



al-raida

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IMPORTANCE OF DOCUMENTATION IN THE ARAB WORLD

IWSAW's Documentation Center, mentioned in the second issue of Al-Raida (page 12), is an essential project because it is intended to be a stepping stone for all IWSAW future projects. Its aim is to provide adequate knowledge and research material for everyone interested in the study of women, more particularly, women of the Arab East. The IWSAW center will serve not only the needs of researchers and students at the Institute and BUC but the center will also provide services for the Arab region and other parts of the world. It is a unique research center, perhaps the only one in this area, which concentrates on works by and for women in the Middle East.

The collection in the Documentation Center includes pertinent books, periodicals, studies, research papers (printed or mimeographed, published or unpublished). These works, written in English, French or Arabic, include biographies, history, essays, surveys, fiction — all reflecting woman's status in the past, as well as the present in respective Arab countries.

"In classification and cataloguing", says Mrs. Samira Rafidi Megh-dessian, librarian at BUC, "we have adopted the international method used by the Library of Congress in America. We have been using a list of subject headings based on the same source."

So far, the Center contains over 300 English and French books, besides periodicals, along with a large number of research papers and a unique collection of reports about women's conferences in different parts of the world.

Classification and cataloguing of this material presents a large research undertaking. Yet, it is expected to be accomplished soon. By 1978, the IWSAW Center will have ready for publication and sale a complete bibliography of English works about women. Other works from round-the-world are added to the collection constantly. The Arabic Bibliography will be ready some time later in 1978.

Besides the list of books, the bibliography will include: 1) A survey of books dealing with Middle East sociology and containing sections or articles on women. 2) Asterisk notations indicating the works which are catalogued and available at the IWSAW Documentation Center.

Rose Ghurayyib

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QASSEM AMEEN (1863-1908)

- A RESEARCHER WHO SOUGHT TRUTH FOR ITS OWN SAKE, NOT AS A STEPPING STONE TO AUTHORITY AND HIGH POSITION.
- A THINKER WHO PRECEDED HIS AGE IN RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMAN IN SOCIETY.
- AN IDEALIST IN HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD LOVE.

To introduce Qassem Ameen. It is appropriate to mention the following story about him:

When, in 1890, the Duke of Harcourt, a French writer, published a book about Egypt, depicting the backward condition of Egyptians and the low status of Egyptian women, Qassem retorted by publishing in French an article in which he debated the statements of the French writer. He wrote that Egypt granted its citizens all the rights proclaimed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man as propounded by the French Revolution, and that the Egyptian government was bound to apply in its decisions the principles of justice and equality.

Following his statement, Qassem Ameen, who was a lawyer and a judge by profession, proceeded to examine his conclusions seriously. Was he right in his refutation of the Frenchman's ideas? Or was he simply moved by national zeal? He then started a careful, objective investigation of the social conditions in Egypt and came to the conclusion that theories and sweeping general statements did not agree with reality. The recognition of the "rights of man" by the Egyptian government did not guarantee their application in practice. After long deliberation, he laid his finger on what he considered the chief cause of cultural backwardness: the inferior condition of women. "If half of the population", he argued, "lead a life of slavery, fear and ignorance, how can we expect any development for the entire nation?"

From these investigations about the true condition of women in Egypt, he proceeded to write earnestly. His books, "Emancipation of Woman" and "The New Woman" are remarkable monuments in the history of Arab feminism, revealing his sincerity of character, his wide scholarship, and his extensive culture derived from books and travel. In his works he used a scientific approach based on the logic of hypotheses, observed experience, data comparison and induced conclusions.

Qassem Ameen examined the rights which Islamic law confers on women and found that it gave them equality with men in civic rights, such as those of transaction, performance of sales and purchases, possession, donation, declaration of will and so on, without obliging them to obtain their husbands' agreement. But certain circumstances in later centuries that pervaded the Moslem World, brought about a despotic patriarchal rule on the part of the governors, thereby influencing their male subjects to adopt a similar attitude toward their womenfolk. Wives

were imprisoned in their homes by force. Men indulged openly in the practice of polygamy. Women slaves were kept as concubines. The right to divorce was abused and other social injustices enacted.

If men allowed their daughters to receive some education, they equally prevented them from practicing any form of work, thus encouraging them to forget what they knew, to lead a dull, useless life.

In his exposition, Qassem Ameen resorted to all kinds of religious, logical, and scientific arguments. He applied his knowledge of economics, for example, when he compared a woman who has been deprived of education and the ability to work with a large treasure stored in a chest, which the owner contemplates every day but fails to invest wisely for the full profit it could represent. Such ironies pointed out many cultural contradictions.

