is as yet little knowledge or understanding about what work women do in the informal economy in the rural and urban areas of Lebanon, how this work varies between regions, how much income is generated and under what terms and conditions women work. The lack of data and recognition mean that issues around the informal economy do not feature in national debates and policies around women's employment and little has been done to date to address the barriers and constraints facing women working in this sector. Yet it is a critical sector for women, a sector in which they work and earn money that is essential for their households.

This area of work deserves far more attention, research and policy support, especially in relation to describing the scale of the work, where women are located within the informal sector and their contribution to the Lebanese economy. Policies are needed to support women and help them to overcome the barriers facing them, which include:

- *The need for social protection and regulation.* The lack of laws and policies regulating employment in the informal sector (for women and men) mean that there is no minimum wage, no job security, rarely do women get maternity leave or sick leave, and there are few if any social benefits. The Labour code explicitly excludes work undertaken from home, including agriculture, although agriculture employs over 10% of the workforce.
- *Women's need to own and access land:* women rarely own land because of discriminatory inheritance laws rooted in personal laws, different for each confession. They also lack land because of their belief that men should own and control land even if the women own it. The lack of ownership (less than 10%) means that they have no collateral for raising credit and so cannot easily borrow to build up their small businesses, keeping them working with low technology relying largely on their own manual labour.
- *This work is largely invisible* to the Government and also to communities who often see women's work in the informal sector as a natural part of their providing role with the family and community. It is ignored, uncounted, unregistered and unregulated.
- *The programme initiatives undertaken by NGOs and donors* are uncoordinated, fragmented, and all focused on different issues. They tend to be short term and scattered. This approach cannot be expected to leverage major changes for women.

- *Women themselves often do not see the value of their work in this sector and both women and men still see men as the providers (even if this is a role they cannot properly fulfil) and they overlook or underplay the value of women's financial contributions to the family*

A few activities have been undertaken that indicate awareness of the range of needs in this sector and provide a starting point for increasing the work around women's informal work:

- *The Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Commission for Lebanese Women* have mandates to work on job creation, and to look at economic empowerment and engagement in informal employment. However, MOSA has not focused the work on women and they have limited resources
- *The Ministry of Agriculture* does have facilities for credit to agriculture but these are not currently focused on women.
- *While new law has been enacted recently for work in the informal sector the 2009 law only applies to the conditions for foreign migrant workers in the informal sector, and does not apply to e.g. farmers or Lebanese domestic workers. In addition no minimum wage has been set*
- *ILO, El Solh and Hijab for Euromed (2008), some local and international NGOs, and MOSA do carry out some work in relation to women's work in the informal sector, for example:*
 - Improving women's co-operatives
 - Providing micro-credit to women for home businesses
 - Training women on business development
 - Training women in the skills needed for handicrafts, food preservation and other activities
 - Women's literacy
 - Linking women to markets and enabling them to meet market demands
 - Building women's confidence and promoting their participation outside the home
 - Work on e.g. reforestation to improve the wider context for rural livelihoods

There is some evidence of a rising interest in this area of work on livelihoods (work in the informal sector), especially women's roles in rural work, looking at the gender issues and the possibilities for women's empowerment, and this needs to be supported and increased.

Section 4: Women's domestic care work

4.1 Introduction

There is similarly no clear definition and only a very limited acknowledgement of household and domestic care work in Lebanon, even within women's organisations and international agencies. Consequently very little work has been undertaken around measuring the work that women do within their homes as 'housewives', fulfilling their role as wives, mothers and carers. Yet it is clear from the data presented above that this work is, for many women, arduous and time consuming, and it cuts across the time, energy and resources they have for undertaking paid work, whether in the formal or the informal economy. It also affects the time they have available for participating in political life, in training or other activities and curtails their opportunities outside the home in multiple ways. For example, women are often pushed into doing low paid informal work because it can be more easily done in or near home and the hours can be fitted around domestic duties.

There is no clear consensus about the meaning of, or how to count, women's work, in the domestic economy. It is often equated with 'social reproduction' or all the unpaid care work being done by women in the household, including cooking, cleaning, shopping, care of the children, sick and elderly (Elson, 2000). The currently accepted way of measuring women's work in the home (and in the wider informal sector) is to undertake time use surveys asking women to account for the way they spend the hours in each day and week. Where time-use surveys have been carried out, measuring the time women put into different tasks within the household as well as in productive and community work, it shows that women work long hours, often rising well before dawn and sleeping very late in order to fulfil all the work –paid and unpaid- that is required of them¹⁵. Managing these multiple demands can place a strain on women's health, their opportunities for education and training, and seriously limit any time for relaxing or leisure. As shown earlier the weight of women's domestic tasks and the social expectations that this is their primary role often prevent them from participating in the formal economy at all, and beyond that in the wider political and social life of the society.

¹⁵ http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/timeuse/overview_ses1.pdf The overview of time use surveys done by Ironmonger, D presented on this website shows the consistently high number of hours women put into housework, often 2-3 times that of men. It also shows a huge range in the hours of housework done in different countries reflecting changing attitudes to housework as well as the rise in labour saving devices.

