

Working Women between Discrimination and Marginalization

The first report

Permanent Observatory for working women

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Summary of the Report

This is the first report by the observatory of "Permanent Conference of Working Women". We have tried through it to highlight the problems faced by women workers in the workplace and in unions. This report is on the monitoring operations that have been implemented in five governorates (Greater Cairo / Alexandria / Suez / Ismailia / Qena) using all available tools, skills and means for collecting information, facts and interviewing processes. Our belief is that the road to equality and non-discrimination in the workplace is still long and arduous and that the role of civil society organizations is still and will remain to be influential and active in this issue which is pivotal to all working women. Hence the report focused on monitoring problems faced by women workers in the workplace and in unions in the public sector, the education sector, nursing and community associations and the informal sector.

Target:

The Center for Trade Union services, through the Permanent Conference of Working Women program, sought to monitor and analyze problems of working women problems in the workplace and in unions of various employment sectors (public / private / government / non-formal). Monitoring operations were based on the kinds of problems that women face during work and the impact the problems have on their professional and family lives and their vision of the appropriate mechanisms to be used in solving those problems. This is achieved through a questionnaire which contains a number of themes and includes many questions which elaborate the type of problems, their causes and how they affect their role in society and their vision for finding solutions to them. The monitoring and analysis for each question leads to objective results that contribute to supporting women's participation in the workplace and in labor unions; and to reveal the extent they are affected by these problems and to ensure framework of equality for her within the workplace.

How was the report prepared:

This report was compiled based on observations that have been gathered by the Monitoring Group, consisting of (15) monitors and observers from the Permanent Conference of Working Women in five governorates. Based on phases of the monitoring process, there were successive stages of preparation, accessing information and data processing by applying the questionnaire on female workers and trade unionists and documenting their replies to each question. Personal interviews were conducted as well through which complaint forms about the workplace and union were received, recorded and analyzed to identify the causes and mechanisms of their vision to solve them.

The organization of the monitoring report:

The essence of this report is a detailed framework that deals with monitoring all aspects of the process and on a comprehensive base built on the plan developed and implemented by the Monitoring Group in the five targeted governorates. The report was compiled so as to address all monitoring operations that tackled problems of working women within the workplace and the trade union and was based on the following:

- Monitoring the problems of working women in the workplace and its impact on their performance at work.
- Monitoring women problems in trade unions and the implications on the exercise of trade union action.
- Monitor working women awareness and knowledge of laws applied to them and their perception of these laws as providers of legal protection to them.
- Monitoring forms of discrimination against women in the workplace and union and its impact on working women.
- Monitoring the vision of female workers of the role of state institutions in providing protection for them.
- Monitor the role of unions in solving their problems and bringing issues to the attention of the public.
- Monitoring the vision of working women regarding women assuming leadership positions within the workplace and the union.
- Monitoring the role of political parties and civil society organizations in solving problems of working women.

Report methodology:

The observatory of the Permanent Conference and its team developed a methodology and mechanism of action suitable to the objectives of the monitoring and evaluation processes to be implemented. They are represented in a number of executive phases based on principles, frameworks and scientific standards that have been developed in order to reach a number of key outputs that contribute to the monitoring of the problems faced by women workers in the workplace and the impact on their role in work and family life. Hence work in this report is based on a methodology of descriptive approach which is the suitable approach to the planned process of monitoring. During the application forms were filled and personal interviews conducted to monitor all violations and problems faced by women workers inside the workplace. The methodology was compiled gradually in clear steps starting with the training of the monitoring team which was selected in accordance with the standards that had been developed within the five governorates before starting application of monitoring tools (questionnaires and interviews).

This methodology is based on the following:

- Choosing five geographically diverse governorates (that includes delta area & Upper Egypt, rural and urban areas). These governorates were selected based on previous experience and work and the existence of branches of the association through which strong relationships with working women and unionists were built. It also reflects geographical diversity required for the monitoring process.
- Choosing a number of various business sectors which recruit women (Public / government / private / non-formal).
- Designing a questionnaire and a form of complaint within personal interviews. The questionnaire is designed adopting some of the terms of reference regarding working women and their status in the workplace according to ILO special conventions agreements in particular agreement number 100, and Convention No. 111 of 1954 relating to equal pay and the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation as well as the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination

against women for the year 1971, in addition to labor law number 12 for the year 2003, the civil service Act No. 18, and the Egyptian constitution of 2014.

- Training course in Cairo for the 15 monitors on monitoring and documentation skills.
- Providing scientific material that includes all specialized skills related to monitoring and documentation and how to conduct interviews and write it down.
- Designing an action plan that included application of the form in each governorate, their numbers and the number of personal interviews, how to communicate with each case and provide direct and rapid legal services in addition to a specific date and purpose for monthly meetings of the working group of monitors to identify the most important problems they encountered during the application of the form, personal interviews and basic activities.

