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Economic And Social Commission For Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT

**EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS:
THE SOCIAL IMPACT AND RESPONSE IN ESCWA COUNTRIES
BEIRUT, 8 DECEMBER 2009**

Summary

In response to the call by the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/63/277 to hold regional consultations, and following the UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development held in New York between 24-26 June 2009 and its resulting Outcome Document, ESCWA's Social Development Division (SDD) organized a regional meeting of experts on 8 December 2009 to review the social impact of the global financial and economic crisis on the countries of the region.

The meeting, which brought together over 30 international and regional experts, explored the social impact of the crisis on the different categories of countries in the region, focusing on issues of employment and livelihoods, poverty and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and social protection systems. The meeting also put forward recommendations for policy and programme responses to ameliorate the effects of the crisis on the region's poor and marginalized groups.

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Introduction

1. In response to the call by the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/63/277 to hold regional consultations, and following the UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development held in New York between 24 - 26 June 2009 and its resulting Outcome Document, ESCWA's Social Development Division (SDD) organized a regional meeting of experts on 8 December 2009 to review the social impact of the global financial and economic crisis on the countries of the region.
2. The meeting aimed to understand the social impact of the crisis on the different categories of countries in the region, focusing on issues of employment and livelihoods, poverty and the MDGs, and social protection systems. The meeting also aimed to explore policy and programme responses to ameliorate the effects of the crisis on the region's poor and marginalized groups, and identify a set of recommendations for member countries and ESCWA as a step towards elaborating a socially-responsive national and regional agenda.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS ISSUED BY THE MEETING

3. Set forth hereunder are the principal recommendations put forward by the meeting participants at the conclusion of their discussions:

(a) The global financial and economic crisis provides an opportunity for integral change of economic and social policy towards a human development paradigm. This calls not only for greater government regulation of the economy but also for progressive social protection initiatives and greater social expenditure. Home-grown solutions and re-prioritization should be rights-based and people centered;

(b) The adoption of labour market policies to promote productive employment, develop human capital, increase social protection and enhance human welfare;

(c) The adoption of a heterodox approach to fiscal policy where expenditure should be shifted away from areas such as defense to focus on development and social objectives, including health, education, social protection and infrastructure, and where taxation policies are reviewed and reformed;

(d) Good governance and social participation are important elements of any economic or social reform agenda. Civil society organizations are natural social partners for development;

(e) In considering policy and programme responses to the crisis, ESCWA member countries should carefully consider the care economy and the non-paid work both inside and outside the home;

(f) ESCWA and other regional and international organizations should consider conducting a survey to review the impact of the crisis on the poor, women, children and the informal sector;

(d) Social protection and social insurance are important elements of an integrated social policy approach. Member countries of the ESCWA region should look to invest in social protection because it reduces poverty, builds human capital and gives the vulnerable population a stake in development and the state.

II. DISCUSSION TOPICS

4. The meeting was inaugurated with a keynote address delivered by a guest speaker. This was followed by three principal sessions and a roundtable discussion. During the course of the meeting, panelists, speakers and participants discussed the items on the agenda as they appeared in the organization of work.

A. EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS ON THE LABOUR MARKET

5. The first working session of the meeting was moderated by Mr. Samir Radwan, Labour Economist, who stressed the fact that with or without crisis, the ESCWA region suffers a problem of employability that

requires more thinking in terms of appropriate response. He stated that countries of the region need to admit the existence of the crisis and its impact on their economies, and start thinking about what needs to be done.

6. Mr. Mahmood Messkoub, Institute of Social Studies (ISS), the Netherlands, presented a paper on the impact of the crisis on employment and poverty in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, in which he highlighted the heterogeneous characteristics of the ESCWA region, noting that before the crisis the region had high unemployment rates, high poverty rates (mainly rural), and unequal distribution of income. While explaining that poor people cannot afford not to work, and thus have poor employment with poor returns, he questioned whether an increase in growth will subsequently lead to an increase in employment by the same rate. He explained that trade flows, labour migration, and financial flows including remittances constitute the main channels of transmission of the international crisis to the ESCWA region. In this respect, he argued that the stock markets in the ESCWA and MENA region were the first to be affected by the crisis, noting that resource rich ESCWA countries are better positioned to deal with the impact of the crisis. He also noted that once the crisis reaches the real economy, resource-poor labour-abundant countries will be highly affected, predicting that remittances will, at best, remain constant. Finally, Mr. Messkoub discussed the various policy responses to the crisis, differentiating between an orthodox interpretation of fiscal space which recommends cuts in public expenditure to maintain economic stability at the expense of long term development, compared to a heterodox one which recommends a shift in expenditure away from areas such as defense to focus on development objectives (health, education, social protection and infrastructure). He concluded by mentioning some policy responses adopted by countries of the region, stressing on the need to maintain social expenditure in order to alleviate the impact of the crisis on the poor.

