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Development of Arab Women and the Concept of «self-image» ☆

Measuring the economic participation of Women and assessing their share in the development process, implies a deep and comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms and determinants of such participation.

So far, attempts have been made at analyzing relationships between female employment and women's status, fertility patterns, education, legislation and other social and economic variables. However, some basic issues have been overlooked or neglected because of lack of appropriate instruments to use in measuring issues such as:

- **Perception** of Arab women's role in the process of development;
- **Self-image** of Arab women as a result of her participation in economic production;
- **Self actualization**, through participation and the impact of women's employment on:
 - 1 - decision making patterns in the family.
 - 2 - child rearing patterns.
 - 3 - husband-wife relations.
 - 4 - breaking or strengthening of the extended traditional family.

There is a need to work out appropriate concepts, measurements, and analytical processes for the study of the concept of self among Arab women, and how it affects their participation or non-participation in the process of economic development. Evaluating women's share in the development process, should not only be restricted to their economic participation but also to their development as individuals and the impact of their personality on their family and ultimately their community.

These comments are based on the review of available literature at the Documentation Center of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World and on two studies undertaken by the Institute, namely:

- 1 - *A survey of rural household resource allocation in Lebanon in 1975 (a pilot study).*
- 2 - *Sex-role orientation of Arab male and female university students (1979).*

In the survey of rural household resources allocation, it was found that the tools for data collection were excellent for gathering quantifiable data on resources, but not

very efficient in the assessment of the position of women in family interaction, participation of women in decision making process, and in perception of options and constraints that face them and their families.

The objective of the second study was to measure the attitudes of both male and female Arab students towards the role of women in present Arab society and determine the direction and dimension of attitude change. Scaling of responses from traditional to non-traditional was assessed on the basis of conformity of responses to the traditional sex-role pattern in the Arab world. The questionnaire covered issues such as wife-mother role, husband-father role, husband-wife relations, women's employment and economic independence and women's access to education.

It was found that in Lebanon both males and females took a moderate position towards non-traditional sex-roles, with females having significantly more modern attitudes than males.

Socio-economic variables could explain 27% of the total variation in sex-role orientation of the females, and mother's education had the strongest share in the tool of predictability of the variables. Demographic variables such as age, and class at the university explained only 6% of the variation. On the other hand, religion did not account for variation. Although these results are comparable with other research studies on college students both here and in the West, we still have a long way to go in order to explain all the variation. It is possible that additional information on self - image and role perception could add to the understanding of the situation of women in the process of economic development.

It is therefore essential to create models that would be used to study two situations:

- 1 - *A model to measure the impact of Arab women's participation in economic development on their total personality, their family and society.*
- 2 - *A model to measure the reasons for non-participation of Arab women in economic development on three levels: personal, familial and societal.*

(*) Comments made by Julinda Abu Nasr at a meeting of the Population Council, American University of Beirut.

A Survey of the Stages of the Women's Liberation Movement in the Arab World ☆

The feminist movement in the Arab countries, as in other parts of the world, is still at a pioneering stage. Its leaders are still called pioneers, whether they lived in the 19th or the 20th century.

Since its appearance in England and the U.S.A. two hundred years ago, the movement went through periods of progression and regression. The first stage is represented by leaders like the British **Mary Wollstonecraft** (late 18th century), and the American **Lucy Stone** (early 19th century). Both leaders claimed women's complete equality with men. The stage of regression took place between 1920 and 1956 when, under the influence of Freudian theories and the pressure of industrial propaganda, women in America and elsewhere were induced to return home. Between 1950 and 1963, the important works of **Simone de Beauvoir** (France) and **Betty Friedan** (U.S.A.) marked a new impetus in the movement which, since that time, has continued to spread not only in the West but also in developing countries.

The feminist movement in the Arab countries started in the 19th century as part of a general awakening and went through the same stages of «upward and downward stress» that characterized the western movement.

The Middle Ages witnessed the flourishing of Byzantine and Arab civilization in the Middle East; women enjoyed a relative share of freedom which permitted the emergence of women rulers, women poets, singers, dancers and so on. Islam, as early as the 7th century, gave women the right to own property, fixed the laws of marriage, divorce and inheritance and limited the number of wives to four conditioned to the instauration of justice for each of them. In the 19th century, after four hundred years of stagnation, a movement of awakening took place, producing reformers and leaders of modernism amongst both men and women. The movement was initiated in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, and from there it spread to the neighbouring countries.

Women's emancipation in the 19th century meant a rising interest in their education. We may mention at least five women who wrote traditional poetry, published articles in magazines, and took part in other cultural activities.

Aisha Taimur of Egypt, in the early part of the century, published poems in three languages: Arabic, the language of the country she lived in, Turkish, the language of the ruling khedives and Kurdish, the language of her ancestors. In the articles she published in papers as well as in her poems, she declared that she was following the steps of former women poets. Though she felt proud of her veil, she blamed men for preventing women from utilizing their talents in a more adequate manner. **Zainab Fawwaz**, a contemporary of Aisha Taimur, was an intellectual who succeeded in obtaining recognition as a journalist, a poet and an author of women's biographies. She was from South Lebanon, lived in Egypt, married a writer from Damascus and, though she kept the veil, took part in literary discussions and panels organized by men. Other women who participated in the revival of traditional poetry in the 19th century were **Warda Yaziji** and **Warda Turk** from Lebanon. **Marianna Marrash** who directed in Aleppo (her home town) a literary salon attended by both men and women.

