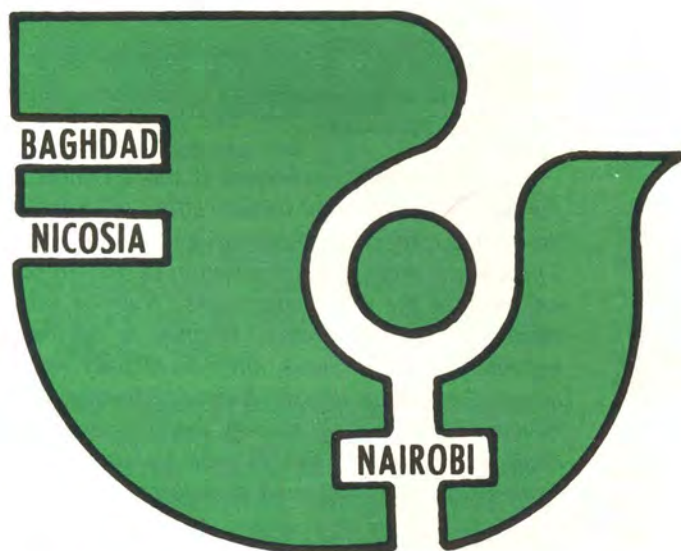


al-raida

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**EQUALITY
DEVELOPMENT
AND PEACE**

CONTENTS

Editorial

Nairobi: a Catalyst for Change
by Aida Arasoghli. 2

Women of Iraq

The General Federation of Iraqi
Women 3
Iraqi Women and Legislation ... 5
Baghdad Women's Meeting 7
Iraq: Facts and Figures 9

Interview

Daisy al-Ameer 10

Conferences

IWSAW Regional Conference ... 12
Women's Integration in Develop-
ment - an Imperative of our Time 14
Nairobi: «If it's not Appropriate for
Women, it's not Appropriate»... 15

Reports From Around the

World16



Nairobi, a Catalyst for Change

Equality, development and peace were the main issues of the conferences held in **Baghdad, Nicosia and Nairobi**. The Baghdad conference (March 4-8) was sponsored by the General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW,) and focused mainly on peace.

The Nicosia conference (June 24-29), sponsored by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World was on the Integration of Women in Economic Development. Both conferences were in preparation for the Nairobi conference which marked the end of the decade for Women; and all three mark a firm step along the path of change and advancement.

The overwhelming message that has emerged from the women's decade conference (July 15-26) and the non-governmental Forum '85 (July 10-19) is that women have grown in stature since the UN announced the decade.

Residents of Nairobi and many observers from around the world were very skeptical about the conference. Part of this is well founded in the bureaucracy that involves most UN procedures and conferences. Part has been rooted in the fears of another performance of the 1980 mid-decade conference in Copenhagen, where crucial topics were overruled by dissensions over reaching a final blueprint on Zionism and apartheid.

The conference has been able to overcome these obstacles and ended in compromise over political issues

such as deleting a reference to Zionism as a form of racism; and to be replaced by a statement condemning "all forms of racism".

Today women's movement is more concerned with the basic economic and social welfare of women around the world, especially those struggling against poverty. There was a marked determination to reach a consensus on most of the important issues. Nairobi was an apt choice for the conference. Women in Africa are still regarded as possessions, they have only recently acquired the right to inherit. Kenya's Minister of Culture, Keneth Matiba, well known for his reputation as a chauvinist, opened the Forum by saying "We, the women of the world, will overcome".

Nairobi could prove to be a catalyst for change. The momentum of the meeting started at the Forum '85 and culminated in the conference. Women met and discussed the gaps in their lives, became more aware of their problems and at the same time more confident of their ability to solve these problems and achieve progress. The concrete result that emerged was mainly to ensure that the resolutions adopted for the protection of women were written into statute books around the world.

The late **Indira Ghandi** once said, "Change is inevitable. But it is up to us to control its content and direction".

Aida Arasoghli

The General Federation of Iraqi Women



Manal Younes, President of the General Federation of Iraqi Women

The General Federation of Iraqi Women (G.F.I.W.) is the only mass organization representing Iraqi women. It was established in 1969 and held its first conference on the 4th of March, 1969. Ever since, this day became the Iraqi Woman's Day celebrated by all the people of Iraq every year.

The Federation aims at raising the social, economic, cultural and health standard of Iraqi women, promoting sisterly relations among Arab women, advocating a unified Arab women's movement and supporting liberation movements around the World.

It endeavours to achieve its goals in different sectors:

1. **The Political Sector** through women's participation in the National Council as candidates and voters, and in the decision-making process of workers and professional organizations.

2. **The Judicial Sector**, by studying personal status laws in Iraq, and the effect of their implementation on women and the family. The Federation has given recommendations to concerned authorities in order to revise some laws, and has taken part in specialized committees of reform of the judicial system in the country. It has also information services for women about their legal rights and duties.

3. The Educational Sector

The Federation has helped the Iraqi Government implement the "Eradication of Illiteracy Campaign" which makes it obligatory for every illiterate man and woman between the age of 15 and 45 years to enrol in literacy centers. It has reinforced legal measures to be taken against those who refuse to enrol in such classes. The Federation encourages women to continue their education, supports scientific and intellectual activities, organizes conferences and seminars for women and publishes or helps publish research and studies on women.

4. The Economic Sector

The Federation concentrates on making women aware of the importance of work, which is envisaged as a patriotic duty. It organizes professional and leadership training courses, and has opened employment units in its local branches to coordinate between employment offers and demands. It has also carried research on methods that would increase women's productivity, and has called upon government departments to increase the rate of women they employ.