He also quoted economics when he said that a woman needs both education and work in order to be able to manage her property or to gain her living in case she remains unmarried. Or, similarly, if she is divorced or widowed, or married to a man who has suddenly become bankrupt or unable for other reasons to provide for the whole family, work is necessary for survival.

Besides economics, he used psychology as a source of argument, particularly when he asserts that education and work are both necessary for the development of a woman's personality. She could be, for her husband, a friend, a companion, or a counselor instead of being an obedient slave. For a truly cultured man, there is no greater happiness than that of sharing life with a woman who understands him, shares his ideas and his plans, and plays for him the role usually played by an intimate male friend. Such companionship was unthinkable in a culture of patriarchal despotism.

In discussing the traditional feminine veil, Qassem tries to show, by referring to Koranic verses, that the veil was never an Islamic institution. Moslem jurisprudence allows a woman to keep her face and her hands unveiled. Moreover, the use of the veil is harmful to a woman's health; often detrimental to her character. It interferes with the proper management of her affairs and retards her social development as a person.

"It is a great mistake to believe that the veil can be a safeguard of a woman's chastity. Experience has shown



that unveiled countrywomen who mix with men are more chaste and less inclined to betray their husbands than the veiled city women who remain secluded in their homes and develop an unhealthy attitude toward the other sex."

His deep understanding of religion led him to declare that a person who sins in thought is just as guilty as one who sins in action. If the veil could prevent actual adultery, it should prevent mental adultery which is punishable by divine law, though not by our common court laws. A woman's virtue, to be trustworthy, must come from within and not be imposed by oppressive means which may induce revolt. The veil is the outward sign of female bondage.

His investigation and experience lead him to assert that segregation of the sexes led both men and woman to suspect illicit relations or expressions of sexual desire in the most innocent motions, and in the simplest looks or utterances. Even now, in communities where segregation of the sexes is still practiced and the veil has been discarded, people suspect the existence of a love affair between a man and a woman who look at each other, exchange a passing word, or salute each other as a sign of recognition. For segregationists, no other communication could exist between a man and a woman except that with sexual connotations.

Writing of marriage, he compared two definitions: that of religious leaders who define it as "a contract allowing a man to deflower a woman"; and the Koranic definition that states: "One of His signs is that He created for you, out of yourselves, spouses in whom you will find repose and instilled between you and them friendship and kindness." The first definition, says Ameen, is coarse and

materialistic, whereas the second refers to a relationship of friendliness, kindness and mutual affection between husband and wife. No other definition surpasses it in beauty.

In handling his subject, Qassem Ameen proves to be not only a fair judge and a careful investigator but also a rare idealist. To him, sensual attraction between a man and a woman is of short duration, while attraction based on spiritual and intellectual ties is more permanent. Love cannot permeate a man's soul and form an essential part of it, unless he has discovered in his beloved those feminine qualities of gentleness, fine taste, intelligence, perception, dexterity, frankness, truthfulness and all the other moral virtues which are far more appreciated than physical beauty by intelligent and cultured men. For him, it is impossible for true love to exist between an ignorant woman and a truly educated man, no matter how beautiful that woman may be.

Qassem Ameen belonged to an elite who were not satisfied with mere words but took care to carry thought into serious and sincere action. "His writings", says Huda Shirawi, the late president of the Egyptian Women's Union, "expound ideas in which he sincerely believed. He spoke out of conviction which was free from any desire for gain or fame." His daring to say what he thought and to defy public opinion brought him violent criticism, refutations, and angry threats from the reactionary majority of his countrymen. Yet, he had the courage to criticize them in these terms: "Divine law prohibits many other sins which it considers just as bad as adultery. For example, assassination, which is considered by both divine and human law even more dangerous than adultery. Why did we not use against the former sin (assassination), the same strong preventive measures which we have been using against the latter? Why should we imagine that adultery is the worst possible crime and, therefore, that it should receive the worst possible punishment?"

Though Ameen died in early middle age, he found time to extend his plan of reform beyond that of woman's emancipation. He denounced certain social evils which prevailed in governmental administration and he even proposed some original ideas about the reform of the Arabic language.

Qassem Ameen's burning zeal and wide interest in Egyptian and Arab evolution and development reminds us of another reformer: Walieddin Yakan, who was Qassem's contemporary and shared his enthusiasm for women's emancipation but on a more limited scale. Yakan, a humanitarian poet and journalist, wrote a prayer for students at the American University of Beirut in 1921. This "Prayer of Humanity", one which they could all recite in private or in public, represented a sign of common feeling and mutual understanding. Humanity for Yakan included all Arab men and women equally.

