

18th International Congress of DAVO, Berlin, 6 – 8 October 2011

DAVO Working Group „Economics of the MENA Region“

Panel „Women in Business in the Middle East and North Africa“

Organized by: **Anja Zorob, FU Berlin, Germany, and Dalia Abdelhady, Lund University, Sweden**

Much of the research on Arab women addresses their marginalized position by highlighting their limited participation in economic and political activities. Recently, however, more attention has been given to female entrepreneurs as important partners in national economic and social development projects. With the continuously growing importance of “women and development” in theory and practical implementation of development cooperation female entrepreneurs in Arab countries are being assigned new roles in their economies and societies.

In the monarchies of the Arab Gulf, women seem to have been identified as holders of huge financial assets deemed more and more necessary for investment in their countries’ future economic development and diversification. Against this background, some kind of a top-down approach of promoting female entrepreneurs has increasingly taken root in these countries. At the same time, business women in the Arab Mediterranean Partner Countries, and in particular owners of small and medium-sized enterprises, attracted increasing attention by the international donor community as important stakeholders in the process of local and national private sector development. In addition, female entrepreneurs across the region started to voice and organize their interests more profoundly. Numerous new business women associations have been established in recent years while its members stepped up efforts at networking at the national and international levels. These developments contrast sharply a view widely held among observers that results achieved so far with respect to the Millennium Development Goals in general and MDG 3 in specific are somewhat limited if not disillusioning. With regards to participation of women in both the economic and political arenas, many MENA countries still have a long way to go to be able to catch up with other regions of the developed as well as many countries in the developing world.

The panel aims at gathering recent and innovative research exploring in greater detail motives, strategies and policies for the promotion of women and entrepreneurship. We welcome paper proposals which deal with but not limited to the following topics:

- Participation of business women / women at large in MENA economies
- General and gender-specific constraints in the regional / local business and investment environments
- Corporate leadership and management styles of female entrepreneurs
- Power, stakes and business practices of women as part of local / regional business elites
- Voice and organization of interests by business women ... and their re-organization in the aftermath of revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia and other countries
- Networking and cooperation of female entrepreneurs and their associations on the local, national, international level
- Social standing and role of business women and their organizations in MENA societies

Paper proposals (350 words approx.) should be sent directly to the panel organizers Anja Zorob, FU Berlin, (azorob@zedat.fu-berlin.de) and Dalia Abdelhady, Lund University (abdelhady.dalia@gmail.com) by **June 15, 2011** at the latest!

For further information on the conference and registration procedures please follow this link <http://davo.uni-mainz.de/tagungen/davo2011.html>