5. The Employment Sector

The Federation has fought for opening up fields traditionally inaccessible to women in the cultural, artistic and sports sectors. It has set-up workshops in some densely populated areas to provide women with job opportunities, and change the social attitude that does not encourage women to work in areas far from where they reside. It has intensified efforts related to the training of women leaders, and provided opportunities for their training in technical skills.

6. The Social Sector

The Federation, supported by the Iraqi government, has tried to change the attitude of people and society vis-à-vis their view of women, as well as to improve the way women view themselves. It has encouraged women to participate in developing and building-up their country, and in the process of social change. It has also given great attention to its members' family problems and has set up various councils for the needy in its different branches.

7. The Health Sector

The Federation has worked to promote women's consciousness of their health and that of their families through lectures on hygiene, film-shows, vaccination campaigns and distribution of pamphlets on health care. It has coordinated its efforts with health institutions in the country to improve health services offered to mothers and children. It has also encouraged women to work as nurses.

8. The Information Sector

The Federation has concentrated its information activities on organizing seminars for women on the problems that they face, and has published a monthly magazine "Al-Maraa" (The Woman) which reflects the progress and achievements of Iraqi women.

9. The Household Sector

The Federation has emphasized to family members the importance of women's participation in the workforce. It has coordinated its efforts with the appropriate institutions so that electric time-saving devices are made available for women at cheaper prices. It has also established day nurseries for children of working mothers, and has encouraged employers to increase the number of these nurseries as well as to improve their condition.

10. The Sports Sector

In Iraq, before 1978, girls in general were kept away from sports activities and most families refused to let their daughters train in sports fields and gymnastics. This issue was given special attention in the 1978-79 campaign which called for all the Federation's centers to form sports teams in basketball, volleyball and table tennis; as well as equestrian games, gliding, parachuting, judo, karaté and shooting. The Federation has provided all the equipment and trainers for these teams. It has also coordinated with the "General Federation of Iraqi Youths" to ensure that sports activities are practiced by both young men and women.

11. The Art Sector

The Federation has given special attention to women's participation in artistic activities by means of an intensive programme requiring all its centers throughout the country to form acting, music, singing and folkloric groups of men and women.

The groups affiliated to the G.F.I.W. have been able to win the admiration of the public by:

- presenting a model for non sexist social relations between men and women.
- contributing to the cultural and artistic education of women and,
- changing social attitudes towards women's participation in the artistic field by presenting good performances.

12. Rural Women

Sixty per cent of the activities of the G.F.I.W. have been directed to improve the state of rural women because of their importance for the economy, especially in food production.

- a) It introduced "Rural Tents", a large tent set up in the countryside, especially in remote villages where basic services are not available. A number

of Federation members accompany the tent; they include experts on various subjects related to women. These experts work in coordination with various government departments. The programme, which usually lasts from 3-5 days, includes seminars on different issues relating to women.

- b) The G.F.I.W. has also adopted the method of "Rural Caravans" which lasts 10-30 days, during which the caravan tours villages and provides services to them.
- c) In remote areas, the G.F.I.W. has formed "liaison committees" to coordinate between the Federation's nearest centers and rural women. Each committee represented the nucleus of a potential new center.

13. Regional Activities

The Federation has developed and reinforced its relations with Women's Organizations in the Arab World. It exchanges experiences with them, organizes common working programmes for development and has hosted the headquarters of the "General Arab Women's Federation" and the "Training Center for Arab Women's Federation" and the "Training Center for Women's Leadership". It has established links with Arab research institutes and universities, the "Arab League" and departments of women and family affairs.

14. International Activities

The Federation gives special importance to its relations with women of Islamic, non-aligned, developing and socialist countries as well as with women's movements in industrialized countries. It is a member of the "Democratic World Women's Federation", the "International Federation of Family Institutions" and the "International Federation for Children's Welfare". It has also signed cooperation agreements with a number of women's organizations and has hosted several "World Women Meetings", the last meeting was convened in Baghdad, 4-8 March 1985.

Wafa Stefan

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Iraqi Women and Legislation

One of the major achievements of the Ba'ath Socialist Revolution of July 1968 has been the improvement of women's legal status in Iraq based on the following principles:

- The revolution is the rise for freedom aiming at the service of people and human progress; however, a revolution is not a real one if it does not aim at women's emancipation and the development of their material and cultural condition.⁽¹⁾
- Popular mobilization and any action by the people would be incomplete without women's strong and effective participation.⁽²⁾
- Strengthening women's position in the forms of rights and customs in society is part of the process of women's emancipation.⁽³⁾

Moreover, close cooperation between the Iraqi President and the General Federation of Iraqi Women (G.F.I.W.) resulted in many significant changes in laws affecting women. One example that the G.F.I.W. quotes is the case of an Iraqi woman who has sent the Federation a letter seeking its help concerning a court decision to evacuate the matrimonial house after her husband filed for divorce. The woman was arguing against the decision on the ground that she helped her husband buy the house and had lived in it for the past 16 years with her eight children.

The letter was sent to the President who responded favourably by issuing Resolution No.77 of 1983. It stipulates that a wife may continue, after divorce, to live without her husband in the joint matrimonial home for a period of three years, provided that the wife herself did not file for the divorce.

On the 17th of July 1970, a new legislative policy was enacted in Iraq. It guaranteed equality of rights and duties among citizens without discrimination of sect, race, language, social background or religion.

This policy can be divided into five main sections from which we chose the laws pertaining specifically to women.

1. POLITICAL RIGHTS

The **Interim Constitution** of Iraq stipulates that woman enjoys equal rights to man in all fields. **The**

(1) Saddam Hussein, "About Revolution and Women", pp. 20-69.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

Law No.55 of the National Assembly (1980) gives women the right to vote and be elected for the National Assembly. In the 1980 election 16 out of 19 women were elected and in 1984, 33 out of 46.

