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Arab NGO Network for Development  
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

Arab NGO Network for Development

# Annual Report 2017





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**The Arab NGO Network for Development works in 12 Arab countries, with 9 national networks (with an extended membership of 250 CSOs from different backgrounds) and 23 NGO members.**

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# 1. Arab Watch Report on Social and Economic Rights

Arab Watch Report (AWR) is an ANND research-tool for strengthening civil society's role in monitoring social and economic policies with a human rights-based approach. Published biannually since 2012, AWR focuses on national, regional, and international policies and factors leading to the violation of economic and social rights. Country-level qualitative and quantitative analysis on the focus of the year is used by researchers to develop set of recommendations that are used in ANND advocacy work. Thematic papers and regional analysis are included to provide a comprehensive view on the selected theme as well. As a result AWR becomes a key resource tool at the center of ANND advocacy work. To date, ANND has published 3 AWRs;

**2012 Arab Watch Report on the right to work and the right to education**

**2014 Arab Watch Report on Social Protection**

**2016 Arab Watch Report on Informal Employment**

In 2018 ANND will publish the AWR on **Food Security, Sovereignty and Rural Development.**

## Activities Completed

### **a. Launch of the 2016 Arab Watch Report in Beirut and Cairo on 8-9 May 2017:**

On 8 May 2017, ANND, in cooperation with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, held a workshop to launch the "Arab Watch on Economic and Social Rights 2016: Informal Labor" at the Institute's premises at the American University of Beirut. The next day, the report was launched in Cairo, in collaboration with the American University of Cairo (AUC), the Economic Research Forum (ERF), and the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement, at the ERF premises in Cairo. In addition to launching the report, the two workshops aimed to initiate a serious and comprehensive debate on informal employment in the Arab region.

***"Informal labor is not a marginal issue in Arab countries. It is a core component of modern Arab economies and the distribution of work therein and is doomed to expand under current policies."***

***Samir Aita, Lead Researcher, Arab Watch on Economic and Social Rights: Informal Labor***

The 2016 Arab Watch report contains two main sections. Section one covers the global and regional context, through the analysis of national reports and international data and statistics. It also contains studies on the relationship of informal labor with neoliberal policies, migration, and the gender aspect. Section two contains national reports from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. The report reaches several vital conclusions, namely that the "highest percentages of lack of formality are in countries with the least strict laws and bureaucracies, and vice versa. This goes against the stereotype that says that informality is a result of strict



laws and bureaucracies.” It also concludes that “informal labor in Arab countries is mostly waged labor, except in rare cases, which contradicts another idea that says that informal labor is a choice, as young people entering the job market have no choice but to find any type of livelihood, no matter how fragile or temporary.”

### **b. The Arab Watch Report 2016 findings were presented at international meetings:**

The lead researcher of the AWR 2016 participated in the international meetings and presented the main findings of the report. This included:

- The 12th meeting expert group on Informal Sector Statistics at International Labor Organization (October 2-3, 2017) which focused on the statistics and challenges on the informal employment
- The IMF/WB Annual Meetings Civil Society Forum (October 11, 2017) that covered gender and informal employment

### **c. Start of preparatory work for the 2018 Arab Watch Report:**

As in previous AWR process, preparatory work AWR 2018 started with an expert meeting held on 10 November 2017 to discuss key concepts related to the theme of the AWR. Experts' discussions made it clear that food security and access to food is not a geographically defined issue but rather depends on market mechanisms implemented. Yet, it was also mentioned that there is a need to move from food security to food sovereignty, as the latter puts the decision in the hands of local communities and ensures sovereignty in food policy that depends on sustainability and agricultural development. In this context, neoliberal policies, trade and investment, production and consumption patterns were elaborated with their impacts on food sovereignty.

The meeting report will serve as a key input for the AWR 2018 research at national level and for regional and thematic papers.



## 2. Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted in September 2015, including a declaration, 17 Goals and 169 Targets. The preparatory phase of the Agenda was very inclusive, diverting distinctively from the previous development agenda, the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, ensuring a transformative agenda and leaving no one behind, as promised by the 2030 Agenda, would be the real test-case for the success of the Agenda. In this regard, effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation is key and is the real challenge. This must involve all development actors in light of the mutual accountability principle.

ANND as a regional network organization, prior to the adoption of the Agenda 2030 enabled regional exchange platforms for formulating civil society recommendations for the Agenda and supporting civil society advocacy for a rights-based Agenda. In this regard, ANND undertook several capacity development activities as well as making resource-material on mutual accountability available, focusing on different roles played by development actors within the Agenda 2030 context. Furthermore, starting with the adoption and implementation of the SDGs, ANND has engaged in effective monitoring and contributed with its members and partners in national reviews as part of the Reflection Group, a new 2030 watch initiative. Currently ANND implements a project entitled “Mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab Civil Society Agenda”.

*“Foreign occupation, armed conflicts and wars are key challenges, even before talking about stability and essential political reforms. It is obvious that there is no development without peace and no peace without development. Moreover, systemic challenges, which are the result of persisting neoliberal authoritarianism after the Arab uprisings, are going side by side with austerity measures and neoliberal economic policies imposed and promoted mainly by the International Financial Institutions and other partners.” Ziad Abdel Samad, ANND Executive Director*

### Activities Completed

**a. National Dialogues on the implementation of the SDGs were held in Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia and Jordan** to discuss the national reports and to undertake a comprehensive national assessment reflecting the implementation of Agenda 2030 and socio-economic reform initiatives.