At this period of our history, amid the suffering from severe political and social crises, it would help us to seek inspiration and guidance in the examples of former leaders who were witnesses through their words and their lives to the truth of spiritual values and the necessity of holding fast to them for a better life.

RIMA ALAMUDDIN

Rima Alamuddin's premature death occurred only 14 years ago (1963); yet, she may be considered a pioneer in the sense that she was one of the few Lebanese or Arab women writers who chose to express themselves in English. Moreover, she was a pioneer in her efforts to create her own original style and to inaugurate personal modes of expression inspired through her knowledge of the English language and modern Western Literature.

Rima drew most of her ideas, from Western Culture but the atmosphere she depicts is purely oriental. The background is Lebanese and so are the characters of her stories and poems, though they may appear in Western dress and adopt Western manners. Her artistry performed an ideal marriage of cultures.

She was born in Beirut, in 1941, of a Lebanese father, Najib Alamuddin, Director of the Middle East Airlines, and a Swiss mother, Dr. Ida Kunzler. She started her education in Lebanese private schools. At AUB, she majored in English and obtained her B.A. with distinction. She then continued her studies at Girton College, Cambridge. While at college, she started writing in English, publishing stories, poems and articles in college papers and magazines. In 1960, at 19, she published a novel "Spring to Summer", written in a realistic style, revealing an acute awareness of people and places.

In 1963, at the age of 22, as she was preparing to return to England her accidental death occurred, depriving her country, her family and friends of a promising writer. Peter Grey, the English critic wrote: "She left behind her more solid achievement than most of us, and although, as a true artist, she would have been the first to wave it aside as mere five-finger exercises in preparation for the next attempt, it has a high and enduring quality."

Besides her novel, Rima left a collection of short stories "The Sun is Silent", with a surrealist touch; and a collection of poems, "Years of Youth".

"Years of Youth" is made up of 15 poems, written in free verse, published with a foreword by Peter Grey, who says, "She was unescapably aware of the great dichotomy, of the fact that tears and laughter are but aspects of the same thing, that mankind "is born to one law and to another bound, created sick, commanded to be sound".

His foreword refers to Rima's wide culture and the rich experience that she was able to accumulate and utilize during her short life on earth.

In analyzing her style, he points-out her understanding of the secret of art which consists in making the far look near, bringing opposites together, giving the illusion of similarity in the dissimilar:

I hoped I would not have to know how tired I would be



A tiredness not lost, and good, as after a long
and arduous work
leaving me free to roam about reluctantly,
a tiredness not altogether tired...

"With What Tenderness", her first poem in the collection, was written when she was seventeen. The accumulation of words in it recalls a confused dream, but the phrase "with what tenderness" recurs between the lines and gives the impression of nostalgia for things past and gone. The reader enjoys the rhythmic character of the measured, rimeless lines, though he may not grasp their meaning.

"There Was a Yellow Rose", the second poem, tells an obscure tale about a yellow rose, a red rose, a dried rose and a blind boy; the whole suggesting a parallel between the rich dreamland of the past and the barren present, stifled by reality.

«Rural Household Resource Allocation»

By Joseph Faris,
Professor of Sociology,
St. Joseph University, Beirut,
with Father George de
Napoli as co-author.

A study sponsored
by IWSAW and funded by
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

This study is a survey of rural households in Lebanon, covering ten families in each of four villages and representing different human and ecological zones in this country. The four villages are Ma'ad (Jubail, Mt. Lebanon), Sa'adin (Akkar), Ain-Zebdeh (Beka'a), Hassin (Kesrouan, Mt. Lebanon). The ten families were studied in depth, on the basis of family size, permanent residency, employment of head household, income, and land ownership.

The total population of the four villages is 1363; the smallest being Sa'adin, with 62 inhabitants, and the largest, Ain-Zebdeh with 950. The average overall family size is 5.6.

Since these villages are all located in rural districts, we should expect their inhabitants to take farming as their chief occupation, but this is not the case. The average proportion of those fully occupied with agriculture ranges from 28 — 67%, while 1 — 8% use agriculture as a part-time activity. The rest earn their incomes by holding various jobs in public works, services, business, industry and so on. In one village, Sa'adin, the whole cultivable area is utilized, while in Hassin (Kesrouan) utilization is only 10%; in Ain-Zebdeh, 59%; and in Ma'ad, 15%.

The fundamental fact which emerged from the survey is the general lack of interest in agriculture among the villagers. Working the land is not socially esteemed in Lebanon and it has the occupational disadvantage of being at the mercy of the weather. Except where landholdings are large and sufficiently remunerative to compensate for negative cultural evaluations, the work of a small landowner can hardly be considered as worthy of a successful farmer or country squire. "The attractions offered by steady work with a fixed salary and the rise in social standing which it represents, especially in a cosmopolitan city like Beirut, far outweigh any possible palliatives offered for small increases in Agricultural productivity."