4.2. Women's care work in Lebanon

The work women do in the informal sector is usually paid, albeit erratically and at low levels, while their housework is always unpaid. Looking at women's work across both the informal and the household economies shows that women in Lebanon on average work up to 14 hours a day on agricultural and domestic tasks (FAO, 1995). This is significant and reflects findings elsewhere:

Whether they live in industrialized or developing countries, in rural or urban setting, in general women work longer hours than men....time-use surveys reveal across a selection of developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, women's working hours exceed those of men, often by a wide margin. For many women unpaid work in and for the household takes up the majority of their working hours, with much less time spent in remunerative employment...even when they participate in the labour market for paid employment, women still undertake the majority of housework...women in more affluent nations still spend a far greater proportion of their working hours than men in unpaid work (UNICEF, 2007).

The regional office of ILO has undertaken a study on 'care needs and provisions in Lebanon' and the regional office for the Arab states has set this issue as a priority stressing the need to study how work in the provision of social care impacts on women's participation in the labour force. One of their early findings underlined the constraints of time and resources faced by women because of their unpaid care responsibilities, which meant that they had to opt for informal income generating work, often home-based, rather than trying to work outside the home in the formal sector. They also highlighted the fact that unpaid care work is undercounted or missed by most of the methods used for measuring economic activity. In this study they say that 57.8% of women work in the informal sector without economic, social or legal security and protection, conceptualised as multiple contributions in addition to housework; the work is often labelled 'care work', unseen yet essential to the well-being of families, communities and the wider society (ILO Regional Office for the Arab States, 2008).

This is important because domestic work previously has been understood narrowly to mean cooking, cleaning, shopping and only essential to the household and immediate family. Now it is increasingly understood that women's domestic roles are far more encompassing that that and involve the reproduction of the next generation; support to workers in the family; education in social, cultural and religious affairs for the children; care for the sick, vulnerable and elderly; and contributions to the community social fabric through voluntary work and organising and engaging in community events such as weddings, births, deaths and community crises. This work is essential to the maintenance of the family unit but also to the maintenance of the society. It has been largely unseen in all societies until the last two-three decades and remains that way in Lebanon, where these activities are all defined as

women's work and is reinforced through their religious responsibility as wives and mothers. It has been ignored and very little research exists to date.

A few pieces of information were identified for this review. One from 2006 (Habib, Nuwayhid and Yeertzan) focused on three disadvantaged communities on the outskirts of Beirut. These were poor areas, lacking infrastructure and composed of different religious communities. The survey covered around 2500 households and focused on the division of labour in the household and the participation of all adult members. 23% of the women were engaged in paid work and they worked on average 45 hours per week earning a monthly salary of \$234. 77% of men worked in the formal sector.

The survey divided household activities into 28 chores classified as household tasks; these covered housework as well as the responsibilities for care in the family. They were grouped under categories: cleaning, cooking and laundry; care-giving for the elderly sick and disabled and for childcare; financial management of household expenses and payments; home management such as purchasing water, organising heating, meeting basic home needs; and home and car maintenance. The authors studied the time that men and women spent on each job and the frequency with which they were performed and their overall conclusions were that:

- women performed most of the household labour whether they worked outside the home or not
- when men dedicated time to tasks these were the tasks more traditionally associated with men such as home and car management and maintenance
- women did almost all the domestic work of cooking, cleaning, the laundry, and looking after the children

The research also found that housework was 'feminised' not only among the adults but from the early stages of childhood where girls are required to help their mothers. These findings were consistent across communities. Interestingly working men contributed more to the household work than unemployed men or those without an income and the reasons for this appeared to be that it was possible for men who were providing for their households and whose traditional masculine status was not challenged to step outside their normal roles and help their wives. For men who were not able to provide it seemed that their traditional masculine status was threatened and they could not compromise it further by undertaking what were perceived to be female roles.

This research was forced to exclude any analysis of housekeeping, cooking and child-rearing activities because of the difficulties the researchers encountered in quantifying and

monetizing them. Women were not able to specify the time spent on each activity because they saw them simply as part of their role; farmers' wives found it hard to distinguish between their housewife activities and their income generating activities. Women had difficulties throughout the research because they often performed housework and income generating activities simultaneously or collectively, nevertheless the researchers were able to conclude that for the majority of households the economic contribution of women was more than 15% and it could rise to 25%. In spite of this contribution 52% of the women did not consider themselves economically active, even if they were working long hours in the fields.

The sense of belonging to the extended family and seeing yourself as part of this group, with mutual consultation and a network of relationships commands very high respect in the society. In his research report, Jean Mourad (2007) reported that 71% of people interviewed about issues of social allegiance and a sense of belonging said that this came predominantly from their membership of the family. National allegiance, religion, or the tribe were all less significant. People turn to the family for support and it is a critical institution in Lebanese society; the father who holds the ultimate authority dominates it and the model of the family is patriarchal. Women as well as men accept this.