- o In Egypt: On 28-29 March 2017, in coordination with the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement and the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights
- o In Lebanon: On 4-5 April in coordination with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs-American University of Beirut, the Lebanese Observatory for the Rights of Workers and Employees, Lebanese Trade Union Training Center, Mouvement Social, and the Lebanese Transparency Association.



**b. A validation session for the resource-guide “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A Manual for Practitioners” was organized on 16-17 June 2017:**

Two-day validation session for the finalization of the Manual on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development brought together key development stakeholders in order to discuss main findings and recommendations included in the Manual and to elaborate further on the implementation of the Agenda at national and regional levels. Participating stakeholders from civil society, trade union, academics presented cases from national levels, in order to ensure the exchange of best-practices and lessons-learned. The Manual covers Goal 1, 8, 10 and 16.

*Details are available at: <http://www.annd.org/data/item/pdf/513.pdf>*

**c. A regional Conference on the “Role of CSOs in Implementing SDGs” was organized on 3-4 July 2017 at the League of Arab States General Headquarters in Cairo, Egypt**

The conference was organized as part of the implementation of the Arab Decade for Civil Society Organizations and in coordination with the League of Arab States’ General Secretariat (CSO Directorate) and the Economic and Social Council for Western Asia (ESCWA). The meeting shed light on the key and integrated challenges faced by Arab CSOs, the most important of which probably being the lack of dialogue among stakeholders in various Arab countries, as well as not including CSOs in many planning processes, which require the adoption of a holistic approach founded on sustainable human development, human rights, public freedoms, and democracy as a basis to achieve development.

*Report available at <http://www.annd.org/data/file/files/LAS-Agenda2030-Report-EN.pdf>*

**d. ANND Delegation participated at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2017 and raised civil society concerns on the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in the Arab region**

ANND’s delegation to the HLPF was formed of civil society representatives from Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, and Morocco. At the 2017 HLPF, Jordan became the third country from the Arab region to participate in the Voluntary National Review process; following Egypt and Morocco in the 2016 review. As in many parts of the world, the Arab region lags behind in the implementation of the Agenda 2030; structural challenges on social, economic and political levels continue and inequalities continue to widen. The Arab States lack road maps for implementation and are still trying to identify ways and means to integrate the three pillars of Sustainable Development in their institutional structures, national plans, and budgets. As the Ministerial Declaration adopted at HLPF reaffirms, the pace of implementation must be accelerated. A statement was issued by the delegation members following the Ministerial outcome of HLPF.

*Statement is available at <http://www.annd.org/english/itemId.php?itemId=532>*



**e. ANND monitored the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and developed national reports for Spotlight 2017 and within the implementation of the UNDEF project entitled “Mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab Civil Society Agenda”**

The Spotlight Report is published by ANND, the Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Global Policy Forum (GPF), Public Services International (PSI), Social Watch, Society for International Development (SID), and Third World Network (TWN), supported by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The national reports on SDGs implementation for the Spotlight 2017 focused primarily on the role of private sector. As Spotlight 2017 presents, “in recent decades, the combination of neoliberal ideology, corporate lobbying, regressive fiscal policies, tax avoidance and tax evasion has led to a massive weakening of the public sector and its ability to provide essential goods and services. The same corporatized strategies and fiscal and regulatory policies that led to this weakening have enabled an unprecedented accumulation of individual wealth and increasing market concentration. The proponents of privatization and public-private partnerships (PPPs) use these trends to present the private sector as the most efficient way to provide the necessary means for implementing the SDGs. But many studies and experiences by affected communities have shown that privatization and PPPs involve disproportionate risks and costs for people and the public purse.” National reports from Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia and Egypt shed light on the role of private sector in development and included cases of violations on economic and social rights. The 2017 Spotlight Report on Sustainable Development was launched during the HLPF on 10 July 2017.

***“To ensure that the Arab region’s Sustainable Development priorities are being achieved, it is imperative to put in place a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress, identify areas of concern, monitor financial resources allocated to the set of priorities, and assess the overall impact of the key policies and programs in meeting the SDGs. As a regional network of NGOs, ANND is fully engaged in active and effective monitoring of the 2030 Agenda at national and regional level. On substantive issues, ANND looks at this Agenda with a critical eye. It reproaches the Agenda for adopting a non-obligatory approach and having a weak human rights dimension.” Dr. Saadi Mohamed, ANND Researcher, Morocco***

**2017 Spotlight Reports are available at <http://www.annd.org/english/itemId.php?itemId=537>**

On the other hand, within the framework of UNDEF project, ANND developed 5 country reports (Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco), snapshots on development challenges and key asks of civil society (based as well on the outcome of national workshops) and launched the work for the e-platform. E-platform will provide a visual space for civil society groups mainstreaming SDGs in their agenda to exchange information, disseminate research, access to key resources.



