

**Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR)  
organize  
in partnership with the World Bank and with the support  
of the European Union and the Hariri Foundation,**

**Seminar on Gender and Development:  
«Building Partnerships and Networking Relationships»  
Tunis, October 20 - 22, 2002**

**Background Note**

**A. Context:**

***I. The Arab Gender and Development Network (@NGAD)***

The seminar is part of a World Bank-supported<sup>1</sup> project titled «Establishing a Gender and Development Network» which is implemented by CAWTAR. The overall purpose of this project is to establish a regional network made-up of both individuals and organizations (governmental and non-governmental) concerned with gender and/or development. The creation of this network for research, training and information-sharing is to serve researchers, political and development actors, as a platform to disseminate, inform and provide a space to help formulate policy recommendations on gender issues in the context of regional development.

The main fruit of Cawtar and the World Bank cooperation was the constitution of «The Arab Gender and Development Network (@NGAD)».

@NGAD's membership is open to governmental and non-governmental bodies as well as to academics and research centers. The participatory nature of the network is viewed as a necessity for sound coordination of collaborative and well-studied activities of various network partners.

**@NGAD Focus Areas:**

@NGAD is placed in the framework of three key areas: 1) gender and decision-making; 2) gender and legislation; and 3) gender and media, all in light of globalization's impacts and with a view to the future through the eyes of young adolescents<sup>2</sup>.

**@NGAD process:**

Building the Network has undergone a participatory process of meetings and consultations with Network partners comprised of various organizations and experts. This dynamic process is still ongoing.

So far, a Network launching event took place in Tunis (April 2002) which included a brainstorming of @NGAD's main objectives. This was followed by a smaller meeting in Cairo (May 2002) where topics, possible activities and methodologies were further refined.

***II. Cawtar Vision:***

@NGAD's setting-up consolidates Cawtar's strategic vision which is based on building partnerships and networking in order to seek concrete progress on issues relating to gender and development in the Arab Region. A development based on the fundamental principle of equal rights and access to resources for women and girls so as to ensure sustainable livelihoods for their families, their self-achievement and communities.

Cawtar upholds a comprehensive approach for partnership and networking relationships that gather various actors such as NGO's and governmental bodies, national, regional and international entities, organizations and individuals. This means: firstly, to strengthen working relationships and to build bridges between these various actors; secondly to identify priority topics of mutual interest as background for, lastly, a concrete action plan to be implemented, following timetables and division of labor among network members and partners.

As provider of gender training, research, clearing house services, and advisory services, Cawtar is able to play a relay point role, and offer an inter-linking dynamic space for such networking process. Moreover, the constitution of Cawtar's status as an international organization with board members representing international, national and regional institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations is a guarantee of openness and flexibility needed as a basis of any networking act.

## **B. The up-coming Event: Regional Seminar on Gender and Development: «Building Partnership and Networking Relationships»**

The Network Event titled «Gender and Development: Building Partnership and Networking Relationships» will be held in Tunis on October 20-22, 2002. Most of the 70 invited participants have been active members in previous Network-building events.

The main objective of the event is to focus on @NGAD's implementable activities and «to get @NGAD moving».

### **Global objectives**

The Event's broad goals (as defined in previous Network events) are as follows:

- \* To support an active partnerships and networking relationships among various active organizations and individuals in the fields of gender and development.
- \* To direct a collective debate towards the identification of priority activities (including implementable action plans and time tables).
- \* To contribute to the dissemination of a gender culture and to raise awareness by supporting gender work in the Arab media.

### **Specific objectives**

To serve these broad objectives, the seminar will focus on :

- identification of priority items for research and training in the fields of gender and development
- setting up of implementable action plans and time tables based on division of labor among @NGAD's members.
- setting up of a participatory approach related to CAWTAR's Arab Women Development Reports (AWDR) including identification of priority topics, reports carrying out and dissemination.

### **Programme guiding lines:**

Thus the programme is composed by a multidimensional components. On the first day, participants will meet in thematic workshops to identify - based on a general framework proposed in previous Network meetings - concrete items for concrete activities.

The second day of the event will be dedicated to sharing partners' past experiences in these thematic areas to ensure a basis for further building relevant and sustainable partnerships. Panels are planned for Arab research centers active in the field of gender to seek more participation to ADR's implementation, for Donors to evaluate their own experiences and to identify the relevant partnership tools and for media experts to prospect gender media strategies . On the last day, participants will again meet in their thematic working groups to set-up implementable action plans and timetables for activities identified in the previous days. This would be based on assessments made and conclusions drawn from days one and two. The aim of day three is also to form task force groups towards a division of labor among Network partners. Each task force group will focus on specific implementable action plan. One of them will be dedicated to training actors to suggest items and contents for next courses based on evaluation of previous achievement.

