

Development needs– “REFORM”

By Rami Mehdawi

The Palestinian Association for Empowerment and Local Development – REFORM, organized a charity dinner last week, aimed at gathering a group of youth and women's grassroots organizations in a number of areas defined as less fortunate in the official and semi-official developmental processes, with a number of companies from the private sector and funding and employment organization. In this context, REFORM has worked to accompany women centers from a number of provinces for the purpose of facilitating brainstorming processes to identify production ideas and initiatives to help in involving women in the production process, and bridging the gaps of local employment, through creating networkers between these institutions and the private sector, funds and employment councils that may contribute to providing incubators to these projects.

However, these initiatives will not see the light in their real size as long as those responsible for developmental processes are unable to heal their relationships, and as long as the private sector is not seriously involved in local development processes, and the relationship between the official establishment and civil institution is represented by stalemate.

In order to overcome the incapacitated traditional means of development and to reduce reliance on foreign funding, REFORM allocated all incomes from the charity dinner to one of the ideas put forward by the women centers participating in the event, the presence of private sector companies was very positive and an evidence of their desire to carry out developmental processes away from the media and away from their desire to exploit this event for marketing and advertisement.

The centers participating in this dinner had simple dreams and ambitions, those centers cannot afford borrowing funds, whatever the amount is, women coming from Heja, Iskaka, Qalandi and Dier Jreer were only looking for encouragement, support and some material in order to start their initiatives.

We undoubtedly spoiled part of their rapture with our numerous questions and our deep economic thoughts relate to our understanding of the market, consumption patterns and motives, of which all shouldn't have been raised, since all our understanding of economy must be further developed to serve the desire of approximately 52% of the community to engage in the production process, there is no alternative than straightening our «developmental approach», and understand that our steadfastness cannot be achieved without deepening the development of our weak and poor local communities.

Here, it is necessary to enquire about the social responsibility of large companies, and whether the social responsibility they claim is for the purposes of advertising and marketing of their products? Is it limited to providing financial facilities?

The most unique thing in REFORM's experience is its refusal to request financial facilities, and its insistence that the idea is to create partnership between stable institutions and women's and youth institutions, under which both parties of the partnership benefit, such as a local bank

getting into partnership with the Heja Charity Foundation, whereby the bank benefits from a low income but will be supporting the targeted institution. In this context, one of the women centers suggested to a big company to sign an agreement where the center will be manufacturing “key holders” for this company instead of importing them from China, which will certainly contribute to the reduction of unemployment of women, people with disabilities and youth.

In the same regard, REFORM renewed its call for private sector companies and institutions, especially banks, construction companies and other stable services companies to deal positively with small borrowing, pointing out that according to REFORM's vision, if its efforts to be supported by those companies and facilitated by official frameworks, particularly employment funds and Arab funds, it will surely contribute to the reduction of unemployment rates significantly, and will support the creation of untraditional production systems in Palestine.