In another study, albeit with a very small sample, Obeid (1998) did initial qualitative research in the Bekaa Valley with 26 women. The women were divided into five categories ranging from traditional woman (more normally referred to as 'housewives') through to women assuming male roles and university students. The research found that for the traditional women the division of labour is clearly defined; they are in charge of all matters related to the children and the house, including budgeting and decision-making. They are happy with their status as housewives and do not work outside the household (the sample is however small). They say they do not feel inferior because of their status as homemakers and are proud of taking care of the men and children. For the women dissatisfied with this restrictive role they are trying different ways to generate an independent income, including selling 'muneh' products or undertaking handicrafts. Their income is used for household expenditure to complement their husband's income, but it does give them some autonomy. However, their husband's status remains higher than theirs and his authority is still recognised; for some this causes resentment.

For the women who have assumed more 'male roles', usually because they have become heads of households, because of being abandoned or their husband having married a second wife, things can be different. They are often economically productive, for example in

running a shop, weaving carpets, harvesting. They need to provide for their children and they manage to put aside money for exceptional expenses such as school fees or daughter's marriage; they, like women who are secondary breadwinners, do not spend the money on themselves. The division of labour is less clearly defined for them and because they are busy earning an income they might leave housework to other female members of the household. They contribute a large part of the household income and play a major role in decision-making, yet they also continue to play the female roles of house maker and carer.

The research showed that while there was no homogeneous category of 'village women' all the women had developed ways of playing multiple roles without going outside the social norms that require them to be homemakers while adapting to their situation. There were, however, some changes clearly taking place as a result of more women earning an income and going out to work, and the researchers expect that this will lead - in time - to more involvement of women in public life

4.3 The challenges posed by the realities of care work for women

These realities pose real challenges for women working outside the home who have to struggle with a double working day. For women working in the informal sector their contribution to the household economy is often ignored or overlooked and their role as the primary house workers and caregivers remains strong; to date the economic value of their work within the home, in care work and in their role as community organisers and supporters is almost completely uncounted. Yet, women make a significant contribution to the household, carrying out multiple domestic chores and providing care and support to the young, the sick and the elderly. They often contribute directly to household food security in many contexts, especially among the rural poor, through 'muneh':

Rural women are involved in 'muneh', the preservation and conserving of foods which enables them to cut their household budgets and save money. The products, when there is a surplus, can be sold highlighting the narrow line between work that supports the household in kind and that which generates a cash income....

Muneh is the main mean of cutting corners, saving money for the household. It is not considered as "real work", particularly because it is not remunerated, and as such it might be considered as the archetype of invisible work... "Everybody prepares the muneh for the household, but nobody sells it." (Participant FGD1). "We make jams: figs, cherries, peaches and burghul. We do not sell; it is only for the house." (Participant FGD4). "I prepare the basic muneh: pickles, makdus, tomatoes... not kishk" "My parents in law have a goat so they provide us with dairy products and this helps me save money." (Participant FGD5) "My mother makes everything at home, not for sale" (Participant FGD8) (Boustany-Hajjar, 2010: 36)

The effects of this 'double working day' and the multiple responsibilities women carry combined with their dependent status are many. First, tiredness due to the stress of too many responsibilities; secondly, domestic work may be left undone or postponed because of lack of time, leading to feelings of guilt and the sense of not being able to live up to the family expectations. Thirdly, resentment against husbands or in-laws who still take decisions that women themselves feel they can now take. Their husbands and the wider family continue to play important roles in the decision-making and even when women are increasing their economic activities this has not significantly changed their decision making status or the household division of labour, with women still being seen as the carers and men the providers.

From the little research available it has emerged that for some women anyway they would like to see day-care centres for small children, access to domestic help, and more support from their husbands with regard to household work, i.e. they want to change their roles as house workers and care givers and find ways to share the chores and the responsibilities with others, freeing their time for other things. There are not enough hours in the week for many of them to adequately perform the role of both worker and mother, especially when the children are young. This reflects findings from more extensive research in many other countries and shows:

- The long hours many women work in fulfilling their triple roles, results in tiredness and lack of time for leisure or other more interesting or productive activities such as training, education, higher paid work or political participation
- The persistence of the ideology of men as breadwinners and women as dependents is striking, and continues even when realities are changing and women's economic contribution is critical to the family
- That women's lack of status and being seen as dependents is related to the lack of recognition of their essential roles as carers and house workers and the lack of acknowledgement of the work they do. This undermines their confidence and their own recognition of their major contribution to the family and community and wider economy
- That women find themselves in very diverse positions in the family and the society, depending on poverty, education, access to credit, marital status, religion, geography (whether rural or urban) yet are often treated as a homogeneous group.
- However high women rise they still have to manage the care economy and the house, though men may start to take on some of the tasks involved. The ideology of

men as providers and women as dependents and carers is proving hard to shift even when realities change

There are strong cultural and religious norms around the concepts keeping women as subservient in the family and responsible for all the care and domestic work. In Lebanon family law, including the norms covering marriage, divorce, children, inheritance and the division of labour within the family are governed by the personal status laws of each of the 18 confessions that structure Lebanese society. These concepts vary in small ways between the different sects and religions but the over-riding ones are remarkably similar between religions.

