

Al Akhbar newspaper published earlier this week a report on the revision of Clause 14 which is related to ensuring equality amongst spouses thus allowing the spouses of employed women to benefit from the provision of the NSSF. This revision was intended to ensure access to the NSSF to those excluded. The report criticises the ways in which the Parliamentary Commission for Women and Children's Rights dealt with the issue and notes that the said Commission did not ensure equality amongst spouses and failed to show who is actually targeted with this reform.

The report traces back the process that led to the demand for this reform which originated in an initial consensus between the National Commission for Lebanese Women, the Lebanese Women Council and a number of women NGOs to address the gaps in Clause 14 including the revision of article G which stipulates that only spouses of employed women who reach 60 years of age or beyond and who are unable to secure their livelihoods because of a physical or mental disability are entitled to benefit from their wife's NSSF entitlements. NCLW and its coalition request that this be changed to become "any spouse who does not benefit from any other form of social security. The Parliamentary Commission distorted the revision and introduced a condition for its preliminary approval namely that the husband may benefit only if he is not engaged in paid work and if he is living in the same house as his wife. The revision will benefit unemployed and self employed men but will leave many others beyond the remit of this revision. Mary Debs from the National Gathering to Lift All Forms of Discrimination Against Women noted that this revision is problematic in view of the nebulous definition of "engaged in paid work". She insisted that there is a need to review this revision so that it includes working and non working spouses as well as non Lebanese spouses.

For his part, the member of the Parliamentary Commission for Administration and Justice, Ghassan Moukhaiber, indicated in an interview in Al Akhbar newspaper that the issue is not that of equality but rather one that is related to social services and that the solution lies in addressing the overall problem with the current social security system.