The first half of the 20th century generated a new impetus in the feminist movement, which led to its propagation in other Arab countries than the three already mentioned. **Huda Shaarawi**, who publicly tore off her veil in 1923, was the founder of the union of Egyptian women. She also founded a feminist magazine in Arabic and French and the Arab Women's Federation in 1944, a few years before her death. Her collaborators were the famous writer **May Ziadeh**, **Seeza Nibrawi**, the Union's secretary who died a few months ago, **Malak Hafni Nassef** who died at the age of 32, leaving a book expounding her modernistic views about women's emancipation. This period witnessed the emergence of a large number of women authors, journalists and founders of women's magazines, public speakers and founders of literary salons, the most famous

(*) Paper presented at the Conference for the Integration of Arab Women in Economic Development organized by IWSAW - Nicosia, Cyprus, June 1985.

being that of **May Ziadeh** which she directed for 12 years and succeeded in bringing together the Egyptian intelligentsia of that time.

The period was characterized by a wave of social consciousness which led to the creation of women's feminists organizations, charity associations and orphanages, and to the emergence of voluntary social workers who advocated social justice and prison reforms.

Their social activity was intensified with political activity displayed through their writings, the public demonstrations they organized and other forms of support to militant nationalism in their countries.

Their claims, as set forth in the writings of **Malak Hafni Nassef** and the declarations of **Huda Shaarawi** and others, consisted of the following:

1. Granting women the right to education, including higher education.
2. Encouraging women to study gynaecology, and business management.
3. Abolition of the veil, partially or completely.
4. Necessity of allowing the betrothed to see each other before marriage.
5. Abolition of polygyny.
6. Restriction of the husband's unilateral right to divorce.
7. Raising the age of marriage and guardianship.
8. Granting women electoral rights, including the right to participate in political activity.

Most of the above claims have been granted since they did not contradict Islamic law. However, differences between religious leaders continue to exist regarding the interpretation of Koranic laws concerning polygyny, divorce, inheritance and other details in the personal status laws, which vary from one country to another and obey to a movement of fluctuation.

Feminist leaders of the early 19th century generally came from well-to-do families. They claimed education and justice for women in general, but had little or no contact with the laboring classes where women have to cope with the «double burden». Their claims did not include the right to work for women of the bourgeoisie or the improvement of work conditions for underprivileged women. Another drawback in their movement was the scarcity of scientific research concerning

women's status and problems. An exception was the masterly work of the Egyptian author **Qasem Amin** in 1904, «Tahreer el Mar'aat» (Women's Emancipation), which discussed the influence of ignorance and oppression on women's life and personality, referring to religious, logical, judicious, psychological and economic arguments. Another book by **Nazira ed-Din** «As-Sufour wa al-Hijab», appeared in the thirties. The work was based on an analytical research of women's right to discard the veil, supported by religious arguments. At the time, it aroused a good deal of commotion; but many think that the book had been written by Nazira's father, a judge at the Shari'a court, and attributed to the daughter.

The gaps existing in the activities of that period were filled by women leaders in the second half of the century (1950-1980). The activities of this second period proceeded along the same path of those started earlier, and there is no doubt that progressive steps have been achieved. Since then, a larger number of women have access to education, and yet the rate of illiteracy remains high. More women are entering professions previously monopolized by men, and show increased interest in science courses, while in the past they concentrated on art and literature. Their presence in positions of leadership still remains meager, while in politics it is almost non-existent. Laws dealing with personal status are a subject of controversy between liberal and conservative groups in the Islamic world as a whole.

Apart from being a period of expansion in feminine activities already started in the first part of the century, this period is marked by two distinctive characteristics: **first**, the spread of scientific research on women to America and the rest of the Western world has produced a similar interest in women's studies in the Arab East. **Second**, the integration of women in development is being launched by the United Nations, and shared by almost all countries of the world, including Arab countries.

Both movements have created for women certain problems which this conference will raise and discuss, and for which my speech will serve as an introduction.

Women's studies are certainly an outstanding achievement of our scientific age. They have the advantage of using the modern scientific method of questionnaires, systematic computation, statistical and graphic

results, reaching a high degree of accurate conclusions and banishing all forms of inaccurate generalizations. Women's studies have recently multiplied in Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait and other parts of the Arab world. These studies, whether carried out by the indigenous researchers or by foreign research institutes, have dealt with such topics as women's education, eradication of illiteracy, women's integration in development, problems facing women's work, women's image in the media and in school books, family-planning, health education... etc.. The studies have aroused enthusiasm, but were criticized because of their limited topics and their methodology. The topics were criticized because they limited the evaluation of women's progress to the fields of education and work, and neglected such aspects as woman's personality and how it has been affected by education and work. Other neglected topics were the effects of women's education and work on family status and structure, the concept of freedom as visualized by women of today, the value of education, and its success or failure in creating awareness and social consciousness among both men and women, and the status and problems of rural women who form a majority in many Arab countries.

