

AL-Raida

Lebanese American University

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The Pioneer الرائدة

Women in the Labor Force



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). 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 development projects; and to enhance the educational and outreach efforts of the Lebanese American University.

PROJECTS: IWSAW activities include academic research on women, local, regional and international conferences; seminars, lectures, 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 monographs on the status, development and conditions of Arab women, in addition to *Al-Raida*. Twelve 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 illiterate and 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 below.

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) 791-645. 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. e-mail: iwsaw@flame.beirut.lau.edu.lb

PURPOSE AND CONTENT: *Al-Raida's* mission is to enhance networking between Arab women and women all over the world; to promote objective research on 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.

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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.

S U B S C R I P T I O N

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HIS STORY RECONSIDERED

On reading Rachid El-Daif's semi-autobiographical novel *'Azizi al-Sayyid Kawabata (Dear Mr. Kawabata, 1995)*, I was struck by an unusual reference to the narrator's grandmother who, owing to extreme poverty, had to leave her husband and children in order to earn a living in America. She spent ten years there before finally returning to Lebanon with enough money that would allow her daughter to have a decent marriage.¹ Initially, I thought the incident was a mere fragment of the author's imagination; however, when I learned that it was based on historical fact, I decided to inquire about this phenomenon. If the majority of the people I consulted with were, like myself, unaware of the existence of such women, a few had heard of this occurrence though they seemed to know very little about it.

This reference in El-Daif's novel set me thinking of these nameless women who had the courage and daring to part with their families and make it all on their own. Feeling ashamed of my ignorance, I began to look for sources that would enlighten me on the topic and provide me with information. It was a very difficult and frustrating task, to say the least. The history books I consulted were full of information on immigration, but there was hardly anything on women immigrants. In my search for sources, I managed, through my friend Nazek Yared, to get hold of Evelyn Shakir's recently published book **Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States (1997)**², a work that should be treasured by every Lebanese and Arab woman.

According to Shakir, around the 1870's a number of Lebanese women both single, and married began to travel "westward" all by themselves. Many of them were spurred by "husband or father" though others "seem to have been acting at their own initiative and for the same reason as men. Above all the siren call for riches." A few others travelled hoping for a good marriage or, as was the case with Gibran Khalil Gibran's mother, "to escape a bad one." What is extraordinary about those women is their ability to endure not only the heavy responsibility they were saddled with, and their longing for the children and family they had left

behind, but also "the compromising moral position [they] occupied, the sexual temptations they could be subjected to and the gossip at home" about women who were scot-free and no longer protected by husband, father or brother.

In America, the jobs open to immigrants included work in textile mills, garment making, shopkeeping, cotton mills and peddling. The latter, according to Shakir, was very attractive because it did not require any "special training... no capital (they took merchandise on consignment), and little English (their wares spoke for themselves). It was also a business easy to liquidate whenever they decided to return home."³ Among the items they sold were beads, cheap necklaces, toilet water, vials of holy water supposed to have come from the holy land, thread, combs, shoelaces, aprons, fabrics, needlework, linen, silk lingerie and eventually dresses to wealthy women. Women pedlers did a better job than men because it was much easier and more proper for a woman to deal with housewives and enter the privacy of their homes in order to sell their goods than it was for men. Within the span of a few years, and after accumulating enough money, many of these women returned home with the sufficient means to help their families in a number of ways including buying a house or land or providing their children with the required schooling or university education.

Bint Arab is a unique book that traces the history of Lebanese migration and immigration to America with special emphasis on women. Shakir is one woman who has attempted to read past events outside of a patriarchal paradigm, and her book will open new horizons particularly that history books scarcely deal with women at all, and when they do, it is done in a casual manner and in passing. The contribution of women seems to have been generally overlooked by many historians who present a history monopolized by men where woman plays a marginal and insignificant role. In other words, one could say that history is read and interpreted by men through a manipulative selection of details, where only a handful of privileged women are presented. These are women who made it because they had the social and economic prestige.

My interest in women and in working women, in particular, induced me to pursue the subject and look for more sources that deal with working women not only at the turn of the century, but also over the past 50 years. Father Boutros Daw's book entitled *Tarikh Al-Mawārina al-Dini wa al-Siyassi wa al-Ḥadari* (**The Religious, Political, and Cultural History of the Maronites**, 1978), deals with the role played by Maronite women in history. He sees the Maronite woman in the context of war and the

Christian religious experience. For Daw, the ideal Maronite woman is the one who combines valour, courage, skilful use of weaponry as well as the purity and chastity of the Virgin Mary. In short, the perfect maronite woman is the one who

combines the qualities of the Amazonian as well as the Virgin and the nurse. One prominent woman he refers to is Alya Francis (1842-1924) who learned medicine from her father and practised it throughout her life. She also learnt fencing and the use of weapons and fought bravely in the various attacks on her family. As a result, and owing to her courage and daring, she was nicknamed the "heroine of Lebanon." Her Amazonian qualities made her a force to be reckoned with _ her voice was enough to scare many a brave warrior.⁵

Apart from aristocratic women, the work generally assigned to women at the turn of the century was restricted to housework, agriculture, weaving, lacework, embroidery, knitting, needlework as well as midwifery. One very important industry before 1914, was the silk industry in which women were directly involved. A number of silk factories were established and, initially, the workers were exclusively male; however, with the success of this industry over the years, there was urgent need for more labourers, and, therefore, girls

were hired though at lower wages than men.⁶ Fawwaz Traboulsi's illuminating article in the newspaper *Al-Hayat* gives an account of the work undertaken by women in the manufacturing of silk. Traboulsi describes the condition of women who worked for thirteen hours a day in the summer and ten in the winter and who were paid one piaster and up to five if they were skilled laborers. Many women would raise silk worm at home, and since silkworm eggs were very expensive, they could only afford a

few grams that they hung in small gauze bags around their necks. It did not take long for the eggs to hatch in the warmth of the women's bosoms though the ideal temperature was supposed to be 25 rather than 35 or 37, but how could they, poor as they were, possibly afford sending the eggs to the proper kilns? This thriving business was soon



"La Cueillette des olives" Oil on canvas Omar Onsi, 1957

discontinued when with the opening of new trade routes to the Far East, Europeans had gained access to processed silk that was cheaper and finer than the silk produced in Lebanon's factories. Accordingly, the silk factories were closed down, and some of them were turned into brothels, the only refuge left for redundant and needy women.⁷ Other factories were turned into more constructive venues. Emily Trad (1870-1950), for instance, converted her father's silk factory into a school for orphans.⁸

The establishment of the Syrian Protestant College (now the American University of Beirut) in 1866 and the American Junior College (now the Lebanese American University) in 1924 assisted in the spread of education among men as well as women and the eventual opening of many schools and the establishment of many journals and magazines in Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine and Iraq where women constituted a pivotal force. Among the pioneers are women journalists whose contributions between 1858 and 1929 cannot be underestimated. According to Shirine Khairallah, there were 179

newspapers in Lebanon during this period.⁹ Before 1945, most women's journals dealt with western women, but after Lebanon won its independence, the journals began to shift emphasis and deal with the problems of Lebanese and Arab women. A few talented women established organizations and women's journals that demanded education for girls, the amendment of personal laws, the removal of the veil, the eradication of illiteracy, poverty, and prostitution, and the improvement of prisons.¹⁰

During the Ottoman period, the jobs open to women were restricted to nursing and midwifery, and women who had degrees were only allowed to practice midwifery and eye treatment which "did not involve a woman treating a man's body." However, towards the end of the Ottoman period, some women began to practice medicine such as the gynecologist-obstetrician Hallum Sabra whose "name appeared in the medical section of the Beirut register for 1889" and who practised medicine with two male doctors in downtown Beirut.¹¹ Gradually, the contribution of women began to gain force. According to the magazine *Ṣawt al-Mar'a* for December 1948, nine women doctors, two dentists and one pharmacist graduated from the American University between 1931 and 1944. Others obtained their degrees from abroad notably the Physicist Salwa Nassar who received a Ph.D in Physics from Berkley, Najlaa Izzeddine who was the first Lebanese woman to receive a Ph.D. in "Historical Research" from Chicago University, and Jamal Harfoush who received her Ph.D. in General Medicine from Harvard University.

In 1923, the Working Woman Association was established by Nazek Al-Abed to deal with problems related to working women. Many projects were envisaged to boost the national industry including the establishment of the Center for handicrafts in 1937 and the starting of the Baalbeck Festival in 1955 to encourage folkloric arts such as dancing, singing, acting and music. As a result of the establishment of the Center for Handicrafts, upper and lower class women were brought together in their joint efforts on projects that would boost the national industry, which necessitated the setting up of centres for needle work, embroidery and other crafts.¹²

The sixties and seventies witnessed more interest by women in Medicine, Engineering, Law, Pharmacy, Business and Business Management. Gilberte Abu Jaudeh, for instance, founded the first Government School of Nursing in 1971-1972 and served as director of the same school, while Eugenie Saed and Labiba Sadaqa were founding members of the YWCA. In fact, the performance of women as directors of schools, hospitals, research institutes and other organizations reveals skill and strong

capability.

If women have been active in the labour force, the majority have not been able to reach top positions in their respective fields. For instance, women journalists have continued to flourish in Lebanon though the vast majority continue to occupy such positions as reporters, art critics, reviewers, correspondents, and fashion critics, but rarely do they make it as editors or columnists, especially in the political field. One reason is that men "still stubbornly believe that women should keep away from politics."¹³ A study made for the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World on the image of women in the Lebanese Press (1935-1975) reveals that weekly newspapers have given more attention to women than daily newspapers though the woman is presented exclusively within social and strictly "feminine" spheres.¹⁴

The sixties witnessed a boom in painting and sculpture as well as the writing of poetry and fiction by women. Women fiction writers dominated the scene during this period and overshadowed the works of men. Among the women writers of novels and short stories are Layla Baalbaki, Emily Nasrallah, Hanan al-Sheikh, Balqis al-Humani, Salwa Safi, Etel Adnan, Rafif Fattuh and many others.

Women are gradually gaining access to jobs previously monopolized by men in the scientific, managerial, and business sectors as well as in other vocations, yet this progress would not and could not have been possible without those other women who over a hundred years ago, had the courage to break the chains and push their way into the male arena. Since history has assigned them a marginal role, it is our duty to interrogate this history, to question his story and retell it from another perspective than the purely male point of view.

Samira Aghacy, Professor of English, L.A.U

ENDNOTES

1 (Beirut: Mukhtarar, 1995), pp. 28-29.

2 (Connecticut, London: Praeger, 1997).

3 *Ibid.*, p. 24-31.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

5 pp. 297, 302.

6 Shakir, p. 49.

7 *Al-Hayat*, Dec. 21, 1997.

8 Shirine Khairallah, *The Sisters of Men* (Beirut: The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, 1996), p. 235.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 176, 203-205.

10 Quoted in Rose Ghurayyib, ed., *Aḍwā' 'ala al-Haraka al-Nisā'iyya al-Mu'aṣira* (Beirut: The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, 1988), pp. 219-224.

11 See Khairallah, p. 250.

12 Ghurayyib, pp. 347-348.

13 *Al-Raïda*, II (August, 1979), 8.

14 Quoted in Ghurayyib, pp. 223, 229.

FREE Sex

by Joelle Abi Kan'aan
L.A.U. Student

What exactly is sexual freedom? Sex that is free of commitment or obligation has a high price tag – physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. There is no such thing as “free sex”, someone always pays. We often have a misconception of the true meaning of freedom; it is not our ability to do whatever we want whenever we want but it is our ability to be free from bondage – the bonds that the consequences of our choices can put us in. Sexual freedom means the ability to let down all barriers and become completely vulnerable to your partner knowing that you can trust him/her without reservation. It means that by having sex the partners have nothing to fear at all. All this is possible in marriage – and only in marriage. Sex is not intended to be mere physical attraction, but rather an expression of permanently committed love. And this love is not just a feeling, it is primarily an act of the will, a choice to make the welfare and happiness of another individual more important than our own. Since sex is an act of love, not a primal response, our most important sex organ is in fact the mind. It is in the brain, not in some primitive instinct, that the choice is made to pursue sex or not to pursue sex. Therefore to claim that sex is only natural is to deny our ability to make choices. We can say no. We are not at the mercy of our sexual urges.

No one can deny the fact that sex is enjoyable; if it weren't enjoyable before marriage it wouldn't be after – your body doesn't know if you're married or not. But pre-marital sex is risky. The results of pre-marital sex are not always seen at first, they are often not even considered because a relationship can “feel so good”. But how we feel is often a weak indicator of what is right or wrong, good or bad, and it doesn't change the consequences. But you may ask, if many consequences are at stake why are so many people today having pre-marital sex? The reasons are many but they are, in general, common to all mankind in all cultures. For instance, people have sex because of a lack of understanding of love, because of peer pressure, curiosity, loneliness, rebellion, or skepticism about commitment. They have sex as a result of their search for intimacy, security, and self-esteem and because of their need to love and be loved. The list can go on and on but unfortunately, no matter what the reason, when a person engages in pre-marital sex he/she becomes vulnerable to many

consequences. I have divided these consequences into four basic categories – physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual.

Physical consequences. I will begin with the physical reasons since they are the ones that are the most obviously manifested ... STD's. Sexually transmitted diseases are a big factor to reckon with and the possibility of a person contracting one is high when more than one sex partner is involved. To name a few, they include: Aids, Chlymadia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis, genital Herpes, venereal warts, Trichomoniasis, etc. These range from being bothersome, to chronic, to fatal. In the United States today, the total number of reported cases of STD's exceeds that of all other infectious diseases except the common cold. Individuals under age 25 make up the majority of these cases. These are sad facts and its even sadder that many people believe the condom to be a sure shield against these diseases. That is an overstatement. There have been more than one reported cases of women who have contracted the Aids virus from their partners who had been depending on the condom. The surest way to reduce the risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease is to abstain from sexual intercourse. Other physical consequences of pre-marital sex that we have to deal with is the possibility of unwanted pregnancies. Sex is a means of reproduction and although precautions can be taken, there is no 100% protection. I specifically know of a relative of mine who became pregnant while on the pill. Over the last 20 years, the percentage of illegitimate births, in the USA, to women 19 years or under has increased from 15 to 51 percent. Three out of every four pregnancies will be unintentional. The very consequences of sex proves that it is not intended for anyone other than a husband and wife. Creating another life (or engaging in activity with that potential) is an awesome responsibility that cannot be borne by couples who are not committed to each other fully.

Emotional consequences. Moving on to the other consequences of pre-marital sex, I can think of at least five emotional reasons why we should wait to have sex - 1, to safeguard from being put on a performance basis, 2, to safeguard against guilt, misleading feelings, and the hardships of breaking up, and finally 3, to safeguard against psychological and emotional distress. In general, sexually active people suffer from comparison and the performance

syndrome. When people are put on a performance basis (which means they are accepted only when they act or do something in accordance with another person's expectations), their value and dignity are lost. They are not considered important because of who they are, but rather are deemed acceptable because of what they do. Without the committed bonds of marriage, sex is inherently a selfish act done for personal gain. For the relationship to go on, the sex partners must continue to be pleasing to each other. As soon as one partner no longer lives up to what the other expects of him, the relationship is in trouble. Another problem that results from pre-marital sex is the feeling of guilt. This is one consequence that may haunt a person longer than any other.

When sex is entered into casually and without commitment, people get hurt physically and emotionally - guilt is the awareness of having transgressed a standard of right and wrong, or it is the lingering doubt of thinking that perhaps some act was wrong. Many people I meet are plagued by these two kinds of guilt. One of the reasons for sexual involvement is the confusion between sex and love. As one writer put it, "sexual encounters outside of marriage, whether or not they include intercourse, give an illusion of intimacy that can be mistaken for the lasting commitment that makes a marriage work". When we mix up between sex and love, we have confused the simple concepts of giving and taking. Love always gives and always seeks the best interests of the other person. Pre-marital sex takes. Each individual has his or her goal in having sex before marriage, but each is in it for personal reasons. A girl may "give her boyfriend what he wants", thus making it look as though she is giving to him in love, but she does it for a personal motive. She may want the security he provides or any of a dozen other reasons, but her "giving" is actually a form of taking. She is misled by her emotions. I am sure that most of you have at least once before experienced the hardships that go along with breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend. Hard enough as it is, if you have had sex with your partner it becomes that much more difficult to break up. It can be a terribly tearing experience emotionally. So many people have said to me, "When I walked away from that relationship, I left a part of me behind." Sex forms a bond that can exist no matter what the rest of the relationship is like. The longer it goes on the harder it is to break it off. Sex creates an emotional bond so powerful it must be reserved for marriage. The effects that casual sex have on the mind and emotions can take many forms. I've already mentioned guilt but there is also humiliation, anger, rejection, and resentment which can lead to bitterness.

Relational consequences. There are several relational reasons why we should wait to have sex. These include the possibility of communication breakdown between the partners and the possibility that sex becomes dominant and buries love. Hunger for an intimate relationship is built into each of us. We all want to love and be loved. Sex is merely the physical expression of that intimate love we seek, not

the source of it. When we delay physical involvement to its proper time, we allow the relationship to grow and mature. It is a building process, and cutting it short by getting into sex before marriage may make it impossible to put the process back on course. Communication breaks down. In one survey of 730 American sex therapists and counsellors, 85% said the number-one complaint they hear is lack of communication in relationships. When sex enters the scene too soon, the foundation of a relationship is weakened and frequently collapses completely. According to Robert O. Blood, Jr., in one of the most careful surveys on the subject, sexual "intimacy produced more broken relationships than strengthened ones". When a couple has found a quick way to be intimate by having sex, they don't bother taking time to become mentally, emotionally, and spiritually intimate. They become lazy in their attempts to grow closer, opting for what is easy over what is lasting. What is needed to build a lasting intimate relationship is consumed by sex.

Spiritual consequences. Last but not least, there are spiritual reasons why we should wait to have sex. A spiritual law of cause and effect is at work so that choices which are made within God's value structure bring blessing, and those that transgress his boundaries bring negative consequences (some of which I spoke about). The purpose of God's provision against pre-marital sex is to protect us from the suffering that these consequences can afflict. God's command that we reserve sex for marriage is an expression of His love for us; He in turn wants to provide us with the most fulfilling sex life possible. A lifelong relationship between a man and a woman is something truly awesome. When two people against all odds overcome the forces that would drive them apart and devote themselves mutually to each other, one can say that they represent a bond of love that defies a selfish and uncaring world. When we engage in an activity which is contrary to God's calling we, in a sense, forfeit the great love that could be ours for mere physical pleasure that has many repercussions. We may try to increase our joy and fulfilment through sex but we will always come up empty. We will always experience a void. We can be fulfilled only by a right relationship with God. We are then loved and accepted, faults and all, because of who we are not because of what we do. This gives us security and significance. With God as the source of our love and not our partner, we are now ready to impart complete selfless love as expressed through the committed bond of marriage through which we are able to tell our partner that we will love him or her on the same basis upon which God loves us - nothing less.

In light of what I have just discussed, it becomes obvious that what our society calls "free sex" is in fact anything but free, and couples pay for it with their bodies, their minds, and their emotions. Getting into pre-marital sex is easy, any man or woman can do it. The real challenge however lies in having enough sexual creativity to be able to satisfy your partner for an entire lifetime.

Recent Publications

Afkhami, Mahnaz and Erika Friedl. *Muslim Women and the Politics of Participation: Implementing the Beijing Platform*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

Custers, Peter. *Capital Accumulation and Women's Labour in Asian Economies*. London: Zed Books, 1998.

Danielson, Virginia. *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Esfandiari, John L. *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Haddad-Yazbeck, Yvonne and John L. Esposito (Eds.) *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Karam, Azza M. *Women, Islamists and the State: Contemporary Feminisms in Egypt*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

Petchesky, Rosalind P. and Karen Judd (Eds.) *Negotiating Reproductive Rights: Women's Perspectives Across Countries and Cultures*. London: Zed Books, 1998.

Sinclair, M. Thea, Eileen Boris and Elisabeth Prugl (Eds.) *Gender, Work and Tourism*. New York: Women, Ink. Books, 1997.

Sittirak, Sinith. *Daughters of Development: Women in a Changing Environment*. London: Zed Books, 1998.

cottage industries which are not regarded as serious business. It will be an inspiration to other women.

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Call for Papers

An international conference dedicated to Simone de Beauvoir entitled "50th Anniversary of the Second Sex" will be held in Paris on January 21, 22 and 23, 1999. Written and oral presentations may be made in French or English. Prospective participants should send the provisional title of their presentation, a 1500 word abstract and a short curriculum vitae before July 15, 1998 to Cinquantenaire du Deuxieme Sexe. All candidates are asked to specify which of the following topics they wish to address: Origins, Impact of the Work, The Difficulties of Translation, The 'Second Sex' Generation, Radically Feminist, From 'them' to 'Us', Commentaries, Analyses, Critiques, and Relevance and Timeliness of the Second Sex.

For more information contact:

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75849 Paris Cedex 17 , France

Filmmakers Library

Women Entrepreneurs: Making a Difference Produced by Pixie Bigelow

The focus of this documentary is the unique entrepreneurial qualities that women possess and the spirit with which they face the challenges of their personal and business lives. The four women profiled are Canadian, of different races, cultures and ages, and representing a cross section of businesses. All the women are self made; none have inherited their businesses. Starting with very little, their vision, their wits and their hard work have overcome setbacks and helped them keep going. There is a commonality among these women entrepreneurs in the way they manage their businesses, consider their employees as "family", reward hard work, and integrate their personal values into the corporate culture.

