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WOMEN OF SAUDI ARABIA

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Saudi Arabia: Development and Growth

The idea of setting up factories for women only was initiated by His Majesty King **Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud**.

The factories will be operating within five years time and will employ around fifty thousand females, who will contribute to relieving the country of its dependence on foreign labor.

The rationale behind the integration of Saudi women in the industrialization endeavors of Saudi Arabia will be discussed in an article titled «Saudi Women and Industry» in this issue of *Al-Raida*. The future issues of *Al-Raida* will cover women of different Arab Gulf States focussing on the potential and responsibilities of women in the process of social and economic development. Here I find it convenient to write about **AGFUND**, the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations. His Royal Highness Prince **Talal Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud** proposed the idea of creating a programme to contribute towards easing the problems of developing countries to UN Secretary-General in 1980.

It was decided that the financial help could best be channelled through these organizations. With strong support from the heads of Arab Gulf states (Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) as well as private donors, governments and corporations inside and outside the Gulf, **AGFUND** was set up in April 1981. The fundamental aims that were delineated in the programme focussed on women and child affairs, and a Women's and Child Bureau was established at **AGFUND**.

With its headquarters in Manama, Bahrain and an office in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, **AGFUND** has a staff of 20 people including seven professionals. **AGFUND** is presided by His Royal Highness Prince **Talal**, assisted by an Administrative Committee comprising representatives from each of the seven contributing countries. **AGFUND** contributed US\$ 133 million as a help towards financing 184 projects that touched over 200 million people in more than 110 countries. Sixty per cent of the funds of the programme were allocated to projects and schemes relating to mother and child; hence priority in support for UN Organizations was given to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). **AGFUND** founder and President, Prince **Talal**, has always emphasized the role of women in social development and the need for the integration of women in social development, «there will be no social development and no improvement in the conditions of children and mothers unless women are integrated in social development».

Saudi Women and Industry

His Majesty King Fahd has initiated a new plan for the integration of women in the industrialization endeavors of Saudi Arabia. Fifty thousand girls are to join the emerging new labor force in the factories to be set up for women only. The rationale for these endeavors has centered around the need for women's economic participation and the improvement of their status, women constitute half the population, and according to *Aisha Almana*^(*) «are emerging as a major social force, demanding an increase in their participation in the economic and social life of the country and calling for the recognition of their active and necessary roles in the development process».⁽¹⁾

At present women comprise less than four per cent of the labor force. The need for trained labor force has been a strong incentive for women's economic activity, and the country is in need of the fifty per cent of its human resources to relieve the economy from the shortage of «manpower». The potential female labor force entrants can be seen as substitutes for part of the expatriate labor force. The importation of foreign workers places a strain on the social fabric of the society, and these bottlenecks face countries that have their economies based on the export of oil. Realizing the need for women's potential contributions, the Minister of Planning in Saudi Arabia says «The issue is not whether women will work, but where».⁽²⁾

The Qur'an does not discriminate against women, but rather calls on all believers to work. Women's right to employment was recognized in the Qur'an, and existed since the early days of Islam. The late *King Faisal* on a state visit stated «that the most important requirements Islam calls for are: to maintain progress, to carry out justice, to create equality...».⁽³⁾

The fundamental guidelines that were delineated in Saudi Arabia's development plans focussed on the vital objective of diversifying the Saudi economy by developing the agricultural and industrial sectors. The growth of the oil sector has generated capital surpluses to be invested in development projects, which will have a decisive effect on women's participation in the labor force. When examining the third five year plan (1980-

1985), one of the policies advocated «expanding the base of female employment in a fashion which will increase human output...».⁽⁴⁾

Within the same plan, the most important imperative was the direction of the media towards «altering society's attitudes towards the work of women and their contribution to the development and evolution of the country based on our orthodox Islamic values».⁽⁵⁾

In an interview with *Dr. Hikmat al-Arabi*,⁽⁶⁾ head of the women's department of the Ministry of Planning, on the new initiative of His Majesty *King Fahd*, she said that women have been able to hold high positions in the work structure, and this indicates that women have the capacity and the potential. His Majesty *King Fahd* has given special attention to the status of women, trying to integrate her in new sectors of the development policies.

Dr. Aisha Almana stressed the need to carry out a feasibility study to assess the skilled labor that is needed for the project, as well as to have the right institutions that will train women, since it is very essential to have these factories run by the indigenous women. She also emphasized the need of relieving the country's dependence on foreign labor so that it can have a self-sustained economic growth. *Almana* referred to Japan as an example of a highly industrialized country where women were integrated in the industrial sector, but still safeguarded their traditions and customs. Women in Japan constitute forty per cent of the industrial labor force among the age group 20-24, but this rate decreases for the age group of 25-40, and then increases after the age of forty. According to *Almana*, this is a firm indicator of the strong motherly role, where the value of proper childcare and strong family ties are still high on the priority list.

The integration of women in social and economic development does not mean rejection of the traditional role of Arab women or the blind imitation of other societies; women will continue to be key members in the family.

