

**"A REPORT ON  
WOMEN'S STATUS  
IN KUWAIT"  
(PREPARED BY :  
THE COMMISSION  
IN CHARGE OF  
WOMEN'S AFFAIRS,  
COUNCIL OF  
PLANNING, KUWAIT,  
1975**

This report consists of four chapters dealing with the present status of the Kuwaiti woman, under the following headings:

1. Women and the family
2. Women and education
3. Women and work
4. Women in politics

### 1. Status of Kuwaiti Women in the Family

In the introduction, the document refers to the Kuwaiti Constitution which considers the family as the basis of society, pledges to safeguard its existence, concede material help to citizens who suffer from disease, old age or physical disability, and to administer medical care and social security to all citizens.

The Kuwaiti law grants women equal rights with men to enjoy these social benefits. The same law applies to men and women in connection with the right to citizenship, i.e., its retention or abolition. Equality of the sexes is also observed in the execution of penal laws, and in the application of financial aid to needy people, for example, widows and orphans, divorced women, aged or disabled individuals, those suffering from chronic diseases, parents whose children are at school, pregnant and nursing women whose husbands are in want.

Public aid also includes administered financial help brought about by catastrophes from public or private causes.

The chapter expounds the laws regulating pensions of civil employees and pension distribution among heirs in the following proportions:

- To the widow (or widows in case of polygamy): 3/8 of the pension.

- To sons and unmarried daughters: 3/8 equally divided among them.

- To parents, brothers and sisters, 1/8 equally divided.
- The remaining 1/8 to the public treasury

Penal laws against abortion and killing of the new-born are also stated in this chapter, along with other laws requiring vaccination of infants against smallpox and diphtheria, or the imposition of necessary precautions for the prevention of contagious diseases.

At the end of the chapter, paragraphs from the Charter of the United Nations are quoted, which claim respect of the Rights of Man and of the basic human freedoms, without discrimination based on sex, language, religion or race. These quotations serve to confirm the adherence of Kuwait to the U.N. Charter and confirm its attitude of non-discrimination between the sexes in the application of law.

The report declares that the law of personal status in Kuwait, i.e., the law regulating marriage, divorce, inheritance and guardianship, is directly derived from the Moslem system of law. It has not been published in the document because a project for the elaboration of this law is in preparation and will be published separately.

### 2. Women and Education

The status of Kuwaiti women in education is based on the Constitution which stated that "education is free and compulsory for all Kuwaiti children, boys and girls, through the primary and middle School Levels. The State will also take charge of providing school buildings, teachers, stationery and all other necessary equipment."

The constitution also stipulates the responsibility of the State to assume the task of girls' education according to religious principles and Arab values, making use of modern scientific progress, without neglecting woman's special vocation to be a mother and a moral guide to the new generation.

This introduction is followed by statistical tables showing 1) the

steady increase in the number of girl students, growing from 2606 in 1956 to 10102 in 1974; 2) the increase in the number of girl students reaching the 4th middle form, from 23% in 1965 to 70% in 1974; 3) the decrease in the percentage of illiterate women from 74% (of Kuwaiti women) in 1957, to 56.9% in 1973.

Progress was made through the increase in the number of girls' schools, of centers for the elimination of illiteracy and the training of adults; through the establishment of the Kuwait University and the increase in number of university women students, who, in 1973-1974, reached a percentage of 64.3 in comparison to male students. This difference is explained by the fact that more women students enroll in the school of arts (100% versus 36% for the boys), and in the school of science (21% versus 7% for males).

On the other hand, the number of boys is superior to that of girls in the upper classes of law, business, economics, and political science.

### 3. Women and Work

This chapter states the labor law for women, indicating the leave granted for motherhood, the marriage allowance, the bonus given to single women, the industries and occupations which are forbidden to women. It asserts the principle adopted by the government of giving equal pay for equal work without discrimination between the sexes.

The "Arab Pact for Labor" is also adopted by the Kuwaiti states, including the article which abolishes all discriminatory treatment based on race, color, sex, religion, or political doctrine.