Education is of little value if it limits itself to the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic, and neglects moral training and social awareness. Consequently, it is not enough to take the number of literate women and working women in a certain region, but we should also ask ourselves and researchers what kind of education is being offered by commercial schools which have been given a free hand in that region. We should try to detect the schools which inculcate in their students a spirit of bigotry and blind obedience, fill their heads with superstitions, and fail to awaken their creative abilities, their desire for further knowledge and their social consciousness.

Regarding the method adopted in these studies, it has been criticized by such researchers as Dr. **Huda Zurayk** and Dr. **Wadad Sulaiman Marcos**⁽¹⁾ on account of inaccuracies in the statistical information and an overwhelming use of demographic and statistical methods, neglecting the social historical method. In evaluating woman's work, for example, it is necessary to take into

consideration her part-time work outside the house, her economic activities within the family, her seasonal work in the field and her irregular outside work. The «multivariate techniques of analysis» should be used instead of the general statistical report.

Women's integration in development should not be considered as a new idea because, from the very beginning, women have been active workers at home, in the field, in domestic industry and in particular feminine occupations (like embroidery, sewing, nursing, midwifery and other varied handicrafts). The present movement aims at integrating in development the inactive middle-class women whose work has been limited to supervising their servants and housemaids. The movement seeks also to widen and increase women's opportunities for work by encouraging them to venture into fields formerly monopolized by men. No doubt their activity has created for women new problems and raised various questions such as: «To what extent has their new involvement contributed to their liberation (or to their enslavement)»? and «In what ways has it affected their personality, their family status and their social role»?.

The studies and articles which attempted to answer the above questions abound in complaints regarding the unjust treatment imposed on women in all fields of employment where «society's acceptance of male domination has pervaded development work». Sexual discrimination is still the order of the day, women are relegated to low-skilled, low-paid and easily replaceable jobs. As to the impact of work on their personality, it carries the same possibilities offered by education. Work may be to woman a means of liberation if it gives her the opportunity for intellectual, social and financial development, provided she avoids being exposed to exploitation and overwork as a result of carrying a «double burden». Otherwise, work may become a form of enslavement.

Here, we should remember that the process of development, involving both men and women in developing countries, has been little discussed and needs further study. According to Canadian President **Massé**⁽²⁾, «development is no more thought of in material terms but rather as a qualitative change in the way people

(1) Al-Raida, February 1, No. 23, p. 7; and May 1, No. 24, p. 3.

(2) Al-Raida, May 1, 1983, No. 24, p. 1.

think, act and relate to their environment». The influx of capital investment is not enough; there is a shortage of human resources in Third-World countries. The indigenous people lack the technical know-how to operate the machines that have invaded their countries. Another prerequisite for development is an understanding of people's background and cultural heritage, and this requires their own involvement in self-criticism.

If we compare women feminists of today with their predecessors, we find that the former have to face a more complicated situation resulting from the complexity and diversity of their demands. Facts revealed through increased research impose on them new responsibilities. As Third-World nations acquired their independence lately, women felt the need to assess their conditions and to carry a more independent study of themselves in an effort to reach a personal viable solution to their problems.

In an attempt to revive their local cultures, many Third-World countries have drifted into a wave of reaction, obliging women to go back home, and inducing repressive measures in the laws pertaining to personal status.

Can we conclude from the above facts that the present stage in feminist activity is characterized by confusion and destabilization which earlier pioneers did not encounter?

There is no doubt that the present stage features drastic changes and transitional difficulties. Yet, in spite of many negative aspects, we may detect at least two positive symptoms peculiar to this stage. **First**, the emergence of a **new type** of woman with a new way of life. In the past, women had only one choice for their future: Marriage. In some communities, they had two choices: marriage or convent life. Now, a third choice is open to them as a result of their involvement in education and work. It is the possibility for woman to live alone, and to lead an independent life dedicated to some worthy cause, such as social, artistic or scientific activity. A woman who has adopted this choice is one who has freed herself from the complexes that usually assail a solitary woman. Formerly, a woman who lived alone was rejected by society, but today this new woman has succeeded in asserting herself through inde-

pendent work. She has rejected the idea that a person was born for a definite purpose, that a woman, for example, was born to serve her clan or her community, or that her destiny is to catch a man, submit to him and identify with him and his family. This woman believes in her right to plan her own life and choose her own reason for existence. She may be a single woman, a widow or a divorcee. She may also be a married woman who enjoys complete equality with her husband. Her likes are not numerous; but they are multiplying and are to be found everywhere. She is the woman of the future.

The **second** positive development in the present stage of feminist activity is its international dimension. It started in the Arab world as a regional or local activity, but has recently spread widely. Every Arab country has its women's union; its members communicate with those of other unions and form a general women's federation. They meet in conferences and congresses in which they exchange ideas and publications.