It is very important to be aware of the potential role of Arab women in the development of their respective societies.

Aida Arasoghli

(*) Aisha M. Almana is a sociologist and previous Director of the Women's Social Bureau, Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

(1) Almana, Aisha. «Saudi Arabia: An Emerging Social Force», in *Sisterhood is Global*, Robin Morgan, ed., p. 587.

(2) Newland, Kathleen. *The Sisterhood of Man*, p. 148.

(3) Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate of passports and Nationality, Pilgrims statistics for 1391 A.H.-1971 A.D.

(4) Al-Farsy, Fouad. *Saudi Arabia: A Case Study in Development*, p. 152.

(5) Ibid., p. 153.

(6) Sayidaty, November 4-10, 1985, p. 24.

Saudi Women and Education

In 1985, Saudi Arabia celebrated 25 years of state education for women who constitute 25 per cent of the total students of the Kingdom. Moreover, although Saudi Arabia is considered to be a conservative society, available data show that significant advances have taken place in the field of education since 1960. Girls equal boys in numbers at every school level and are considered better achievers by their teachers.

Traditional education in Saudi Arabia was until the 1960's in the hand of teachers who taught their pupils religious and social studies at private schools. Only boys used to attend these schools which still exist nowadays especially in areas where there are no government school facilities, but only kindergartens and primary level classes. As for girls, there were no government schools available prior to the 60's, and only private tutoring existed for daughters of the wealthy.

Saudi Arabia's first modern girls's school, Dar Al-Hanan, was founded in 1956 in Jeddah by King Faisal's wife, Iffat, who believed that girls as well as boys were to be taught to participate in the technological world of the 20th century. The school was at first intended for orphans and other young women who needed education to enable them to earn a living as adults. Today, Dar Al-Hanan is one of the country's elite schools and has a small philanthropic boarding school for the needy.

Nowadays, says a medical professor at King Abdul-Aziz University, «people think quite differently about what women and girls can and should do within society». ⁽¹⁾ Although girls still marry young, marriage

is not the obstacle to further education that is encountered in many parts of the world.

Many of Dar Al-Hanan's pupils, will go to university after marriage and might choose to work later.

Christianne Jalkh seems to confirm the fact that the situation of women in Saudi Arabia has improved a lot in the last 20 years. ⁽²⁾ She says that women who were illiterate want their daughters to go to school. The same goes for men who married uneducated women. Moreover, says *Jalkh*, Saudi women don't marry as early as before and do not want as many children. Many married women, she writes, go to evening schools and others chose to remain single in order to give all their time to their careers.

«Saudi women have high hopes», writes *Aisha Almana*, a Saudi sociologist and previous Director of Women's Social Bureau. ⁽³⁾ This is based in part on the increase in educational and training opportunities which began in 1962, she explains. In 1960 there were 3 girls' schools in Riyadh and 1200 students in them. In 1982, women were 25 per cent of students at Riyadh University. Today they constitute more than 35 per cent of the total students of Saudi Arabia, more than 14,000 of them are enrolled in teachers' colleges and universities. Furthermore, their numbers are increasing and the projected number of female enrollment in colleges is expected to reach more than 40,000 by the late 1980's. *Almana* predicts.

Women are enrolled mainly in the social sciences, in

(1) Searight, Sarah, «Saudi Women: The Educational Revolution», *The Middle East Magazine* No. 133, Nov. 85, pp. 38-39.

(2) Jalkh, Christianne, «Arabie Saoudie. Une prison dorée», in *Terre des Femmes*, Editions La Decouverte/Maspero, pp. 139-146.

(3) Almana, Aisha. «Saudi Arabia, An Emerging Social Force», in *Sisterhood is Global*, Robin Morgan ed., pp. 587-588.

medical schools, and teachers' preparation colleges — all of which prepare them for jobs in the traditional female sector of female education, social welfare and medical services. In fact, Saudi education is sex-segregated since age six. It is divided into primary, intermediate and secondary levels. Numbers fall considerably at the transition to the intermediate level and still further, at the secondary one. A 1979-80 survey showed women's enrollment in primary school to be 55 per cent and secondary school 23 per cent.⁽⁴⁾

Sex-segregation at schools means that facilities are duplicated and that libraries, for example, are open one day a week only for women. But this apparent extravagance is seen necessary as long as it serves the aim of educating the female population.

Only in the medical field are the barriers down, says *Searight*.⁽⁵⁾ She sees that as an important indicator for the future because Saudis recognize how desperately they need medical staff, although there is pressure on women to specialize mainly in obstetrics or gynecology. *Searight* mentions a recent television programme on girls in Saudi Arabia which called them «the doctors, scientists and teachers of the future». She says that Saudi women see the need to «Saudi-ize» the country's work force, i.e. to get rid of foreigners who are occupying many categories of employment, in order that they (women) be accepted in the wider labor market.