Statistical tables show that the number of women employed in technical and cultural occupations has risen from 8.9% in 1957 to 52.9% in 1972, as compared with their other occupations. The proportion of women employed in administrative and secretarial work

has also increased from 2.6% in 1957 to 26.7% in 1972.

The same source shows also that in 1972 the largest number of **working women** were employed in the Ministry of Education which accounts for 2624 Kuwaiti employees and 3972 non-Kuwaitis. The next in occupational number are those employed in the Ministry of Public Health which has 156 Kuwaiti employees and 2080 non-Kuwaitis.

In the Kuwait University there are 121 Kuwaiti employees and 76 non-Kuwaitis.

In the Ministry of Social Affairs: 101 Kuwaitis, 21 non-Kuwaitis.

The statistics for 1973 show that 96.2% of the working Kuwaiti women are employed by the government in education and other professions while their percentage in the private sector does not exceed 3.8%

The same statistical table tells that most of the working women are between 20 and 24 years of age; the proportion of those belonging to this category is 59.61% of the whole. The proportion falls to 27.89% for those between 25 and 29, to 3.27% for those between 30 and 34. It becomes nearly non-existent for those who have reached forty. From these data we can conclude that most of the working women in Kuwait stop working after marriage.

Another table belonging to the year 1973 gives the following figures about the whole number of working women in Kuwait:

- a. Number of women working outside their homes: 5200. Their proportion to the whole number of women: 2.7%
- b. Number of women students: 24390. Their proportion to the whole: 12.4%
- c. Number of women exclusively occupied with housekeeping: 77230. Their proportion to the whole: 39.4%

d. Total number of productive women: 106,820. Proportion to the total number of women: 54.5%

e. Number of unproductive women, i.e. the aged, the disabled, girls under 12 years: 45.5%

Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning that the number of women teachers in official schools is superior to that of men teachers, the percentage of the former being 57.6 in 1973-1974. The number of Kuwaiti women teachers, however, is inferior to that of non-Kuwaitis, the number of the latter being 3964 and that of the former, 2444.

#### 4. Women in Politics

Kuwaiti women have not yet obtained the franchise or right to vote. They have no access to administrative positions or municipal councils.

Since 1972, women have started forming their own societies and athletic clubs. They have been also joining associations of teachers, doctors and pharmacists, artists, school and university graduates, writers and literary men. They form a sizable portion in social organizations like the Red Crescent, Child Welfare Association, and Family Planning.

The report on "Women's Status in Kuwait" gives evidence of the intensive efforts displayed by the State to effect actual participation of women in the process of development by giving them full opportunity for education and work.

If we remember that the number of girls in government schools has realized a fivefold increase in the space of 18 years, we may have an idea of the success achieved by the government in this respect. If we also recall that the number of women involved in cultural and technical occupations has increased from 8.9% of the whole, in 1957, to 48.5% it should be reasonable to assume that the Kuwaiti woman will continue her progressive march and will obtain her full rights in all fields.

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#### "Journal of Educational Documentation" Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia

A semi-annual magazine, issued by the Data Center for Statistics and Documentation in Saudi Arabia.

In a copy No. 13 (Apr. 1977) received by the Institute, the reader will find brief articles on educational documentation, the role of school libraries in educational movements, educational events and abstracts. Also there is detailed information on the development of special education in the kingdom with a list of annotated Arabic and English documents.

Special education in Saudi Arabia means the education of the handicapped. The Data Center Magazine lists 20 schools for the handicapped, accommodating some two thousand boys and girls who are blind, deaf, mute or mentally retarded. About 700 men and women teachers are engaged in training them, with a budget of about 88 million Saudi rials.

Equally in this copy we read that 160 schools have been founded in the Riyadh district alone for the teaching of illiterate adults. 2254 such schools have been created for women, in 280 villages and towns, containing 350,000 women students.

This carefully produced issue presents good statistical proof of steady cultural development and progressive educational policy in Saudi Arabia.