The annual family income from agriculture ranges from a minimum of LL 900 per capita to a maximum of LL 12,000. The most favored geographic area, from the agricultural point of view, is Sa'adin (Akkar) where the entire land is cultivated.

The total per capita income for rural households (including agricultural and non-agricultural vocations) is between LL 2000 and LL 10,000/year.

Illiteracy seems to increase where cultivated land is larger in size with fewer good schools nearby. More access to education creates a tendency to emigrate with a decreasing interest in agricultural work.

That is to say, the distribution of educational services is highly unbalanced. Each of the four villages, except little Sa'adin, contains only a government elementary school. The closest secondary school is 6-10 kms. away from them. Health and social services are almost nonexistent. These limiting educational factors encourage illiteracy and stem opportunity for emigration, keeping many working on small land holdings close by their homes and families.

The modern arab family is the unit in these four villages but vestiges of the extended family exist, especially in isolated areas like Hassin, in Kesrouan. Equally in this village, the status of women seems to be more stagnant than in Ma'ad or Ain-Zebdeh where women and children, especially those who have received some education, are allowed a share in discussions and decision-making, concerning the education of children and household expenditures.

The problem which faces those interested in village welfare, deduced from this study, is that of improving the conditions of agriculture, education, and the standard of living in the Lebanese village, so that the villagers may be persuaded to remain and give up the desire to emigrate. Education should be adapted to the needs of the villagers in such a way as to succeed in eradicating the old-fashioned, depreciative attitude toward farming and restoring love for the soil and pleasure in cultivating it. Education should encourage cooperative work by the educated minority with the aim of creating more active cultural life which, supported by the natural charms of village life, will make the rural setting an attractive place to work and live.

Family Planning and Women's Development at MONASTIR, TUNISIA, 9-12 AUGUST, 1977

This conference was organized by the National Women's Union of Tunisia and was attended by representatives of Family Planning Associations from various Arab countries: Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Morocco, Sudan, Tunis, Jordan, Algeria, Yemen Democratic Republic. Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr, who attended the conference provided the following brief notes:

The Minister of Planning in the Tunisian Government, H.H. Mr. Mustapha Zaanouni, opened the Conference with a speech on his country's achievements in the field of women's development and the projects which are being planned for the future.

The Iraqi delegate of the Women's Federation in Iraq gave a talk about women's progress in her country in the field of education and work. "Family Planning to us means the implementation of family welfare projects, meeting the country's need for increased population, providing children with proper hygienic care which will ensure normal growth."

The Syrian delegate spoke about the role played by Syrian women in economic development, the efforts displayed in the struggle against illiteracy, and the improvement of conditions of rural women. She expounded the claims of her country women, among which are the amendment of the law of personal status with the effect of abolishing polygamy, giving women equal rights with men in connection with divorce and the guardianship of children. The Egyptian delegate, Mrs. Fakhriyya Qassem, gave a lecture on a project of integrated rural development as applied in the self-help project of "Sandyon Village" and in the creation of the "Happy Childhood" center, financed by the cooperation of the Cairo FP Association, the Social Research Center at the American University in Cairo, and the Ford Foundation.

The representative of the General Women's Union of the Democratic Republic of Yemen stated the objective behind family planning activities in her country, as

follows: "To promote the health standard of mother-child, to reduce the infant mortality rate and to develop the health standard of the Yemeni citizen in general."

The recommendations of the Conference were summarized in ten points by Mena Bulletin of June-July-August 1977, the most important of them are the following four:

1. Emphasis on the necessity of close cooperation between women's organizations and Family Planning Associations.

2. Equality of the sexes in opportunities for education and work.

3. Amendment of Family Laws with the active participation of women, i.e., repeal of discriminatory laws related to divorce, social security, pension schemes, inheritance, widowhood, and polygamy.

4. Inclusion of demographic, health, and nutrition components in every educational program which should explain the advantages of planned parenthood and the use of different contraceptive devices.

Family Planning in the Arab World Gains Ground and Importance

Family Planning Organizations are spreading in almost every part of the world. The IPPF, International Parental Planning Federation, has been active in bringing them together by holding frequent meetings, conferences, and panel discussions in various parts of Asia and Africa and by forming regional councils for associations in the same region. Thus The Middle Eastern and North African (Mena) Regional Council was formed under the presidency of Mrs. Fathia Mzali, who is also president of the Tunisian Women's Association. Its general director is Dr. Issam Nazer. The Mena Region Council, whose central office is in Carthage, Tunisia, publishes a quarterly bulletin in three languages: Arabic, English and French.