In fact, there is already some progress in this direction especially in the civil service, in banking where

there are separate branches for women, and in tailoring. *Searight* mentions that the Institute of Public Administration in the Kingdom has recently opened a women's section which is developing work opportunities for women only. She quotes students at the institute as saying that «no one minds if we work alongside computers». She also says that the only vocational training centers for women in Saudi Arabia are tailoring institutes where women who have left school after primary school can qualify to attend the two-year course. After graduation, these women can apply for a government loan of 200,000 Saudi Rials (\$54,000) to help set up their own establishments.

According to the General Secretariat for Girls' Colleges statistics for 84-85, women in Saudi Arabia have majored in agriculture, medicine, allied medical sciences, religious subjects and the sciences. Only engineering, architecture and pharmacy remain exclusively male.⁽⁶⁾

It also appears that the trend reported in the early 70's of an increasing number of Saudi women entering the labor market as nurses, medical technicians, doctors, social workers, newspaper writers, radio announcers and so on, is gaining momentum. Actually, the government in its official development operating plan for 1980-85 unequivocally committed itself to «providing appropriately for the education of women» and to expand the academic fields offered.⁽⁷⁾

Wafa' Stephan

(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 139-146.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 38.

(6) Massialas, Byron and Samir Jarrar, *Education in the Arab World Praeger*, pp. 245-247.

(7) *Ibid.*, p. 247.

Saudi Women and Work

The evolution and development of the economy in Saudi Arabia have produced new employment opportunities and have stimulated an increase in the awareness regarding the potential of women.

The fact that most working women are still concentrated in the so-called feminine occupations of education, health and social planning should not be a discouraging factor, since these areas are in need of qualified indigenous people especially with the growing shortages of manpower. According to *Aisha Almana*, a prominent sociologist in Saudi Arabia, «this separation has, however, contributed to women's holding higher positions in the work structure albeit in running the female sectors».⁽¹⁾

Today, there is a new trend where women are involved in real estate, construction, commerce or even starting their new business which is not limited to the wealthy. There are many wage workers who also have their own business. *Almana* gives the example of a nomadic woman who worked as a janitor from 7 A.M. to 2 P.M., and then worked in her store in the afternoons and evenings, and now owns her own house as well as two grocery stores and attends a literacy programme two hours every day. In an article in *Al-Sharkiah*⁽²⁾, three successful Saudi women discussed their experiences in starting their own business and how they entered areas that were traditionally dominated by men. Females are starting to diversify their fields of study to include sciences, business, engineering and so forth. *Abir Salameh* is a twenty-four year old contractor who works with builders and who also owns a bakery in Jeddah. *Raeda Bin Laden* is an interior designer and runs her own gallery, and there is *Najwa al-Olafi* who is in the fashion business and has a shop for women's clothes.

Women associations in Saudi Arabia have played an important role in improving women's conditions. The first women's association was founded in 1960 with the support of princess *Iffat*, wife of the late *King Faisal*, who also supported the admission of women into prim-

ary and higher education institutions. The right of equal educational opportunities has increased the work potential of women since education has a direct linkage to women's participation in the labor force. Better education and more opportunities in employment would render women capable of contributing to the process of development in Saudi Arabia, and therefore to a more sustainable and balanced socio-economic growth.

There are three women associations in Jeddah, namely: «*Al-Jamieah al-Nisaciah al-Khairiah*», «*Al-Jameiah al-Faisaliah*», «*Jam'iat al-Bir al-Khairiah*». These associations offer social services and financial aid to needy families and health care services for children in nurseries. They also offer educational services such as typing courses.

Other Saudi women occupy jobs such as deans-of women's colleges, directors of different female institutions and schools. *Dr. Ibtissam al-Bassam* was recently appointed as director of *King Fahd Academy* in London. She has a Bachelor degree in English Literature from Cairo University, and a PHD in Education from the University of Michigan. She was head of the English department in the school of education in Jeddah, and the dean of the school of education in Riyadh before she became director of *King Fahd Academy* in London.⁽³⁾ *Tahira al-Hafith* is another Saudi woman who has been working in England since 1966 as a designer of Kaftans. She exhibited recently in London a collection of rare Bedouin costumes that belonged to different tribes of the Arabian Peninsula.

There is no doubt that the role of women in the development of Saudi Arabia will increase as a result of social, economic and educational growth. The restrictive nature of some local traditions regarding the role of women are still considerable, but these are bound to wither as a result of greater governmental efforts and recognition of the economic freedom that Islam bestows to women.

Aida Arasoghli

(1) *Almana, Aisha*, «Saudi Arabia. An Emerging Social Force», in *Sisterhood is Global*, *Robin Morgan*, ed., p. 587.

(2) *Al-Sharkiah*, November 1985, pp. 54-56.

(3) *Sayidaty*, October 21, 1985, p. 53.

Saudi Arabia



Location: Saudi Arabia encompasses around four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula, bordered by the Gulf, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to the east, the two Yemens and Oman to the south, the Red Sea to the west, and Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait to the north.

Geography: Saudi Arabia is divided into four major regions: Najd, Hijaz, Asir and Al-Hasa; and for administrative reasons it is divided into five major provinces: Western (Hijaz), Central (Najd), Eastern (Al-Hasa), Southern (Asir) and Northern province.