The importance of the report:

The importance of this report is related to our realization that there are still large gaps present in equality between men and women in Egypt and that despite the long struggle of working women and the achievements made, the way is still very long way to achieve equality and non-discrimination against working Egyptian women. For equality and non-discrimination to materialize, their issues must be researched and worked upon actively so that they are achieved in the frame of human rights beliefs and the defense of the right to equality. The current contradiction in legislation and social practices has led to obvious double standards in the rights of working women. Women enjoy equal rights in some public areas but it is suffering because of anti-equality legislation. This has led to the persistence of traditional roles for both sexes in society which does not recognize equality and accentuates discrimination between men and women. This is a major obstacle facing suitable work for women, so it was necessary for us to search, monitor and document these problems and their consequent effects to find mechanisms that are proposed by the women workers themselves in a serious attempt to present them to the public and decision-makers as a contribution to help finding solutions that lead us to improving the working conditions and environment for every Egyptian woman worker.

General introduction

The right to equality and non-discrimination is a fundamental right in a democratic society, some believe it is the most important because if achieved it ensures the realization of all other rights. To demand equality and non-discrimination here are many elements: requesting equal interaction for each individual, calling for equal distribution of public resources, demanding equal protection for collective rights. In this frame, great efforts have been made on all international and national levels to address non-discrimination and equality between women and men at work but they still exist in several areas. We may see their impacts on the health and lives of women, economic growth and work stability. The community still needs more efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in employment and her human rights. In this context, we see that the 2014 Constitution and international labor standards promoted equality and non-discrimination between the sexes in labor and employment. Article 11 of the Constitution directly tackled women's rights, "the state guarantees the achievement of equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in accordance the provisions of the Constitution. The State shall take measures to ensure suitable representation of women in parliaments, as stated by law, and guarantees women the right to hold public office and senior positions in the state and judicial bodies without discrimination against her. The state is committed to the protection of women against all forms of violence and to ensure the empowerment of women to reconcile their family duties and work requirements. The state is also committed to providing care and protection of motherhood and childhood and women breadwinners, elderly women and women most in need."

Article 13 states that "The state commits to maintaining the rights of workers and work to build a balanced business relationship between the parties of the production process, ensure access to collective negotiations, work to protect workers from work hazards and ensure availability of security and occupational health and safety conditions, the prohibition of arbitrary dismissal as regulated by law."

Article 14 states that "Public posts are the right of citizens on basis of merit, without favoritism or mediation, and that those assuming those posts are in the service of the people and the state guarantees their rights and protection, and that they carry out duties for the sake of people's interests. They may not be dismissed but in a disciplinary way, except in cases described by law."

Article 17 has focused on the organization of social protection for workers by stating that "the state shall ensure the provision of social insurance services. Every citizen does not enjoy the social insurance system, the right to social security, including guarantee him a dignified life if it is not able to support himself and his family. In cases of disability for work, old age and unemployment, the State shall provide a pension suitable for small farmers, agricultural workers, fishermen and temporary workers whose work is described by law. The funds for insurance and pensions are considered private funds that enjoy all the aspects and forms of protection of public funds. The funds and their revenues are right to their beneficiaries, and are to be safely invested and run by an independent body according to law. The State guarantees insurance and pension funds. "

Article 76 has focused on the organization of trade union workers by stating that "the creation of syndicates and unions on a democratic basis is a right guaranteed by law. It shall have legal personality, operate freely and contribute to raising the level of competence among its members, defend their rights and protect their interests. The State shall guarantee independence of the judiciary and unions whose boards of directors may not be dissolved without a court order. They may not be established in statutory bodies."

Articles 92 and 93 were established to control and protect the rights and freedoms and abide by international agreements and conventions on human rights. Article 92 stipulates that "the rights and freedoms of the individual citizen do not accept disruption or detraction. No law regulating the exercise of the rights and freedoms may restrict those rights and freedoms their origin and essence."

While Article 93 stipulates that "the state is committed to the international agreements, covenants and human rights conventions ratified by Egypt, and acquires the force of law after publication in accordance with the established procedure."

By this, the hand of the legislator has been tied in drafting laws, as referring agreements to legislators to formulate laws do not touch the origin of the rights and are restricted according to Egypt's international obligations.

Within the framework of interest in the rights of working women ILO issued four basic agreements which are:

- The Discrimination in Employment and Occupation No. 111 for the year 1958.
- Convention of workers with family responsibilities No. 156 for the year 1981, which "applies to men and women workers with responsibilities in relation to their children, where such responsibilities restrict the possibility of practicing economic activity or promotion related to such activity".

- Maternity Protection Convention No. 183 for the year 2000.

- The convention for Equal Remuneration No. 100 for the year 1951, which is considered the most important on conditions of working women and sorts of protection which she must have in the work environment and what she must possess in terms of basic demands. The convention addresses the educational and professional skills available to ensure the rise of women to supreme positions of professional and administrative hierarchy, and help them overcome obstacles to eliminate all forms of discrimination in the workplace. The reconciliation of work and family is a cornerstone in women's work and requires support for protection of motherhood at work and family responsibilities. This is associated to limits on working hours and breaks, terms and conditions most suitable for women and her public duties, and related also to expand social insurance coverage to include maternity and child care subsidies, both for the mother or the working wife.