In Arab countries, governments



This photo features from left to right: Mrs. Fathia Mzali, President of IPPF MENA Region, Mrs. Sud Abdul Sattar Al Bayrouti, from Iraq Family Planning Association.

have encouraged the formation of family planning associations within their countries and have supported the holding of conferences and meetings to report activities and to discuss mutual plans.

In December, 1976, the Arab Republic of Yemen inaugurated its

Family Planning Association at Sana'a. In the same year, FP associations were formed in the Yemen Democratic Republic and in Bahrain. FP Associations already existed in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan.

Children's Literature as a Means of Promoting Intercultural Understanding

A seminar on "International Perspectives in Literature for Children and Young People" was held in Denmark, August 29-September 2, 1977, by the Danish National Commission for Unesco.

A comprehensive report about the seminar is in preparation and will be ready in early 1978 but the recommendations made by the participants have been condensed by the drafting committee for the report, and here we publish them as they were reproduced in the copy received by Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr, Director of the IWSAW, who attended the Seminar.

Resolved: that the Unesco's regional centers for book development give due consideration to the value of fictional literature for

children and young people, for education and for the general endeavour to heighten the quality of life;

...that model collection of children's books for kindergartens, schools, and public libraries be established, above all, in connection with Unesco's regional centers.

...that existing international, regional and national institutions and organizations, governmental and non-governmental, be encouraged toward increased cooperation, aiming at a wider distribution of monographs and serial publications for children.

...that the number of fellowships for teachers and children's librarians be increased with a view to promote studies on the effect

of fictional literature for children and young people, aiming at enhancing their knowledge of other cultures and influencing their attitudes towards these ends.

The following points were also emphasized:

1 - The promotion of literature dealing with contemporary conflicts in a way that promotes intercultural understanding.

2 - The need for books for the handicapped child and books about different handicaps in order to increase understanding by others.

3 - The importance of avoiding discrimination and cruelty by a careful selection of folk tales and modern tales for children.

Impact of War on Lebanese Children and Youth



This social topic was discussed at a conference organized by the Lebanese Child Welfare Association and suggested by Mrs. Zahia Salman, Head of the Association. It was held in Beirut on the 7th and 8th of December, 1977. A large number of organizations participated in the panel by presenting studies and lectures on the topic or by joining in the discussions which followed. Some of those organizations present were "The Educational Center for Research and Development", "The Lebanese Red Cross", "Beirut University

College - IWSAW", "International College", "American University of Beirut" and "Lebanese Family Planning".

The representative panel ended with a large number of recommendations which may be summarized as follows:

1 - Promotion of health conditions by the modernization of basic health services; application of the U.N. charter concerning the "Rights of Children"; carrying out a permanent cleanliness campaign throughout the country; pro-

ducing complete statistical information on the number of the handicapped and war victims; and adopting a plan for effectiveness against drug addiction.

2 - Promotion of the mental health of children by developing their creative powers and meeting their need for joy and recreation; awakening their national feeling through the production of suitable radio and television programs; popularization of sports and folk arts and the elimination of films which incite to crime and violence.

3 - Promotion of social justice by recognizing the importance of a well integrated and all-inclusive plan of social reform.

4 - Promotion of education by adopting an educational plan based on a thorough study of the needs of Lebanese society; provision of modern, well-equipped school buildings; raising the quality of textbooks; providing better training for teachers; and the preparation of good reading material for children and youth.

"Social and Academic Adjustment of University Women of the Arab Gulf States"

This is the title of a field study prepared by Dr. Isaac Kotb, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the "Kuwait University", published in 1975. The study attempts to determine the attitude of women students at the Kuwait University toward certain social and academic problems like the following: choice of a major and factors influencing this choice, equality of right to education for both sexes, vocational orientation of women, married women and work, family planning, problems facing the modern family, political and nationalistic trends.

The study shows that the proportion of Kuwaiti women students at K.U. reaches 55% of the whole number of women at the university. The proportion of

women is superior to that of men, being 60-64% of the whole student body in all departments except those of law and jurisprudence.

The results of the study show that 78% of the women students use their own judgment in the choice of their major and do not yield to outside influences; 64% are planning to work after graduation, while 26% intend to pursue their studies; 83% favor co-education at university level; the majority (79%) believe that women have the same right as men to education at its various levels. Most of them (73%) reject the idea that marriage between an educated man and a non-educated woman is more likely to ensure stability of marriage; 75% also reject the tradition which pretends that marriage with one's kinsfolk is more stable

than marriage outside the family.