Area: 2,261,070 sq.Km.

Capital: Riyadh.

Languages: Arabic.

Religions: Islam 99 % (predominantly Sunni), Hijrah (AD 622).

Education: First girl's schools opened in 1960, and Saudi women were first admitted to universities in 1962. In 1980, women comprised 27 % of students at 5 universities.

Birth Rate: Per 1000 pop., (1975-1980): 49

Death Rate: Per 1000 pop., (1975-1980): 18

Life Expectancy: (1975-1980): Female 49 years, male 47 years.

Government: Saudi Arabia was officially proclaimed fully sovereign on September 22, 1932. Absolute Monarchy of the *Saud* family. Juriprudence is based on the Islamic Shari'a. A

21-member council of ministers advises *King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz*.

Currency:

Riyal.

Production:

Dates, wheat, barley, petroleum and petroleum products, cement, plastic products.

Equal Pay Policy:

Women in the public sector are to receive equal pay for equal work.

Family:

An employed woman is entitled to a fully paid maternity leave 4 weeks pre- and 6 weeks post delivery. Child-care centers are subsidized by the government; in 1983 there were around 200 day-care centers (both public and private). Social services include institutional care, social security, community development and service centers. The Ministry of Health, along with 13 other government agencies, offer free health-care services to all citizens.

Finance:

In 1980, *Al-Rajih* money exchange company of Riyadh opened the first women's branch (13 branches in 1982), with women directors and staff. Saudi women control an estimate of 30-40 % of Saudi Arabia's wealth.⁽¹⁾

(1) «Saudi Women Moving into Banking». International Herald Tribune, Feb. 4, 1982.

The Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Regional Conference

(March 24-28, 1985)

The third «Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Conference» was convened in Abu-Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates under the sponsorship of H.R.H. the ruler of U.A.E.; and was hosted by the General Federation of the United Arab Emirates Women.

Among the hundred-and-twenty delegates that participated in the conference was the delegation of Kuwait headed by *Dr. Rasha as-Sabah*, as well as members of the Kuwait women organizations and researchers from the University of Kuwait and the ministries. *Mr. Abdallah al-Mazroui*, opened the conference on behalf of H.R.H., the ruler of U.A.E., by stating that Islam has safeguarded the rights of women, and encouraged knowledge and education.⁽¹⁾

During the conference, twenty-three studies were presented, and evolved around the following areas:

- The role of Women in social and economic development, with special emphasis on the potential of Arab women, which could enhance the process of development, if women were given the right chance to use the potential.

- Education, the Media, and the effect of marriage on women's work; all the studies have emphasized the need of eradication of illiteracy.
- Vocational training and development for women.
- The role of women organizations in enhancing women's participation in work.
- The Arab legislation concerning work.

The following recommendations were suggested:⁽²⁾

- To acknowledge the final draft of the official structure of the committee of coordination in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, with its headquarter in Kuwait.
- To form a committee of *Louloua al-Qutami* (Kuwait), President.
Fatma al-Issa (Kuwait), secretary general of finance.
Rawda al-Mutawa (U.A.E.), assistant.
Hutham al-Mahdi (Iraq), assistant.

It also included a representative from Bahrain, who was to be named later.

- To hold meetings every six months.
- To decide on when and where to convene the next conference.^(*)

(1) Al-Roumi, article in «Journal of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies», pp. 273-279.

(2) Ibid., pp. 277-278.

(*) The fourth regional conference is going to be convened in Iraq or Bahrain in March, 1986.

New Publication on the Gulf

Bahrain and the Gulf

Ed. Jeffrey B. Nugent, Theodore H. Thomas, Groom Helm Ltd. London and Sydney, 1985. 221 pages.

The General Federation of Jordanian Women

(May 14-16, 1985)

The General Federation of Jordanian Women held a national conference in Amman under the sponsorship of H.R.H. Queen *Nour al-Hussein*. Among the studies presented at the conference was the study of *Butheina Jurdana*(*) on the image of the Jordanian women in the media. She spoke of the important role that the media play in the development of women. In the press, Jordanian women began to play an active role after the fifties, e.g. «Majallat al-Bait al-Arabi» was established in 1978. From 1948-1959, programmes in the radio were restricted to news broadcasts and songs, but later, the programmes were more oriented towards development of the Jordanian society with special programmes for women. Some of these programmes encouraged women to work and tried to offer solutions for the problems that face working women. Other programmes discussed personal status laws such as marriage, inheritance and divorce.

She also spoke about the Jordanian television which has always encouraged women to play an active role in society. Some of the programmes focussed on the problems that face working women who have to carry a «double burden». Other programmes were educational and instructive in their approach, with more emphasis on the cooperation between men and women in work, than on the separate roles where labor is divided. She said that the local programmes did not represent the problems of the Jordanian women, except for some which focussed on rural women and their problems, such as their unremunerative work in the fields. The educational programmes dealt mainly with childcare and health education. Women were misrepresented in the Bedouin programmes and they were usually portrayed as possessions who have no identity of their own. In advertisement, women's value centered around her looks, most advertisements were imported from the west and were alien to the Jordanian women.

