AL-Raida

magazine

الرائدة Volume XIII, No. 72, Winter 1996 The Pioneer

File: Women, the Media and Sustainable Human Development

also

- Female Circumcision: Culture or Torture?
- Honor Crimes in Lebanon
- Unlearning Abuse

INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES IN THE ARAB WORLD
LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

ABOUT IWSAW

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) was established in 1973 at the Lebanese American University (formerly Beirut University College). The founder and Director of the IWSAW is Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr. Initial funding for the Institute was provided by the Ford Foundation.

Objectives: The Institute strives to serve as a data bank and resource center to advance a better understanding of issues pertaining to Arab women and children; to promote communication among individuals, groups and institutions throughout the world concerned with Arab women; to improve the quality of life of Arab women and children through educational and developmental projects; and to enhance the educational and outreach efforts of the Lebanese American University.

Projects: IWSAW activities include local, regional and international conferences; seminars, lectures and films; and educational projects which improve the lives of women and children from all sectors of Lebanese society. The Institute houses the Women's Documentation Center in the Stoltzfus Library at LAU. The Center holds books and periodicals. The Institute also publishes a variety of books and pamphlets on the status, development and conditions of Arab women, in addition to *Al-Raida*. Eight children's books with illustrations, and two guides, one of which specifies how to set up children's libraries, and the other which contains information about producing children's books, have also been published by IWSAW. In addition, the Institute has also created income generating projects which provide employment training and assistance to women from war-stricken families in Lebanon. The Institute has also devised a "Basic Living Skills Project" which provides a non-formal, integrated educational program for semi-literate women involved in development projects. Additional IWSAW projects include The Rehabilitation Program for Children's Mental Health; Teaching for Peace; and the Portable Library Project. The latter project was awarded the Asahi Reading Promotion Award in 1994. For more information about these or any other projects, write to the Institute at the address provided above.

ABOUT AL-RAIDA

Al-Raida is published quarterly by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) of the Lebanese American University (LAU), formerly Beirut University College, P.O. Box 13-5053/59, Beirut, Lebanon; Telephone: (01) 867-618, ext. 288; Fax: (01) 867-098. The American address of LAU is 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1846, New York, NY 10115, U.S.A.; Telephone: (212) 870-2592; Fax: (212) 870-2762.

Purpose and Content: *Al-Raida*'s mission is to enhance networking between Arab women and women all over the world; to promote objective research of the conditions of women in the Arab world, especially conditions related to social change and development; and to report on the activities of the IWSAW and the Lebanese American University. Each issue of *Al-Raida* features a File which focuses on a particular theme, in addition to articles, conference reports, interviews, book reviews and art news.

Submission of Articles: We seek contributions from those engaged in research, analysis and study of women in the Arab world. Contributions should not exceed ten double-spaced typed pages. Please send a hard copy and a diskette. We reserve the right to edit in accordance with our space limitations and editorial guidelines. Submissions will not be published if they have been previously published elsewhere.

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The quarterly journal of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World
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Editorial

If Knowledge is Power, Communication is Empowerment

At this very moment, you are actively participating in a process of communication. By reading this Editorial, you interact with one of the many different types of media available in contemporary Lebanon. No matter where we live, the communications media constitute a powerful force in our lives. As a means of socialization, the media are as influential as the family and the schools in shaping who we are and what we think, value, need, fear and do. Our daily exposure to print and electronic media provides us with our unspoken (and usually unexamined) assumptions about what is desirable and possible in our lives as individuals and as members of a society. The media play a crucial role in shaping our awareness of gender roles and our conceptions (too often unquestioned) of the "proper" qualities and characteristics of men and women. As a source of news and information, the media shape our sense of our rights and responsibilities as citizens and enable us to prioritize national challenges and goals. Ideally, the media should enable each of us to participate in the formation of a public consensus about the aims of social development and governmental policies. Through active participation in processes of communication, each person, whether male or female, young or old, rich or poor, Muslim or Christian, should be able to analyze, question and influence the social, political, economic and environmental world in which he or she lives. For a variety of reasons, however, this ideal is seldom realized in any contemporary society.

In an effort to understand how the media shape our sense of self and our view of our nation and society, and in the interests of understanding how the media can be used to empower individuals to make a positive impact on their shared world, the File section of this issue of *Al-Raida* addresses the multi-faceted topic of "Women, the Media and Sustainable Human Development in Lebanon." Often, when feminist scholars and journalists address the topic of women and the media, they focus primarily upon the narrow issue of negative media portrayals of women as sex objects or mindless creatures subordinate to the whims of men. Certainly, demeaning and degrading presentations of women in the media should be criticized and condemned; such portrayals can only serve to perpetuate disrespectful attitudes and behaviors which humiliate, violate and damage women and girls. In this issue, we critically examine the portrayal of women in Arabic-language women's magazines (see the research article by Dr. Eid, page 26). However, we also expand our focus to address the roles that women play in the decision-making processes of various Lebanese media institutions (print and electronic), as well as to survey the actual and potential role of the media in fostering sustainable human development projects and processes of democratization.

Women's role in and impact upon the Lebanese media are matters of increasing significance. According to the Report of the Lebanese National Committee prepared for last year's International Women's Conference in Beijing, 80 percent of all college students pursuing degrees in media and communications in Lebanon are women. What future awaits them as media professionals? How will their attitudes, concerns and priorities shape Lebanese media productions in the coming decades? Will women journalists and television producers, more so than their male counterparts, address the complex social, economic and educational forces impacting upon the Lebanese family, and thus, upon the Lebanese nation? The File section of this issue of *Al-Raida* represents the first stage of a long-term research project designed by sociological researcher Irene Lorfing to find objective answers to these important questions.

The interrelated topics of social and economic development and the media have recently become matters of controversy and public concern in Lebanon. We hope that this issue of *Al-Raida* will be a timely contribution to the ongoing debate about Lebanon's institutional restructuring and the achievement of just and equitable socio-economic development in the Second Lebanese Republic. We hope that the articles, reports and interviews in the File section inject some needed thoughtfulness, civility and constructiveness into the current debate.

Communication, like charity, begins at home. Effective communication is the responsibility of each individual, whether citizen, parliamentarian or minister. After sixteen years of war, during which constructive debate and dialogue were silenced by the deafening roar of shelling and shooting, it is imperative that each person in Lebanon develop his or her abilities to communicate in a constructive and nonviolent manner. In an era of such technological advancements as cellular telephones, E-Mail and the "World Wide Web," it is easy to forget that the most basic medium of communication is speech. Through face-to-face dialogue, individuals can make or break their society. If our speech is not rooted in rational thought, respectful values and constructive attitudes of justice, fairness and tolerance, we will never progress as individuals or as a nation. If we refuse to listen actively and cooperate creatively with the other because "she is a woman" or "he is a young person" or "they are from a different sectarian background than us", then we are limiting our individual and collective potentialities and undermining the very basis of our society and nation. The following Opinion column by AUB Graduate Student Rana Idlbi makes this point eloquently.

The experiences, knowledge, ideas and skills we each possess as individuals become a precious communal resource by being shared through communication. The media which facilitate such sharing among and between individuals must be respected, protected and nurtured. Considering the extent of the damage inflicted on Lebanon by the long and senseless war, the creative use of every medium of communication will be required in order to rebuild this wounded but promising country, mind by mind, heart by heart, citizen by citizen, regardless of age, gender or confessional background.

Laurie King-Irani
Editor-in-Chief

"Let Us Communicate!"

The situation was startling: intellectual women leaders who have spent most of their adult lives fighting for women's rights, freedom and dignity coolly rejected a request for advice made by two young women. Instead, they continued chatting amongst themselves about their maids and their diets. Of course, I understand and appreciate that their maids play a crucial role in organizing their active and busy lives, thus enabling them to dedicate their time and energy to women's issues and intellectual activities. I also understand and respect these women's concerns about maintaining their health. What I cannot understand, however, is their insistence upon carrying on a trivial conversation in the midst of an intellectual event featuring their expertise, rather than giving two minutes of their time and attention to interested and committed young women who may become leaders of the women's movement of tomorrow, young women who aspire to carry women's struggle for respect and equal rights into the next millennium.

There is a world-wide consensus about youth's important role in carrying on various human rights struggles and projects. Youth represent continuity and future hopes. Because of this, we should encourage them and nurture whatever interests or capacities they demonstrate, rather than ignore or belittle them whenever they raise a question. Women's movements in general, and women intellectuals fighting for women's rights in particular, should avoid falling into the trap of "intellectual elitism". Elitist attitudes serve only to widen the gap between different groups and generations. Considerable external pressures already prevent women from embarking on processes of transformation and change to awaken them to the inviolability of their rights and the importance of their existence as autonomous human beings capable of making their own decisions. Thus, internal divisions among women based on age, class, religion, race, experience or intellectual achievement is unnecessary and even defeating. For what is the use of intellectual women living in their ivory towers, rejecting all dialogue with their fellow women and men, dismissing others' suggestions and refusing all avenues of communication that might bring together women and men from various backgrounds to pursue common goals? Equally important, if women's movements and issues are not reflective of young people's needs and aspirations, these movements will quickly become superfluous and perish. Continued lack of communication and cooperation will also lead to a terrible breach between different generations, and might even result in divisiveness and pronounced competition between women, causing a break-up within the women's movement that will have long-lasting negative implications for women's rights in the future. To avoid this grim possibility, intellectual women should avoid creating alien theoretical frameworks which do not reflect the needs and interests of today's young Lebanese women. If the younger generation feels alienated and ignored, they will be unwilling and unable to continue what these women pioneers began.

Here, we reach a crucial question: Is it possible that women's issues can become merely a routine for women activists? Is it possible that speculations about women's liberation and rights gradually become nothing more than a "pair of glasses" used only in preparation for and during meetings and seminars, a theoretical lens which you simply remove when you have finished your speech and stepped down from the dais? If this is the case, then there is no use for all of the information, research and intellectual activity conducted and possessed by intellectual women leaders. All too often, they seem unwilling or unable to deliver these intellectual resources to others, and equally important, to receive them from others. Moreover, if the insistence on the importance of youth remains confined to the pages of abstract agendas, then the role of youth should be removed from the agenda and replaced by more pressing items.

There is no doubt that intellectual women leaders are a valuable source of information and ideas, and that their experience constitutes a treasure that cannot be replaced by anything or anyone else. No one can deny the essential role they have played in improving women's conditions in Lebanon on all levels over a period of several decades. But it appears that they are often so absorbed in their work that they have begun to live in their own lofty spheres, exchanging their ideas and research results only with those who occupy this same intellectual level.

Because the knowledge, experience and views of these intellectual women leaders are a precious asset sought by all, they are asked to share with all. Because the lessons they have learned while paving the rocky way for women are essential for continuing the work they began, they are asked to exchange all of their knowledge with everyone, especially the young. Since their guidance and cooperation are essential, various channels of communication should be opened between the different generations in order to build the sturdy bridges across which the women's movement must march into the future.

Rana Idlbi,
M.A. Student, Political Science
American University of Beirut

(Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of IWSAW, Al-Raida or the Lebanese American University)

"Quote, Unquote"

A selection of inspiring quotations from various sources on women's issues and concerns

Reflections on the Beijing Conference experience by Kay Henry, a member of the Women in International Development Group (Harvard/MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA):

"I have never liked to resort to gender-based generalities, as in 'women are from Venus, men are from Mars' (or, as a recent book title expresses it, 'Women are from Paris, Men are from Detroit'). However, there does seem to be something to those *clichés*. For example, take Deborah Tannen's notion, as explained in [her book] *You Just Don't Understand*, that men tend to emphasize hierarchy and women tend to emphasize cooperation. In Beijing, I saw cooperation — usually earnest, patient cooperation — daily. There was so much information, and so many questions, that we had to rely on informal networks rather than formal news sources. If you didn't know the location of a meeting, you asked the first woman you saw, and she would tell you whatever she knew. Even the informal networking process had a different flavor from the 'let's do lunch' mentality we're accustomed to [in America]. If you exchanged cards with someone, it was usually because you genuinely wanted to keep in touch. One woman gave me her boss's card with an address in Malaysia, saying 'I think you and she each have information that the other could use. Please get in touch with her.' The emphasis was less upon selling oneself — something we do far too much of [in the US.] — and more on sincere interest in each other's work; less on 'what can I get out of this?' and more upon ' what can we offer each other?'.....Here are a few random memories from the conference: A woman from Rwanda lost 40 family members in the recent ethnic conflict, including a dozen who were killed before her eyes. Her message: 'We have to stop the cycle of vengeance!'.....A Kenyan woman and an American woman cross paths in a parking lot and begin a conversation. The Kenyan woman offers her card; she is starting a rape crisis center in Nairobi. 'I was raped once,' says the American woman. 'Someone tried to rape me, but I escaped,' replies the Kenyan. With tears in their eyes, they embrace as a taxi pulls up to take the Kenyan woman to the airport. Women from half a dozen countries, over the course of two days, say to me in independent conversations, ***'If the world is going to be saved, women are going to save it!'***.

from *WIDNews*, October 1995

From a Statement to the Fourth World Conference on Women presented by the Twenty-First Century Values Committee:

"We speak for those who are suffering, for those who believe in a better future, and for all those who see the need for change. What we propose is nothing less than a revolution in consciousness. We want to stand as fully integrated human beings who take responsibility for what is happening in our world, now and into the next century. Many people feel that spiritual concepts and language cannot be used in official documents and presentations. Such concepts, they feel, may be misconstrued to support religious or social dogmas which cause oppression of some members of society, and which sound conservative, fundamentalist or discriminatory. We call upon you today to suspend your judgments about spirituality and examine those values which we feel to be the keys to the future of humanity. No two entities in this universe are identical, yet all are sacred. All have intrinsic worth and existential value. It is in the realization of their sacredness that we find our deepest sense of oneness with them. It is in the realization of their sacredness that we find our commitment to them. The existence of a blade of grass, a thousand year old tree, a hundred year old woman — all are valuable, all are spiritual, all are inalienable members of our vast universal family in our global village. The essential values for the twenty-first century are those at the core of the human heart. They include, but are not limited to: love, honesty, trustworthiness, dignity, compassion and service. When practiced in daily life, they break the cycles of revenge and violence that are destroying human life at all levels, from the family to the nations. [These values] also foster the far-sightedness required to protect our fragile environment and to repair the damage already done....Women and children represent 75 percent of the world's population and are as such the largest constituency on the planet. They have almost nothing to say in designing the economic and political structures in which they live. This must change. A twenty-first century paradigm must actively include this 75 percent of humanity at the center of all strategies and policies....Respect and accountability, good administration, selflessness and forgiveness, tolerance and compassion, are the essential ingredients for any just and healthy society. The accumulated wisdom of the ages must now be brought to bear by women on the shaping of the future. We have hope: Hope born of women's experience of suffering, and the power that comes from the transformation of that suffering.....Our hope will bear fruit when women, for the first time, become real protagonists in creating global history."

From a speech given by feminist activist Bella Abzug in Beijing:

"Change is not about simply mainstreaming women. It is not about women joining a polluted stream. Change is about cleaning the stream, changing stagnant pools into fresh, flowing waters. Our struggle is about resisting the slide into a morass of anarchy, violence, intolerance, inequality and injustice. Our struggle is about reversing the trends of social, economic and ecological crisis. For women in the struggle for equality, there are many paths to the mountain top...Our struggle is about creating sustainable lives and attainable dreams. Our struggle is about creating violence-free families. And then, violence-free streets. Then, violence-free borders. For us to realize these dreams, we must keep our heads in the clouds and our feet on the ground."

Women's Environment and Development Organization,
***News and Views,* Vol. 8, Nos. 3-4, December, 1995**

From a New York Times article on "First Woman Advocate at the UN":

"Not long after Rosario Green arrived at the United Nations a couple of years ago, she was distracted one day while walking along a corridor by the sound of sobbing. A woman in a telephone booth was telling a friend she was being harassed by her boss and she did not know where to turn. Ms. Green, a Mexican diplomat who is no stranger to machismo, remembers hesitating, but then walking away because she felt she had no right to interfere. But she said she thought to herself that sooner or later there would have to be a system to help a victim like this. Two years later, Ms. Green, now Assistant Secretary General for political affairs, is the highest ranking woman in the United Nations Secretariat, and may be in a position to make a significant difference. At the end of November, UN Secretary General Butros Butros-Ghali named Ms. Green the first coordinator of all women's issues in the United Nations system, ranging from working conditions to the role of women in UN programs world-wide. A Mexican banker who has watched Ms. Green's career unfold said she knows the territory, after a difficult climb to positions of influence in Mexico's Foreign Ministry. 'She's tough, but gentle,' the banker said.

And that, Ms. Green said, is part of the problem. Women in diplomacy have to learn to walk a fine line between assertiveness and diffidence, 'while men can just be themselves. If you become very assertive or very aggressive, because men are not paying attention to your ideas, then you are also not taken into account because you are too tough,' she said. 'Men lose their tempers quite often, and that is just an event. In a woman's case, that [loss of temper] becomes a description, a label.'

There is a touch of sarcasm in her voice when she considers at what late date the world has finally concluded that the role of women may be the most crucial in social development. 'I don't know how we have survived so many years by thinking of women as a separate chapter,' she said. 'We are not a separate chapter. We are half the book'."

— Barbara Crossette, *New York Times International*, February 16, 1996

From the Writings of Ibn Rushd ("Averroes"), a Muslim philosopher who lived in Andalusia during the 12th century, A.D.:

"We hide the woman in the home and limit her activities to housework and caring for children. Hence, she becomes quite limited in her thinking and experience. If only women were given the same opportunities for study and growth that are available to men, they would be much different than we now find them, and would indeed be capable of competing successfully with men in intellectual activities and productions."

(We encourage readers to submit items for "Quote / Unquote".)

Photo credit: Hayat Karanouh

Women Visible in First Palestinian Local Elections

In the context of the first elections held in the Palestinian Authority, women's participation was visible, even though most did not succeed in winning seats in the governmental council. The well-known human rights activist and Professor of English Literature at Bir Zeit University, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, who served as the official spokesperson for the Palestinian delegation during the Madrid peace talks and subsequent meetings, won a seat. The only contender to Yasser Arafat's leadership of the new Palestinian entity was a woman, Samiha Al-Khalil, a highly respected social worker and political activist who founded the *In'ash al-Usra* ("Preservation of the Family") community services agency in the West Bank more than a twenty years ago. Although Al-Khalil was soundly defeated by Arafat, she succeeded in focusing discussion on important topics related to gender equality in social development, women's absence from decision-making processes in Palestine, and human rights issues.

United Nations Report Equates Domestic Violence with Torture

In a ground-breaking report issued in late February, the United Nations stated that domestic violence suffered by women throughout the world has reached epidemic proportions and that, in its social effects and physical and emotional consequences, it is quite similar to torture. The report supports its dramatic claims with statistical data from a variety of countries, indicating that domestic violence is a social ill which knows no boundaries, whether national, religious, or economic. A United Nations spokeswoman, Dr. Kumaraswami, stated unequivocally during a press conference to announce the publication of the study that "domestic violence is tantamount to torture; it is incumbent upon all governments to enact legal measures to halt violence against the world's women." The following statistics provide a glimpse of the seriousness of the problem: In Japan, 77 percent of all women surveyed admitted that they have been physically abused by their husbands or fathers. In Kenya, 42 percent of women said that they had been beaten regularly by their husbands. The report estimates that up to 50 percent of women world-wide are the victims of domestic violence at some time in their lives.

International Women's Day Officially Observed in Lebanon

Lebanese First Lady Mona Al-Hrawi gave an eloquent speech to open a commemoration of International Women's Day (March 8th) in Beirut. Stating that "woman is the true mirror of her society, and one can know much about the refinement of a people by looking at the character of its women," Mrs. Al-Hrawi indicated that Lebanese women are a noble reflection of their society and culture because they have shown considerable grace under pressure and contributed so much to their country at a time of great need. She stressed that the topic of women, her rights and challenges constitute a key concern in the reconstruction of post-war Lebanese society. Following Mrs. Hrawi's speech, Lebanese University President Dr. Assad Diab commented that "Democracy and democratization in Lebanon will remain incomplete and insufficient if women remain outside the framework of the political process. We must work hard to pass positive laws, not simply to remove negative laws, in order to realize women's progress and greater participation in all realms of life." Other speakers included Dr. Muhammad Mashnouq, Maitre Laure Moghaizal, and Mrs. Wafa Hamzeh. All affirmed Mrs. Hrawi's views and sentiments concerning the important role of Lebanese women in the reconstruction of Lebanese society. Maitre Moghaizal, however, stressed that the Lebanese Government and Legislature still have a long way to go in recognizing and guaranteeing women's rights.

Announcement

Al-Raida is looking for foreign correspondents to write stories on topics and issues of concern to women throughout the Arab world. If you are a professional or freelance journalist or researcher living in an Arab country, please consider submitting reports on legislation, events, conferences, debates and performances related to women and women's issues. If your article is accepted for publication, you will receive a payment of US$100.

Research Notes

Recent Publications and Films of Interest

The New Yorker Magazine (February 26 and March 4, 1996) has published a special women's issue. Included in the issue is an article by Jane Kramer entitled "The Invisible Woman" which illuminates the unexpectedly similar problems and challenges facing women in New York City and women in a small Moroccan village.