**f. ANND organized International Workshop on “Strengthening Public Policies for the 2030 Agenda” on 30 November to 1 December 2017 in coordination with The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB). During the event, a public launch was organized for the 2017 Spotlight Report**

The workshop, together with the participation of the Reflection Group members provided a space for exchange of experiences and strategies among representatives of national, regional and global civil society. The meeting focused on people and planet, public-private partnerships, as well as the experience-sharing for CSOs HLPF engagement.

**Videos of the event are available at <http://www.annd.org/english/itemId.php?itemId=566>**

**g. ANND participated in several international and regional meetings and presented civil society concerns on the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and key challenges for achieving sustainable development in the region.**

These meetings were an occasion to highlight structural regional problems in the implementation of the Agenda. These include:

- o Occupation, war and conflicts, insecurity and instability as there could be no development without peace and no peace without development.
- o Persistence of neoliberal authoritarianism after the Arab uprisings
- o Austerity measures and neoliberal economic policies imposed and promoted in the region by the European Union and the International Financial Institutions.

***“The European Union should renew its commitment on the Agenda 2030, play a key role in reforming global economy, global governance and corporates. With its policies on trade, development and aid particularly should address inequality among and within countries and enhance policy coherence for sustainable development, to protect human rights, enhance transparency and accountability.” Ziad Abdel Samad, ANND Executive Director- intervention notes at ‘Global South’ perspectives on the European crises”***



### 3. Monitoring EU Policy Impact in the Region

The European Union is a key partner for the Arab region. Following the revision of the European Neighborhood Policy in 2015, at bilateral level exchanges took place with the Southern Neighborhood countries for the adoption of Partnership Priorities by late 2016. On the other hand processes on Structured Dialogue continued as reflected in the 2016 EU Global Strategy', which calls for a stronger engagement with civil society in partner countries. Whereas the new ENP introduced 'stabilization' as key and acknowledged that the causes of instability often lie outside the security domain alone, Euro-centric security concerns peaked during the implementation of ENP in 2016 and 2017. This was due to several terrorists' attacks in Europe and migrant flows. In order to address the root causes of the migration, and enable job creation in September 2017 the EU launched the European External Investment Plan. The plan is based on pooling public resources and using Official Development Assistance to subsidize private companies.

ANND's monitoring and advocacy work to the European Union continued with its main call since the Barcelona Process: a partnership that serves development, human rights, peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean shores, ensuring mutual responsibility and accountability.

ANND considers that policy revisions undertaken by the EU remains limited. Euro-centric discourse and focuses on addressing challenges such as terrorism, refugees and migration with a security-based approach is challenging for a genuine partnership. In addition, collaboration is sought on trade, investment, infrastructure support, energy and tourism sectors principally and in a short-sided vision, thus undermining the development needs of the people in the region.

#### Activities Completed

##### **a. ANND became part of the Regional Hub on Structured Dialogue and continued active participation at Civil Society Forum-Neighborhood South on Structured Dialogue**

In follow up to the December 2016 Regional Workshop of Euromed civil society organizations, and together with the European civil society counterparts and networks from South, ANND became part of the Regional Hub for Structured Dialogue. As part of the Hub, ANND in 2018 will be part of civil society forums, regional thematic meetings and research work on EU policy impacts in the region. For 2017, ANND actively participated to the Civil Society Forum-Neighborhood South meetings (Tunis on May 25-27, 2017, Brussels 10-12 July, 2017).

***"...on the sectorial engagement, whereas the Draft strategy highlights the private sector investment in natural resource production and in oil sector, civil society assessment sheds light on the very fact that "loans towards oil extraction make no sense as this sector has access to credit, and maintaining oil extraction***



*will not contribute to resolving the existing power crisis in Egypt.” Input for the EBRD consultation on Egypt Draft Country Strategy available at <http://www.annd.org/data/item/pdf/455.pdf>*

### **b. ANND, together with SOLIDAR, Espace Associatif and SOLIDAR-MENA project Moroccan partners organized a Regional Meeting on Youth and Employment**

Within the framework of a project on “Decent Work, Social Protection and Freedom of Association in the Middle East and North Africa: Mobilizing for Social Justice by strengthening and promoting CSOs, social movements and the (independent) trade unions’ role in reforms and democratic changes”, a two-day regional meeting was organized in Rabat, Morocco on November 24 and 25, 2017. The meeting focused on youth and employment in the region, highlighting that youth employment should be a common denominator addressed within the EU-Arab partnership. During the meeting civil society representatives from both shores of the Mediterranean noted that empowering youth starts initially with recognizing their needs and protecting and fulfilling their rights and freedoms.

In return, responding to their needs requires adapted capacity-building opportunities and the implementation of policies providing future possibilities. To be effectively hearing the voices of youth and engaging them directly in shaping their own future is vital. Furthermore, empowering youth necessitates moving beyond isolated youth programmes and projects towards a comprehensive look at the issue of sustainable development and adopting reforms to address structural challenges faced at diverse levels, being economic, social or political.

### **c. ANND monitored the role of the European Development Banks**

Input was submitted within the framework of the consultation launched on the Draft Country Strategy for Egypt together with the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights.

A position paper for the EIB visit to Jordan was published focusing on the role of civil society in development. A transparent, participatory, and inclusive social dialogue is needed in Jordan (and in other countries of the region that the Bank invests in) to identify priority areas for cooperation-respecting country ownership. The social dialogue should also be expanded to discuss the EIB investments’ added-value in addressing development challenges with rights-based impact.