The women are in disparate businesses. One turned a derelict hotel into a first class resort; one exports food to poor countries; one has an international software training company, the last runs a publishing empire from her home. Their businesses gross between one and twenty -seven million dollars. This documentary will dispel the myth that women entrepreneurs operate only small businesses, often in the retail sector, or

Conferences

World Conference on Family Violence

A conference entitled "World Conference on Family Violence" will take place in New Delhi, India on september 8-11, 1998. The conference is jointly sponsored by People to People Ambassador Programs and YWCA of the USA. It's goal is to focus on practical, sustainable solutions that can be implemented in different cultures to stem the growing trend of family violence. The World Conference on Family Violence will address the continuum of violence by encompassing the interdependent relationships of child, intimate partner, and elder. Thousands of social workers, elected and government officials, advocates, educators, religious leaders and legal and medical professionals from around the world are expected to attend. Conference attendees will exchange information on the long-term implications of family violence. Most conference work will focus on identifying and developing implementable alternatives to fear and violence in families. Practitioners will exchange information on how to intervene in potentially dangerous situations and provide support for families through courts, workplaces, social networks, schools, churches, support groups, the health care system, and local government.

Quote, Unquote

We are all housewives, the natural people to turn to when there is something unpleasant, inconvenient, or inconclusive to be done. It will not do for women who have jobs to pretend that society's ills will be cured if all women are gainfully employed. In Russia, 70 percent of the doctors and 20 percent of the construction workers are women, but women still do all the housework. Some revolution. As the Russian women's saying goes, it simply freed us to do twice the work. ... The question of house work is not a trivial matter to be worked out the day before we go on to greater things. Men do not want equality at home. A strong woman is a threat, someone to be jealous of. Most of all, she is an inconvenience, and she can be replaced. They like things as they are. It's pleasanter."

(Ms. Magazine September/October 1997 pp. 16 - 18)

"I sell sandwiches and snacks: chocolate, bread, cigarettes, chewing-gum, biscuits, and soft drinks to the girls working in the factories near the stall. I sell items that do not spoil easily, since this place does not have either piped water or electricity. My daughter fetches water from the nearby factory. Having no electricity does not cause me that many problems since I close the stall before dark. ... I shop every day. I wake up at six in the morning. Around six thirty, I am at the stall, frying potatoes and eggs and preparing sandwiches. The girls who work at the factory stop by to buy sandwiches before starting work at seven o'clock. Between seven and eleven thirty, I don't have that many clients; I take advantage of the quiet and prepare the meals that I serve around twelve, ...around four o'clock my workload lessens; I wash up and clean the counter. I close the stall at five ... because I have to shop. Before going back home, I buy vegetables and other goods ..."

(The Thousand and One Paths to Empowerment: Coping Strategies of Poor Urban Women in Tunisia, pp. 65-66)

"For women with family responsibilities, their upward movement may be hampered as they juggle time to devote to both career and family. An important feature of professional and especially managerial work, are the long working hours that seem to be required to gain recognition and eventual promotion. Part-time managers are a rare breed and yet it seems virtually impossible to reconcile long hours with the demands of running a home and caring for children. As a result, in certain countries there are indications that women, more than men, forgo marriage and children for the sake of their careers."

(World of Work: The Magazine of the ILO, #23 1998 p. 7)

"Among developing regions, Africa has the highest participation rate of girls: approximately 37 per cent of girls work in Africa, versus 20 per cent in Asia and 11 per cent in Latin America. The ILO says that although boys account for roughly three out of every five child labourers, the proportion of girls may well be higher; activities carried out in and around the household are generally under-reported. Household work is reported to be the main reason for about one-third of the youngsters who do not attend school. They were either never enrolled or obliged to drop out of school because of full-time housework. If such full-time housework were taken into account, the number of girls could even exceed that of boys."

(World of Work: The Magazine of the ILO, #23 1998 p. 10)

"I found a job through a friend of mine ... I had a very difficult time during this period, I hardly saw my children ... I would wake up early in the morning to cook and leave the food for them. When they came back from school, I wouldn't be there to see whether they ate or not, or how they were. If the children found the house door open they would enter; otherwise they would have to wait outside. When I came back at night, they would be asleep. I didn't see them at all. I got tired really tired ... I left my job. I started to work at home, selling fruit ... I used to make barely enough money to pay the water and electricity bills."

(The Thousand and One Paths to Empowerment: Coping Strategies of Poor Urban Women in Tunisia, p. 29)

"... the problem for men is not just that women are taking more jobs; it is that a significant proportion of men are dropping out of the job market altogether as women enter it. In the 1960s, almost all men worked and less than half of women. Not so now. The percentage of working-age men in the EU outside the labour force rose from just 8% in 1968 to 22% in 1993. For women, the trend was reversed, falling from 58% to 44% over the same period. In America the pattern is slightly different: while women's labour-force participation has risen from 43% in 1970 to about 60% now, men's has dropped relatively little from 80% to 75% (though there is an important exception: male high-school drop-outs - those completing fewer than 12 years of school; in 1970, 86% were either working or looking for work; by 1993, only 72% were). If its employment trends continue, America will be employing nearly as many women as men by 2005."

(The Economist, September 28th 1996, p. 24)

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

International Women's Day - 50 Years of Women's Rights?

In the run up to international women's day, Amnesty International today launches a campaign calling on governments to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by mainstreaming human rights practices which fully recognize women's rights. "Despite their long struggle for human rights, women continue to suffer from second class status both in their own countries and at the United Nations," Amnesty International said. "The UN sometimes uses sexist human rights language and does not consistently include a gender perspective in human rights reporting and gender expertise in field visits and operations." The organization is calling on the UN to bring women's human rights from the margins into the mainstream by adopting gender-sensitive language. In particular, the organization's French-speaking members around the world will be writing to their governments and non-governmental organisations asking for the expression "droits de l'Homme" to be replaced by a non sexist expression, such as "droits humains."

For two hundred years, the official French language has used the words "droits de l'Homme" (literally, the "rights of man") when referring to human rights. The language arises from the 1789 Declaration on the Rights of Man and Citizen — a declaration whose rights were not meant for women, and which did not treat men and women as equal human beings. "Many francophone people around the world have acknowledged this and stopped using "droits de l'Homme". However, their governments and organizations such as the United Nations and the Francophonie continue to use it — showing that their language has not kept pace with the developments and inclusion of gender perspectives in the field of human rights," Amnesty International said. It is not just the

French language which needs to be changed, according to the organization. All governments, inter-governmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations should adopt gender-sensitive language which does not obscure women's experiences. "This language change may be seen as trivial in itself, a question of semantics to some, but language is indicative of the continuing failure to take women's human rights seriously, and that failure leads to death, torture, disappearance, unfair trials, honour killings and using rape as a weapon of war," Amnesty International said.

Another reason for the lack of work on women at the UN and governmental level is that the inclusion of a gender perspective in human rights reports is far from complete. Women's rights remain invisible in the majority of reports. To rectify the situation, all international and national bodies investigating human rights violations should systematically include violations of women's human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights.

However, women are not just invisible in some UN human rights reports, they are woefully under-represented on UN human rights bodies as a whole, with the exception of those regarded as having a focus on women. To really integrate women's issues into all areas of the UN, a gender balance on those bodies and mechanisms needs to be implemented as speedily as possible.

While there have been advances in some areas, such as the 1993 adoption by the UN of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the 1994 appointment of a Special Rapporteur on violence against women, women's rights have not been systematically and consistently integrated into the majority of the UN's work. Indeed, women's human rights were only substantiated and reaffirmed in the Vienna Declaration issued at the World Conference on Human Rights — almost 50 years after the UN was founded.

1998 marks the 50th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which obliges governments to protect all

their citizens, male and female, no matter which country they live in. It specifically forbids discrimination against women because of their gender or religion and on any other bases. Yet, this year the universality of human rights is under attack — an attack which inevitably leaves women as its victims. In the name of culture or tradition, women are denied equal rights before the law. Women are also targeted because they stand up for their rights, campaign for change or defend their family and community.

32-year-old Nadezhda Chaykova, was a journalist investigating high-level corruption in the Chechen Republic. Her body was found in March 1996 in a shallow grave. She had been blindfolded, severely beaten and shot in the back of the head. Although there is conflicting information about her killers it is clearly believed that the Russian army, angry at articles alleging misappropriation of funds earmarked for reconstruction. Dita Indah Sari is serving a five year sentence in an Indonesian jail. The 24-year-old's "crime" was to take part in a peaceful demonstration calling for a rise in the national minimum wage. She was convicted under the draconian Anti-Subversion law which the government uses to silence its political critics. Leticia Moctezuma Vargas, a teacher in the Mexican state of Morelos is peacefully campaigning to stop a government sponsored multi-million dollar golf course and tourist complex on land the Tepoztlan community considers sacred. Both Leticia and her 11-year-old daughter have been beaten, and told to "take it easy with your politics or we will kill you".

As part of its year-long campaign to promote the UDHR, Amnesty International is calling on governments to demonstrate that they give a priority to promoting and protecting women's human rights by ratifying and implementing human rights treaties relating to women, fully integrating work on women's rights with human rights work, stopping discrimination against women, training police and military personnel on gender issues, and protecting women from gender-based violence.

WOMEN AND DISABILITY

The Lebanese American University, Byblos campus in collaboration with the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) held a panel discussion dealing with women and disability. The moderator was Mrs. Mona Khalaf, Director of IWSAW. The speakers participating were Sylvana Laqqis, President of the Lebanese Sitting Handicapped Association; Zoya Rouhana, Coordinator of the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women; Deputy Nayla Moawad, and Lawyer Violette Qmair. Laqqis discussed the discrimination practiced against disabled women in light of her experience at the Lebanese Sitting Handicapped

Association. She also talked about the obstacles disabled women face within the family and in society at large. Rouhana tackled the subject of violence against disabled women and reported real life cases and live testimonies. Moawad, on the other hand, explained how the government deals with the subject of disability. She also suggested several very important measures to be taken by the government in order to improve the situation of disabled women. Qmair talked about the legal standing of the disabled in the Lebanese law and shed light on a recent draft law presented to Parliament to render more rights and privileges to the disabled.

IWSAW CELEBRATES THE INTERNATIONAL WOMAN'S DAY

This year IWSAW celebrated the International Woman's Day by launching its study entitled "Female Labor Force in Lebanon". The speakers were Dr. Nabeel Haidar, Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Lebanese American University, Mrs. Mona Khalaf, Director of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Lebanese American University, and Dr. Kamal Hamdan, Consultation and Research Institute.

Haidar gave a historical overview of the university and explained that IWSAW is the first institute of its kind in the Middle East. He also discussed future plans to open a center for civic responsibility and leadership. Hamdan discussed the methodology his team adopted in executing the study, the sample chosen, the difficulties they faced etc. and finally Khalaf presented the findings of the study.



WOMEN AND DEMOCRACY

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World and the Guidance Office hosted Deputy Nayla Moawad who gave a talk on Women and Democracy. Mrs. Mona Khalaf, Director of IWSAW welcomed Moawad who talked about the effective role women can play in politics and decision making. She also highlighted the important role civil society plays in enabling women to reach decision making positions. Moreover, she encouraged women to participate in the municipal elections to affirm the active role women play in the public and political arena.

WOMEN IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) and the Continuing Education Program (CEP) organized a panel on Women in Islam and Christianity on May 28, 1998. Mrs. Maria Mroueh, Director of CEP gave the word of welcome followed by an introduction to the panel. Mrs. Mona Khalaf, Director of IWSAW introduced the speakers: Archbishop George Khodr, Greek Orthodox Archbishopric of Mount - Lebanon, Mrs. Rabab Al-Sadr, President of the Imam Al-Sadr Philanthropic Institution, Dr. Mary Mikhael, President of the Near East School of Theology, and Dr. Farida Banani, professor of Law from the University of Morocco. Archbishop Khodr in his presentation explained how Christianity abolished discrimination between the sexes, while Mikhael shed light on the status of women during the times of Jesus Christ. Al-Sadr talked about the position of women in Islam, quoting the Quran especially the verses where women are portrayed as equal to men and elaborated on the spiritual value that Islam endows to women and to human relationships. Banani, on the other hand, criticized the male medieval Islamic religious scholars for imposing their own one-sided interpretations of the prophet's tradition (Hadith) in order to undermine women's position in Islam.

Introduction

A WIFE OF NOBLE CHARACTER

What do women do? When do they actually “work”; when performing their productive or reproductive role or both? How is their work quantified by economists and valued by society?

These questions have been answered differently, at different times and in different environments. The Proverbs of the Old Testament describes a “wife of noble character” as follows:

- *“A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.*
- *Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.*
- *She gets up while it is still dark, she provides food for her family...*
- *She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.*
- *She sees that her trading is profitable and her lamp does not go out at night.*
- *When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.*
- *She makes linen garments and sells them...*
- *Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.*

That outstanding woman, described above, is obviously hard to come by. She is depicted as the provider of the family. But once encountered, she is given all the credit she deserves:

- *Her children arise and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praises her...*
- *... Give her the reward she has earned and let her works bring her praise at the city gate”*

Since then, very many women, performing as well, have been taken for granted in many parts of the world, particularly in developing countries, where their work outside the household is considered an extension of their reproductive role, while the Old Testament, when talking about woman’s work, refers to it in the plural (“her works”).

In fact, the issue of women and work has always been a controversial one, basically because of the restricted economic definition given to work which centers essentially on its remunerated aspect, on participation in the labor force. Women work more within the household and do not get paid for it, while men work primarily for wages. One historical reason for this market/non market division of labor along gender lines stems basically from the fact that “only women can get pregnant and breast feed babies”. With no economic value attached to women’s reproductive activities, men are usually considered to “work” more than women, particularly in developing countries where men receive the lion’s share of income and recognition for their economic activity since more than three-quarters of their work entails market activities².

However, data on time use by women and men for a sample of thirty-one countries indicate that women work more than men in nearly every country. Women carry an average of 53% of the total burden of work in developing countries and 51% in industrial ones. If we, therefore, adopt a wider definition of work which takes into account how women spend their time

and monetize their non-market activities, we will obviously be improving their economic status in society. The UNDP Human Development Report of 1995 estimates that non-monetized, invisible contribution of women to \$11 trillion a year³.

The status of women in the labor force is not much rosier:

- Women’s participation in the labor force has risen by only 4% between 1970 and 1990, compared to a two-third increase in female adult literacy and school enrollment⁴.
- Women hold usually low-paying jobs or work in the informal sector. They are concentrated in jobs that present shorter working hours or allow greater flexibility⁵. They consequently receive a much lower average wage than men. The average female wage is only three-fourth of the male wage in the non-agricultural sector in 55 countries that have comparable data.⁶
- The rate of unemployment is higher among women than men in all regions.
- Women make up 70% of those living today in absolute poverty⁷. It is only if we adopt the appropriate means to alleviate this poverty that we will be able to achieve “a decent worldwide standard of living” and “assure human dignity to all human beings”⁸.

Improving women’s lot is, however, not only linked to increasing their participation in the labor force, but also to raising the value of their time. Our concern should be primarily to broaden the value of opportunities women have. If women are free to choose what to do, “time spent in the household must be at least as valuable as in the best alternative salaried job”⁹.

The file in this issue of *Al-Raida* deals with the monetized aspect of women’s work. It essentially includes the executive summary of the study undertaken by IWSAW and financed by AID on the Female labor Force in Lebanon, and a résumé of the study on Women and Men Home-Based Workers in the Informal Sector in the West Bank Textile Industry, along with a series of interviews with working women.

Mona Khalaf
Director, IWSAW

ENDNOTES

1. Alejandra Cox Edwards, “The Market, Legislation and Employment for Women”, paper presented at the Special Session on Women in the Economy, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995, p.3
2. UNDP, Human Development Report, 1995, Oxford University Press, 1995, p.6
3. Ibid
4. UNDP, op.cit., p.4
5. Alejandra Cox Edward, op.cit., p.5
6. UNDP, op.cit., p.4
7. Frederick Mayor, “Preface by the Director - General”, Gender Equality Information Kit, March 8, 1998.
8. Ibid.
9. Alejandra Cox Edward, op.cit., p.3

FEMALE LABOR FORCE IN LEBANON

1. Content and Scope of the Study

The goal of the study entitled "Female Labor Force in Lebanon" is to provide the data base needed to formulate prioritized strategy related to the supply of and demand for women in the Lebanese labor market and to design adequate plans of action and policies to implement such a strategy. The specific objectives of this study are the following: To provide a profile of working women including characteristics, education, skills, training, experience, social status, and other relevant factors;

to estimate the size of the Lebanese female labor force in selected economic activities and sectors;

to highlight the conditions in which women work;

to examine the social and cultural problems that working women face;

To detect employer preferences, identify demand trends especially with regard to skills and examine the implications of these trends on the education and training of women.

The report starts with an introductory chapter that defines the scope, content, and methodology of the study. The second chapter provides a brief overview of the status of Lebanese women and examines the structure and evolution of the female labor force in Lebanon. Information included in this chapter is derived from studies and statistical data made available by various national and international reports and surveys. The third chapter details the results of the field survey of working women which constitute the basis for identifying the characteristics of female labor. The fourth chapter presents the results of the employers' field survey which are used to predict future trends in the demand for female labor. Finally, the study concludes with general recommendations that can be used to improve the quality of female labor supply and make it more responsive to labor demand.

2. Overview of the Status of Lebanese Women and the Lebanese Labor Force

The status of women in communities reflects the stage of development of the society in general. It is a result of the interaction of several factors, including the ideals, traditions, and beliefs that govern societies. In the past two decades, an improvement in the status of Lebanese women, at different levels, was observed; however, as a result of the civil war (1975-1990) and the difficulties that accompanied the first years of reconstruction, this improvement was somewhat modest and slow.

2.1 Legal Status of Lebanese Women

Lebanon has ratified many of the international conventions that are directly related to human rights. Lebanon has also ratified, but with reservations, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). As a

result of the efforts exerted by the civil society, especially by non-governmental organizations concerned with human rights, some gender-discriminatory Lebanese laws have been reformed. However, cultural practices still deprive women of many legally acquired rights, although the Lebanese Constitution does not specify major areas of gender discrimination.

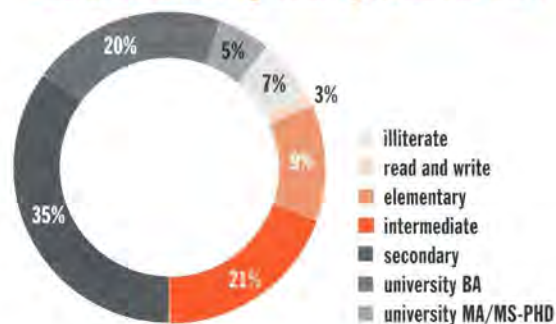
2.2 Lebanese Female Participation in Political Decision-Making

During the past two decades, the level of female participation in political life and national decision-making in Lebanon recorded a modest improvement, though it is still relatively low.

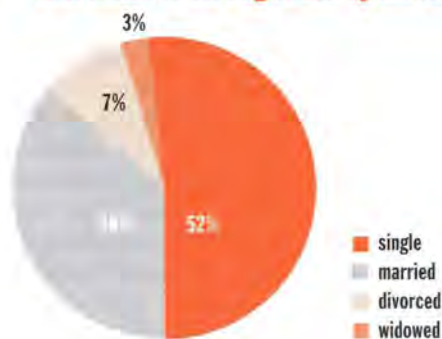
2.3 Educational Level of Lebanese Women

Over the last decade, the Lebanese society has achieved a considerable quantitative improvement in the rate of female enrollment in all levels of education, especially at the secondary and university levels. However, this improvement has not been translated into adequate diversification in the types of specialization in which women enroll. Female enrollment in higher educational levels is still concentrated in those fields of specialization that are considered "traditionally feminine" and that are marginal to the needs of the labor market and its competitive segments.

Distribution of working women by educational level



Distribution of working women by marital status



2.4 Health Status of Lebanese Women

Female access to health services, especially to primary health care, has improved during the seventies and eighties. This has been primarily a result of the efforts exerted by the civil society, coupled with Government efforts in the health sector.

2.5 Lebanese Women and Poverty

The Lebanese war had severe effects on the impoverishment of the population as a whole. Poverty and the economic crisis exert additional burdens on women; reduced female school attendance and access to basic social services are early signs of an impoverished society, while reduced employment opportunities directly affect women with low skill levels. Specific categories of women are particularly vulnerable to poverty, especially women-heads of household (currently estimated at 14 percent of the total heads of household in Lebanon), women in rural areas, and women who derive their income from small-scale activities in the informal sector. These women should be provided with social safety nets to assist them in overcoming their vulnerability to poverty.

2.6 Lebanese Women's Access to Productive Assets

Access to productive assets forms an escape route from poverty and deprivation, while lack of access to these assets indicates the extent to which the poor remain poor. Although reliable, comprehensive gender-desegregated data on female access to productive assets are lacking in Lebanon, small-scale surveys indicate that it is low, especially in terms of land and capital.

2.7 Background of the Lebanese Labor Force

2.7.1 The Lebanese Economy

Prior to 1975, Lebanon was characterized by an open, growing economy with a strong currency associated with low foreign debt, and a relatively efficient service and banking sector. But structural imbalances, especially regional ones, inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth, in addition to inadequate social services and protection measures, projected trouble. During the war, the structure and performance of the Lebanese economy changed considerably. A decline in economic growth, a fall in real tax revenues, arising public debt, and a sharp decline in the purchasing power of the Lebanese Pound and its foreign exchange rate were witnessed. The war also resulted in an almost complete destruction of the basic infrastructure and services in the country, a deterioration in productivity, and a decline in exports. After the war, the Lebanese economy started moving slowly on its long way towards recovery. The economic problems faced were enormous and the means available to solve them almost nonexistent.