Experience has taught women that men in both East and West, educated or illiterate, refuse to give up any of the privileges they acquired during 8000 years of patriarchal rule. «Men are ready to liberate themselves from all traditions except the one which confirms their superiority over women and their right to exploit them». This declaration was made by **Tatiana Mamono**, the Russian feminist. She adds that the Russian system, in spite of its emphasis on equality among people, has failed to implement sexual equality. The same is true of the opponents of this system outside Russia, who do not seem to be more concerned than the earlier group about women's liberation. The same complaint is heard from Palestinian women who took part in the revolution, and from Moroccan and Algerian militant women who fought side by side with men in the struggle waged against colonialism. All these women affirm that the fruits of the liberation movement were forbidden to women who have been ordered to go back home. As a result of the opposite alliance among men against women, the latter have been obliged to form a counter-alliance of women whose objective is to defend their rights and resist the injustice imposed on them by men everywhere.

The spreading wave of female consciousness is best expressed in a recently published work (1984), «Sisterhood Is Global»⁽³⁾, compiled by **Robin Morgan**. A number of countries, including eight Arab states, as well as the United Nations, are represented in this book. Seventy women contributed their articles; they were an eclectic group from different backgrounds and countries. All these women share the same cry, the same call for unity and united effort against male domination. They believe that women, who have suffered injustice and exploitation all through 8000 years, should be more ready than men to understand and sympathize with the needy and the underprivileged. Since they form half of the world's population, they should be able to become powerful enough to liberate their sisters as well as their brothers, the male sex, from three dominating plagues: lust for power, moneyworship, and destructive violence, three plagues threatening the world with annihilation.

June 30, 1985
Rose Ghurayyib

For The Record

Progress for disabled: Providing opportunities for disabled women was the focus of a regional workshop from 10 to 23 October in Amman Jordan. The agenda included establishing job possibilities such as self-employment and co-operatives, identifying community resources and reviewing present educational and training facilities. The ILO organised the session in collaboration with the Jordanian government and with the financial assistance of AGFUND. Representatives attended from Bahrain, Democratic Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen Arab Republic.

ILO Information Vo. 23, No. 5, December 1987.

World Congress of Women

Moscow 23-27 June 1987

«Towards 2000 - without Nuclear Weapons: for Peace, Equality and Development»

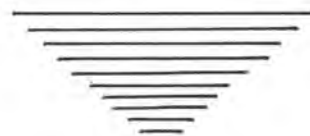
Initiated by WIDF, a world forum of women united 2823 participants from 154 countries representing 1005 national organizations, women's trade union and youth organization movements, professional groups, women artists and house-wives. 88 international and regional organizations were represented at the congress, and the United Nations participated with 25 high-ranking figures and with representatives from 13 UN specialized agencies.

The Congress is part of a process that began with the UN Declaration of the International Women's Year in 1975 and continued right through to the UN Decade for Women in Nairobi, 1985.

The Moscow Congress allowed women to pinpoint the obstacles today which is a sort of next step forward after Nairobi.

At the largest gathering of women since Nairobi the delegates gave expression to the dearest wishes and aspirations of women from all social strata, various outlooks and beliefs, for a world without nuclear weapons, a world in which everybody can realize the right to live and work in peace, a world in which every woman can build up a secure and happy future for the coming generations.

Women of the whole world
Journal of the WIDF No. 3/1987.



(3) Anchor Books, N.Y. 1984.

Education and Economic Needs Drive Arab Women to Join the Labour Force

The Arab world at present is witnessing the emergence of a working women's force. This influx of working women came as a result of an economic need that one bread winner cannot afford anymore to feed a family composed of five to six persons, on the average.

The mere fact that more women are joining the labour force, although in relative terms, has transformed many aspects of society: economically, socially and culturally. The change did not come easily nor cheaply. Arab women paid a heavy price to reach economic independence. Certainly the path they followed was not planted with roses, they waged a series of battles starting with the dropping of the veil, annulment of illiteracy, and convincing fathers, brothers and husbands to allow them to leave the house and work in offices and factories.

Wherever one goes in the Arab world, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, one can see women involved in economic activity. Agriculture and domestic services are still the predominant spheres. But many young women, single and married, are joining the long queues of light industry or operating electronic machines in banks, airline companies and offices. Yet, the overwhelming majority of Arab women are still idle, staying home and managing their households.

Arab working women on the average still earn less than men, and many experience subtle forms of discrimination in their effort to advance their positions as full-timers and to obtain equal pay. Few are the women who reach the level of leadership in both the public and private sectors. Arab governments in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq name women ministers. But the real and final authority is still vested by the prime ministers who are men. Few are the women in the Arab world who chair board meetings of big companies and banks. The majority of women who work in corporations are on the lower managerial level, clerks, secretaries and tele-

phone and telex operators, though women earmarked for themselves a reputation as excellent teachers, nurses, and executive secretaries.