*Position paper, "EIB: a litmus test of political will in Jordan", available at <http://www.annd.org/english/itemId.php?itemId=493>*

### **d. ANND provided input to official consultations launched raising civil society concerns on EU policies**

**Input provided for the Public Consultation on the External Financing Instruments of the European Union:** The submission focused on the European Instrument for



Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI) and their relevance; effectiveness, impact and sustainability; efficiency; EU added value; coherence, consistency, complementarity and synergies; and leverage. It noted that given the shrinking civic space in many countries of the region, the financial assistance provided by the EU should be an opportunity to create further engagement for civic actors, including trade unions, labor unions, and human rights defenders and so on. Similarly, ad hoc and project-based approach would also bring only limited results. On the contrary, financing instruments should be tools to strengthen the adoption of nationally owned, comprehensive development plans and human rights action plans.

*The input is available at <http://www.annd.org/data/item/pdf/500.pdf>*

**Input for the Evaluation of the trade component of the EU's Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements with six Mediterranean partner countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia):** The paper tackled the purpose, issues that the evaluation is based on as well as the methodology used. With regard to the latter, a revision of the methodology was called for. This is mainly because the Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) modelling used by the EU assumes labor mobility between sectors and full employment. Nevertheless, "the reliability of findings from CGE models is constrained by data limitations" Furthermore labor reality in partner countries does not align with CGE model assumptions; labor mobility between sectors is difficult, there is high unemployment and informal economy is a key challenge. Therefore ex-post evaluation should not be bound by CGE modelling, with improved relevancy to context, integrating unemployment and informal labor realities in many of the partner countries.

*The input is available at <http://www.annd.org/english/itemId.php?itemId=571>*



## 4. Development Effectiveness

Civil Society Organizations contribute to the developmental process and to achieving social change through democratic, peaceful, plural, and innovative methods. In addition to being tools for social solidarity, provision of services, and mobilization of communities to engage in the developmental process, they also work on empowering these communities to demand their rights in order to improve their living conditions and build a democratic and just state.

The Development Effectiveness process considers civil society to be one of the stakeholders, along with national and local governments, the private sector, and parliaments, being an effective and influential partner in the process. Recognizing the importance of this role, in addition to the challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities entailed, CSOs aim to fulfill the necessary conditions to enhance their participation and maximize their influence in the developmental and political process. This is achieved through stressing the adherence to self-accountability standards in their developmental practices and their pursuit to “civil society effectiveness in development.”

### Activities Completed

#### **a. ANND published a book on The Implementation of Istanbul Principles in 6 Arab Countries**

The study launched in 2017 documenting the implementation of the IPs in 6 countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan and Tunisia) revealed that the level of implementation of Istanbul Principles varies due to different national contexts on enabling environment, political will and available spaces for national dialogue; last but not least capacity of civil society to empower themselves and through being empowered i.e. access to resources, and information.

#### **b. A paper on the challenges facing the effectiveness of development financing and the role of Arab CSOs was prepared (to be published in 2018)**

Auhtored by Zeina Abla, the report considers Arab countries development financing conditions and provides an overview of the development financing mechanisms in Arab countries. It highlights the constraints to their effectiveness, starting with the inherent shortcomings of the prevailing international development cooperation system that shapes development financing. The paper concludes with set of recommendations for CSOs including:

- o Maintaining and strengthening their monitoring role with regards to the different development financing mechanisms and policymaking
- o Engaging in dialogue with other development financing stakeholder namely the government, the private sector, donors and other CSOs to constantly redirect any development financing action towards the primacy of a developmental vision



In addition, for CSO advocacy particularly, the paper recommends to keep debt under scrutiny and linking borrowing to developmental objectives, to raise citizens' awareness on accountability and in this regard making tax work for development. It reminds ensuring that development effectiveness are put in pace, for CSOs as well through implementing Istanbul Principles. Lastly, given the increasing private sector engagement in development, it recommends CSOs to assessing private sector project impacts and engaging in dialogue with private sector to ensure that development priorities are in place.

**c. ANND actively participated to the CPDE meeting entitled Istanbul Principles@7 Breaking Ground, Taking Roots in Bangkok, Thailand**

The meeting was organized with the 7th year anniversary of the adoption of Istanbul Principles. These Principles, ANND adheres to and promotes, represent a meaningful commitment by CSOs to the practical implementation of the four development effectiveness principles (democratic ownership, focus on results, inclusive partnerships, and transparency and accountability).

**d. As the Regional Secretariat for MENA, ANND took part in Coordination Committee and Global Council meetings of CPDE.**



## 5. Advocacy at IMF and WB Spring and Annual meetings

International financial institutions (IFIs) play an active and influential role in making national and regional financial and economic choices and decisions. This is especially true about the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank Group (WB). Arab fragile transition economies have been the victims of random fiscal and monetary policy reforms which partly result from the IFIs actions and recommendations ignoring the social implications and sometimes the concurrent political turmoil. ANND has been monitoring the impacts of IFIs recommendations in the region from a rights-based and social justice perspective. Outcomes of the research undertaken has been presented as well participating to IMF/WB Annual and Spring meetings organized.