### **Workshops items:**

The participants will attend one of two workshops titled

- 1) Gender and Decision-Making**
- 2) Gender and Legislation.**

As mentioned earlier, these two thematic areas were identified and discussed at previous Network meetings. Key points, major questions-raised and broad proposals for concrete actions are summarized as follows:

On Gender and Decision-Making:

Previous Network meetings recommended to focus on the factors hindering women's access to decision-making positions, and the limited opportunities offered to women to take independent, affective initiatives<sup>3</sup>. In addition, questions related to difficulties by women holding various levels of responsibilities were raised.

In order to focus the Network's discussion, it is proposed to concentrate on the following (still somewhat broad) sub-themes: Women in Parliament; Women in Governmental bodies (regional/national/local); Women in the Private Sector; Women in Civil Society Organizations (NGOs, Media, etc.); and Women and the Family. The Workshop will also focus on the role of women parliamentarians in achieving more recognition of women's rights. Testimonies and experiences of Arabs and Europeans women parliamentarians will be exchanged and debated.

The goal will be to direct the workshop debates towards the identification of concrete and implementable activities.

On Gender and Legislation:

At previous Network meetings there was agreement that @NGAD would pursue three issues regarding gender and legislation:

- 1) Help redefine the notion of citizenship;
- 2) Work towards developing legislation;
- 3) Aim at bridging the gap between legal texts, prevailing cultural perceptions; and the implementation of the law.

With these three broad guiding principles in mind, it is proposed to focus the workshop discussion on the following sub-themes: Gender and Citizenship/Nationality; Violence Against Women/Domestic Violence; Unmarried Women; Women at Work; and Access to Resources (ownership, inheritance, banking, etc.)

Again, the aim is to direct the workshop debates towards the identification of concrete and implementable activities.

In addition to the two workshops mentioned above, there will be a special focus on gender and media and adolescents as outlined below:

#### Gender and Media

Past Network events have elaborated at length on issues regarding gender and media. There it was concluded that it was necessary 1) to increase media coverage on gender and development 2) to make Arab journalist aware on pertinent gender issues.

The October Network event aims to directly address both identified needs<sup>4</sup>. Winners of a special competition of Arab journalists<sup>5</sup> have been invited to attend the meeting, which would reinforce mass media and @NGAD partnership. At the same time, these journalists will prepare articles on the event and the issues raised which would help to increase media coverage on gender and development issues

Moreover, a panel gathering media experts will be held in order to prospect new horizons for @NGAD strategy of communication in the field of gender and development in the Arab region.

#### Prospective Gender Issues: Adolescents:

It is important for the Network to have a good understanding of the current problems facing Arab adolescent girls to ensure @NGAD's relevance for the Arab woman of the future. Following previous Network meetings, a closed workshop on «Adolescents» will take place parallel to «Gender and Decision-Making» and «Gender and Legislation» workshops.

The adolescent workshop will bring together the team that worked on «Arab Adolescent Girls: Reality and Perspective», CAWTAR's Second Arab Women's Development Report. The aim of this team is to deepen the analyses of the report's sub-items as related to adolescent personal identity, relationship, behavior, Values and youth culture.

The Adolescent Working Group will follow the three-day event and provide its feedback on how suggested Network activities (determined over the course of the Network meeting) relate to Arab adolescents.

#### Participants at the October Network Meeting:

The participants invited to the Network's October Meeting include the following: active members of @NGAD; Network partners representing national governments, regional and international organizations; Arab Parliamentarians; Civil Society Representatives; Arab Journalists; Gender and Development Trainers; and the team of CAWTAR's Second Arab Women's Development Report titled «Arab Adolescent Girls: Reality and Perspective».

#### Language(s):

The October Network Meeting will be held in Arabic, French and English (with simultaneous translation).

1. The World Bank's Development Grant Facility (DGF) (see <http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/dgf/dgf.nsf>)
2. «Arab Adolescent Girls: Reality and Perspective» will also be the title of CAWTAR's Second Arab Women's Development Report, which is accompanied by a report on «Arab Adolescent Life Stories».
3. These conclusions were also based on a comparative study of «Arab Women in Decision-Making» which was carried by CAWTAR with the support of the European Union. This 1997 study included case studies and data from six Arab countries.
4. This initiative is also based on a workshop supposed to be organised by CAWTAR and the Hariri Foundation in preparation of the first Arab Women's Summit in 2000.
5. A CAWTAR-implemented competition for Arab Journalists supported by the Hariri Foundation in 2001.