7. In his presentation, Mr. Azfar Khan, International Labour Organization Regional Office, discussed the impact of the crisis on migration and remittances noting the scarcity of accurate data due to the lack of regular survey exercises on the subject. He noted that the crisis has not resulted in any significant impact on migration in GCC countries except for Dubai. In addition, the relative diversity of the migrant population like in Saudi Arabia has prevented the downturn. He focused on the Mashreq countries like Lebanon and Jordan that have both outgoing and incoming migration and where remittances constitute 30% and 27 % of GDP respectively, while other countries are major source countries. Mr. Khan argued that the World Bank projections regarding the impact on remittances were not borne out in reality, giving examples from Pakistan where the State Bank data has shown an increase in remittances from the Gulf, and Egypt where remittances have been more or less preserved. He concluded that there is no real change in migration and remittances in the region due to the crisis, pointing to the problem of migration in the Gulf as an issue of rights.

8. During the discussions that followed the session, participants agreed that the cost of the crisis has been socialized, noting that progressive forces have a space to come together. Participants also discussed the importance of enhancing social participation and reclaiming social solidarity during this period, when there is a need to maintain the agenda of decreasing poverty.

B. POVERTY, MDGS AND GENDER

9. The second working session was moderated by his H.E. Mr. Georges Corm, Former Minister of Finance in Lebanon, who urged that analysis of the impact of the crisis in the region should take into account the region's dependence on oil. He indicated that the economies of both oil exporters and importers are closely affected by changes in the oil market. He asked participants to look at the crux of the matter: "how long can we remain dependent on oil and remittances?". He also criticized the skewed investment in the region on luxury real estate and flashy infrastructure calling it a caricature.

10. Mr. Mahmoud Abdel-Fadil, Professor of Economics at Cairo University, presented a paper on the effect of the crisis on poverty in the region. Mr. Abdel-Fadil said that the crisis in the ESCWA region is still unraveling and it is too early to assess its full social impact. Nonetheless he argued that higher levels of unemployment, lower wages, depletion of savings and cultural impoverishment have led to the impoverishment of the middle and poor sections of population which has led to high levels of social instability. He focused especially on poor and vulnerable populations who are unable to cope with crises and emergencies. He said that those individuals and families living on the margins of poverty will be the most

affected with thousands of new families joining the ranks of the poor and a “thinning out” of the ranks of the middle class.

11. Mr. Adib Nehmeh, ESCWA, presented the effect of the crisis on the MDGs. He began his presentation by asking: “Is the crisis happening now, or has it been taking place for years?”. He argued that the crisis has existed long before the crash in 2008 and any solution must be constructed with this understanding. He was critical of the illusion of the global stocks and transactions based on speculation. He noted that under Goal 1 in the MDGs, Middle Income Countries and Least Developed countries stand to lose out the most with higher numbers of poor expected. He also predicted that under Goals 2, 4, 5 and 6, a reduction in public spending can be expected and all services that require large infrastructural investments will be affected even more severely. Mr. Nehmeh noted that the crisis provides an opportunity for integral change of economic and social policy.

12. Ms. Lina Abou Habib, Collective for Development and Training on Development-Action, began her presentation by reiterating the importance of holding accountable those responsible for the crisis. She argued that there is a clear intersection between capitalism on the one hand and patriarchy on the other and called for de-bunking the fallacy that only paid work constitutes work. She argued that in a region such as ESCWA where the care culture is strong, women shoulder a highly disproportionate share of care. She said that so far, the government’s response to the crisis has been oriented towards the male citizen to the exclusion of women in society. She called for an inclusive system that takes into account women’s work both inside and outside the home, and urged international organizations to look into the care economy.