For example, in Islam the concept of Qiwama is found in the Quran (Surat Al-Nissa V34) and means that the man has primacy and ascendancy over the women in relation to his obligation to provide for her. Husbands are obliged to keep their wives and the women's obligation is to be faithful, obey their husbands, and look after his needs (Welchman, 2011). In the bible in some passages it is clearly stated that the man is the head of the household 'But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God' (I Corinthians, 11 verse 3). The position of the husband in the home and his related responsibilities are quite clearly defined in principle in Ephesians 5:22, 28-31: "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church; and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in everything."

Only one confession has to date committed to women and men being equal in responsibility for the family and children and for co-operation around child care (The Russian Orthodox church). For the majority these beliefs about women's and men's roles and responsibilities underpin the personal laws governing behaviour within the family; in some confessions men also control the physical mobility, dress code and more detailed behaviour of their wives. The norms are strong so that even where women do inherit a percentage of land, for example, it is usual for them to give it to their husband or brother for them to control and use. These beliefs are deeply embedded in the society and upheld by the personal status laws that discriminate against women in many ways, including their lack of rights to pass on their Lebanese nationality to children. To date little work has been done to explore the realities within each confession to see how much work women do in the home and what effect their subordinate status to the male head of the family has on their access to social, economic and political opportunities and their well-being.

The inequalities enshrined in the personal status laws led to Lebanon making reservations around many aspects of CEDAW, because they could not support commitments to women's equality within the family and domestic sphere in the face of these laws.

4.4 The importance of work in the care economy

When women in countries of the North started to talk about their unpaid roles as house workers over 40 years ago, the focus initially was on the need to pay women or to support them financially for the time that they put in to maintaining the household. Over time the understanding of the critical role of women in the social reproduction of the population and the workforce has deepened. It is very clear that for a society to perpetuate itself and to be successful culturally, politically, socially and economically the next generation has to be produced, raised healthily, educated, socialized into a wide range of roles, and be nurtured and cared for. While some of this work is undertaken by the Government, for example through the provision of schools, vaccinations and health services, much of the work is done within the family. Within the family this work continues to be largely the responsibility of women. This is especially true in the Arab region and Lebanon is no exception.

Debates continue globally about the appropriate division of responsibility between the state and the family for the social reproduction of the next generation and the care of the most vulnerable members of the society. In many countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Arab region the Governments provide very few resources to support the reproductive role and the traditional divisions of labour demand that women take the bulk of the responsibility in the family. Women in Lebanon are often expected to combine this domestic work with income earning – in the formal or informal sectors- limiting their opportunities for engaging in other areas of life, including political representation or participation. Even where women perform these roles well their status remains defined as subservient to their husbands or other male household members.

4.5 Conclusions

Even more than women's work in the informal sector the work that is undertaken in this area is almost completely invisible. The lack of time use surveys means there is little data on how women use their time and whether this is changing over time, with their rise in education for example. The evidence found for this report suggests that little is changing around the

attitudes and behaviour towards housework, with women carrying the major responsibility largely unaided. The low value placed on this work is reflected in the poor wages and treatment meted out to domestic workers who come in to help or replace the labour of the wife and mother.

There is little discussion about this sector in Lebanon, little attention is being paid to the time and energy it takes from women and girls, how it impacts on their opportunities to leave the home and participate in activities such as village meetings, politics, formal employment, education and further education, training and so on. Women's low participation in other activities may well reflect the time they spend on homework but to date research is lacking to demonstrate this.

In Lebanon the legal framework for supporting women in their care and domestic responsibilities is very weak: there is no provision for child care support - either financial or in the form of child care centres; their access to maternity benefits is very limited and only for some women working in the formal sector, paternity benefits and leave do not exist. Limited health care facilities, social services and access to education mean that women bear the brunt of the responsibility for keeping the family members well, cared for and supported. This work is not paid and neither is it supported by Government policies and specific benefits designed to help women fulfil these multiple and complex caring roles within the family, yet

Care is a universal need, and the way care is organized is decisive for gender relations, equality and collective well-being. Most care work is unpaid...care work is deeply gendered and based on gender inequalities which place multiple work and care burdens on women (Harcourt, 2010:8)

The lack of attention to women's work in the home is a barrier to achieving the MDGs according to a senior politician in Uganda:

the lack of visibility of this sector (care) of production, and women's lack of voice and bargaining power in both public and private investment, are strong barriers [to reaching many of the MDGs]...for rapidly growing and middle income countries, it is necessary to envisage new policies that can integrate the productive and caring economies, paid and unpaid work, into one unified structure that is efficient in producing quality goods and public services and quality care. (Byanyima, 2007:2)

The reservations that Lebanon has on ILO, CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action conventions, means that it is opting out of commitments to promoting gender equality in many areas of life. The reservations especially apply to work and life within the family and marriage. By maintaining the personal status laws of each confession, that govern women's lives within the household, the Government is failing to address the tight religious norms that

are applied through concepts such as 'qiwama' whereby men are defined as the household head, the decision maker, the provider, and women's obligations are to obey him and provide the care and attention he and the family need.