2.7.2 The Lebanese Labor Force

The resident population in Lebanon is currently estimated at 3.1 million, with the highest concentration in the Mohafazats of Mount Lebanon and North Lebanon. The size of the labor force currently amounts to 944,281 persons (including the unemployed), with the highest activity rate in the 25-39 year age group. During the war, the labor force witnessed dislocation

as a result of several factors, including the destruction of the Beirut City Center and, consequently, the forced displacement of its inhabitants into other areas, fragmentation and decentralization of economic markets, and de-localization of economic activities. The massive internal displacement of the population during that period resulted in a surplus of labor in some regions of the country and in a shortage in others.

The skewed spatial distribution of the population was, and continues to be, a main feature of the country. The Government, in its development and reconstruction plan, is beginning to realize the deprivation of rural areas and is considering some policy decisions towards increasing and rehabilitating the basic infrastructure and services in these areas.

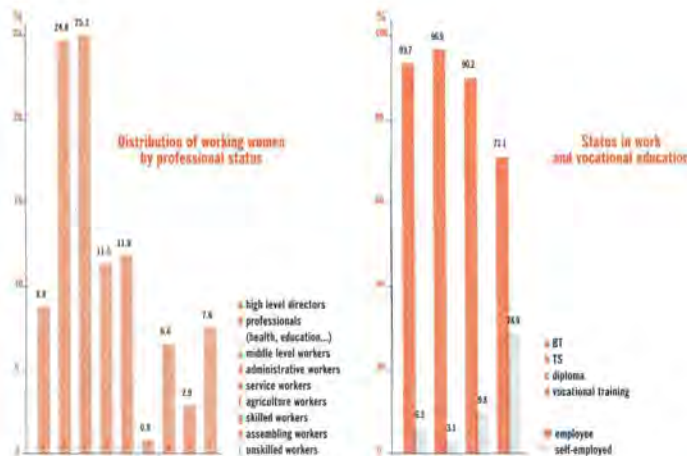
2.7.3 Sectoral Distribution of the Labor Force

The Lebanese economy is characterized by heavy dependence on the service and trade sectors, as compared to the production sectors. Despite some variations, the sectoral structure of the gross domestic product (GDP) has remained more or less stable during the past two decades, with a slight decrease in the share of the agricultural sector and a relative increase in the service sector.

2.7.4 Distribution of the Labor Force per Educational Level

The educational profile of the labor force has witnessed some improvement in the past years, showing a decline in the percentage of illiterate and low educational level workers and an increase in the percentage of those with secondary education and university degrees. As a result of regional inequality in the access of the population to educational opportunities, the educational status of the labor force varies among the different regions of the country.

The current educational system is characterized by low enrollment in vocational and technical training (5 percent of the total number of students in 1993). This is a result of several factors, including the lack of orientation policies based on market need, the small number of vocational schools as compared to the total number of schools, and the centralization



Status in work per educational level (%)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
employee	54.0	59.3	61.7	79.1	89.3	88.0	75.5
self-employed	43.6	39.2	36.2	20.7	9.2	9.8	23.4
both	2.4	0.0	1.0	0.2	1.2	2.0	1.1
other	0.0	1.5	1.1	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

- A illiterate
- B read and write
- C elementary
- D intermediate
- E secondary
- F university BA/BS
- G university MA/MS-PHD

of technical and vocational schools in the capital Beirut and its suburbs.

2.7.5 Distribution of the Labor Force per Status of Employment

Wage employment is a dominant feature of the Lebanese labor market. There has been an increase in the level of wage employment in the last two decades, and it is currently estimated to represent about two-thirds of the labor force.

2.7.6 Some Factors that Affect the Lebanese Labor Market

External migration has been a historical trend in Lebanese society and a life-long safety valve for its economy. However, emigration in the last two decades has resulted in huge losses in the economy with serious repercussions on the labor market, since it has caused serious shortages in the internal labor market- especially of skilled and qualified workers.

Although no accurate statistics on the percentage of foreign labor in the country exist, specialists believe that it is high and consists mostly of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Thus, foreign labor competes strongly with similar categories of Lebanese workers, exerts negative effects on the real level of the minimum wage rate adopted in the country, and has adverse effects on the technological level, especially in the field of public works.

2.7.7 Unemployment

Unemployment is currently estimated at 8 percent, although under-employment (especially disguised unemployment) is thought to be much higher. Emigration during the war has helped keep unemployment rates at relatively low levels, more or less the same as recorded in 1970.

2.7.8 Wages and Living Conditions

The deterioration in the national currency exchange rate, coupled with hyper inflation especially in the late eighties and early nineties, have resulted in a decline in the living standards of the Lebanese population, especially those of salaried people. The purchasing power of the minimum wage, as well as the level of average real wages, have sharply declined. Future wage policies should take into consideration the depreciation in real wages and should try to reverse this trend, especially that wage earners, constitute about two-thirds of the Lebanese active

population.

2.8 Female Participation in the Labor Force

Female participation in the labor force cannot be viewed solely through quantitative data. Important qualitative indicators, such as the status of women in work and professional levels, are crucial in determining the type and nature of this participation.

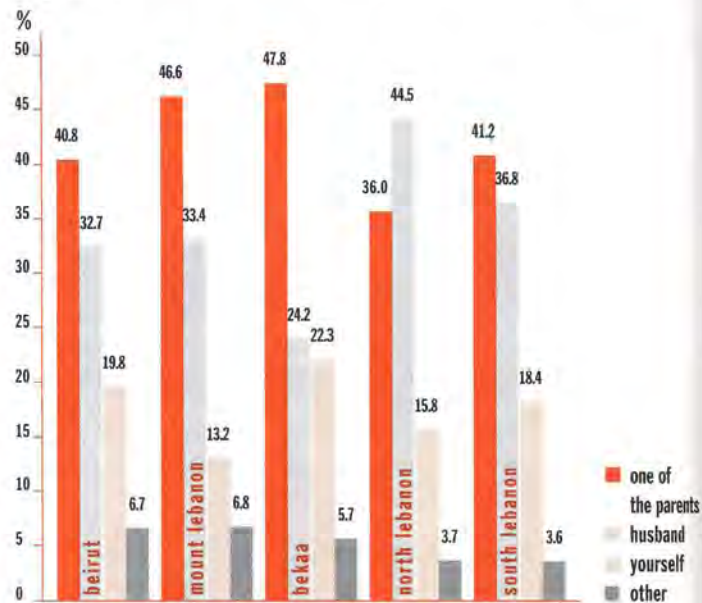
2.8.1 Size of the Female Labor Force

Women constitute about 50 percent of the resident population in Lebanon, and about 20 percent of its labor force. The highest activity rate for females is recorded in the 25-29 year age group, with declining activity rates for older age groups. Social norms and cultural constraints still influence the degree of female economic activity and participation in the labor force. Despite the fact that female activity rates tend to decrease with age, activity rates for older age groups have been increasing in the past two decades.

Contrary to the male labor force, single women constitute the majority of the female labor force. This variation affirms the social norms and values that still regard women primarily in relation to their reproductive roles.

2.8.2 Geographical Distribution of the Female Labor Force

The highest concentration of the female labor force is in the Beirut suburbs and in Mount Lebanon. There has been a significant decline in the share of rural areas in the female labor force since 1970. This is rather to be expected given the lesser contribution of the agricultural sector to the GDP and its declined economic contribution to the economy of the country in general.



2.8.3 Distribution of the Female Labor Force per Sector of Activity

The sectoral distribution of the female labor force is consistent

with the sectoral distribution of the labor force in general. About 81 percent of working women are active in the services sector, with only 15 percent and 4 percent in the industrial and agricultural sectors, respectively (1996).

2.8.4 Distribution of the Female Labor Force per Educational level

The majority of female workers have completed secondary education and, to a lesser degree, university- level education. The educational profile of working women is higher than that of the labor force in general, which indicates that employment and career opportunities are more accessible to women who have higher educational levels and that education forms a prerequisite for female employment.

2.8.5 Distribution of the Female Labor Force per Employment and Professional Status

About 80.3 percent of working women are wage employees as compared to an average of 66 percent of the whole labor force. This indicates the difficulties that women entrepreneurs face, and especially those working in the informal sector within small-scale production levels, specifically within the context of their low access to productive assets.

2.8.6 Distribution of the Female Labor Force per Occupation

The improvement in the educational status of women did not reflect a change in their status in the employment hierarchy. Although it has slightly increased in the last two decades, the number of women assuming positions of authority and responsibility, i.e., in decision-making, is minimal. There is a higher concentration of the female labor force in lower employment levels. About half of the female workers are middle-level employees, teachers, and specialists in the education sector.

2.9 The Lebanese Legislation Governing Women’s Work

The Lebanese Labor Law, which was enacted in 1946 and is still in effect at present, governs men and women’s employment in Lebanon. The Constitution declares equality among all Lebanese citizens, with equal rights and responsibilities. It includes women in the general term “citizens”. Labor relations are ruled by the Lebanese Labor Law and the Social Security Law. In defining the “employee”, these laws include both men and women, unless otherwise indicated. The Lebanese labor law comprises specific provisions relating to the work of women and emphasizes the principle of “equal pay for equal work”. Laws on minimum wage rates apply to all employees, regardless of their gender. Female employees, however, are not entitled to family allowances unless they are heads of household.

A new labor law is now being prepared by the Ministry of Labor. Several articles concerning women and child work are expected to be rectified. The first blue-print of this law is still under discussion among the various parties in the Government, businesses, and the Lebanese General Confederation of Trade Unions.

3. Female Work in Lebanon: Characteristics and Perceptions

This section of the study specifically outlines the characteristics of working women, their professional status, and their working conditions. It also provides a synthesis of the limitations that female workers in Lebanon face and their attitudes towards and perceptions of employment. All information included in this chapter is based on the results of the working women survey.

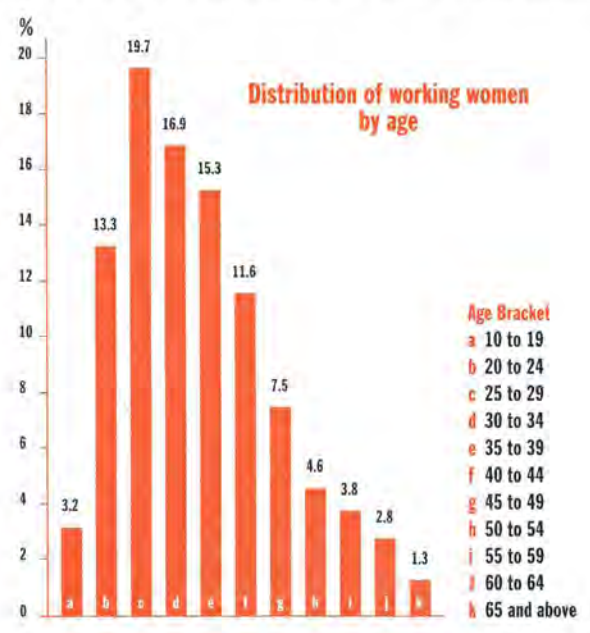
3.1 Profile of Working Women

3.1.1 Geographical Distribution

The Lebanese female labor force is concentrated in the Mohafazat (Province) of Mount Lebanon (43.7 percent), including the Beirut suburbs, and in Administrative Beirut (19.9 percent). On the Caza (District) level, the highest concentration is found in the Cazas of El-Metn, Baabda, Kesserwan, and Beirut. The concentration of the female labor force in urban areas does not undermine the importance of women’s work in the agricultural sector in rural areas, both as paid labor and family-help. Higher female economic activity in urban areas is a result of many factors, including better access to education and employment opportunities (as a result of the increased availability of these services in such settings).

3.1.2 Age Structure

The age structure of the female labor force reflects a high degree of concentration in young age groups. Women in the 25-29 year age group have the highest labor force participation rate (19.7 percent), followed closely by women 30-34 years of age (16.9 percent). Female participation in the labor force declines after the age of 30. The relatively young age of the female labor force indicates that this phenomenon is somewhat recent and is assumed to be directly related to the increased educational achievement of women. The decline in female economic activity after the age of 30 is, in most cases, due to marriage and



the division of family roles, which decrease the female's ability to carry out income generating activities.

3.1.3 Marital Status and Family Characteristics

Marital status is a strong demographic variable that affects female economic participation: 52.6 percent of the female labor force is single. The regional variation in the marital status of working women reflects the norms and values that govern the communities in different regions of the country. In regions with conservative communities, lower economic activity rates for married, widowed, and divorced women prevail. In urban areas, and especially in Beirut, the economic activity rates tend to be higher.

In general, married working women have smaller families, with up to 2-3 children per family. The number of working women who are heads of household is significant (16.3 percent of working women). As expected, the majority of divorced and widowed working women are heads of household, and a considerable proportion of single working women are found to assume financial responsibility for their families.

As is the case for the female labor force in general, the economic activity of working married and single women decreases with age. However, the economic activity of widowed women increases with age as a result of the economic crisis they face especially after assuming the role of heads of household.

3.1.4 Family Education and Employment Background

Most working women come from families with low educational levels. In general, the educational level of parents does not considerably influence that of their daughters, which implies that families are placing a higher value on the returns and benefits of education.

3.1.5 Educational Level of Working Women

34.6 % of working women have completed secondary education. The percentage of illiterate working women is low, while university graduates and graduates of vocational schools account for about 25 percent and 18 percent of the female labor force, respectively. The relatively high educational profile of working women implies that education is an important prerequisite for work and employment, and that the relationship between the educational status of female workers and their employment credentials is crucial.

The educational profile of female workers varies according to region, with higher attainment levels in urban and peri-urban areas. The concentration of female employment in urban areas is directly related to the increased educational level of women in these areas, in addition to the fact that job opportunities are mainly concentrated there. The majority of female university graduates are specialized in the fields of Arts and Humanities, followed by Economics and Business Administration. The majority of women with vocational education are specialized in secretarial work, computer skills, accounting, and nursing. It is observed that higher female educational levels, in quantitative terms, have not resulted in a diversification of the acquired types of specialization. The study also indicates that female

enrollment in traditional "feminine" fields of specialization is still predominant, regardless of the demand in the labor market.

3.1.6 Socio-Economic Background of Working Women

The majority of working women live in households with monthly family incomes ranging between LL500,000 - LL1 million. Family income has a positive impact on women's incentive to work since female employment increases with the increase in family income, reaching a peak for family incomes about LL1 million, thereafter decreasing. This strongly advocates that the incentive for women from low-income families to work is primarily economic need. Average family incomes vary slightly among the various geographical regions, and are generally higher in Beirut.

Family incomes are lower in female-headed households. This may imply that women earn lower salaries in general, but may be related to several other factors such as educational and professional level, as well as expertise.

3.1.7 Type, Size, and Nature of Enterprises

As a result of the predominance of the private sector in the Lebanese economy, the majority of working women are concentrated in this sector (74 percent). Furthermore, about 45 percent of females are employed in small and medium-size enterprises that employ fewer than 50 workers. Except in regions where agriculture prevails, permanent employment is dominant over seasonal employment.

3.2 Professional Status of Working Women

3.2.1 Status in Work and other Variables

As is the case for 66 percent of the total Lebanese labor force, 80 percent of female workers are wage earners. Self-employment is a more prominent feature in the areas of Bekaa, North, and South Lebanon. Self-employment is also particularly linked to activities in the informal sector and associated with small-scale enterprise development which is especially suited for women with low qualifications and educational status. But we should not underestimate the number of female workers who are "professionals" and thus self-employed, such as doctors, lawyers or engineers running their own businesses. Self-employment is associated with age, marital status, and educational level: in general, self-employed women are older, married or widowed, and, except for the professionals, have a low educational background.

The greatest percentage of self-employed "professionals" with university degrees are specialized in the fields of Law and Political Science, followed by Economics and Business Administration, Engineering, and Health Sciences. The majority of women with degrees in Education, Arts and Humanities, Sciences, and Social Sciences are employees.

The majority of self-employed females have commercial businesses. Female paid employees are concentrated in industrial, transportation, educational, health-care and social work enterprises. As a result of the predominance of informal small-scale enterprises in females' self-employed economic activities, incomes of paid employees are higher.

3.2.2 Professional Level and other Variables

Professionals represents 24.6 % of the female labor force of whom 15 % are education specialists, 5% accountants and specialists in administration and law, and 3 % specialists in health sciences. A large segment of the female labor force consists of middle-level employees (24.8 percent) including workers in the sector of education (11 percent), and executive office and sales employees (10 percent). The majority of administrative female employees are secretaries and accountants, whereas most female service workers are housekeepers and low-level sales personnel in small shops. In addition, most women working in the sectors of education, health, and social work are professionals and middle-level employees such as teachers, or education specialists, and nurses.

Female educational background and professional status are interrelated. A higher educational level is a prerequisite for female access to higher professional levels. The same applies to vocational education: the percentage of professional and middle-level female workers increases along with higher educational profiles.

Most high-level female directors have degrees in Economics and Business Administration, whereas a high percentage of middle-level female workers are specialized in health sciences or education. Most female administrative workers are specialized in Law and Political Science.

The percentage of administrative, service-industry, and skilled female workers is higher in the private sector. Female access to high professional levels is also considerably greater in the private sector than in the public sector.

The majority of female employees in small enterprises (employing fewer than five employees) are service-industry workers. Female access to high decision-level positions decreases as the size of the enterprise increases, implying that this access is primarily linked to self-employed small-scale activities.

Finally, as professional levels decline, the prevalence of permanent irregular employment becomes more evident: for example, seasonal employment is associated to a high degree with unskilled workers.

3.2.3 Work Preparedness and other Variables

The majority of working women value the importance of education as a means to access employment in the labor market, and as a prerequisite for promotions and higher income levels. Work preparedness is found to be associated with the field of specialization: women specialized in technical fields, such as engineering, education, and fine arts, are better equipped to shoulder the responsibilities of their work than those in other areas of specialization. The majority of women with vocational and technical degrees value education as a prerequisite for work, especially when the duration of this education is long (about three years). Work preparedness is also found to be positively related to educational and professional levels. Furthermore, promotion perspectives are positively associated with educational achievement, professional level, and years of experience.

3.3 Working Conditions and Allowances

3.3.1 Salary Scales and other Variables

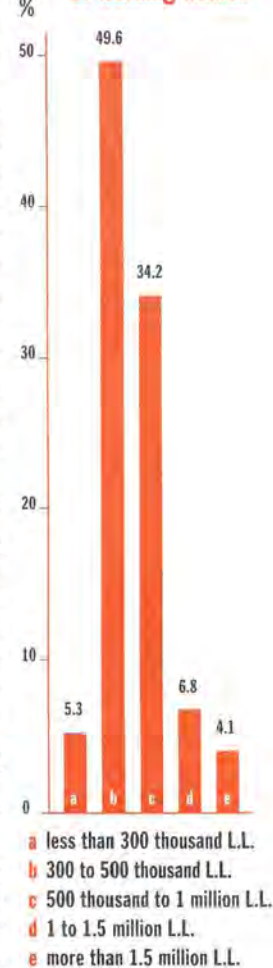
About 50 percent of female workers earn monthly salaries ranging between LL300,000 and LL500,000, whereas only 11 percent earn more than LL1 million per month. (It is worth noting that 1US\$ is equivalent to 1550L.L.). Salary scales are higher in urban and peri-urban areas (especially Beirut and Mount Lebanon). The variation in salary scales per age group is linked to many variables, especially education and qualifications. Low salaries prevail in young age groups as a result of low education, qualifications, and experience.

The number of dependents per household does not have a considerable effect on the level of family income. This is an indication that employers, in general, do not give heads of household family allowances. The Lebanese labor law stipulates that employees are entitled to "family allowances"; however, only men (and women-heads of household) are entitled to these allowances.

Salary scales are also positively related to educational and professional levels. Higher educational and professional levels correspond to higher income levels, whereas lower salary scales are associated with vocational education. The private sector has a more diversified salary scale. Salary scales are also positively associated with the size of the enterprise.

The relationship between salary scale, professional level, and years of experience follow ordinary market rules, i.e., higher professional levels and more years of experience generate

Salary distribution of working women



Salary distribution of working women by type of work (%)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
less than 300 thousand L.L.	31.2	9.3	1.7	0.0	0.0	4.4	0.7	3.4	4.2	9.1
300 to 500 thousand L.L.	54.4	67.2	40.5	78.6	16.8	55.7	26.4	42.8	48.2	66.5
500 thousand to 1 million L.L.	13.2	20.2	43.9	21.4	62.6	28.5	54.0	30.4	39.1	16.6
1 to 1.5 million L.L.	0.0	2.2	8.4	0.0	10.4	7.6	13.2	16.6	5.0	2.9
more than 1.5 million L.L.	1.2	1.1	5.5	0.0	10.2	3.8	5.7	6.8	3.5	4.9
total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

- A agriculture
- B manufacture of garments and other
- C manufacture of papers, publishing
- D manufacture of equipment
- E electrical and other installations
- F commerce
- G transport
- H public administration
- I education, health and social work
- J entertainment activities

Salary distribution of working women by professional status (%)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
less than 300 thousand LL	1.9	2.4	3.1	3.5	6.8	13.1	8.3	10.9	22.1
300 to 500 thousand LL	25.6	33.0	51.0	54.9	68.4	58.1	64.7	76.4	68.2
500 thous. to 1 million LL	39.9	44.0	40.6	36.0	19.8	28.8	24.4	12.7	7.8
1 to 1.5 million LL	19.6	12.4	4.0	4.2	2.5	0.0	1.7	0.0	1.4
more than 1.5 million LL	13.0	8.2	1.3	1.4	2.5	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.5
Total	200.0	200.0	200.0	200.0	200.0	200.0	200.0	200.0	200.0

- A high level directors
- B professionals (health, education...)
- C middle level workers
- D administrative workers
- E service workers
- F agriculture workers
- G skilled workers
- H assembling workers
- I unskilled workers

higher salaries. This may imply that gender considerations become less pronounced with higher expertise and qualifications. However, this assumption cannot be taken as a rule, for gender factors are known to influence the selection of workers, promotions, and other employment characteristics.

