

The Work Conditions of Women Refugees: The Case of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

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Abstract : This study aims to shed light on the work conditions of female refugees and the most important constraints and challenges preventing them from accessing good earning work. The study was conducted in the Syrian refugee camps in Bekaa province, Lebanon, with a field survey carried out between 2016-2017 through face-to-face interviews of 69 female refugee workers, in addition to 4 focus groups. The results show that 97% of the Syrian female refugees are agricultural workers, they form more than 53% of the agricultural labor work among the refugees. Women predominantly perform all agricultural activities (Planting, weeding, fertilization, irrigation, compacting, cutting, sorting, packaging), except the carriage of heavy objects and sometimes irrigation are exclusive for men. The female child labor is 66% of the child labor. To maintain the livelihoods of their families, women accept to be paid for 4-8 \$/day with gender gap around 6 \$/day. Women's acceptance of these low wages is one of the main reasons for landowners' preference of hiring women under bad work conditions. The less educated and skilled (40% of the women are illiterate, and 2% have some skills) women are more likely to be limited to farm work. In addition, there are other reasons as traditions, labor market demand and other challenges related to security and legal issues. This study finds that enhancing the women capacities (for both refugees and host community) through vocational training and cooperative micro enterprises matched with income generating activities and opening new market channels for local manufactured products can play important role to improve the work skills and conditions, and that can improve the livelihood of their families. The study also recommends to adopt a strategy by all humanitarian agencies to make the aid on educating children condition.

Keywords : agricultural work conditions, gender wage gap, women refugees, work constraints

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