These personal status laws mean that a woman's life, within the marriage and the home, is governed by confessional and religious law, not national, secular law. These laws are discriminatory against women and the dominant ideology that the man is the head of the household, the provider and the decision maker, and that women owe obedience and are dependent on the man persists even when women make major contributions to the household, including financially. It continues even where women are divorced or widowed; brothers, fathers, in-laws often play the role of head of the household for them.

The need for research to understand women's experiences within different confessions and contexts (rich/poor, rural/urban, citizen/non-citizen) is clear and urgent. The time women spend on work within the household has implications for their health, their availability to take up other opportunities, economic, political or social, and their sense of worth and confidence within the society. Their invisibility in this sphere is almost total and requires a spotlight on it so that their needs and rights in relation to domestic care work can be understood and become part of the policy debates around the status and rights of women in Lebanon.

Section 5: Taking the work forward

The legal frameworks relating to women and work in the Lebanon present many challenges and contradictions. While Lebanon has signed up to many international conventions relating to women's rights and has passed national laws focused on women's equality before the law, there are major gaps in the legal system and there are no laws governing work in the informal, unregulated sector where the majority of women work. Even within the formal sector there is a lack of legislation addressing women's particular needs at work and women with children especially are absent from the formal employment sector. Many laws that do enable women to better combine their reproductive and productive roles that are to be found in other countries are yet to be passed in Lebanon.

By allowing personal status law to govern households Lebanon perpetuates traditional gender divisions of labour. Women remain almost exclusively responsible for domestic tasks; men are typically regarded as the head of the household, even in contexts where men have left or died and where many households are actually headed by women or women may be an equal or primary financial provider. The long hours of work women put in to maintain the family and support the family income are largely unseen.

The data show a lack of coherent commitments to addressing women's inequality and a variable approach to implementing the international conventions promoting women's rights that Lebanon has signed up to. In the absence of an overall strategy to generate jobs, to promote women within employment, to ensure ILO and other conventions are upheld, it is largely left to non-state actors to work with women, especially in the informal sector. Much of this work is focused on the challenges for women making a living in the informal sector including the need for skills development, access to credit, and access to better markets. While important these initiatives are usually time-bound, uncoordinated between NGOs, and not big enough to leverage significant change.

Little attention is currently being paid by any organisations to the nature of the global economy and women's marginal position within it; the need to develop good job creation schemes to enable women and men to earn a decent living; the challenges to women of working in informal or illegal jobs in order to survive or enable their families to survive; or the realities of women's roles within the household and the community. Until women's position, status and work in every economic sector (formal, informal, care) is recognised it cannot be counted or described and little can be done to support women in their economic roles. While

there is a global focus on women's economic empowerment currently, it is in fact largely targeting women's work in the informal and unregulated sector and addressed through small amounts of often uncoordinated training, micro-finance and marketing support.

It is critical now to deepen the analysis of women's role within the global economy as well as each national and local economy and to undertake research with them in order to understand their realities and their hopes and fears. Identifying what is of most concern to women in different contexts will enable them to have a voice in these debates and help to identify the international, national and local constraints, where things are changing and how (for better or in the current global crisis for worse), and where women's opportunities could lie if they were given adequate support from Governments, employers, and their families and communities.

During discussions on some of the findings in this report, especially around invisible and informal work, participants at two workshops held by CRTDA in Beirut during 2012 identified a number of critical barriers to the economic advancement of women and these included:

- The lack of jobs in the Lebanese economy for women and men and the limited attention to job creation policies
- the lack of laws promoting women's participation and equality in the formal workplace, including their lack of access to social security, poor maternity provision, limited promotion, leaving when they have children because of lack of childcare provision and much more
- women's relative lack of access to Unions and to Parliament meaning there are few laws to support them within the formal sector
- the many challenges women face in the informal economy, especially in relation to time to do the work, low income, lack of access to loans and credit, and the difficulties of marketing their products, especially when competing with industries who produce similar goods at lower prices
- women's heavy responsibilities in the home, for housework and care for the sick, elderly and children, which is 'taken for granted'
- the lack of recognition of women's essential contribution to the well-being of the family and the society, through their work in many areas of the economy- in the home, the workplace and in informal employment
- the marginalisation of women in many areas of life and the mentality and culture of men who keep women marginalised and do not recognise or respect their work

- the religious beliefs that perpetuate women's subordinate status in the society and the continued dominance of religious norms that require women to serve and obey the male household head
- the problems caused by violence against women, both within the home and through harassment at work
- the lack of Government support for women's care work, for example the lack of child care provision, pensions and accessible care for the elderly and sick

In spite of these barriers and challenges it was noted that there have been some changes in the Arab region, and Lebanon, though since 'The Arab spring' many gains in areas of women's lives are currently being contested through the introduction of new constitutions in some countries. Until these revolutionary changes more women were entering the workforce, some beneficial laws were being passed (e.g. a new maternity law in Lebanon, which extended maternity leave to 10 weeks); and more women had mobility and a voice than in the past –all of which are at risk of reversal in some countries now. It was highlighted that women are not homogeneous and find themselves in very different contexts according to the country where they live, whether they are rural or urban, educated or less educated, richer or poorer, and according to the rules and norms of which religion or confession they belong to. The situation is not uniform or static.