3.3.2 Overtime Allocations

Only 20 percent of working women work overtime hours. Employers compensate overtime work with additional pay, but the study reveals that they do not adhere to the amount stipulated by the Lebanese Labor Law (overtime pay should be 1.5 times regular wage rates). Overtime benefits allocated to female workers do not vary considerably with geographical location. However, overtime benefits are highly associated with middle-level and skilled employment levels.

3.3.3 Weekly Employment Hours

About 40 percent of working women work fewer than 33 hours per week (the Lebanese Labor Law stipulates that weekly employment should not exceed 48 hours). Employment hours are related to women's age, marital status, educational status, geographical location, professional level, and years of experience.

Working hours vary according to geographical location and are found to be longer in Beirut and Mount-Lebanon. Young women are found to work more hours, and the work week becomes shorter as age increases. Married women workers work fewer hours per week than single, divorced, or widowed females. This reflects the tendency of married women to try and cope with their responsibilities as wives, mothers, and income-generating persons. The relationship between employment hours and motherhood also bears out this conclusion, since most mothers are found to work fewer hours.

Employment hours are found to be negatively associated with educational levels, professional status, and experience. Long work weeks are highly associated with service-industry and skilled workers.

3.4 Allowances, Fringe Benefits, and Working Conditions

3.4.1 Allowances

Within the context of this study, allowances are defined as including annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave, transportation allowances, social security, private insurance, bonuses, loans, education allowances, and the existence of day-

care centers for children of female employees. About 78 percent of employers are found to adhere to the specified duration of the mandatory annual leave stipulated by the labor law. About one-third of working women are not given a transportation allowance, and more than 35 percent of working women do not have access to social security. It should be noted that only 20 percent of the working women in the sample are self-employed, which means that the remaining 80 percent are employees who should benefit, by virtue of law, from social security. The percentage of 35 shown above reveals that these women work in enterprises that are not registered with the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), which constitutes a discrimination against these employees.

3.4.2 Working Conditions

Within the context of the study, working conditions include comfortable seating, ventilation, lighting, bathrooms, rest places, drinking water, first aid, fire safety procedures, as well as cooling and heating. It is noted that about 80 percent of working women are satisfied with their working conditions. The availability of good working conditions varies according to geographical location and is best in urban and peri-urban areas (Mount-Lebanon and Beirut). Working conditions are also relatively better in the private sector than in the public sector. The availability and quality of acceptable working conditions are related to the size of enterprises. It should be noted that these conditions are worse in small-scale enterprises employing fewer than five people.

Finally, the quality of working conditions is positively related to the salary level of working women. Working conditions are acceptable when salary levels range between LL500,000 and LL 1 million, but increase in quality and availability as salary scales increase.

3.5 Limitations and Constraints That Working Women Face

3.5.1 General Limitations of Working Women

The most commonly reported hardships that working women face are low salaries (39 percent), lack of promotion opportunities (18 percent), and lack of benefits (16 percent). The impact of the various constraints identified by working women differs according to geographical location. In rural

List by degree of importance 3 constraints you face at work (%)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
Beirut	12.8	14.4	31.6	6.7	1.9	3.7	14.1	3.8	11.0	100.0
Mount-Lebanon	7.9	20.9	35.7	5.6	0.8	2.3	15.8	2.7	8.3	100.0
Bekaa	13.7	16.2	35.7	4.1	0.9	1.9	18.5	2.8	6.2	100.0
North Lebanon	13.6	9.4	40.0	5.0	0.3	7.5	9.6	2.4	12.2	100.0
South Lebanon	11.6	16.6	40.2	3.2	0.3	2.6	11.2	3.1	11.2	100.0
Total	10.7	17.1	35.5	5.3	0.5	3.3	14.4	2.5	9.5	100.0

- A family pressure
- B non availability of promotion opportunities
- C low salary
- D status as married woman
- E legal problems
- F being a woman
- G non availability of benefits
- H non availability of day care centers
- I other

areas limitations resulting from family pressure and gender are more pronounced, whereas limitations concerning the work itself (such as low salary scales) are more prevalent in urban areas. The prioritization of limitations faced by working women changes according to their marital status; married women face more limitations as a result of family pressure and related constraints. There is also an association between the primary constraints faced by working women and their educational level. As educational levels increase, the effect of factors such as family pressure and gender implications decreases, while other factors such as promotion perspectives become more pronounced.

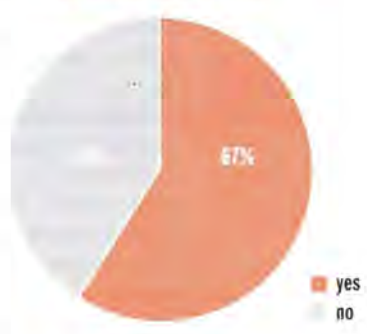
3.5.2 The Impact of Gender on Access to Employment Opportunities

Only 15 percent of working women feel that their gender has a negative effect on their access to employment opportunities. The negative effects of gender are more pronounced in rural areas, low income families, and families with a low educational background. As the educational level of parents improves, female workers tend to disregard the effect of gender on their access to employment opportunities. Again, this is thought to be a matter of cultural background since families with higher educational levels do not differentiate between their male and female children as much as families who have low educational histories. Furthermore, higher female educational and professional levels and more years of experience decrease the impact of gender on access to employment opportunities. This may indicate that employers' preferences with relation to gender decrease in importance when professional levels and qualifications are higher. Also, gender bias in access to employment opportunities declines as the size of enterprises increases.

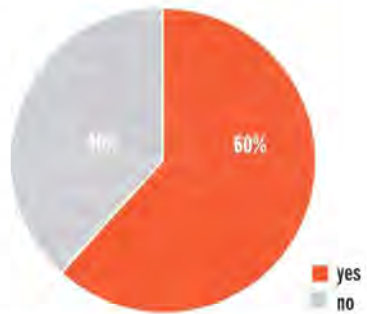
3.5.3 Limitations of Married Working Women

Fewer than 25 percent of married working women feel that their marital status has a negative effect on their work. In general,

Does your work require psychological effort?



Does your work require physical effort?



married and single working women agree on the primary limitations they face. Hence, the principal obstacles and limitations faced by working women are shared irrespective of marital status. However, gender-related limitations in access to higher income levels are more pronounced for women in general than for married working women in particular. The negative effects of marriage on employment are strongly felt in closed rural communities. The negative implications of gender and marital status are highly associated with low professional levels- especially with unskilled, skilled, and administrative workers.

3.5.4 Limitations of Working Women in Relation to Employers

Only 8 percent of working women face problems with their employers. The major complaints are exploitation (44 percent) and rude behavior (24 percent). Discrimination based on gender as a cause for problematic relationships is quoted by 16 percent of women, while sexual harassment is almost non-existent. It should be noted that women do not feel free to express the constraints that they face as a result of sexual harassment due to cultural barriers.

Problematic relationships occur more often in rural areas (where gender has a more pronounced effect on women's employment), and among female employees who do not feel prepared for their jobs as well as among those who are not satisfied with their employment status.

3.5.5 Constraints Faced by Working Women in Relation to Acceptance of Families

A minimal percentage of working women face problems in their parents'/ husbands' acceptance of their work. The main reasons for their family objection to work are: employment hours (28 percent), community gossip (19 percent), and type of work (17 percent). Other reasons such as "restriction of the authority of the head of household", are not very crucial. Family acceptance varies according to geographical location (higher in urban areas), marital status (higher for single females), and educational level of families (higher when parents' education is higher), and of the working woman herself. Family acceptance of female work also depends on the contribution of the working woman toward family expenses. When the family is poor, a greater percentage of her income is spent on household expenses, and the primary motivation for female work becomes a matter of economic need.

3.5.6 Time Constraints Faced by Working Women

One of the constraints commonly faced by working women is availability of time. Since women carry multiple burdens and responsibilities, they face problems finding sufficient time for themselves and their families. About 40 percent of working women do not find time for themselves, while a lesser number face constraints in finding sufficient time for their families. Time constraints are related to marital status, family income levels, and professional levels. As expected, single women are less burdened with family responsibilities and face fewer time constraints than married women. Also, poor families cannot

afford to hire help, thus women in these households face higher time constraints.

3.5.7 Consistency Between Qualifications and Employment

The low level of consistency between qualifications and employment is an important limitation that affects workers' productivity and output. About 85 percent of women feel that their qualifications are totally consistent with their work. The status in work is found to be related to consistency between qualifications and employment. It is expected that self-employed women show a higher degree of consistency between their education and qualifications. As educational levels increase, female expectations and ambitions increase, and the degree of consistency declines. The level of consistency is also a factor of the area of specialization. Those working women who are specialized in the areas of education, fine arts, media, engineering, and health sciences feel that their employment is highly suitable to their qualifications. Women working in traditionally "male" fields of activity such as the manufacture of equipment feel that their qualifications are higher than their employment status.

3.5.8 Reasons for Changing Employment

Women change their jobs primarily because they are offered better status in work (32 percent) or higher income levels (18 percent). Disagreement with employers has also been found to be an important incentive for changing employment. The fact that better salaries provide a primary incentive for job change indicates that financial variables are primary incentives for female employment.

3.6 Attitudes and Perceptions

3.6.1 Perception of the Gender Dimension of Work

The importance of gender as a criterion in the selection of work is confirmed by 43 percent of working women. The degree to which gender forms a primary consideration within this context varies according to geographical location, female educational level, the family's educational background (as the educational level of fathers increases, women are more inclined to disregard gender as an important determinant in the selection of their work), status in work, and professional level. As female educational level and professional status increase, the importance of gender as a primary criterion in the selection of employment declines.

More than half of working women believe that there is a division of labor based on gender. The majority of working women perceive that females should be employed as "professionals", and, to a lesser extent, as middle-level employees and administrative workers. A small percentage of women thinks that high level jobs are suitable for female employment.

The reaction of society to female employment is influenced by many variables, especially marital status, region, type of work, and professional level. About half of working women feel that their status in the community has been upgraded as a result of employment. As the educational and income levels of women

improve, the reaction of society is more positive and more pronounced. This reaction is also linked to some characteristics of female employment, such as type and duration, which implies that communities encourage and recommend some types of work for women more than others.

3.6.2 Incentives for Female Employment

The primary incentive for women's employment is economic need (35 percent), followed by financial independence (21 percent) and self-esteem (20 percent). The correlation of employment to female education and aspirations has also been a determining factor in the selection of work for 39 percent of working women. Gender perception by women also proves to be an important factor in selecting the type of employment.

Primary incentives for women's work vary according to marital status. Financial need and the desire to increase family income are especially relevant to married, widowed, and divorced females. It is the most important factor for women-heads of household. Other incentives, such as self-esteem, are more common among women in urban settings and among those with higher educational and professional levels.

3.6.3 Family Members' Motivation for Work

Regardless of their background and educational level, mothers motivate their daughters to work. This is primarily because mothers, being deprived of financial independence, strive for their daughters to have a better future. Parents' encouragement of female employment is related to marital status (higher for single females), female educational level (higher for higher female educational levels), and family education background. In general, as family income increases, family support for female work increases. Husbands' encouragement of female work is directly linked to income levels and the percent of income spent on family expenses.

3.6.4 Financial Independence and Share in Family Income

Empowering women and mainstreaming them within decision-making positions begins with gender economic mainstreaming as a means toward financial independence. However, due to cultural and sociological barriers, only one third of working women have established the link between their work and financial independence. Many variables are involved, including marital status, educational status, professional level, and income level. With higher educational levels, professional status and income levels become higher, and employment as a means of financial independence becomes more important. The factor of financial independence is also linked to the percentage share of working women in family expenses. As this share increases, women feel that they do not own their incomes, and satisfaction with the financial rewards from their work diminishes.

Most working women contribute more than 75 percent of their income to the family budget. The woman's participation in family expenses is a factor of marital status (lowest for single women), family size (as the number of dependents increase, female contribution to family income increases), and family income (as the family income increases, the percent of the

working woman's contribution to family expenses decreases). The contribution to the family budget is also linked to the educational level of the working women. Increased educational levels imply higher freedom of action on the part of working women, especially in issues related to income and expenditure. It also appears that women with higher educational levels certainly feel more secure and financially independent than those who only work for financial reasons, i.e., to support their families.

3.6.5 Decision-Making

About 63 percent of working women do not associate work with changes in family attitudes, especially with respect to decision-making. The effect of female employment on decision-making is associated with educational level, income level, and participation in family expenses. As expected, women with higher educational and income levels have a wider opportunity for breaking male-dominated "authority" within the family.

Do you think that being a female affected the selection of your current job? (%)

	yes	no	total
Beirut	38.5	61.5	100.0
Mount-Lebanon	43.2	56.8	100.0
Bekaa	54.9	45.1	100.0
North Lebanon	37.8	62.2	100.0
South Lebanon	50.8	49.2	100.0
total	43.2	56.8	100.0

Does the fact that you work affect your participation in decision making? (%)

	negatively	positively	no effect	total
Beirut	0.8	42.3	56.9	100.0
Mount-Lebanon	1.2	38.2	60.6	100.0
Bekaa	0.5	30.6	68.9	100.0
North Lebanon	0.7	32.2	67.1	100.0
South Lebanon	1.7	26.9	71.4	100.0
total	1.0	36.1	62.9	100.0

3.6.6 Family Responsibilities

Employment as a means for altering family roles is not very evident. The study reveals that one out of two working women is primarily responsible for family chores, as compared to only 0.2 percent of husbands. The primary responsibility of child care still rests with women even if they work. The burden of household duties is mostly felt by working women with low educational levels. As the educational level of women increases, their income levels increase, allowing them to hire paid help for assisting in household chores. The major problem is that women are being encouraged to enter the labor market and to become income generating members of their communities without being offered any assistance to handle their increased responsibilities. Husbands expect their working wives to contribute and share in family expenses, but they are not willing to share in the other duties that burden these women.

4. Employer Perceptions: Implications on Future Demand for Female Labor

This section of the study outlines the characteristics of the enterprises included in the sample, the employers' preferences

with regard to gender, and expected future expansion of activities and the implications of the latter on the demand for female labor. All information included herein is based on the results of the enterprises' survey. It is very important to note that the estimates included here cannot be considered representative of the total population of enterprises in Lebanon and should only be considered as indicative of trends.

4.1 Characteristics of Enterprises in the Sample

The gender distribution of employers in the sample is skewed in favor of men reflecting the relatively weak position of women, despite slow improvement, both in ownership and decision-making. The majority of employers in the sample hold university degrees; a minimal number are illiterate, and a minority have had a vocational education. The difference

Do you think that some professions are more suitable for women than others? (%)

	yes	no	total
Beirut	64.8	35.2	100.0
Mount-Lebanon	57.8	42.2	100.0
Bekaa	79.9	20.1	100.0
North Lebanon	26.0	74.0	100.0
South Lebanon	70.7	29.3	100.0
total	57.1	42.9	100.0

Does the fact that you work make society regard you differently? (%)

	negatively	positively	no effect	total
Beirut	5.0	55.2	39.8	100.0
Mount-Lebanon	3.3	48.6	48.1	100.0
Bekaa	3.3	43.7	53.0	100.0
North Lebanon	3.7	46.6	49.7	100.0
South Lebanon	2.9	49.6	47.5	100.0
total	3.6	49.4	47.0	100.0

between male and female employer educational levels is evident, with higher educational profiles for male employers. Also, the majority of employers who have vocational degrees are males. The higher percentages of female employers with low educational backgrounds indicate that a significant proportion of female employers have low levels of expertise, which imposes major limitations on their ability to exercise other forms of formal employment. The majority of enterprises included in the sample are located in Mount-Lebanon and Administrative Beirut that were established during the war (1975-1990). This confirms the results of the Household and Population Survey (1996) which revealed that Mount Lebanon and Beirut have the highest percentage of the labor force.

The majority of the surveyed enterprises are private and offer predominantly permanent jobs. The highest percentage of enterprises with seasonal work are located in the Mohafazat of Bekaa and North Lebanon, which are areas characterized by agricultural production and thus seasonal employment. It is noted that the number of enterprises owned by women and offering seasonal work is considerably higher than those owned by males, reflecting the seasonal character of female-owned small-scale enterprises.

Most enterprises included in the sample employ fewer than 10 persons and are clustered in the sectors of commerce, manufacturing of garments, education, health-care, and social

work. The majority of female employers own small-size enterprises that manufacture garments and related products, or provide education, health-care, and social services.

The distribution of employees is also skewed in favor of male employees. Although seasonal employees constitute a minority irrespective of gender consideration, the percentage of females among them is higher than that of males. The study also reveals that gender distribution among decision-making employees favors men.

4.2 Allowances and Working Conditions

About two-thirds of employers in the sample provide their employees with social security, annual leave, and sick leave, while only half provide transportation allowances. Other forms of benefits given by employers include loans, bonuses, maternity leave, insurance, and education allowances.

The majority of employers indicate that sufficient lighting, clean bathrooms, and proper ventilation are available in their enterprises. A lower percentage have fire resistance, cooling/heating, and first aid.

4.3 Work-Preparedness of Employees

About fifty percent of employers feel that employees are well prepared to perform their jobs in line with their qualifications and job description, as compared to 36.2 percent who feel that employees are only fairly prepared for their work. Since the majority of working women perceive that they are prepared for their jobs, a gap between the expectations of employers and the actual perception of working women in relation to work-preparedness is evident. This may also indicate that employer expectations go beyond the actual quality of work provided by female employees. Work-preparedness is associated with several variables, including the sector of activity, gender of employer, and principal activity of enterprises.

4.4 Prerequisites for Employment

About half of the employers require vocational education as a prerequisite for employment. It is noted that this is more pronounced among employers in the Bekaa and North Lebanon, and among employers with a vocational or university education. The need for vocational education is also highly associated with enterprises in the public sector as well as medium-sized and large enterprises. The need for vocational education is also linked to the main activity of the enterprise. The majority of employers identify the need for computer skills and knowledge of languages as additional qualifications required of employees.

Most employers consider prior experience as a prerequisite for employment. Furthermore, prior experience is demanded to a higher extent by enterprises in the public sector and is related to the main activity of enterprises.

4.5 Employment Channels

The majority of employers use their personal relations to recruit new labor. It was also observed that the majority of female workers have found their present employment through personal contacts. The use of employment channels varies

slightly according to the principal activity of the enterprise.

4.6 Expected Future Demand For Labor

Only 25 percent of employers have plans to expand their activities within the coming three years. The majority of these employers are found in the Bekaa and North Lebanon. Since the region of Bekaa was found to have the highest percentage of enterprises with seasonal work, the expected expansion in this region may be of a seasonal nature.

As the size of enterprises increases, short-term plans for increasing enterprises' activities increase. The lack of incentive among small-scale enterprises to increase their level of activity results from the constraints they face, such as low access to loans and narrow market. Employer plans to expand their activities also depend on the main activity of the enterprise. It is observed that fewer than one third of education, health-care, and social work enterprises plan to increase their level of activity in the near future. This sector of employment is crucial for the female labor force since it employs the highest percentage of working women.

Planned expansion in activities is found to have an implication on increased demand for labor. Future demand for labor is expected to be highest for university graduates and holders of vocational and technical degrees. The demand for employees with a low educational level and with informal vocational training is expected to be low. Future demand per level of education is related to the geographical region.

Enterprises in Beirut require the highest educational level of their future employees, whereas the demand for employees in Mount-Lebanon is characterized by a diversified demand for all levels of education, although higher for holders of university degrees. The demand for graduates of vocational training (TS) is greater in North Lebanon and the Bekaa (the two areas to place greater importance on vocational education as a prerequisite for employment). The demand per educational level is also associated with the size of enterprises: small-scale enterprises have a greater demand for graduates of vocational education, whereas the demand for higher educational levels is greater in larger enterprises.

The highest projected increase in existing professional levels is expected to be for professional and middle-level employees. The demand for administrative workers and high-level directors is expected to be lower. Skilled and unskilled labor is not expected to be very high in demand. Since the categories of professionals and middle-level workers are found to employ the largest portion of the female labor force, the expectation of increased labor opportunities especially in these categories opens a promising perspective for women's work. Within the category of professionals, the demand for education and health specialists, including teachers, doctors and nurses is expected to be the highest. The highest projected demand for middle-level employees is in the technical professions and health care services.

More than one-third of employers who plan to increase the number of employees expect equal demand for both male and female workers. The demand for employees per gender depends on the main activity of enterprises. The expected

future demand for the female labor force is concentrated in education, health-care and social work.

4.7 Employer Preferences

Employers prefer to employ women rather than men. Employer preferences with relation to gender vary according to geographical location and the individual characteristics of enterprises. Owners of small enterprises prefer female employees. As the size of the enterprise increases, employer preference for female employees decreases considerably.

Employers who prefer male employees think that men are more productive and more serious. They also think that specific types of work are more suitable for men. Employer preference in relation to gender is linked with the sector of activity. The suitability of some activities for either gender remains the principal factor that dictates the level of demand per gender.

More than 50 percent of employers are indifferent to whether their female employees are married or single. Most of the remaining employers prefer single women, especially in rural areas. This is also the case with employers who have plans for expanding their businesses.

The study reveals that the most important reason for the employers' preference for single women is that the rate of absenteeism of married women is higher. The second reason is that married women prefer to work for shorter periods.