Arab women's contribution in professional life or career, can be found mostly in developing Arab societies where women have had a good educational background. This class of Arab women can be found largely among Lebanese, Egyptians, Palestinians and Tunisians, who have excelled as doctors, writers, social workers, journalists and college professors.

Women's achievement of high goals did not come without problems. Probably the most profound and widespread of women's problems is one that came hand in hand with greater opportunity in the job market to meet the conflicting demands of family and career. Conservatives and fundamentalists question whether there can be accommodation between home and work place, suggesting that perhaps there can only be a choice between the two. Many young educated women are challenging this judgement and are trying successfully to perform both requirements with the help of maids who are still available in the Arab world and the cooperation of either family members, like mothers-in-law and aunts who happen to live with them or close to them.

Women have a small percentage, not more than 5% or 10% of the new jobs created in the Arab economy. With more women seeking employment, old debates have been revived and matters once considered settled have become contentious issues.

One issue questions whether women who have children should be working at all. Another concerns the inequities women encounter and how they may be overcome.

The majority if not the totality of Arab women put their households and husbands first and have no wish to enter the job market, nor are they attracted by talk of equality and rights. It is only the better educated, and rather the elite - those interested in careers, liberal and radical women - who put up these debates. The majority abide by the rules of society and their upbringing, which taught them to accept being submissive to men. Arab society is still a patriarchal society.

Few educated women are beginning to have rising work aspirations and ambivalence towards motherhood, although the trend among educated middle class women now is to have less children than their mothers and grandmothers. Few are the ones who are dubious about marriage.

Like the rest of the world, women in the Arab world did not anticipate themselves in the labour market. As a result they were less prepared for better paying positions.

Other conditions women confront in the world of work, is better treatment, especially for pregnant women who need to be absent from work after delivery. The Lebanese Labour Law gives every working pregnant woman a paid maternity leave of absence for two months. Other Arab and non-Arab countries where this law does not apply explain why women work on part-time basis or seasonal periods. There are some companies and indeed communities that oppose employing married women.

There are also special provisions that govern women's working conditions in the Arab world. Except for nurses women are not allowed to work at night, or take jobs that require heavy physical duties. On the other hand women are under-represented in certain kinds of jobs such as members of parliament, ministers, ambassadors, judges, high administrative jobs in government, police force and army cadets.

Middle Eastern societies did not reach the level of development where all kinds of jobs are open to women whether they are applying for them or not. Only when women are presented with a range of opportunities will they be able to say that they have freely chosen the kind of work they want.

The economic crisis that the world is passing through, including the Arab world, has driven thousands of Arab women to work. A change of values of life in the Arab world is taking place. Economic needs, education and modernization are influencing both men and women to have identical interests and aspirations regarding work.

Certainly with more young women going to higher education, there will be more integration of jobs and a

greater representation in the wide range of occupations. Moreover, enrollments of women in professional programs portend further gains in the future. The Arab world is passing through a transitional period. Hence, the status of women and their economic contribution has to follow. Development goes in various circles, if there is progress in one sector progress has to follow in other sectors as well.

Time and time again, it has been proven that promotion of working women in the private sector proved more profitable and quicker than the public sector. Lebanese Labour Law pays married men a family allowance while a working widow who is the sole breadwinner is not entitled to these privileges. Arab working women in general settle for smaller pay, this is because better paying jobs were not open to them. Education and changing men's perception of their role in society as well as the economic need would lead ultimately to the growing presence of women in the job market.

There are basic changes in the character of work all over the world. The main problem that hinders Arab women's position is the problem of authority. Men refuse to work under women executives and take orders from a woman. The biggest obstacle to advancement of women in the Arab job market is the fact that men feel uncomfortable with working women. Women are considered by Arab men as outsiders if not intruders to work, the only sector where urban city dwelling women are moving up quickly is in the retail and fashion business. Perhaps because their clients are chiefly women. Almost most of the boutiques in Beirut, Damascus, Amman and Cairo are managed and owned by women.

Achievement of Arab women in the post-independence period is not yet complete, and has still a long way to go, but it is remarkable and should be given credit in promoting of women's status in education, culture and social development. No doubt they owe this improvement to themselves first and to enlightened leaders in some Arab countries by giving women their political rights - suffragettes - and hence promoted their economic and social integration in society.

Education is the Key to Increase Gulf Women's Contribution in Economic Development

Before the discovery of oil in the Arab Gulf i.e. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Bahrain, conditions of women were correlated with the conditions of their husbands, and the classification of the family in the tribal and class systems.

Gulf society was divided into four classes:

1. Royal family or ruling Amirs.
2. Rich merchants
3. Farmers, pearl divers, ship builders, fishermen and Bedwins.
4. Servants.

Gulf women shared with their husbands the hardships of life when they were poor and enjoyed later the manifestations of affluence that came with the use of oil prices in order to contribute some income to their families.