13. During the discussions, a number of observations and comments were made. Mr. Mahmood Messkoub noted that although data is not always perfect, one can find overall trends. Mr. Hassan Abdel-Ati said that to date Arab governments have followed a neo-liberal model and that much more work needs to be done to influence this approach. Mr. Zafiris Tzannatos noted that “Recovery” does not necessarily mean a return to normal, but rather indicates a stop to the free fall of the economy. He noted that it may take years following a crisis such as this one to get employment rates back to what they were. Mr. Ibrahim Saif questioned the call for the return of the state, asking for a clear definition of what role for the new state and what kind of state? Ms. Ramla Khalidi questioned why analysts often focus on proving the economic rewards of social investments but rarely look at the social rewards of economic investment. She noted that it appeared that the same global institutions and structures that had created the global crisis have now been put in the driver’s seat to find a solution. Mr. Samir Radwan recommended that ESCWA or other international organizations should conduct a survey to review the impact of the crisis on the poor, women, children and the informal sector.

C. SOCIAL PROTECTION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

14. In the course of the third session moderated by Mr. Ziad Abdel-Samad, Arab NGO Network for Development, country case studies on the national experiences of social protection were presented by experts from the Sudan, Bahrain, and Morocco.

15. Mr. Hassan Abdel Ati, EDGE for Consultancy and Research, the Sudan, presented a paper on the effects of and response to the international crisis on the Sudan. After providing an overview of the Sudanese economy since the 1970s, Mr. Abdel-Ati argued that the global crisis did not spare the Sudan, and that in fact due to the country’s recent dependence on oil, the crisis and the fluctuating oil prices have been particularly severe on Southern Sudan and the poor, who make up close to two-thirds of the country’s population. Furthermore, Mr. Abdel-Ati noted that the Sudan has been transformed from a food exporter to a food importer with devastating effects on the poor. Mr. Abdel-Ati argued that the reaction to the crisis has been sluggish and not proportionate to the needs, and outlined a series of policy recommendations for the Government.

16. Mr. Farooq Ameen, Ministry of the Labour, Bahrain, delivered a presentation on the Labour Unemployment Scheme in the Kingdom initiated with the International Labour Organization (ILO) assistance in 2004 with a labour force survey and an actuarial study, and the issuance of a new law in 2006. Mr. Ameen described both the compensation scheme and the aid scheme saying that they are open to civil

servants, private sector workers, and first-time job seekers. Furthermore, and in a first in the Gulf region, the compensation scheme which includes re-training and assistance for job seekers, covers foreign workers.

17. Mr. Abdeljalil Grefft Alami, Ministry of Social Development, Morocco, described Morocco's efforts towards the development of a comprehensive social policy and social protection package. Mr. Alami gave details of the process of broad national participation created by the government in the build-up of the National Strategic Framework for Poverty Reduction. Initiated with the National Human Development Report (NHDR), the analysis of the gaps and challenges in socio-economic reform was undertaken. The NHDR called for a break with the past and the adoption of a development model that promotes strong economic growth that reduces poverty and inequality, does not produce new exclusions, and is sustainable. He called for holistic protection, building capacity and guaranteeing incomes.

18. During the discussions, several speakers noted the lessons and experiences highlighted during the presentations. Mr. Samir Radwan said unemployment insurance provides a needed short-cut to protect vulnerable workers who have lost their jobs. However, he noted that where this insurance is needed the most, in middle income countries and least developed countries like Morocco and the Sudan, it is not found. Several interventions focused on the need to take into account the vulnerability of workers in the informal sector, especially women and youth.

D. ROUNDTABLE ON POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

19. During the roundtable moderated by Mr. Rami Khoury, Issam Fares Policy Institute, AUB, Lebanon, interventions focused on the global, regional, and national responses. The roundtable sought to synthesize the discussions of the day's three sessions and conclude with a set of recommendations.

20. Mr. Krishnan Sharma, Financing for Development Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), argued that any drop in GDP will lead to major setbacks in achievements and social indicators. He noted the central role of inequality and the distribution of resources on the welfare of populations as well as on social cohesion. Mr. Sharma highlighted some of the inter-governmental recommendations, especially those emanating from the Outcome Document of the July 2009 World Conference on the Crisis. He noted in particular the UN System wide response of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination which includes:

- (a) Additional financing for the most vulnerable;
- (b) Food security;
- (c) Global jobs pact
- (d) Social protection floor;
- (e) Humanitarian, security and social security;
- (f) Monitoring and analysis (eg: GIVAS).