### Activities Completed

#### **a. ANND participated in the Spring and Annual Meetings of the IMF/WB Group, on 21-23 April, and on 13-15 October 2017 respectively**

During the IMF/WBG Spring meeting ANND convened two panels one addressing the IMF and “the Arab Transition Economies” and the other addressing the World Bank on “War Economies and the neighboring countries”. The panel aimed at improving the World Bank and IMF’s influential economic policies in five Arab emerging markets (Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan) by featuring the facts, analyses and recommendations included in the recently released “Articles IV” and “Request for Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility” reports. In addition a regional brief on the latest MENA Outlook and Monitor was presented.

During the Spring Meetings, ANND had chance to network with global partners, having speakers in the joint panels organized, including of the EURODAD and of the Reality of Aid Network (CPDE) on “Assessing IMF-WB’s Technical Cooperation for Achieving 2030 Agenda”.

During the Annual meetings Civil Society Forum three activities were organized on the economics of war and peace in the region and the economies of countries undergoing transformations and with regard to social justice and sustainable development.

#### **b) National research on “Articles IV” and “Request for Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility” from Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Tunisia were completed**

National reports elaborate on different country context and analyze the IMF policy recommendations impacts and alternatives in this regard. For instance, in Lebanon, although the IMF Article IV consultation report show that the Lebanese economic model has reached an impasse, especially with the decrease of deposit inflows, shrinking government revenues, and meager growth, IMF propositions are only short-term to save the status-quo, hoping for the regional instability to end soon. On the other hand, Egypt analysis show that the measures imposed by IMF actually contradict with the objective



of fiscal consolidation and led to the surge of the interest payments on public debt, which also contributes to the increase of the budget deficit. The case of Tunisia, elaborate on the IMF recommendations for the reform of the “business climate”, exchange rate policy, food subsidies, which in turn entrench the deregulation and liberalization of the Tunisian economy and risk further widening inequalities and dysfunctions of the development model. Presenting an overview of IMF engagement in the country conclusions of the Jordan study is similar to other countries, that the insistence on the promotion of fiscal austerity, on the one hand, and trade liberalization, on the other, have often exacerbated Jordan’s socioeconomic challenges, such as unemployment and poverty levels. A regional overview, post Arab-uprisings, completed national reports with set of recommendations for alternative macroeconomic framework. This included:

- o Monetary policy should not play the leading role in macroeconomic management, but should rather be employed to accommodate expansionary, counter-cyclical, fiscal policies. It should ensure the availability of liquidity – that is, growth of the money supply – which is necessary to stimulate private investment and meet the growing demand for money.
- o Arab countries should be allowed sufficient policy space to devise an exchange rate management strategy centered about the attainment of a stable and relatively competitive exchange rate.
- o The IMF should work with Arab governments on placing benchmarks for public expenditure on vital social and economic sectors, and the same for progressive taxation policies, just as it places targets on budget deficits
- o Reforming subsidies ought to be the last stage of a robust economic development plan based on wage-led growth policies, the pillar of which are increasing productivity through the encouragement of productive sectors as a part of a wider economic and industrial policy framework

***National reports and the regional overview are available at <http://www.annd.org/english/itemId.php?itemId=544>***



## 6. Universal Periodic Review

Since 2009, ANND engages at Universal Periodic Review process, as an advocacy, accountability and monitoring tool. ANND adopts a comprehensive approach to UPR engagement that encompasses systematic monitoring, coalition and consensus building among civil society groups, follow-up and advocacy. Advocacy opportunities at national level and at UN level during the Working Group sessions are used to reflect on key policy recommendations addressing root causes of the human rights violations. In this work, ANND focuses particularly on the situation of economic and social rights, as these rights require addressing systemic failures and adopting a new development approach.

### Activities Completed

#### **a. Two joint submissions were presented for the Universal Periodic Review of Israel that will take place in January 2018**

ANND worked on two joint submissions, on economic and social rights and on enabling environment for the UPR Israel session, calling for an immediate end to Israeli occupation and demonstrating gross human rights violations Palestinian people face under Israeli occupation.

For the economic and social rights focused report, ANND worked together with Al Marsad and covered the right to health, work, education and social protection of Palestinian people, as well as the right to adequate standard of living. On enabling environment, the joint work of ANND, PNGO and CIVICUS tackled violations on the freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression. The submission included several cases that demonstrate that Israeli authorities continue to wilfully undermine the operating environment of Palestinian civil society groups monitoring and documenting human rights violations.

#### **b. By mid-2017 ANND started the implementation of the OHCHR-EU supported project for monitoring the implementation of UPR Lebanon recommendations; particularly women's economic and social rights-related ones.**

UPR as a process provides a framework to advance the human rights conditions in the country, yet could be also considered to be a comprehensive step towards achieving broader and universal commitments undertaken, namely within the framework of international human rights law and the Agenda 2030. Within this project ANND focuses specifically on SDG 5 and aims at building an effective coalition of women's rights and wider human rights organizations, committed to advancing women's economic and social rights and enabling multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms on women's economic and social rights issues. During 2017, ANND:

- o Conducted a desk review on the UPR process and on the implementation of recommendations on women's economic and social rights
- o Organized a national consultation meeting on 12 September 2017 that involved



- 27 participants from various organizations, particularly women's organizations and those working on implementation of UPR recommendations
- o Organized a training on Tax and Gender: The training was held on 9 November 2017 and introduced tax and gender issue in Lebanon with a rights-based approach.