Rural women represented the second exploited class in the Gulf after the servants. Despite the active role that rural women played in the agricultural sector, they were never economically independent or recognized by society and themselves as salary earners. In addition to their house responsibilities, women in the Gulf rural areas tilled the land, irrigated the farms, herded animals, collected dates, sold eggs or vegetables in the market place, wove carpets and made tents. Some of them worked as servants in the houses of rich merchants. During the long absence of their husbands at sea, wives of pearl divers in Kuwait and Bahrain, took full responsibility managing family affairs and would dive themselves when economic conditions demanded it.

Women and wives of the ruling class and the rich merchants were exempted from work. But the women in relation to men were inferior human-beings, exploited and not given any power. Their lives were always threatened with the fear that their rich husbands would marry other younger women, as they often did. Women from this class were kept invisible in order to

protect their «honour» and preserve the image of the family. Their main job was and still is to produce children and supervise the housework which was done primarily by servants. The women were totally idle and kept in their isolated harems.

In 1950 the Gulf region faced radical social and economic changes as a result of the discovery of oil. These changes have directly affected the status of women. The two major variables that affected the status of women were education and employment.

Despite progressive changes in education and opening of schools for both boys and girls, the Gulf region suffers from a high illiteracy rate, especially among women. With the exception of Bahrain and Kuwait, where women's education first started in 1928 in Bahrain and in 1937 in Kuwait.

Education of girls in Saudi Arabia officially started in 1960 and the policy of women's education has been to train women to be good housewives and mothers. Girls' education was carried by women teachers, mostly from Egypt and Palestine and in a totally segregated environment from boys.

Adult education was introduced in the Gulf States as a state policy. In an effort to annul illiteracy thousands of men and women benefitted from these programs, and hence encouraged their children of both sexes to go to school. Once the Gulf States adopted a welfare system where the state sponsors free education for all at all levels, inside or outside the country, many sought higher education abroad in Europe and the U.S.A. Once the newly educated classes returned to their backgrounds, they played an important role in convincing their parents to allow their brothers and sisters to follow their path. Also this new class of young men started looking for future wives among the educated girls, a factor that convinced a lot of families, especially mothers to encourage their daughters to complete their studies even up to university levels.

But Gulf Women, though educated, did not engage themselves in the work force. There are two reasons to explain this trend:

- First, the strong traditional beliefs of women's primary role, namely that of a housewife and a mother.
- Second, women's lack of financial need as every Gulf citizen benefits from the welfare system and is paid a check at the end of each month by the State.

In most of the Gulf States' demand for highly skilled labour, excludes men and women from work. Work depends entirely on imported labour force such as Egyptians, Palestinians, Lebanese, Pakistanis and Indians etc...

Some countries in the Gulf are more tolerant than others regarding women's employment. Kuwait, Bahrain, Dubai, Sharja and Oman are known to have less strict rules regarding women's work if compared with Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi, where the strictest rules are observed.

In general, there are constraints and difficulties facing working women in the Gulf. Among them are the following:

1. Family restrictions: A woman might face a husband who orders her not to work. Her father and brother might do likewise, and she has to obey.
2. Lack of transportation: Women in Saudi Arabia, natives or foreigners alike are not allowed to drive. Often their husbands, brothers, fathers or drivers have to drive them to work. In the rest of the Gulf States women are allowed to drive, but it is the lack of public transportation that hinders women's movements.
3. Fear of rumours: Jobs that require a woman to work with men are looked down on and considered unsuitable for women with a status symbol.
4. Limited opportunities: Gulf women can hold public jobs as teachers, doctors, nurses, social workers and administrators but only in the female sector.
5. Lack of child care facilities: Women face difficulties finding child care facilities at work or outside work. Problems are eased however by extended family

cooperation where mothers - in - law or mothers could baby - sit for the children in their absence.

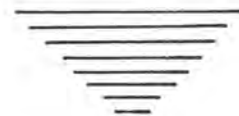
6. Lack of economic incentives: Women, married or single are not required by the Islamic Sharia to secure the family's income, which is considered the man's responsibility. Another reason is that some families do not need additional income.

Kuwait on the other hand tolerates women employment; it does not encourage work except in those cases where it directly contributes to the substitution of foreign labour and then only jobs which are socially acceptable by Kuwaiti standards. Thus women's labour is accepted neither to fill a need nor for the economic reward it produces. It seems primarily to be accepted to give educated girls something to fill time between graduation and marriage, or for the Kuwaitis to be modern and theoretically to provide Kuwaiti substitutes for non - Kuwaiti employees.

In conclusion definite changes are taking place in the Gulf that would eventually improve the lot of women, who make half the society. Gulf women do not feel they are given opportunities to contribute equally in their countries' development. They are analysed in subsidiary roles with their identities forged through men and hence their opportunities and choices are extremely limited. Education for both sexes is the key for providing a better life for the Gulf individual as the liberation of women could not be separated from the liberation of their societies from illiteracy, and discrimination. All indications seem to ascertain that Gulf women, indeed Gulf society, has still a long way to go.

Maha Samara

N.B. Those interested in the subject are advised to read «Social Science Research and Women in the Arab World». UNESCO, Paris, 1984.



Income Generating Activities for Displaced Lebanese Women

A Project Implemented by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World.