21. Mr. Frederico Neto, ESCWA, began his intervention with a note that social insurance is a critical element of a social policy that should not be very expensive at approximately 2 per cent of GDP. He argued that social protection is important because it reduces poverty, builds human capital and gives the vulnerable population a stake in development and the state. Mr. Neto said that while the response of governments in the short term is more or less clear (fiscal stimulus with social spending), in the medium term governments should focus on Protection of the vulnerable, Prevention through insurance and social transfers and Promotion of resilience and livelihoods (the 3 Ps). He gave the example of Indonesia which following the Asian financial crisis in 1997 was able to slash poverty rates from 33 per cent to 12 per cent through coherent social policies and well designed social safety nets.

22. Mr. Ibrahim Saif, National Economic and Social Council, Jordan, argued that development must be placed at the heart of economic planning. He said that the policies of the past two decades were unsustainable and have led many countries in the region to "hit a brick wall". He said one must differentiate between GCC countries and others. Among his main recommendations were:

- (a) a review of the taxation policies in the Arab region;
- (b) re-focusing priorities and placing people first in economic and development planning;
- (c) further investigation and research should be focused on the informal sector, and its role in the economy;
- (d) direct subsidy programmes to the poor who have been affected by the crisis;
- (e) focus on education programmes and the links with poverty.

23. In the discussion that followed the roundtable interventions, comments focused on the need to advocate among governments in the region to take advantage of the small window of opportunity presented by the crisis to re-shape and refocus years of economic and social policy away from a neo-liberal agenda towards a more development centered and people centered platform that integrates social concerns in economic planning. This paradigm shift is possible only with coordinated action and solid partnerships between all stakeholders in society. The transformative role of the state was highlighted, with participants calling for a re-examination of the role of government in leading change. Mr. Samir Radwan said that analysts should not be focused on the “oppressive state” but a government that can lead change. He argued that trickle down will never take place given the high rate of illiteracy among Arab populations, as well as the high numbers of people working in the agricultural and informal sectors. He suggested that ESCWA should focus on new thinking and to continue to act as a convener of regional expertise in an effort to find home-grown solutions.

24. Mr. Ziad Abdel-Samad stressed the importance of democratic governance in all its elements of participation, accountability, transparency, etc, and the relationship with the state. He also stressed that any sustainable solutions should be built on a rights-based approach where social rights are at the heart of economic planning. Mr. Rami Khouri noted that any discussion on the role of the state is by definition complex, and is compounded in the region by interventions in the social sector by the private sector, religious groups, tribal groups and civil society organizations. He said that in a number of countries, parallel structures and social systems are being built along those of the state.

25. Participants at the roundtable also stressed the importance of endorsing social insurance schemes and social protection programmes aimed at reducing poverty, building human capital and giving vulnerable populations a stake in development. Mr. Zafiris Tzannatos praised the ILO’s Global Jobs Pact and Social Protection Floor saying they had the potential to become the framework for long-term action. Participants unanimously called for homegrown solutions to the region’s development problems founded on evidence-based research and analysis, and effective social dialogue and participation.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. VENUE AND DATE

26. The Expert Group Meeting on the Global Financial and Economic Crisis: the Social Impact and Response in ESCWA Countries was held at the United Nations House in Beirut on 8 December 2009.

B. OPENING

27. Mr. Roberto Bissio, Third World Institute, Uruguay, gave the opening keynote address which included observations on the social impact of the crisis from a civil society perspective. Mr. Bissio based his observations on the Social Watch Report 2009, which includes 61 reports prepared by civil society organizations from around the world. The report, described as the first bottom up report on the social impact of the crisis, concludes that poverty and inequities have been globalized and that the real situation on the ground is worse than any model could predict. Mr. Bissio stated that attention should be given to the “invisible victims of the crisis”, namely domestic workers, women, children and the poor, who are most impacted by the crisis, but had no responsibility in creating it, noting that these are the people least likely to influence the political decisions and least likely to benefit from responses. He noted the rare consideration to the gender aspects of the crisis and measures to counter it, except in UN documents. He argued that women

will be most impacted by the crisis from both economic and social perspectives, since they are the first to lose their jobs and last to recover, they are more affected by the decrease in social services, and they are subject to more domestic violence by unemployed men who are unable to provide.

