

## Young Arab Women

Youth represent an important sector of the Arab population. More than half the 250 million people in the Arab world today are under the age of 25. Given that the youth are the future and are a force to be reckoned with, identifying their problems and needs is a key element in ameliorating their conditions. Arab youth are plagued by very many ills, namely high unemployment rates, deteriorating public education, wars, social marginalization, health and reproductive problems, gender oppression, and sexual violence against young women to mention a few. The purpose of this issue of *Al-Raida* is to highlight the situation of youth in the Arab world.

The issue begins with the Executive Summary of the Second Arab Women Development Report, published by the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), on Arab adolescent girls. The main aim of the report is to examine the future of Arab women by highlighting the conditions of teenage girls. It calls for raising the level of women's participation in decision-making. Adib Nehme sheds light on the situation of adolescents in the Arab world and examines how they are affected by modernity and globalization. Shafiq Shuaib takes on the issue of Lebanese youth with all the complexities such a category entails. Ali Harb, on the other hand, reflects on the youth, whom he considers a new human factor in a changing world, by questioning what moves the young? Of what do the young dream now? How do they think? What do they look to? What motivates them in the midst of the rapid changes, sudden mutations and radical transformations? Khawla Abu Baker tackles a taboo subject that is rarely

discussed in the Arab world. In her study on sexual abuse within the family, she highlights the role the family plays in the perpetuation of sexual abuse. Mary Kawar, on the other hand, draws attention to the importance of women's work and how it empowers women. Kawar, in her article on young single working women in Jordan, describes how employment has ameliorated young women's lives. The importance of education, internships, and work experience in the United Arab Emirates is addressed in the study entitled "Educating Ms. Fatima". The issue also contains an article on "'Urfi Marriage in Egypt" where the author compares it to cohabitation.

Mona Fayad writes about puberty and the onset of menstruation and how that affects girls in the Arab world. Talal Al-Atrash focuses on the conditions of Syrian girls where he portrays the active role young women are playing in their quest to achieve gender equity. Over and above that, this issue contains a feature article about the Ishraq Project that aims at educating and entertaining out-of-school girls as well as a short write up about educating Moroccan girls in rural areas. A presentation by OXFAM tackling early age marriage in Yemen is also included.

This issue of *Al-Raida* also contains a write up about two prominent Lebanese women working in the media. The Millennium Development Goals are also discussed in an attempt to establish gender equity. Last but not least, the issue contains three book reviews: an autobiography, a journal, and a third that tackles the issue of mental health.

Mona Fayad