(*) Member of the committee of working and career women.



Queen Nour and Butheina Jurdana

(From Sayidaty)

The Image of Women in Egyptian Films

Miss *Jurdana* also spoke of the image of women in Egyptian films. A research study was carried on around 410 Egyptian films, the results indicated that 23.4 per cent women were portrayed as females only, 22 per cent as housewives, 20.5 per cent as working women, 10.5 per cent as students, 79.5 per cent as artists and 5.4 per cent as rural women (the percentage of rural women in Egypt is around 29 per cent). These rates do not represent the Egyptian population, women were misrepresented in the films and portrayed as creatures whose main concern is to get married.

Recommendations

At the end of her study, she suggested the following recommendations:

- To recognize women's right for education and work.
- To prepare programmes that will eradicate illiteracy of women.
- To promote campaigns to inform women of their legal rights.
- To inform women of health education, childcare and nutrition.
- To abolish the image of women as sex symbols.

These recommendations could be implemented by:

1. Encouraging all women's organizations to be integrated in the advisory committee responsible for the preparation and planning of programmes.
2. Increasing the number of programmes dealing with the family, the child and the rural women.
3. Coordinating between all the sectors of the media to promote a positive image of women.
4. Establishing a magazine especially designed to deal with issues relating to the new role of women and the need for women's integration in economic development.

The Lebanese Family Planning Association

(October 31, November 1-2, 1985)

The Lebanese Family Planning Organization held its fourth conference on «The Image of Women in the Media» to assess and evaluate the conditions of women in Lebanon. Among the participants were fifty delegates representing women's groups, federations, social and health centers, as well as members of the association.

Dr. Adnan Mroweh, president of LFPA opened the conference by emphasizing the need for family planning to improve the conditions of women in general, and of the rural women in particular. *Dr. Aman Shaarani* gave a speech on the role of the media and its effect on the integration of women in development. She mentioned that the image of women in the media did not reflect the true needs and reality of women, especially on issues like development and the problems that hamper women's integration in development. Instead, the media emphasize the looks of women and portray them as beautiful females while they can be productive members of society sharing the same rights and responsibilities as men. She recommended a more viable policy which would aim at changing the traditional image of women, and enacting laws that do not discriminate against the employment of women in the public and private sectors. She also suggested preparing special programmes that will educate women and make them aware of their different roles in society.

On the second day of the conference, *Dr. Hashem Husseini* gave a speech on the image of women and the changing reality. He said that the image of women in the media is a reflection of their image in society, and any change in this image is linked to changing women's conditions. The media usually like to please the people, and have more power to re-inforce existing values and concepts than to promote new ones. People tend to respond to images and ideas that they already believe and are common to them.

Mrs. Nabila Breir (UNICEF) presented an assessment of the UN decade for women conference that was convened in Nairobi, July 1985. She stressed the need

for more interaction between the administrative and financial bodies and women's organizations and associations. She also spoke about the workshops that were held in Nairobi and that were related to Arab women emphasizing the need for eradication of illiteracy of women in order to enhance their integration in development.

Discussions in the conference revolved around four major areas, namely: the media, the decision-making process, Nairobi, and women's integration in society. For each of these areas, the following recommendations were suggested:

The Media

- To determine the important role the media play in re-inforcing the status of women, emphasizing the need for field studies before preparation of the programmes.
- To encourage the television to reject all advertisements that portray women in a sexist manner.
- To have the media accessible to all areas of Lebanon.
- To appeal to women's organizations to cooperate with the media to promote a positive image of women, whereby a committee will coordinate with the censorship board at the ministry of information to identify the programmes that mispresent women.

The Decision-Making Process

- To recognize women's rights in the decision-making process in Lebanon.
- To modify legal and constitutional laws to conform to the principles of equality.
- To adopt and implement the recommended changes by most organizations and federations and policy-planners.
- To study women's status specially when modifying legal and constitutional laws.



Nairobi Conference

- To hold a conference to assess the recommendations that were reached at the end of the decade for women.
- To form a follow-up committee to study all forms of discrimination against women.
- To call upon the mass media to cover all conferences relating to women, noting that the media's treatment of women is narrow, with little response to changes in women's lives and aspirations.

Women's Integration in Society

- To provide training centers for women in all areas of Lebanon.
- To recognize the need for women's integration in governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- To carry out research studies on the reasons that hamper women's integration in public life.

General Recommendations

- To modify all laws that do not safeguard the equal rights of women, especially concerning laws of citizenship for Lebanese women married to non-Lebanese men.
- To sponsor more field-work studies and increase the number of field-works in all areas of Lebanon.
- To recognize the pervasive influence of the media on attitudes and opinions; the way women are

presented will strongly affect people's notions on the status of women.

- To encourage men's participation and the educational bodies in such conferences.