To balance the responsibilities of work and family responsibilities, women often have to enter the labor market and exit it several times during her life. This makes her lose space to men and loses some of equality. This does not affect accumulation of social security benefits, education and training opportunities as well as possibilities for

promotion. Cultural and social conditions usually represent obstacles to women's advancement in the practice of some jobs and sometimes lead to discrimination between men and women in some jobs. Such conditions often force some women to leave work and be satisfied with family life or to do part time work for a period which leads to denial of opportunities for promotion and advancement. Despite the increase in women's share in work in Egypt, her share in senior management positions still continues to drop because they are still enjoying a less fortunate economic position compared to men and face serious discrimination. Despite the fact women are no longer a backup workforce, equality of opportunity remains to be an elusive goal despite women entering some jobs that had previously been dominated by men. While men were monopolizing office jobs, it is now typically operated by women. There is now a high percentage of women representation in managerial positions and in positions of professional and technical terms. Women have surpassed the glass ceiling or barrier women find difficult to progress beyond in decision-making positions or important administrative functions which reflects social and economic discrimination. Despite the increased participation of women in the workforce, in addition to some social developments, however, the majority of working women are still disadvantaged and less fortunate than men, and various forms of discrimination continue inside and outside the workplace. It is known that cultural norms and social beliefs about gender roles play a role in determining what women and men get in terms of level education and kind of education. Women are usually expected to do household tasks and care for the family and children. This happens despite the fact that women's paid work contributes to the family budget as much as man does. In many countries this income plays a big role in keeping families above the poverty line. Therefore, lack of equal rights, whether economic or social, is a powerful source of discrimination and social exclusion. The issues related to discrimination against women in the workplace may be categorized into three groups. The first: supply in the labor market as women work under the pressure of economic urgency and hence are forced to choose between work and family responsibilities and may continue to stumble in her career if she has no luck coordinating between job duties and responsibilities of the home which in turn could deprive her of working to improve the education and skills that qualify for higher positions. Inequality in education and training which are musts to achieve equality as education and training of women's is still at lower levels compared to men and still the numbers of women entering the labor market and the quality of work that is offered to female is weaker than that for men. Discrimination is also detected girls accessing education which faces many problems. Often women are denied opportunities for training and re-training at the level of the enterprise in which she works because she lacks seniority and qualifications compared to men. Employers may realize that the returns from investing in the training of women are lower than for men and this affects women's opportunities to upgrade their skills and flexibility. Then comes the second group represented in the demand from the work market where the focus is on sex basis. One gender is usually expected to occupy specific functions of the labor market and often jobs dominated by females offer fewer benefits than male-dominated jobs and may include denial of wage labor, retirement and compensation of disease and the type of work, working hours and types of work contracts and promotion opportunities. Employers expect the role of women to be household related and her participations lower than that of men because of family

responsibilities and thus tend to reduce women's access to high level jobs and women end up in the positions whose progress is blocked. In this context, disparities and discrimination, which are considered a form of inequality, continue between men and women. Evidence of so is in the following:

- wages reflect economic return on human capital acquired through education, training, experience or innate, such as physical strength, the influence of family and community and this caused a big differences between men and women not be in favor of women.
- functional separation affects women wages directly by placing them in jobs with low pay or indirectly by limiting her exclusively to certain jobs, especially jobs are heavily contested for a limited number of opportunities.
- Women may choose or be forced to accept jobs where it is easy to reconcile domestic work and care for her family and a paid job. Socially women may not enjoy enough confidence to occupy jobs traditionally dominated by men.
- The nature of women participation has changed; instead of permanent work women tend to work an unofficial temporary job and multiple part-time jobs, part time work or work at home or false contracts and be used in very small enterprises in the informal sector. This exposes women to a lack of job security and income and to the real danger of marginalization in the labor market which may be accompanied by low wages and few benefits or no pay and lack of rights, social protection and training opportunities.
- Officially unemployed men are more than women because of the larger population of the labor force in addition to the fact that women's unemployment rates tend to rise. Discrimination against women increases with high levels of unemployment, given that women's work raises unemployment of men who are in need for the job more than women and that complicates the problem for women who seek jobs for the first time or older women.

The third group of issues related to women's problems in the workplace deal with legislation. Women in the workplace are subject to many images of discrimination against them making them the most vulnerable to poverty and deprivation of decent work opportunities for social and cultural reasons. Discrimination can be through legislation and regulations as the legislature prohibits the use of women in some types of work that are considered unsafe and inappropriate on the basis of previous assumptions about the capabilities and role of women in society. These legislations which were designed to protect women are, in some cases, used to discrimination against her. Employers for instance use maternity leaves, which aim to protect women's reproductive ability, to be an excuse to keep women from the labor market because they are more expensive than man. We can see in the second chapter of the work Act number 12 for the year 2003 some provisions which were placed to protect women's rights, include:

- (Article 90) It is not permissible to employ women in business that is malicious to them in terms of health and morals.
- (Article 91): The female employer is granted 90 days vacations (in the case of pregnancy and childbirth) and compensated equally to the overall pay once they had spent 10 months or more in the service of the employer. In all cases the female worker may not be employed during the 45 days following delivery. This is applicable twice at the most for the duration of active service; with the exception of female workers for

the state (government employees) to whom civil service Act No. 18 applies as Article No. (49) gives them the right to maternity leave for four months and a maximum of three times for the duration of the service.