Middle East Report has published a special issue on "Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East" (No. 198, January-March, 1996). Featured writers include Suad Joseph, Rita Giacaman, Jehan Helou, and Haya al-Mughni. Articles address changing notions of citizenship and gender roles in Lebanon, Palestine, Bahrain, Algeria, Iran and Turkey.

The British documentary filmmaker, Mai Masri, has recently completed a compelling video about Palestinian human rights activist and scholar Dr. Hanan Ashrawi entitled "Hanan Ashrawi: A Woman of her Time." For further information, write to Mai Masri, 33 Avenue Road, London, NW8 6BS, United Kingdom.

Conferences

"Beijing and Beyond", a conference organized by the Sisterhood is Global Institute, will be held in Washington, D.C. in the United States on May 10-11, 1996. The conference proceedings will focus on the impact of the Beijing Conference's *Platform for Action* on women in the Muslim world. For more information, contact (301) 657-4355.

Recent Dissertations

As-Sammak, Amina Harb. Female Mental Health and Sociocultural Change in Kuwait: Stress, Depression and Locus of Control in Traditional-Modern Female Roles. California School of Professional Psychology-Fresno, Ph.D.: 1994

Beaudan, Collete Juilliard. *L'Imaginaire de la femme enfermée: le regard des peintres et des ecrivains du xixe siècle francais sur la femme orientale.* (Volumes I and II.) City University of New York, Ph.D.: 1994.

Al-Hefdhy, Yahya Suliman. The Role of the *Ulama* (Islamic Scholars) in Establishing an Islamic Education System for Women in Saudi Arabia. The Florida State University, Ph.D.: 1994.

Khatib, Maha Kasim. Beyond the Mysterious and Exotic: Women of the Emirates (and I) Assess their Lives and Society. Brown University, Ph.D., 1994.

Nakanishi, Hisae. Creating the "Ideal" Woman and Reconstructing "Islamic" Women: Ideology, Power, and Women's Consciousness in Post-Revolutionary Iran. University of California, Los Angeles, Ph.D., 1994.

Forthcoming Publication

Nour Publishing, the first women's publishing house in the Arab world, will soon issue a book emanating from a book fair and conference held in Cairo in late 1995. The forthcoming publication will include scholarly evaluations of social sciences in the Arab world, women's movements in the region, women's literary productions, the image of women in popular and classical Arabic literature, and the impact of *shari'a* (the Islamic legal code) on women in the Arab world. Contributors include Khawla Mattar, Suheir Mursi, Eileen Kuttab, Dalal Bizri, Hasna Hamzoui and Abdul-Hamid Hawwas, among others. The forthcoming volume will be the latest in a series of valuable publications produced by Nour Publishing. For further information, contact Hasna Mikdashi, Nour Publishing, *Dar al-Mara' al-Arabiyya*, No. 9 Mudiriyat at-Tahreer Street, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. Nour Publishing is also seeking distributors for its books. Interested distributors should contact Ms. Mikdashi at the above address.

Academic Prize for Arab Women Writers

Nour Publishing announces that it will bestow two prizes on deserving women writers and scholars in 1996. Nour will award one prize for the best social science research undertaken by a woman on any topic related to women in the Arab world, and a second prize to the best novel written by a young, as-yet-unknown woman writer. Submissions for the Social Science award may be written be in English, Arabic or French; submissions for the Literary Award must be written in Arabic. The prize for each category consists of the publication of the winning selection and an opportunity for the awardee to meet with distinguished critics to discuss the published work. For further information, write to Hasna Mikdashi at the above address.

Report on Income-Generating Projects to Assist War-Affected Women

Because of the duration, depth and devastation of the Lebanese conflict, Lebanese women's roles changed drastically during the war. Many women lost their husbands, while others were abandoned and left to fend for themselves as the social order disintegrated. Women's traditional sources of income and other means of subsistence in their villages of origin were lost. Displaced from their homes, many families faced poverty of a severity surpassing anything they had experienced before the war. Consequently, the IWSAW, in an effort to address these needs, evolved from a strictly academic institution during the war years to become a provider of outreach and assistance programs for women. Our research revealed that most of the women surveyed had no formal education or skills with which to earn a living or support their families. Furthermore, we found that these women were struggling with interrelated economic, educational, and social and emotional problems which needed to be addressed in the context of a long-term, integrated community development project. IWSAW was convinced that the most humane and effective form of intervention would be through the implementation of income-generating projects. Not only can these projects empower the individual women economically, they also provide opportunities for social and economic benefits to women and their communities as a whole.

The fundamental principle underlying the income-generating projects is that women can earn a living in a manner that promotes dignity and fosters self-respect. Because the program brought together women from East and West Beirut (Christians and Muslims), the program also facilitated understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and friendships among the different sects. This is a momentous accomplishment in and of itself, given the long years of internecine conflict. The solidarity among the women not only encouraged self-reliance and self-confidence, it also strengthened their income-earning potential while reducing their feelings of exploitation and isolation, thus enabling them to contribute to social and economic development.

The first population group we targeted was displaced women, particularly those who were housed in various settlement areas throughout Beirut and its suburbs. The precarious circumstances forced these women to become heads of households for the first time. They confronted insurmountable economic hardships on a daily basis, and felt quite powerless to change their situations. In their crowded and unsanitary lodgings, women were left to care for their children and in many cases for their disabled or aging parents. Although the women were keen to find a solution to their economic problem, the majority reported that they could not leave their families for any length of time. Thus, we made every effort to devise a program that would address these issues while accommodating their needs. Some women with embroidery or knitting skills were already working within their homes. Unfortunately, the income derived from their work usually could not sustain their families.

A preliminary study was undertaken by the Business Department of BUC (now LAU) to ascertain the skills required in the market place in order to ensure employment for these women. Knitting was targeted initially, given the demand for clothing and the fact that many of these women already possessed some basic knitting skills. By 1988, the IWSAW was implementing income-generating programs in this domain. Training sessions were provided and women were supplied with the necessary raw materials and patterns to produce the goods in their own homes, thereby enabling them to generate income without neglecting their families. Women received payment from IWSAW upon the completion of each product. It was then the responsibility of IWSAW to market and sell the finished products. The women were also provided with basic economic and marketing principles, thereby encouraging them to participate more fully in the labor force.

By 1990-91, the income-generating projects had expanded to include another segment of the population which had been neglected: a whole new generation of young displaced females between the ages of 15-21 who, due to their lack of skills and education, were unable to find jobs. These girls were not only forced to leave school at an early age due to the war and their displacement, they were also viewed as a burden to their own impoverished families. Many of these young girls have come to accept their circumstances as their "lot in life". Of course, this fatalistic approach cannot be considered as an attitude which fosters human dignity. Upon speaking to many of these young women, they revealed their interest in participating in a vocational training program. As one would expect, their interests and skills varied from that of their mothers and grandmothers. Therefore, IWSAW was able to provide them with specialized training in some of the following areas: hair-dressing, secretarial skills, flower arrangement and factory sewing. IWSAW organizes between nine to twelve courses in these fields each year; as a result, we have been able to reach

approximately 270-360 women annually. To avoid training women for non-marketable skills, the IWSAW regularly researches and identifies the needs of the market place. In the event that a particular skill is no longer deemed marketable, the particular course is eliminated from the training program and replaced with a more appropriate course. All of the candidates who successfully complete the training program are issued a vocational diploma from the Lebanese Government.

As an integral component of the income-generating projects, all of the trainees received assistance with job placements, combined with the Basic Living Skills Program (BLSP). The BLSP introduces women to important topics such as family planning, health, child care, home management, civic education, nutrition, environmental awareness and legal rights. The incorporation of the BLSP is a unique feature of our income generating projects. Women were also encouraged to attend literacy classes since education plays a crucial role in the socio-economic development process.

More recently, IWSAW has implemented the sequin embroidery program in the Baabda Prison for Women. Most of the women in this prison have been the victims of degrading social and economic conditions and have been negatively stigmatized. Working with this population was particularly challenging, given the fact that so many of them felt discarded by society and had no hope of improving their situation. Feelings of personal worthlessness and a sense of failure were common among these women. One of the major obstacles that the women had to overcome was their own deeply rooted feelings of inferiority and powerlessness. Clearly, they needed to feel a sense of accomplishment and belonging. The income generating program, combined with the knowledge gained from the BLSP, provided these women with the opportunity to promote their own personal and economic development. This was further enhanced through the utilization of the mobile library, also developed and distributed by IWSAW.

The IWSAW attempts to change self-defeating attitudes which may have impeded women's participation in the development process. Most of these women have been exposed to a hostile environment which has dehumanized them while devaluing their contributions. In contrast, our programs not only train women in an environment which promotes support and solidarity, the programs also help them to cultivate their skills and develop their capacities as whole, integrated human beings. We believe that any program focusing on marginalized women that does not combine skill acquisition, personal development, and cognitive reformation is futile. This holistic approach may account for our less than three percent drop-out rate. The positive feedback from the women themselves also tends to support this position.

A questionnaire was administered in August 1995 to 317 women who had been trained in our income-generating programs during 1993-94 and 1994-95. The purpose of the survey was twofold: first, to evaluate the quality of the training programs, and second, to follow-up on each woman's progress. A summary of some of our findings follows: 84.76 percent of the women who responded reported that the duration of training was adequate; 50.09% of the women were also found to be employed, while 42.33% worked within their homes on a regular basis. An overwhelming 93.10% of the women reported an improvement in their standard of living. Overall, we have observed positive changes in women's presentation, levels of confidence, the way they perceived their world and their place in it. The peripheral roles which many had previously accepted were now being questioned and redefined. Our belief in these women, and our efforts to get them to believe in themselves, has enabled many of them to acquire a sense of optimism and control over their own lives. This is best illustrated in the following brief testimonies from two of our trainees. A widow who lost her eldest son during the war had this to say about the program: "I lived in a pool of misery and poverty. This program has helped me to regain faith in life again. I can now smile with hope and faith". A mother of three, whose son was suffering from a heart disease, had the following to say: "You spared me the long hours I used to spend wrapping chocolate, with very little income. Now I don't have to worry about the income to pay for my son's medication".

It is a well-documented fact that women lack equal opportunities and access to basic resources, thus contributing to their marginalized status. How can any government devise an effective development plan when more than half of the population — women — have not even been accounted for?

IWSAW believes that Lebanon's most valuable resource is its own human resources. Evaluating women's share in the development process should not be restricted solely to their economic participation, but should also include their development as individuals. The whole of society is deprived of human and economic resources when women are not encouraged to participate in the development process. Development should be understood as a qualitative change in the way people think, act and relate to their environment, not simply a quantitative economic change. In order to achieve sustainable development, society must regard women as foci, as well as agents, of change. Acknowledging women's actual and potential contribution is of vital importance for any integrative development planning.

Melikie Joseph
ISWAW Staffer

Utilizing Puppets in the Classroom

As a component of its outreach work in Lebanese schools, the IWSAW offered an original workshop for school teachers on March 22 and 23 which focused on the use of puppets as creative educational aides in the classroom setting. The workshop, presented by a young Canadian woman, Nathalie Sirois, began with a brief but comprehensive presentation of the history of puppetry in various cultures and an examination of the theoretical foundations for using puppets as educational instruments. Workshop participants gained a better understanding of the many educational uses of puppetry and its traditional links with creative self-expression. The teachers also had the opportunity to exercise their own creativity, both with their hands and with their minds. The two-day session culminated with a fruitful exchange of ideas and experiences. At the conclusion, participants had gained new and concrete ideas for introducing puppets into their own classrooms, thereby ensuring the enrichment of their students' educational experience.

Two more workshop sessions are to be presented, one in English and another in French, and all available spaces have already been filled. The enthusiastic response received, and the productive exchanges during the workshop, reflect the extent of the dedication of many Lebanese teachers to their profession. All participants displayed curiosity, creativity, and a desire to improve the quality of their pupil's learning environment. The Institute will continue its efforts to provide opportunities and resources to help them realize this desire.

As part of its week of events in honor of International Women's Day, the IWSAW honored women artists. Pictured are some of the participants at this event. Seated are artists Yvette Achkar-Hampartzoumian and Helen Khal.

Research on Lebanese War Widows and Wives of Kidnap Victims Completed

A comprehensive research project by Dr. Samia Seifeddine, "Material, Personal, Social and Family Well-Being of War Widows and Wives of the Kidnapped with Children in Beirut" has recently been completed. The project, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency's Awards Program and the Canadian Bureau for International Education, employed quantitative and qualitative research methods to assess the overall material and psychological well-being and financial needs of war widows and wives of men who were

kidnapped during the Lebanese war. The overall aim of the project was to develop culturally relevant responses to the needs of these women and their dependent children, and to generate data that may be of help to professionals working with women war victims in Lebanon and other countries afflicted by violence. The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World was honored to assist Dr. Seifeddine with part of her research in Beirut. A copy of the report is available for perusal in our offices.

The Kuwaiti poet Suad El-Subah listens as she is introduced to a large audience before her poetry recitation on International Women's Day. Seated to her left is LAU President Dr. Riyad Nassar.

IWSAW Organizes Training Program for Professionals Working with Emotionally Troubled Children

For the third consecutive year, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World will host a two-week training session entitled "Families Searching for Solutions," featuring the expertise of Dr. George Awad, a prominent child psychiatrist from Canada. The training sessions, to be held in May, are designed specifically for mental health professionals. Participants will gain skills and insights which will enable them to work more effectively with behaviorally and emotionally troubled children. For further information, contact Miss Melikie Joseph at the Institute.

Image of Women in Popular Proverbs Examined

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World organized a lecture about "Women in Popular Proverbs" by Dr. Nader Sraj, a Professor at the Lebanese University specializing in Linguistics. Dr. Sraj began by explaining that language is one of the most important tools for revealing the hidden side of human thought. A proverb, being brief yet profound, provides the linguistic social researcher with rich material for examination and analysis from which to derive conclusions.

Dr. Sraj then asserted that women's image in our popular traditions and literature is highly distorted, and that it clearly reflects our patriarchal mentality. He gave many examples of proverbs which emphasize the women's poor image, such as: "He cries like a divorced woman", "Prison is for men and tears are for women", "The honor of a girl is like a match stick: it doesn't burn except once" (*i.e.*, when she is deflowered), "A woman without a husband is like a garden without a fence", "A girl is a source of grief even if she were Mary". However, Dr. Sraj also pointed to the presence of some proverbs that are positive, such as; "If a woman is lucky, she bears girls before she bears boys", "Men are destructive while women are constructive". He also stated that certain occupations are frequently mentioned in association with women. Among them are: dancer, tailor, washer, bread seller, and cook.

Dr. Sraj explained that the importance of proverbs is not only attributed to their capacity for reflecting society's mentality, but also to the fact that they constitute an influencing factor over the development of a society's mentality. "Being able to critically examine proverbs allows us to become aware of their implications and hence to exercise control over them. Eventually, we should be able to speak

Janane Mallat, Producer and Director for LBCI and C33, gives her opinion during a panel discussion on women in the media at LAU.

of a healthy social life for women, children, family and men in our contemporary Arab societies."

Attendees at a book exhibition organized by IWSAW enjoy conversation during International Women's Week at LAU. In the center of the photo is Linda Mattar, President of the Lebanese Women's Council. To the right is Ghania Doughan, Secretary General of the Lebanese Committee for Women's Rights.

of various women writers' works. This booklet should be ready for distribution by June, 1996.

IWSAW CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WITH A WEEK OF SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

In celebration of International Women's Day, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) organized a week-long series of events and activities.

Honoring Arab Women Writers

On Monday, March 4th, a presentation on Arab Women Writers featured the works of several women writers in Lebanon. Five outstanding writers were honored: Ms. Rose Ghorayyib, Mrs. Advik Shayboub, Dr. Najla Abu Ezzeddine, Dr. Zahia Kaddoura and Mrs. Emily Faris Ibrahim. Those who introduced and paid homage to the aforementioned artists were Dr. Nazik Yared, Mr. Henry Zghaib, Dr. Mona Amyuni, Dr. Claudia Abi Nader and Maitre Sonia Attieh respectively.

IWSAW is now preparing an annotated bibliography

A standing-room-only audience enjoys the poetry of Suad El-Subah.

Film Presentation

"*Al Sheikha*," a compelling film portraying the seri-

ous social problems surrounding children's street gangs in Lebanon, was shown on the LAU-Beirut campus on March 5th. Due to scheduling difficulties, Filmmaker Leila Assaf, a Lebanese woman residing in Sweden, could not be present to lead a discussion and answer questions following the screening of her film. Therefore, IWSAW Program Officer Hania Osseiran presented a prerecorded interview with Ms. Assaf, after which film critic Emile Chahine led a discussion. The film elicited strong reactions and lively discussions from the audience.

Honoring of Lebanese Artists

Given the significant contributions which Lebanese artists have made on the local and international levels, the IWSAW honored three Lebanese women artists: painters Helen Khal and Yvette Achkar-Hampartzoumian, and the sculptress Salwa Rawda Choucair (who was unable to attend due to an accident that left her with a broken leg). The first two artists were honored by Ms. May Menassa and Mr. Jack Aswad respectively. In addition, slide presentations illustrating all three artists' works were shown.

Maguy Farah, popular political talk-show hostess on MTV, participates in a panel discussion on women in the media.

International Women's Day

To commemorate this historic and significant date, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World hosted a poetry recital by the esteemed Kuwaiti poet and author, Dr. Suad El-Subah. Prior to the recitation, The IWSAW hosted a reception for distinguished guests. An overwhelming number of representatives of the print and audio-visual media were in attendance. Dr. El-Subah honored the Institute with the recitation of a poem she composed especially for the event.

In conclusion, the week's events were well-received and thoroughly covered by all forms of the media, thereby serving to promote public awareness of women's issues and the work of the IWSAW. Given the favorable response from the public and media, the Institute hopes to implement this week-long celebration of International Women's Day on an annual basis.

May Kahhalé, Press Coordinator for the Office of the President of the Lebanese Republic, serves as moderator for a panel discussion on the print media at LAU.

Photo credit: Hayat Karanouh

Introduction

Women, the Media and Sustainable Human Development

Wherever one looks, whatever one reads, and whomever one talks to nowadays, it is impossible not to notice that the entire world is in the midst of a profound revolution: the global communications revolution. The world-wide phenomena of cable television, satellite communications, the Internet, fax machines, E-Mail and personal computers means that more people in more places can access more information than at any time before in human history. Clearly, this development heralds the emergence of new and powerful political, cultural and economic forces. Will they reinforce or revoke established global relations of dominance and dependency? Will they insure the hegemony of Western economic models, cultural values and political agenda? Or will they instead enable the vast, silent majority of the world's population — those living in the countries of the developing world — to participate effectively in the processes of dialogue, debate and decision-making which will shape the contours and set the priorities of the approaching millennium? Furthermore, how will the global communications revolution affect traditional relations between nations and civilizations? Between social classes? Between genders? Will the increasing powers of the media be employed to facilitate or to obstruct the achievement of social and economic justice and the attainment of human rights in countries in the Arab world ?

The contemplation of these and related questions, and the observation that more than 80 percent of all Lebanese college students majoring in media and communications are women (1), inspired the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World to design a comprehensive, multi-stage research project on women, the media and sustainable human development.

The first stage of the project was a qualitative survey, conducted in the form of two public panel discussions, of the views of key professionals in Lebanon's print and electronic media concerning the media's role in sustainable development projects and the role of women in decision-making process in Lebanon's media institutions. Based upon the information collected through these two discussion sessions, we will design and administer a quantitative survey questionnaire for graduating senior students majoring in media and communications at the Lebanese American University and the Lebanese University. The resulting survey data should reveal students' motivations and career goals, their awareness of the meaning and aims of sustainable human development, their attitudes towards their chosen profession, their expectations concerning decision-making and power-sharing in media institutions, and their evaluations of their own preparedness for the demands of the media job market.

Results of the various stages of this research project will appear in *Al-Raida*, beginning with the File section of this issue, which summarizes and interprets the results of the two panel discussions, provides a working definition of sustainable human development, assesses an interesting media experiment which presented the viewpoints and voices of actual Lebanese women (*"Lubnaaniyyaat"*); taps the experience of women educators and journalists, and investigates the ways media and advertising in Lebanon reinforce irrelevant and unrealistic expectations about gender roles and relationships. Finally, the File includes a new occasional feature, "Tool-Kit", which provides our readers with an important instrument for realizing sustainable development projects: guidelines for successful grant-writing.

Although there are many possible angles from which to view the role of women in the media (*e.g.*, the portrayal of women by the media, women's alternative media, the media's impact on gender socialization, *etc.*), our introduction to this File section will focus upon the impact of the rapidly globalizing media on women - and men - in the developing, non-Western world. The *Platform for Action* issued following the 1995 International Women's Conference in Beijing stressed the need for women of all nations to press for greater participation in media decision-making, adding ominously that "most women in developing countries are not able to access effectively the expanding electronic information highways, and therefore cannot establish networks that will provide them with alternative sources of crucial information." Clearly, the economic, educational, personal and political enhancement of women's lives in the developing world depends greatly upon the quality of print and electronic media available to them. Given that many women in the developing world are illiterate, newspapers and magazines are of little use; considering that dependable electrical service is still a rarity in much of Africa and Asia, informative television programming is usually irrelevant. This leaves battery-operated radio, theatrical performances and face-to-face communication as the primary media for the dissemination of crucial information about health, empowerment, legal rights, child-care, income generation, education, and environmental issues.(2)

Although Lebanon is considered a part of the developing world, the media resources available to the Lebanese public are, fortunately, much richer and more varied than those available throughout most of Africa and Southeast Asia. At present, the *quantity* of media resources is not the main problem confronting the Lebanese public. Rather, it is the *quality* of media that gives cause for concern. Very few public education programs are produced and broadcast in Lebanon. With the exception of some valuable and interesting locally-produced public affairs programming, the prime-time hours of most Lebanese television stations are dominated by imported adventure and romance movies from the United States and Egypt, or, more commonly, by popular soap operas from Mexico which are dubbed in formal Arabic.

Naturally, the scenarios, gender roles and relations, attitudes, values and ideologies communicated by these imported programs are not particularly relevant to the circumstances confronting most Lebanese women and men. Nor are these programs educational, inspiring, or reflective of Lebanese national goals or values. The scarcity of creative, relevant and informative local productions and the resulting dependence on imported Western programming is not conducive to sustainable human development in Lebanon. Young media professionals, an increasing number of whom are women, should focus on creating local educational and entertainment programs which are tailored to the needs of Lebanese women and men.

According to the Bangkok Declaration of 1994:

> Globalization of economies and the media...is leading to centralization of control over both resources and decision-making, with the result that one culture dominates and marginalizes women, nature, minorities, and indigenous and Third World peoples....
>
> The so-called mainstream media are a male-dominated tool used by those in power. At the global level, they are controlled by the North (*i.e.*, by the US and Western Europe); nationally, they are in the hands of the local elite. As they are now structured, the media propagate unsustainable life-styles, growing pauperization and consumption patterns which turn people into consumers not only of goods, but of ideas and ideologies; women, children and the majority of men are invisible and their voices are unheard. There is a particular lack of respect for the integrity and dignity of women: stereotyped and dehumanized, we have been turned into commodities. The excessive use of violence in the media is destroying the sensibilities of all of humanity. It is thus essential to promote forms of communication that not only challenge the patriarchal nature of media, but strive to decentralize and democratize them; to create media that encourage dialogue and debate; media that advance women and peoples' creativity; media that reaffirm women's wisdom and knowledge; and media that make people into subjects rather than objects or targets of consumerism. Media [should be] responsive to people's needs.(3)

This statement, which succinctly defines women's ideal participation in the shaping of media programming conducive to sustainable human development, is one that Lebanese media professionals need to consider. After sixteen years of devastating and wasteful warfare, Lebanon is in great need of renovation and reconstruction, and not just at the level of physical infrastructure and public services. Lebanon's greatest resource is its people, their skills, knowledge and experiences. It is the human, intellectual, social and moral capital of Lebanon which is the most valuable, and hence, the most in need of renovation, enhancement and conservation. The media, as well as the family and the schools, bear a great responsibility for the human reconstruction of Lebanon.

Are the print and electronic media in post-war Lebanon fulfilling these responsibilities? The answer is mixed. Although one can easily find educational and edifying media productions, such as the youth and the human rights supplements of *An-Nahar* newspaper and the weekly supplement edited by Claire Gebeyli in *L'Orient-Le Jour* , as well as stimulating talk shows on television and radio, the most prevalent (and apparently the most popular) programming on Lebanese prime-time television consists of imported American movies and Mexican soap

operas. What messages do these programs impart? Blatant materialism and greed, first and foremost. The American movies and the Mexican soap operas do not just narrate stories, they also subtly communicate to the Lebanese viewer the following insidious messages: *"this* is how you should look; *this* is what you should be wearing; *this* is the type of house and car you should have; these are the activities in which you should be engaging. If not, then you are a loser and a failure. But, if you buy the products, assume the manners and buy into the values presented on this program and in the accompanying advertising, you might just have a chance at glamour, prestige and sex appeal yet!". This message undermines individual and collective self-esteem; creates feelings of relative deprivation and jealousy (which may have detrimental effects on interpersonal relations); instills false expectations of self and others; communicates distorted and stereotyped gender roles; promises immediate salvation and fulfillment through consumerism; and can lead to excessive spending and debt among those who are easily convinced that they can buy a better lifestyle and purchase an improved self. No message could be more destructive of traditional values, cultural identity or rational economic planning. No message could be more detrimental to social and political reconciliation in post-war Lebanon. No message could be more threatening to the Lebanese environment, since materialism and greed often lead people to sell their lands to ecologically insensitive construction firms in order to turn a fast profit.

It is interesting and instructive to contrast the women and lifestyles presented on the Mexican soap operas with the moving and compelling portrayals of actual Lebanese women presented in *"Lubnaaniyyaat"*, a documentary commissioned for Lebanese television by the Lebanese National Committee in preparation for the International Women's Conference in Beijing last year. In the documentary series, beauty was visible not only in the women's physical appearance, but even more so in their character, courage and convictions. Wealth was found in their experience, skills and knowledge. Their successes were not necessarily material, but spiritual and moral. After viewing this documentary series, most Lebanese viewers were probably much more inclined toward critical thought, moral reflection, intelligent discussion and the undertaking of constructive action than they are after viewing the intrigue, betrayal and lust presented by the typical Mexican soap opera or American movie. Programs such as *"Lubnaaniyyaat"* should be a regular, weekly feature of Lebanese television programming, not just a once-in-a-decade experiment.

In response to the media's usual claims that such realistic, educational and inspiring programming will not find an adequate audience or enough commercial sponsors in contemporary Lebanon, we beg to differ. The clear popularity and success of such participatory televised talk shows as *Ash-Shater Yehki*, ("The Smart One Talks"), *Al- Haki Baynatna*, ("Talking between Us"), *Bi-Sowt 'Aale* ("In a Loud Voice") and *Kalaam An-Naas* ("People's Opinions") all attest to the intellectual curiosity, public concern and social awareness of the Lebanese viewing public. The fact that many people faithfully view and discuss these programs every week proves that the Lebanese public has a hunger for frank, realistic and informative discussion of pressing social problems and issues, such as human rights, domestic violence, civil marriage, abortion, medical services and educational reforms. The extent and diversity of the audience of one of these programs, *Ash-Shater Yehki* (which is produced by a talented and dynamic young Lebanese woman, Janane Mallat), became clear to some *Al-Raida* staff members last month after they appeared as participants on a segment of the program dealing with inter-faith and inter-cultural marriages. For days after the broadcast, our staff members were continually approached by a wide variety of people from all regions of Lebanon who had seen the discussion on television and who wanted to continue it on the street, in a book-store, in a restaurant, sitting in traffic, and even between floors on an elevator. The Lebanese public is not stupid, narrow-minded or apathetic; there is a vast audience eager for informative and stimulating programs. If the audience exists, which it clearly does, commercial sponsors should not be difficult to find.

Theoretically, the more media outlets available to the public, the more opportunities there will be for quality programs which foster attitudes, values and behaviors consistent with the aims of sustainable human development. Ten television stations broadcasting stimulating and enlightening programs is infinitely preferable to 50 stations spewing out violent, insipid and semi-pornographic movies which deaden sensibilities, discourage thought, and degrade women. The crucial issue is not the number of available media outlets, but rather, the extent to which Lebanese media professionals, citizens, and citizen associations can apply pressures on private and public television stations for the presentation of responsible and constructive programming which serves the various needs of Lebanese society.

During the aforementioned roundtable discussions held at L.A.U., media professionals commented that graduating students of media and communications now entering the work-force often lack the technical skills and intellectual breadth needed for a successful career in journalism. This indicates a clear need for a more diverse and well-rounded curriculum stressing history, sociology, civics, political science and environmental issues. Young journalists often lack an awareness of the wider social, historical and political contexts of the stories they investigate and write. Being able to comprehend and effectively communicate this wider and more complex reality is crucial not only for their future career success, but also for adequately informing the public about the true nature and extent of the social, economic and environmental challenges confronting Lebanon. How can citizens think critically, decide wisely and act effectively if they do not know the facts, and more importantly, the relationships between the facts? It is the responsibility of the journalist to reveal these relationships; thus, it is the responsibility of the universities to teach good writing, critical thinking and strong analytical skills.

Another important topic raised by the panelists concerned the interrelated technological and political challenges facing Lebanon's print and electronic media in the near future. Both the introduction of the Internet and the possibility of a regional political settlement in the Middle East will result in governments' decreased abilities to control and censor media productions, just as it will increase the permeability of the political and cultural borders separating the states of the region. These developments will inevitably lead to heightened regional competition for media products, services and audiences. Hence, the managers, directors and decision-makers at all levels of the print and electronic media in Lebanon, no less than the growing ranks of young media professionals, should be prepared for this sharpening of media competitiveness. The Lebanese media should waste no time in formulating creative, stimulating and inspiring public programming to compete successfully with its neighbors' programming. If Lebanon wants to retain its media audience, consolidate its cultural identity, affirm its national agenda and foster the public's collective self-esteem and sense of empowerment, it would be wise to nurture and encourage the rising generation of young Lebanese journalists, the great majority of whom are women.

In its modest way, the publication you are now holding in your hands represents an attempt to empower and inform Arab women through the medium of the written word. *Al-Raida's* purpose is to widen awareness, encourage debate and critical thought, and to offer suggestions for effective action and cooperation to improve the status of Arab women and children. In the brief twenty years since its founding, *Al-Raida* has made an impact on attitudes, opinions and discourse concerning the role and potentialities of Arab women in the contemporary world. Writers such as Rose Ghurayyib, Emily Nasrallah, Evelyn Accad, Suad Joseph and Laure Moghaizel have asked critical questions, raised sensitive issues and made intelligent suggestions in these pages over the last two decades. As a result, networking among Arab women, as well as communication between Arab and Western women, have been enhanced and the challenges confronting Arab women and children during a violent and tumultuous period of the region's history have been better understood by scholars, activists and policy-makers.

Al-Raida's impact, however, is only as powerful as its readership is wide. We encourage you to share this pioneering publication with others; to send us articles, essays and art-work expressing your ideas, hopes and opinions; and we urge you to encourage subscriptions among your friends and colleagues throughout the world. Help us increase our ability to encourage women's rights, gender equality, and sustainable human development in the Arab world.

Laurie King-Irani
Editor-in-Chief

Footnotes:

(1) *National Report on the Status of Women Prepared for the Beijing International Women's Conference*, 1995.

(2) Malee Pruekpongsawalee, "Women, Communication and Development." Unpublished paper presented at the Bangkok Conference on "Women Empowering Communications", February 1994.

(3) Final Statement of the Bangkok Conference on "Women Empowering Communications", February, 1994. The conference was organized by the World Association for Christian Communication, London; Isis International, Manila; and the International Women's Tribune Center, New York.

Sustainable Human Development is the Enhancement of Social Resources

An Interview with Mrs. Anna Mansour, Advisor for Sustainable Human Development, UNDP-Beirut

Irene Lorfing: Could you briefly define the concept of sustainable human development ?

Anna Mansour: Before giving a definition it is important to review the evolution of the concept of development in relation to changing political and economic contexts throughout the world. Since 1990, scholars, activists, policy-makers and the UN have been questioning conventional models of development based upon classical economic theory. The proposed new perspective is embodied in the sustainable approach to development. The perspective of the conventional model was linear, uniform, imitative, anti-traditional, short-term, and invested in physical capital to achieve progress. The new approach provides alternatives because it is non-linear, recognizes diversity, encourages innovation, considers tradition an asset and focuses on existing social capital. Thus, sustainable human development implies the dynamic integration of economic or material capital, physical capital (the environment), human capital and social capital. In other words, the basis of this approach is the individual, who must be encouraged to work with others in order to promote mechanisms for change, improvement and control. According to this model, development should stem from individuals' own priorities and initiatives.

The UNDP defines sustainable human development as "the enlargement of people's choices and capabilities through the formation of social capital so as to meet, as equitably as possible, the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future ones". The core of this concept is the issue of democracy.

I.L.: On the basis of the National Report (1995) on the situation of women in Lebanon, what kinds of projects, in your opinion, best promote sustainable human development ?

A.M.: The National Report gives general trends and aggregate statistics, showing women's comparative status and development over a ten-year period. It also calls attention to women's lack of participation in political affairs and their virtual absence from decision-making positions in the economic and public spheres. The U.N.'s Human Development Report for Lebanon has used the same indicators, *i.e.*, health, education employment, *etc.*, and again has highlighted the key issue of women's participation. However, if any effective developmental project is to be initiated, these statistics cannot serve as a sufficient basis for action and implementation. There are great disparities between Lebanese women, due to age, religion, social class, urbanization, education, and exposure to other cultures. These disparities are manifested in women's everyday behaviors and in their relationships with men, children, other women, and the authority structure (whether familial or societal). All of these relationships affect women's self-perception, and hence, her sense of her own power and potential.

Appropriate development projects should be based on qualitative research, which documents all of the constraints, as perceived by women in the context of the reality of their daily lives. Women themselves should tell us what their options are, and pinpoint the factors they perceive as obstructing their choices. It is only through the assessments of their own needs and priorities that projects oriented toward sustainable human development can be designed and implemented.

I.L.: During the last decade, international agencies have invested considerable efforts and resources in many development projects in Lebanon. However, little is known of the impact of these projects. Why ?

A.M.: I would like to start by saying that we have not done much. I undertook a comprehensive study of the development efforts undertaken during the last ten years in Lebanon by international organizations, the U.N. and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to classify aid by type and scope.

I discovered that very little resources were allotted to women's projects, and no particular project could fit completely into the sustainable human development perspective. Programs were generally sectorial and not integrated. I do not think we can measure impact, because the majority of the projects surveyed were not based upon situation analyses, and few had any inbuilt criteria for evaluation. Their aim was strictly immediate crisis intervention, and we must not forget that social change is a complicated and slow process.

True sustainable human development projects should demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Affordability, *i.e.*, an awareness of the project's cost-effectiveness in terms of money and human power , so that time, money and skills will not be wasted.
- Sustainability, *i.e.*, the potential of the project to continue after the departure of the initiators.
- Relevance to the actual needs of people.

These are the reasons why qualitative situational analysis is needed before starting a pilot project.

I.L.: Does the UNDP have a public communication strategy ? Do you cooperate with the Lebanese media for purposes of advocacy and the dissemination of information?

A.M.: As UNDP employees, we have a new mandate. We consider ourselves as catalysts and advocates for social change as well as mobilizers of change. We support potential partners at the national and local levels. Our work consists of advocacy, networking and capacity building. Our policy is to share information. At the Beirut UNDP office, a "think tank" was formed which grouped Lebanese experts from different sectors and disciplines to work on a developmental profile for Lebanon. The report being prepared is an integrated, qualitative situational analysis.

This profile is intended to be used as a tool for advocacy. During the process of completing the report, every time a diagnosis is made, we communicate it to the general public in order to receive constructive "feed-back". Thus, we have made our contacts with the media, in an effort to make them our allies in advocacy. The overall response of media professionals, however, was reserved, due to economic considerations related to the cost effectiveness of non-commercial programming. Another difficulty we have confronted in strengthening our partnership with the media is the scarcity of capable young professionals. Beginning journalists often lack appropriate knowledge about development, as well as appropriate attitudes, creativity and skills.

A Survey of Media Professionals' Views on Women, the Media and Sustainable Human Development in Lebanon

by Irene Lorfing, Researcher

Over the years, the focus of development has gradually changed from a purely economic emphasis to a multi-dimensional one. Development today is about the enhancement of economic, human and social resources; the overall aim of the new development approach is to ensure sustainable growth and to encourage human potential. This human-centered, integrative vision is known as sustainable human development (SHD), an approach to development which strives to promote economic growth such that benefits are equitably distributed and the environment is preserved. SHD also takes into consideration the needs and aspirations of men, women and children; empowers individuals by widening their choices and opportunities; and stresses their right to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Sustainable human development encourages and fosters self-reliance.

During and after the 16-year Lebanese war, considerable efforts and resources were invested in the "reconstruction" of Lebanon, the development of the economy and rehabilitation of various social institutions. So far, however, we have not seen results from these efforts in terms of improved quality of life, increased employment, equal opportunities, empowerment or the participation of large segments of the Lebanese public in the development process.

The noticeable lack of sustainable human development in post-war Lebanon leads us to ask the following questions: How can we achieve sustainable human development within the new international context of economic and media globalization? How can we develop democratic strategies to reduce poverty, avert ecological disasters, promote quality of life, strengthen human rights, and preserve our cultural identity as well as the social and economic specificities of Lebanon's different regions? The development of macro-strategies will not help us in finding answers to these questions. Rather, we must set specific tactics, for example, empowering people through education and information in order to enable them to express freely their needs and aspirations and to participate rationally in the political, social and economic decision-making process.

Since gaining its independence in 1943, Lebanon has been known as one of the most liberal and democratic states in the region. Thanks to its free press, its numerous publishing houses and the diversity of audio-visual media, Lebanon is unique in the Arab world. Indeed, Lebanon has been called a "media state".

It is now an accepted fact among sociological researchers that media can influence behavior and that television in particular can be considered as a key agent of socialization. Televised images and messages can affect behavior either positively or negatively. Images also present models of behavior and interaction which may be good or bad, foreign or local. These models can encourage stereotypes of women, workers, minority groups, the poor, *etc.*

The importance of audio-visual media as a means of creating awareness and enabling people to act can be understood in the context of A. Bandura's social learning theory. In general, viewers are attentive to new behavior modeled by another person. If they believe that this new behavior is effective in reaching a set of desired goals, and if, furthermore, they feel they can easily model this new behavior, then that behavior has a great likelihood of being adopted, especially if the model performing the successful action is similar to the viewer, or if imitating the model enhances the viewer's self-esteem.

In view of the media's important role in creating awareness among Lebanese men and women, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World hosted two round table-discussion sessions to address the capability of Lebanon's print and electronic media to promote sustainable human development in the country.

These two round-tables represent the initial stage of a larger research project which aims at assessing:

- the role of the Lebanese media in sustainable human development in the context of the communications revolution and the possibility of a regional political settlement.

- the factors affecting decision-making processes within Lebanese media institutions.

- the role and status of Lebanese women media professionals and their future opportunities for participation in decision-making concerning format and content of local productions.

- media education, in view of the fact that 80 percent of all Lebanese students of journalism and media communication are women. What are their motivations for choosing this career? Does their training enable them to understand the aims and concepts of sustainable human development? What are their chances of finding a job and eventually making a successful career in the media?

The two round-tables attracted large audiences of academics,

journalists, students, media professionals, representatives of development agencies and others.

The first debate grouped prominent Lebanese journalists, both men and women, to evaluate the role of the written press in promoting sustainable human development. The participants were Mrs. May Kahhalé, Press Coordinator for the Office of the President of the Republic of Lebanon (moderator); Ms. Maha Samara (free-lance journalist), Mrs. Laure Ghorayyeb (*An-Nahar*), Mr. Jihad El-Zein (*As-Safeer*), and Mr. Jubran Tueni (*An-Nahar* and *Nahar ash-Shabab*).

The moderator opened the discussion by distinguishing between two types of press: that which expresses the views of the government as well as the opposition, and the totalitarian press. The ensuing debate revealed a consensus among the participants and audience concerning the following issues:

- New technological advances, such as the World Wide Web (Internet), will revolutionize the Lebanese press and shift its focus primarily to national news and events.

- The rapidity with which news reports are dispatched and the absence of communication barriers will ultimately render censorship difficult, if not obsolete, in the region.

- A new political culture is emerging among the younger generation of Lebanese. Youth are no longer interested in abstract and ideologized political news, but rather, in matters which directly influence their lives.

- Given the above-mentioned trends, the press should place greater focus on local news and immediate social and economic issues and become more specialized. The mission of the press is to give objective information to the public in order to enable people to think critically, form opinions, and make rational choices. This new view of the press clearly reflects the philosophy of sustainable human development.

- A new role for the press implies a need for enhanced and specialized training of journalists, as well as increased democratization of decision-making processes within the press.

- Although the number of women journalists in Lebanon has been increasing, women continue to be absent from the decision-making process.

The second round-table grouped television directors and program producers. The participants were Dr. Anissa Al-Amin (Moderator), Professor of Social Psychology at the Lebanese University; Miss Janane Mallat (Producer, C33); Miss Maguy Farah (Talk-Show Hostess, MTV); Mr. Fouad Naim (Director, Tele-Liban); Mr. Pierre Daher (Director, LBC); and Mr. Ali Jaber (Director, Future Television).

Dr. Anissa Al-Amin opened the debate with a brief presentation of the results of her study on the social and psychological profile of the "addicted" television viewer in Lebanon. She stated that "the rationale for today's debate is to re-examine the relationship between the people of a country and their image of themselves (conveyed primarily through the medium of television), and to assess the influence of the televised image in our world today."

Discussing the results of a research project she recently undertook (1995) with some colleagues at the Lebanese University on the relationship between people's attitudes and self-images and their viewing of television, Dr. Al-Amin asked "Who is the addicted television viewer? Addicted viewers, who form the vast majority of the television public, and by means of whom television thrives and survives in Lebanon through employing its considerable capital in advertising, belong to a social category which exists in a narrow space of freedom. By a narrow space of freedom, I mean that the addicted viewers' perceptions and sense of personal capabilities are profoundly limited. For such people, who are usually poor, money equals freedom. Similarly, for the uneducated, the knowledge imparted by television programs, however partial and inadequate, equals freedom. The narrow space of freedom to which addicted viewers are confined is also limited by conservative behavioral models portrayed on television: the possibilities presented for relationships between classes and genders are few. Also, the addicted viewers' sense of geographical space has shrunk due to confessional and regional fragmentation within Lebanon during the war years. As a result of this narrowing of freedom and possibilities, the average television viewer has withdrawn narcissistically into himself or herself. A focus on personal matters and concerns is the eventual result of the ineffectiveness of laws meant to guard and guarantee human rights.

"Television benefits from this historical moment. As a profit-motivated industry, it has taken advantage of the fact that so many viewers feel a deep sense of frustration and powerlessness and a corresponding desire for escapist entertainment. Financed by an immense capital, television is able to interrupt the most important news with a trivial advertisement for a sanitary product or a brand of chewing gum. Through its financial and social power, television can unleash a compelling flood of attractive images which arouse the suppressed imagination while repressing critical thought. These alluring images consume the addicted viewer's time, as well as his or her frustrated self. The televised image is ephemeral, immediate, easy and dazzling. Due to its evanescence, it requires the viewer's participation on the level of the imagination.

"This study has concluded that living in the imagination, as is the case with Lebanon's vast television public, leads to a psycho-sociological reality expressed by the following comments

given by individuals interviewed during the research process: 'television is a replacement for my husband', 'I expect [television] to teach me the English language', and 'I search in it for everything sexy'. These and similar comments reveal a passive, reactive and dependent attitude best described as 'consumerism'.

"The solutions presented to viewers' problems by television programs are either mythological-fantastic (*e.g.*, Mexican soap operas such as *Estrellita*), or regressive, as seen in the presentation of behavioral models such as Adel Imam, the wayward Egyptian hero who survives by his luck, wits and charm; or Nadia Jundi, who represents the scheming and vengeful *femme fatale* . Do these images correspond to and facilitate the overall human development of our society? Do they present constructive and realistic gender role models?

"According to one scholar, Schramm, the goals of media in developing countries should be the following:

1. To strengthen feelings of national belonging.
2. To be the voice of developmental programming and planning on the national level.
3. To participate in relevant and necessary vocational training leading to growth and development.
4. Expansion of markets.
5. Helping people to contemplate their future realistically and constructively.
6. Enabling a country to play its role as a nation among other nations.

"The participants with us today, who will discuss and evaluate the policies of audio-visual broadcasting upon which the "freedom of the image" depends, are tasked with a great responsibility. Each one of them has a rich experience, as well as extensive financial and technical resources and considerable human capabilities representing both genders. We hope that the participants of this panel discussion, individually and collectively, will give their suggestions for enhancing the role of the media in sustainable human development in Lebanon. The key question to be answered is: How can the audio-visual media assist the Lebanese television viewer, and hence, the Arab audience, to become more aware of his or her dignity, potential and capabilities so that he or she will be empowered to participate actively and effectively in social processes?"

The participants discussed the role of television in sustainable human development with bold frankness. They pointed out some irrevocable realities of their industry and commented on some of their experiences in broadcasting programs related to development issues. The audience interacted enthusiastically and gave its recommendations. The debate illuminated the following facts :

- The audio-visual industry in Lebanon operates within a democratic polity and a liberal economy.

- All stations are commercial in nature, including the national station, which must attain its own self-sufficiency through advertising.

- Being independent and commercial, television stations must rely exclusively on advertising in order to survive and make a profit.

- Broadcasting *via* satellite is a phenomenon which cannot be controlled. Non-Lebanese television programming will eventually invade every home.

- Given the above parameters, decisions concerning the choice of programs are based on market research indicating public preferences. The discussants indicated that, were they to follow exactly the expressed preferences of the majority of people, the level and quality of programs would definitely decline. In the absence of a higher independent media committee to provide directives for programming, the staff of each station seeks an equilibrium between extreme public preferences and responsible programming.

- However, discussants also demonstrated sensitivity to the issue of enhancing public awareness about problems and events concerning viewers' own lives. In fact, most television stations devote a certain amount of time to public service programming, such as talk shows and coverage of special events.

There is little pressure emanating from public opinion for increased programming on issues related to sustainable human development. The discussants noted that, although talk-shows on human rights issues such as personal status laws, women's rights, divorce, cross-cultural marriages, abortion, *etc.*, attracted acceptable numbers of viewers, topics related to the environment did not. Given the inconsistency of public interest, the discussants stressed that the promotion of sustainable human development should result from a combined effort undertaken by the government, the family, the schools and the media. Through the expression of viewers' needs, television can amplify the public's voice and send strong messages to centers of political power. However, the media cannot, in and of itself, solve complex social and political problems.

The reactions of the audience were varied, but centered on the following :

- The public should not be exploited by advertising. Advertising should serve the needs of the people, rather than people serving the needs of advertisers.

- Television viewing is very important in our society; thus, it

should have a greater role in public affairs and give more attention to public opinion.

- Television can be a mirror of socio-economic realities in Lebanon; it can help people understand the actual contexts of their lives, empower them and enhance their self-respect.

- Television can be used to educate and refine the public's taste.

- Encourage the production of local educational and entertainment programs emphasizing constructive social messages.

- There is a need for more creativity and imagination in local productions.

The two round-table debates revealed three important issues for further reflection:

1. The issue of access to information and its relevance to people's lives

In the absence of clearly delineated and powerful political ideologies, the world has become a single global market. Thus, there is no doubt that the existing link between the globalization of the media and that of the economy will be self-perpetuating and mutually reinforcing. In view of this reality, it is imperative to find effective means to combat foreign control over knowledge and information and to promote our own image and cultural specificity. Concerning this issue, participants of both media panels expressed awareness and concern. However, they differed in their perception of their role in addressing this problem. The print media professionals stated that they have a clear mission, *i.e.*, informing the public, while the audio-visual representatives reported that their main role is to entertain the public. Regarding this divergence in the perception of their roles, the question of media out-reach is key to understanding (and therefore shaping) the relationship between the media and sustainable human development.

2. The issue of public opinion and its relation to the media

The concept of public opinion is closely related to the concept of democracy; hence, the role of the media cannot be understood or evaluated without taking into consideration the political and economic systems in which they operate. Public opinion can have an impact on the media only if citizens are empowered and free to express themselves.

Several questions immediately arise: How do we reinforce people's participation in the public decision-making process? How do we strengthen the power of civil society? How can we change passive consumers of news and images into pro-active citizens ? What is the role of the political authority, of the schools and of the family in shaping a democratic citizen ? How do we empower the citizen to express his or her choices and at the same time encourage him or her to respect the choices of others?

3. The issue of women's role and status in the media

Despite the ever-increasing number of women professionals currently working in the media, women's role in the decision-making process is very limited. This situation is counterproductive to the media's role in development. If media are to be partners in the promotion of sustainable human development, it is necessary that women contribute their own perspectives to the definition and analysis of all issues in the communication field.

Women in Lebanon comprise more than half the population and represent at least half of the audiences for all media programming. They shoulder tremendous responsibilities for the well-being of their societies through their contribution to the formal and informal sectors of the economy and through their daily care of the family and the home. Women are at the core of all meaningful human interactions that constitute the social capital of any nation. Consequently, women in the media should be given greater opportunities for reflecting the reality of their societies. The media industry is developing at a rapid pace, and as documented by research and by the *Platform for Action* issued at the conclusion of the recent International Women's Conference in Beijing, women are often the losers in the overall development process.

The questions that arise here concern whether or not, in this era of market and media globalization, there will be room for more "down-to-earth" programs that explain and analyze issues related to human rights, the environment, and realistic situations of women and their families. Also, will women media professionals be given enough power to challenge policies concerning career opportunities and promotion criteria? Will they be able to participate more fully in decision-making concerning the diffusion of violence, negative stereotypes and degrading images of women ? Will Lebanese women currently employed in the media, or enrolled in faculties of media, communication and journalism, become more aware of interrelated social, economic and political issues, and, more importantly, will they possess the knowledge and capabilities to act on this knowledge?

The next stage of this research project will provide answers to these and other questions.

The Unsung Heroines of Lebanon

By Ghena Ismail, Editorial Assistant

During the Lebanese conflict, while men were engaged in war's games and intrigues, the Lebanese woman was proving her abilities and skills in different spheres of life. She was constantly repairing all that the war had blindly and heartlessly damaged. She was determined to find hope in whatever scarce resources she had. Commitment, sacrifice and determination were the themes of the lives of those Lebanese women who were never defeated by the trying conditions of the war. The great experiences of these women were recognized long after the war had ended. They were presented to the public on different television stations through the Lebanese documentary series, *Lubnaaniyyaat* ("Lebanese Women").

In preparation for the Beijing Conference, the Lebanese National Committee decided to make a television program to promote awareness of the situation of women in Lebanon. Partial funding for the documentary was provided by the UNDP. Janane Mallat, in charge of producing local television programs for both LBC and C33, was consulted for suggestions. She proposed producing a documentary to highlight the lives of fourteen Lebanese women who are important, but not necessarily famous. Among those selected were Frocina, Marie Claire, Sana, Sahar, Nadia, Marlene, and Badriyyah.

Frocina is a manicurist who has had to work hard for forty years in order to support her late brother's family. Her work starts daily at 7:00 a.m. and ends at 7:00 p.m. She is now sixty years old, and has succeeded in educating her nieces and nephews in good schools and has provided them with most of their needs through her simple job. When asked about her perception of her own future Frocina immediately replied: "Just as I didn't abandon my nieces and nephews, they wouldn't abandon me." She then added, "Do you think they would?"

Marie Claire Antakly is head of the anesthetization section in *Hôtel Dieu* Hospital. She has been working in this hospital for nearly thirty years, and last year she was elected President of the Lebanese Committee for Anesthetization. Marie, who is known as Mimi, is the first and only woman to have reached such a high position in Lebanon. During the war, it never occurred to Mimi to leave Lebanon as she felt there was an increasing need for her skills. "I don't deny that I felt extremely worried about my children. I even used to send them abroad whenever things got very bad. At a certain point, their father left with them. However, I never considered leaving with them myself." Apparently, Mimi's sense of duty was greater than any fears or worries.

Sana Taweel works on a committee associated with the Islamic Orphanage. The main aim of this committee is to help war widows support themselves. Widows are trained in sewing, and when each of them have mastered the skill, a lunch is arranged to collect the cost of a sewing machine for her.

Sahar is a 30-year-old woman who was afflicted by polio when she was 4 months old, as she wasn't vaccinated. Fifteen years later, during the war, her hand was injured and had to be amputated. However, Sahar's double physical defect did not stop her. Today, she works in the offices of the Lebanese Committee for Handicapped People. Moreover, she has learned to drive on her own. Sahar reports, "I learned to accept the things which I cannot perform because of my disability with a smile. However, I sadly reject the things which society obstructs me from accomplishing." Apparently, the list of forbidden acts for any girl seems to be endless in our society, so one can imagine the situation facing a disabled girl; probably it is twice as challenging.

Nadia Tawtal is in charge of the Social Reconstruction Center in Burj El-Barajneh. The aim of this center is securing primary needs for people, family planning, and fighting illiteracy among women. In 1975, the war started and people were kidnapped according to their identity cards. However, nothing changed with respect to Nadia, a Maronite, who kept going to Burj El-Barajneh, a Shiite area, every day. Nadia was blamed for her so-called "careless" attitude by most of the people and even by members of the Government itself, but this did not stop her. "Never have I felt that I was a stranger in Burj El-Barajneh. I always believed that when a person performs good deeds, he/she will never be harmed." It's worth mentioning that Nadia did not marry, and hence, many people consider that she has sacrificed her happiness and life for the sake of others. Nadia believes, though, that she has only been fulfilling her duties. She is happy with what she has done and she doesn't view her life as a futile sacrifice.

Marlene is in charge of a nursery. Her deafness and muteness did not stop her from doing what she most enjoys in life, which is taking care of children. She recalls, though, that one of the children's mothers was afraid of placing her

child at her nursery. "She was worried about how I would hear the baby if he cried. So, she started coming to the nursery daily to make sure that her baby was fine. When she saw the way I treated the children and talked to them, she was relieved."

Badriyya is a brave woman who volunteered to talk about her experience with the AIDS virus on television in order to make people aware of the circumstances surrounding this disease. Badriyya, who contracted the disease from her late husband, made it clear to people that AIDS cannot be transmitted except through sexual relationships, blood transfusion (if the blood is infected) and from the mother to her fetus. However, many people (like the owner of Badriyya's house) do not understand this fact. Badriyya sadly reports, "My landlord would not accept the rent. He simply wanted me out of the house." Badriyya adds that despite the financial help she is receiving, her life is still tough.

All of these dynamic Lebanese women are but a representative sample of a much larger group of women who fought their way through the endless hardships of war bravely and proudly. These women offered much to their immediate communities and hence to Lebanese society. They were never discouraged by the difficulties or obstacles imposed on them by life and history. Considering the sacrifices these willful women made, the hardships they overcame and the minimal support they received, can anyone not acknowledge their importance, and hence, can anyone not appreciate the significance of a sensitive and inspiring documentary like *Lubnaaniyyaat*?

Strangely enough, however, *Lubnaaniyyaat* did not succeed as it was expected to. According to Janane Mallat, Director of the documentary series, this was due to two reasons: The first concerns how the stories of these women were presented. One story was presented each day. "Perhaps, three or four stories should have been grouped and presented on the same day," Ms. Mallat observed. Secondly, the structure of our society, which is highly heterogeneous, means that media audiences are varied and hard to please. "It is not easy to move a society that is made up of people from different backgrounds, beliefs and environments," Ms. Mallat adds. "It is certainly not easy to move a society in which people's rights are not respected, and in which women's rights are considered to be 'second class'."

However, the documentary, according to Mrs. Mallat, retained its value for the following reasons: First, it was spiritually rewarding to the women participants. Someone like Frocina, who has rarely heard a word of thanks in her entire life, must have been greatly touched upon being stopped by admiring people on the street. Secondly, the testimonies of the women can be used as catalysts for stimulating discussions and debates in workshops. *Lubnaaniyyaat* is important for yet two more reasons: First; it is a reminder to the Government of the state's obligations towards citizens like Frocina and Badriyya. Why should the future of a committed and generous person like Frocina be dependent upon the sympathy and circumstances of her nieces and nephews, and why should a woman like Badriyya, who contracted AIDS because of her husband's irresponsible sexual behavior, be left to face her terrible fate on her own without any help from the Government? (It is expected that by the year 2000, 7000 people will be suffering from AIDS in Lebanon, and the Government has not yet developed any effective, comprehensive strategy to help these people.)

Second, *Lubnaaniyyaat* is an important source of empowerment and hence human development. When the viewer meets defiant and willful women like Frocina, Sahar or Marlene who were never discouraged by their difficult physical or financial circumstances, he or she learns to become more appreciative of his or her individual powers. Do we need a better example than Marlene's to know how much a strong will can accomplish? Although lacking two important media for communication - hearing and speech - Marlene possessed a medium which was even more important: the medium of her heart. Hence, she was able to prove to society that a physical handicap is not a good criterion by which to evaluate someone. Moreover, when the viewer meets Sana, Nadia, and Mimi, he or she learns a different lesson, one about being committed to society. You will often find women who have struggled to protect their families; seldom will you find women or men who committed themselves to the welfare of the wider society, especially during the war when all values were being questioned and destroyed. However, the dedicated women portrayed in *Lubnaaniyyaat* definitely did take care of their society. Finally, by seeing a woman like Badriyya, one learns the value of sharing one's experiences with others, because then one will be giving people something concrete to consider. Isn't this what we need to empower ourselves, to examine our social concepts, themes and codes in light of our own tangible experiences?

Finally, we hope to see more programs like *Lubnaaniyyaat*. However, as I mentioned in the introduction, *Lubnaaniyyaat* was presented in preparation for the Beijing Conference following a request made by the National Committee's Director, Lebanese First Lady Mona Al-Hrawi. Hence, there was a political will to produce it. Had the force of that will not been exerted, we would not have had the chance to share with these women their great experiences. Would we?

A Conversation with May Menassa, journalist and writer on cultural affairs for *An-Nahar* newspaper, Editor of the monthly magazine, *Jamaluki*, and lecturer on women's and cultural issues.

Conducted by Ghena Ismail

May Menassa was brought up in a strict atmosphere which valued discipline and gave scant attention to the development of personal traits and talents. Composing poetry was considered disgraceful, and a conflict developed at home when her elder brother's poetic talent started to express itself. This conflict was resolved only after May's brother suffered from schizophrenia and was eventually placed in a mental hospital. In this atmosphere filled with obligation, responsibility and anger, May found her refuge and salvation in writing.

Ms. Menassa studied literature in the *Ecole des Lettres*, and it did not occur to her then that she would work in the field of media one day. However, Ms. Menassa's captivating presence could not but be noticed, and she was eventually asked to work in the field of television. She worked in television for eight years, but when journalism beckoned, she did not hesitate to accept. "My work in television did not satisfy my need for free self-expression, which I eventually found on the small piece of paper."

When asked if she confronted any obstacles as a woman journalist, her immediate reply was that any person who works with sincerity and diligence will not face obstacles. But, if no special difficulties confront women journalists, why do we not have many female journalists in decision-making positions, and why does the percentage of female journalists employed in the field not exceed 30 percent, although statistics show that in the last five years, 80 percent of journalism students are females? Ms. Menassa's surprising explanation was that most of the girls she has tested in her magazine did not know how to write a well-structured sentence, and that, while the man's pen is often firm and sensitive, the woman's pen is weak and spiritless. Hence, she refuses to attribute the difference between the percentage of females working as journalists and that of men to the existence of discrimination against women. She explains that women today, especially in the various non-governmental institutions, are viewed and treated just as any man is. "The woman has excelled in the field of advertising. She can be the president, director and owner of many advertising companies. It seems to me that the girl was created for art, more so than for journalism." However, Ms. Menassa asserts that we shouldn't generalize, because if one picks up *An-Nahar* newspaper, for instance, one will see many articles signed by women.

May Menassa, journalist for An-Nahar newspaper in Lebanon.

Although Ms. Menassa believes that a woman should be liberated, she thinks that journalists' efforts should be directed towards liberating the society as a whole. "You cannot liberate the woman

without liberating the man and enlightening him." A man, according to Ms. Menassa, needs to understand that women's equality to him implies that she is ready to shoulder equal responsibilities. Then he will feel relieved rather than threatened.

Hence, awareness is needed and obviously awareness is part of human development. So, how does Ms. Menassa view the media's encouragement of sustainable human development projects in Lebanon? The media in Lebanon, according to Ms. Menassa, is highly sensitive and daring. Journalists cover a wide variety of areas and participate in different conferences and seminars. "However, media is, of course, only one of society's different tools responsible for promoting human development. It cannot effect a real change unless the Lebanese Government assumes action. The Government is the real school, and when it is absent, we are left to live with the law of the forest."

Nevertheless, if Ms. Menassa was to evaluate Lebanese journalism, she would affirm that it is genuine journalism, of a calibre that one rarely finds elsewhere in the East. "The editorials of Ghassan Tueni, publisher of *An-Nahar* newspaper, are capable of moving a country and arousing the drowsing consciences of many people."

But will the Lebanese print journalism remain so daring? Doesn't Lebanese print journalism fear being subject to legislation similar to the proposed audio-visual reorganization?

Ms. Menassa acknowledges the presence of such a fear, since she believes that Lebanon is no longer a completely democratic country. However, she is not discouraged. "Let us have a look at Russia and the communist countries. Although repressed, freedom could not be totally destroyed. It was present in the prisons, in the Gulag, and in Siberia, and this repressed freedom led to the birth of valuable and important writings which were eventually published. Whenever and wherever a totalitarian ruling system existed, it eventually collapsed and people were finally able to convey the truth."

No legislation, according to Ms. Menassa, can threaten journalism, because the voice of truth always prevails. However, she fears that in the event of a regional political settlement, words will no longer have meaning. "We may get so wrapped up in our talk about money that we neglect art and literature." But, she often tries to quiet these fears by noting that art is still growing in America, the leader of the capitalist system, so we need not worry.

In the light of dramatic regional changes, the role that journalism can play in safe-guarding a Lebanese national agenda and identity, according to Ms. Menassa, is to continue what it writes now and not to prostitute itself to others. "I fear that most literary prostitution takes place when the pen writes against the good of the country. I and a few others will continue to write for the good of the country, for the sick cedar tree. We will continue to write about the village poet who is on the verge of death, yet no one is paying attention to him or her. We will continue to write about culture, humanity and music. This writing is beautiful and innocent and cannot harm anyone. We do not want to attack anyone. On the contrary, we want peace and security."

Since development implies the presence of a strong relationship between education and the labor market, what is Ms. Menassa's evaluation of the journalism curricula currently taught at Lebanese universities and colleges, and what is her advice to journalism students?

Ms. Menassa thinks that the curricula are good, but to be more effective, both the teachers and the students need to be as devoted as they can be. Her advice to students would be that they consider themselves primary school students again and carefully learn the principles and rules of the language. "Students should cultivate their minds, read, and go beyond the two-line news event. They should view themselves as educators and consider any article they write a 'school'."

Finally, Ms. Menassa feels satisfied with what she has accomplished, because she was able to give in the difficult circumstances (during the war) as well as in the normal ones, and hence she succeeded in developing emotional bridges with the people. Very often people stop Ms. Menassa on the street to tell her how they felt after reading one of her articles. Ms. Menassa's articles do not only have an impact on the average person, but sometimes they influence people in power and hence motivate them to take a certain action. "Do you know how it feels to learn from the Minister of Agriculture that what you have written about a farmer made him feel that this farmer should be awarded? Don't you think that this is a wonderful gift?"

An example of a cover of a popular Arabic-language women's magazine in Lebanon.

Women's Magazines in Lebanon: A Progressive or a Regressive Force?

by Dr. Bassima Sukkarieh Eid,
Professor, Lebanese University

The following is a synopsis of a study (1) undertaken to analyze the images of women portrayed in popular Arabic-language women's magazines in Lebanon. The goal was to assess and interpret the messages (implicit and explicit), being conveyed to women readers by these magazines. The overall purpose of the study was to document the extent to which women's roles were stereotyped in these magazines, and to gauge the cultural "lag" between the manner in which women are represented and the reality of social and economic conditions in post-war Lebanon. The existing data on such conditions clearly indicate that married women and mothers are increasingly involved in the public sphere, a development which entails a significant change in women's position and status in society, as well as alterations in the roles they play in the home setting.

Because women's magazines, unlike most other journals and publications, are specifically targeted at the female half of the population, and furthermore purport to cater to the needs of this segment of society, they are key socializing agents, particularly with respect to their impact on women's consciousness and self-image, as well as women's potential role as agents of change in their homes, communities and society. The sample for this study consisted of 32 Arabic-language monthly and weekly publications available in Lebanon. Out of this sample, a quota sample of 8 magazines was selected for intensive analysis. The study employed the methodology of content analysis as its main research tool, covering a period of four years (1989-1993). For practical reasons, content was categorized according to three separate headings: fiction, non-fiction and advertising.

The survey of the salient scientific literature on the relationship between society and the mass media indicates a dynamic, interdependent interplay between these two factors. This suggests that the image of women disseminated through the media is the result of the interaction of forces which shape social realities, and cannot, therefore, be understood or explained in isolation from the broader socio-economic, political and cultural contexts within which it is produced. The literature also reveals a trend towards a more integrated approach, one which attributes to the media a creative value, *i.e.*, that of producing, reinforcing, and transforming collective social representations and realities.

From this perspective, the study hypothesized that Arabic-language women's magazines in Lebanon did not constitute a vanguard of social development and progress. In their capacity as socializing agents, they instead represent a conservative and often reactionary force which impedes equality, social equity and progress. Their impact upon the processes of social change is negative, rather than positive; they perpetuate out-moded sex role concepts of women, reinforce traditional, patriarchal double standards for men and women; and ignore the dramatic changes in the economic and even political status of women. The magazines analyzed in this article are, in fact, lagging far behind the actual progress and realities of Arab women.

Content analysis of all eight magazines together, not separately, yielded results which supported the aforementioned hypothesis. The image of women, as portrayed in these magazines, was almost without exception defined by the confines of women's domestic roles and their sexual appeal to men. Women's identity was entirely determined by the presence or absence of a man in her life. The redefinition of sex roles by feminist movements and the actual changes in women's lives in post-war Lebanon, as well as their increasing involvement in the public sphere, were virtually absent from the pages of these magazines.

The question we must ask, then, is this: why do these magazines insist on perpetuating inaccurate stereotypes of women? Our query is answered, in part, by a closer look at the structure of the media industry and by a review of the major findings yielded by this study. First of all, the women's magazine industry in Lebanon is mainly owned and dominated by men. Work is divided along gender lines such that women are most often found occupying jobs with little if any decision-making power. The influential, high-ranking positions are the preserve of men. This visibly male-dominated structure is hardly counteracted by the preponderance of women writers and reporters , not to mention a large number of women editors. The ultimate decisions pertaining to questions of policy and selection of content remains entirely in male hands.

Increased involvement of women in decision-making processes might indeed improve the chances for a more realistic and progressive portrayal of women, but it is certainly not the final answer to a problem which is rooted in cultural conditioning from an early age in Arab society. Images of women and men transmitted by the socialization process place constraints on women's participation in the media work-force, as in all other domains of work. It is only when these concepts change that there will be a change in the image of women projected by women's magazines. Any change in the media's portrayal of women will require a simultaneous change in sex role definitions in the society at large. The day that this change arrives will be the day that the need for women's magazines vanishes from our society.

The overarching visual message of women's magazines emphasizes feminine beauty and seductiveness, as well as youthfulness. In exchange for beauty and youth (both of which are ascribed, not achieved, attributes), women are rewarded with the security that only a man can provide, with status and romance, highlighting the precedence of a woman's appearance over all of her other characteristics. The feminine role models most frequently depicted on the covers of women's magazines surveyed in the sample stressed the importance of beauty, sexual desirability, and youth.

An examination of the classification categories used to analyze the magazines' content indicates the preponderance of "soft" news over "hard" news. "Soft" news refers to material that does not require any specialized knowledge, appeals to the emotions, and focuses on the private domain. "Hard" news, on the other hand, consists of material requiring specialized knowledge which appeals to the faculty of reason and which focuses on the public sphere. By confining their content to such soft topics as society news, fashion, child care, interior design, beauty, romance and cooking, women's magazines have divided the world into mutually exclusive male and female domains: women's place is in the home and man's place is at work. By suggesting that women are personally, rather than professionally oriented, these magazines denigrate women's true capacities and activities and thus limit their role in society.

Content Analysis: Fiction

Like the images on the covers of women's magazines, fiction demonstrated a distinct bias in favor of young and attractive women. The typical heroine was a physically beautiful young woman (20-29 years of age), whose goals revolved around marriage and romance (57 percent of the sample). The emphasis on housewife/mother roles for women, *versus* occupational, professional roles for men, was revealed in the following patterns: fewer males were portrayed as husbands than females were as wives (15 percent as opposed to 50 percent). Women usually appeared as mothers (61 percent of sample), whereas men appeared as fathers in only 22 percent of the cases. This reveals that the writers (who, incidentally, were predominantly women, *i.e.*, 81 percent of all fiction writers surveyed) consider marriage and parenthood to be more crucial in a woman's life than in a man's life. A "spinster's" failure to marry was more important to the story line than her career and professional accomplishments.

In her interactions with men, the average female character invariably demonstrated passivity and subservience to men, whereas in her relationship with other female characters, she appeared ingenious, creative and forceful. Passivity appeared to be female personality trait only in her relationship to men. Although femininity is not described explicitly in terms of passivity, the description of masculinity in terms of action, independence and authority implies that passivity is the corresponding feminine quality. Thus, not only are double standards applied to male and female behavior, but women have to assume the additional burden of a "double" personality: her real one, which emerges in her interactions with other women, and her assumed one, which appears in her interactions with the significant males in her life.

Fictional content in Arabic-language women's magazines does not reflect the dramatic changes in Lebanese women's status during the last decade, a period which witnessed a marked increase in women's education and employment. In the fiction, working women (usually spinsters) are often portrayed as "unfeminine". The happy housewife and the single young woman who is secure in her beauty represented the dominant image of successful women in fiction. Consequently, marriage and motherhood were depicted as the ultimate goals and the only activities which could assure happiness, meaning and fulfillment.

Further empirical research is required to determine the extent to which such stereotypical portrayals of women's roles influence women's self-esteem, life choices, and expectations. On the basis of the research results presented above, however, it is clear that fiction in women's magazines perpetuate inaccurate images of women by focusing solely on physical appearance, seductiveness, passivity, and by describing women in terms of their marital status.

Content Analysis: Non-Fiction

Overall findings of this survey indicate that non-fiction articles suffer from the same cultural lag evidenced by the fictional articles. The role models offered by women's magazines, their reflection of social realities and their ideological positions regarding changing roles of women, all point in this direction.

With respect to articles on women's employment, few articles deal with this important topic, and those that do demonstrate ambivalence about the concept of working women. Employment of single women, those having very few household responsibilities, is accepted and even encouraged, after all, such activities provide young women with golden opportunities to meet eligible young men. Employment of married women, on the other hand, is condoned only if it does not interfere with her primary duties as wife and mother. Household chores (cleaning, cooking, laundry, decorating) are always the responsibility of women. Sharing of such duties with a husband is not recommended, as these activities would be very degrading for a man to perform. His responsibilities are providing for the family and being the intermediary between the private realm of the home and the public world of work. Volunteer work is encouraged as an acceptable outlet for married women, as is part-time employment. Dire economic aspects are seldom highlighted, important though they may be to most women in post-war Lebanon.

Job descriptions for women are usually romanticized. A "capable" woman is one who can take any and all added responsibilities in her stride. Combining the demands of home and office is made to appear simple. Such glamorization ignores the real hardships that ordinary working women confront on a daily basis. Thus, readers may suffer guilt feelings if they are not able to assume immense responsibilities without any problems. Cultural expectations in this regard are unrealistically high and thus place undue physical and psychological strains on the working wife and mother.

Occasional profiles of successful women in non-traditional occupations are overshadowed by an emphasis on the traditional role of woman as wife and mother, and by the scale of priorities presented by the magazine, whether implicitly or explicitly. A woman's first and foremost responsibility is her children, her husband and her home. Career and work outside the home comes in a distant third or fourth on this list of priorities.

The study also revealed an intriguing paradox: a double emphasis on woman as sainted wife and mother and woman as beautiful seductress. What these two seemingly contradictory images have in common is this: both stress that woman's ultimate goal is to please a man.

The ideal woman, according to men, is a woman who combines these two aspects in one.

This definition of the female role reflects the position of women in the traditional, male-biased, male-dominated patriarchal structure of Lebanese society. Clearly, women's magazines are complacent about communicating and continuing this unrealistic and inaccurate definition. The short-comings of Lebanon's social structure are never critically examined. If a woman fails to find fulfillment in domesticity and subservience to a man, it is not society that is lacking, it is she who is inadequate in some way. Women's failure to find fulfillment in their traditional roles is attributed to the individual woman and conflicts are reduced to personal circumstances. That they may be the result of wider economic, social and political conditions is never even considered.

The portrayal of women in non-fictional articles contradicts women's growing participation in the labor force, as well as feminist views concerning the images of women which such magazines project. The trivialization of women's lives and experiences at the hands of women's magazines is further manifested by the lack of "hard" news stories concerning issues which touch women's lives, such as abortion, double standards of behavior, sexual harassment, rape, gender discrimination, and economic injustice and exploitation.

Content Analysis: Advertising

Like fictional and non-fictional articles in women's magazines, advertising also presents a very narrow view of women. In most ads, women are confined to traditional roles, *i.e.*, wife and mother or physically alluring temptress. Women are also utilized in advertising as objects and instruments of persuasion to sell products to consumers by appealing to the two dimensions of their idealized and stereotyped role: housewife/mother and sex object/seductress. Female oriented advertisements appeal to woman's fear of being rejected by a man, and thus, left to live alone. In exchange for the beauty promised by the advertised products, women are assured security in love and marriage.

Statistically, advertisements for beauty products and beauty-related services outnumbered advertisements for domestic products. The decrease in the number of advertisements of domestic products as a positive sign is nullified by the increase of ads for beauty products. This statistical reality reflects the fact that advertisers are more committed to exploiting women's fears and insecurities to sell their products than they are with the overall socio-economic conditions of women. Advertisers only embrace change for the purpose of increased efficiency in promoting sales and it is only in this light that changes in the way women are portrayed are to be interpreted. Proof of this is the absence of the working woman, the older woman, and the less attractive woman from advertising images. Because of their economic dependence on advertising, women's magazines appear to promote images of women which encourage conformity to the norms of femininity established by the male-dominated socio-economic system. Thus, advertising in women's magazines constitutes a regressive force obstructing the liberation and progress of women, and hence, their improved socio-economic status.

Conclusions

Content-analysis of the portrayal of women in women's magazines in Lebanon yielded highly consistent results with respect to the image of women projected therein. The overall conclusion is that women's magazines present narrow images of women which are inaccurate and distorted when seen in the context of the actual social, economic and cultural conditions of women's lives in contemporary Lebanon. The magazines present a highly stereotyped and unrealistic image of women, which has its counterpart in an equally stereotypical image of man. Stereotyping is apparent in the pronounced emphasis on female physical appearance and the description of women, whatever their occupation, in terms of their marital status and their relationship with men. Stereotyping is also evident in the dichotomous division of personal traits and attributes into feminine and masculine qualities, the implication being that women exhibiting masculine traits of independence, initiative, and assertiveness are unfeminine and therefore disliked by men, the supposed central concern of their lives.

Discrimination against the older, less attractive, unmarried professional woman is blatant. The hidden message seems to be that "ordinary" women should be on their guard at all times, because they have to compete with some powerful fantasy images of physically perfect models. The image of the independent, ordinary working woman is virtually absent; thus, the contributions of these women as providers for their families and sustainers of their societies are easily overlooked.

Unlike other categories of magazines, women's magazines are sex-typed. They address a disempowered group: women. Implicit in women's magazines is the message that women are helpless; they need to be taught how to deal with the condition of being female and how to survive in a world made for men and by men. By rendering such "services" to women, women's magazines rationalize and justify women's subordination to men, going so far as to romanticize it by providing glamorous standards and expectations which few, if any, women can meet. The images presented in these magazines, and the messages implicit within them, reinforce women's disadvantaged status in the prevailing social and economic order.

By comparing the image of women portrayed in these magazines to the actual social realities confronting most Lebanese women, we notice a distinct cultural lag. The feminist movement has been more than just a passing concern for over half a century now, but women's magazines have yet to place the principles of feminism on their agenda. Women's new and ever-evolving status and roles have yet to permeate and transform the content and *raison d'être* of these magazines. In sum, women's Arabic-language magazines in Lebanon distort, rather than mirror, women's reality.

Footnotes

(1) This study was conducted by Drs. Bassima S. Eid and Laila G. Kaddoura, professors in the Faculty of Information and Documentation, Lebanese University.

Conversation

An Interview with Jean Makdisi, Professor of Humanities at L.A.U., and author of the book *Beirut Fragments*, about a course she taught entitled "Women in Media and Communication".

Conducted by Ghena Ismail

GI: What was the primary objective of this course?

JM: I had done a lot of reading about the feminist movement, which showed me that in the Arab World we are often confused by what others are saying, both about themselves and about us. Hence, I thought it was important for us to develop our own theory based on our actual experiences and to move away from what others say about us in particular, or about women in general. In our small classroom, I wanted to test some feminist ideas and concepts. That's why the readings were from a very wide variety of sources. There were some French readings, some American readings, some English readings and a lot of Arabic readings. Besides the readings, I screened several films for the students. I was trying to test the theoretical arguments that have been created somewhere else, to see how or whether they apply to women in the Arab world. Having a class comprised of young women who were new to the idea and who were hearing all these questions and theories for the first time was exactly what I wanted. People who have thought a lot about the issue would have read about it, and if they had read about it, they've already been influenced by other people's theories and perceptions. I wanted to have a clean reaction, and that's what I got.

GI: But there were older women in the classroom, too. What about them?

JM: I was especially happy to have this mixture of different ages and experiences. Every age has its own experience. When you're young, it is the question of your father and the way you view your future. Issues seem clearer and simpler. When you are older, the challenge you face is the actual experiences that you've had, with all their complexities, which muddle the view. What is very clear when you are young becomes more complicated as you grow older. That's why I found it terribly important to have older women and younger women together in the same classroom.

GI: What was the main difference between the reactions of the younger students and those of the older ones?

JM: The younger students were more rebellious, more demanding, and more critical of society. They were full of enthusiasm and sometimes anger, which I appreciated; I believe that we can't change the world unless we are angry.

GI: You said that you wanted to introduce the students to a wide variety of material so that they could reach their own conclusions. Certainly, though, you already had a certain theory or conclusion in mind, didn't you?

JM: The only thing I had in mind, and still have in mind, after several years of working on my book is that much has been written about women in the Arab World and there is still a lot of misapprehension and miscomprehension. In fact, I often wonder how some people here can talk as though there is no problem, and I find this appalling, especially in light of some of the laws we have. It seems to me that there is a lot of injustice. Of course, there is plenty of injustice in society in general. However, I think that the situation of women is a particularly nasty one, because inside society there is an extra "layer" of nastiness to women. Returning to your question, what I had in mind then was that I didn't want either the students or myself to be influenced by reading or hearing others' views. I wanted us to begin from scratch and to formulate our own ideas. This is why I asked you to carry out independent studies about how women were represented in advertising. You all discovered almost the same thing: Most advertising focused on female sex appeal.

GI: It focused, too, upon motherhood.

JM: Romanticized motherhood, of course.

GI: Yes. All of the women, even the housewives, were young and beautiful, and a male voice was used even in those advertisements which were directed at women.

JM: As the course title suggests, I wanted the students to find out how women were represented, how people were looking at women and how women look at themselves. I wanted you to figure out whether we, as women, look at ourselves the way others look at us, and whether we do that because we assume that this is the way it is. When you start to criticize and analyze how women are represented in the media, especially in advertising, you get a very definite sense that a vision of our being is imposed on us from the time we first open our eyes.

GI: What was the topic that aroused the most discussion in the classroom?

JM: Women and health. Unfortunately, we don't think enough about the medical establishment and about the relationship of women to this medical establishment, which is

largely a male establishment. Even if there are women doctors, they are only a part of an entirely male dominated profession. Obviously, when you speak of health, you're not only dealing with individual doctors, you're also dealing with hospitals, pharmaceutical industries, and huge industries such as health insurance, which women have to cope with more often than men do due to the nature of the woman's body, of course.

GI: How did this topic concerning women and health fit into the course?

JM: You discovered in your study of advertisements that women had to be young and beautiful. However, not all young women are beautiful. There is also a feeling that once you become older you are no longer a woman. This is a terrible thing to impose on women, that you are a woman from the age of 12 until the age of 45, and this is part of the representation. The whole issue of women's health in relationship to the society and in relationship to women's view of themselves, and therefore, other people's views (including those of the advertising industries, health industry and the cinema), are interrelated and are part of women's representation.

GI: Why did you want your students to focus, in their independent studies, on how women were represented in the medium of advertising in particular?

JM: You can be a genius, but never get published, while you find some horrible writers who have been pushed ahead by advertising. Advertising is a weapon, an instrument of power. Hence, a critical understanding of it is absolutely necessary. I wanted my students to look at the advertisements and see what they are doing, how they manipulate people and how they make one think about one's self. A magazine or a TV program which is not well advertised or which doesn't have advertisements doesn't survive. Hence, advertising is enormously important.

GI: The classroom was comprised solely of female students. What is your comment on this?

JM: I'm very sorry about this. It was certainly important to have men in the classroom, but of course, I have no control over who registers for the course. Also, don't forget that this was a brand new course about which students knew nothing. We needed, perhaps, to have a campaign of some sort to arouse the interest of students and to tell people that the time has come to take a course simply for the pleasure of thinking about things. Nothing that concerns women doesn't concern men as well. So, I'm very sorry there weren't more men, and I'm very sorry there weren't more students. Anyway, I didn't foresee a huge enrollment. In such a course, it would have been good to have twenty or even fifteen students only.

GI: How do you evaluate the course on the whole?
JM: I enjoyed teaching the class a lot, and I felt we had a very strong rapport. We had some arguments, which is fine. I am a great believer in argument.

GI: Knowing that you have enjoyed the class a lot, I feel encouraged to ask you about your evaluation of the young women's views. You've said they were rebellious and angry, but how deeply analytical was their thinking?

JM: I was very impressed by the fact that you responded so critically. I was impressed that what you said were not *clichés*. A lot of *clichés* are being chucked around all the time. However, when I heard you arguing some of the points, you were very critical, articulate and confident as well. You only said what you had to say and not what you thought would please the teacher, and I felt very proud of you. As you get older and you are hammered by the advertising and media messages for 30 or 40 years without questioning them, you gradually adopt their vision and it eventually becomes part of you. As for you, having thought about the meaning of these messages or images at an early stage, you have become immune to them or at least aware of their implications and the expectations they are indirectly instilling in you. One of these expectations, for example, is that we all have to look like Claudia Schiffer, the most famous and attractive model in the world. However, not all females are Claudia Schiffer. Females have different bodies, different figures and, of course, different personalities. You really got this point and were critical of it.

GI: Finally, have you learned anything yourself from the experience of teaching the course?

JM: In all courses that you teach or study, if there is debate and discussion, you learn. Sometimes, I was surprised by some of the reactions to something I thought was obvious. It is always healthy to have your thoughts and beliefs challenged. During and after the course, I became more certain that we do have our own experiences and that we all have a great potential. It's not that I ever doubted that we did. However, each generation of women, mine as well as yours, need to think hard about what they want, and the only way we can think hard about what we want is to think clearly about our own situation. We need to figure out: "Do we have a problem?", and if we agree that we do, the next step should be defining our problem. The only way to do this is to critically think and not simply parrot what other people are saying. We should not use the *clichés* about how intelligent and capable the Lebanese woman is. If we do, we'll be implying that we don't have a problem. So, you need to think. Any course on any topic can make you think if you are really intelligent, critical and willing to use your mind and analyze what you're reading.

A Tribute to the First Women's Journal Published in Lebanon

By Azadouhi Simonian Kalaidjian
Department of English
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The editor of The Youg Armenian Woman, Siran Seza, on the occasion of her 40th anniversary as an editor and writer. Beside her is Azadouhi Simonian (Kalaidjian), the main speaker on that occasion in December 1967.

"The Young Armenian Woman" (*Yeridassart Hayouhi*), the first women's journal ever published in Lebanon, was founded in Beirut in October 1932 by a woman writer and journalist, Siran Seza (Zarifian). In her first editorial, Seza wrote "The publication of this journal arises not from a whim, but from a necessity. Psychologically, any desire that is suppressed will eventually seek expression through different channels, overcoming all kinds of hurdles along its way....*Yeridassart Hayouhi* aims to bring together all the Armenian women, regardless of differences of age, education and social background, to participate in efforts to ennoble the souls and to educate the minds of the members of the Armenian community." The journal, which was usually 32 pages in length, was published regularly each month for two years until 1934. After a lapse, it continued from 1947 until 1968, when it ceased to be published.

A talented editor as well as a writer, Siran Seza was born in 1902 in Constantinople, Turkey, and died in Beirut in 1973. She received her secondary education in the American College and graduated in 1919. Before arriving in Beirut in 1922, she worked as a volunteer for the Near East Relief organization following World War I. Later she pursued higher studies at Columbia University in New York City for three years, specializing in literature and journalism, during which time she received her Masters Degree and became a Ph.D. Candidate. She returned to Beirut in 1932, whereupon she established her journal.

At the age of 15, Seza had already translated into Armenian Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Renowned Armenian poets such as Vahan Tekeyan recognized Seza's literary talent and published her writings in the leading journals of the period. Her style and language were considered to be rich and mature at an early age. Her two published novels were *The Rampart* and *The Sinner*.

Siran Seza'a literary and journalistic talents, coupled with her educational background, set high literary and intellectual standards for her journal. It was not just another women's magazine concerned with fashion, culinary arts and romance. Among her contributors were male and female writers, educators, essayists and social theorists.

Through her editorials, Seza urged the Armenian woman to rise from her humdrum existence and address concerns which would bring about radical changes in the community's social, cultural and educational structure. She invited women to assume responsibilities along these lines. Seza's constant criticisms of women's absence from decision-making positions, such as boards of education and other committees, brought about needed changes by convincing the leadership of the day to let women participate in these decision-making bodies. Seza vociferously advocated the education of women, especially an education which prepared women for a career outside the home. She also stressed the need for continuing education programs for older women through her editorials and specially researched articles.

By reading the pages of *Yeridassart Hayouhi*, Armenian women were exposed to the views and attitudes of the international women's movement. March 8th, International Women's Day, generated many editorials. Seza heralded women's right to vote in the Lebanese parliamentary elections in the early 1950s. By inviting the Armenian woman to join hands with the Lebanese Arab woman in shouldering responsibilities for the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of all women in Lebanon, she created and strengthened women's awareness of their civic and legal rights.

Through her editorials, Siran Seza endeavored to bridge the gap between Armenian and Lebanese women, a gap which was

created by the language barrier. She thus wrote of the necessity for Armenian women to learn Arabic and to participate fully in the Lebanese Arab women's movements. Arab women writers, such as Emily Nasrallah, Leyla Usayran, and Aida Idriss, as well as pioneering figures such as Laure Tabet, Alexandra Issa El-Khoury, Jamal Harfouche, Salwa Nassar, and Marie Sabri were featured in the pages of *Yeridassart Hayouhi* with admiration.

A cover of the journal from the 1960s.

Women's movements in other Arab countries, such as Syria and Egypt, also received special coverage. One editorial in particular (February 1954) supported Egyptian Women's Association President Doria Chafic and her associates' hunger strike, undertaken to stress their desire that women occupy executive positions in the Egyptian Government and other national decision-making bodies.

A researched article was devoted to prominent American women who had struggled for civic rights of women in the United States, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Stanton, through whose tireless efforts the U.S. House of Representatives passed a law bestowing on women the right to vote. Other Western women were introduced to the Lebanese Armenian audience through the pages of the journal, such as Frances Perkins, Louisa M. Alcott, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mary Baker Eddy, Clara Barton, Jane Adams, Helen Keller, and others. Eleanor Roosevelt's message on the occasion of the International Declaration of Human Rights (1968), and its complete translation into Armenian, received extensive coverage.

Along with international and Arab women, Seza also wrote about the achievements of Armenian women in Armenia and in the Diaspora. Women writers such as Zabel Yassayan, Sibil, Hayganoush Mark, Silva Gaboudigian, Zabel Boyadijian, Zarouhi Kalemkarian, Marie Beylerian, Zarouhi Bahri and others were given due recognition. Armenian women artists were also presented through their art exhibitions along with women music educators, pianists and violinists.

Seza was especially supportive of young women columnists, essayists and writers. Through her encouragement, a group of university graduates made their mark on the journal as contributors during the publication's last five years. Such names as Janet Kassouni (Houri), Asdghig Kojaian, Cecile Keshishian, Mary Tarpinian, Arsine Tarian, Rita Balian, and Azadouhi Simonian (Kalaidjian) appeared frequently during those final years. This same group of women celebrated the 40th Anniversary of Seza's literary career and the 15th Anniversary of the publication of *Yeridassart Hayouhi* on 7 December 1967 in Beirut.

A year later, in December 1968, the last issue of the journal was published with an editorial entitled "Good-Bye" in which Seza lamented the fact that there was no successor to take the publication of this journal upon herself, nor was there an editorial board which could ensure its continuity. Certainly, the lack of funding for the publication was the most insurmountable problem. Seza's husband, Dr. Nerses Kupelian, an essayist himself, had firmly believed in the role of *Yeridassart Hayouhi* and supported it financially throughout the years. With his death, it became difficult to continue publication. The journal was later taken over by a group of young men who called it *Yeridassart Hay*, meaning "The Young Armenian Man". This journal, however, had a short life. Currently, a group of young Armenian women from the United States and the Middle East are making efforts to organize a bilingual publication (Armenian and English). If this project succeeds, we will be happy to hail the reappearance of *Yeridassart Hayouhi* in the Middle East, North America and Europe.

The odyssey of *Yeridassart Hayouhi* is an amazing tale which can inspire us with the best traditions of the Armenian community in Lebanon. In addition to its contribution to the awakening of the Armenian woman and its questioning of the accepted social, educational and economic order, the journal also became the conscience of the community. For years, it alerted the Armenian leadership to the dangers and pitfalls lurking in the community's life and also served as a sounding board for new ideas and procedures to be tested.
Tribute is due to the pioneering achievements of *Yeridassart Hayouhi* during such times when women did not have much influence on the social, economic and political life of Lebanon. Since that time, much has been accomplished to ensure more extensive participation of women in decision-making processes. However, the unique role of *Yeridassart Hayouhi* is still worthy of the highest praise and tribute to Siran Seza's pioneering efforts in women's journalism.

by Wafa Stephan Tarnowski

Women and writing was the focus of the 1995-96 yearly publication of the Lebanese Association of Women researchers, known as *"Al-Bahithat."* Reading this publication is a requirement for anyone interested in Arab women writers in particular or the subject of women's writing in general. Why do women write? How do women write? Is there a typically "feminine writing" as opposed to a "masculine" one? These are a few of the questions raised by the contributors. More general questions are also considered: What do women write about? Who are the women writing in Lebanon today?

According to Elise Salem Manganaro, Associate Professor of English Literature at Fairleigh-Dickinson University in the US, Lebanese women writers generally come from a well-educated, often bilingual or trilingual background which forces anyone wishing to analyze their output to consider class as well as gender. Manganaro notes that "most of the authors are women of privilege, usually versed in English or French, who left Lebanon during the war years and had the time and space to reflect upon and utilize the war in their narrative, which were then published by presses, often outside Lebanon, and made available, usually to an elite readership, often in the West as well." (p. 170)

But, this sociological description of Lebanese women writers does not do full justice to the complexity of their background and output. I would rather envision Lebanese women writers standing on the edges of several different cultures and using their privileged multi-cultural position to enrich the languages and conventions in which they choose to work. French language writer Venus Khoury Ghatta says in her contribution, entitled *"Le Mentir-Vrai"* (the Lying Truth) that men and women writers of Arab origin have added an "oratorical dimension" to the French language, "taking it down to the street, inventing new words close to those of our mother tongues and becoming story-tellers rather than novelists". These writers, she adds, "carry in their writings their native land, its idioms, its scents and flowers", continuously expanding the French language and enriching it. (p. 48)

The obvious question is, did the Lebanese women writers do the same for the English language? Until now it seems to me that most Lebanese women writing in English are more involved in academic careers and thus write about anthropology, sociology and literary criticism *(e.g.* Suad Joseph and Elise Manganaro), while the two English novelists included in the selection are Etel Adnan, who also writes in French, and Jean Said Makdisi, who is also involved in teaching. Evelyne Accad, although writing her literary criticisms in English, seems to prefer writing her novels and songs in French first, then translating them into English.

However, regardless of the language these women have chosen for their writing (including Arabic, of course) they have a lot to say. Etel Adnan believes that "women love words" and she doesn't mean "exclusively educated women" only, but the vast majority of women that she has encountered and still encounters in her life. Women, Adnan believes, need to talk "as a way to keep reminding themselves and everybody around them that they exist." (p. 155) "We can say that women do 'things' to words, imprint them with their will and superstitions, thus falling under their power (p. 157). She gives as an example how, when in love, women tend to believe more what is said to them than what is done, and how "they are particularly susceptible to rumors, to the magic aura of pronouncements, to the shadow side of things half-said, half-heard" (p. 158).

Jean Said Makdisi observes that writing about the world has been a way to appropriate it; writing has made it hers, and has given her a place in it. She felt a sense of rebellion while writing her first book *(Beirut Fragments)*, especially since she did it secretly: "I felt subversive: I had a secret knowledge of the world that it did not have of me" (p. 131). She also believes that writing is a "dangerous business" because telling the truth as one sees it, which is the principal function of the writer, "exposes one, not only to criticism, but to the possibility of admitting that one has a position...therefore that one may be offensive." She compares writing to gambling: "you have to put your money down and take your chances" (p. 137). Finally, she believes that women must write in order to "say the world as we see it, however difficult it may be... each one in her own way, but our voices must be heard at last" (p. 138).

It is impossible to do justice to the breadth of the testimonies contained in this publication, including literary criticism, poetry, drama criticism, journalism and academic analysis, written in three languages, and including men writing about women writers. As Editor Mona Takieddine Amyuni mentions in the preface, the committee responsible for selecting the writings felt like "children on Christmas Eve with gifts coming down to us through the chimney, mirroring the rich spectrum of people who responded" (p. 18). The aim of this publication was for Lebanese women to "speak up in order to be heard", to "understand, reflect, and analyze each other's experiences, problems and research", but mostly, to stand "outside the circles of power", to speak for "many silent people", and hope to "mobilize the potential of other writers and researchers, especially among the young" (p. 19-20).

If that was *Al-Bahithat's* aim, they succeeded. If I can count myself among those aspiring Lebanese women writers, I indeed felt motivated, inspired and encouraged to continue in the footsteps of remarkable women such as Andrée Chedid, Claire Gebeyli, Venus Khoury, Laure Moughaizel, Nazek

Yared, Daisy Al-Amir, Samira Aghassi, Evelyne Accad, Etel Adnan, Jean Makdisi and all the others. I admire Claire Gebeyli's total dedication to the art of writing, comparing it to a "cult" or a sacred craft, and describing herself as a "worker of the word" (p. 53). I agree with Venus Khoury when she says that writing is a way for women to "break taboos" and to "tear themselves from a clandestine existence" (p. 47). I wholly agree with Samira Aghassi that writing is a way to reach oneself and others and enter the public sphere, no matter how personal or subjective the writing may be (p. 27). I was convinced by the way she compared writing poetry to looking through a microscope and being able to see all the particles of herself she couldn't previously perceive without it (p.29). I also admire Nazek Yared's honesty when she says that as an Eastern woman she finds herself unable to write freely about sexuality, because of the way she (as most Arab women) was brought up (p.63). I became aware of the censorship problems that most Arab women writers have to face when they tackle sensitive issues such as religion or politics and the need to apply "self-censorship", as Yared calls it (p.64).

Finally, I understand Andrée Chedid saying to Evelyne Accad in an interview that writing is like "something haunting you, that you don't want to escape from. We feel ill at ease when we don't write...a kind of malaise and anguish" (p. 221). But mostly, notes Chedid, writing for men and women alike should aim at "integrating the whole" at "universalizing" instead of writing for a narrow political view or within a folkloric vision. She quotes Michel Leiris as saying: "A work should be rooted and uprooted at the same time" in order to have universal appeal, and a writer needs a good "dose of solitude" in order to create (pp. 223-224).

photo credit: Hayat Karnouh

Tool Kit

Successful Grant-Writing for Sustainable Human Development Programs

Laurie King-Irani

According to an ancient Chinese proverb, "if you give a hungry man a meal, you will fill his belly for only one day; but if you teach him how to fish, he will be able to feed himself for the rest of his life." The proverb reminds us of the wisdom of self-sufficiency and the necessity of long-term planning to solve or prevent problems. The proverb is quite relevant to development and empowerment projects in countries of the developing world, especially countries such as Lebanon, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia which are suffering innumerable social problems as a result of long and destructive civil wars. A great deal of energy and resources have been expended on development projects in Lebanon over the last two decades, but with mixed results. Five years after the end of the conflict, the social and economic situation confronting most Lebanese people remains challenging at best and desperate at worst. Particularly affected are the displaced and individuals orphaned, widowed and handicapped by the war.

International organizations such as UNICEF, UNDP and UNHCR are currently facing pronounced pressures on their resources, both personnel and material, because of increasing social, political and economic problems in Africa, Eastern Europe and the former USSR. Because of the mixed results of many development projects in Africa and Asia over the last two decades, the UN has formulated a new development model, that of sustainable human development (*tanmiya mustadeema*). The philosophy and aims of this new model are best described by reference to the aforementioned Chinese proverb. The point of sustainable development is to begin with the individual, his or her needs, resources, abilities, hopes, fears and demands; in the context of his or her society, economy, political structure and natural environment. Beginning with these raw material and realities, the aim of sustainable development is to empower the individual — through education, assistance, training, encouragement, creation of income, and participation in decision-making processes — to take his or her life into his or her own hands and begin shaping and changing the objective circumstances confronting his or her society in order to establish a more just social and economic system, a more viable political order, and a healthier environment. These goals cannot be imposed or dictated from the outside. No one knows his or her own reality and problems better than a person himself or herself.

Although it may sound blunt, money is power. To possess it is to have authority and to wield positive influence over people, events and circumstances; to lack it is to be dependent upon the whims and demands of others who may or may not have your best interests at heart. So, how do you go about getting a grant from a foundation? We are going to outline the key steps for you, but first a word of warning: ***Most foundations are cutting back on the numbers of grants they give and the amount of money they distribute due to world-wide economic pressures.*** This does not mean it is impossible or hopeless to obtain a grant, it simply means that you have to work harder and do your utmost to convince a granting agency that its money will be well-spent in funding your project.

THE STAGES AND STEPS OF SUCCESSFUL GRANT-WRITING

Stage I: Preparing to Write

Step 1: **Define the problem or need you wish to address and solve.** What are its causes? What factors are involved? What will be the long-term impact on society if nothing is done to treat it? (Example of a problem: The link between poverty, female illiteracy and high infant mortality. Example of a need: Education and mobilization for a healthy environment.)

Step 2: Do your homework! Undertake **intensive research** on the problem or need, and the work that other groups (governmental and non-governmental) have done to solve the problem or meet the need. Did they succeed or fail? Why? Also, **do research on similar problems in other countries.** Were they successfully solved? What lessons can be learned? Can we apply these lessons to the Lebanese context? How? Who will need to be involved? What stages must be followed? How long will it take? How much will it cost? What are the potential problem areas? What are the forces and factors working against the achievement of your goals? How can you best minimize these forces and factors?

Step 3: **Finding the granting agency (foundation) most likely to give you funding.** It is always a good idea to get funding from more than one source for a single project. Granting agencies like to know that a) they are not carrying the entire financial weight, and b) your proposal was impressive enough to warrant funding from another agency. First, research all of the local possibilities. Do churches and mosques in your region provide funding for social development projects? Do well-to-do families provide funding for projects like yours? Next, look to the regional and international levels. Using E-mail, it should be fairly easy to find the names and addresses of major foundations and granting agencies throughout the world. Once you have this information, write a brief, professional and informative letter to "Director of Grants", stating who you are, what you wish to do and why, and requesting that they send you a copy of their grant guidelines and, if possible, a copy of their last Annual Report. **Annual Reports are valuable resources for grant-writers; they give you a clear, immediate picture of what kinds of projects get funded and why.** This is very important data to have before beginning the next stage.

After performing the above steps, you will have a good "data base" of information, and you should also have a long list of names of experts, community leaders, volunteers, teachers, lawyers, *etc*. Make an organized list of these individuals and organizations, either on color-coded index cards or on a computer data base. You will need their advice and participation later on.

Stage II: Writing the Grant Proposal

Step 1: Write "Draft Zero" of your grant proposal. Before you do the first draft, simply write down, on a large sheet of paper, all of your ideas, insights, dreams, observations, worries, goals and plans. At this stage, do not give any thought to logical order, correct spelling, grammatical perfection, or other people's opinions. **Simply give yourself the freedom to explore all of your ideas fully in a creative and open manner**. Do not throw this piece of paper away; it will serve you well in the following steps.

Step 2: Following the guidelines of the granting agency, **begin to structure your grant proposal.** It is a good idea to use index cards of basic facts and key points for each section. At this stage it is **extremely important that you have all of your facts and**

information in order, especially your budgetary information concerning costs, salaries, travel expenses, *etc.* Do not overestimate costs and salaries, or the granting agency will suspect that you are trying to make a personal gain from this project. On the other hand, however, never underestimate costs and salaries, either. You will rarely get the exact amount of money that you request; most granting agencies give somewhat less than the amount requested.

Here is an outline of a standard grant proposal, with comments and advice concerning what should appear in each section of the proposal.

I. SUMMARY

This is the single-most important section of your proposal, and also the shortest. The first sentence should be powerful and capable of attracting and maintaining the attention of the individuals on the committee that decides which grant proposals receive funding. The members of this committee will be reading hundreds of proposals, so you have to try, right from the start, to get a competitive edge. Indicate why the problem or need you have selected is so serious, how your project will solve the problem or address the need, and even have relevance for the solution of similar problems in other countries. Also stress why your organization is the best one to address this particular problem or need. The summary, in other words, should be a brief but compelling statement of the entire proposal.

II. AMOUNT REQUESTED: $000,000

Now that you have indicated in the summary what you plan to do, you have to specify exactly how much money will be required to achieve your aims. At this point, you do not need to supply a complete itemized budget. That usually comes last, in the form of an appendix to the proposal.

III. BACKGROUND OF PROBLEM/NEED

In this section, you will use all of the data you collected during the first stage. Provide a historical account of the problem, a description of the overall socio-economic and environmental results of the problem, and a forecast of what will happen if the problem is not solved or the need is unmet. Be sure to cite other studies, previous attempts to address the problem, as well as governmental and/or UN assessments of the problem or need. You must let the granting committee know that you have given careful thought to all relevant dimensions and details of the problem. A good background section will inspire the granting agency's confidence in your intelligence, perseverance and integrity and encourage them to keep reading the proposal.

IV. Description of the Project

Begin this section by re-stating the project description given in the initial summary, then break it down into specific chronological stages, indicating who will be involved during each stage, how long it will take, and what will be the results of each stage. If you are employing a specific methodological approach or ideology, clearly indicate such in this section. In a separate appendix, you should include the *résumés* (c.v.'s) of each key person involved in the project. The description section will be the longest part of the proposal. If it is too short, you probably have not done enough research or thought out all of the details.

V. Results and Benefits of the Project

In this section, you are no longer dealing with facts you have obtained through research, but rather, with hopes, dreams and wishes you want to realize. A very important factor that all granting agencies look for is multiplier effect, in other words, the capacity of a project to reach and influence as many people and organizations as possible, especially people in the decision-making ranks of a society or organization. This is the section in which you should state the extensive multiplier effect of your project. Another important item to emphasize is project products — will your project result in a book or video which can be used to educate and empower people throughout the country and the region? Will your project result in the establishment of a network of scholars, activists, lawyers, and teachers who will continue to meet and work on these problems/needs long after the grant money is gone? This section should conclude with a viable follow-up plan. Granting agencies do not like to put a lot of money into a limited, short-term project; they prefer to see long-term and multi-dimensional results. Make the argument here that your project has this emphasis.

VI. BUDGET NARRATIVE

Here you must provide an itemized budget, by category, for the entire project, from beginning to end. Include such categories as salaries, day-to-day expenses, such as telephone and travel costs; publication costs of any written materials; operating costs (for example, office rental, office supplies electricity, special equipment *etc.*). Provide sub-totals for each category, and then a final grand total.

VII. APPENDICES

Include an appendix for each of the following: *résumés* of key personnel; charter, by-laws and history of your organization; maps of regions you will be focusing upon, and letters of support from key political, social, and religious leaders in the targeted region.

NOTE:

It should take at least two months to write a good grant proposal once you have collected all of the necessary information. Be sure to write several drafts until you have written the shortest and most informative proposal possible, which is also interesting to read and likely to make the reader feel enthusiastic and hopeful about your project. Once you have gotten good at writing grant proposals, you can probably do a good job in less than one month's time, but if you are a beginner, give yourself time to perfect your skills.

Once you have completed the grant proposal, make sure that it arrives to the granting agency well before the deadline. It can take six to eight months to learn whether or not you have received funding. Once you have submitted the grant proposal, there is nothing to do but wait patiently and undertake any preparatory steps concerning the project that do not cost a lot of money, such as mobilizing individuals and organizations, informing the general public, targeting additional areas for focus, *etc.* Do not contact the granting agency; they will contact you, either to say you got the grant, or to let you know that you did not. If you don't get the grant, never call or write the agency asking for explanation. you will not get one. For every grant that is given, more than one hundred are refused. The foundation does not have the time to respond to hundreds of requests for explanation.

If you do not get funding the first time, do not give up! Most organizations make many attempts to obtain funding before they are successful; but once they do get funding, it becomes much easier to obtain funding in the future. Have faith in yourself and maintain enthusiasm about your project, and simply try again. Good luck!

Brigitte Kheir Keirouz, Environmentalist and Feminist

by Rima Jeha,
LAU Student of Social Work

"The only common ground uniting all Lebanese people, regardless of their confessional membership or political ideology, is the environment. It is the very basis of our lives, yet not enough is being done to protect and preserve it." So asserts Brigitte Kheir Keirouz, a young environmental activist who now serves as the Lebanese National Coordinator for LIFE (Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment), a project of the United Nations Development Program. Keirouz, a dynamic young woman who hails from the north of Lebanon, holds two degrees from the American University of Beirut (a BS in Nutrition and Dietetics and a Masters in Public Health). She worked for Save the Children during the war years and has always been concerned about public and environmental health conditions in Lebanon.

In her current professional capacity, Keirouz is trying to mobilize action and legislation to halt the general degradation of the Lebanese environment in the post-war period. "Our behavior towards the environment shows a complete lack of foresight!", Keirouz exclaims. "The negligence and indifference towards nature is so pronounced. People do not seem to realize — or to care — that the costs of degrading the environment year after year are so much more expensive than projects to remedy and halt the damage. For example, instead of spending a little bit more money on creating environmentally sound quarries in remote, treeless areas of the country, such as the eastern mountain sides, companies are cutting down trees and removing valuable top soil in the Metn and Kesirwan to mine gravel for buildings and road construction. This is a criminal action! But who is trying to stop it?" Keirouz specifically condemned the destruction of the Nahr Ibrahim area, where important historical ruins are located, and quarrying near prehistoric caves in Antelias. "People are quarrying there simply because it is cheaper and more convenient for them; their only interest is to make money fast without any thought of the future repercussions."

Another environmental disaster that concerns Keirouz is the destruction of Lebanon's sea front. "Lebanon's beaches are one of the country's biggest tourist attractions, but unfortunately, 20,000 industrial plants dump wastes on the beaches each year. Not only our sea water, but also our ground water, surface waters and soils have become very polluted. Take the example of the environmental atrocities in Burj Hammoud [a suburb northeast of downtown Beirut], where various kinds of dangerous toxic wastes were dumped during the war. Every ton of solid waste produced in Beirut ends up in the sea, so the water is extremely polluted now."

Keirouz has some advice and suggestions for halting, or at least limiting, Lebanon's rampant environmental destruction. First, she recommends that the Government adopt the "PPP" policy, *i.e.*, "Polluter Pays Principle", which stipulates that taxes must be imposed on industrial polluters equal in monetary amount to the cost of treating their wastes, thus forcing them to adopt environmentally safe practices. For instance, in Chekkah (a heavy industry site located midway between Jbeil and Tripoli), the Government should impose taxes on factories which are greater than the costs of air filters and scrubbers for smokestacks. Another way to reduce harm to the environment would be to enforce Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for every reconstruction project undertaken in Lebanon. Keirouz cited the example of the proposed Inter-Arab highway, which will link Beirut to Damascus. "How environmentally friendly is this project? So many new buildings, including large hotels, will be built along the highway. Will these hotels have adequate septic tanks?"

Keirouz feels that legislation is key in fighting environmental devastation. She suggests that the Lebanese Parliament enact new laws requiring that trees be planted around every new construction site and that water treatment facilities be installed in every municipality in Lebanon. Most importantly, however, Keirouz stresses that municipal elections be held soon to replenish and reinforce local government throughout Lebanon. Since no municipal elections have been held in the country since the 1960s, municipal governments are under-staffed and ineffectual. Free and independent elections at the municipal level would guarantee the installment of a new generation of local officials, who, it is hoped, will be environmentally aware and concerned enough to take action to halt the wholesale destruction of one of Lebanon's greatest resources: its natural beauty.

Keirouz suggests that women may be able to play a key role at this level. Noting that women were strong, brave and persevering during the long, tiring years of Lebanon's civil war, Keirouz feels that women are less interested in ideological differences and political maneuvers than men are, and that this makes them more capable of focusing fully on accomplishing the task at hand. "During the war, Lebanese women proved that they were strong. They had to assume so many responsibilities, in and

outside of their homes. They were forced to become stronger, and as a result, they are now ready and willing to engage in political action. Also, women were able to deal with all of the disasters of the war. No matter how bleak the situation became, they never gave up hope."

Although Keirouz is pleased to see women in Lebanon's Parliament, she notes that their arrival to positions of power resulted from inheriting their seats from male relatives. "But, at least they are there; it is a start!" What Keirouz would like to see, however, is more women serving as ministers in the Lebanese Government. "It is about time we had a woman minister! Why not? Women are as capable as men, and perhaps more persevering; they have real commitment and passion about their work." Keirouz's overall assessment of women in post-war Lebanon is that they have "definitely progressed" and proved themselves capable in the private and public spheres.

Keirouz relates that her own greatest satisfaction and reward is knowing that, through her work, she is playing a part in preserving the common good of the whole world and ensuring a safer future for tomorrow's children. "It is a good feeling to know that you are pursuing a higher goal, and knowing that what you are ultimately working for is the preservation of Mother Earth." If more energetic, hard-working and conscientious young women like Brigitte Kheir Keirouz enter the field of public service and environmental protection, Lebanon's future can only be brighter.

photo credit: Hayat Karnouh

Essay

Female Circumcision: Culture or Torture?

Heba Hage,
LAU Alumna

The operation lasts just fifteen minutes. A little girl is entirely nude, her legs spread wide apart while she is held down by several women. A traditional practitioner offers a short prayer, takes a sharp razor, and excises the clitoris. She cuts from top to bottom. Then, to ensure adhesion, the practitioner uses four acacia thorns which pierce one side and pass through the other. These are held in place by a thread or horse-hair. The girl is defenseless; her unbearable pain is expressed in howls (1).

This is the ancient practice of female circumcision — or perhaps mutilation is a better word. As a woman, I feel that this practice is abhorrent. Furthermore, it is "...medically unnecessary, painful and extremely dangerous, a deliberate disfigurement and disablement affecting millions of women, carried out solely in the name of tradition, without ideological, practical or religious sanction" (2). Recent World Health Organization statistics show that more than 80 million women have undergone this form of genital mutilation in about 40 different countries (3). In Egypt, where about 80 percent of rural women are circumcised, 365 girls are operated upon daily (4).

Evidence from the remains of female mummies dating from 2000, B.C. indicate that female genital mutilation originated in ancient Egypt (5). Types of circumcisions include *sunna* (excision/clitorodectomy) and Pharaonic infibulation. Although *sunna* is considered to be the mildest form, the physical injury inflicted in each case is extreme. If complications develop, a girl is likely to die from tetanus infection resulting from the use of unsterilized and dangerous equipment such as blades, iron knives and glass shards (6). Even if she lives, she might suffer from hemorrhaging, painful urination and difficult menstruation. Even worse, when delivering a child, scar tissue blocking the birth canal can result in fetal and maternal death (7). Not only is anesthesia unheard of, but the wound is often cleansed with kerosene or engine oil! (8) . The psychological and physical trauma of female circumcision generates feelings of betrayal and resentment towards adults, who trick and coerce young girls into having this operation against their will.

A recent report affirmed that this barbaric practice has been on the rise, despite vigorous campaigns by international and local health organizations (9). What are the reasons for its persistence? Proponents give justifications on the grounds of tradition, enhancement of fertility, religion, prevention of promiscuity and cultural relativism.

Tradition refers to ancestral practices that symbolize the shared heritage of an ethnic group (10). Advocates of female circumcision insist on its continuation for the reason that it is handed down by their forebears; but the real reason is that it is the only means for females to achieve a recognizable status and role in society and hence be accepted and integrated into their community. This tradition gives a girl an ultimatum rather than a choice: either jeopardize your health or be deprived of esteemed social acceptance (11). I believe that this is wrong because the promotion of social and political cohesion should not be dependent on the suffering and death of individual human beings (12).

Despite convincing medical evidence, traditional practitioners — who perform 90 percent of all circumcisions — continue to believe that this sexual surgery is a prerequisite for fertility and safe delivery (13). Some communities, like the Isoko and the Urhobo of the Delta state, even conduct circumcision when a woman is seven months pregnant (14). How can an ethnic group ensure cultural continuity when this practice endangers the very fertility of women, the life-givers of any society?

Justifications for circumcision based upon religion are misused and rest upon frail doctrinal grounds. Although both Islam and Christianity uphold virtues such as modesty and virginity, neither religion requires female circumcision (15). Furthermore, Christian and Muslim proponents cannot site textual references in either the Bible or the Qur'an to justify this alleged religious requirement. Also, not all Muslim countries practice circumcision — not even Saudi Arabia, the cradle of Islam (16). Ultimately, the argument misuses religion as an instrument of fear and exploitation.

Another reason advanced for the practice of circumcision is the male desire to prevent female promiscuity. Quite simply, sexual control and subjugation of women through circumcision suggests that men do not exercise responsibility and control over their *own* sexual behavior. Circumcision is thus enforced to control the sexual impulses of women in a way that suits the needs of men (17). Otherwise, why does custom not advocate castration to ensure male fidelity?

The theory of cultural relativism claims that human rights violations in one culture may be viewed as morally right in a different cultural context (18). It is understandable that any abolition of local traditions based on external norms is likely to be rejected, but in the case of female genital mutilation, I have reservations about using the argument of cultural relativism. For example, Article 17 of the African Charter affirms that

"every individual may freely take part in the cultural life of his community. The promotion and protection of morals and traditional values recognized by the community shall be the duty of the State" (19). It would be highly ironic to argue that such a document would endorse female circumcision when it involves torture and mutilation to half the population it claims to protect! Obviously, only "positive" and life-enhancing African values should be preserved. Another example which is at odds with cultural relativism is the French trial of an African immigrant accused of sanctioning the genital mutilation of her daughter (20). The prosecutor, Miss Weil-Curiel, argued that "not only is circumcision a form of butchery to control women," it also violates a French law against harming children. Miss Weil-Curiel won the case.

In essence, one cannot propound "culture" and "ethnicity" to defend female circumcision because, according to the *Harvard Law Review*, "...even cultural values and practices are as legitimately subject to criticism from a human rights perspective as any structural aspect of a society" (21). It is logical to associate culture with tradition and history, but one must recognize that culture is an amalgam of the traditional and the contemporary; it is dynamic and not static (21). Therefore, it is pertinent to re-examine practices passed down in the light of contemporary values in order to determine whether these practices deserve to be perpetuated. A practice such as female genital mutilation does not deserve legitimacy because, as an age-old custom, it has outlasted any factual or historical usefulness or validity it may have once possessed. It is a practice devoid of benefit to society as a whole. Nor is it of benefit to the individual, to whom it offers only agony, injury and fear.

Last, but not least, one must keep in mind the all-important point that "within a dynamic notion of culture, a woman's health and reproductive freedom are essential to cultural survival *and* continuity" (23).

Editor's Note: According to a recent issue of *The Women's Watch*, a publication of the International Women's Rights Action Watch, the Government of Egypt has recently retracted its ban on female genital mutilation. Due to pressures from certain sectors of the religious establishment, the Egyptian Health Minister, Ali Abdel Fatah, issued a decree that medicalizes the practice of female circumcision and designates particular hospitals as appropriate centers for the performance of the operation for a fee. According to spokesmen at the Health Ministry, the new medicalization policy is an attempt to halt the "butchery that damages the health and lives of more than half of all young girls." However, many observers noted that the Ministry's decision came in spite of a recent *fatwah* issued by the Grand Mufti of Egypt (which was supported by many other respected religious leaders) stating that there is nothing in the Qur'an to support the continued practice of female circumcision, and that the opinion of the medical establishment should prevail in making decisions on this issue. According to the New Woman Research Center in Egypt, "the decision to codify and medicalize circumcision, rather than criminalizing it, has nothing to do with religion or morality, but is rather a decision to codify the control of women, and to codify violence against them, in addition to codifying their inferior status in society" (*The Women's Watch*, Volume 9, No. 5, June 1995. Page 6).

Footnotes

(1) Darkenoo, Efna and Scilla Elworth (1992). "Female Genital Mutilation: Proposals for Change," *Minority Rights Group International.*

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

(3) Heise, Lori (1989). "The Global War Against Women, *The Washington Post*, April 9.

(4) *Al-Kifaa al-Arabi*, p. 27.

(5) Assaad, Marie (1979). *Female Circumcisions in Egypt: Current Research and Social Implications*. American University of Cairo.

(6) *Harvard Law Review*, "What has Culture Got to do with It?" Excising the Harmful Tradition of Female Circumcision." Vol. 106, No. 8, p. 1947.

(7) *Ibid.*, p. 1944.

(8) Heise, p. B4.

(9) Ezzat, Dina (1994). "A Savage Surgery." *The Middle East*, January, pp. 35-37.

(10) *Harvard Law Review*, p. 1950.

(11) *Ibid.*, p. 1950.

(12) *Ibid.*

(13) *Ibid.*

(14) *Ibid.*, p. 1951.

(15) *Ibid.*

(16) Ezzat, p. 36.

(17) Darkenoo, p. 13.

(18) *Harvard Law Review*, p. 1953.

(19) *Ibid.*, p. 1955.

(20) Simons, Marlise (1983) "African Mutilation Ritual Collides with French Law," *International Herald Tribune*, November 25th.

(21) *Harvard Law Review*, p. 1959.

(22) *Ibid.*, p. 1959.

(23) *Ibid.*, p. 1960.

Rights & Wrongs

The Story of Hala:
Anatomy of an "Honor Crime"

by Ghena Ismail,
Editorial Assistant

Can you imagine punishing a person for having blue eyes instead of green ones, or for having a fair complexion instead of a dark one? Can you believe that we are living in a society which evaluates people according to their anatomical attributes? Can there be anything more barbaric than killing a girl for something over which she has no control and perhaps has never looked at, due to a sense of shame? Only 41.32 percent of girls are born with what may be considered a normal hymen; 11.2 percent with an elastic hymen, 16.16 percent with so fine a membrane that is easily torn, and 31.32 percent with a thick elastic hymen.(1)

Hala's hymen had never been intact; it did not meet with the "proper criteria". Hence, execution was her fate. The judge was her father and the executioner was her brother. All of her tears and protests that she was innocent were to no avail. All that mattered was the condition of her hymen, which apparently did not match with society's specifications: it did not bleed on her wedding night. Perhaps it was too thin or elastic, and Hala had to pay for this with her life!

One has to admit, though, that Hala was given a fair chance according to the legal codes of Lebanon. A judgment wasn't passed on her immediately, as is the case with many other girls, especially those living in rural areas. Upon her family's request, Hala's husband was kind enough to have sexual intercourse with her several times — every time in a more fierce manner than the time before — hoping that she would eventually bleed. However, she did not. Hala cried, and her husband, who believed she was innocent, told her, "I know you are innocent. Hence, I will wound my finger with a knife and when it bleeds, I will stain the sheet with my blood and present it to your family as proof of your innocence." But Hala's pride and integrity prevented her from accepting her husband's solution. She asserted that she would confront her family with the truth. "I know I am innocent; I have never had sexual intercourse with any man other than my husband." This truth hardly mattered to Hala's father, though, who passed the death sentence on his daughter and ordered her indignant brother to carry it out.

Hala's murder was taken to the military court, since her brother is a corporal in the Lebanese army; and here, one should note the fairness of the judges who were so sensitive to Hala's misery that they would not accept to sentence her brother to less than one year's imprisonment! Apparently, if Hala's brother had bounced a check, he would have been subject to a longer prison sentence. (Article 666 of the penal code specifies that a person who bounces a check can be sentenced for up to three years in prison.) Does this mean that a check is of more value to the judges than the life of an innocent woman? Does it mean that unfortunate girls like Hala, whom nature has neglected to endow with the proper kind of hymen, are not protected by the Lebanese law? Or does it suggest that our laws include a hidden form of discrimination against women? To answer these questions objectively, one must examine the Lebanese laws.

The Lebanese Constitution guarantees equality among all Lebanese citizens, and emphasizes that personal freedom is safeguarded and protected by the law (Articles 7 and 8 of the Lebanese Constitution.) However, if we look at the Lebanese penal code, we find that it doesn't really conform to the Constitution, as it clearly includes laws that distinguish men from women. These laws are related to the so-called "crimes of honor." What are these crimes? To whose honor do they refer? And why is such a distinction made between men and women?

Crimes of honor refer to those actions committed by a man in an effort to defend his honor. Hence, it is *man's* honor which is meant here. Interestingly enough, though, man's honor in our Middle Eastern societies is more closely related to the sexual behavior of the women in the family than to his own behavior! In other words, a man can commit adultery and yet be considered an honorable man, as long as women in his family are safeguarding their sex organs. A man can sleep with a different prostitute each day, but if one of the women in his family was only suspected of having had a sexual relationship outside of marriage, his honor would be greatly wounded. Hence, he would be excused for killing the *suspected* woman and her partner. Article 562 indicates that if a man was surprised at seeing one of the females in his family in an act of adultery or pre-marital sex, and subsequently killed her unintentionally, he will benefit from an extenuating excuse. It is worth noting here that the act of adultery to which Article 562 refers need not be witnessed by the murderer. The mere presence of circumstantial evidence providing a man with a sense of certainty about the occurrence of such an act allows him to benefit from the extenuating excuse if the act of killing is carried out immediately, due to surprise.

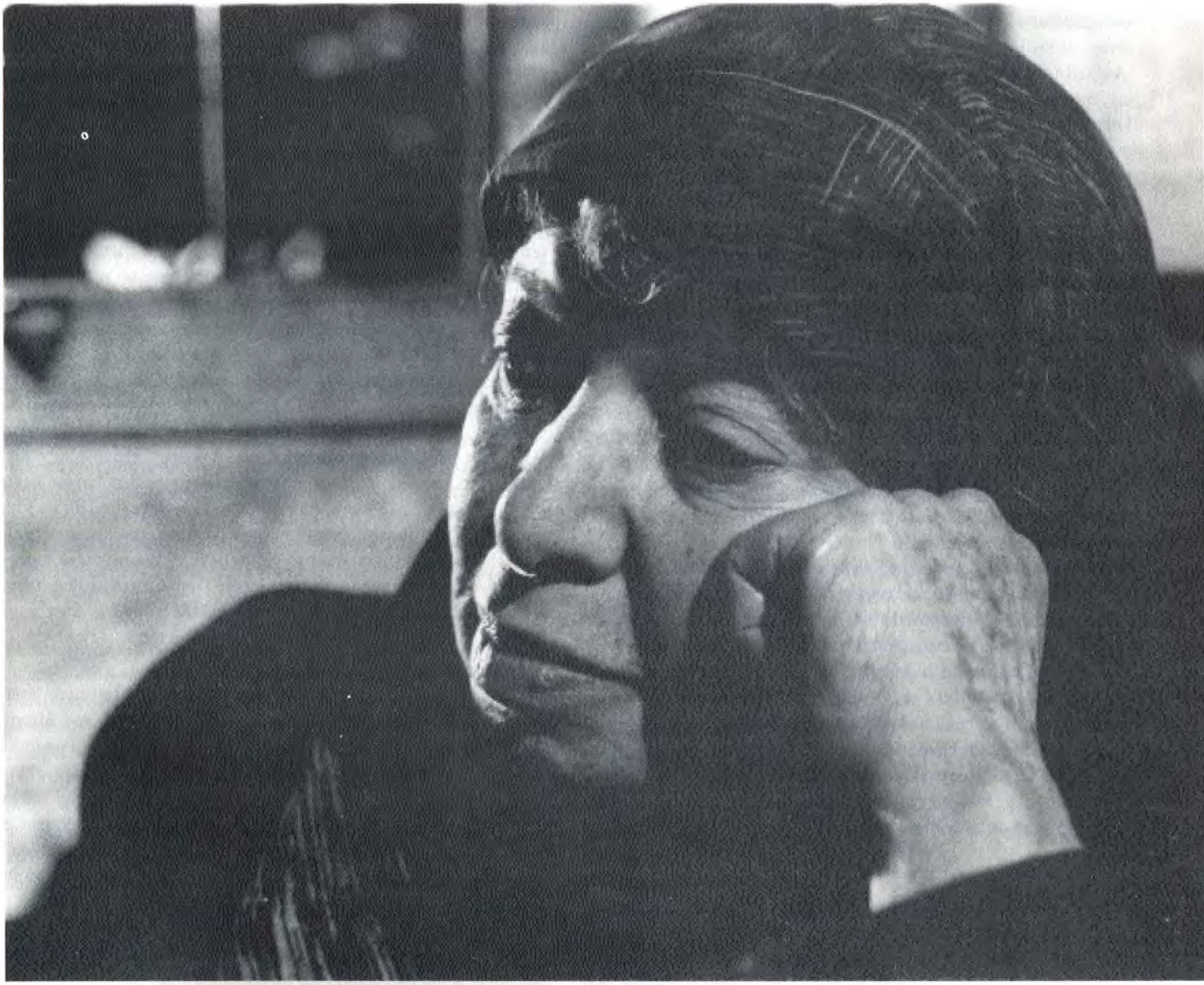
Apparently, Hala's inability to bleed was considered the sound evidence which provided her brother with the utmost certainty about her non-virginity, and strangely enough, her brother's crime was considered unintentional. As a matter of fact, Hala's brother, upon learning that she did not bleed, consulted with his

father first, took the permission for the murder, and then took Hala to the suburbs of the country where he actually killed her. In spite of his conscious planning of the murder, his act of killing was not seen as intentional or deliberate by our judges!

Should we deduce, then, that our law is more favorable to the man's welfare? Or should we deduce that our law is influenced by beliefs which indicate that a man is less capable of exercising control over either his temper or his sexual impulses? But isn't such a belief quite offensive to any decent, mature human being? Apparently not, at least as far as our judges are concerned. Even if these laws are not offensive to them as human beings, they are highly offensive to Lebanon's legal institutions. What is the use of any legal system that is incapable of implementing justice? What is the importance of a law if it cannot protect innocent girls like Hala from ignorance, anger and unjustified suspicion? It is certain that no law can ensure safety and protection for all the citizens all of the time, but it is just as certain that laws should not be subject to the biases or prejudices of a patriarchal system that uses religious and moral values and sometimes man's honor to mask its cruelty.

Footnotes

(1) Statistics of the Institute of Forensic Medicine, Baghdad, Iraq, 1940-1970, published in *The Iraqi Medical Journal*, 21 February, 1972, as reported in *The Hidden Face of Eve* by Dr. Nawwal As-Saadawi.



Picture credit: Hayat Karanouh

Women, Education and Social Change

Unlearning Abuse

As I walked across AUB's campus one afternoon, I overheard a conversation between two students, a woman and a man. The male student was trying to explain to his friend that there are times when it is necessary for a man to beat a woman. I was tempted to stop. I turned back, and the look on the young woman's face stunned me more than what the young man was saying. She was nodding her head in complacent agreement, and seemed convinced that he was speaking a self-evident truth. The sad part is not just that this actually occurred, but that the young man's comments are not considered an extreme or unacceptable opinion in contemporary Lebanon.

As part of my doctoral dissertation research, I have spent the last six months investigating the history of women's education in Lebanon, specifically, the effect of higher education on Lebanese women's social status. Through my research, I have discovered many signs of improvement and indications of empowerment. Yet, that is all they are: signs and indications. In reality, tradition and culture, melded into religion, are so engraved in people's minds that they obviate the idea that formal education, however comprehensive it may be, empowers women and fosters social change. True awareness and change, I believe, occur only when people feel it is in their best interests to change. Until such awareness dawns, they tend to use the excuse of tradition, culture and religion when they feel threatened by a perceived loss of power. In our society, it is men who decide when and what type of awareness and change occur, when we need to redefine our traditions and reconstruct meanings that fit the world in which we live, or when to return to a patriarchal interpretation of religious life, since many believe that all the ills of the world are due to the fact that we have strayed away from God.

Lebanon has a long history of formal and informal education. Inhabiting a trade center and a gateway between East and West, the Lebanese have been exposed to many conquests going back thousands of years and have adapted to various ideologies and lifestyles. This type of education is priceless; it helped Lebanese society to survive and succeed in a very competitive milieu. The Lebanese continually had to bend and reshape their thinking, because a tree branch that does not bend will break. When formal education was introduced, all Lebanese embraced it. History tells us that this education was not reserved for boys alone, but served girls as well. Girls enrolled in schools (*madaaris*), and many were taught at home.

When the 19th century brought an influx of missionary educators, girls' schools were opened as well. A few wealthy families even sent their daughters abroad to continue their education. A current Byblos Bank "infomercial" tells us that Helene Barudi was the first Lebanese woman to receive a medical degree from London in 1895, after which she returned to Lebanon to practice. Women were admitted to AUB's nursing program in 1905 (1) and by the 1920's a Women's Junior College had been established and AUB and St. Joseph's University began accepting female students.

Lebanon was one of the first Arab countries to provide higher education for the entire region. More astonishing, it was also the first country to provide women with equal educational opportunities. By the 1950s, education was not the preserve of the wealthy alone. Lebanon's hunger and eagerness for knowledge resulted in women representing approximately half of the student population in most of Lebanon's universities (2) and girls scoring higher than boys in general governmental testing in all fields, including the physical sciences.

Yet, as researcher Mona Khalaf has noted, "Lebanese women have easy access to education....but that education has not enabled them to reach decision-making positions"(3). There is much work to be done, and it is clear that formal education, though crucial for fostering awareness, is not the sole solution to the difficulties women confront in this society. There is another type of education, an informal one known as socialization, which must be addressed. This type of learning is needed to transform awareness into concrete change. Socialization enables the re-examination of ideologies which state that women should be punished if they do not serve men's purposes, *i.e.*, if they do not serve the good of society. An interview with a respected religious cleric, Sayyed Muhammad Hassanein Fadlallah, reveals what many young Lebanese men and women are learning informally. Fadlallah argues that "a man has a right to beat his wife when she refuses to have sexual relations with him, which she should comply with at all times...unless she specifies when she does not want to in the text of the marriage agreement" (4). Another cleric, Father George Dimas, stresses that 'there are circumstances that lead to violence and the woman is not always innocent....Many times it is she who instigates the situation" (5).

These men and others invariably cite outdated and selective interpretations of religious traditions and holy writings, and always shape them to benefit and serve men. Several assumptions underlie these beliefs and attitudes. One is that a man has a natural right to force a woman to do what he wants; there is a clear hierarchy and he is on top. Second, we find an arrogant, nonchalant attitude that in most cases of violence, it is the woman's fault. She causes problems and the poor defenseless man is left so perplexed that he simply must resort to violence to correct an injustice done to him. Third is the assumption that a man has a right to use violence against a woman, or anybody else who upsets or frustrates him. This type of discourse is not only expressed by the older generation and the clergy ; rather, it is prevalent among the young, both females and males.

The opinions of the two clerics mentioned above are shared by many, especially the fathers, brothers, husbands, and male cousins of young women. The concept of women serving only as mothers and wives, existing solely to please men sexually and provide them with male heirs, is the *sine qua non* of patriarchy. This socially constructed ideology holds back women, as well as men. This worldview is rigid and permits no alternatives; it is reinforced in socialization through stories, examples, proverbs, movies, songs and television programs that aid in educating children and developing their sense of their sex roles and functions in society.

These notions form the basis of Lebanon's Personal Status Laws. If women are created to please men and provide them with children, preferably male, then it stands to reason that if women misbehave and do not provide men with their God-given rights, then men can resort to violence. Lebanese laws reinforce this ideology. The legal code relegates women's issues to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and private family issues. These codes make women completely dependent upon men and their mercy. Women are allotted the status of legal minor; they are assumed to have less capacity and intelligence; thus, they need to be guided, even by physical force.

Interestingly, when women were first accepted to institutions of higher education, they chose to study nursing, medicine and pharmacy. These professions are associated with the physical sciences, which tend to be viewed as more difficult to master than other fields. So, women can be entrusted with the most important tasks of having children, raising them, feeding them, even medically nursing them and others back to health, but women must be beaten into submission for men's pleasures. Perhaps there is no contradiction here. As long as women are seen primarily as nurturers, wives, and mothers, or in other subservient roles which serve men, their submission is unquestioningly accepted. Women who promote such subservient roles will be rewarded, for they serve patriarchy and men's need to control and be powerful. Those women who ask for rights that diverge from woman's traditional role will be viewed with mistrust, even as enemies who are trying to destroy the family and society.

Lebanese society is still in a state of transition and flux after experiencing nearly two decades of instability, chaos and violence, all of which was brought on by men. The post-war era is an important period for reshaping Lebanese society and for reviewing the roles its citizens will play in the future. In June 1993, *Al-Anwar* newspaper published a revealing survey. The results indicated that 60 percent of Lebanese men believe women are equal to men, but feel that women's primary and natural function is found in the home as wives and mothers. Men, however, belong in the public sphere, *e.g.* , work and politics. The men will allow women to go to school and work, as long as they do not abandon their God-given duties to their men.

Why should a society be so eager to educate its women if they belong only in the private realm? One answer is that education and work complement each other as long as they serve patriarchal ends. The more educated a woman, the better educated her children and the more her husband can benefit from her work in times of financial need. She can even be a source of conversation, someone with whom he can talk. "Every man has a woman behind him who wants to discuss his job with him....if he doesn't discuss it with his wife, he'll probably discuss it with his secretary" (6), notes Mona Khauli, National Director of YWCA in Lebanon. She inadvertently stresses that a man requires that a woman satisfy him intellectually as well, or else he will turn elsewhere for such stimulation. Another example of this type of thinking became apparent when a Professor of Humanities at the Lebanese American University, Nazik Saba Yared, conducted research on battered women. She shared her disturbing results with some of her female friends, and was shocked to hear them say "these women deserved to be beaten, or else they must like to be beaten, otherwise they would not accept it!" (7). This philosophy is shared by many men as well. One husband concluded that his wife did not tell anyone he beat her because she herself believed she deserved it (8).

Yet, many women who experience physical abuse have nowhere to turn. Their families force them to keep it quiet and return to the violent husband "for the sake of the children", or they blame the wife for provoking her husband and make it clear to her that they do not want to know. The woman may come to feel the same way. Unless women begin to participate constructively in reshaping socialization by actively reinterpreting tradition, religion and the complementary roles of the sexes in Lebanese society, the vicious cycle will continue regardless of how well-educated women become. Women must demand to participate in the dissemination of knowledge; they must give voice to new social constructions at all levels of our society: political, legal and economic. Only in this way can we develop just and inclusive social roles for all, not just for men. The prevailing "zero-sum" attitude needs to change. It is only with the help of informal cultural education that society can grasp that women are neither men's enemies nor their slaves. However, the first and greatest challenge is to convince women that they deserve better, that they are as intelligent as men, and that they can contribute more to society than simply biological services.

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Footnotes

(1) AUB *Alumni Magazine*, 1990, p.12.
(2) *Al-Raida*, 1995, Vol. XI, No. 68, p.12
(3) *Ibid.*, p.14.
(4) *Al-Raida* 1994, Vol. XI, Nos. 65-66, p. 30.
(5) *Ibid..*, p. 28.
(6) *Al-Raida*, 1995, Vol. XII, Nos. 70-71, 95, p. 31.
(7) *Al-Raida* , 1994, Vol. XI, Nos. 65-66.
(8) *Ibid.*

Khalida Messaoudi: An Algerian Woman Stands Up

Paris: Flammarion, 1995
Reviewed by Wafa Stephan Tarnowski

Khalida Messaoudi is a feminist leader and a democrat who has backed the Algerian Government's decision to stop the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) from winning the 1991 parliamentary elections. For that, and for her critique of FIS policies towards women, the FIS has officially condemned Messaoudi to death. She now lives in hiding, with family and friends, unable to stay in one place for more than one night for fear of being discovered and killed.

During one of her clandestine trips to France, she was interviewed by the French journalist Elisabeth Schemla of the *Nouvel Observateur* newspaper. This book is a transcription of that long interview. It was dedicated to "all the raped and murdered women, to all the intellectuals, children, artists and journalists who were victims of the FIS' armed faction and to all who are saving Algeria's honor."

The book is part autobiography and part political analysis of the historical process that brought about the bloody confrontation between the FIS and the Algerian authorities. It explains, from a pro-democratic, pro-feminist standpoint, what went "wrong" in Algeria and why the country is wracked by violence and why its intellectuals, journalists, singers, teachers and students are being killed on an almost daily basis.

Messaoudi discusses in detail the FIS' ascent to power. Some of the important reasons for this ascent, in her opinion, were the state's policies of forced arabicization of education and the 30-year-old one-party system, which forced citizens to have a narrow view of history and the world, while excluding them from active and meaningful participation in Algeria's political life. Thus, young people brought up in that atmosphere are unable to perceive any dialogue between philosophy and religion, except through the lens of Islamic fundamentalism. Hence, young Algerians (who form 70 percent of the country's 26 million citizens) have grown up to believe that Islam is a "global substitute for all ideological, political, economic and social problems" (p. 145).

Messaoudi's generation (she was born in 1958), which is that of the daughters and sons of Algeria's freedom fighters, was one destined to fill the jobs left vacant by French colonialists. It was an optimistic generation which believed in freedom, democracy and civil society. The clash happening now in Algeria is between these two generations, explains Messaoudi (p. 23).

Where do women fit into this clash, one wonders? Messaoudi devotes two chapters of the book to this question, in addition to the few autobiographical chapters concerned with her childhood and upbringing as a Berber woman and direct descendant of a *marabout* and a local Muslim saint, Sidi Alí Moussa. According to Messaoudi, the year 1980 was a watershed for Algerian women. The new president, Chadli Ben Jedid, presented a new personal status code which made Algerian women perpetual minors. Women were not to be allowed to leave the country unless accompanied by a male guardian. Women were only recognized as "daughters of", "mothers of", and "wives of" men. They could not work, marry, divorce, study or inherit without the consent of their tutor (Article 11). Article 8 of the code allows polygamy, while Article 53, on divorce, clearly favors men. Although the wife gets to keep the children, the husband remains the legal guardian and tutor. So children cannot go to school without their father's signature, for instance. Article 52 of the Code gives the conjugal home back to the husband in the event of a divorce. Thus, many divorced women are left homeless with their children, living in the streets.

Concerning inheritance, men receive double the amount that women receive. Here, Messaoudi blames the Algerian Government for pushing for the adoption of the "Family Code", despite many protests by women on the 8th of March, 1980, during the year 1981, and up until the 9th of June, 1984, the date of the Code's final ratification (p. 85). According to Messaoudi, it was only women who opposed the code (p. 92), not only that, but two generations of women opposed it: the Freedom Fighters of the early 1960s and their daughters.

In 1981, both of these generations of Algerian women

organized a demonstration against the Code. Participating in the demonstration were some of the women who once fought alongside men against the French colonial forces. Messaoudi asked these women why they had gone back to their kitchens and turned their backs on public life for two decades. Their answer, according to Messaoudi, was that they had never stopped being militants, but that their work was not public any longer. They had been busy taking care of orphans and war widows, but had grown tired of fighting "outside"; they wanted to go back "inside" the house to be with their families and children (p. 83). However, the women fighters were now very disappointed with the men alongside of whom they fought. They told Messaoudi "we never thought that they would manage the country like this and do to us what they have done!" (p. 84).

As for the most famous of the women freedom fighters, Djamila Bouhired, Messaoudi recalls meeting her one day, by chance, in front of a store. They recognized each other. Bouhired started crying and Messaoudi became very emotional. The FIS armed faction had already begun its violent persecution of women who did not war a veil in public. Bouhired told Messaoudi, "My daughter, what are you living through these days?! Have courage, and don't give up!" (p. 85). Courage, Messaoudi has a lot of. On the 16th of May, 1985, she, together with forty other women from different regions and various political parties, met and created "The Association for Legal Equality between Men and Women". It was permitted to exist until 1989, when it was banned.

In October, 1988, Algeria's youth, students and unemployed took to the streets and attacked all governmental institutions. Their demands were "freedom and dignity and justice, and the right to be themselves". There were thousands of wounded and five hundred dead, as well as scores of arrests during those demonstrations as a result of government repression. Messaoudi's supporters joined in and backed the fight for democracy. A "National Committee Against Torture" was founded and later dissolved. The problem, according to Messaoudi, was that this "democratization" was being implemented under the umbrella of the Family Code, which no one was willing to challenge or change (p.137). Moreover, a law adopted in June 1990 authorized husbands to vote on behalf of their wives in municipal elections. From Messaoudi's perspective, Algerian women were being sacrificed once more (p.138). This, she could not accept. Hence, she has earned the label of "radical" in the eyes of many.

In June, 1989, a fundamentalist armed group set fire to the house of a woman living alone with her seven children because the group considered her a "prostitute" since she was living without the guardianship of a male relative. All Algerian feminist groups mobilized themselves and asked the government for protection for women. At the same time, there was a lot of dissent among these feminist groups, some of whom had decided to support the armed Islamic group's call for the return of the veil, preventing women from working, listening to music and dancing. Messaoudi's own organization was split on these issues, so she moved on to form a new organization entitled "The Independent Association for the Triumph of Women's Rights" (p.140). Messaoudi stresses that the importance of this organization is that it is independent of any male political parties. She says she is for "women's autonomous speech" and women's right to go wherever they wish *(ibid.)*. The "woman" dimension of a female's identity, according to Messaoudi, outweighs all the other dimensions of her being. "She is woman before being Algerian, Berber, Muslim or militant" (p. 142). Messaoudi is a fervent believer in a secular, egalitarian and independent Republic of Algeria *(ibid.)*.

It is obvious to any reader that Messaoudi is a very forceful and passionate person. Her beliefs are clearly delineated and emphatically expressed. One cannot help but to admire her intelligence, integrity and honesty. One of the most touching parts of the book appears at the very beginning, when she recounts her life in hiding and how being prevented from performing her professional role as a math teacher has deprived her of her "spinal cord" (p. 19). She also relates that not having a *chez soi*, a "place of her own", has disturbed her deeply, and how her clandestine life has transformed her into an insomniac, afraid of being alone, yet craving personal space, which is lacking since she is always under others' protection. In order to counteract these fears and disturbances, Messaoudi tells us that she makes a special effort to always be neat, well-dressed, and to present herself correctly to others. Most important, however, is her determination to remain standing *(debout)*: "I must remain standing at all times, for me and for the others", she concludes with conviction (p. 22). *An Algerian Woman Stands Up* is an important addition to the library of anyone interested in the contemporary Arab Islamic world, women's rights and human rights.

Cantata for a Dead Bird

A Novel in French by Claire Gebeyli
(Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996)
Reviewed by Mona Takieddine Amyuni
Associate Professor, Humanities
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Claire Gebeyli's first novel in French, *Cantate pour l'Oiseau Mort*, has just been published in Paris. Familiar with Gebeyli's poetry and journalistic writing for several decades, I approached her novel with great curiosity. Could one write such a thick work (nearly 300 pages), I wondered, when one is essentially a poet? My initial curiosity quickly became great expectation as I read *Cantata*. If arousing expectation and fulfilling it is the sign of a good novel (as E.M. Forster claimed), *Cantata* certainly meets the criteria.

I read the novel in one sitting, carried through the 49 chapters as though through a piece of haunting music (as the title suggests). The two parts of the book converge towards the ultimate tragic images of three victims: a giant stork shot down by callous people; a distorted, ageless and sexless human being named Victor/Loulou; and a beautiful young woman, Lea, who has preserved, in her vibrant soul, the aborted promise of a fresh dawn. Both Lea and Victor/Loulou, however, are killed by the bombs which fall upon Beirut and its citizens during the Lebanese war (1975-1990). Their deaths are presented as emblems of a savage and useless war.

A new departure ends the novel and ties together the conclusion and the opening, as in a great piece of music featuring a subtle pattern of a recurring *leit-motif*. The introduction begins as follows (reviewer's translation): "The time has come to pull together, stitch by stitch, what remains in the memory, to mend the woven fabric of a tapestry whose threads stretch so far back into the past." Then the narrator wonders: "Why should one care about roots? Isn't life the best of all promises? Why should one tie it down to a piece of land?....And yet, not willing it nor understanding its reasons, memory has imposed its laws. Images recur infinitely, recounting, inch by inch, the flow of time and the succession of generations of people....Images bring up to the surface a chorus of voices deeply buried in the earth."

And thus the chorus of voices, the *Cantata*, begins to be heard.

Out of this vast opening, a one-hundred year saga unfolds, covering the lives of generations of families from East and West, meeting first in Alexandria and later in Beirut, during the golden periods of both cities. Greeks, Italians, Arabs and Jews mix, mingle and perform their interrelated dramas before scattering apart again and striking fresh roots in new, far-flung corners of the world.

Gebeyli brilliantly presents an epic tale of continual migrations. She captures the essence of life and death, of wars and revolutions, of the history of great cities housing a rich mixture of people, cultures and ideas, yet fatally breaking down under the weight of political and socio-economic pressures. With great subtlety and grace, the narrator allows the reader to gradually decipher a vision of life and death, of being rooted and uprooted, in this turbulent part of the world. To be born on the shores of the azure Mediterranean, to grow, love, suffer and migrate, define the human condition. The last paragraph of the novel carries Lea's parents by boat to her brothers who have newly established themselves in Australia. This old couple, however, have lived the best years of their lives in Alexandria and Beirut; they sail away from the Mediterranean's shores more dead than alive.

Gebeyli's tale weaves, "stitch by stitch", the great tapestry whose threads stretch so far back into our collective Mediterranean past. Questions of great import loom large over the characters and plot of Gebeyli's fine novel: Isn't the land, any land, God's gift to mankind? Is mankind fatally condemned to conflicts and exile, starting with Cain and Abel's mythic confrontation and ending with war-damaged Beirut?

With great humility, Gebeyli disappears behind her narrator. She does not attempt to give answers to the many questions that the novel implicitly poses. Instead, she trusts the sensibilities of her readers to fill in the blank spaces, stitch by exquisite stitch.