28. On the other hand, Mr. Bissio stated that the impact of the crisis is not immediate and not all countries are affected similarly. Worth noting is that in many countries the crisis has been continuously there for decades and did not start with the collapse of the financial markets. Increasing unemployment, rising poverty and social exclusion, diminishing remittances, decreasing exports, and returning migrants have been reported around the world. He critiqued the belief that the market will solve the problem by itself, saying that governments are back into the scene, generating a political dispute about where the money provided by governments should and will go. He provided examples on impact and responses from various countries in Latin America, Eastern and Western Europe, the US and the MENA region. He also noted that while some countries are resorting to foreign aid or their own resources to save their falling economies and bailout banks, others are resorting to harsh fiscal and monetary initiatives and cutting on their social expenditures, an intervention deemed unacceptable in times of crisis. In addition, in some countries, governments as well as social organizations are in denial state claiming that introducing the crisis to the political system will have worse results. Social watchers from many countries around the world have reported fear of social organizations and the people in general that the government responses would benefit the already privileged, stressing on the point that the ethical option of supporting the vulnerable in times of crisis is also the choice that makes economic sense.

29. Mr. Bissio concluded that the crisis has generated an appetite for reform that unfortunately will be diluted by the recovery and by the time the crisis reaches developing countries. He critiqued the G20 agenda for responding to the crisis, noting that the UN agenda went farther in terms of ambitions. He mentioned that the analysis of the crisis by the UN has been much deeper, putting the blame where it should go and making proper suggestions. He highlighted the need to reform the voice of the developing countries in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), predicting that other issues brought to the agenda on a global scale such as the eradication of fiscal heavens and bank secrecy are not likely to have short term decisions around them.

C. PARTICIPANTS

30. The meeting was attended by around 30 regional and international experts, practitioners, and United Nations agency representatives. A list of participants and summary biographies are contained in annex I and II of this report respectively.

D. AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

31. The organization of work is contained in Annex III of this report.

E. DOCUMENTS

32. A list of the documents to the Forum is available in Annex IV of this report as well as on the ESCWA website at: <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=1162E>.

Annex I

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Annex II

SUMMARY BIOGRAPHIES

Roberto Bissio



A journalist by profession, Roberto Bissio, is the Executive Director of the Third World Institute, a non-profit organization committed to the promotion of South-South information exchange and the access of communities and citizen organizations to information. He is chief editor of the reference book "The World Guide", published every two years in English, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese with a development perspective on international relations. Under his direction, the Third World Institute started in 1989 the first Internet Service Provider in Uruguay and also UruguayTotal, the most visited "portal" and directory of the country. The Institute sued the Uruguayan government in 1991, forcing it to change monopolistic regulations that made Internet access difficult for the public, it initiated projects to provide access for blind people and has actively promoted the use of ICT tools by international civil society organizations and campaigners.

Mr. Bissio is also coordinator of the international secretariat of Social Watch (www.socialwatch.org) a network of Civil Society Organizations monitoring gender and anti-poverty policies in 60 countries; a member of the civil society advisory group to the UNDP administrator; a member of the boards of Third World Network, of the Montreal International Forum and of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO).

Samir Radwan



Samir Radwan is one of the Arab World's most well-known development economists and employment specialists. He is currently a Member and Advisor on the Board of Trustees of the Investment and Free Zones Authority of Egypt (GAFI). From 2003-2006, he was Managing Director of the Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries Iran and Turkey, a regional think-tank based in Cairo. Prior to that, he had spent close to 30 years in the International Labour Organization where he held key positions including Adviser to the ILO's Director-General on Development Policies and Counselor on Arab Countries. He is the author of a number of seminal books and publications on labor markets, industrialization, development and agrarian systems and poverty.

Dr. Radwan holds a PhD in Economics from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, a Masters in Economics of Underdeveloped Countries from the University of London and a BA in Economics from Cairo University.

Mahmood Messkoub



Mahmood Messkoub is a Senior Lecturer in Development Studies at the International Institute for Social Studies of Erasmus University, Rotterdam, where his focus is on social policy and poverty. Prior to joining the ISS, Dr. Messkoub was a lecturer at Leeds University Business School. He has also held Visiting Scholar positions at Boston University, the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, and the Nobel Institute, Oslo. He is widely published on issues of demography, employment, poverty and social policy, and is consultant to a number of international and UN organizations including the ILO and UNRISD.

Dr. Messkoub holds a PhD in Economics from Queen Mary's (University of London), a Masters in Economics from the University of Leicester, and a BA in Economics from the National University of Iran.

Azfar Khan



Azfar Khan is the Senior Migration Specialist in the ILO's Regional Office for Arab States. In his ILO career he has held a wide array of positions as a Technical Advisor on Population and Poverty in the Development Policies Department, as a Development Economist in the Socio-Economic Security Programme and more recently as the Senior Migration Policy Specialist in the International Migration Programme based in Geneva. Prior to joining the ILO, he was a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague, the Netherlands, where he also served as the Director of the UNFPA/Government of Netherlands Global Programme of Training in Population and Development. He has written widely on a range of topics examining the interrelationship of economics, population, poverty and social security.