- (Article 92) prohibits termination of employment of female workers or dismissing her (for any reason) during pregnancy and maternity leave.

- (Article 93): Grants working women two extra breaks (other than the periods prescribed) for nursing. The break should not be less than half an hour during the work day. The worker has the right to join the two breaks and calculate them as actual working hours during the two years following delivery, without any reduction to wages.

- (Article 94): A female worker - in the facility which hires fifty or more female workers –has the right for an unpaid leave for a period not more than two years to care for her child –for two times at most during her service. In the private sector establishments, female workers have the right to an unpaid vacation to care for her child up to a maximum two years at a time; three times throughout her career. As for the civil Service Law, Article 50, paragraph 3 grants the female worker an unpaid leave to care for a child for two years at a time and a maximum of six years during her employment. As an exception to the provisions of the Social Insurance Law No. 79 of 1975, Article No. 125 126, the administrative body carries the burden of the insurance contributions for the female worker. She, according to provisions of the law, should be compensated by wages equal to 25% of the salary she was to be paid at the start of her leave, according to her selection.

- (Article 96): An employer who recruits a hundred or more female workers in one place has to establish a nursery for their children. If the number of workers in the facility is less than 100, the employer shall share with other employers in the area the implementation of this commitment.

Thus we see that all the provisions related to women labor was to protect her but at the same time can be a sometimes used to discriminate against her. Employers can use the legislation to have an excuse to keep women from the labor market under the pretext they are more expensive than men.

To improve the status of working women in Egypt, we should work on the following:

- oblige the Egyptian government to implement the Convention on Discrimination against Women and remove all barriers that deprive Egyptian women from active participation and opportunities for decent work, promotion and equality.
- the abolition of discrimination against domestic workers in the Unified Labor Law 12/2003 and modify its provisions so as to ensure women are included under the umbrella of legal and legislative protection and guarantees they enjoy equal pay of fair wages, social and health insurance and union action.
- the integration of women in the labor market and insurance and integrating them in all developmental projects that are implemented to create sustainable jobs with linking these development projects carried out by women according to the market system with the development of their capabilities and enabling them to face the brutality of the free market system.

- The development of the health and social security systems to ensure the social, health and educational protection for working women especially the private non-formal sector.
- Provide free treatment at public hospitals and health units that provide reproductive health services free of charge especially with the development of these hospitals and units to ensure the right of women to health care.
- supporting poor families which includes girls to enable them to continue the girls' education with the establishment of literacy classes near the houses of female workers and girls who did not enroll in education in times compatible with their work, social and economic circumstances.

Civil society institutions must express solidarity to implement those recommendations to improve the conditions of working women and make working women access "her rights to safety, decent work and a decent life."

Hence the importance of the role provided by the "Observatory of the Permanent Conference for Working Women" which works to monitor the availability of social and economic protection and legal guarantees for working women in the workplace. The Permanent Conference of Working Women aims to improve the social, economic and political conditions for working women, rejects any form of discrimination against them and condemns and combats regression culture which believes that place of working women is home by confrontation. They should work to change the legislative structure that impede women's exercise of their role and activate existing laws that are not applied and enable and support working women by mechanisms of union work and enabling women to assume leadership roles and responsibilities within their union.

To continue work in order to achieve the objectives of the observatory, its philosophy, scientific methodology, values and strategic orientations; the observatory is looking forward to:

- Raising women's awareness of the importance of revealing the facts about all violations they experience in the workplace
- Supporting and empowering women to defend their rights in the workplace.
- Force decision-makers and the media to adopt issues of working women and what they are exposed to in terms of violations in the workplace.
- Forming groups of union leaders in each governorate who are able to monitor violations against women in the workplace.
- Monitoring the reality of working women and all the data relating to her locally and internationally.
- Disseminating of the culture of women's rights and facilitating communication between various parties interested in the field of women's rights.
- Preparing reports and issuing periodicals specialized in the field of working women's rights.
- Carry out research and studies on the protection of rights of women workers and draft papers on means of developing it.
- Aid the state to draft policies and programs aimed at improving the situation of women working.

In this context, the questionnaire addressed five main axes to reach the goal of the report: Monitoring all the risks and violations women are subject to in the workplace and in the unions, their impact on their role and their methods of resistance. The axes were represented in the following:

First: General information about:

Workspace / work type / type of contract / pay / marital status / Age / union to which they belong

- ♣ where the ages of the sample respondents ranged between 21 and 55 years.
- ♣ Variable educational status between high school and university graduates.
- ♣ The duration of the work ranged between three and thirty years, some working on a permanent basis and others on temporary contracts.
- ♣ The marital status as well varied between married and unmarried.

The first axis: tackled the nature of the problems and their impact on working women in the workplace and family life.

The second axis: tackled the concept of discrimination, its forms and effects on working women.

The third axis: tackles the extent of familiarity of female workers with laws applicable to them and to what extent the law provides legislative and social protection.

The fourth axis: tackled the vision of female workers to the role of the state and its institutions in the provision of legal and social protection for them.

The fifth axis: tackled the vision of female workers and unionists for the role of independent trade unions and civil society organizations in the adoption of their cases and presenting them to the community.