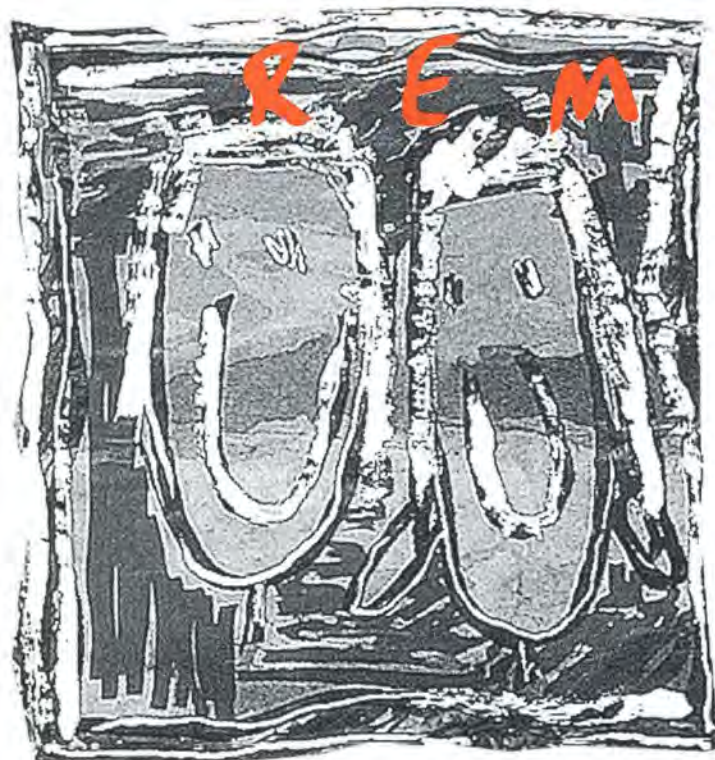
Employers prefer to employ females in the 20-35 year age group. Older women are much less in demand. This conforms

with the current distribution of the female labor force, where the highest concentration is found in the 25-39 year age groups.

More than 70 percent of employers feel that some jobs are more suitable for men than for women. Employer perception of the suitability of work for women/ men is related to geographical location. It can be observed that the effect of gender on the suitability of employment is more pronounced in rural areas. One of the results included in the survey of working women indicated that women in the rural regions, especially the Bekaa and South Lebanon, feel the impact of gender on their access to employment opportunities and on the type of employment.

Employers feel that the most suitable professional employment for women is, first, in administrative categories, and, second, in service industry. Within the range of administrative workers, the majority of employers see women as cashiers, receptionists, and similar occupations, while they feel that the middle-level office jobs are better suited for men. Employers also strongly associate female employment with sales personnel as well as specialists in education. It is also observed that the majority of employers do not think that females are suitable for skilled and unskilled labour.

Finally, there is a discrepancy between the views of employers and working women as to which professions are most suitable for women. Employers and working women share the idea that skilled and unskilled employment is not very suitable for women.



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WOMEN AND MEN HOME-BASED WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR IN THE WEST BANK TEXTILE INDUSTRY¹

By Suha Hindiyeh-Mani,
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This article is a shortened version of a research project conducted in 1995 on "Women and Men in the Informal Sector in the West Bank: Home-Based Workers in the Textile Industry". The central thesis examined was "that both men and women could probably meet their livelihood needs in case of temporary unemployment through subcontracting". In this work I established that the gender division of labour in the West Bank confines women to rigid reproductive and productive roles; thus, hindering their mobility, and increasing their vulnerability at the level of the household, the market and society. The principal objectives of the study were; (i) to acquire an understanding of the mechanisms of subcontracting in controlling home-based workers (both men and women) and (ii) to explore the role of gender in employment patterns in the textile industry. A fundamental finding was that while women's home-based work is a basic survival strategy that enables them to carry on with their reproductive role, for men, it is just a short term strategy which is resorted to in case of unemployment conditions. However, men's comparatively less limited access to the market motivated them to recognize the opportunities and capitalize on them. The data also suggest 'job-gendering' at different levels in the textile home-based work. Job-gendering was evident in the skills men and women acquire through the work they do and as a result of contractual arrangements with contractors/subcontractors who are exclusively men. Another interesting finding was the feminization of home-based work at both levels as home-based workers and wage labour earners.

Introduction

Until recently, the Palestinian labour force in the West Bank has been identified with the integration of the Palestinian economy through the absorption of almost half the active labour force in the Israeli labour market (Siniora, 1986:1). This absorption took different forms, of which subcontracting was a major form. Subcontracting in the Palestinian context emerged as a result of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. With its developed export economy, Israel has been able to assimilate the Palestinian economy not only through subcontracting arrangements but by manipulating the Palestinian economy as a whole. Hence, a major manifestation of the "integrationist" policy was the process of proletarianization of large numbers of men and women largely

from the countryside. Thus, the concentration on the process of economic "integration" was a priority for understanding mechanisms of control over the West Bank natural and human resources.

Significantly, the literature on women, men and work in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has on the whole been part of the literature on economic "integration" in the Israeli economy. The theoretical perspectives used were within the colonial settler thesis, dependency theory and general Marxist theory and the "integrationist" policy implemented by Israel affecting all aspects of living conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Sara Roy elaborates on this:

Palestinians tend to use the language of dependency theory and use neo-Marxist analyses to define the relationship between Israel and the West Bank as economic and structurally asymmetric. It is a centre-periphery relationship between two separate economies, with Israel the dominant "centre" economy and the West Bank its subordinated, peripheralized counterpart (Roy, Sara. 1995:119).

The entry of women and men in the formal and/or informal sectors as wage labourers in subcontracted workshops and in home-based production at a later stage - although it existed before 1967 on a very small scale in the crafts industry and in agriculture on an even smaller scale - was not a result of economic growth and development, rather it was the consequence of the annexation of the Palestinian economy into the Israeli developed economy. In addition, other policies implemented by the occupation authorities (mainly land confiscation and water usage restrictions) have accelerated the entrance of both men and women into the Israeli labour market. Thus farmers, casual labourers, and so on have become cheap labour power for Israel. A major consequence of pooling out of cheap labour power has been growing employment in the textile manufacturing industries and a blurring of the boundaries of the formal and informal sectors.

Subcontracting developed into a major method used by Israeli firms for employing cheap labour power in textile products and other light industries such as food processing and paper manufacturing. In the textile industry, subcontracting arrangements resulted in the growth of large numbers of Palestinian workshops to the advantage of the Israeli local and export markets. Palestinian subcontractors owning workshops receive the cut material from Israeli firms for assembly in their workshops, and the unskilled labour employed is mainly

constituted of women, with a few men. In the occupied territories the textile industry employs one-quarter of those employed in the industrial sector (Samed 1988). The majority of these workshops are tied up to Israeli factories. The textile industry does not require high technology and employs Palestinian local labour in relatively large numbers. This sector mainly involves small factories/workshops small in size, employing less than ten workers. It is also characterized by seasonal work and limited invested capital (Abu Abla, Abla, 1986).

Home-Based Work and its Gender Implications in the West Bank

Home-based workers are dispersed geographically in the West Bank. They are in cities, towns, villages and refugee camps. However, all home-workers come from low income families whose spouses, other male members in the family and/or women members of the family work in low paid jobs in Israel or in the West Bank. A few of the male spouses and other male members in the family work in different occupations, of which the salaries are barely enough to support a family of 6 to 7 members. Almost all home-workers interviewed, whether men or women, have worked at one time in textile workshops run by Palestinian businessmen carrying subcontracted assembly work for Israeli firms. The two major reasons why women and men work as home-workers are their difficult economic situation due to unemployment and the fact that there is no direct supervision by employers. However, women interviewed stated that they do home-based work because of social restrictions on their mobility and because they can care for their children and perform domestic tasks at the same time. For men home-work has another dimension; one man asserted, 'I do not want to be under the control of a Palestinian factory owner unless there are laws that regulate the relationship between us'. He also reported that the closure of the West Bank to Israel had caused many workers to lose their jobs; given the high rates of unemployment, home-based work was welcome and the flexible working hours gave a feeling of self-employment for both men and women. Additionally, for men in particular it is considered a step towards opening their own textile workshop. Some men have been able to open textile workshops in their homes and/or become distributors between Israeli firms and Palestinian home-based workers, while being themselves home-based workers, i.e. combining different activities, which they found to be more profitable. Other men and women gave up work in textile workshops when the West Bank closures to Israel left Palestinian textile workshops without regular work. Some women reported an interest in opening their own workshops, but the unavailability of capital combined with their reproductive role which hinders mobility, means that they have not been able to do so.

The above explicitly reflects an income-earning strategy of the household and the gender implications of home-based work. For women it is a basic survival need, especially for female-headed households (among cases interviewed four women were the head of the family and the sole earner, while another two were the only earner in the family where family members were

unemployed). The gender implication for women is that home-based work will enable them to combine their reproductive role with their productive income-earning work. On the other hand, for men it is a short-term household strategy brought about by unemployment, and because there are no socio-cultural constraints, they were able to perform other activities related to home-based work i.e. subcontracting arrangements at the market level. Men's unlimited accessibility to the market motivated them to recognize the opportunities and capitalize on them (Friedman and Hambridge 1991:171) in conditions of unemployment. Women's accessibility to the market is of course, limited by their domestic responsibilities. At the household level it was found that women working in home-based production do not necessarily retain and save from their earnings, since it is spent as part of family expenditures.

Gender Determinants and Home-Based Work

Discussing the role of gender in home-based work is intricate. There is no sharp demarcation in employing either men and/or women. However, quite a large number of women are working in home-based work though men are also found in significant numbers. One can go as far as saying that all members of the family might be involved to different degrees according to whether the worker is a woman or a man. Nevertheless, the above classification can help in delineating gender differences in relation to women's and men's access and control over resources and decision making processes - thus, describing their access to subcontractors, relationships between subcontractors and home-based workers and the types of work done by both women and men.

Women Home-Based Workers

All women home-based workers without exception, worked in textile workshops and/or firms before starting home-based work. They are the sole earners and/or the second major supporters in the household. They all have direct contact with subcontractors and/or owners of firms whether Palestinians or Israelis. They are also in control of the assembly work and make the financial arrangements with the subcontractors to a lesser degree. Additionally, they all employ wage workers (an average of seven) and get very little help from family members in assembly work. Access to work resources through subcontracting depends mainly on supply and demand in the market. However, some of these home-based workers work for one contractor or a subcontractor who has not been changed for sometime. One of them reported that when the subcontractor she used to work with stopped providing her with assembly work, she began looking for another and now works with him. Although the others did not change subcontractors, the information gathered suggests that it is not difficult to find subcontractors. This is because of the increasing work in textile industries - both for the local Palestinian market and the Israeli market (which is partly for export). However, the cases of women home-based workers revealed differences according to marital status, whether she works with an Israeli firm or a Palestinian subcontractor, and the presence of male partners in the household. Marital status was found to be a significant

factor in determining women's control over income, factors of production and decision making.

Single Women Home-Based Workers

All of them are the primary home-based workers, and they get very little help in assembly work from family members (mainly in the finishing stage). However, they employ wage labour and are in full control of their work and the arrangements they have with subcontractors. The home-based workers working with Palestinian subcontractors receive the cut material at home. All single home-based workers are in control of the financial transactions and are paid once a month by a contractor who comes to the house for delivery and collection, and pays them by the piece.

Widowed Home-Based Workers:

Widows were found to have full control over their income, factors of production, and decision making to varying degrees. However, for those working with Israeli contractors, a male member in the family brings and delivers the work back. All of them employ women wage labour.

Married Home-Based Workers: Husbands are usually in full control mainly if the work is done through an Israeli subcontractor. However, working with Palestinian subcontractors few women are in control of the financial arrangements.

Men Home-Based Workers

Male home-based workers have direct access to owners of firms and subcontractors and are in full control of their work. This is "expected" because of their socially acknowledged role in production and as family supporters. However, there is a difference in their access to subcontracting and control of market resources which is reflected in the combination of the work they do with other factors, mainly the number of workers they employ and the number of sewing machines they own.

Gender Roles in Home-Based Work

Gender roles operate at two levels in relation to access to contractors and subcontractors. All subcontractors and firm owners are men. Concerning assembly work as home-based workers, there exists a gender division of labour (who does the major work in assembly and who makes the financial arrangements with the subcontractor). There is also a gender division of labour at the household level in relation to earning allocation and decision making.

Access to Contractors/Subcontractors

Having worked originally in textile workshops and small factories women have access to Palestinian subcontractors and/or distributors in the Palestinian market. Besides, Palestinian workshop owners approach them in their homes. These workshop owners are either self-employed and/or work through subcontracting with Israeli firms. The data collected suggest that male home-based workers find access to subcontractors and firms much easier due to their unrestricted mobility and ability to expand their work. Not only do they

have access to subcontractors but also can develop their work by combining different kinds of subcontracting arrangements. Almost all women home-based workers reported a keen interest in developing their work into workshops, working on their own and for the Palestinian market. However, they stated that their domestic responsibilities, restrictions on their mobility and the fact that they have no savings means that they are unable to work on their own. Traditional norms of behaviour restrict women's ability to take initiatives. One home-based worker reported that being a widow restricts her mobility even more because "people seeing me out of the house too often might gossip about me". Another single home-based worker said that "as a woman in our society it is better to work at home and not go daily to work in a factory". Hence, tradition is a factor hindering the mobility of women and making them even more vulnerable.

The majority of women home-based workers reported that they do not know of credit organizations to which they could apply. Also, they are scared to take the risk of obtaining credit due to high interest rates and remain skeptical about their ability to pay back on time especially that conditions in the market are unstable because of the political situation.

The productive work of women in clothing assembly at home conforms with their 'natural' domestic role. The majority of women interviewed started working as home-based workers because it does not conflict with their roles as wives, mothers, sisters and daughters, and enables them to bring an income to the family. Subcontractors' reasons for preferring women or men home-based workers were not clear. They gave contradictory responses but they revealed their preference for women because they accept lower payment and possess dexterity in the assembly work. However, subcontractors reported that men are more productive than women and engage in heavier and more demanding work.

Home-Based Work

Women home-based workers with the help of female wage labour perform the assembly work. Women wage workers have specific hours of work, while the home-based workers have longer working hours as they work at night. This is dictated by the domestic responsibilities a woman has to undertake during the day. She leaves assembly work to do housework, prepares meals for the children and husband and performs other household chores. Men home-based workers, irrespective of the number of wage labourers they employ, only work in assembly of cut material. They do not have responsibility at the household level. Men workers know exactly the number of hours they work a day while women are unable to give a precise figure. Besides, men home-based workers are usually helped by women members of the family in the finishing part of assembly work, while women home-based workers are not similarly assisted by male members. This clearly indicates that women's productive labour at the household level is considered "flexible". Women are considered the carers in a family, ensuring that it is close and united. Men are identified as breadwinners and supporters of the family, going out daily to the market, and are not expected to have household

responsibilities. Women however, juggle housework and child care with their home-based work so that the two become invisible.

Another significant variable that distinguishes men's and women's home-based work is the type of material assembled. Men are given jeans material to assemble while women are given dress material. This involves a difference in the amount of money paid to the worker, suggesting that men produce goods of higher marketable value. Subcontractors and men home-based workers reported that women cannot assemble jeans material because they find it too rough to handle.

A primary factor in home-based work is the settlement of finances with subcontractors. Male members of the family, whether home-based workers or not, are responsible for this. In the category family labour it was very clear that men are in charge, although women are the primary assembly workers and in some cases have trained male members in the family in the assembly work. However, in the case of single and divorced women they are in control of their financial arrangements.

Gender Roles at the Household Level

The question of women's access to and control of household resources as earners and decision makers is a complex subject. When asked how they allocate their earnings, women's natural response was that 'it is spent in support of the family'. Information collected suggests that women do not retain money. However, one woman home-based worker reported that she is saving from her income and she is planning to purchase a piece of land. Her brothers who work with her in home-based work save money for investment. The brothers are the decision makers although she is the one who introduced them to the subcontractor, having worked for a while in his workshop. In another case of family labour, the husband controls the household resources and is investing in building a house which will be registered in his name, even though it is built from the earnings of both the husband and the wife.

When asked if she is able to save money, the wife responded 'I have not thought of the idea', and added that since her husband is paid by the subcontractor he is in charge of household expenditures. This and other cases reflect the notion that everything belongs to the family and nothing belongs to women individually, while men refer to their machines and work as their own, reflecting women's subordinate position in the family. In the category of women home-based workers, in particular single and widowed, they control household resources though several cases reveal that they support male members of the family. In one case the married brothers wanted to share profits with their sister although they are not living in the same house and earn an income from their own work. The sister helped them for a while but now she has started investing in machines and has opened a bank account. For the married woman it was clear that her income goes into family support.

Conclusion

In discussing gender determinants of home-based work in the informal sector in the West Bank, the article has revealed similar characteristics of home-based work in the informal

sector as in other Third World countries. These characteristics are summarized in the lack of job security, and stereotypical traits associated with women such as patience, and dexterity. At the same time, women are low paid, and their turn over is very high. They combine long hours of home-based work and domestic responsibilities. Meis asserts:

"By defining women as housewives and breeders, it is possible to obfuscate the fact that they are subsidizing, as unpaid family workers and low paid production workers, the modernization process (1986: 188)."

Women's employment in home-based work is a basic survival strategy that enables them to carry on with their reproductive role in maintaining the household domestic responsibilities. For men, it is a short term household strategy due to unemployment. However, men's unlimited accessibility to the market motivate them to recognize the opportunities and capitalize on them. This was evident from different cases illustrated where men have combined home-based work and subcontracting. Although subcontracting and home-based work emerged in the West Bank under conditions of occupation, the logic of capital is the same everywhere. Israeli capital has benefited from Palestinian men's and women's cheap labour in maximizing its profits. However, women's cheaper labour has been manipulated through patriarchal relations in the Palestinian society and has been viewed because of women's subordinate position in the family, as invisible labour at the level of home-based work. Palestinian subcontractors also benefited from the cheaper labour of women in expanding their workshops and factories although to a lesser degree than the Israeli contractor.

ENDNOTE

1. Adapted from **Women and Men Home-Based workers in the Informal Sector in the West Bank Textile Industry** (1996) Suha Hindiyeh-Mani published in English by World University Service (UK) and in Arabic by the Women's Studies Center/ East Jerusalem 1996.

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By Ghiya Irshaid,
L.A.U Student

Unlike most other bookstores and libraries, L'Arche de Noé is not just a commercial shop. It's a small place with a big message. The founder and owner Mrs. Leila Amad Bissat hoped that she could make a difference by opening this bookstore. Because of the war, Ras Beirut was transformed from a center of culture and civilization into an area full of bars and cheap nightclubs. This fact greatly saddened Mr. and Mrs. Bissat for they had lived there most of their lives. Ras Beirut had given them a great deal and it was time to return the favor. With the help of some friends, they decided to buy out the bars and open respectable shops in their places one of which is L'Arche de Noé.

Coming from a background that encouraged culture, personal accomplishment and innovation, Mrs. Bissat became aware of the importance of reading in shaping the future generation. As a student at the College Protestant, she noticed how the well-read and cultured students usually excelled in their fields. This observation convinced her at an early age of the importance of books and reading. Mrs. Bissat obtained a BA in Sociology in 1976, and when the war ended, "opening a bookstore for children seemed to be the best idea." Not only is L'Arche de Noé a bookstore, but also a library where children can sit and enjoy reading all kinds of books and stories. The books are displayed in such a manner as to motivate children to read: "I used to have a hard time finding the books I wanted in the



libraries. The employees were usually unhelpful, and it took me forever to find a certain book. This is why I stress on the organization and display of books, especially that we're dealing mainly with children." The bookstore also offers computer courses, crafts, and summer tutoring for children.

Only nonviolent educational toys and games are sold at L'Arche de Noé. Mrs. Bissat asserted: "this generation has been exposed to enough violence during the war. Promoting such toys, I think, would only drive them to accept violence all the more." Although commercial toys such as machine guns are highly in demand, she insists on adhering to principles and not selling such toys.

In order to further accomplish her aims and promote the bookstore in a more credible way, Mrs. Bissat came up with the brilliant idea of holding an exhibition once a year. The exhibition goes on for a month where books, songs, toys and gadgets related to the theme of the exhibition are sold. The first exhibition was on the environment, one of Mrs. Bissat main concerns. This concern was nurtured in Vienna, where Mrs. Bissat lived for three years. In Vienna, she had time to work on herself in a cultural and artistic environment. She was greatly affected by the Green Peace Movement and became more environmentally aware. This is why her first exhibition was on the importance of a clean healthy environment and the dangers of pollution. The second exhibition was on Beirut and was entitled, "Heritage of a Past, Vision of a Future." The original colors of Beirut, the kinds of trees that used to grow in Beirut, the architecture of the city and its history drew many people to this exhibition. Both exhibitions were a great success.

Mrs. Bissat stressed on the important role of parents, schools and television programs in encouraging children to read. Unfortunately parents are not exerting enough effort: "The age where children acquire the habit of reading is between ten and twelve years, and parents must motivate children to read at this age." Mrs. Bissat also blames the governmental institutions concerned with this issue particularly the Ministry of Education. Such institutions are not devoting enough time, attention, or work: "The work we do at L'Arche de Noé can only be done on a small scale, but the government has the means to encourage reading and the promotion of educational books and toys on a national level." With the help of TALA Institute for educational toys, Mrs. Bsat produced an educational game on Beirut. By playing this game the children not only have fun but they also learn very basic information about their city, Beirut: "Such toys and games are really needed to replace other harmful and disturbing toys that children play with today."