To conclude, it is clear that knowledge of how human beings react to the media is very diverse, yet the media can influence the audience to abandon stereotypic thinking and to reinforce a positive image of women. Women rarely appear in «hard news» covering which reflects their exclusion from decision-making positions. Most of the people who set the policy in the media are men, and this imbalance poses a problem of perspective which can be solved by hiring more women in the media.

At the international level, UNESCO and the UN Fund for population activities are helping establish feature services for news about women in different regions around the world. The aim of the project, according to UNESCO is to make sure that «the image of women projected will be closer to the realities of a society in a process of change»⁽¹⁾, it is impossible for the media, print or broadcast to have a positive presentation of women as long as discrimination against women is still accepted in the real world.

Aida Arasoghli

(1) «Regional Women's Feature Devices Taking Shape», UNESCO press release, May 23, 1978.

The Basic Living Skills Programme^(*)

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World — Beirut University College, held a conference in Nicosia, December 10-12, 1985 to introduce the «Basic Living Skills Programme» which was exhibited before in BUC on November 9, 1985. Around 18 participants attended the conference from different Arab countries, namely: Iraq, Morocco, Kuwait, Yemen Arab Republic, Republic of Democratic Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia (Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations —AGFUND) and UNICEF.

The «Basic Living Skills Programme» is a unique programme consisting of one-hundred-and-forty lessons divided into eight areas, namely: health, environment, nutrition, childcare, family-planning, home management, civic responsibilities and legal rights. The programme includes a guide manual that has detailed information on how to teach these lessons and how to evaluate the results after teaching these lessons.

The BLSP is a comprehensive programme that has educational material relating to different aspects and needs of the Arab women. The rationale behind this programme is that social illiteracy in the Arab world, especially among women, is one of the major problems that one should study and try to solve. Moreover, the choice of the different subjects was based on the fact that improving women's life and conditions involves more than the elimination of hunger and disease; it involves women's awareness of their rights and potential as well as learning certain skills that will help improve their life and the conditions of their families, and thus women can be integrated in the process of development.

Preparation for this programme started in 1976 in collaboration with experts in different fields. Field-studies were carried out in Lebanon and some Arab countries in 1977 to assess the problems and needs of women in all these countries. At the same time, some of



the educational material was prepared, and a programme was broadcasted on the radio «The Doctor's Mail» in Lebanon in 1981.

Due to the current situation in Lebanon and some financial problems, the programme was implemented in 1983 by testing the educational material on around 70 women of different age-groups and from different environments in several social service centers in Beirut and the suburbs, and then evaluating the lessons and modifying them. Around fifteen experts in different fields have worked on the preparation and implementation of this programme.

It is important to note that introducing the legal aspect in educational programmes is an unprecedented approach which will help the woman to know her legal rights and thus contribute to development and liberation. The legal section has only covered Lebanon because it was not possible to cover all the legal codes of the Arab countries, though this could be included later.

This programme was prepared to complement all the development programmes that are being applied in the Arab countries. It is a new experience that can be developed and modified in order to achieve the rationale behind its preparation and implementation. This unprecedented pioneering experience is a step along the road of improving, qualitatively, the development programmes in the Arab World.

(*) The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut University College, held an exhibition to present the «Basic Living Skills Programme» to the Public on November 9, 1985.

La Maison Sans Racines «The House Without Roots»(*)

By *Andrée Chedid*



Andrée Chedid

(from *Le monde*)

Andrée Chedid presented her book «The House Without Roots» in Paris, October 1985 in a ceremony attended by Lebanese President *Charles Helou*, Mr. *Ghassan Tueni* and Miss *Yvette Turpin*, Lebanon's representative of tourism in Paris. Chedid's book starts with a quotation by *Gibran Khalil Gibran*, which says: «Your house will not be an anchor, but a mast». In fact, the reason why Chedid chose the title «The House Without Roots» is that the concept of a person's roots in life is primordial for her. The «House without Roots» is not one already built, but is a place where uprooted people find themselves and are in the process of building a house.

As a child, *Andrée* used to accompany her Grandmother (*Nouza* in the book) for the summer holidays at the Grand Hotel of Sofar (Solar in the book) in the Lebanese mountains. It was during these times that the young *Andrée* (*Kalya* in the book) learnt about her family's history, about the Lebanese way of life, the hospitality, warmth, generosity and... quick temper of its inhabitants. It was also during one of these holidays that she met her first love, *Mario*, a young law graduate whom she was to meet again during that summer of '75.

In the book, *Andrée-Kalya* lives in Paris and works as a photographer. She lived in three countries, Egypt, Lebanon and France, and in the three countries she set-up roots. *Kalya's* grand-daughter, *Sybil* is separated from her because her son, *Sam*, married an American and decided to live in New York. So both grandmother and granddaughter, although from the same roots, live different realities and are in different worlds. It is in the land of their ancestors that they decide to meet to spend the summer of '75 which marks the early days of the civil war in Lebanon.

Writing about roots *Chedid* says: «What are roots? Are they ancestral ties or are they woven through one's existence? Are they those of the ancestral homeland rarely visited, those of a neighbouring country where childhood was spent or those of a city where one has lived the longest time?»⁽¹⁾

Why did *Kalya* choose to come back to the land of her ancestors and bring her grand-daughter with her?

