

Arab Women Entrepreneurs

Special Issue on Women Entrepreneurs Regional Workshop organized by
CAWTAR/IFC, 11th -13th April 2006, Tunis-Tunisia



CAWTAR/IFC organized a regional workshop during the period of the 11th -13th April 2006, in Tunis-Tunisia. The workshop focused on Arab women entrepreneurs. Its main objective was to finalize the methodology, the budget and the timeline of a regional study on Arab women entrepreneurs in five countries: Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates. The framework of this study is based on a previous project in Vietnam designed and supervised by Julie Weeks, President and CEO of Womenable, but also an international consultant based in Washington DC. The workshop was attended by representatives of research centres, professional women association and experts, and moderated by Weeks.

This issue reflects the views of the participants on the workshop and importance of the regional study and its implementation through the partnership of CAWTAR/IFC/business women associations and research centres.



Carmen Niethammer, Program Manager for IFC-GEM, presented the studies conducted by IFC in a number of Arab countries. The objective of these types of studies is to illustrate the obstacles facing women entrepreneurs in the daily-life of their business work.

Dr. Soukeina Bouraoui, the Executive Director of CAWTAR valued IFC's efforts geared to reinforce the capacities of research centres and its support to women's entrepreneurship. She reiterated that the study aims to assess the needs of women entrepreneurs and to support research centres. Moreover, the study will be used as an advocacy tool to sensitize decision-makers on women entrepreneurs' ability to play an active social role, a base for building capacities, mobilizing resources and maintaining the gap between research centres and business associations.

The study will also be covered by the member journalists of the Centre's @nged media network who will shed light on achievements, contributions and the successful experiences of Arab women entrepreneurs. This is another important step towards maintaining strategic partnerships among the media, research centres and business women in the absence of adequate media coverage of women's participation in the economic sphere.

Project Partners

Bahrain

Bahrain Business Women Society

Bahrain Centre for Strategic Studies and Research

Jordan

Women Studies Department, University of Jordan

Jordan Forum for Business and Professional Women

Lebanon

Women Studies Institution, Lebanese American University

Lebanese Business Women Association

Tunisia

Chambre Nationale des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises

Institut Supérieur de Gestion

United Arab Emirates

Dubai Women's College

Dubai Businesswomen Council

Study Timeline in year 2006

May: research design-video conference for project partners

June-July-August: fieldwork

Mid September: 2nd regional workshop-and submission of data collected to study coordinator

Mid October-early November: finalization of national reports and their submission to the study coordinator

1st December: Submission of regional report

Ibrahim Al Rumahi

Bahrain Centre for Strategic Studies and Research



Establishment of Women's studies unit in our Centre

Our centre focuses on strategic studies and polling surveys. We conducted studies for Bahrain High Council of Women and we concluded a five-year agreement with the council to conduct studies on Bahraini women.

Unfortunately we do not have studies on business women as generally under-explored issue in Bahrain. The regional study commissioned by CAWTAR/IFC is a niche at both the national and regional level; it will foster collaboration among different partners, specialized centres and business women especially, as we need their support to implement several projects. I will suggest to our Centre to establish a women studies unit to liaise and leverage this type of efforts.

Nada Fawzi Al Shehabi

Bahrain Business Women Society



We express our needs in the research field

The study is critical given our need for data and credible studies. The existing data is general and sporadic and should be collected to be utilized in better ways. I expect through this project that we will be able to exchange experience and information, and to learn about addressing the gaps facing development of women entrepreneurship.

The partnership with research centres is a good strategy and important as it gives us the opportunity as a business association to prepare and reflect our needs in the proposed study. I greatly value the partnership of CAWTAR/IFC in this direction.

Leyla Khaiat

Chambre Nationale des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises



We are in need of study to guide us on future planning

I am expecting the proposed project to reflect a realistic picture of the economic context, the status, the socio-economic weights and the aspirations of business women in Tunisia. I also expect the study to build grounds for future projects and to touch upon promising areas for new entrant young business women.

We are in need of an in-depth study on economics of access to credit and encouragement of business women. I have seen several studies but they have not raised the actual demands of business women and we could not use them when advising new entrant women entrepreneurs. We need an action-based study including possible opportunities and

Monica Gallant

Dubai Women's College



To pave the way for a network comprising female students and business women

We need this type of proposed study to assess the needs of business women in the training field, to build their capacities and to encourage young women to enter the business and entrepreneurship sector.

I expect the study to pave the way for a network comprising female students and business women. I think the cooperation between CAWTAR/IFC offers a prime opportunity for a strategic study from which business women can learn and plan their activities.



Abeer Dabadneh

**Women Studies
Department, University of
Jordan**

The study is an added value to scientific research on women

Our Centre had before conducted in collaboration with the Jordan Forum for Business and Professional Women a study on the role of business women in support of projects. This regional study is an added value to scientific research on women. Especially, it is unique in its approach which aims to maintain a real cooperation between research centres and NGOs. We expect through this study to be able to identify the Arab experiences, to establish networks, and to exchange experiences. We expect the study to maintain a solid database on women entrepreneurs due to the dearth of information on this topic. CAWTAR/IFC should consider knowledge generation as an important goal to continue their partnership in this domain.

Rana Al Akhal

**Jordan Forum for Business and
Professional Women**



We do not know a lot about each other

The value of the proposed study relates to its regional nature and its focus on women entrepreneurs in different Arab countries. I think it is the first of its kind in the region. The workshop was a real chance to learn about each others' experiences. Especially, I have already had wrong ideas about the realities of business women in different Arab countries. CAWTAR/IFC project is an important step towards fostering networking in the sphere of research and collaboration with business women. I think this study should receive particular attention in the region given that most policies are made based on numbers and statistics. If we really want to respond to the actual needs of business women, we need deeper study on this issue. I hope this study is a step towards future cooperation among Arab countries; we had cooperated before with the Women Studies Department, but at the national level. was at the national level.



Mona Khalaf

**Women Studies Institution,
Lebanese American University**

The dearth of data undermines the important role of business women

I think the dearth of data undermines the important role of business women. The proposed study will shed light on the actual presence of business women as successful productive contributors in economic growth. Without considering the successful experiences of business women, which is the concern of the study, it will be difficult to inspire the new entrant young women in the entrepreneurship sector. The participation of research centres will render such a study credible as well as will reflect the case of women entrepreneurs in a scientific and precise manner. This will definitely help business women to better improve their approaches to business planning and to respond to their challenges.

Leila Karami

**Lebanese Business Women
Association**



Any work to be successful should be based on research

The proposed study allowed us to exchange views and experiences and to learn from CAWTAR/IFC. The Arab media misrepresented the image of Arab women in different sectors. As business women, we need networking and cooperation to become a pressure group to bring about desirable change. The partnership with research centres is fundamental. Any work to be successful should be based on scientific research. Before, I did not think that research was important. However after participating in this regional workshop I am really convinced of the important role of research. I hope the study will undertake the views of business women, business men and the young new entrants. We are in real need for a generation of business men and women able to influence decision-making and the social development of our nations.