✚ **Analyzing the axes of the report**

The report has included a total number of (150 women- 100 poll applications- 50 complaints applications)

- 🌿 The monitoring applications: (25 Cairo- 25 Alexandria- 25 Suez Canal cities- 19 Upper Egypt)
- 🌿 Complaints applications (6 Cairo- 4 Alexandria- 21 Suez Canal cities- 19 Upper Egypt)

- ✚ **The First Axis:** The nature of the problems of female workers and the extent to which they affect the female worker at work and in her home life. This axis is dealt with through six questions in the poll application that effect on working women at work and at home. The answers of the poll subjects appear in the following tables

Question 1

Do you have problems at work?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ no answer
124	26	0

Question 2

Did these problems affect your family life or your performance at work?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ no answer
114	28	8

Question 3

Do you feel that you are subjected to harassment inside your workplace or while on the way to work?		
Yes	No	
120	27	3

Question 4

Is there a nursery at your work?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ no answer
34	115	1

Question 5

Is there a means of transportation provided by the workplace?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ no answer
8	141	1

Question 6

Do you feel that you work in a place that is safe in terms of health?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ no answer
61	88	1

We find out from asking the poll subjects the first question related to the extent of the problems inside work that 124 women said yes compared to 6 women who said no, which confirms that there really are several problems that the poll subjects mentioned in the details of their answers. The most important of these questions were:

(wages/the type of contract/ discrimination/ inequality in rights although the law stipulates this equality/ transportation/ nurseries/ working hours longer than what is stipulated in the law/ working during official holidays with regards to the private sector and the investment sector/ the breast feeding hour that is granted by the law that workers were not able to make use of because of the distance between the nursery and the work place making the working mother unable to leave work and return within an hour/ lack of health and vocational security means making the working place unsafe/ inequality and disregard for the circumstances of working women in access to appropriate training in preparation of leadership positions or promotion/ harassment inside and outside of work especially women working in the private and investment sectors) this is despite our knowledge that the conditions of appropriate work

mean an effort in exchange for a wage and that it should be included in the economy and the GNP to contribute to the development of the country. A number of elements have to be taken into consideration such as a fair wage and the regularity of labour, the duration and conditions of the contract, social security as represented by (health- unemployment benefits – compensation) and representation in trade unions, working hours, the concentration of the work, vocational risks, participation in decision making, the possibilities of vocational advancement or development of skills, the social status associated with a certain job. All these measures should be included in the work and that is why labour market policies have to be designed to include issues such as gender to help women improve their position in the labour market. Skills broaden the horizon of the working opportunities and lead to more abilities to earn money and professional and training aspirations and earning skills that lead to opportunities in work with a higher pay. In socially more advanced societies this matter is tied to expressing a more equal vision to the role of women and men and the rejection of the traditional wage earning model and a change in the division of responsibilities in house work. It was proven that securing a training before employment and training on the job to strengthen the technical and professional skills is an effective policy for the labour market and realizes the policies of equal opportunity.

Obstacles against women in training can be summarized as follows:

- Employers usually regard women as a high risk liability due to the fact that she is more likely to leave work to take care of her children
- Most women work in the informal sector where training opportunities are minimal
- Demand for female labour is concentrated in jobs that require unskilled workers and that do not allow for professional advancement

Female workers are affected to a large extent by the presence of children in the family and therefore, to achieve equality in treatment, measures have to be taken to make sure that the woman's reproductive role does not affect her work negatively. The recommendations in this regard include:

- Health care during pregnancy and after delivery
- Women should get their wages in full during the maternity leave
- Raising awareness about the social and occupational role of women and a better division of responsibilities towards the family and work and giving fathers the opportunity to play a set role in child rearing.

The issue of protecting motherhood has raised many questions and presented questions about the protection of the value of labour and equality.

As for the second question which deals with the effect of these problems on her life, 118 women said that they affect her performance at work and in her family life. On the other hand, 28 women announced that the problems had no effect on them and 8 workers answered that they do not know or they have no answer. They described these effects as a loss of self-confidence, lack of concentration in their work and delay in their working hours and their

inability to receive the training that the work provides because their times are inappropriate for the nature of their responsibilities. They frequently think of leaving work and staying at home, constantly fighting with the husband over the responsibility of the children and suffering several occupational illnesses due to work in a unfit environment.

Concerning the third question about the harassment of working women at work or on their way to it, 120 women answered yes, 27 said no and 3 did not have an answer or said they did not know. This indicates that there is harassment and that the working women feel it and its effect on them. The poll subjects described these harassments as coming from their bosses, their colleagues or on their way to and from work.

In reply to the fourth question about the availability of a nursery in the work place, 34 women said yes, 115 said no and 1 said they did not know or had no answer. The workers who said there was no nursery in their work place mentioned the hardships they and their children go through and how this affects their commitment to work and the days they have to miss work or be late as the nursery is far from the work place. Additionally there is also the financial burden that she carries and thinking about her children throughout her time at work, decreasing her concentration much more than her male colleagues who are not subjected to these problems. Additionally the distance between the work place and the nursery causes most mothers not to benefit from the breast feeding hour granted to them by the law.