Article 7 of the Personal Status Laws sets 18 years as the legal age for marriage, and 15 years if the person has the legal approval of his/her guardian or father.

2. ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Labour Law No.151, 1970

Its amendments cover the working hours of working women and give them the right to feed their babies during work, the right to have a pregnancy and maternity leave (fully paid) and provides care for infants in nurseries provided free by the employer.

The Law of Pension and Social Security No.39, 1971

Gives working mothers and their babies free health care and gives women the choice to retire at the age of 55, while the age of retirement for men is 60.

Regulation No.36 on the Employment of Women, 1972

Prevents women's employment in jobs "not suited to their nature or that constitute social and health risks to them".

The Law of Agrarian Reform No.117, 1970

Gives women the right to economic independence and acquisition of a land, to reclaim it and cultivate it.

The Law of Agricultural Cooperatives

Gives women the right to join these cooperatives on equal footing with men to enable them to practice various agricultural activities competently.

The Law of the Estate Bank

Gives the wife the right to borrow money to build a house independent of her husband.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE RIGHTS

The Law of Civil Service No.44, 1977

Gives female civil servants 72 days for pregnancy and maternity leave including a minimum of 21 days for delivery.

The Law of Equality Between Men and Women No.9, 1975

Considers the woman's income independent from her husband's; gives her legal exemptions related to income-tax; allows her to receive marriage allowance even if her husband does, and children's allowance if

her husband doesn't and gives the children the pension of her two dead parents.

Law No.113, 1977

Allows women to join the armed forces, the Air Force Academy, the police and national security organisms.

4. EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS

The Law of Compulsory Education No.118, 1976

Provides for compulsory free education for children of both sexes till the age of ten, and ensures equality in education till the end of the primary level.

The Law of the National Comprehensive Literacy Campaign, 1978

Requires illiterate citizens of both sexes, between the ages of 15 and 45, to attend literacy classes at specialized centers and popular schools.

5. SOCIAL RIGHTS

The Laws of Personal Status, 1959 and 1978

The laws and their amendments regulate the relationship between married couples in order to guarantee their rights and that of the children. **Article 57** gives the mother the right to nurse and bring up her child in all circumstances, unless judged unfit and harmful to the child by court. It raises the age of custody from 7 to 10 years old and extends it to 15 in some cases when it proves to be good for the child. Moreover, if the father of the child dies or breaks any of the custody conditions the child remains with his/her mother until the age of maturity; and no relatives, male or female, may contest the mother's right for custody. However, the custody of the child may be transferred to the father if the mother breaks any custody conditions.

Article 10 states that the marriage contract should be made before a court, and imposes punishment on anyone who contradicts this provision.

Article 45 states that no man can take a second wife unless by court consent, or unless he is separated from his first wife.

Article 9 states that marriage by force is deemed not valid by law if the marriage is not consummated, and is liable to punishment.

The Laws of Inheritance, Article 19

States that daughters shall inherit when there are no sons.

The Laws of Social Welfare, 1980

Ensures Social Security for all citizens during their life and their families after their death. It places the

wife on the same footing as her husband by regarding each of them as head of the family. This law also covers families with no income or low income; physically, mentally and psychologically disabled children; widows; orphans; disabled persons; and children from broken families.

Article 133 of this law regards the widow or the divorced wife who has a minor living with her as the person entitled to the social welfare salary.

The Law Of Care for the Legal Minor, 1980

Refers to the mother as the minor's legal guardian. It sets up a special fund to undertake the payment of alimonies for women whose husbands are imprisoned, absent or very poor.

6. Resolution No.1611 of the Revolutionary Command Council

In respect to the wife's housing, it states that "the inherited house may not be sold or joint property removed, if it is occupied by the wife of the deceased, as long as the wife lives and unless she agrees to the sale of the house or the joint property. Such agreement must be made before court". (23/12/82)

Resolution No.1, 2/1/1983

Stipulates that a wife shall remain (on request) after divorce or separation, living alone in the conjugal home owned by the husband. This decision shall be included in the divorce or separation case.

Conclusion

According to the G.F.I.W. reports, the laws and resolutions pertaining to women issued after the 1968 July Revolution endeavour to build a "New Iraqi Woman", giving her the opportunity for independent decision-making safeguarding all her rights in her private and public life. Moreover, according to G.F.I.W., these laws are being gradually enacted in order to match the process of change happening in all the all Iraqi society. Thus, they are being used as effective and practical tools for sustained change rather than theoretical ones.

This article is based on two sources:

"Report on the Progress of Iraqi Women and Implementation of the Programme of Action of the U.N. Decade for Women", prepared by Ali A. Manhal for the General Federation of Iraqi Women - Secretariat of Researches and Studies, Shafick Press, Baghdad.

"The Legislative Policy in Iraq and its Reflections on the Legal Status of Women", distributed by the G.F.I.W. Headquarters at the Baghdad Meeting for Women of the World, (4-8 March 1985).



Baghdad Women's Meeting

(March 4 - 8, 1985)

Women in the world celebrate women's day on the 8th of March every year. Iraqi women celebrate their day on the 4th of March to commemorate the day the General Federation of Iraqi Women (G.F.I.W.) was founded in 1969.

This year the G.F.I.W. invited 400 women delegates from 56 different countries, and representing various women's organizations and political parties to participate in the celebration of their 16th anniversary.

The celebrations started on the morning of the 4th of March, wreaths were laid on the Martyr's monument, an oval shaped turquoise edifice standing on the banks of the Tigris river. It was followed by a visit to the G.F.I.W.'s headquarters, and a photograph exhibition of the works and achievements of the Federation with samples of handicrafts made by women from various parts of the country.