Mrs. Bissat advises all women not to remain idle for, in her opinion, work makes a person more organized, punctual and decisive. In the working environment, you are exposed to all kinds of people and you learn how to deal with them: "In this manner, you will have more respect for people and for yourself. You will start assessing people's behavior and actions from a different angle, and with more awareness and rationality." Mrs. Bsat chose a career with a flexible schedule so that she can give her children the time they need. Her son and daughter constantly come to the library and are very proud of their mother's accomplishment. Mrs. Bissat opened L'Arche de Noé five years ago when her son was twelve years old and her daughter only eight. Mrs. Bissat asserts, "I owe it all to my husband's full unconditional support. He was there for me, helping me through every step of the way."

Not just

A COMMERCIAL BOOKSTORE

Jewelry IS A LANGUAGE BY ITSELF

By Ghiya Irshaid

“When I started this workshop in 1991, I had no intention of turning it into a serious profession, it was a mere hobby,” says Mrs. May Rishani. “As time went by, I became more involved and decided to teach myself the profession. I read books about the old and new techniques of making jewelry and studied its history and symbolism.” After a great deal of work and effort Mrs. Rishani, now a well established jeweler, has managed to develop her business on a much larger scale, with seven professional artisans working with her. All the work is done in the workshop from the minute the gold is bought as a raw metal until it is transformed into a unique piece of jewelry displayed in the show room. Mrs. May Rishani’s designs are greatly affected by oriental jewelry: “In my opinion, jewelry is a language by itself.” She explained how wearing jewelry evolved from just a pebble on a string, to a symbol of wealth and social status. Jewelry in many cultures has a direct association with the gods. People wore certain stones to protect themselves from evil, or out of superstition. Not only is jewelry a piece of adornment but, “it has a lot to say about you, as a person. The metal, colors, and stones you choose have a lot to do with your personality, hopes, and aspirations.” Today the value of a piece of jewelry is relatively very important to the buyers. It is thought of in terms of an investment. When asked why this profession is mainly dominated by men, Mrs. Rishani said: “I

think the economic factor plays a major role in this issue” Usually, men have more financial means than women. Men think more in terms of investment and profit. Women, on the other hand, tend to be more sensitive to the art itself

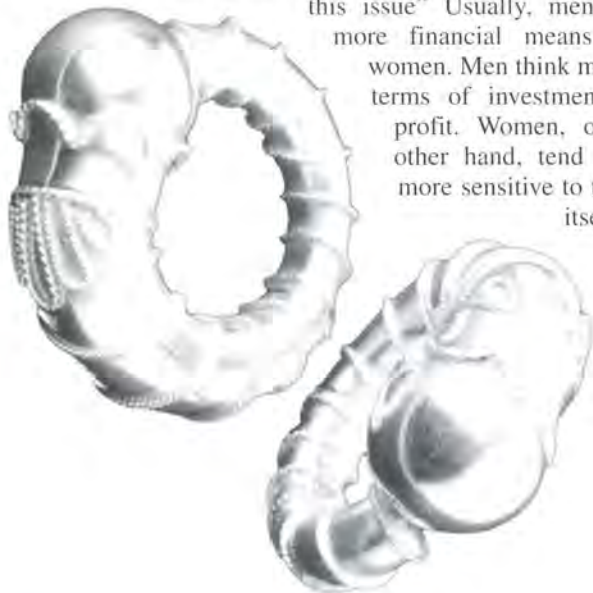


and the aesthetic beauty of a piece of jewelry rather than the commercial value.

Mrs. Rishani was brought up in a conservative environment: “We were strictly disciplined at home and had limited freedom. Yet, culture and self accomplishment were the bases of our upbringing”. Mrs. Rishani is very active socially. She is one of the founding members of the Louise Wegmann College and a member of the American Women’s Club. She has helped in giving aid to the children of the West Bank and has served as member of the Shuwaifat municipality. Now she is the President of the Society of the Friends of the American University of Beirut Museum. Although she is independent and active at the social level, Mrs. Rishani insists that her role as mother, for her two sons, is the most important. Her husband and children were always her first priority. A mother, as she asserts, has a “sacred obligation” towards her children: “I always made it a point to be at home the minute they came back from school. They might be busy studying, but they knew that I was there for them.” Mrs. Rishani attributes her success basically to her family’s support. Her husband provided for her career at the beginning; however, the shop today is a totally independent financial entity. It was her family, she asserts, that provided her with the confidence she needed, and they have remained a major source of strength and reassurance.

Rishani affirms that work has changed her personality. She has become more critical in her judgment of people. Although, she had always taken everything she did seriously, she insists that work demands more commitment and perseverance. A strong sense of responsibility is vital if you wish to succeed in any job or profession: “It was the first time I had really dealt with money and budget, and this made me more cautious. You cannot afford to overlook the minutest detail.”

Mrs. Rishani encourages all women to work. Work gives a person a sense of self-accomplishment, satisfaction, and financial independence and boosts one’s self confidence. A working woman feels that she is equal to man in the real sense. Mrs. Rishani admits that it is very difficult for a full time working woman to cope if her children are still young. Therefore, “a working mother should try to spend quality time with her children, to make up for the time she is at work.” In her opinion, the family is a “sacred obligation,” and she has succeeded in achieving a balance between her private and professional lives. Looking around the show room, one cannot but be astonished at the beauty, style, and uniqueness of her designs. She is a truly talented artist, with a strong sense of persistence and resolution, just the right combination for success!



Two UNCONVENTIONAL JOBS HELD BY ONE WOMAN

by Myriam Sfeir, Assistant Editor

Hala takes my brother to school everyday. She also works on the petrol station my family frequents. The two unconventional jobs she holds prompted me to interview her for this issue of *Al-Raida*. Her husband was present during the interview, so I had a chance to hear what he had to say.

Hala graduated from high school and got married soon afterwards. Prior to her marriage, she had never worked for she was busy taking care of her home and family. The deteriorating economic conditions in the country forced her husband to take up two jobs at the same time. At a certain point, her husband, discouraged by the prevailing situation, gave up attempting to make ends meet in Lebanon and decided to try his luck outside the country. Hala was tremendously affected by her husband's absence: "I was miserable and lonely and felt burdened with the responsibility of brining up our four sons all by myself. So I asked my husband to return to Lebanon where we could work hand in hand." At first her husband was opposed to the idea of his wife taking up a job; however, the need for "the extra cash" finally convinced him to allow her to work.

Hala started off by running their vegetable store, while her husband worked as a school bus driver. Two years later her husband decided to sell the bus and work as a taxi driver, but Hala advised him not to sell it and offered to do the job herself - driving the children from and to the school. At first, he opposed the idea since he did not want her to overwork herself, but she finally managed to convince him to acquiesce. When asked if any of the students' parents complained about the change in drivers the answer was negative. Hala affirms, "Mothers were in fact very pleased for their children were content with me because I am more patient with them." Her husband admitted: "The students enjoy going with her to school. Sometimes when Hala is unable to take the students to school and I go instead I often sense disappointment on their faces." Some time later her husband rented a petrol station and started a taxi company and

Hala began working at the station since her husband was very busy driving to and from Beirut.

According to Hala it is important that women help their husbands for nowadays living conditions are harsh, and both spouses should work to ensure a decent living. She maintains that "work has changed my life. I feel productive and active and would rather work than stay at home, visit friends and socialize. Yet, I still believe that women should work only when in need and that their top priority should be their families."

Hala's schedule is very busy. She wakes up early and leaves the house at seven to drop the students off to school. After that she goes straight to the petrol station and rarely gets back home until late. I asked her how she manages to cook her meals everyday, and she explained that she cooks part of her food at home and the rest she prepares at the station. She tidies things up during the week days and on weekends, she cleans the house, does the laundry, and attends to all the household chores. Hala asserts that her husband and four sons are very supportive and helpful: "None of my children was negatively affected by my work. When my youngest son was a toddler I used to take him with me to work. I could do that because I'm my own boss and my hours were flexible." Hala maintains that her children often help her out both at home and on the petrol station: "My boys fix their beds, clear the kitchen table, throw the garbage away, etc. They sympathize with me and realize that I can't cope without their help. My husband also pitches in when he is free."

Hala affirms that their relatives and friends appreciate her work and encourage her to keep it up. According to her husband, "our children look up to their mother and are proud of her and so are many of our friends who want their wives to do likewise and assist them in their financial responsibilities." Hala asserts: "Most of the customers whom I serve at the station are shocked by the fact that I am a female. Some encourage and congratulate me, whereas others wonder if such work embarrasses me. I am not embarrassed not even one bit."

A WOMAN Taxi Driver

By Myriam Sfeir

She is Virginie Asmar the only female taxi driver among forty men working at Auto Tour, a reputable taxi company. When I first heard about her I was intrigued to find out what compelled her to take up such a male dominated profession. I called Auto Tour and fixed an appointment.

On meeting her, I could see that she was more than ready to answer my queries. She told me that prior to her present job, she had worked as an independent contractor (a tailor) for a factory that manufactures shoes for Bata; however, owing to the company's deteriorating financial situation the management stopped contracting independent tailors. Consequently, Asmar lost her job and remained unemployed for over four years. She explained that there were no jobs available at that time and when talking to her cousin, who is a taxi driver, about her situation she jokingly proposed applying to a taxi company. Contrary to her expectations, her cousin encouraged her and she started seriously contemplating the idea. She called up a colleague of hers who works for Auto Tour and asked for help. He was very supportive and offered to fix an appointment with the manager. Several days later she met with the operations manager, and the owner of the company offered to give her a job on a trial basis. In the meantime, she was required to buy a Mercedes Benz and acquire a public driving license.

When asked how her parents reacted to her choice of profession she explained that at first they thought she was joking, but when they realized that she was serious they did not interfere. According to her, they couldn't complain for it was a respectable job in a reputable Taxi company. Besides, she maintained that they had confidence in her and looked upon her as a tough and responsible person capable of deciding for herself, particularly that she is single and is therefore free to choose a profession.

Asmar asserted that she never experienced any blatant discrimination either on the part of her employers or her colleagues. Yet, she is bothered by Auto Tour's reluctance to send her on night trips. She

holds: "If there is a trip at night they always make sure not to send me. I know that it is not against me personally but because I am a woman. Besides, although it's been approximately three years since I started working at Auto Tour, Mr. Saibeh still worries about me. He often calls, during working hours, to check on me especially when I go on long distance drives." She also admitted that when her colleagues first found out that a woman would be working with them they objected, but the manager explained to them that the decision had been made and that they had no choice but to accept the idea.

Asmar maintained that she works in the area of Jal el-Dib because she lives there and knows it inside out. According to her, this applies to most drivers: "each one of us works within his/her area." In theory, Asmar asserted that she is supposed to work from 5:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. but it is not always the case: "Every morning I receive a call from the office concerning my hours for we drivers go by turns. If, for instance, I fail to report, another driver takes my turn." According to Asmar, being a taxi driver is simpler than sewing shoes. She affirms: "My work is enjoyable yet it is tiring because drivers in Lebanon are undisciplined, and the traffic jams are a problem."

People's reactions varied yet on the whole they were mostly positive. According to Asmar, "most of our clients began eventually to ask for me personally whenever they called for a cab, and many women felt more at ease with me. Among the problems I faced earlier on was that clients who had ordered a taxi failed to recognize that I was their driver. So after several incidents, the operator decided to inform the clients in advance that the driver is a woman. Only a small minority rejected the idea of a woman driver, while many others welcomed it."

Asmar affirms that some men felt uncomfortable in her car because pedestrians made fun of them. Even traffic control policemen harassed her. Asmar recounted several incidents where policemen stopped her to inform her that it was illegal to drive her husband's cab: "Once a policeman advised me to remove the Taxi sign when driving my husband's car. I told him that I was single, and this was my car for I was



a taxi driver, but he thought I was joking. The man received the shock of his life when I showed him my papers.”

In Asmar’s opinion, “more women ought to join this profession by seeking respectable taxi companies. Nowadays some advertisements in newspapers require female taxi drivers, but not all such companies consider the job an honorable one. Some companies employ girls for other purposes. I recently came across an add in the newspaper requesting four women drivers. I called the company out of curiosity, but it turned out that they wanted single women to work at night.”

In order to obtain more information about the circumstances behind Asmar’s employment I met with the company’s operations manager Mr. Faris Saibeh. According to Saibeh, Virginie payed them a visit and expressed interest in working for Auto Tour. So she was asked to fill in an application form: “I studied her application and to be honest at first I was hesitant because of the traditional Lebanese mentality. Yet the decision was mine and in spite of everything I decided to employ her on a trial basis since at Auto Tour all drivers undergo a two month trial period before they are employed. I wanted to give Virginie a chance for she was tough and respectable.”

Saibeh explained the pros and cons of having a female driver among his male dominated team: “ We encountered many problems at first for some people refused to have a woman driver. The reasons varied: some clients had no confidence in her driving, while others were uncomfortable and did not feel at ease perhaps because she threatened their manhood. Besides, there is a prevalent misconception among our local and Arab clients that a woman who drives men around is improper and indecent. All these variables were taken into consideration for our reputation was at stake. At the same time, we received positive feedback too: “Many female clients felt more comfortable with a woman and preferred her to a male taxi driver. Besides a lot of mothers favored having a female drive their children and teenage daughters around especially at night. Virginie attracted a lot of publicity. Once the media found out there was a female taxi driver working at Auto Tour several newspapers, magazines, and T.V. stations wanted to interview her.”

Saibeh admitted that he worries a lot about Virginie: “I frankly do not feel comfortable sending her out at night. I feel responsible for a weaker person who cannot defend herself the way a man does when he is behind the wheel. Although all our drivers who work day shifts are expected to work at night when needed this rule does not apply to Virginie. With Virginie its different, she ought to finish work no later than 5:30 p.m.”

ENDNOTE

1. Asmar has appeared on several local T.V.stations namely ICN, Future Television, Télé Lumière, Tele Liban, etc. and has been interviewed by several Lebanese and Arab magazines and newspapers.

A MACHO HUSBAND

By Myriam Sfeir

“I have lived with my husband for donkey’s years. I cannot stand it but there is nothing I can do about it for I have no money, no one to turn to, and nowhere to go.” These are the words of Umm Adel,¹ a domestic worker who suffered a great deal at the hands of her husband. Umm Adel is originally from Turkey. She was orphaned at an early age and was raised by her paternal uncle who could not afford to send her to school. Her uncle and his wife loved her dearly, so they decided to marry her to their son. Umm Adel was only 13 years old when she married. Her husband treated her very badly, and one year after their marriage he took a second wife. Her in-laws were very upset with their son and pressured him to divorce Umm Adel. When he refused they drove him out of the house. Yet, Umm Adel maintains: “My husband threatened his parents and swore that he would harm them if they interfered in his life. They couldn’t do anything to stop him for he had a mind of his own.”

Upon recalling the harsh and destitute life she has led Umm Adel recounts: “We remained in Turkey for several months, and after that we moved to Lebanon where we rented a tiny flat in a poor neighborhood in Beirut. I am still living in that same flat, along with my youngest son and my husband. The flat, which consists of two rooms and a tiny kitchen, used to be inhabited by 14 people. I wonder how we² managed to live in it.” According to Umm Adel both she and her husband’s second wife had to work in order to make ends meet: “Even though our husband worked at the Port of Beirut, until it was closed down during the war, he never gave us a penny. In fact, he used to take all our savings. All the money he had was spent on indecent women.”

When asked about her relationship with her husband’s second wife Umm Adel asserts: “We are friends, we had to get along for we lived together in the same house for approximately two decades. Yet, we are very different in nature.” Umm Adel admits that, unlike her husband’s second wife, she never rebelled against her husband for she was raised to be submissive, subordinate and to obey the men in her life who always had the upper hand in everything. Umm Adel holds: “My husband’s wife is a tough woman and is no longer scared of our husband. She retaliates whenever he hits her and on several occasions, she along with her daughters, beat him up. Once she was able to move out of the flat, she managed, with the help of her children, to rent a place of her own. I never dared

par Excellence



contemplate leaving my husband because I did not want to lose my children. I couldn't leave or live without them. Besides, I was all alone in Lebanon with no relatives to go to. Moreover, I knew that there was no way for me to divorce him since he is the man and he, alone, has the right to divorce."

Although Umm Adel has been working for the past 56 years, she has not saved a single penny. She maintains, "My husband used to beat me up and take all my money whenever I refused to give him my savings willingly." Umm Adel recounts, "My husband has not worked for the past 24 years, but he has no worries about money matters since all the financial responsibilities are taken care of by the "two slaves he has married". The only time he ever buys anything for the house is when he wants money from us. Umm Adel admits that her husband looks upon her as his personal maid: "Although we haven't actually spoken in 20 years, he expects me to cook for him. He is usually abusive when the food is not to his taste or when I'm too tired to cook." Umm Adel affirms that her children often interfered and tried to shield her from their father's abuse and violence.

Umm Adel argues that her husband is hated by all his children equally for "he is self-centered and has never shown them any love or affection." She recounts: "My husband succeeded in ruining our lives. He forced two of our sons to marry at the age of 13. The brides he chose for them were Kurdish relatives of his. My sons were miserable for they were still too young. Besides, thanks to him none of my children has received any formal education because he was busy spending our money on his mistresses: "Schools were very expensive³ and I could hardly afford to feed and clothe my children." Umm Adel pauses and broods over the viciousness and insensitivity of her husband: "What sort of man would bring his girl friend, who is as young as his

daughter, home with him and sleep with her on the only bed at home, while his wife and son sleep on the floor?"

Umm Adel's dream is to have a place of her own some day, yet she knows it is practically impossible: "The only reason why I can afford our current rent is that it is an old lease and is relatively cheap. Buying or renting a flat nowadays costs a fortune." Even though Umm Adel has been paying the rent for the past 50 years, the lease papers are in her husband's name so he has all the benefits and privileges. This is one of the reasons why she can't drive him out, coupled with the fact that he is abusive and violent: "I know that he can easily beat me up if I ask him to leave. I often contemplated throwing him into jail, but I worried about how people would judge me. Besides, his revenge after he is released from jail is something I wanted to avoid." Umm Adel recounts that during the war some friends, who witnessed the misery brought about by Abu Adel⁴, advised them to murder him and dispose with the body. Yet, Umm Adel admits: "Even though it could have been an easy task had we pretended he was shot on the street by some sniper, and although the idea was very appealing we couldn't do it."

Umm Adel is now around seventy years old and is still working, thanks to her husband. Although her sons help her out and often give her money, they have families to support. She holds: "All I have is what I earn. I have to work, otherwise I will not be able to pay the bills, buy food, etc." She asserts that she'd rather work than stay at home: "I enjoy my work, it is not tiring for my employers do not pressure me to work. They treat me like a member of their family."

It should be noted that Umm Adel was very scared and worried about being interviewed at first for fear that her husband would find out. When I explained to her that **Al-Raida** is published in English and is not sold locally, she felt relieved and spoke with frankness about her life.

ENDNOTES

1 Umm Adel means the mother of Adel. In the Arab World the parents of male children often adopt their eldest sons' name.

2 Umm Adel, her husband, his co-wife, along with eleven children lived in the house.

3 Being non-Lebanese, they do not qualify to send their children to free public schools.

4 Abou Adel means the father of Adel

Harassment in the Workplace, DOES IT EXIST IN LEBANON?

By Myriam Sfeir

Confusion may be inevitable when it comes to personal relations: so much of it is based on nuance, anyway. But it's also true that sexual harassment law, perhaps more than most, is constantly evolving as each new case comes before the courts and establishes new precedents. Thus, what today would be a perfectly obvious (and winnable) case of harassment - a woman loses her job because she won't sleep with her boss - was far from obvious to judges in the early 1970s. (Ms Magazine, p. 50)

What is sexual harassment in the work place? What behavior counts as sexual harassment? Is it illegal? Are there any legal actions to be taken in case someone is harassed? While surfing the net to find some information about sexual harassment that would enable me to answer all these questions, I came across an advocacy organization for working women in the USA called 9 to 5. It was established in 1973 and since then has been "fighting for more effective corporate and public policies to end sexual harassment and protect the rights of victims."

Sexual Harassment: What Every Working Woman Needs to Know.

Have you experienced any of the following at work?

Suggestive comments about your appearance?

Unwanted touching or other physical contact?

Unwanted sexual jokes or comments?

Sexual advances?

Exposure to pornographic pictures?

If you have experienced any unwanted verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature, you are not alone. This behavior is considered sexual harassment.

It's not only offensive, it's against the law. Sexual harassment is illegal even if the harasser is not your boss, even if he is not threatening that you will lose your job if you don't go along.

What the Law Says:

Sexual harassment is unwanted, repeated sexual attention at work.

Sexual harassment is illegal if:

- Your job depends on your going along with this behavior, or
- The conditions of your employment (such as pay, promotion, vacation) depend on your going along with this behavior, or
- The harassment creates a hostile or offensive work

environment which interferes with your ability to do your job.
- Everyone has the right to a workplace free of harassment.

What You Can Do:

Sexual harassment is not your fault.

Sexual harassment is not about sex. It's about power. Typically such behavior is designed to humiliate and control.