### **c. ANND shared its UPR experiences at international arena**

ANND participated in the Launch of the Study: Beyond the Procedure: UPR as a catalyst for public debate on human rights on March 17, 2017. The event was held at UN premises in Geneva and allowed ANND to share best practices, lessons learnt from the region, and provided a networking opportunity with groups working on UPR from other regions.



## 7. Enabling Environment

Although most Arab states have ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, States do not meet their obligations with regard to protecting, respecting and fulfilling these rights. The freedom of association, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, the right to access to information, resources are systematically violated. In addition, shrinking policy space for States is a critical factor negatively impacting decision making processes. This leads to less room for national civic actors to participate, together with restrictions on the disclosure of information, civic engagement.

The enabling environment is defined as “interlinked conditions (legal, organizational, financial, information, political and cultural conditions) that affect the capacity of development actors such as the capacity of the civil society organizations to become involved in a sustainable and effective manner in the development operations, including the internal circumstances of these organizations and the external circumstances related to the practices of the governments and supporting parties”.

ANND monitors enabling environment in the region and undertakes advocacy at national and international level, highlighting, as acknowledged as well in the Busan outcome Article 22, that “civil society organizations play a vital role in enabling people to claim their rights, in promoting rights-based approaches, in shaping development policies and partnerships, and in overseeing their implementation”.

### Activities Completed

#### **a. Monitoring enabling environment in Egypt through NED project continued**

Civil society restrictions in Egypt, was a top-issue in 2017, following the highly-debated NGO law that was introduced in the country late 2016. ANND on February 2017, issued a brief analysis entitled “Why we reject the NGO law” in Egypt to point out various violations imposed by the law, including that the law violates the Egyptian constitution. Whereas the Egyptian Constitution considers organizations as a legal entity upon notification; Article 8 of the draft NGO law violated this constitutional inclination. The mentioned article required registration for conferring to an NGO the legal entity status. The draconian law, with many other limitations on access to resources (opening a bank account, foreign funding...etc.) came into force on 29 May 2017. ANND through NED project entitled “Civic Space Watch” worked with Egyptian civil society, monitored human rights conditions and violations as well.

***A website, documenting violations is now in place, accessible at <http://www.rightsmemory.org/>***

Within the framework of the project, a regional experts meeting organized on 28-29 October 2017 in Beirut, allowed in-depth exchange among key experts with regard to the role of civil society in the changing regional context. Particularly after the Arab uprisings the



evolving regional context was elaborated. Experts tried to focus on needs/necessities of civil society in the region, in this changing context and taking into consideration challenges and opportunities at political, economic and social levels. A central question of the debate was on the political role of the civil society and the key elements of the development model/ vision perceived by the civil society. Diversity of civil society context in the region, its independency, challenges (i.e. access to resources), alliance-building were also tackled.

**b. ANND launched a book on the enabling environment of civil society in the Arab region, with an overview of the current situation of civil society organizations in Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine.**

The research with a regional overview, country cases and country-specific indicators regarding the establishment of civil society organizations and their success highlights several challenges faced by civil society. It notes that the relationship between the democracy and the right to form associations is a strong one, and there is a need to support and encourage political and social discussions relating to the enabling environment. The book includes several recommendations to invigorate the work of civil society organizations in the region, in order to consolidate the values of justice, equality, and sustainable development.

**c. ANND contributed to the CIVICUS Monitor, with civic space related developments from the Arab region.**

ANND is one of regional research partners for the CIVICUS Monitor research-tool on civic space. The Monitor offers ratings of the state of civic space in every country of the world, based on several sources of constantly-updated data, news of latest developments in each country, reflects the voices of local people and civil society organizations. During 2017, ANND added Libya to its monitoring work, in addition to Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Sudan. 29 updates were on the Monitor page, as well as interviews with civil society activists. Interviews reflecting on the specific issues from Jordan, Tunisia, Egypt and Palestine were conducted, enhancing as well international solidarity. For instance, interview with PNGO came around the Palestinian Prisoners' hunger strike to disseminate information on the violations of the right to self-determination of Palestinian people. Similarly, interview with EACPE focused on the travel bans imposed on Egyptian civil society activists, as well as restrictions imposed on access to resources and foreign funding.



## 8. Study Week on Trade, Investment and Macroeconomic Policies

Since 2012, through the Study Week organized by the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), along with the South Center and the Third World Network provides a great opportunity for researchers from the Arab region to deepen their knowledge and expertise on trade, investment and macroeconomic policies. They take brief-presentations from experts like Martin Khor, the Executive Director of the South Centre and a world-famous economist, or Richard Kozul-Wright, Director of the International Strategies Department at the UNCTAD and discuss key issues pertinent to the region. Furthermore, they share country-level experiences on these issues and network among each other. A social media page, led by ANND, allow them to interact and exchange news on trade, investment issues as well, and disseminate further information with regard to research work they do.

### Activities Completed

#### **a. The fifth Study Week was organized on 4-8 December 2017**

12 researchers and activists from six Arab countries joined 2017 Study Week and had enriching discussions and debates with experts and high-level specialists on different topics including SDGs, global economy, investment treaties, debt, intellectual property, innovation & health, gender, food & seeds, human rights & business etc.