The next three days were spent at al-Rasheed Hotel where the Baghdad women's conference was held. Women delegates presented their studies about the aims and achievements of their respective organizations during the women's decade, while officials of the G.F.I.W. presented several papers concentrating on:

- Women and legislative policy in Iraq (see article p. 5).
- Iraqi women and decision-making.
- Rural women in Iraq.
- Iraqi women and war.
- The G.F.I.W.'s preparation for the Nairobi conference in July 1985.

Mrs. **Manal Younis**, Chairwoman of the G.F.I.W.

opened the conference by saying that the 3-day gathering was very important for coordination and exchange of experience among women and for serving women's liberation around the world.

She expressed hope that the meeting would be an opportunity for women to learn more about each other's problems and concerns and set up strategies for the year 2000.

Concluding her speech, Mrs. **Younis** said she hoped this gathering would give delegates the opportunity to observe the achievements of Iraqi women and unite in the call for peace around the world.

Among the interesting research papers presented in the Baghdad meeting was one titled "Iraqi Women and the Integration of Development in Rural Areas". The study revealed the Iraqi leadership's concern to narrow the gap between the living standards in urban centers and those in rural areas. It described some of the efforts made towards improving the status of women and mentioned the setting up of medical centers, agricultural cooperatives, illiteracy campaigns and rural workshops.

Women delegates were taken on a field trip to the outskirts of Baghdad to visit an all-women's farming cooperative. They were warmly welcomed by the rural women dressed in traditional black robes and were offered coffee, sweets and bread made in clay ovens (tannour). (See photo)

Women visitors had the opportunity to see products of the farm and ask questions about the organization of the cooperative. "What is particular about this farm,"

said its Chairman, "is that it is run on a cooperative basis and operated by women only". These women do all the field work by themselves without the help of men and they live in little compounds near the fields, with their children. "Their men are fighting on the front" she added. The farmer-women looked healthy and happy and proud of their work, they were ready to answer all our questions and mixed gladly with women of different cultures.

Back to Baghdad, the visiting delegations were taken to a fine arts exhibit of modern Iraqi artists, many of whom were women. The display included sculptures, ceramics, calligraphy, jewelry, oil paintings and water colors. The most impressive were the jewelry items made of old beads, semi-precious stones and silver and gold inspired by old Babylonian and Sumerian models.

The third day was concluded by the Festival of Young Arab Poets, attended by foreign and local visitors, which took place at the hotel. Poets recited their works, some especially written for the occasion. They came from Iraq, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and North Yemen.

Two of the most impressive participants were Dr. **Suad as-Sabbah** of Kuwait (see Al-Raida No. 32, p. 10) and **Moncef al-Mezganni** of Morocco who recited parts of a long epic poem.

On the last day of the conference (March 8), the participants were taken in the morning to the big celebration hall and its surrounding gardens to watch various Iraqi ethnic groups perform their folkloric dances in colorful costumes. The afternoon was spent listening to concluding reports and plans of action for the future, especially for the Nairobi conference.

What did the participants learn from their Iraqi experience and what were their comments in general?

Lebanese head of delegation, Dr. **Fitna Messaykeh**, said that "the Baghdad meeting was an opportunity for Arab women to share their views and experiences with women of the world and that all delegations stressed the need for peace in human societies to enable women to raise their families in a stable environment".

Mrs. **Fawzia Mohammed Ibrahim**, head of the United Arab delegation said that, "although it was her first visit to Iraq, she did not feel a stranger because the women spoke the same language, had similar histories and the same aspirations".

Fatima al-Zahabi, head of the Moroccan delegation and Deputy Chairwoman of the Federation of Moroccan women, said that her second visit to Iraq and attending the present meeting in Baghdad has been a rewarding experience. She also added that the Iraqi



Rural
Women
Offering
Bread

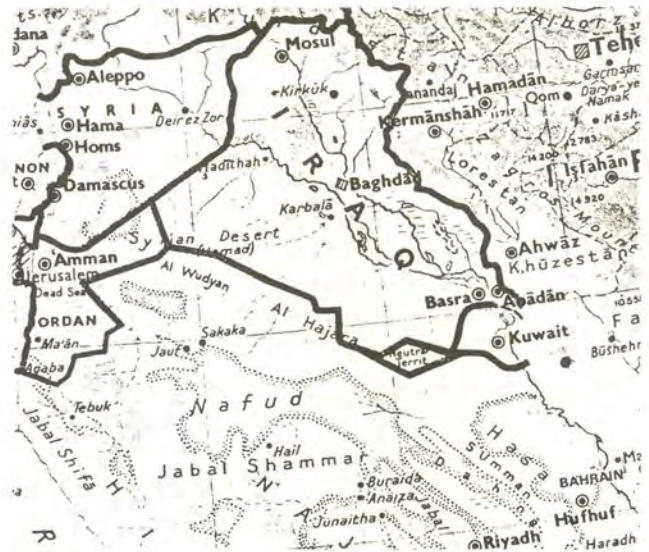
woman was a model of struggle, with a deep sense of responsibility towards her country.

Member of the Indian Parliament, Dr. **Najma Haibatullah**, said about her third visit to Iraq, "that one cannot separate women's issues from other issues of society, particularly if one bears in mind the importance of peace as a goal of the world women's decade". Dr. **Haibatullah** believes that women can play a significant role in establishing peace in their countries by pressing their respective governments to find the proper environment for peace, she thinks that "instability is a great impediment to the realization of the goals of the women's decade, especially equality with men and integration in development!"

To conclude this report on the Baghdad World Women's Meeting, the participants were overwhelmed with the spirit of friendship, hospitality and warmth. Iraqi women who participated in this conference, whether an official, a delegate or a guide were a striking example of the great steps achieved by the women of Iraq during the past 15 years. Many women wore their military suits, all were energetic, friendly and helpful. They were proud of being women and of their role in building their society. Iraqi women present at the conference represented jobs which ranged from bus drivers, school teachers, airport officials, government employees, science researchers, airport officials, government employees, science researchers, ceramic artists and painters or sculptors. They portrayed women at their best, fully satisfied with their lives and achievements, and proud to be Iraqis.