The vocations they prefer, listed according to priority, are as follows: teaching, social work, medicine, government employment, law, industrial work.

The public sector is more attractive to them than the private sector, probably because it offers more stability. 89% prefer marrying an educated man of limited means to marrying a rich suitor. 65% believe in woman's right to participate in political elections.

On the whole, the results obtained by Dr. Kotb seem to reflect a progressive evolutionary spirit in women students of the young Kuwait University, founded only 10 years ago.

The Lebanese Ministry of Labor Confirms Principle of Equal Rights for the Sexes

In a detailed report presented to the Arab League in December 1977, the Lebanese Ministry of Labor expounded the steps taken by the Lebanese Government regarding the application of the laws stipulated by the Social Work Document in accordance with recommendations received from the Arab Ministers of Social Affairs' Conference, previously held at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The report stresses the application of the law which grants women the same rights as men in the field of labor, according to international agreements promulgated by the International Labor Organization. The first agreement, no. 100, asserts for both sexes equal pay for equal work. The

second, no. 111, forbids racial discrimination concerning the right of the individual to work and job protection.

The Parliamentary Commission for Administration and Justice had already approved in its meeting of June 8, 1977, the project of a law confirming equality of the sexes by amending all legal texts which violate the principle of equality. (See Al-Raida, no. 2, p. 11).

The report adds that equal opportunities for education and training are open to Lebanese men and women. The National Committee for struggle against illiteracy is active in the field of training adult women.

Women's History Research Center 2325 Oak Street Berkeley, California

IWSAW has received an information pamphlet about the Women's History Center in Berkeley, which "from 1968 to 1974 collected and organized over a million documents relating to the role of women in our society."

Major collections are published on microfilms: "Her story" contains complete issues of woman's serials; the Women and Health, Mental Health, Women and Law microfilms include articles gathered from women's publications, mass and alternative press, professional journals and unpublished pamphlets and manuscripts from all over the world.

Microfilm library available on request.

**"A REPORT ON
WOMEN'S STATUS
IN KUWAIT"
(PREPARED BY :
THE COMMISSION
IN CHARGE OF
WOMEN'S AFFAIRS,
COUNCIL OF
PLANNING, KUWAIT,
1975**

This report consists of four chapters dealing with the present status of the Kuwaiti woman, under the following headings:

1. Women and the family
2. Women and education
3. Women and work
4. Women in politics

1. Status of Kuwaiti Women in the Family

In the introduction, the document refers to the Kuwaiti Constitution which considers the family as the basis of society, pledges to safeguard its existence, concede material help to citizens who suffer from disease, old age or physical disability, and to administer medical care and social security to all citizens.

The Kuwaiti law grants women equal rights with men to enjoy these social benefits. The same law applies to men and women in connection with the right to citizenship, i.e., its retention or abolition. Equality of the sexes is also observed in the execution of penal laws, and in the application of financial aid to needy people, for example, widows and orphans, divorced women, aged or disabled individuals, those suffering from chronic diseases, parents whose children are at school, pregnant and nursing women whose husbands are in want.

Public aid also includes administered financial help brought about by catastrophes from public or private causes.

The chapter expounds the laws regulating pensions of civil employees and pension distribution among heirs in the following proportions:

- To the widow (or widows in case of polygamy): 3/8 of the pension.

- To sons and unmarried daughters: 3/8 equally divided among them.

- To parents, brothers and sisters, 1/8 equally divided.
- The remaining 1/8 to the public treasury

Penal laws against abortion and killing of the new-born are also stated in this chapter, along with other laws requiring vaccination of infants against smallpox and diphtheria, or the imposition of necessary precautions for the prevention of contagious diseases.

At the end of the chapter, paragraphs from the Charter of the United Nations are quoted, which claim respect of the Rights of Man and of the basic human freedoms, without discrimination based on sex, language, religion or race. These quotations serve to confirm the adherence of Kuwait to the U.N. Charter and confirm its attitude of non-discrimination between the sexes in the application of law.

The report declares that the law of personal status in Kuwait, i.e., the law regulating marriage, divorce, inheritance and guardianship, is directly derived from the Moslem system of law. It has not been published in the document because a project for the elaboration of this law is in preparation and will be published separately.

2. Women and Education

The status of Kuwaiti women in education is based on the Constitution which stated that "education is free and compulsory for all Kuwaiti children, boys and girls, through the primary and middle School Levels. The State will also take charge of providing school buildings, teachers, stationery and all other necessary equipment."

The constitution also stipulates the responsibility of the State to assume the task of girls' education according to religious principles and Arab values, making use of modern scientific progress, without neglecting woman's special vocation to be a mother and a moral guide to the new generation.