He holds a PhD in Economics and Development Studies from the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, and a Masters of Arts in Economics and Bachelor of Arts in Economics from McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

Georges Corm



Georges Corm is an eminent Lebanese economist and historian. He began his career with the Lebanese Civil Service in 1963. In 1969 he entered the field of Arab and International banking. In 1980 he became Advisor to the Governor of the Central Bank of Lebanon and in 1985 he established in Paris as an independent Economic and Financial Consultant for Arab and International institutions as well as several private financial institutions and companies. In December 1998 he was appointed Minister of Finance of the Lebanese Republic (up to October 2000). He has been Professor Lecturer since 1969 at various Lebanese Universities and is now Professor at Saint-Joseph University where he teaches “International Economic Cooperation” and “Financial Management of the State”.

He studied in Paris and graduated from the *Institut d'Etudes Politiques* (with majors in Economy and Public Finance) in 1961 and from the *Faculté de Droit et de Sciences Economiques* (PhD in Constitutional Law in 1969). He is a member of several academic boards in the Middle East and Europe and Member of the Board of Trustees and Secretary General of the *Arab Organization to Fight Corruption*. He has published extensively in Arabic, French and English on economic topics, and has several award winning works. His website is: www.georgescorm.com

Mahmoud Abdel-Fadil



Mahmoud Abdel-Fadil is a senior Egyptian Economist, and Professor of Economics at the Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences in Cairo University, a post he has held since 1983. Dr. Abdel-Fadil has over twenty years of international experience in macro- and micro-economics as well as wide experience in sector planning, rural development and regional planning. He is considered a regional authority on issues of poverty and income distribution. He is consultant to several United Nations and international organizations including UNDP, the World Bank, the IMF, UN University, the ILO, UN-ESCWA and others and has undertaken assignments in Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Morocco and the UAE. He is a member of the Egyptian Society for Economic Sciences, and sits on the Editorial Board of the Cambridge Journal of Economics.

Dr. Abdel-Fadil holds a PhD in Economics from Sorbonne University in Paris and a BA in Finance and Accounting from Cairo University.

Adib Nehmeh



Adib Nehmeh is the Regional Advisor on Social Statistics at ESCWA. Mr. Nehmeh is a Social Development Specialist with many years of experience working in the Arab region on issues of human development, social policy, MDGs, and poverty. Prior to joining ESCWA, Mr. Nehmeh was UNDP's Regional Advisor on Poverty supporting 18 UNDP Country Offices and governments in the region in the design, implementation and monitoring of poverty programmes and policies. Mr. Nehmeh was also Project Manager at the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs where he oversaw a number of key projects including the development of an index of living conditions based on the unsatisfied basic needs (UBN) approach.

Mr. Nehmeh holds a DEA degree in Sociology, and Masters degree in Law and Philosophy. He is a lawyer, a civil society activist and a board member of several national or regional CSOs. Mr. Nehmeh has authored and contributed to many publications, including books, reports, papers, training materials, and articles on poverty, human development, gender, disability, and youth & adolescents.

Lina Abou-Habib



Lina Abou-Habib is the Director of the Collective for Development and Training on Development – Action (CRTD-A), a regional organization working in action research, programme interventions, campaigning and lobbying on gender equality and social justice in the MENA region. Ms. Abou-Habib has been involved in the design and management of development programmes in the Middle East and North Africa region on issues related to gender and citizenship, economy, trade and gender and leadership. She is a co-founder and coordinator of the Machreq/Maghreb Gender Linking and Information Programme. Ms. Abou-Habib has collaborated with a number of regional and international agencies, including The Royal Tropical Institute, UNIFEM, ILO, ESCWA, UNDP, UNRWA, EMHRN, WB, IDRC as well as public institutions, in mainstreaming gender in development policies and practices and in building capacities for gender mainstreaming. Prior to that, she was the Programme Coordinator for Oxfam GB in Lebanon. Ms. Abou-Habib is a programme advisor for the Women's Learning Partnership and the Global Fund for Women and is on the editorial board of Oxfam's journal, Gender and Development. Currently, she is involved in CRTDA's Arab Women's Right to Nationality Campaign and is the Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Association of Women's Rights in Development.

