

“DEVELOPMENT PLANNING FOR WOMEN”⁽¹⁾

In defining “development planning” the lecturer says that it does not necessarily mean westernization. She defines it as a “creative process to liberate men and women and equip them with the necessary skills to be both participants and beneficiaries of development.” She describes the backward condition of women in Arab countries, the high rate of female illiteracy, their lack of participation in leaderships, the lack of women’s awareness of their conditions, their lack of training, the inadequacy of data regarding their status and needs.

Society with its burden of traditions, stands as a handicap to women’s integration in development. It should stop regarding women’s work as mere decoration or assistance to the husband, and considering the success of women in terms of their success as wives. It should give up alienating women workers and closing to them key positions, especially in science fields.

In two fields, women’s social and economic functions must be recognized. First in home-making where she is regarded as an unemployed woman though she should perform a full time job. Second in agriculture, where her participation in third world countries may reach about 50 percent, as in Iraq,² yet she is deprived of regular salaries and of the right of land ownership because the new Agrarian Reform Law of 1958 and 1970 has allowed registering the land in the name of the husband.

As a solution, Mrs. Sharif, recommends the following:

1. The modification and implementation of laws regarding women, including the recognition of the housewife as a worker deserving social security and of the rural woman’s right to remuneration and ownership.

2. Data should give factual information on women’s conditions and needs, especially on women in rural districts where health conditions are relatively poor.

3. More adequate training should be given to women planning to work; it should aim at developing their self-confidence as well as their talents.

4. In Arab countries, the organized and systematic reciprocity in resources requires regional and integrated planning which cannot be reached as long as the people do not control their destinies and their national resources. Hence the political issue is central to all development planning.

1. Condensed from a lecture given by Thoraya O. Sharif, UN Commission for Western Asia, in the Women’s Studies Lecture Series, B.U.C., May 24, 1979.

2. See *Al-Raida*, Feb. 1979, Vol. II, No. 7, p. 10.