Recent literature on development 'questions' the efficacy of past and present income generating projects with respect to women. The main argument centers around the definition of the term «Income generating activities» which usually «connotes small activities irrelevant to the stream of national economic development» (ISIS, 1983; p. 95). Literature also abounds in examples on how income generating activities projects can exploit women's labor and increase their isolation and marginalization, specially if they are home based (ISIS 1983; pp. 97-101). Findings also suggest that many home based handicrafts and food processing projects do not find the necessary markets to become economically viable.

In spite of the above mentioned shortcomings, income generating projects are considered as one of the most fruitful approaches for integrating women into social and economic development. However, such projects should be conceived not only in terms of empowering the individual woman economically but rather offer potentials, and possibility for social and economic benefit to women and their community as a whole. Therefore, income generating projects should aim at achieving self-reliance through the action of women's solidarity groups. Collective action of women will not only promote self-reliance, but also strengthen their income earnings, accentuate consciousness raising, reduce exploitation, insure collective financing and marketing and promote organizational and supportive services by informal arrangements between women themselves.

In Lebanon today, earning money is both necessary and desirable for women in general and displaced women in particular.

Over the last ten years the situation of women in Lebanon has deteriorated in general and more particularly among displaced families. Over 700,000 Lebanese were forced to move away from their towns and villages

of origin (Iskander and Baroudi, 1984) and settle haphazardly in the capital, its suburbs and Mount Lebanon.

Actually most displaced women lost their traditional source of income and other means of subsistence in their villages of origin, while many city and sub-urban dwellers lost their jobs in the industrial and services sectors. The mothers were faced with unsurmountable economic problems and were eager to get help in increasing their income and opted for activities in their homes. However, their main and immediate concern was how to get money for their subsistence.

In view of the everlasting conflict, the growing inflation and unemployment rates and the precarious living conditions of most displaced people, the Institute for women's Studies in the Arab World at Beirut University College, felt it is imperative that income generating projects be initiated to help displaced Lebanese women earn an income and achieve self-reliance.

A feasibility study was conducted over a period of six months to determine the social, technical, commercial and financial aspects of the project and to examine the possibility of its implementation. Of the three pilot studies made knitting was found to be the most viable for the following reasons: knitting can be done at home, thus enabling the women to care for their families while still earning money; most of the women interviewed (150 in East Beirut and 150 in West Beirut) possessed skills in knitting. Market survey revealed hand knitted items to be in demand and several outlets for sales both in Lebanon and abroad were found.

Several modern and attractive models for children aged two and under were selected from foreign magazines. Wool was purchased and given to women skilled in knitting who could read instruction in a foreign language. They were asked to indicate what kind of wool suited each model, what size of needles were appropriate for certain items, the length of time it takes to complete an item and the amount of wool needed for each model.

NANET

The next step was to translate the knitting instructions into Arabic and give it to the women to start knitting. Quantities of wool was purchased with the assistance of Save the Children Federation and the Catholic Relief Service. Instructions for each model were translated into Arabic. Several hours were spent with individual women to ensure the quality of work. Upon perfecting the model each woman was given enough wool to make two items per week.

A catchy name for marketing the product was chosen-NANET. Tags were printed on material to be sewen on the item. Buttons for each model and color were chosen. Every model was given a reference number and size number. The finished product was then encased in a nylon bag.

As soon as these were ready, photographs were taken of the different models and sent to Sweden, the United States, some Arab countries and to retail shops in Lebanon. Together with the photographs a leaflet stating the objectives of the project were included.

A number of sales have already been made. The money will go back into the project to enable us to purchase material and pay credit to an increasing number of working women. Our aim is to have as many displaced women working and earning their living and to find a steady and dependable market for the products thus attaining our goal of achieving self - reliance for needy displaced women and their families.

The Institute not only feels satisfaction at the progress made but also gratification at the eagerness and willingness of the women who have been able to earn money by their own work and who seem to have acquired a new lease on life by earning their living with dignity and self respect.

We would like to conclude this article with a comment made by one of the women in this project - a grandmother - who said that she had never in her life earned money from her own work and was thrilled to be able to contribute to her family's economic needs.



NANET is hand knitted woolen baby cloths.

NANET is made by displaced Lebanese women who have lost their homes.

NANET reaches women in their settlements to help them generate an income to support them and their families.

NANET is knitted by 120 women thus helping to support 720 persons (average of 6 persons per family).

NANET produces the latest models in baby cloths from ages 3 months to two years.

NANET is always ready to produce new models.

NANET also produces baby blankets for cribs and cots.

«Women's Economic Development in the Arab World»

Proceedings of the conference on «The Integration of Arab Women in Economic Development», organized by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World - Beirut University College, Nicosia - Cyprus 1985.

This conference gave a group of 30 Arab women researchers from 10 Arab countries and 5 representatives from research centers in non-Arab countries, the opportunity to meet and discuss, in the light of modern research, problems of prime importance in the life of women to-day, namely their integration in economic development.

