

Session 2: Social protection for the informal sector



Hania Sholkamy

Hania Sholkamy is an Egyptian anthropologist, currently an associate research professor at the Social Research Centre of the American University in Cairo. Her work has focused on gender, health, and social protection in Egypt. She designed and piloted the cash transfers programs of the Government of Egypt as special advisor to the Minister of Social Solidarity. She has been a visiting fellow and professor at the American University in Beirut, the Arab Gulf University in Bahrain, and Yale University.



Wafa' Bani Mustafa

Wafa' Bani Mustafa, Minister of Social Development, and the Chairperson of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. She previously occupied the position of Minister of State for Legal Affairs (2021-2022). Wafa is a lawyer who holds a Master's degree in Psychological Counselling, and obtained specialized Courses in Women in Public Service from Wellesley College, Boston - USA (2011). Moreover, she obtained the Order of State Centennial. She is a former Member in the Jordanian House of Representatives representing Jerash governorate for three consecutive terms (2010-2020). She is the first Jordanian woman MP to chair a parliamentary bloc. She is a founder of the Jordanian Women Caucus, and the Chairperson of the Coalition of Women MPs from Arab Countries to Combat Violence against Women. Wafa is a member of the Constitution Sub-Committee of the Royal Committee to Modernize the Political System.



Haneen Sayed

Haneen Sayed is an economic development expert with over 30 years at the World Bank, where she led major reform programs, policy dialogue, and development initiatives across four global regions. She specializes in social protection, labor, education, poverty, gender, and fragility. Since 2023, she has been a Senior Fellow at the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center. She holds degrees from Stanford and Columbia and completed executive education at Harvard. Her career spans roles at Morgan Stanley, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, and teaching positions in New York. She also served on LIFE's board.



Issam Lahmar

Issam Lahmar is the current Minister of Social Affairs of Tunisia, with a distinguished career in the judiciary. His career spans various judicial roles, including Judge at the Court of First Instance in Kef, President of the Labor Division at the Court of First Instance in Grombalia, and Counselor at the Court of Cassation. He has led teams and departments at the Center for Legal and Judicial Studies and served in the Ministry of Justice. Lahmar is also a lecturer in labor and social law and has published numerous books and articles on labor disputes, social security, and insurance law. He holds a degree in Law from the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of Tunis and advanced judicial training certificates.



Nidhal Ben Cheikh

Nidhal Ben Cheikh, PhD in Economics from the University of Paris-Cité, is an international consultant specializing in social protection and employment. He previously served as Economic Advisor to Tunisia's Minister of Social Affairs and Director of Studies at CRES. With extensive experience across MENA countries, his work focuses on inclusive social protection, labor market reforms, and child protection. He is a Research Associate at the Economic Research Forum (ERF) and the author of several publications on informality and policy evaluation. Nidhal brings expertise in data-driven program design, capacity building, and advancing gender-responsive and evidence-based social policies.