Report and photos
by Wafa' Stephan

Iraq



Population:	14,000,000 (1982 est.)	Government:	Ruling Council.
Age Distribution:	0 — 14 years : 48,3%	Head of State:	President Saddam Hussein, in office 16 July 1979.
	15 — 49 years : 46,5%	Local Divisions:	18 provinces.
	60 ± : 5,3%	Industries:	Textiles, petrochemicals, oil refining, cement.
Ethnic Groups:	Arabs: 75%	Chief Crops:	Grains, rice, dates, cotton, tobacco.
	Kurds: 15%	Minerals:	Oil, gas.
	Turks: 10%	Other Resources:	Wool, hides.
Languages:	Arabic (official), Kurdish.	Labor Force:	50% in agriculture.
Religions:	Moslems 95% (Shiites 55%, Sunnis 40%, Christians 5%).	Currency:	Dinar.
Geography:	168, 928 sq.miles.	Health:	Life Expectancy at birth: 56.1 yrs. (1982)
Location:	In the Middle East, occupying most of historic Mesopotamia.		Births: 47 per 1.000 pp (1978)
Neighbours:	Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia.		Deaths: 13 per 1.000 pp (1978)
Topography:	Mostly an alluvial plain, including the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, descending from the mountains in the North to the desert in South West. The Arabian Gulf Region is marshland.	Education:	Infant Mortality: 25 per 1.000 live births (1982).
Capital:	Baghdad.	Literacy:	compulsory through age 10. 30% (1978).
		Reference:	The World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1984, p.508.

Correction

The reference number of *Al-Raida* February and May issues should have read:

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Daisy Al-Ameer

Half Iraqi - half Lebanese (on her mother's side), writer Daisy al-Ameer symbolizes the woman who has taken the best of what the Arab World and the Western World has to offer women.

Director of the Iraqi Cultural Center in Beirut, Daisy has been living in this city for the last 25 years, suffering and bearing with its inhabitants the brunt of war.*

It is in Beirut that she started writing (1962), a city which enjoyed a multi-cultural atmosphere. Here she is talking openly to co-editor Wafa' Stephan about her experiences as a writer and as a woman in a country she has adopted but that is not her own:



Q. How did you start your career as a writer of short stories?

A. I have always loved literature. As a child I was an avid reader and would read books above my age level. I started writing as a hobby. I had many stories in mind before the first story "The Little Rug" was published in 1962. It was well received by the critics. This made me feel I was not a beginner in the field and encouraged me to continue writing. This year I hope to publish my sixth collection of short stories in Arabic.

Q. Why did you choose to write short stories and not novels?

A. I think novels take a long time to write. A novel needs long term planning, patience, and time. I am a person who cannot wait - who has no patience. I have a quick temperament. I do everything quickly. A novel cannot grow in such an atmosphere. I do not possess the qualities needed for novel writing and I find that short stories suit my personality better.

Q. What are the subjects you have dealt with during your 25 years of writing?

A. I started writing in the early sixties when I was a young woman. Naturally my interests differ from the ones I had then. I am now a mature woman who has

experienced life. What urged me to write was my extensive travelling which took me away from my home and country. Being away from home made me feel nostalgia, loneliness, homesickness and a longing for my country. These feelings still exist in me today as I am a person who has never settled and I still feel unsettled.

In my writings I am concerned about women. Being a woman I understand them better than men. Women's problems are familiar to me. In our Middle Eastern society there is a barrier between men and women which makes it difficult to understand each other. When I read books by men who write about women I feel it is all wrong. Men see women through their own desires. For example, if a man loves a woman who does not return his feelings he tries to forget her by drinking or getting involved in a political party. In other words he tries to solve his problems in a way I do not feel is right. On the other hand, I can understand how a woman feels from a glance, a flutter of an eyelid, a smile or a sigh. Women for me are an open book while men are the unknown entity, hidden and ambiguous.

Q. Many of your readers are men. What is their reaction to your writings about women?

Men appreciate my writing. They acknowledge the fact that I write about feelings in women that they did not know existed. They say "We never thought such

* In an article written by Daisy al-Ameer in *An-Nahar*, Sept. 13, 1985, she reveals her decision to leave Beirut.

small matters could be so important for a woman". Men believe women have no other interest in life except love and marriage. This is not how I view life nor is it my main concern. Of course women fall in love and marry and children are important to them. However, since I was a young woman, I never believed that man is woman's foremost concern. I am concerned about the social problems women face, their relations with others, how people view them and what they have to say about them.

Q. What is the reaction of your women readers?

A. They are content with my writings. They tell me I write about things they cannot express themselves. They say "You have spoken up for us by writing about our problems and concerns".

Q. If men are not the most important concern of a woman. What is then?

A. It is traditions that crush the realization of her dreams and her fear of society's taboos and customs. It is also the power others have over her. In a Middle Eastern society everyone feels responsible for the woman: her father, brother, husband, mother, aunts and even cousins. Middle Eastern women are bound very strongly by social customs. They fear gossip and want to safeguard their reputations. All these factors constrain a woman's freedom and do not allow her to be liberated.

Q. Have you overcome these concerns and problems in your own life?

A. I overcame them when I grew older. When I was young these problems paralyzed me as they paralyze other women. I was young and afraid. Now I feel privileged because I have the courage which most women lack. I have acquired ways in which to be assertive. One major problem I have not overcome is "existential sadness", not the sadness of falling in or out of love but the sadness of the human condition and the passage of time.