This introduction is followed by statistical tables showing 1) the

steady increase in the number of girl students, growing from 2606 in 1956 to 10102 in 1974; 2) the increase in the number of girl students reaching the 4th middle form, from 23% in 1965 to 70% in 1974; 3) the decrease in the percentage of illiterate women from 74% (of Kuwaiti women) in 1957, to 56.9% in 1973.

Progress was made through the increase in the number of girls' schools, of centers for the elimination of illiteracy and the training of adults; through the establishment of the Kuwait University and the increase in number of university women students, who, in 1973-1974, reached a percentage of 64.3 in comparison to male students. This difference is explained by the fact that more women students enroll in the school of arts (100% versus 36% for the boys), and in the school of science (21% versus 7% for males).

On the other hand, the number of boys is superior to that of girls in the upper classes of law, business, economics, and political science.

3. Women and Work

This chapter states the labor law for women, indicating the leave granted for motherhood, the marriage allowance, the bonus given to single women, the industries and occupations which are forbidden to women. It asserts the principle adopted by the government of giving equal pay for equal work without discrimination between the sexes.

The "Arab Pact for Labor" is also adopted by the Kuwaiti states, including the article which abolishes all discriminatory treatment based on race, color, sex, religion, or political doctrine.

Statistical tables show that the number of women employed in technical and cultural occupations has risen from 8.9% in 1957 to 52.9% in 1972, as compared with their other occupations. The proportion of women employed in administrative and secretarial work

has also increased from 2.6% in 1957 to 26.7% in 1972.

The same source shows also that in 1972 the largest number of **working women** were employed in the Ministry of Education which accounts for 2624 Kuwaiti employees and 3972 non-Kuwaitis. The next in occupational number are those employed in the Ministry of Public Health which has 156 Kuwaiti employees and 2080 non-Kuwaitis.

In the Kuwait University there are 121 Kuwaiti employees and 76 non-Kuwaitis.

In the Ministry of Social Affairs, 101 Kuwaitis, 21 non-Kuwaitis.

The statistics for 1973 show that 96.2% of the working Kuwaiti women are employed by the government in education and other professions while their percentage in the private sector does not exceed 3.8%

The same statistical table tells that most of the working women are between 20 and 24 years of age; the proportion of those belonging to this category is 59.61% of the whole. The proportion falls to 27.89% for those between 25 and 29, to 3.27% for those between 30 and 34. It becomes nearly non-existent for those who have reached forty. From these data we can conclude that most of the working women in Kuwait stop working after marriage.

Another table belonging to the year 1973 gives the following figures about the whole number of working women in Kuwait:

- a. Number of women working outside their homes: 5200. Their proportion to the whole number of women: 2.7%
- b. Number of women students: 24390. Their proportion to the whole: 12.4%
- c. Number of women exclusively occupied with housekeeping: 77230. Their proportion to the whole: 39.4%

d. Total number of productive women: 106,820. Proportion to the total number of women: 54.5%

e. Number of unproductive women, i.e. the aged, the disabled, girls under 12 years: 45.5%

Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning that the number of women teachers in official schools is superior to that of men teachers, the percentage of the former being 57.6 in 1973-1974. The number of Kuwaiti women teachers, however, is inferior to that of non-Kuwaitis, the number of the latter being 3964 and that of the former, 2444.

4. Women in Politics

Kuwaiti women have not yet obtained the franchise or right to vote. They have no access to administrative positions or municipal councils.

Since 1972, women have started forming their own societies and athletic clubs. They have been also joining associations of teachers, doctors and pharmacists, artists, school and university graduates, writers and literary men. They form a sizable portion in social organizations like the Red Crescent, Child Welfare Association, and Family Planning.

The report on "Women's Status in Kuwait" gives evidence of the intensive efforts displayed by the State to effect actual participation of women in the process of development by giving them full opportunity for education and work.

If we remember that the number of girls in government schools has realized a fivefold increase in the space of 18 years, we may have an idea of the success achieved by the government in this respect. If we also recall that the number of women involved in cultural and technical occupations has increased from 8.9% of the whole, in 1957, to 48.5% it should be reasonable to assume that the Kuwaiti woman will continue her progressive march and will obtain her full rights in all fields.

RECEIVED BY IWSAW DOCUMENTATION CENTER

"Journal of Educational Documentation" Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia

A semi-annual magazine, issued by the Data Center for Statistics and Documentation in Saudi Arabia.

In a copy No. 13 (Apr. 1977) received by the Institute, the reader will find brief articles on educational documentation, the role of school libraries in educational movements, educational events and abstracts. Also there is detailed information on the development of special education in the kingdom with a list of annotated Arabic and English documents.

