

The Role of Women in Jordan Society

Nineteen delegates from eleven Arab countries, participants from UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA and ILO, together with numerous Jordanian observers, attended the Seminar on the Role of Working Women, which was held in Jordan on April 26-29, 1980.

The Seminar was organized by the Department of Working Women in the Ministry of Labor, in cooperation with the United Nations Funds for Population Activities (UNFPA).

Papers presented by delegates gave valuable information on working women and their problems in the Arab World but more particularly in Jordan.

An exhaustive paper on voluntary organizations and working women in Jordan including both East and West Banks, was presented by Mrs. Intissar Jardaneh. After emphasizing the importance of women's voluntary work in its capacity of supporting women in employed work, Mrs. Jardaneh called for the construction of strong bridges between it and the formal bodies on the one hand and between it and the public on the other.

The material information, administrative and technical backstopping of voluntary work are, according to her, a basic support for its development. She also stressed the necessity of doing away with cliques which retard voluntary work, of working toward the prevention of overlapping and the establishment of coordination among organizations.

Dr. Mallalah, director of the Jordan Institute of Management, gave a paper on working women and the Jordanian economy, including only those working for a salary. They form, as he said, 19% of the employees working in institutions employing 5 or more people, and the vast majority are in Amman.

Offering employment to women in rural districts is therefore necessary to limit their migration to town. Employed women, like employed men, are primarily attracted to public administration and social services. The industrial sector is equally attractive for both sexes; banking and finance are the third largest occupation for women.

Mr. Munther Masri, director of the Vocational Training Association, opened his talk by outlining the strides made in women's education between 1970 and 1978. He then discussed the post-high school vocational training for women, pointed out the problem of providing

vocational guidance in schools and the necessity of orienting girls toward applied science, so that they may not concentrate on humanities and pure sciences.

The Seminar's main recommendations are briefly condensed in the following:

- 1 – The new labor code which is now being prepared in Jordan should increase the working women's maternity leave to make it twelve weeks, with a minimum pay of 75% of the normal salary.
- 2 – Eliminate sex discrimination regarding job opportunities, wages, termination of service compensation, training and education promotion, among others, sex labelling of occupational fields as exclusively appropriate for males and females.
- 3 – The principle of equal pay for equal work must be applied regarding women by the ministry of Labor as well as by the private sector.
- 4 – The ministry of education should develop a vocational guidance program to help students choose suitable careers.
- 5 – Extend vocational training for girls in secondary schools and suggest new fields for women's employment.
- 6 – The ministry of education should organize study projects of woman's image in school books and curricula with the aim of changing the traditional image which repeats the sex-stereotyped roles of men and women in society and replacing it by one which projects new roles played by women of to-day.
- 7 – Adequate training should be provided for kindergarten and nursery school teachers and training courses organized to improve their capacity.
- 8 – The ministry of social development and women's working and voluntary work organizations must agree on a clear strategic plan for voluntary work which would ensure the upgrading of its productive capacity.
- 9 – The Arab countries and concerned organizations should support the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, founded in Beirut 1973, by cooperating in its activities and providing it with documents and information necessary for its effective functioning.

It is appropriate to mention here that IWSAW was represented at this Seminar by Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr who presented a report on its activities.