Q. What caused you most sadness in your life?

A. Being away from my country - Iraq. My constant travels and the lack of a stable home. It is true that I have been living in Lebanon for a long time, but I always feel I can be posted to another country any time and be obliged to leave. A home means a lot to me. I have always worried about not having a stable home. I am attached to my home and I love it, but at the same time I have never been in a home that I have felt will be mine forever.

Q. How can a woman find contentment and inner peace?

A. Work is very vital for a woman because through it she can become economically independent. Work is

fulfilling for both men and women. It is often said that women cannot bear the responsibilities of work. Many women fail to do so because they think that work is a transitory phase that precedes marriage. I believe a woman should not regard work as a transitory stage but should set it as her first goal and have a sense of responsibility and a professional conscience. She should not use her feminine attributes at work and say "I am weak, and I need someone to take care of me". In my job I have worked harder than most men and I realize that men do respect women who work seriously. It is very important for a woman to be respected. Respect does not come easily, it has to be earned. There are certain ways of behavior that lead to respect.

Q. According to you what is the biggest problem of the Middle Eastern man?

A. His problem is that he does not understand women. In our society a woman is an actress and the man an actor. All are actors. No one thinks that problems that arise between men and women are of importance. Little matters such as these are always kept private and a problem should not be discussed openly unless it is of a serious nature. In Western societies, men and women are more open with each other, more honest and not afraid of one another or gossip. In our traditional Middle Eastern societies people are concerned in watching what others do and say. Therefore, people retreat into their shells and are afraid to declare their feelings and thoughts. This is a problem one should write about.

Q. What about the Iraqi woman, how do you assess her progress in comparison to other Arab Women?

A. I think that the Iraqi woman has progressed a lot during the last 15 years. She has attained her independence and has an identity of her own. The family life of Iraqi woman has changed whereby the woman is free and takes independent decisions, she is independent economically and can reach high positions. The Government has given women many things, it is one of the countries which has given women most. I am an Iraqi woman who has a good diplomatic post. I rarely encounter women from other countries who have the same type of post. I feel I don't need a man to support me. I feel that Iraq is my support.

Books published by Daisy al-Ameer:

1. The Faraway Country that she Loves (1984).
2. And the Wave Comes Back (1969).
3. The Happy Arab Home (1975).
4. The Cycle of Love and Hatred (1978).
5. Promises for Sale (1981).

Her current collection of short stories to be published this year might be titled "On the Waiting List" (1985).

IWSAW Regional Conference

Why do women work?

What are the legal statutes regarding women's work?

What is the attitude of the family and the society towards women's work?

What hampers women's integration in development and what are the possible solutions for the existent problems?⁽¹⁾

These were some of the questions that the conference tried to answer through research and discussions.

The Conference on Planning for the Integration of Arab Women in Economic Development, organized by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World - Beirut University College, was held in Nicosia, Cyprus from June 24-29, 1985. Coordinating the conference was Dr. **Julinda Abu Nasr**, Director of the Institute, and Mrs. **Irini Lorfing**, Associate Researcher at the Institute.

Taking part in the presentations and discussions were eighteen Arab women researchers that came from ten Arab countries: North Africa, Egypt, Sudan, the Gulf and the Middle East. There were also prominent non-Arab contributors who took an active part in the discussions.

In her speech, Dr. **Julinda Abu Nasr** outlined the objectives of the conference as follows:

1. To provide a global view of the determinants and trends of women's economic productivity in the Arab region.
2. To produce substantial information which would help in planning for the full integration of Arab women in economic development.

Discussions in the conference revolved around four major areas namely: the Legal, the Economic, the Socio-cultural and Ideological, and the Educational contexts, in which substantial progress needs to be made. For each of these areas the group developed a set of recommendations and suggestions summarized as follows:

The Legal Context

Determining the legal codes that hamper women's integration in development, i.e. legislation in the Arab countries and their effect on women's participation in the field of public work.

It is recommended that governments:

- Guarantee constitutionally equality to workers of both sexes; and to forbid all forms of sexual discrimination.
- Ratify international and Arab agreements concerning the Arab working woman.
- Adopt national legislation in particular laws governing personal status, to conform to the principles of equality consecrated by most constitutions.
- Promote educational campaigns to inform women of their rights, and to encourage them to join unions.
- Dissociate in the labour code protective measures regarding women workers from protective legislation regarding children.
- Restrict, except in the case of maternity, measures designed for the specific protection of women.
- Allow the possibility of a parental leave in addition to maternity leave.

The Economic Context

Women have always been poorer in relation to men in disposable income and property ownership. United Nations data also points to an increase in the impoverishment of women in the next fifteen years unless specific measures are undertaken to remedy existing inequalities. Since the majority of the population in the Arab region is rural, support to the agricultural sector is a vital pre-requisite for the improvement of food production from rural areas and for the reduction of migration to urban areas.

The implementation of the following recommendations can provide women with the practical support they require:

- Encourage intra-regional funding for research on the economic role of women in and outside the household in Arab countries.
- Recognize small scale rural household agricultural and animal husbandry production as a legitimate concern for practical support by international,

(1) An-Nahar (Beirut), 20 July 1985. Article on the Nicosia Conference (in Arabic) by Rose Ghurayyib.

regional and national institutions.

- Identify and remove obstacles to women's employment through the provision of service and protective measures.

The Socio-cultural and Ideological Context

The Arab world is passing through a transitional stage. Therefore, planning for the mobilization of women's full participation in economic development should be viewed within the local, national and regional framework. In this period of transition, Arab women face a crisis of identity. Traditional values that have been fostered through the years do not always meet the demands imposed by contemporary social reality; emulating the West and imported models caused women to feel they were adopting an image alien to their own. It is important that Arab women be given the opportunity to choose their identity and set their own models.