Ziad Abdel Samad



Ziad Abdel Samad is the Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), based in Beirut, since 1999. ANND brings together 30 NGOs and nine national networks from 12 Arab countries active in the fields of social development, human rights, gender, and the environment. The network, established in 1997, focuses on developing the capacity of Arab civil society organizations and promoting democracy, human rights, participation and good governance in civil society and among governments. He has been an active participant in a number of United Nations conferences, WTO negotiations and the World Social Forum. Mr. Abdel Samad is also a member of the Lebanese Negotiating Committee for the accession to the WTO. He sits on the International Council of the World Social Forum and the Coordination Committee of Social Watch, an international network of citizen coalitions that monitors the implementation of the commitments made at the 1995 World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen. Mr. Abdel Samad is a member of the Board of Directors of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. He is a member of the UNDP CSO Advisory Committee to the Administrator. Mr. Abdel Samad is the President of the National Steering Committee of the UNDP Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE) programme in Lebanon and General Manager of the Centre for Developmental Studies (MADA), a Lebanese centre for social and economic studies and research.

Hassan Abdel Ati



Dr. Abdel-Ati is Associate Professor of Development Studies and Director of EDGE for Consultancy & Research in Khartoum. He is also the Secretary General of the National Civic Forum, a platform for political dialogue and peace, and a member in several regional and international networks. Dr. Abdel-Ati previously taught at the University of Khartoum's Geography Department and at the University of Bergen in Norway. He is a consultant for a number of international development agencies, including UNDP Sudan. He is author and editor of several books on Pastoralism, the Environment, Sustainable Development, Marginalization and Peace in the Sudan.

Dr. Abdel-Ati holds an MSc in Regional Planning and a PhD in Development Studies from the University of Wales.

Farooq Ameen Mohammad Abdulla



Farooq Ameen is the Director of Bahrain's Unemployment Insurance Scheme at the Ministry of Labour. He has a long career with the Government of Bahrain as Senior Researcher in Social Planning, Senior Specialist in NGO Activities and Head of the International Relations Section. Mr. Ameen has authored several books and papers on social change in Bahrain focused on issues of women and the family.

Mr. Ameen holds a Masters degree in Sociology of Development from the University of Essex, UK, and a BA in Sociology from Kuwait University.

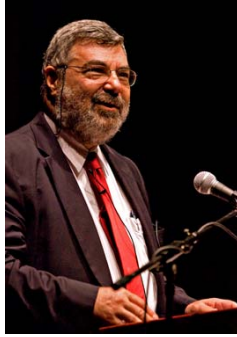
Abdeljalil Grefft-Alami



Abdeljalil Grefft-Alami is a medical doctor with many years of experience in public health, social development and social security. Dr. Grefft-Alami was formerly the Secretary General and Director General of the Moroccan National Social Security Fund. Dr. Grefft-Alami has also held a number of high ranking advisory positions in Morocco's Cabinet, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health. He is consultant to a number of international and United Nations organizations including the World Bank, UNDP and UN/ESCWA, and has been a key author of a number of national reports, including the National Human Development Report of Morocco and the National MDG Report. Dr. Grefft-Alami has also supported the Ministry of Social Development in the identification and formulation of a number of programmes to combat poverty and social exclusion.

Dr. Grefft-Alami holds a doctorate in Medicine from the University of Montpellier.

Rami Khouri



Rami Khouri is the Director of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut. Mr. Khouri is a renowned journalist in the region. His journalism work includes several books and an internationally syndicated column by Agence Global. He also serves as editor at large of the Beirut-based Daily Star newspaper. Mr. Khouri was a Nieman Journalism Fellow at Harvard University (2001-2002), nonresident senior fellow of the Dubai Initiative at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University and was appointed a member of the Brookings Institution Task Force on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World. Mr. Khouri is also a research associate at the Programme on the Analysis and Resolution of Conflict at the Maxwell School, Syracuse University (NY, USA), a Fellow of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, Jerusalem (PASSIA), and a member of the Leadership Council of the Harvard University Divinity School. Mr. Khouri also serves on the board of the East-West Institute, the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University and the National Museum of Jordan. Mr. Khouri was a visiting scholar at Stanford University in October 2006, and in November 2006, he was the co-recipient of the Pax Christi International Peace Award for his efforts to bring peace and reconciliation to the Middle East.