Here are some steps to take if you are being sexually harassed on the job:

- *Say No Clearly. Inform the harasser that his attentions are unwanted. Make clear you find the behavior offensive. If it persists, write a memo to the harasser asking him to stop; keep a copy.*

- *Document the Harassment. Write down each incident including date, time and place. Detail what happened and include your response. Keep a copy at home. This information will be useful if you need to take legal action.*

- *Get Emotional Support from friends and family.*

- *Document Your Work. Keep copies of performance evaluations and memos that attest to the quality of your work. The harasser may question your job performance in order to justify his behavior.*

- *Look for Witnesses and Other Victims. You are probably not the first person who has been mistreated by this individual. Ask around; you may find others who will support your charge. Two accusations are much harder to ignore.*

- *Explore Company Channels. Use any grievance procedures or channels detailed in your employee handbook. If you're in a union, get the union steward involved right away.*

- *File a Complaint. If you need to pursue a legal remedy, contact your state discrimination agency or the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (look in your phone book for the field office closest to you. The federal agency covers workplaces of 15 or more. State law may protect you if you're in a smaller workplace).*

- *Attorneys; You do not need an attorney to file a claim, but you may want to speak with a legal service or private attorney specializing in employment discrimination.*

Under the new Civil Rights Act of 1991, victims of sexual

harassment are entitled to damages for pain and suffering as well as to any lost pay. If you win, you may also recover legal fees. (9 to 5, web site)

The May/June issue of Ms. magazine entailed a special report on sexual harassment at work. Among the articles was an interview with Vicki Shultz, a professor at Yale Law School in New Haven, Connecticut. Shultz argues:

There are two kinds of harassment that the courts have recognized. The first, quid pro quo, forbids a supervisor from telling a subordinate she must have sex with him or else suffer adverse consequences on the job. The other is hostile work environment, where supervisors or coworkers do things that make the work atmosphere more difficult for people based on their gender. Hostile work environment harassment really isn't about sexual exploitation. It's about exclusion - one group trying to make the work atmosphere more difficult for another because they'd really rather not have them around. Or they want to be able to categorize them as inferiors. Sometimes it is sex, but sometimes it's other things that are used to make women less serious, less capable, different, and out of place on the job. Over time, quid pro quo - "put out or get out" - has come to be the popular image of harassment. It has overshadowed hostile work environment harassment. We've become obsessively concerned with sexual advances and sexual conduct, and this has had negative consequences for the development of sexual harassment law." She holds: "What we need to do now is recognize that what happens in the sphere of paid employment is equally important in shaping women's disadvantage. We have to take very seriously the notion that if we're going to be truly free, truly equal, we need to be able to have access to challenging, rewarding, meaningful work that we can do freely and creatively and equally - alongside men, alongside other women, alongside people of all ages and races. (Ms. magazine, pp. 56-57)

Unlike in the West, sexual harassment in general and in the workplace in particular fails to receive any attention whatsoever and is rarely discussed in Lebanon. The illusion of well-being and advancement that clouds our understanding concerning the status of women prevents us from realizing that many working women suffer from sexual harassment in the workplace. Besides, the evident shortage in valid and reliable data prevents one from taking action. Harassed women are reluctant to speak out for several reasons namely fear of being doubted, social pressure, shame, etc. Moreover, absence of laws protecting them reinforces their feelings of hopelessness. A study conducted by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World entitled "Female Labor Force in Lebanon" reveals that among the 8% of working women who faced problems with their employers, 44% complained of exploitation, 24% of

rude behavior, and 16% of discrimination based on gender; however, sexual harassment problems were almost nonexistent. The absence of complaints related to sexual harassment can be attributed to cultural barriers, for women rarely feel free to express the constraints that they are faced with.

According to Lawyer Mirella Abdel-Sater, sexual harassment in the workplace is all about power. It occurs when an employer uses his power and position to exact sexual favors from his unconsenting employee. She maintains that the legal system's penal code fails to tackle this issue and explains that sexual harassment laws, if devised, should fall under the penal code because harassment might take place anywhere and not only in the work place. Abdel-Sater argues that when one proposes to amend a law or legislate a new one, a presentation of the prevailing situation and its ill effects is pertinent. Case studies should be accumulated and the advantages of devising a new law should be cited. Unfortunately, Abdel-Sater holds that sexual harassment cases are practically nonexistent because women rarely file complaints: "The absence of concrete evidence coupled with fear of being blamed discourages women from suing. Society rarely sympathizes with these women who are always mistakenly blamed for their predicament. You often hear people remarking "she asked for it", "she never dressed properly", "she is too friendly", etc.

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He was very mean and disrespectful. He knew that I needed this job very badly for I am a single mother raising my son single handedly
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Abdel-Sater argues that sexual harassment is punishable by law in some Arab countries such as Morocco and Egypt. These laws were promulgated and implemented to protect victims of sexual harassment following big scandals. Abdel-Sater wonders whether we have to wait for scandals to take place, in Lebanon, to take action and tackle this issue. She criticizes a society that tries to deny the existence of such cases in order to appear progressive.

Abdel-Sater explains that when sexual harassment takes place in the work place and the employee files a complaint protesting the unjustified termination of her contract, her employer has to pay her an atonement that entitles her to a compensation provided that she proves to be efficient and is fired for no reason. The compensation might add up to 13 months paid salary depending on how long the victim has served the company.

Abdel-Sater admits: "I do not know on what basis laws protecting the harassed will be devised in the future given that our experience in this area is very limited. In the circumstances it will take long to implement such a law; however, we should continue to discuss the subject for the public to learn about it and about its prevalence. Our work on this subject will enable

future generations to take a stand. Below are two cases I managed to collect. I was supposed to interview a woman who filed a complaint, sued and received a compensation. She consented to being interviewed yet never called me back. I called her several times in vain.

Voices: Case 1

I used to work as an editor in a well known Lebanese organization. Shortly after I was employed my immediate boss invited me along with a colleague for lunch to celebrate my employment. During lunch he offered us champagne and I felt he was trying to impress me. It was so obvious that he wanted a more intimate relationship with me for he often expressed interest in visiting me at home and I ignored his comments. One month later he informed me that he would be paying me a visit at home, so I invited the same colleague along. After that he started making comments about my appearance and expressed interest in seeing me alone: "when will I see you alone?" "when will you invite me to your house alone?" I tried to ignore his comments and later when he became bolder in his comments I got fed up and asked him what he wanted from me. His answer was: "you know exactly what I want." The moment I informed him that I was not interested in him he started punishing me. I used to work on a full-time basis and had an insurance policy that covered both my son and myself. After the incident he informed me that I would be working on a part-time basis, and he deducted 200 dollars from my salary and canceled my insurance. When I asked why he did that he informed me that I'd be better off this way. He was very mean and disrespectful. He knew that I needed this job very badly for I am a single mother raising my son single handedly.

He succeeded in making my life hell. Not only did his actions and attitude bother me but he succeeded in turning me into a nervous wreck living in a continuous state of panic. I later found out that he was dating my colleague. When his girlfriend found out that he was interested in me, she started pestering me too. I tried to ignore them by pretending to be busy on our common breaks. I treated them professionally and never lost my temper for I could not afford to lose my job. I succeeded and stayed with the company for around two and a half years.

The last six months at work were unbearable for my boss started criticizing my work and inventing mistakes I had not committed. I knew he was planning to give me the sack for he often belittled my job, ridiculed my performance, and told me that I was easily dispensable. Although he wanted to fire me ages before, he could not for he lacked a suitable replacement. So he started interviewing interested candidates in secret, for he did not want me to find out, and finally chose one and trained her. One day he called me into his office to inform me that my services were no longer needed. When I asked him why he replied "if you have something to offer in return for your job I'll be pleased to keep you. I think you know exactly what I mean." I was so furious I told him that he was unethical, despicable and base.

I told my close friends and family the reasons behind my dismissal. They were shocked and angered by my boss's boldness and rudeness. I contemplated taking legal action but the odds were against me for after my boss changed my status from a full time employee to a part timer I could no longer sue the company for unjustified termination of contract. So my only solution was to complain to my boss's superior. I took an appointment and went to see him but he turned out to be worse than my boss. He was eyeing me up and down and asked me out on a date. Finally I decided to send a letter to the owner of the company, but there was no answer.

This experience affected me tremendously for it made me suspicious of people's actions and intentions. I doubted myself and at times of weakness, I used to question my actions wondering where I went wrong. Yet deep inside I knew that it was not my fault and was convinced that I had nothing to do with what happened. Then with time I heard a lot of stories similar to mine, and it was comforting to know that people understood my ordeal. The fact that I was a divorcee encouraged the perpetrator to voice his feelings. Had I been married, nothing of the sort would have happened. Given that divorcees are easy preys I started pretending I was married and put a wedding band whenever I had a job interview so that my male interviewees would know that I am not available. If I am harassed in the future I will definitely sue the perpetrator. Although I have learnt to forgive I still have a lot of anger within me.

Voices: Case 2

I used to work as a journalist in a reputable magazine. At work I had problems with my immediate boss who used to publish all my articles under the authorship of other colleagues. I complained about his unfair behavior on several occasions in vain. So I reported his actions to his superior who reassured me that he would help me out. And in fact he did, he took my side wholeheartedly, reprimanded my boss, and informed him that I would be submitting my articles to him instead. One week later he increased my salary. He treated me so kindly that at times I questioned his behavior wondering why he is being so nice to me. He also asked me to drop the formalities and call him by his first name. I was surprised at his remark and refused to do so for he was as old as my father.

One day when I was in his office submitting an article, he closed the door and put his arms around me. I was so shocked that I hid my face so that he would not be able to kiss me. I then pulled away and stormed out of his office. The following day I submitted my resignation. I could afford to do so because my job did not pay well. I did not tell anyone about the incident because I was scared of being blamed. I also feared my parent's reaction. At first I was in a state of denial and refused to term it sexual harassment; yet, the more I thought about it and questioned all the supposedly "good" things he did to me the more it became clear that I was sexually harassed. I also found out that several women were sexually harassed by that same person.

THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT OFFICE (NEO): AN ANSWER TO UNEMPLOYMENT?

By Myriam Sfeir

The National Employment Office (NEO) is an old/new governmental organization under the umbrella of the Lebanese Ministry of Labor. Its mandate enables it to conduct statistical, economic and social studies and to offer guidance and training. Established in 1979, it closed down four years later in 1983. It was reactivated in 1995, by the Ministry of Labor, upon the recommendation of the International Labor Office (ILO).

NEO has a board of directors and an executive committee. The former is headed by the Minister of Labor, and his Vice-President is the Director General of the Ministry in question. It includes representatives of governmental institutions (the Lebanese University, the Directorate General of Technical Training, and the Educational Center for Research and Development), employers,¹ as well as employees.²

In order to obtain more information on the work done at NEO an interview was conducted with Mr. Moussa Gedeon, Director General of NEO. Gedeon explained: "Among the most important duties of the NEO is the creation of employment centers in Beirut and all Lebanese regions. Our basic aim is to curtail the rise in unemployment rates. In order to do so a study on the situation of the labor market and its needs was carried out in collaboration with the International Labor Office (ILO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The first employment center was established in Beirut in January, 1998. The first month served as a trial period, and the center has been operational since February. Initially, we faced a lot of difficulties because the employees at NEO lacked the proper training needed. So we organized training sessions for them which were supervised by the International Labor Office and the Tunisian Office of Employment."

The trained specialists at NEO visit, on the basis of the study results, the establishments that are in need of employees, and an application form is filled out for the

available vacant positions. The application forms are later matched with the job application forms filled by the applicants.³ This process tries to equalize the demand for with the supply of labor.

Gedeon affirms that the NEO's target audience is the Lebanese citizen and maintains that the free services offered at the NEO should be an incentive for people to apply: "I would like to call upon employers and employees to come forth and make use of the services we offer. They ought to have trust in us for their trust will allow our office to grow and prosper. Through our work we aim to refute the saying that everything free of charge is a flop." Gedeon admits that one employment center is not enough and attributes the opening of this center in greater Beirut to the fact that 45% of the Lebanese labor force is clustered in this area. Gedeon clarifies: "It should be noted here, however, that this center receives job application forms from all over Lebanon. In the future several employment centers will be established and each one of them will deal with a specific district. Our long term objective is to find work for Lebanese citizens including those living abroad to encourage them to return to their country."

The National Employment Office has received, so far, numerous job application forms and requests from employers. The data has been codified and computerized. The figures below give an idea on the sort of applications and requests received.



DEMAND FOR JOBS

Family Status	Male	Female	Total
Widowed		4	4
Single	412	218	630
Married	220	66	286
Divorced	4	6	10
Total	636	294	930

DEMAND FOR JOBS

Sex	Working Presently	Not Working Presently	Total
Female	33	261	294
Male	94	542	636
Total	127	803	930

DEMAND FOR JOBS

Age	Male	Female	Total
<=19	46	9	55
20-25	165	91	256
26-30	117	68	185
31-35	93	50	143
36-40	66	38	104
41-45	55	15	70
46-50	40	10	50
51-55	21	7	28
56-60	19	4	23
>60	14	2	16
Total	636	294	930

DEMAND FOR JOBS

Reasons Behind Unemployment	Male	Female	Total
Economic Reasons	229	80	309
Resignation	82	55	137
Looking for a Job for the First Time	97	67	164
End of Contract	65	21	86
Termination for Other Reasons	58	34	92
No Answer	96	35	131
Sickness or Work Accident	9	2	11
Total	636	294	930

DEMAND FOR JOBS

Type	Male	Female	Total
Senior Officials & Managers	49	9	58
Professionals	118	73	191
Technicians & Associate Professionals	123	71	194
Clerks	63	112	175
Service Workers & Shop & Market Sales Workers	62	9	71
Craft & Related Trade Workers	110	8	118
Plant & Machine Operators & Assemblers	65		65
Elementary Occupations (Non Qualified)	46	12	58
Total	636	294	930

DEMAND FOR JOBS

Caza	Male	Female	Total
Batroun	6	1	7
West Bekaa	1		1
Chouf	25	7	32
Koura	2		2
Metn	120	42	162
El-Minieh	4		4
Nabatiyeh	1		1
Baabda	168	65	233
Baalbeck	2		2
Beirut	178	146	324
Jbeil	7	2	9
Jezzine	2		2
Rachaya	5		5
Zahlé	8	2	10
Zghorta	2		2
Tyre	2	1	3
Saida	23	5	28
Tripoli	20		20
Aley	31	4	35
Akkar	6		6
Kesserwan	23	19	42
Total	636	294	930

DEMAND FOR JOBS

Educational Level	Male	Female	Total
Elementary	54	10	64
Licence Technique	4	1	5
Technicien Supérieur	43	20	63
Baccalauréat Technique	77	38	115
Certificat Accélééré Professionnel	1	1	2
Brevet Professionnel	4		4
Illiterate	9	1	10
Intermediate	122	25	147
Secondary	84	41	125
University	225	152	377
No Answer	8	3	11
Post Graduate	5	2	7
Total	636	294	930

ENDNOTES

- 1 The employers have five members representing the banking, industrial, and commercial sectors as well as hotels and hospitals.
 2 The employees have five members chosen from the Labor Union.

3 The matching is executed according to the classifications and descriptions of professions that were prepared by NEO in conformity with international standards. This division reconciles the discourse between employer and employee.



THE WOMEN'S MODEL PARLIAMENT

*By Sama Aweidah-Liftawi
Translated by Ghena Ismail*

PROJECT'S ORIGIN/BACKGROUND

The project is executed through the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling (a member in the Arab Women's Forum – Aisha) which has conducted a comprehensive survey of the discriminatory laws against Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza. After laws were surveyed and examined, proposals for amending them were made by the Center to be later published in a book entitled "Law and the Palestinian Woman's Future." Director of the Center, Ms. Maha Abu Diyeh explained that in light of major developments, namely, the foundation of the National Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Legislative Council, the center started to think of ways through which it could influence the legislator. Consequently, the idea of the Women's Model Parliament emerged. Similar experiences such as children's parliaments and shadow parliaments helped trigger the idea. Ms. Abu Diyeh holds, however, that their own Women's Model Parliament is a pioneer Arab and international experience in the domain of women's legal struggle.

OBJECTIVES

The Women's Model Parliament primarily aims at promulgating Palestinian laws that ensure justice, equality, and respect of human rights. Within this context, it strives at stimulating public dialogue, promoting legal awareness among all groups, and soliciting public and official support for the Parliament's demands and proposals.

STAGES AND COMPONENTS

Work on the Women's Model Parliament project started one and a half years ago. The first stage was a comprehensive survey of laws. The second stage was a national campaign led by the Parliament under the motto, "for the sake of laws that ensure equality and enjoyment of human rights by Palestinian women." A preparatory committee in the West Bank and the Gaza strip

was formed in order to monitor the work and to coordinate with committees and institutes concerned with human rights, legal and/or women's issues such as Al-Haq institute, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights in the Gaza strip, and the Women's Studies Unit at Birzeit University. Later, preparatory committees were formed in all work areas in order to discuss the proposals for legal amendments with a larger group.

Explaining the rationale for the preparatory committees, the center's director said that they, at the Center, realized from the beginning that the legislating process should be socially based and that a large number of participants would empower the campaign. Consequently, they formed a preparatory committee that included different institutes for human and women's rights. People affiliated with these institutes contributed valuable ideas and suggestions regarding the Parliament's role and mandate. Unfortunately, however, they failed to resume their activities with the Center. Seeking a larger social participation, the center decided to extend its scope and form committees in different areas.

According to Ms. Yaseer, working on the project ran in two directions:

1. Training: Members of the area committees were trained on the use of "mobilization" and "influencing" skills. Within this context, the first Palestinian training manual was formed. The manual is to be used by women as a reference to persuade legislators and decision-makers of their entitlement to certain rights. Workshops were held to discuss proposals for law amendments, the training process, and the formulation of a plan to influence important social centers.
2. The Information Campaign: The intense information campaign organized depended on the use of leaflets, posters, caricatures, a special song for the Parliament, radio flashes, T.V. and radio programs on women and the law, a legal slot in the newspapers, and big bulletin boards in the Palestinian cities.

PREPARATORY AREA PARLIAMENTS

Three preparatory parliaments were held in the

main cities of the West Bank in addition to 23 workshops in the Gaza Strip. Each preparatory parliament consisted of eighty-eight members after the pattern of the Palestinian parliament and was equally represented by men and women. In the North parliament, proposals related to the personal status code were discussed. In the South parliament, proposals related to political and civil rights were discussed. In the parliament for the Central area, the focus was on amendments concerning economic, social and cultural rights. Finally, in the session that was held in the Gaza Strip, special emphasis was given to proposals related to the personal status code.

A CENTRAL PARLIAMENT IN THE END OF MARCH

This parliament which was held towards the end of the campaign for two consecutive days provided a free platform. Laws related to women, the family and society were mainly discussed. Recommendations made by the parliamentarians were to be forwarded to the Palestinian Parliament.

THE ARABIAN DIMENSION

There is continuous communication among the Women's Model Parliament and the Arab women's centers. After the Fourth World Conference for Women – Beijing, it was decided that the Palestinian experience be placed within an Arab context. A conference was held in one of the Arab countries in order to formulate mechanisms for improving women's legal status, and the possibility of publishing a legal book that could be of use to women in the third world was discussed.

Moreover, a delegation of five Arab countries including Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco were invited to attend the Women's Model Parliament in their capacity as observers.

In order to improve communication and to bridge the gaps that led the Palestinian society to lag behind political, social and cultural developments in the Arab world, an open seminar following the conclusion of the Parliament's work was organized. Arab women's experiences with the law and the Arab feminist movements' accomplishments were discussed in the seminar. Women activists and intellectuals from Morocco, Tunisia, and India participated.

OBSTACLES THAT FACED THE PROJECT

After the preparatory parliaments were held, particularly the North parliament which focused on the personal status code, a campaign led by a group of extremists was held against the parliament. These extremists succeeded in turning a large segment of the civil society and religious men against those working on the project. They claimed that the Parliament had raised issues contradictory to social and religious principles and were thus destructive of the Palestinian family. Statements signed by certain unidentified groups who refused to reveal themselves such as (the Muslim Woman, the Virtuous Woman, and Mosque Men) were distributed to condemn the Parliament and those in charge. However, none of that prevented the Parliament from moving on. The solidarity among all women's organizations and some social organizations in addition to the support of members of the legislative council and the Palestinian authority (the conclusive parliament was held under the patronage of President Yasser Arafat) and women's masses, helped the Parliament to remain in operation. Ms. Seniora, a researcher and a trainer said that all what they were accused of was false. She added that those who were opposed to the project, accused the Parliament of calling for the control of polygamy though according to her, this did not contradict with the *Shari'a*. "There were rumors that we not only called for controlling polygamy but also for polyandry. There were other rumors that we were devil worshipers.

Other obstacles related to the political situation faced the project. The explosive political situation in Palestine and the Middle East which led to the deterioration of living standards of Palestinians in addition to other social problems - all led to a conviction among some people that the timing of the project was inappropriate.

The project also faced difficulties resulting from the continuous military shut downs imposed by the Israeli occupation and the military belt imposed on Jerusalem city which led to the isolation of the Gaza Strip from the West Bank, thus hindering the execution of a unified plan in both areas.

Moreover, the different laws implemented in each of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and the ambiguity of legislative privileges of the elected parliament/legislative council had a negative effect on the project.

DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS

By Myriam Sfeir

If she truly wants to, the Lebanese woman is able to work alongside her male partner in any field. The Lebanese woman has a role these days in the Parliament, and I hope she'll also have an increasing role in the ministries. Women play a crucial role in contributing to the family income. You can even find a number of women in the Lebanese armed forces nowadays. Lebanon really needs its women, and Lebanese women have to fight for what they want. Both women and men must support each other in the hard fight to regain our leading role not only in the Arab World but internationally. (Nimat Kanaan, Al-Raida issue # 70/71, 1995)

In 1993 Nimat Assaad Kanaan¹ was appointed Director General of the Ministry of Social Affairs after serving the Ministry for 35 years. She is the first and youngest woman to occupy such a position.

Kanaan was brought up in a conservative family atmosphere along with three other sisters and a brother. Kanaan recounts: "Instead of self-reliance women in the Arab World are taught to rely on the family in every way. Yet, unlike most Arab families, we were not brought up to think in this way. My father knew that he would not always be there for us, and given that our only brother suffered from down syndrome my sisters and I were taught to think for ourselves and were encouraged to develop our creativity and individuality." All the Kanaan girls insisted on pursuing their education. They were backed by their father and eldest sister Najla, now a judge at the state council who valued education, contrary to their mother who always feared that if her girls were educated no one would want to marry them.

