

Family Planning and Women's Development at MONASTIR, TUNISIA, 9-12 AUGUST, 1977

This conference was organized by the National Women's Union of Tunisia and was attended by representatives of Family Planning Associations from various Arab countries: Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Morocco, Sudan, Tunis, Jordan, Algeria, Yemen Democratic Republic. Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr, who attended the conference provided the following brief notes:

The Minister of Planning in the Tunisian Government, H.H. Mr. Mustapha Zaanouni, opened the Conference with a speech on his country's achievements in the field of women's development and the projects which are being planned for the future.

The Iraqi delegate of the Women's Federation in Iraq gave a talk about women's progress in her country in the field of education and work. "Family Planning to us means the implementation of family welfare projects, meeting the country's need for increased population, providing children with proper hygienic care which will ensure normal growth."

The Syrian delegate spoke about the role played by Syrian women in economic development, the efforts displayed in the struggle against illiteracy, and the improvement of conditions of rural women. She expounded the claims of her country women, among which are the amendment of the law of personal status with the effect of abolishing polygamy, giving women equal rights with men in connection with divorce and the guardianship of children. The Egyptian delegate, Mrs. Fakhriyya Qassem, gave a lecture on a project of integrated rural development as applied in the self-help project of "Sandyon Village" and in the creation of the "Happy Childhood" center, financed by the cooperation of the Cairo FP Association, the Social Research Center at the American University in Cairo, and the Ford Foundation.

The representative of the General Women's Union of the Democratic Republic of Yemen stated the objective behind family planning activities in her country, as

follows: "To promote the health standard of mother-child, to reduce the infant mortality rate and to develop the health standard of the Yemeni citizen in general."

The recommendations of the Conference were summarized in ten points by Mena Bulletin of June-July-August 1977, the most important of them are the following four:

1. Emphasis on the necessity of close cooperation between women's organizations and Family Planning Associations.

2. Equality of the sexes in opportunities for education and work.

3. Amendment of Family Laws with the active participation of women, i.e., repeal of discriminatory laws related to divorce, social security, pension schemes, inheritance, widowhood, and polygamy.

4. Inclusion of demographic, health, and nutrition components in every educational program which should explain the advantages of planned parenthood and the use of different contraceptive devices.

Family Planning in the Arab World Gains Ground and Importance

Family Planning Organizations are spreading in almost every part of the world. The IPPF, International Parental Planning Federation, has been active in bringing them together by holding frequent meetings, conferences, and panel discussions in various parts of Asia and Africa and by forming regional councils for associations in the same region. Thus The Middle Eastern and North African (Mena) Regional Council was formed under the presidency of Mrs. Fathia Mzali, who is also president of the Tunisian Women's Association. Its general director is Dr. Issam Nazer. The Mena Region Council, whose central office is in Carthage, Tunisia, publishes a quarterly bulletin in three languages: Arabic, English and French.

In Arab countries, governments



This photo features from left to right: Mrs. Fathia Mzali, President of IPPF MENA Region, Mrs. Suad Abdul Sattar Al Bayroui, from Iraq Family Planning Association.

have encouraged the formation of family planning associations within their countries and have supported the holding of conferences and meetings to report activities and to discuss mutual plans.

In December, 1976, the Arab Republic of Yemen inaugurated its

Family Planning Association at Sana'a. In the same year, FP associations were formed in the Yemen Democratic Republic and in Bahrain. FP Associations already existed in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan.