

Dr. Abu Nasr Activities in Egypt as

During her stay in Egypt, December 23, 1975 — February 19, 1976, Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr was asked by the Ford Foundation in Cairo to act as a consultant on women's affairs and to try to find possibilities of mutual aid between Egyptian women's organizations and the IWSAW. Here is a brief summary of her activities as related in her full report.

Objectives of her research:

1. To locate information on projects about Egyptian women.
2. To get a better understanding of projects being conducted by women.
3. To spot local leaders and potential researchers.

4. To secure written documents which may be of help to the Institute for Women's Studies.

5. To identify needs and areas where the Foundation and the Institute may be of help.

6. To recommend projects that may be undertaken.

Dr. Abu Nasr was able to contact a good number of men and women leaders who have been notoriously active in women's affairs, locally and internationally. The more prominent among them are: Aziza Hussein, who has been, since 1962, Egypt's representative to the U.N. Commission on the status of women, Amina-

el-Said, journalist and pioneer in the women's liberation movement; Dr. Sumaya Fahmi, a child psychologist and professor at Ain-Shams University; Dr. Suhair al-Kalamawi, chairman of the Arabic Literature Department at Cairo University; Margaret Abdel Ahad Penner, from the Voice of America; Government officials like Dr. Aisha Rateb, Minister of Social Affairs, and many other leaders in universities, research centers, women's clubs and organizations, Socialist Union, church groups and Arab League offices.

Dr. Abu Nasr was impressed by the large number of institutions and leaders concerned with the improvement of the conditions of women in Egypt.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AFRO-ASIAN SEMINAR REGARDING WOMEN'S SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Afro-Asian seminar was held in Alexandria, March 1975. A number of recommendations were submitted by the group for implementation in Afro-Asian countries. The main issues are the following:

1. Confirmation of women's right to work and to enjoy legal protection of this right; abolition of all forms of discrimination against women regarding remunerations and salaries; ensuring equality of rights to social security.

2. Granting women political rights in Afro-Asian countries where they are still denied those rights, allowing the same access as men to all political functions and recognizing their full rights as citizens.

3. Making all necessary efforts to raise the standard of women's education, recognition of their right to higher and technical education and providing them with better opportunities for vocational training.

4. Immediate application of the



principle of free compulsory education on the elementary and secondary level.

5. Execution of effective and immediate projects for fighting illiteracy where it prevails in all regions.

6. Recognizing the same right of women and men to marriage, to have free choice of a spouse, to have equal rights and responsibilities in the family; the same right to divorce, to enjoy and exercise full legal capacity relating to their personal and property rights, including the right to acquire, administer, dispose of and inherit property; also recognition of the rights of unmarried mothers and protection of their interests.

7. Fixing a minimum age of marriage by law, with the possibility of using strong measures against infringement of the law.

8. Dissemination of knowledge regarding family planning as a means for the development of enlightened and responsible motherhood.

How the Asian Women's Institute came into Being

At a colloquium held by 50 women educators in Memphis, Tennessee, U.S.A., on October 1974, the theme: "Women's higher education, new challenges in a changing Asia-Middle East" was discussed by the participants.

Out of the 50 representatives of various women's colleges in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the U.S.A., the representatives of nine Asian colleges introduced the group to their respective institutions and presented the plan for an Asian Women's institute which would

Consultant on Women's affairs

It was encouraging, as she says, to see the leadership role that some women are taking and the help provided by the Egyptian government in the form of services and financial assistance to a number of women's groups and the organization of a special committee to follow up the recommendations made by the International Women's year Conference at Mexico.

The fact remains, however, that the problems of women in Egyptian society are overwhelming, the illiteracy percentage is high, (80%), the living conditions among the working classes are deplorable and the needs are pressing along the following lines: 1) Literacy programs including not only reading and writing skills but

also hygiene, nutrition, budgeting, family planning, family guidance, cleanliness, child rearing and vocational training. 2) Educational materials which need modernization. 3) General programs needing innovation and more creative work. 4) Better staff training. 5) Making better use of technology. 6) Seeking to alleviate the burden of working women. 7) Providing better quality nurseries and day care centers.

Dr Abu Nasr recommends:
1) In the field of research, a general survey of existing literacy programs, evaluating physical facilities, program content, number and quality of staff, educational materials used.
2) Investigating what assistance may be provided by universities,

government offices and women's organizations, in the form of experts, researchers, writers, etc.
3) Designing more pilot projects to evaluate the effectiveness of modern technology in mass media in community development, from the point of view of content and medium used. In her conclusion, she emphasizes first the need for research in the ways and means to reach the millions of illiterate women, second, the development of materials to be used in educating them. According to her, small grants can be helpful, but "a series of small grants without follow up will be less effective than a carefully formulated project which may include exploratory research, pilot studies and a series of evaluation workshops".

promote the welfare of Asian women and enable them to render more valuable service to their communities.

"The proposed institute would be engaged in research on women in the Asian society, would provide consciousness raising materials and programs, would build channels, of communication and would provide an educational laboratory".

In response to the proposal, a findings' committee was created, whose function was "to recommend objectives which the different educators and educational institutions needed to implement in their particular locations with unique programs relevant to their different cultural and geographical situations".

The "Findings Committee" made up of 5 members of the colloquium drew a long list of recommendations concerning Asian Women's education, including the development of the plans for the Asian Women's

Institute, so that it may begin work in 1975.

They stated the objectives of the Institute as "to assist the women of Asia in their groping for self-fulfillment and in their outreach for the fullness of life for all".

Their main activities would be used for the implementation of these objectives: documentation, research, communication (including conferences, discussion groups and panel discussions, publication of pamphlets, newsletters, etc.)

The nine participating colleges in Asia would be divided into three main areas as follows:

Area A: BUC Beirut, Lebanon
Daravand, Tehran, Iran
Kinnaird, College,
Lahore, Pakistan

Area B: Isabella Thorburn,
Lucknow, India
St. Christophers, Madras, India
Wonen's Christian College Madras, India.

Area C: Ewha Women's University
Seoul Women's College
Tokyo Women's Christian College,

The structure of the Institute was planned, providing for the appointment of a director for each local institute, the three directors of each area forming a unit, an overall representative. A field coordinator would be appointed by the administrators of the nine colleges, whose function would include planning, advising areas and local institutes, and establishing liaison with various international Women's organizations such as the "Association of North American Cooperating Agencies of Overseas Women's Christian Colleges" and others.

The members participating in the planning Committee represented India, Korea, Pakistan, Thailand and Lebanon. Their plan was adopted by the Colloquium members and the Asian Women's Institute started working in 1975.