Several issues were highlighted for immediate attention:

- the importance of day care provision for children to free up women's time for paid work
- the need to measure, recognise and support women's work in the formal, informal and care economies
- women's need for capacity building and education in order to increase their access to formal work and improve their performance in both formal and informal jobs
- the need to address women's low awareness of their contribution and build their confidence through developing their understanding of the context and their economic contributions to the family, the community and the wider community through their formal, informal and care work
- the need for improved markets for women's products, combined with a need to learn new skills, access credit, enter new sectors and make products that are more marketable
- the need to encourage women to participate outside the home, economically and politically

There is work needed on the many challenges facing women's economic empowerment, in the formal workplace, in work on the informal sector, and around work in the home. There is need for research and better evidence and understanding of women's situation and contribution, for legal changes and new policies to better support women in employment and unpaid work. Different Government, donor and NGO agencies need to work together on the different aspects that combine to keep women very unequal in the economic sphere.

Women's work in Lebanon and the region is largely invisible, unappreciated, and the terms and conditions under which they work are unequal and often exploitative. Women remain largely excluded from formal jobs, especially at higher levels, with less than a quarter employed; they toil often long hours in unregulated and unrecognised areas of the informal economy for erratic and low pay, and their economic contribution goes largely uncounted. Their work within the home and family is simply expected and ignored in terms of appreciating women's work in this sphere or supporting their work with financial and other benefits. The religious underpinning of much of women's invisibility and their resulting low status and lack of confidence remains entrenched and there is a need to shift from religious to civic law governing family law in the region.

Annex: Key concepts around women's work used in this study

Women engage in work in the formal employment sector, in the informal economy, in the household and the caring economy, as well as within the community in most economies of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Women's engagement in the different economic areas of life is complex and inter-related. In order to describe and understand these different work roles it is important to clarify the many concepts used and to look briefly at the different scales currently available for measuring this work. It is also important to situate Lebanon within these international standards.

Concepts defined

There are many concepts currently used around the study of women's work and participation in the economy; some are universal while others are specific to certain contexts and cultures. Here we will present definitions used internationally and those specific to the Middle East and Lebanon; however, it was not always possible to find the regional definitions because data are limited for this area of work in the Middle East. A lexicon of short definitions of key terms was developed by CRTD.A (Lexicon, 2008) to address this problem.

The main concepts of household, household head and household work or housework; the division of labour; women's productive, reproductive and community roles; the formal economy; the informal economy, informal work and the informal sector; the caring economy; paid and unpaid work; visible and invisible work, and social protection are addressed below.

The household: the composition of households varies across cultures and contexts, something that was not originally well appreciated by the development community initially. In Africa the definition most commonly used was 'eating from the same pot', capturing all the family members who ate together, whatever their relationship to the household head.

In the lexicon for CRTD.A for Lebanon the household covers two core concepts: those who live together and share the same dwelling regardless of the ties which bind them, and those who consume together. The INSEE (Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques. French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies) definition is all persons who occupy a housing unit without necessarily being related.

The household takes many forms in the Middle East, as elsewhere, and may vary according to whether the household is polygamous, how many children and elderly dependents there

are, and the presence of domestic staff or relatives sent from elsewhere for education or to help in the house. Households may be as small as one person living alone up to large numbers of extended family members living together.

Household head: the common statistical definition in some countries is that the head of the household is the one who declared themselves as such during census surveys; they may or may not provide for the needs of the family. In others (such as USA) the household head is a taxpayer with dependents. There is a vagueness of definition, including in the Middle East, that usually results in men being automatically designated as the heads of households, unless there are no adult males present.

In most cultures, including the Arab region, the norms dictate that the most senior male will be designated as the household head; even in matrilineal societies such as those found in the Pacific women will designate a male relative as the household head. The prevailing assumption is that men are the main providers and decision makers; women are defined as heads of households only in houses where only women and children reside.

Household (or domestic) work: household work is the work essential for keeping the house and the family running, whether in a nuclear family or an extended family. It involves multiple tasks, some of which are done every day and some of which are done on a weekly, monthly or seasonal basis. The tasks involved vary according to the geographical location, the wealth of the family, and the cultural requirements, but are remarkably uniform across different types of family and across the world. They include food preparation and cooking, washing, cleaning, collecting or providing water and fuel, care of household plots of land, house maintenance, care of small animals, and above all care of children and family dependents. It is unpaid work and often not defined as work by those who do it, their families or indeed in Government surveys.

The definitions used in the Arab Region are similar, with women being responsible for much of the household work, though there are variations in the details of male and female roles and responsibilities according to wealth and religion, rural/urban contexts. For Lebanon the CRTD.A lexicon defines domestic work as 'the activity practiced at home to ensure maintenance or proper functioning of the household'; housekeeping includes dish washing, laundry, shopping. A housewife is one who dedicates herself exclusively to housekeeping and household chores, including child rearing'.

This work is increasingly being labelled as work in 'the care economy'.

The gender division of labour: this refers to the division of responsibilities for different kinds of work between women and men. The dominant definitions of the division of labour are that men are the economic providers, decision makers, and protectors of the family while women undertake the domestic roles within the household. Men are expected to play roles in the 'public sphere', in politics, religion, law, decision making, while traditionally women's domain is the family, the extended family and the local community, often defined as the 'private sphere'. In some societies, including Lebanon, women's mobility is often tied to this division of labour and women are not allowed to move beyond the private space without the permission of their husband. This division of labour is especially strong in Lebanon and supported by religious beliefs, for Islam the key concept is 'qiwama' and for Christians the roots of male domination are to be found in several verses in the bible.

Women's multiple roles/women's triple role: Caroline Moser (1989), a development planner concerned with gender equality popularized these terms in the 1980s, drawing attention to the realities that women actually play multiple work roles within the society and have important responsibilities beyond the household. She subsumed housework under the broader title of women's 'reproductive role', which covers everything required to produce and raise the next generation for the family and the wider society. This is now often referred to as their role in the care economy, a term which highlights that this work has economic value even if it is not paid work.

In addition to their reproductive role women also play productive roles (both paid and unpaid) as men do, and both undertake roles within the community. While men have two sets of roles (productive and community), women have three which place heavy demands on their time, demands Moser called 'the triple burden'.

The concept of women's triple role and triple burden has prevailed in much analysis of women's work and gender inequality across the world. It is increasingly recognised that women have to juggle their time and work long hours in order to run their households, raise their children, look after their sick and elderly dependents, as well as go out of the house to earn an income or generate an income from within the household, and to participate in community networks. While some women are restricted in working outside the home for money and some choose to focus on their domestic work and do not seek formal employment, in fact many women have to engage in all kinds of production to both earn a living and supplement the household income. While men often remain the nominal breadwinner in reality vast numbers of women provide essential income for the household,

and in some contexts run households alone. Many women do not receive adequate support from their husbands being second or third wives; others are divorced or widowed; men may be abroad or working away from home, leaving women with responsibilities for production and earning an income.

In addition women are involved in building and sustaining community networks, which are essential for reciprocity and mutual support. This can include attendance at celebrations around births, deaths and marriages and providing support to the weakest in times of crisis.

Where time-use surveys have been carried out in Europe, USA and some countries of Africa and Asia for example, measuring the time women put into different tasks within the household as well as in productive and community work, they show that women work long hours, often rising well before dawn and sleeping very late in order to fulfil all the work –paid and unpaid- that is required of them¹⁶. Managing the multiple demands can place a strain on women's health, their opportunities for education and training, and seriously limit time for relaxing or leisure. The requirement for them to juggle roles is a reality yet women themselves, their families or Governments, do not always recognize it.

The formal economy: the formal economy covers all work that is registered, recognised, regulated and counted. It is presented as 'the economy' in national accounts written by Governments, and in international statistics compiled by e.g. UN agencies and the World Bank. It includes all work in the public and private sectors, as well as self employment in registered businesses. It is defined as the productive work that generates the tax base for a national economy and is closely monitored. This definition applies in Lebanon as elsewhere.

The informal economy, the informal sector, informal work: the informal economy covers work done for pay that is untaxed, unregulated, where laws are absent governing terms and conditions of work, where there is no job security, social protection, or financial benefits. It is un-unionized. It is work that goes on 'at the margins', it is often small scale and it is not counted in Government surveys. The informal sector receives no support from Banks or Government (though there is access to micro-credit provided by NGOs to support small scale work in the informal sector). Any training that is provided for work in the informal sector is provided through NGOs or local people. Income is not recorded or taxed. The work is

¹⁶ http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/timeuse/overview_ses1.pdf The overview of time use surveys done by Ironmonger, D presented on this website shows the consistently high number of hours women put into housework, often 2-3 times that of men. It also shows a huge range in the hours of housework done in different countries reflecting changing attitudes to housework as well as the rise in labour saving devices.

often carried out within the home, small private businesses or on farms; the employer maybe a family member or a local employer; the business will employ less than ten people usually and the wages will fall below the minimum wage. There are no holiday entitlements, there is no formal credit for this kind of business, and low levels of skill or training are needed to carry out the work.

This work is it is often seasonal or sporadic. Informal work includes domestic work for household employers, where women are often exposed to exploitation and sexual harassment; foreign migrant workers do much of this work.