Chedid answers: It is because of tenderness. «Tenderness for this tiny land that one can cross in one day, this stubborn and fragile land».⁽²⁾

(*) Chedid Andrée. *La Maison Sans Racines*. France: Flammarion, 1985, 247pp.

(1) Chedid, Andrée. *La Maison Sans Racines*. p. 79.

(2) Ibid., p. 81.

Upon arrival to Lebanon both grand-mother and grand-daughter start experiencing life in a country beginning to be affected by war. They are stopped by a militia checkpoint on their way from the airport, they witness a bomb explosion at the local fruit shop, one of their friends is kidnapped, the airport is closed, finally they witness the secret plan for a peace march being prepared by two young women, a Muslim and a Christian, who refuse to see the country torn apart by confessional hatred.

This peace march is in fact the focal point of the book. It ties together the past and the present of *Kalya* who, throughout the novel, recounts in details the memories of her vacations with her own grandmother in 1932, then recounts the incidents of her 1975 vacations with her grand-daughter in the same country but in totally different circumstances.

This peace march which only lasts few minutes starts dramatically and ends dramatically. It begins with two young women, *Myriam* and *Ammal*, friends since childhood, who decide to put an end to confessional hatred by calling on people of all communities to join them. The two women agree to meet in the city-center, at dawn, wearing the same color, yellow, the color of hope and life. Once the assigned day arrive, and while walking towards each other to give the signal for others to join them, one of the women is shot. We never know who for it is not important. «Wounded together, they will recover together» writes *Chedid*. It is what happens after the women were rescued and the peace march was thwarted that is more important. For even if the march will cost the life of the most innocent character of the book: the little *Sybil*, hope still remains for peace in the country.

The idea of hope is very important for *Chedid*, because even if things seem irrevocably dark, this «blind violence cannot, should not last», she says. People should quickly join peace, join *Ammal* or *Myriam*, the young women bearers of hope before...

«... Before the city splits in two, before the last passage way (between the East and West) closes down, before hostages become an exchange currency... before an enemy is discovered in the house next door, before this morning's friend becomes tonight's executioner».

As the list of «befores» goes on, the reader realizes that ten years after the events of the novel, these things have become every day realities in Lebanon and that the word «before» does not exist anymore because «the pond of blood has deepened».

What can one conclude from *Chedid's* book, especially if one has lived these ten years of war?

Chedid's book is not an account of someone who has personally experienced the war in Lebanon, but of a person who has followed it very closely from far away. *Chedid* writes about the war as a poet, her words are sharp, her images are vivid and her emotions are well expressed. The rhythm of the book starts slow and speeds till the climax, the death of the little twelve years old girl who lives in the U.S., whose father is Lebanese and who has never seen her ancestral land.

With the death of the innocent child the reader is shocked for he/she would have wished her to be saved. But in fact *Chedid* chose well to let her die because she represents the death of beauty, innocence and truth in a country that has become mad but where hope still remains; hope exemplified by the yellow scarf worn by the organizers of the peace march, which, although splattered with blood, is carried far away by the wind.

Wafa' Stephan

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Edvick Jureidini Shayboub

Edvick Shayboub was awarded the gold Medal of Lebanese Merit, 1958; the Knight of the Cedars, 1968 and the prize of the President of the Lebanese Republic in 1975 for her literary publications. Last month she was awarded the Officer of the Cedars in recognition of her achievements. Widow since 1944. Has two children: Sarmad, an architect from AUB, married Lina Mishalani, and Sana' (a girl) M.A. in Psychology from AUB; married to Hafiz Sabbagh, a textile engineer. She has a B.A. in Arabic Literature with distinction from the American University in Beirut, 1951, and M.A., 1969 (the same year her son Sarmad took his degree as an architect).

Publications

- «Baouh» 1954, and «Shaouk» 1962, two poetry books in free verse.
- «Thikrayati Ma' Gibran» 1958, memories of Gibran Khalil Gibran as told to her by his friend Yousif Hayek. It relates the two Artists' memories in Paris memories in Paris (1909-1910).
- «Attabib Assaghir» 1963, an educational novel for children (12-15); tells the story of the Lebanese village. Won the award for children's literature from «The Friends of the Book in Lebanon».
- «The Lebanese Handicrafts» 1964, a research. Also won the award of «The Friends of the Book».
- «Said Takiedeen, his life and Literary Works», 1969, a thesis for the M.A. degree in modern Arabic Literature, from A.U.B.
- «Shukri Hanna Shammas» — a biography, 1971.
- «Anbar Number 12», short stories, 1979.
- «The Children's Library» seven books with colored illustrations for children (6-7), 1950, 1960 and 1967.
- «With the Nature» — 10 books for children (9-11), will issue soon.

Career in the Press and Radio

1. Radio-Lebanon:
 - Read news bulletin, 1949-1958;
 - Began a daily woman programme, 1951, till

1984 every morning (11:30 a.m.), «With the Family».