#### "International Directory of Women's Development Organizations" Agency for International Development - Washington, D.C. - 1977

"A useful compilation of women's professional business and social groups", "a powerful resource in the efforts to involve all citizens in the development process, and a reference tool for all those desiring to expand their contacts and perspectives for involving more women in the development process".

**"Indian Womanhood  
through the Ages"**

Published by

**"Vivekananda Kendra Patrika",  
cultural magazine of India  
Theme: Indian Womanhood  
Through the Ages**

A voluminous book: it throws light on the bright and dark spots in the history of the Indian woman from the early days of enslavement, sacrifice, and self-denial to the recent period of awakening and struggle for liberation. It compiles biographies of outstanding women leaders, poets, saints, artists who paved the way for the present movement. The various trends and activities of the modern Indian woman are briefly depicted. Illustrations, legends, short stories, poems by men and women lend a note of variety to the contents and help to give a vivid picture of the status of Indian womanhood through the ages.

**"The Iranian Woman, Past  
and Present"**

Published by the Women's  
Organization of Iran 1976

A book in 6 chapters, 75 pp., containing illustrated articles on the role of women in Iran's history, the recent progress made in their education, their present status in the country's economy and politics, the Women's Organization in Iran and their changing role in home and society. The new needs of women and the changing attitudes toward their traditional roles are discussed.

**"Institutes of special education"  
State of Kuwait —  
Ministry of Education —  
Vol 14, 1977**

A book published in three languages: Arabic, English and French, it contains statistical information and numerous illustrations about special education in Kuwait, i.e., the special institutes established for the handicapped.

In 1956, the first school for the blind was established in that country. Since then, twelve more educational and vocational institutes have been established to take care of the deaf and blind, retarded, paralytic boys and girls at various educational levels. This year (1977), student enrollment has reached 2304 boys and girls, including 562 students from the other Arab countries.

The institutes are generously provided with the most up-to-date physical training facilities. Workshops exist also for vocational education. Teachers and staff include specialists, experts, physicians, psychologists, and social workers who are fully qualified.

**"Internal Migration  
of Industrial  
Laborers into  
Cairo and Its  
Effect on Social  
and Economic Changes  
Among Them",  
by Saydeh I. Saad,  
Assistant Instructor  
of Sociology,  
Girls' Islamic College  
Al Azhar University**

This work of 230 large-size pages includes: 1) a theoretical study of the phenomenon of internal migration; 2) a field study with samplings taken from 200 laborers in various companies, leading to well-defined conclusions concerning the causes and consequences of this migration.

**"Women in  
Arab Laws"  
in the light of  
international agreements  
issued by the UNO"  
Published by the  
Lebanese Women's  
Council — Beirut  
1975**

A book of more than 600 middle-sized pages, containing stu-

dies and recommendations given by the panel held for the Lebanese Women's Council, Beirut, Lebanon, 27-31 of May, 1974. It includes thirteen papers presented by the delegates of 13 Arab states, regarding the status of Arab women in personal and family law, labor law, political law. A list of recommendations follows for proposed amendments of the various laws.

**Newslink Published by  
the "Centre for Women's  
Studies and Development",  
Isabelle Thoburn, College,  
Lucknow, India**

First publication — April 1977  
Second publication—Sept. 1977

"Newslink" is the magazine representing the Asian Women's Institute (AWI), including nine centers of women's studies distributed throughout The Middle East, Japan, Korea and India. The idea of the AWI first germinated in the minds of the administrators of nine women's colleges at a meeting in Seoul, Korea. It came into being in 1975. The common objective of the nine centers is "to assist the women of Asia in their groping for self-fulfillment".

**"The Employment of Women  
in the Higher Echelons  
of the Public and  
Private Sectors"**

A report prepared by  
the Kayhan Research  
Associates for the Women's  
Organization of Iran 1975

A brief study to determine "the degree to which Iranian women have succeeded in penetrating into higher echelon positions in selected organizations. It also examines attitudes and problems that have bearing on women's employment at the higher levels."

The study is followed by appendices I & II, giving detailed statistics on women's employment and women in education.

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