Work in the informal sector generates an income, however small or sporadic and usually contributes essential money to the household and the community. It should be measured and counted as a contribution to the Gross National Product of a country, which would greatly raise the GDP in countries where women and men are primarily working in the 'informal' sector rather than in formal paid employment. Because many women work in the informal sector this would give a much fairer picture of women's contribution to the economy, which at present is often defined as being very low because their informal income generating work in the informal sector is overlooked. For example, all agricultural labour in Lebanon falls outside the Labour Law of 1964 and the size of this sector is unknown and unrecorded, yet many women work in this sector.

Definitions of the informal sector and what is included vary between agencies such as ILO, UN, World Bank and the available data they do collect are often not easily comparable because they use different definitions and measurements. However, the key characteristics described above broadly define 'the informal sector' and are applicable in Lebanon.

More recently it has become common to talk about 'livelihoods', looking across all the productive work men and women do, whether formal or informal, in or outside the home, to put together a viable living, to ensure food security and adequate support to their families.

The care economy: There is no clear consensus about the definition of, or how to count the work, in the care economy. However, it is often equated with 'social reproduction' and includes all the unpaid housework being done by women in the household, including cooking, cleaning, shopping, as well as care of the children, sick and elderly that are essential to ensure the care and protection of future generations and vulnerable members of the society (Elson, 2000). In the past it was labelled women's domestic or household work;

those definitions have been extended now to include all the work women do to provide care and support to their families and the communities where they live.

For some the care economy also includes productive work (whether paid or unpaid) that is undertaken within or near the household, such as growing, preserving or processing food; this may generate an income or simply supplement food security for the household. This work should be measured in the GDP and the latest revision of the International System of National Accounts (SNA) states ‘these activities deserve special attention because they should, in principle, be included in measures of Gross Domestic Product, but are poorly measured by most surveys’ (quoted in Folbre, 2006:183)

Folbre is a respected US researcher on the care economy who argues for a wider definition of care work; the term needs to be disaggregated and each component properly defined. She suggests looking at the care economy in relation to the market, explaining that some services undertaken within the care economy are unpaid (such as housework); some meet basic subsistence needs (such as growing food to eat, preserving and conserving food for household use); some involves informal market work (i.e. selling any surplus from food grown and processed for household consumption). For her it also includes paid formal employment in the ‘caring services’ that are often highly associated with women, including teaching, nursing and other services where women often find paid employment¹⁷.

The ‘care economy’ is a concept (however defined) that encompasses the work done to ensure that children are cared for, able to attend school, that they do not have to work (child labour), that they are safe and protected from violence, and emotionally supported and able to become active and productive members of the society. It also includes work to ensure food security within the household, that enables health support and care to be given to the vulnerable in a household, including the disabled, sick and elderly. It encompasses the coping strategies women and men use to protect and support the family in times of difficulty, which may involve e.g. cutting back on their own nutrition, taking on extra work to generate an income, finding ways to ‘cut corners’ on spending and make more within the home, putting in more time to hold together households under stress.

Childcare is one of the most demanding and important elements of the care economy. It is largely unpaid and performed by women yet it is the bedrock of a functioning economy and

¹⁷ This is especially the case in Lebanon where many women in formal employment are involved in professions associated with women’s traditional roles (see the section on formal employment)

closely linked to human well-being. In many societies, including in the Middle East, little attention is paid to this critical role, which is simply assumed to be women's responsibility. Women in the region receive no Government support in fulfilling this role because it is seen as a private family role and part of women's obligations to their husbands and the wider family.

Visible and invisible work: visible work is counted by Government statistics and recognised by society as employment, it is work in the formal economy. Invisible work is all work that is uncounted and unregulated and includes work within the household, the care economy and the informal sector, as well as community work.

Home based work: this is work that takes place in a private dwelling; it may be formal or informal depending on who the employer is and where they are located within the economy. Some labour laws in Lebanon, whether by omission or interpretation, partially or completely exclude home based work and so do not take female or male home workers into consideration. This work is not covered by laws to protect workers and is unregulated and largely ignored in Lebanese policy.

Unpaid work: this is work that is unpaid and yet economically valuable; it is invisible in formal statistics. It includes much of women's work, which while essential and of economic value is not counted or remunerated. It includes agricultural and other labour done by women for no wage, usually on household plots; work to increase household food security; childcare and all aspects of social reproduction and work in the care economy.

Social protection: this is money invested by Governments or external donors and INGOs in social services and welfare to cushion vulnerable population groups from the effects of either ongoing poverty or economic crises. It involves transferring money and resources to families (almost always women) to enable them to continue with their reproductive roles, ensuring that children and other family members can eat, go to work or school, access healthcare, and be supported. This can take the form of cash transfers, child benefits, and direct support to the elderly through pensions, school feeding programs, food for work schemes, social insurance, special support for orphans and those with disabilities, and is designed to prevent people falling into serious poverty and vulnerability. Cash transfers to women are widely used now in humanitarian disasters and in contexts where donors or Governments want to ensure poorer women send their children to school, have them vaccinated or protected in other ways.

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