

For Immediate Release



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## **CIBL.W Launches a New Series of Webinars on Women's Employment in the Arab MENA, Episode 1 focuses on Transportation**

The Center for Inclusive Business and Leadership for Women (CIBL.W) established at the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business (OSB) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) hosted an online webinar called Transportation as a Challenge to Women's Economic Participation. The webinar revealed important information highlighting the key findings from the KIP Index 11-country research study on how transportation affects women's economic participation in the Arab MENA region.

With speakers from Yemen, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon the episode invited discussion and debate about how the lack of safe and reliable public transport is a salient regional challenge. This data was gathered as part of the Center's inaugural project focused on developing a regional index - the KIP Index - on women's participation in the formal economies of the region.

Dr. Charlotte Karam, Director of the Center for Inclusive Business and Leadership for Women (CIBL.W) introduced The KIP index project, and this was followed by the introduction to the Hiwar by Dr. Carmen Geha, co-principal investigator at the KIP index, and moderator of the discussion.

Ms. Abir El Danaf, Research Associate at The KIP Index presented some of the research findings indicating how the unreliable public transportation system in most Arab countries, due to poor infrastructure, high cost and safety measures, leads to many concrete barriers to employment. For example, due to the transportation issues faced by many women, they are often forced to seek work that is in close proximity to their homes leading to restricted job choices, lower wages, informal work arrangements, and often the choice to not engage in paid work at all. Ms. El Danaf also highlighted the growing body of research describing the various forms of violence against women (e.g., sexual harassment, moral reputation tarnishing) experienced by women due to the unsafe, unreliable, and often avoided public transport systems. These factors

further reinforce the prevalent social and cultural norms often preventing women from seeking and securing equal and fair employment opportunities.

Joining from Yemen, Ms. Amal Nasser, an economist with the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies notes that: "Yemen suffers from a lack of personal safety and economic stability, the presence of family restrictions, and the lack of a public transportation system. The war has worsened these pre-existing problems, and while some local "primitive" initiatives were implemented to cope with the transportation deficiencies, no government initiatives were set to respond to the issue."

Dr. Zahra' Langhi, Co-Founder and CEO of the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace similarly noted that: "Libya lacks integrated transportation networks due to the legacy of the authoritarian system that impeded development and, as consequence, women are suffering and deprived from their right to work."

Former Minister of Tourism, Dr. Ikram Basha Imam added that "In Libya it is hard for a woman to be in a managerial position because of the travel requirements between Benghazi and Tripoli. In a well-developed country, it would be easy to travel for 1 or 2 hours between two cities but in Libya, you have to make a 12 hour car ride on roads which are not safe."

Our final panelist speaker Ms. Chaza Abou Daher, Research Manager at Alnahda Research Center in Saudi Arabia shared relevant findings from a recent study in the Kingdom, noting that: "In KSA women spend around 30% of their salaries on transportation. Many reforms and initiatives were newly implemented in response to women's need for transportation. Women have begun to drive themselves and a metro system has been proposed."

The economic burden placed on women to get to and from work, is an added barrier to the women's participation that is not equally carried by their male counterparts.

Please watch this KIP Hiwar episode for free at <https://youtu.be/GIELY2ayff0>

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