The following recommendations were suggested:

- Abolish sex discrimination.
- Recognize women's full citizenship, not only de-Jure but de-Facto.
- Raise the consciousness of policy makers; planners: economic, social and political groups; women's organizations and labour unions regarding the following:

1. To inform citizens, particularly women, of their rights and urge them to exercise their rights especially at the political level.
2. To develop local and audio-visual programmes of quality to promote positive images of women.
3. To establish a network of concerned Arab researchers to conduct research, disseminate and exchange information and provide document services on issues concerning women. The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World could initiate such an activity.
4. To carry out and finance research studies on women within the historic, familial, socio-cultural, literary and art context; and to encourage cooperative studies in the region.

The Educational Context

A. Formal Education

Education plays a vital role in improving the status of women. The factors that hampered women's participation in national development were the lack of social awareness of the value and necessity of female education, the lack of long and short term planning concerning the educational needs of women, as well as the insufficient attendance at primary schools and the insufficiency of the teaching population.

It is recommended that governments:

- Provide women with the skills necessary to equalize their participation in economic development.
- Adopt the educational system suitable for the economic and social needs of each country.
- Encourage women's enrolment in all areas of specialization including the non-traditional fields (science, technology).

B. Non-formal Education

In the non-formal sector, attention was drawn to the high rate of female illiteracy and the lack of training in skills that would improve women's financial status.

Recommendations included an analysis of the changes required in the educational programme in the Arab world such as:

- To create and implement training programmes with the aid of audio-visual materials that do not contain any sex stereo-types.
- To offer training programmes (including in-service and on-the-job training), to serve the special needs of women through formal and voluntary organizations, thus increasing the productivity of women and improving their chances in upward mobility.

Conclusion

It is important to mention that this article is only a brief account of the conference, considering the large number of studies presented and the diversity of problems and recommendations discussed. The recommendations adopted by the conference members represent their efforts to have more effective future planning (both long and short term planning), and global solutions to the problems of Arab working women and their integration in development. Here, I find it convenient to quote Rose Ghurayyib, "the aim of integrating women in development is not only economic. It includes other forms of development: the physical, social, intellectual and spiritual. While we acknowledge the need for this integration, we should try, by every means, to arouse her interest in it and her liking for it".⁽²⁾

Aida Arasoghli

More information and material on the Regional Conference could be obtained from **The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World**, Beirut University College. P.O.Box 13-5053 Beirut, Lebanon. Tel. 811968 Cable Address: BECOGE. Telex: 23389 LE.

(2) Rose Ghurayyib. Article on **Women's Integration in Development**.

Women's Integration in Development an Imperative of our Time

A. Women's Financial Status

A characteristic of our time is the emergence of a longer life expectancy for people in general. Due to physical and social factors, women's longevity, as indicated by statistics, is considered to be generally higher than that of men. Therefore, it imposes on them a renewed concern with old age. The problem of aging has always been a source of worry for all people; and particularly for women because, as a whole, they are financially and socially less privileged than men. "Women are the poorest class in the world", this statement is not an emotional expression meant to arouse pity. It is a fact based on global studies. Women are the poorest because men own most of the property of the world, particularly in developing countries. Most women working in the house or in the field, receive no cash salary.

In the laboring classes, which include the larger group of them, women receive little or no inheritance. Women's share in inheritance is reduced to half a man's share in Islamic communities. A majority of the working women in the Arab world are illiterate and untrained; they receive insignificant salaries and are subject to sexual discrimination. Who will guarantee their right to care and treatment in sickness and old age? Their dependence on husband and children is equivalent to want, because this dependence may fail them.

B. Traditional Misconceptions

There are some traditional misconceptions which have now proved to be false and obsolete. One of them is the belief that women do little or no work, and that housework is no work at all.

In the first place, women who do not work at all are the wives or daughters of the very wealthy, who have servants to look after them and their children. These women form an insignificant minority. Some of them occupy themselves with useful hobbies or volunteer work. They become amateur artists or volunteer social workers. But the vast majority of women take care of household work, such as cooking, housecleaning, and nursing, they may add gardening, sewing, knitting,

embroidering and other useful occupations. On the whole, they perform a full time job and, if they work outside the house, they carry a "double burden". As a matter of fact, the number of their working hours is at least equivalent to, if not more, than that of men.

C. Women and Education

In our days more women are having access to education. Parents are realizing more and more the economic and social values of educating their daughters. Many women are acceding to higher education which was forbidden to them in the past.

Now education imposes work. It induces women to make use of their knowledge in one way or another, just as life imposes activity on living creatures. A person who has developed the habit of thinking and cultivating his various capacities cannot remain idle or limit himself to routine activities or non-remunerative work. Here we are reminded of **Betty Friedan's** research study about the obscure disease invading educated women whose activity was restricted to housework, and who were deprived of the opportunity for intellectual development.

D. Women and Family-Planning

Nowadays most parents are convinced of the necessity for family-planning and for restricting the number of their children. For this reason, many young females are retarding their marriage. Some of them become so absorbed in their work that they decide to devote themselves to it, and follow an untrodden path.

E. The Need for Women's Participation

To all the above factors inducing women to expand the range of their activity, we may add the one resulting from the spread of war, emigration, displacement, inflation and high prices, depriving many families of their male heads or greatly reducing their earnings. Recent investigation has shown that no less than a third of the families in West Asia have female household heads who provide for them, while many women are engaged in permanent jobs permitting them to share in the family expenses.

Rose Ghurayyib

Nairobi: "if it's not Appropriate for Women, it's not Appropriate"☆

The UN-sponsored women's decade conference (July 15-26) and the non-governmental Forum '85 (July 10-19) that was its prelude have attracted more than 10,000 women from 150 countries. The aim of the conference was to review the achievements of women since the UN announced the decade in Mexico in 1975 (Mid-decade convened in Copenhagen in 1980), and to set fresh goals up-to the year 2000. Delegates were expected to adopt a report setting out plans for women's advancement. Equality, development and peace were the main themes of the conference.