The researchers who strongly believe in sexual equality presented seventeen papers revolving around the central theme:

Why do women work? What Kind of work do they do? Does work provide them with economic independence, with cultural and social development? What is the legal status of the working woman? What obstacles stand in the way of her full integration? What solutions may be proposed for her problems?

The topic was wide and multifaceted and gave very different data about the problems of women's work in the various Arab countries. The conference, however, fulfilled its aim by permitting the compilation of the seventeen papers together with reports and recommendations of the participants' committees, into «the book of the Conference» which served as a basis for several speeches and discussions presented by Arab delegates at the Nairobi conference.

To serve as a reference for all those interested in Arab women's integration in development, the Institute has published the proceedings of this conference under the title «Women's Economic Development in the Arab World». The papers are printed in the original language presented at the conference with resumes in English, French and Arabic. The book can be obtained from the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at Beirut University College.

To give our readers a glimpse of the book we are reproducing as a prologue the paper presented by Professor Rose Ghurayyib, (see p. 3).

Economic Contributions of Women and the Effect of the Dynamics of the Family in two Lebanese Villages

A study prepared by Irene Lorfing and Mona Khalaf. Working Paper No. 148, Geneva, ILO, 1985.

The purpose of the study according to the authors is to assess the economic contribution of women in terms of both earned and imputed income, in two Lebanese Villages, in the Western Beqaa, 40 miles east from Beirut.

The study tries to quantify the contribution of women and her impact on family dynamics, namely in decision making.

It shows that the majority of males are engaged in agriculture and are self employed. The contribution of women is mostly ignored, though they give a big hand to their husbands by spending more than 100 days in the field often helped by their children of both sexes. The contribution of women, according to the research conducted, is not only ignored but women are often seen as inactive family members while men are seen as the sole earners and supporters of their families.

This image is contested by the authors, as even in remote rural areas like the Beqaa women themselves consider their work in family maintenance and production as part of their home-maker's role. Women in these villages and the like in Lebanon are engaged in the production of goods and services for which the household would be dispersed, if not provided by them. These services are obscured by the fact that they are «domestic» in nature and are not perceived by society and above all by women themselves as «income».

The findings reveal that in the majority of households the proportion of income generated by women in terms of salaries, selling of home made products, unpaid agricultural work, animal care and food preservation and processing range between 5 to 25% of the total household income. The study shows that women work most when there is a pressing economic need. When the husband's means improve, they often resort to their domestic duties and others are hired to do the labour in the field.

The research reveals that women have an imputed income contribution. The same cannot be said on earned income in non-agricultural sectors like teachers, clerks, telephone operators and nurses.

The study is highly recommended for sociologists and anthropologists to help them in understanding the change in family dynamics in rural areas in Lebanon.

«Women, Employment and Development in the Arab World»[☆]

Edited by Julinda Abu Nasr, Nabil F. Khoury and Henry T. Azzam.

The launching of the United Nations Women's Decade in Mexico in 1975 sparked an increased interest in the role of women in economic development. This resulted in a number of policy recommendations and research priorities, promoting the integration of women in economic development and suggesting ways in which women contribute to this process.

«Women, Employment and Development in the Arab World» was prepared by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World and the International Labour Organization. The book contains the main determinants of women's productivity in some Arab countries and may well serve as a reference on Arab women's economic activities. It also provides quantitative and qualitative data that may be helpful, to planners, policy makers and researchers.

Chapter one identifies the basic trends in the integration of women in development presenting an overview of the economically active females in the different Arab countries.

Chapter two analyses the role and status of women in the economy of the society of the Yemen Arab Republic.

Chapter three presents a general overview of the employment opportunities available for women in the four Gulf States of Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Chapter four presents a case study of the employment situation of Lebanese women.

Chapter five presents the characteristics and structure of female labour force participation in Jordan.

The last chapter presents findings of a study measuring attitudes towards the role of women as perceived by both male and female university students in institutions of higher learning in the Arab world.

Notwithstanding the fact that the subject is both complex and intricate and demands further research, recommendations of some avenues that need to be explored in trying to integrate women in the process of economic development are given. The findings and conclusions in this book could be considered an attempt to pinpoint the important role that women should play in the development of Arab countries.



(*) Mouton Publishers, Berlin, 1984, pp. 143.

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AL RAID A READER

Unforeseen circumstances due to the prevailing situation in Lebanon delayed the last two publications of AL - Raida. The November issue will soon follow. We apologize for the delay please don't give up on us.

AL-RAIDA, IWSAW QUARTERLY

LEBANON

P.O.Box 13-5053
Beirut University College
Beirut, Lebanon
Cable Address: BECOGE
Tlx: BUC 23389 LE

U.S.A.

Beirut University College
475 Riverside Drive,
Room 1846
New York, NY 10115

Director: **Julinda Abu Nasr**
Advisor: **Rose Ghurayyib**
Guest - Editor: **Maha Samara**
Layout: **Rima Khalifeh**

YEARLY CONTRIBUTION

Lebanon: L.L. 250 per year
Other Countries: \$ 15 per year
plus \$3 to cover postage