It gives all types of services and help to women and girls in Lebanon and the Arab countries.

2. The Press:

- Chief editor of «Sawt El-Mar'a», Magazine, 1950-1958.
- Chief editor of «Dunia'l Mar'a», 1960-1966.

National and International Activities

- With National Council of Lebanese Women since 1958. Responsible for publicity. President of «Najla Sa'ab's Library», opened 1974 as a research centre for studies on women works and movements, as well as development. The books are in Arabic, French and English.
- President of «The Association for Promoting Fine Arts in Lebanon».
- On the board of «Lebanese Family Planning» — Chairman of the sex-education committee.
- On the board of «The Organization of Solidarity for Education» — Public Relations. It grants loans without interest for higher education of needy and talented students.
- Visited UK for a month, October 1962 as a guest of the «National Council of Women of Great Britain».
- Visited the USA, February 1967, for a 70-day tour, co-sponsored by the Department of State and the Educational Foundation of «American Women in Radio and Television».
- Joined the Lebanese delegation to the International Council of Women held in Teheran, May 1966, and later in Bangkok, February 1970, where she was elected Vice Convener of the Mass Media Committee. She was re-elected for the same post in Vienna Triennium July 1973.
- Was invited to the First International Convention for Women in Radio and TV, held in London, 1969.
- Represented the National Council of Lebanese Women in the Seminar held in Khartoum, by «The Union of Sudani Women», March 1974.

Morocco

Bouchra Bernounssi and *Oumaima Sayeh*, aged 23 and 24, have graduated in November 1985 from the Moroccan National Pilots School and become the first women commercial airline pilots in Morocco.

They were received in a private audience by *King Hassan II* of Morocco alongside with all the men in their promotion. *Bouchra* and *Oumaima* are qualified to fly all types of commercial airlines and will work with Royal Air Morocco (RAM).

AFP, 13/11/1985

Computer Camp for Girls

A 3-week computer camp was organized in Alexandria, Egypt, for girls from different Arab countries.

The daily schedule involves three hours of computer training, and some hours are devoted to recreational programmes and social activities. Girls have shown great enthusiasm, patience and determination for learning computer studies.

Sayidaty, 17/11/1985

Arab Women's Activities in London

The Arab Women's Association has introduced Arab heritage, culture and art to London's cultural events by sponsoring the play «Thousand Stories in Okath Market».

The play was shown on December 3, 1985 in Albert Hall, London. The play consists of thirteen acts that are not bound to a specific time of history. Yet the events, when put in a certain context, reflect significant implications in Arab History. The play has put special emphasis on Arab famous characters and their linkage to different phases of history. *Nidal Ashkar* was behind the idea of the play that was written by *Dr. Walid Abou Seif*. The Arab Women's Association sent the funds that were raised to help the children of Lebanon.

Sayidaty, 11/11/1985

From the 24th till the 27th of March 1986, the International Conference on Women's History will take place in Amsterdam. Numerous speakers from the Netherlands and abroad will lecture on subjects from the field of women's history. The conference will consist of lectures, workshops and discussion-sessions and, as it is an international conference, the main language will be English.

Participants will receive a conference-book in advance.

Anybody who wishes to attend should write or call to the conference office for registration forms:

International Conference on Women's History
Herengracht 286, kamer 109
1016 BX Amsterdam
020-5252617 (monday, tuesday, wednesday)

Multiple-Role Women are Healthier than Others

A symposium held during the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, found that multiple-role women who juggle outside jobs and family responsibilities are healthier than others.

Speaking at the symposium, *Dr. Lois M. Verbrugge*, an expert on women, work and health at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, said:

«The best health is found among employed married mothers, followed closely by employed married women without children.»
The worst health is among women with «no rules», unmarried women with no job or children.

«Employment is associated with good health,» she said,

«Marriage is also a healthful status, compared to nonmarriage».

Concluding the results of her study on multiple-role women, *Dr. Verbrugge* asked, «Are multiple-role women healthier than others because having important roles offers satisfactions and resources that promote health, or because only healthy women can take on several roles?»

In her final statement the social scientist predicted that as women spend more years of their lives working, their health will improve.

UPI, June 9-10, 1984

Beirut 1984

A Population and Health Profile

Edited by Huda C. Zurayk and Haroutune K. Armenian

This volume presents the findings of a population based health survey in the city of Beirut. As part of its concern to develop action oriented research dealing with public health issues, the Faculty of Health Sciences at the American University of Beirut, has selected the city of Beirut as its community laboratory. This survey has generated a unique data base about the inhabitants of a city undergoing a long civil war. Thus, this book records survey findings, discusses methodological and organizational issues faced in the implementation of the survey, and provides an information base for decision making by the concerned authorities.

This is the result of a group effort by several faculty members, research assistants, interviewers and a very responsive community. It is a rational first step for a health development plan for the future.

The book is published by the American University of Beirut, 1985. 253 pages.

For further information:

Office of Publications, American University of Beirut, Lebanon or Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, N.Y., U.S.A.

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