The fifth question was about the availability of transportation provided by work. 8 said yes, 141 said no and 1 said she did not know. The workers explained in their reply to the question that the lack of transportation to work subjects them to a lot of trouble and hardships while getting to and from work. Weakening their performance and making their household obligations heavy to the extent that many among them prefer not going to work or leaving it completely and staying at home.

Lastly the sixth question was about the extent to which the working woman feels that she they work in a place that is safe for their health in terms of providing industrial safety and health measures. 61 said yes, 88 said no and 1 said she did not know. It is worth mentioning that the poll subjects who answered yes said that safety to them is the ventilation and seating places and not the actual meaning of industrial safety or vocational safety tools. Most of them work in the educational sector and talk about schools and classrooms. Those who said no are mostly from nurses and rural guides and some of the teachers. Those were talking directly about the means of vocational safety during work and the corresponding lack of legislative protection and not providing tools for disease prevention.

Therefore we can see that the conditions and environment of the workplace is a source of health hazards. In Egypt generally, women are subjected to tasks in which there is an inherent danger of accidents less than that to which men are subjected. They are however more prone to certain health hazards. Some of the effects on their health are associated with jobs or industries in which a large number of workers work in factories or in nursing where female presence is prevalent and the rate of injury raises due to the nature of the work.

Workers in electronics are also prone to injuries in the back and in the backbone. In the textile industry they are prone to dangers related to chemicals that lead to handicaps. Female workers are more prone to pressure and chronic fatigue and really aging and other arbitrary and social effects because of the dual role they play including pregnancy, childbearing and economic activity.

The monitoring team in the “observatory of the permanent conference” was keen on documenting everything that the women reveal not only through their answer with yes or no but through encouraging them to give an explanation for each answer and describing it in details to reach comprehensive answers that explain all sides of the questions. Accordingly the answers to the first axis manifested in the following:

- Means of transportation
- The nursery
- Harassment during work or on the way to it
- Not providing a safe working environment
- Discrimination in wages, promotions and access to training
- The type of contract
- The breastfeeding hour

We saw the effect of these problems on the role of workers in the work, family and society through their replies to the previously mentioned questions

➡ **The Second Axis:** Handles the different forms of discrimination and its effects on the working women through two questions. The first include the concept and the second deals with the explanation of its effects

Do you feel that you are discriminated against in work?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ No answer
110	30	10

Question 8

Do you see that there are jobs and tasks for women and others for women?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ No answer
98	50	2

It is clear in the previous two schedules that the number of workers who answered that they felt that there is a discrimination that befalls them in their workplaces was 110 while 30 workers do not feel this discrimination and 10 do not know or have no answer. When asked to elaborate about the forms and effects of this discriminations the poll subjects mentioned many different forms such as discrimination in wage, the kind of work, promotion, holding positions, nominations to training aimed at promoting administrative skills and abilities, discrimination in the kind of contract and treatment and in promotion to decision making positions. As for the effects of this discrimination, the poll subjects mentioned many effects on them whether regarding their performance or their family life. Regarding the effect on their performance at work, the poll subjects said that as a consequence of the discrimination

they are weak on the administrative level and they lose many technical abilities related to work. Additionally they lose self-confidence because they are excluded from responsible positions with the pretext that they are unable and inefficient. Consequently their issues are not presented to the public opinion. As for its effect on family life, they feel persecuted and discriminated against making them lack motivation in practices of family life quietly. Many times they lose their temper with their children very quickly and lose self-confidence.

As for question number 8 concerning the presence of jobs and tasks for men and others for women, 98 said yes, 5 said no and 2 said they did not know or had no answer. The women who said yes, said that there is discrimination between men and women in certain jobs, especially those related to administration and leadership in addition to certain jobs that only men get because of established customs and traditions. Other jobs are done only by women with no scientific reasoning but because of social reasons and the stereotypical image imposed on women. Those who said there was no discrimination explained their answer saying that there are hard jobs and others that are less strenuous. Women therefore in their opinion cannot do these strenuous jobs. As an example they mentioned jobs in which the employment of women is banned according to the chapter on the employment of women in the labour law.

➤ **The Third Axis:** Deals with the extent to which female workers are aware of the laws imposed on them and to what extent the law provides legislative and social protection through three questions as is shown in the tables above

Question 9

Do you know which law applies to you?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ No answer
33	114	3

Question 10

Do you feel the protection offered to you by laws?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ No answer
11	111	28

Question 11

Do you know the maternity leave, the sick leave and the child care leave in the law?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ No answer
88	59	3

Through the above mentioned three tables it is clear to us that the female workers have very little knowledge of the laws that are applied to them. Their answers to the eighth question were divided as follows; 33 said they were aware of the laws in exchange for 114 who

mentioned that they were not aware at all of the laws. Three workers said they did not know or did not have an answer and when asked to explain they said that their knowledge did not exceed the numbers of the articles or names of the laws but did not know the content of these laws or articles. They also said that they did not have the information or the time that gives them this chance. They also asserted that they have a pressing need to know and increase their information through seminars and training that they do not find the time for.