Kanaan graduated with distinction from the American School for Girls in Tripoli (TGS) at the age of 13. Owing to her excellent performance, she was granted a full scholarship, from the school, to study either at Beirut College for Women (BCW) or at the American University of Beirut (AUB). In spite of the scholarship she received, her parents were very much opposed to the idea of sending their daughter to college

in Beirut. Kanaan explains: "We lived in Tripoli and sending me to Beirut was a very difficult decision given that I was very young and had to live away from home for several years." Thanks to her principal at TGS her parents finally agreed and the choice fell on BCW because it was an all girls' college. Kanaan maintains: "My dream was to study medicine and become a doctor; however, I knew it was out of the question. My parents strongly opposed my decision to attend a mixed university so I opted for BCW even though it did not offer the degree in question."

Throughout her life Kanaan was adamant to get ahead. She recounts: "Landing a top ranking position was never an incentive urging me to work harder for since childhood I have taken everything I did seriously. Even though I wanted to succeed, I never craved either power or fame." Kanaan asserts that the essential elements for success are hard work, dedication, devotion and self confidence. Even though her superiors were greatly impressed by her impeccable, diligent, and meticulous work performance, luck played an important part in her promotion: "In 1967 the Director of Social Services was transferred to another department, and I applied for the vacant position and was accepted. The timing was right and I was daring enough to take the plunge; however, I must admit that I was chosen for my competence and potentials. I was able to prove to my superiors that I was capable of doing the job."

Kanaan challenges the claim that women are less equipped to work in the public sphere: "Women are as competent and efficient as men. In fact, they are more patient, meticulous, creative, artistic, and perseverant in their work. Yet, this does not mean that all women are achievers and all enjoy high levels of proficiency." According to Kanaan, a female colleague who does not pose a threat is willingly accepted and liked by her male counterparts: "Men favor a female co-worker for the feminine spicy element she adds to the work atmosphere; however, when she becomes a rival jeopardizing their chances to promotion, they fail to accept the competition. Men believe that when a promotion is available they should be entitled to it, and priority should go to them. They will declare war on women who dare deviate from the norm and tread on foreign grounds. In fact, they will use everything in their power to hinder and hamper her route to success."

When asked if she has experienced any

discrimination herself Kanaan admits that prior to 1974 she never did: "Even though my name came up several times, in 1974, when the government wanted to select a Director General for the Office of Social Development, the government rejected the proposal. Their pretext was that it was still very early for a woman to occupy a decision making position."

Kanaan values team work and strongly believes that the effort and work of each and every team member is integral to the success or failure of a department. The importance of a director stems from his/her ability to lead the working team. According to Kanaan, leadership is a talent, it is an inborn trait in human beings and forms an integral part of one's personality. She holds that "women should develop and cultivate this talent because their failure affects their fellow women, whereas man's failure affects him individually and does not reflect on other men. It is my belief that women ought to exert extra effort if they want to progress and succeed. Men are confident and constantly reassured for they are in their natural element and setting. The work place is their domain."

Kanaan argues that equality between men and women is not absolute because the sexes differ by nature. They have different qualities and characteristics that complement each other and brings about a balanced life: "To me equality is in having equal access to opportunities." Kanaan criticizes working women who require special privileges and seek favoritism: "Women



NIMAT ASSAAD KANAAN

Born in Bouday - Baalbeck, Lebanon, she graduated from the American School for Girls in Tripoli and attended the Beirut College for Women where she majored in Educational Psychology. She also attended the American University of Beirut and graduated with an MA in Education, Psychology and Social Work. Her work experience started in 1958 when she taught English for about two years. In 1960 she started work as an administrator at the Office of Social Development. It did not take her long to move on. In 1963 she was promoted to head of the Social Assistance Department. She was then appointed Acting Director of Social Services, and one year later assumed the position of Director of Social Services. In 1972 she became Acting Director General of the Office of Social Development (currently General Directorate of Social Affairs) a position she occupied for around twenty years. In 1992 she was promoted to the position of Acting Director General of Social Affairs at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. She has represented the Lebanese government in several regional and international conferences and has participated in numerous workshops and training sessions. She has also published two field studies: "Social Welfare Services in a Voluntary Social Institution" and "Unmarried Mothers in Lebanon" as well as a book in Arabic on Social Services in Lebanon. She was presented with the Labor Medal of the First Order in recognition of services in the social welfare sector.

condemn discrimination yet expect to be treated differently because they bear the responsibilities of the family. This is unacceptable." Despite the fact that women are saddled with responsibilities outside and inside the home, Kanaan believes that they should not complain for work outside the house was their choice in the first place. One's personal problems should remain a private matter: "Unlike my male colleagues I had a family to take care of. My three daughters and husband needed constant attention and I had to cater to their needs when I went back home. Yet, I never complained." Kanaan acknowledges the assistance of her mother and sister who helped her a great deal: "I often left my girls with them. Had it not been for them I wonder what I would have done."

Kanaan's greatest satisfaction is that her work was and still is appreciated: "I am always very pleased to hear that I'm considered a successful administrator in the Ministry." Kanaan admits: "I knew that I had to succeed for

failure would affect other women negatively. I was aware that my success would encourage the government to appoint more women to top ranking positions. I had an obligation to pave the way for other female successors. I wanted to ease their climb."

ENDNOTE

1 For more information about Nimat Kanaan check Al-Raida issue # 70/71, 1995.

IQBAL DOUGHAN: PRESIDENT OF THE WORKING WOMEN LEAGUE IN LEBANON

By Myriam Sfeir

The Working Women League in Lebanon, founded in December 1994, is a non governmental organization under the umbrella of the Lebanese Women's Council. The league strives to assist working women in all fields by securing them with better working conditions. The following interview with Iqbal Doughan, the President and founding member of the WWLL attempts to shed light on the work done at the league.

Myriam Sfeir: How did the idea of founding a league for working women come about?

Iqbal Doughan: We were a group of working women dissatisfied with our current working conditions; we realized that even though we were actively engaged in the public sphere our situation in the legal and social system has not improved. Upon investigation, we found out that working women in most Arab countries are better off than those in Lebanon. The Lebanese labor law, promulgated in 1964, is still operative along with the social security law of 1960. So we came up with the idea of founding an organization to enlighten both men and women on the prevailing situation, encourage them to join syndicates, discuss their situation, and voice their opinion in order to convince the Labor Union to adopt their cause.

MS: Can you explain the primary focus of the WWLL?

ID: The WWLL was founded to advocate working women's rights. Its aims are to create a suitable working environment which enables working women to be productive. It includes working women who are wage earners in the public as well as the private sector. Among the objectives of the WWLL is to assist working women in the different fields and to establish better working conditions that would in turn improve their conditions both socially and economically. The league strives to preserve the rights of working women in terms of salary, promotion, and type and hours of work. It is also engaged in consciousness raising where working women are encouraged to work, join

syndicates, and actively participate in the public sphere. At the same time, it is involved in awareness campaigns where it organizes training sessions, lectures, and debates and attempts to secure better relations between working women in all institutions in order to reinforce the spirit of unity as well as the active role women play in all fields. It also promotes and revives hand work in order to preserve Lebanese culture.

MS: Tell me more about the work currently undertaken at WWLL?

ID: Among our basic concerns is amending the current discriminatory laws related to pension, retirement age, indemnity, maternity protection, child care facilities, sexual harassment, etc. We are working on implementing child care facilities in all institutions by trying to persuade the government to promulgate a law requiring employers to provide working women with child care facilities.

Employers ought to be familiarized with the numerous advantages of having child care centers in order to ensure more productivity, uninterrupted reporting at work, and willingness to work extra hours. This law would benefit all working women especially the poor ones who suffer the most. Since they can't afford to send their children to day-care centers, they often leave them with their mothers, sisters, mothers-in-law, and neighbors, and one can imagine how difficult it is for both mother and child.

Working women in other Arab countries are better off for they have better policies and privileges. For instance in Syria each organization with 10 female employees ought to have a day-care center. We are working on improving the current situation, and hopefully something positive will come out of it. Our organization was the first to broach on this issue for we consider motherhood to be sacred, and women ought to be assisted with their double burden.

We are also working on revising the existing maternity protection laws to accommodate all employed women. Owing to the fact that some working mothers are entitled to 40 days' maternity leave while others benefit from a two month leave, our aim is to unify the maternity leave period. Given that

Husbands and children ought to learn that house work is a family responsibility and not the mother's alone

Lebanon has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) the best thing to do is to adopt the approved maternity leave period specified by the convention, namely 10 weeks. In so doing, all working women would enjoy the same privileges.

Furthermore, we are trying to amend some of the existing laws that blatantly discriminate between male and female employees. In fact, we have succeeded in raising the maximum flying age of female flight attendants to sixty years of age. Previously, female flight attendants were required to stop flying at the age of 50. In spite of some achievements we have a long way to go since numerous labor laws treat female employees as second class citizens. For instance, in theory all employees are entitled to a pension which passes on to their spouses and children after their death, however, in practice a husband can collect his wife's pension only when he can prove poverty or physical incapacity. Moreover, a female employee, unlike her male counterpart who is entitled to

compensation for his wife and children, can have compensation in certain cases only: if she is the head of the household due to widowhood, the husband's physical disability, his absence where no contact has been established for a period not less than a year, and divorce where her ex-husband fails to pay her alimony. Furthermore, the retirement age for men in some professions is sixty and sixty - four, while that of women is fifty and sixty respectively. Besides, unlike men who are entitled to seventy-five percent of medical expenses, working women only receive fifty percent. All these laws



IQBAL DOUGHAN

Iqbal Doughan was brought up in a middle class family that valued education. She never experienced any discrimination and was given the same educational opportunities as her brothers. She majored in Law at the Arab University of Beirut, and while still studying she taught in several public schools. She is an appeal lawyer and is the first woman director to head the Regie in Lebanon. She is the Vice President of the Lebanese Women's Council, a legal advisor to the League of Women's Rights, and a member of various legal institutions and non-governmental organizations.

outside the house. The family also falls short of assisting working women with the heavy load they are saddled with. Working women are the only ones capable of improving their lot through changing their family's attitude towards domestic work. I believe that consciousness raising is a very important factor supporting this change. Husbands and children ought to learn that house work is a family responsibility and not the mother's alone. Furthermore, new laws should be promulgated to help female employees. Change will come about just give it time.

Prevailing working conditions fail to accommodate women's dual roles as mothers and workers outside the house.

ought to be rectified and this is our main concern.

MS: Have you received any complaints from sexual harassment victims?

ID: Several women who have been sexually harassed at work have visited our office and recounted their experiences. Yet, on the whole, sexual harassment cases go undocumented in Lebanon. Given that sexual harassment is not punishable by law and owing to the fact that women are always blamed for being harassed, they are discouraged to talk about such incidents and rarely file for complaints. Most of the cases we came across were ones where the female employee either left her job or was fired by her boss. Yet, unfortunately there are a lot of cases where women are coerced to exchange sexual favors in return for their job. Most of these cases involve poor women who need the money they earn very badly.

MS: Any advice you would like to communicate to working women?

ID: Prevailing working conditions fail to accommodate women's dual roles as mothers and workers

Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States

by Evelyn Shakir
Praeger, Westport Connecticut London, 1997
Reviewed by Nazek Saba Yared

Although many Arab American historians have written about Lebanese emigrants to the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries, not much attention has been given to women emigrants of that period. Nor do these history books acknowledge the moral courage it required for these women to emigrate all alone in order to gain a livelihood in America. Nothing had been written on those exceptional women before Evelyn Shakir came up with this fascinating book that reveals her admiration for those "grandmothers" and gives them the respect and attention that has long been their due.

Evelyn Shakir is an American of Lebanese origin, and although she was born and raised in the United States, the sympathy, tenderness and love her book expresses towards those women highlights her strong sense of belonging. An original aspect of her book is that it is based on personal testimonies, not only because those testimonies bring her characters alive before the reader, but also because it is these testimonies that show "what it has meant and what it means today to be an Arab or Arab American woman in the United States" (p10).

Shakir divides her book into three parts: the first part deals with the first wave of emigrants between 1875 and 1925, most of whom were Lebanese; the second part records the testimonies of the second and third generation who had to face "political racism" and prejudice; the third and last part of the book concentrates on the second wave of emigrants since 1945, who came from various Arab countries, but mainly from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt and Iraq. In this part she records in detail her interviews with eight Palestinian girls and women, followed by a "collage" of interviews with women emigrants from all over the Arab world.

In the introduction, Evelyn Shakir notes the contradiction between the Arab Americans she knew, like her uncle "who baked blueberry muffins for his wife's breakfast and washed her underthings by hand" or her other uncle who belonged to the Rotary Club and was a deacon in the Baptist Church (p1), and the stereotype of the Arab as terrorist, oil sheikh or master of the seraglio. Also the Arab women she knew who worked in factories or played whist with their husbands and friends or kept open house on Sundays did not conform at all to the stereotype of the harem girls, domestic slaves or belly dancers "that were fashioned to meet Americans' lurid fantasies about the East" (p2).

The first two chapters of Shakir's book deal with her two grandmothers. Her maternal grandmother Miriam was illiterate and yet, at the age of fifty, managed to convince her husband to emigrate to America in order to insure a better future for their children; whereas her paternal grandmother Katreen, widowed at the age of thirty, emigrated with her children in search of a better future. This first wave of immigrants deprived Lebanon of one quarter of its inhabitants, and, unlike what most people imagine, many of them were women who, whether married or single, emigrated alone either in search of adventure or, more often, of a better life. Those who were married would later send after husbands and children once they had made enough money peddling or undertaking some other kind of work. It was quite common to see Lebanese women "peddling, carrying a big bag with lots of merchandise - laces, thread stockings. They went from door to door carrying the bags on their shoulders and taking the streetcars wherever they went." (p35) Most of the first generation immigrants were peddlers since peddling did not require knowledge of the language or any special training, besides the fact that they could easily give it up whenever they decided to go back to their home country.

Given the amount of work and time they devoted to their work, it is not surprising that some of these women rose to higher ranks, like Aunt Josephine, who eventually made a career of selling designer dresses to wealthy women, always by appointment. Others managed to acquire substantial property in the city, or start a shop for some relative, or send their sons to private schools.

Americans, however, looked down on women peddlers and on all working mothers for that matter. The author herself remembers how her fifth-grade teacher criticized working mothers, even those who were not

peddlers. With time those immigrants, men and women, turned from peddling to other jobs, becoming mill and factory hands or entrepreneurs.

For instance Hannah, the author's mother, started a factory of sports clothes when she was in her fifties and only gave it up when she was seventy one years old. The income of her factory was higher than that of her husbands' printing press.

Although most of the shopkeepers and factory or restaurant owners were men, many immigrant women also owned shops that sold ladies' underwear or household linen, in many cities including Boston and New York. Perhaps the most famous among them being the jeweller designer Mary Azeez El-Khoury whose place of business stood on Park Avenue in New York, and who entertained famous writers and artists such as Amin al-Rihani and Gibran Khalil Gibran.

Other immigrants managed to find work in factories. Shakir's mother, Hannah, became a factory hand when she was only fourteen and, like so many others, worked twelve hours a day to support her family after her brothers had left the house. Despite the gossip that centered around them, these working girls managed to gain the respect of their family members and a certain degree of independence. For example, with the approval of their families, they were allowed to choose their husbands, though most of the marriages took place between couples of the same religion and background, or even of the same village revealing that first generation immigrants still clung to their customs and traditions.

By the twenties and thirties more and more immigrant children began to graduate from high school and move into technical schools and universities. Parents, however, preferred educating their sons, and very often part of the girls' salaries went towards paying their brothers' tuition. Some girls, however, among first generation immigrant women, managed to graduate from high school, learn how to speak several languages, get involved in social issues, give speeches and write in Arabic journals and newspapers. Among them were Layyah Barakat, Philomena Yusuf al-Barid, and especially Afifa Karam who wrote for the **al-Huda** newspaper before starting her own magazine **The New World for Women**. In her articles, she insisted on the importance of education for women, pointing out that women's ignorance was the main cause of exploitation by father and/or husband.

In the second part of her book, Evelyn Shakir deals with Arab American women's struggle against political racism, showing how second and third generation children tried to deal with it by adopting

American food, clothing, manners and even religion. Despite such efforts, they continued to bear the brunt of American policy in the Middle East, as well as the Zionist anti-Arab propaganda in schoolbooks, journals, and television talk shows and plays, an antagonism which reached a climax after the Six Day War.

As a result, Arab Americans united with the new Arab immigrants who had fled the unstable political situation in their countries. It was largely owing to those new immigrants that Arab Americans managed to reconnect to their roots and go back to visit their countries of origin. Many of those Arab American women campaigned to make the American public aware of who the Arabs really were. Arabs are not all oil sheikhs or terrorists, and their women are not all victims of genital mutilation or forced child marriage.

The author devotes the third part of her book to the wave of immigrants from 1945 to this day. Although she points out that they came from all over the Arab world, she interviews Palestinian women only in the fourteenth chapter because of their greater numbers and because she felt that their situation is a flagrant example of the conflict Arab American women face in the United States.

The final part entitled "Collage" includes testimonies of immigrant women and girls from different parts of the Arab world. Although most of them agree that the US has offered them rare chances of education, work and freedom, they nevertheless express homesickness for their countries of origin.

The value of Evelyn Shakir's book is not only in the vast information one gleans of the life and courage of first women immigrants, but also in the political, ethnic and cultural racism Arab immigrants had to face and fight. What is especially endearing in the book are the lively interviews and testimonies and the great love with which it was written and which transpires from every page, a love that is revealed, for example, in her pain when she describes the little Palestinian boy who died "with these big eyes looking at everybody, looking at everybody, then he closed his eyes and he died. This bullet that had entered him, once it entered him it had exploded. I mean, he was dead inside before his eyes even knew it" (p101). Love too transpires from her sarcastic description of how the immigrants were offered a table at ethnic fairs: "On these occasions, their Syrianness (meaning mainly Lebanon which was part of Syria under the Ottoman Empire in those days) - or some tamed version of it - was paraded before the American public, like a well-groomed housecat put on a leash that could be relied on not to scratch or hiss." (p82)

When Work Doesn't Work Anymore

by Elizabeth Perle McKenna
Delacorte Press, 1997
Reviewed by Lynn Maalouf

What happens when a middle-aged woman, "successful" in her corporate career and apparently "having it all", one day realizes that something went wrong in the way she planned her life, that having it all is not being who she really is or who she wants to be, that work, which had been the main vector throughout, "doesn't work" for her anymore?

This book is about a gender and generational crisis, that of the women baby boom generation, having virtually made it through the men's circle, apparently reaching the same powers at work, and one day, finding out that there is more to their identities than what they do. In a very light, narrative tone, McKenna relates her experience as a modern, corporate woman, who at one point in her life, turns back and reassesses the choices she has made throughout her career and the values and principles that have guided these choices. This book is interesting in the sense that it relates to all corporate women in the western world in general, while simultaneously drawing a critical eye on the American work ethics, and the role of women throughout. The author's initial analysis revolves around a conflict which she expresses as a "tear between a life built around who we thought we should be as career women and who we have become in the process of our lives" (p.15). In the latter part of the book, however, this conflict takes on an increasingly male/female note: "Women work under a no-win paradox: We need our work to be fully realized as women but in order to do the work, we have to silence a good deal of ourselves" (p.69).

What the author means by "good deal of ourselves" is that feminine part which, according to her, has not yet been integrated into the work culture. She diagnoses this sudden deep dissatisfaction with work, and that of all other women she has interviewed, as a biased definition of success that these women have grown up with, and have not reconsidered for a variety of reasons. Success had been to them success on men's terms, thereby excluding, even repressing, the female side, or values traditionally identified with feminism.

McKenna skillfully challenges this situation by persuasively suggesting that other values could be integrated into the present system, and by so doing, could most probably ameliorate the work atmosphere, increase efficiency and productivity, and give women as well as men more satisfaction and contentment. The problem, she says, is that "women compounded their lives by adding the male-defined success identity onto their female identities" (p.10).

Today however, in a changing corporate climate, it has become increasingly difficult for women to live up to the work ethics they had grown used to, and this change has been a trigger in most of the lives of the women interviewed. Changing personal values paralleled with changing work conditions have dangerously carved out wide disparities between individual and professional identities. This gap has caused women depression, loss of self-confidence, drastic changes in their lives, or, as the author did, has driven them to resign suddenly at career height, not always grasping the reasons for doing so. Of course, reactions vary according to individuals but also to financial means. As the author points out, work is first and foremost carried out for basic survival, and not all people can afford to make the same choices as the author's.

It is important to note that this is not one more feminist book about women at work. It is a woman's response to contemporary changes in the corporate world. As McKenna points out, the feminist struggle opened the way for her generation to become working women, but now, this generation has to integrate its own values into the system, so that success is no longer defined according to men's values but also to women's. In order to take that path, the author finds it necessary as a first step for "women [to] replace their emotional, psychological and even financial dependence on our work identities with a more porous, broad and flexible system of identifying themselves. One that prizes balance over attainment, meaning over status, inclusion over hierarchy, the product over the process" (p.184).

Although this book is addressed quite exclusively to western working women, it does provide an insight on changing values and the way these affect women. Whether values are changing, in the Arab countries, to the benefit or detriment of women, (and they seem to be dangerously moving towards the latter), it is important to be able to integrate our own values into the surrounding system, and it is necessary for women to work and live, without denying any part of themselves.