Frederico Neto



Frederico Neto is the Chief of the Social Development Division of UN/ESCWA in Beirut. He has a wide range of work experience in the economic, social and environmental fields, accumulated during 19 years of service in the UN system. He was previously the Chief of the Urban Economy and Finance Branch at UN-HABITAT in Nairobi, where he dealt with urban employment issues, rural-urban economic linkages and municipal finance. Mr. Neto began his UN career at Department of Economic and Social Affairs in New York, covering several sustainable development issues, including water resource management and climate change. He was a member of the Secretariat of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and was responsible for several chapters of the Annual UN Flagship publication World Economic and Social Survey. He is also the author of many articles in several areas of international development policy.

He holds a PhD in Economics from the London School of Economics and a Masters degree in Urban Economics from University College London.

Krishnan Sharma



Krishnan Sharma is an Economist in the Financing for Development Office of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. He is the lead economist for analyzing developments relating to private capital flows to developing countries and providing policy recommendations. His recent achievements include collaborating with the World Economic Forum to devise ways to mitigate the risks faced by private investors in infrastructure projects in developing countries. Sharma has also undertaken extensive research on economic and financial issues relating to emerging economies in Asia and Latin America, and has published papers and books on issues ranging from corporate bond market development to GDP-linked securities and the Asian financial crises. He is currently working on a project concerning the impact of diasporas on entrepreneurship. Prior to joining the UN, Sharma worked in the financial sector in London. He was a senior economist at the Henley Centre for Forecasting and later an economic affairs advisor at Old Mutual International Asset Managers.

Ibrahim Saif



Ibrahim Saif is the Secretary General of the newly established Economic and Social Council of Jordan. He is an economist specializing in the political economy of the Middle East with research interests in international trade and structural adjustment programs in developing countries, with emphasis on Jordan and the Middle East. Dr. Saif serves as a consultant to international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the International Labor Organization and is a fellow with the Economic Research Forum and a member of the Global Development Network. He has taught at both the University of London and Yale University, where he offered courses on the Economies of the Middle East.

Dr. Saif holds a PhD from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

Annex III

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 9:45	Opening Session Keynote: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roberto Bissio, Director, Third World Institute (Uruguay) and Coordinator, Social Watch
9:45 – 10:00	Break
10:00 – 11:15	Session 1: Effects of the Crisis on the Labour Market Moderator: Samir Radwan , Labour Economist, Egypt Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employment Challenges in the Region: Mahmood Messkoub, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague• Impact on Migration and Remittances: Azfar Khan, International Labour Organization Regional Office, Lebanon Discussion
11:15 – 13:00	Session 2: Poverty, MDGs and Gender Moderator: HE Georges Corm , Economist, historian and former Minister of Finance, Lebanon Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• On Poverty: Mahmoud Abdel-Fadhil, Cairo University, Egypt• On MDGs: Adib Nehmeh, UN-ESCWA, Lebanon• On Gender: Lina Abu-Habib, Collective for Development and Training on Development, Lebanon Discussion
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	Session 3: Social Protection in times of Crisis Moderator: Ziad Abdel-Samad , Arab NGO Network for Development, Lebanon Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global Lessons & Best Practices: Hassan Abdel-Ati, EDGE for Consultancy & Research, Sudan• Unemployment Insurance in Bahrain: Farooq Ameen, Ministry of Labour, Bahrain• Social Policy Reform in Morocco: Abdeljalil Grefft-Alami, Ministry of Social Development, Morocco

Discussion

15:30 – 15:45

Break

15:45 – 17:00

Session 4: Roundtable on Policy Recommendations

Moderator: Rami Khoury, Issam Fares Policy Institute, AUB, Lebanon

Discussants:

- **Krishnan Sharma**, Financing for Development Division, UNDESA, New York
- **Frederico Neto**, SDD, ESCWA, Lebanon
- **Ibrahim Seif**, National Economic and Social Council, Jordan

Annex IV

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Title	Symbol
Concept Note	E/ESCWA/SDD/2009/WG.4/3
Organization of Work	E/ESCWA/SDD/2009/WG.4/L.1
Keynote address on the Social Impact of the Crisis: Observations and Proposals from a Civil Society Perspective	E/ESCWA/SDD/2009/WG.4/2
The Impact of Global Financial Crisis on Employment and Poverty in the MENA Region	E/ESCWA/SDD/2009/WG.4/
The Global Crisis and its Impact on Poverty in the ESCWA region	E/ESCWA/SDD/2009/WG.4/
Sudan and the International Financial Crisis: Effects and Response	E/ESCWA/SDD/2009/WG.4/