In the 11th question about how much they feel the protection of the law, 111 workers said that they do not feel this protection because of the problems they face inside work and are unable to solve. In exchange for this 11 workers said they felt protected and 28 answered that they do not know which means that most poll subjects do not feel that they are provided with legal protection in their work and lose the feeling of legislative security that provides them with solutions for their previously mentioned problems.

The tenth question mentioned some of the articles of laws concerning working women such as child care leave, sick leave and maternity leave. 88 workers mentioned that they are aware of these leave days in exchange of 59 workers who said they did not know of them and 3 did not have an answer. This is an indicator that the poll subjects, despite their lack of knowledge of the articles of the law in general, are actually aware of the laws concerning the vacations on the practical level since they get these vacations. On the other hand a number of poll subjects do not know of sick leaves and the number of days in this respect.

➔ **The Fourth Axis:** Deals with the workers vision for the role of the state in providing legal and social protection for them through one question, the answers to which are explained in the table below

Question 12

Do you feel the state's role in solving the problems of working women?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ No answer
41	106	3

As is shown above in the table, 106 polled subjects do not feel the role of the state institutions towards the solving of their problems. On the other hand 41 polled subjects said that they do feel the role of the state and 3 said they do not know or have no answer. The polled subjects explained the reason for not seeing a role for the state in solving problems by saying the state does not draft policies appropriate for the social and legal protection of the working women. They also stated that there is not much to be done with the laws even when they exist. The working woman does not find adequate social care for her role as a worker and her responsibilities as a mother and a wife. There are also many international conventions to which Egypt is a signatory but were not implemented by local laws. The state and media organizations still put women in stereotypical forms of labour therefore asserting the principles of discrimination and inequality in society and work

➡ **The Fifths Axis:** deals with the vision of female workers and unionized workers of independent unions and civil society organizations and parties in adopting their issues and presenting them to society through three questions the answers for which are in the following tables

Question 13

Do you feel the role of the union you belong to in solving your problems at work?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ No answer
39	104	7

Question 14

Are there any women in leadership positions in the union?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ No answer
62	74	12

Most of the Yes answers came from the unions of teachers and nursing only

Question 15

Do you feel that there is a role for political parties and civil society organizations in solving the problems of working women?		
Yes	No	I don't know/ No answer
44	92	14

In the poll subjects' answers to question 13 about the role of the union in solving the workers' problems 39 said they feel the role of the union in solving their problems, 104 said they do not feel this role and 7 said they do not know or that they had no answer. the poll subjects explained the why they do not feel the role of the union by mentioning that unions until now basically do not adopt the issues of working women and do not place them on the agenda of public opinion thus placing women's issues at the end of the list of priority issues. There is also a constant discrimination that takes place between men and women in union related work as is the case with all places and institutions. Subsequently the unionized woman does not feel the role of the union in solving her problems or changing the stereotypical image that was drawn of her role in the workplace or the union.

In question 14 about women holding leadership positions in unions 63 polled subjects said that there were women leaders in their unions while 74 said that there were no women in leadership positions in the unions and 13 said they did not know or had no answer. It is worth noting that the women who answered yes were mostly from the teachers and nurses unions and this may therefore be due to the general effect of women on these unions and their effective role in union related work while in other unions women do not feel that they have a leading position. Subsequently they do not feel that issues concerning them are presented and take a priority in the discussions agenda at work. Even those who said yes see that even though women take on decision making positions, they

still are fought by men in many ways and are subjected to a lot of pressure that may even touch on their reputation and their conduct making some of them leave the field to men to save their reputation or lose self-confidence and their ability to work. They take a back seat and this is generally apparent in union related work now. Until now unions do not present anything tangible to solve the problems of working women and until now the issues of working women have not taken a first priority in discussion or presentation.

Question number 15 that dealt with the role of parties and the civil society organizations in adopting issues of working women. 44 of the poll subjects said that there was a role for these organizations in solving the problems of working women while 92 said that they did not feel any role for political parties and civil society organizations in adopting the issues of working women with few exceptions. 14 subjects said they did not know or did not have an answer. they explained that this was because they felt that political parties do not pay much attention to women's issues in general and even when they cared this care is directed towards the political participation of women without addressing the problems of women in general. As for civil society organizations, the poll subjects who did not have an answer said that these organizations are interested in women's issues in general without concentrating on workers or union workers with few exceptions of women's organizations who have lately gained an interest in working women lately.

➤ **Second: Complaint applications**

In a continuation of the observatory of the permanent conference for working women, came the idea of offering legal support for working women who are subjected to problems inside their work or union through complaint applications. These applications were announced by the working team of the observatory in workplaces, unions in the five governorates through the legal offices in the branches of CTUWS in each governorate. Fifty female workers filled complaint applications in which they filled information about the case that is making the complaint as well as the nature of the complaint and its subject and the means of intervention required. The complaints of the workers were concentrated in some work related issues. The method of filing a complaint was directly through personal interviews in which the complainant tells her complaint and her most important requirements and the forms of support that she needs. The complaints (14 applications) varied between repression at work, lack of equality in wages, discrimination based on gender and arbitrary dismissal, deprivation from promotion for reasons that are non-legal, (12 applications) because of bad treatment from superiors, preferring men in some jobs without legal reasons, men reaching leadership positions disregarding skills or abilities but because of preferring men over women in these positions. 11 complaints were because of there is no nursery despite the condition of 100 female employees in the work place is applicable. 4 complaints were because the working environment was not suitable and lacked the conditions of health and

safety measure. 9 complaints were because of the lack of means of transportation causing extreme exhaustion for the workers and causing them to be late for work.