There was no dispute on the basic need to consolidate the achievements of the women's decade, and there was a consensus on most of the important issues. But the Committee in charge of preparations for the conference had lengthy arguments and did not agree on 58 of 372 paragraphs in a document setting out strategies for the future of women. The dispute items dealt mainly with the implication for women of South Africa's racial policies, Israel's occupation of Arab territories, the existing world economic and information order and the international peace movement. There were deep differences on how individual goals should be reached. US and Third World delegates divided on many issues. US delegates became increasingly intransigent as the conference drew to a close especially on the issue of the inclusion of anti-Israeli references into the resolution. A last minute compromise was reached, deleting a reference to Zionism as a form of racism. It prevented a walkout by the US delegation headed by President **Reagan's** daughter, **Maureen**. All have agreed, however, that women must become more involved in the decision-making process related to peace.

Employment, health, education, food, water, agriculture, communications, housing and the environment were all covered, as well as refugees, the disabled, one-parent families, and social systems which tend to encourage evils such as prostitution. There was more focus on development in the workshops sponsored by Third World countries.

According to American feminist **Betty Friedan** "This

conference in Nairobi is possibly the last place on earth where we can do something that will make a difference in women's lives... We must here at Nairobi, outline the future directions of feminism".

Many workshops in Nairobi were about equity, equal opportunities and pay, and the general economic survival of women, especially the rural peasant women where progress towards equal rights has lagged. According to recent FAO statistics rural women work an average of 18-hours a day, and 30 per cent of all households are now headed by women due to labour migration to the cities.

Anne Neale, a member of the international wages for housework campaign said that women did two-thirds of the work in the world and received only five per cent of the global income, while they owned as little as one per cent of the world's assets. She added that the issues of wages for housework should unite women, cutting across all boundaries. There was a consensus on the official recognition of the value to national economies of unremunerated housework.

There were spontaneous alliances between the Muslim Fundamentalists and the Holy See on the stand against abortion. The Iranians and lesbian groups spoke of the use of women "for the satanic pleasure of men".

To conclude, we can summarize the specific demands which were approved unanimously and which will help women in the following areas:

- (i) Parental leave and day-care for children to reduce the "double burden" of working women.
- (ii) Increased participation of women in trade unions, political parties and the military, and greater involvement in technical and scientific fields.
- (iii) Immediate protection for abused women and children and the right to fight back their abusers.

Aida Arasoghli

☆ Slogan at the "Tech and Tools" exhibition at the Forum '85 in Nairobi.

25 October: Women's Special Day for peace

"MINDFUL of the major role which has been, and is continuing to be, played by women in the search for peace,

RECOGNISING that United Nations Disarmament Week should be the major occasion in the annual calendar of every national United Nations Association as well as of WFUNA,

ACCEPTING the desire of women to be associated, both nationally and internationally, with each other in the pursuit of disarmament, confidence building and peace,

ANXIOUS to give every encouragement to women to continue their historic role in the international peace movement,

The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA)

1. Agrees that WFUNA should recognise 25th October annually as the WFUNA Women's Special Day for Peace with effect from 1984,
2. URGES all United Nations Associations, either individually or together, to organise special events at the international, regional or local level to give due expression and publicity to the Special Day".

France Honors Arab Women

Three Arab women were honored in France recently: Palestinian journalist **Raymonda al-Taweel**, Algerian writer **Aysha Lamseen** for portraying a positive image of Arab women in her stories and novels (written in French), and Moroccan gold medalist **Nawal al-Mutawakkel** for winning the Olympic Games gold medal in Los Angeles.

France offered them the honorary prize of the French-Arab friendship for their role in raising the status of Arab women in the international circles.

Al-Hasnaa
20/9/1985.

UNIVERSAL CHILDBIRTH PICTURE BOOK

An Arabic edition of the UNIVERSAL CHILDBIRTH PICTURE BOOK (CBPB) has been published. The book, a picture story of reproduction from a woman's view, is designed for teaching purposes and is specifically designed for the community health worker.

English, French, and Spanish editions are also available. Free sample copies are available from the following address:

187 Grant Street
Lexington, MA 02173
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Tel. (617) 862-9431

Soviet Orientalists Arrive to Beirut

Four Soviet orientalist, Dr. **Erene Smellaskya**, Dr. **Natasha Faronshanina** Dr. **Larissa Zodina** and Dr. **Tamara Missilikova**, have arrived to Beirut to give speeches on issues regarding the Soviet Union and the Arab World. Dr. **Zodina** gave a speech on "The Institute of Orientalism in the Soviet Union" and Dr. **Faronshanina** gave a speech on "the study of the culture of the Arab World in the Soviet Union". Dr. **Smellaskya** spoke on "the socio-economic history of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine in the 17th and 18th century".

An-Nahar
22/9/1985

Finland and Egypt

Three Finnish researchers went to Egypt to conduct research on the activities of Egyptian women, as well as writing a survey on the history of the Women's movement in Egypt.

Leila Kolio, **Syrk Normi** and **Liza Yokyowanta** met with most pioneer Egyptian leaders and social workers.

Al-Hawadeth
20/9/1985.

WOMEN EMPLOYMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB WORLD

This book has been prepared by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW). It deals with the participation of Arab women in the labour force, the socio-economic, demographic, cultural and legal factors that determine the participation rate, and the policies - behavioral as well as institutional that would facilitate and enhance wider female participation in economic activities in this part of the world.

Women Employment and Development in the Arab World

is published by Mouton, a mail service order is available.

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