The exchanges among researchers and the experts shed light on the compulsory need to revise trade and investment agreements that reduce the role of the state in the region and thus impose barriers on technology transfers and promote the corporate power and private interests over human rights. An evaluation session organized allowed researchers to express their desire and seek possibility to conduct future research merging their interests. Comparative study on informal labor in the Arab Region and a study on the effects of investment in the rentier sector, specifically on net loss and net gain in the region was proposed, in addition to the idea of organizing a regional workshop with all former study week participants.

ANND will elaborate in 2018 options for adjusting Study Week program in light of the outcomes of the evaluations (in 2017 and previous years) to ensure that the program meets the needs identified.



## 9. Tax Justice

The majority of tax systems in our Arab countries are characterized by stable and varied sources of financial revenues, but at lower levels than in other emerging market countries and developing countries. Moreover, tax systems suffer from a low level of escalation, do not support equal opportunities between firms, and are very complex, making tax administration harder. The multiplicity of tax exemptions and tax rates often limits justice in the management of these systems. The concentration of taxes on personal income and trade taxes reduces their ability to redistribute income, while wealth taxes, such as property taxes, only play a limited role in mobilizing the financial resources of these countries. Furthermore, tax burdens are not proportionately distributed to all economic activities and all segments of society, including men and women, due to the absence of necessary methods during policy development, such as gender responsive budgeting.

### Activities Completed

#### **a. ANND organized a Regional Workshop on: Tax Justice and Gender Equality in Tax Systems in the Arab Region in Amman on 20-21 March 2017 and launched “The regional coalition on Tax Justice”**

The regional workshop aimed to analyze and critique tax systems in Arab countries, to contribute to developing fair social and economic policies, achieve social stability and equality, and enhance the role and interventions of civil society on the matter. Following in-depth discussions, a regional coalition on tax justice was announced.

The coalition elaborated on a background document, as well as the presentation of the coalition’s strategies and working methods, such as lobbying and advocacy, capacity building, networking and membership, research areas, composition, and structure. The participating organizations also agreed on the importance and necessity of the coalition, which will act as a coordination and networking framework to contribute to achieving tax justice in the Arab region. It will be founded on the strategies of research and knowledge production, capacity building, and networking and coordination. The coalition’s founding committee was charged with following-up the recommendations of the regional workshop. The committee is composed of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, Social and Economic Rights Monitor – Palestine, Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies – Jordan, and the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights.

#### **b. On January 31st 2017, ANND organized National Consultation meeting on Tax Meeting in Lebanon. Two country papers, namely “Tax Justice in the Lebanese System” by Mr. Nabil Abdo and “Gender Justice in the Lebanese Tax System” by Ms. Farah Kobaissy, Researcher were presented in the meeting.**

The papers reflected that in Lebanon, the tax burden is mostly felt on middle- and low-



income groups due to the absence of appropriate public policies. For instance, the sectors with high profits are taxed the least. On the other hand women informal workers make approximately 57% of the total female labor force and women labor participation ranges between 23% and 27% compared to 73% for men, as most women undertake unwaged work in households. This, in turn, is one of many reasons why women are more affected by tax injustice.

**c. ANND has developed two new regional research papers that assess tax systems in a number of Arab countries under the economic and social justice perspective (especially in Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Palestine) and that of gender justice (in Lebanon, Egypt and Tunisia)**

These two studies complement ANND's research and advocacy efforts since about one and a half year in cooperation with Christian Aid and with the support of Ford Foundation on tax policies in the Arab region and their economic and social repercussions. These two pilot studies also complement a comparative study of tax systems in six Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco) prepared by ANND with the same partner in 2014.



## 10. Promotion of Social Dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean Neighborhood

The major political changes which occurred in 2011 and mainly had impact on the South Mediterranean neighborhood, showed the limits of the economic and social policies followed so far and made more obvious the urgent need of institutional reforms.

Since 2008, the European Union has engaged – in the framework of the UfM (Union for the Mediterranean) in a process that associates governments and representatives of employers and employees. This process aims to give a “more effective” role to the social dialogue in the Mediterranean neighborhood. It is within this framework that the pilot project for the promotion of social dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean neighborhood has been launched in 3 countries (Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan). ANND is part of this project, together with ATUC (Arab Trade Union Confederation), BusinessMed (Union of Mediterranean Confederation of Enterprises), ISCOS (Italian Union Institute for Cooperation and Development), Progetto SUD, AIP (Portugal Industry Association), SOLIDAR, CNT Belgium (National Labor Council) and CES Morocco (Economic and Social Council). The project aims to lead to the desired changes of attitudes and aptitudes of the targeted groups regarding the social dialogue’s concepts and practices. These changes would be ensured through more specific results:

- 1-A better understanding of the economic and social situation in the targeted countries and of the mechanisms of social dialogue, and a higher knowledge on tools and modalities for improving and institutionalizing social dialogue, through an enhanced cooperation between the social partners
- 2-An enhanced exchange and a mutual learning of the relevant stakeholders.
- 3-Promoted policies for social dialogue and exchange of best practices, in the region, and further developed at EU-Southern Mediterranean level.