It is worth noting that legal intervention in these complaints was through presenting legal consultations by the lawyer in each of the branches in the different governorates and presenting informational support through answering legal inquiries related to each problem.

➤ **Conclusion and recommendations**

Work is an important and necessary value in the lives of people and groups and the right to work is one of the basic human rights that had been celebrated by the international declaration of human rights and all other international conventions related to human rights. That is way talking about other rights such as the right to free expression and opinion or the right of people to run countries etc., becomes a meaningless luxury for an unemployed person or another person working under inhumane conditions and suffers because of need. Several international texts issued by the general assembly of the United Nations or the International Labour Organization assert this right. Among them we would like to mention (agreement number 11 issued by the ILO in 1958) and the equal wage agreement (agreement number 100 concerning equality between male and female workers in wages that are equal to the value of their work, issued by ILO in 1951) and the agreement for union freedoms and the right to organization (agreement number 87 concerning the labour freedoms and the protection of the right to union organization dated 1948) and the agreement on the freedom of union organizations and collective negotiations (agreement number 98 on the application of the right to union organization and collective negotiations drafted by ILO in 1949).

All these treaties admit to the right of women and men in work and guarantee the practice of this right and how to improve the working conditions through rights to unions. The international treaty on the abolition of all kinds of discrimination against women collects all these rules and procedures in its 11th chapter that urges countries to:

1. To take all the appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of work in order to guarantee for her a base of equality between her and men especially:
 - The right to work is an established right for all humans
 - The right to enjoy equal opportunity in employment including the application of the same measures in employment affairs
 - The right to freedom of career choice and the right to promotion, job security and all the benefits and conditions of service and the right to training and vocational retraining including craftsmanship apprenticeship, vocational training and recurrent training.
 - The right to equal pay, and the right to equal treatment
 - The right to social security
 - The right to disease prevention and vocational safety including the protection of the reproductive role

We therefore see that the principle of non-discrimination between the sexes implies backing away from any discrimination or exclusion that is based on gender and forces the state to apply equality in all areas and cases that concern women's work and responsibility. Women have to enjoy all these right in the context of support from the state and empowerment for them in appropriate work. These rights are all taken from the international treaties regarding work the respect of these rights and enjoying them is subject to the state's social and economic choices for the state. Despite that the international conventions asks the states that ratify them to remove all forms of discrimination against women "by all appropriate means and without delay" the state still has discriminatory laws and do not activate the laws according to the conventions which shows that reform is very slow for women.

In this context the results of the monitoring operations by the team of the observatory of the Permanent Conference for Working Women in five governorates asserted that the working woman in the Egyptian labour market is still subjected to many problems that affect her and her role in work and society. There is a pressing need to find out realistic information about the economic role of women and its impact on family and society including all forms of violence, discrimination and lack of equality that befalls them due to legislation or because of the societal culture that sanctify it inside society and work whether it is official or unofficial. This should be presented to decision makers in order to design programs and policies that encourage equality and lack of discrimination and terminate all the problems of the labour market that had been previously mentioned to support women in access to appropriate work policies. It is certain that women are more prone than men to exploitation and dangerous practices and every female worker regardless of her social status to a minimal social protection, secure wage and appropriate working conditions in light of the critical economic situation. The main target of this social protection is the securing of safe working conditions and preservation of income empowering everyone to safe and productive work and helping them to face losing their jobs, illness or old age. Social protection differs with the different genders since, as we have seen, customs and traditions and societal culture have a different effect on men and women. Despite women doing all the jobs of men, discrimination for men is always present.

The recommendations presented by the poll subjects:

- Abiding by working relations and policies and procedures that guarantee that men and women enjoy fair working conditions
- The role of the state in executing policies that eliminate forms of discrimination and stereotyping that women are subject in work and society
- Supporting and empowering women workers to raise their skills and abilities and training them on important topics related to work "labour law/ special international conventions by the ILO/ negotiations and their tools/ union work skills.. Etc."

- Activating the role of the equal opportunity units that have been established in ministries in 2012 so that they have felt the impact of its role and have demanded a similar unit in the ministry of health
- Merging gender in union work in a way bigger than it is at the present
- The role of the union in working on women holding positions of leadership inside the unions
- Amending the article in the labour law that addresses the establishment of nurseries in the workplace so that the minimum required workers in the establishment is 50 not 100
- Providing appropriate means of transportation for the workers to the work place
- Drafting an article in the labour law that criminalizes sexual harassment inside the workplace.
- Providing a safe working environment for the workers in terms of safety and vocational health including industrial safety tools and safety legislation
- Providing training for the female workers in appropriate times so that they could join them
- Abiding by working hours specified by the law and not forcing workers to work during holidays.
- The right to disease prevention and safe working conditions including protection of the right to reproduce.