Special education in Saudi Arabia means the education of the handicapped. The Data Center Magazine lists 20 schools for the handicapped, accommodating some two thousand boys and girls who are blind, deaf, mute or mentally retarded. About 700 men and women teachers are engaged in training them, with a budget of about 88 million Saudi rials.

Equally in this copy we read that 160 schools have been founded in the Riyadh district alone for the teaching of illiterate adults. 2254 such schools have been created for women, in 280 villages and towns, containing 350,000 women students.

This carefully produced issue presents good statistical proof of steady cultural development and progressive educational policy in Saudi Arabia.

"International Directory of Women's Development Organizations" Agency for International Development — Washington, D.C. — 1977

"A useful compilation of women's professional business and social groups", "a powerful resource in the efforts to involve all citizens in the development process, and a reference tool for all those desiring to expand their contacts and perspectives for involving more women in the development process".

"Indian Womanhood through the Ages"

Published by

**"Vivekananda Kendra Patrika",
cultural magazine of India**

**Theme: Indian Womanhood
Through the Ages**

A voluminous book: it throws light on the bright and dark spots in the history of the Indian woman from the early days of enslavement, sacrifice, and self-denial to the recent period of awakening and struggle for liberation. It compiles biographies of outstanding women leaders, poets, saints, artists who paved the way for the present movement. The various trends and activities of the modern Indian woman are briefly depicted. Illustrations, legends, short stories, poems by men and women lend a note of variety to the contents and help to give a vivid picture of the status of Indian womanhood through the ages.

"The Iranian Woman, Past and Present"

Published by the Women's
Organization of Iran 1976

A book in 6 chapters, 75 pp., containing illustrated articles on the role of women in Iran's history, the recent progress made in their education, their present status in the country's economy and politics, the Women's Organization in Iran and their changing role in home and society. The new needs of women and the changing attitudes toward their traditional roles are discussed.

"Institutes of special education"

State of Kuwait —
Ministry of Education —
Vol 14, 1977

A book published in three languages: Arabic, English and French, it contains statistical information and numerous illustrations about special education in Kuwait, i.e., the special institutes established for the handicapped.

In 1956, the first school for the blind was established in that country. Since then, twelve more educational and vocational institutes have been established to take care of the deaf and blind, retarded, paralytic boys and girls at various educational levels. This year (1977), student enrollment has reached 2304 boys and girls, including 562 students from the other Arab countries.

The institutes are generously provided with the most up-to-date physical training facilities. Workshops exist also for vocational education. Teachers and staff include specialists, experts, physicians, psychologists, and social workers who are fully qualified.

"Internal Migration of Industrial Laborers into Cairo and Its Effect on Social and Economic Changes Among Them",

by Saydeh I. Saad,
Assistant Instructor
of Sociology,
Girls' Islamic College
Al Azhar University

This work of 230 large-size pages includes: 1) a theoretical study of the phenomenon of internal migration; 2) a field study with samplings taken from 200 laborers in various companies, leading to well-defined conclusions concerning the causes and consequences of this migration.

**"Women in Arab Laws"
in the light of
international agreements
issued by the UNO"**

Published by the
Lebanese Women's
Council — Beirut
1975

A book of more than 600 middle-sized pages, containing stu-

dies and recommendations given by the panel held for the Lebanese Women's Council, Beirut, Lebanon, 27-31 of May, 1974. It includes thirteen papers presented by the delegates of 13 Arab states, regarding the status of Arab women in personal and family law, labor law, political law. A list of recommendations follows for proposed amendments of the various laws.

**Newslink Published by
the "Centre for Women's
Studies and Development",
Isabelle Thoburn, College,
Lucknow, India**

First publication — April 1977
Second publication—Sept. 1977

"Newslink" is the magazine representing the Asian Women's Institute (AWI), including nine centers of women's studies distributed throughout The Middle East, Japan, Korea and India. The idea of the AWI first germinated in the minds of the administrators of nine women's colleges at a meeting in Seoul, Korea. It came into being in 1975. The common objective of the nine centers is "to assist the women of Asia in their groping for self-fulfillment".

**"The Employment of Women
in the Higher Echelons
of the Public and
Private Sectors"**

A report prepared by
the Kayhan Research

Associates for the Women's
Organization of Iran 1975

A brief study to determine "the degree to which Iranian women have succeeded in penetrating into higher echelon positions in selected organizations. It also examines attitudes and problems that have bearing on women's employment at the higher levels."

The study is followed by appendices I & II, giving detailed statistics on women's employment and women in education.

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