### Activities Completed

#### **a. A national capacity development workshop was organized in Morocco on 7-8 July 2017**

The meeting organized in collaboration with Espace Associatif aimed at helping local actors to get acquainted with the economic, social, legal, and organizational content and practices of Social Dialogue and its institutional challenges. A brainstorming session on Social Dialogues helped assess the level of their knowledge of the participants, before elaborating further on main themes including the role of government, phases of the dialogue process and the challenges faced. Capacity building on skills for negotiators, how to conduct negotiations and post-negotiations process allowed them to deepen their knowledge.

#### **b. A regional expert workshop on Human and Labor Rights was organized on 23-24 September 2017**

The expert workshop held in collaboration with the Jordanian Women’s Union aimed to



open a discussion on the rights-based approach to labor issues, especially in the context of the interlinkages and connectedness of both sets of rights (human and labor rights) in Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. The workshop also aimed at highlighting critical issues that CSOs can take on in order to enhance workers' rights, as well as coming up with recommendations and positions to propose it to prospective social dialogue meetings. The participants agreed on the following issues to be addressed in the prospective social dialogue sessions to be conducted with the government, trade unions and employers' organizations:

- 1) The ratification and application of ILO core conventions, especially Convention 87 on the right to organize
- 2) Eliminate explicit and implicit discrimination towards women in labor legislations
- 3) Eliminate explicit and implicit discrimination towards people with disability in labor legislations
- 4) Establish universal social protection systems for all people regardless of their status in the labor market.

### **c. A Regional Meeting on Trade and Investment Policies was organized on 23-24 November 2017 in Morocco**

In coordination with Solidar and Espace Associatif – Morocco, held a regional seminar on trade and investment in the Southern Mediterranean. The seminar aimed to reach several recommendations related to trade and investment, which could be used as themes for wider societal dialogue in the future in the concerned countries. The meeting allowed exchanges on the global trade scene, especially in light of the WTO Mini-Ministerial held in early October 2017. It also looked into the role of UNCTAD, especially in relation to aligning the trade and development agenda. Regional trade and investment policies, especially in relation with the EU were also elaborated including with an overview of dispute settlement policies and discrepancies between the various processes. National situations in the project countries allowed a comparative analysis, during which civil society representatives identified possibility of intervention and the role of social dialogue in such negotiations.

### **d. Series of Thematic Capacity Building meetings were organized on Sustainable Development**

- o The start of the second series of National Capacity Development workshops began with 2 workshops in Tunisia. The first was held in the context of ANND's work on national dialogues regarding the Sustainable Development agenda. It was linked to SOLiD, to prepare for the national capacity development on Agenda 2030, through a comprehensive manual (attached) prepared by ANND and geared towards civil society, trade unions, and parliamentarians. The preparatory workshop was held on 20 July 2017, in collaboration with the Social Sciences Forum. It included the participation of around 35 experts and practitioners from civil society and trade unions, in addition to academics and activists.
- o As for the training, a workshop in Tunisia on sustainable development goals and the role of social dialogue in their implementation was organized on 21 and 22 December 2017. It involved the active participation of several NGO and Trade Union representatives from Tunisia and covered pertinent issues in the SD agenda.



## 11. Disability Project

People with disabilities and injuries are the most marginalized and vulnerable group within the Syrian refugees in Lebanon. They are at high risk of violence, exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion. They face daily challenges that prevent their access to basic needs services including Health services. The right to accessible health care is not available to many refugees and for people with disabilities due to the lack of inadequate and specialized health services and to the exclusion of people with disabilities from Humanitarian aid programs in Lebanon. Whereas between 2014-2016 ANND implemented a specific project Empowering persons with disabilities and injuries within the Syrian population affected by the crisis and supported movements in civil society organizations dealing with Syrian refugees with disabilities, in 2017 a pilot project has been implemented focusing on enhancing representativeness and active participation of People with Disability within the humanitarian intervention in order to address their needs and to improve their living conditions and their services.

### Activities Completed

#### **a. Policy Brief on the Situation of PwDs in health services and how to improve this situation**

Based on a participatory research, the study was undertaken with the partnership of informal groups of people with disabilities/ injuries based on Bekaa and north Lebanon. The policy brief elaborated on barriers to healthcare access among PwDs in Lebanon including financial ability, lack of coverage for certain healthcare services as well as limited availability of specialized services, or lack of information on health care services. The findings of the research were later presented to policy makers and service providers during a discussion session organized. List of recommendations identified were presented in this discussion session including:

- o All relevant stakeholders must develop and use a unified and systematic method for classifying disability, which reflects the diversity of PwDs in Lebanon;
- o Financing should focus on the provision of health services in a systematic and equitable manner and should be based on a comprehensive study of the healthcare needs of PwDs in accordance with internationally acceptable standards;
- o The MoSA and humanitarian organizations are advised to introduce a monitoring and accountability system to hold institutions and providers to high standards of quality of care;
- o Healthcare centers and institutions must be held responsible by ministries and donors for equipping their facilities and for training their staff members to ensure access to healthcare for PwDs. Furthermore, ministries and donors should ensure that specialized services for PwDs are available at these centers and institutions;
- o A directory of all healthcare services available for PwDs must be prepared which provides PwDs with relevant and accessible information.

***Full text of the study is available at <http://www.annd.org/english/itemId.php?itemId=568>***