

WOMEN'S WORK IN JORDAN

During the last decade several factors have helped to integrate the Jordanian woman in national development. Besides the international woman's movement sponsored by the United Nations Organization, there has been the economic factor created by the country's need for woman's participation in the implementation of the five-year plan of economic and social development (1975-1980). Woman's work is particularly needed in replacement of male workers emigrating to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries in search of higher wages.

In 1975-76, a series of conferences presided over by His Highness, Prince Hassan, were held with the aim of encouraging woman's integration in development and deciding on the most efficient methods to carry it out. A department for women's work was created in the Ministry of Labor in 1976. Since the end of the sixties, the Jordanian Labor Code requires for women the right to equal pay for work with men and a fair treatment for women with maternity leave and for nursing mothers.

Between 1961 and 1976, a general development in the educational status of the Jordanian woman is shown by the following figures:

In 1961: number of girls aged 11 registered in government schools, was 55 % of the whole. In 1976: their number rose to 97.2%.

In 1961: girl students between 15 and 18: 11.8%

In 1976: girl students between 15 and 18: 64.9%

Mention must be made of the lower proportion of girl students in rural areas as compared to urban ones. For example, in 1976, the percentage of literate women in urban areas was 58.9% while in rural ones it was only 33%.

In 1977-78, the numbers of registered students of both sexes in all schools and universities were as follows:

Elementary-secondary:	233,552 girls 335,853 boys
Vocational Education:	2,831 girls 5,995 boys
Post-secondary:	3,396 girls 5,465 boys
University and higher Studies:	2,970 girls 5,388 boys

The above figures represent the proportion of female to male students in a country of 2,018,000 inhabitants, where women constitute about 50% of the

population.

Women's participation in development in 1975 reached the following proportions:

- 35% of the workers in rural areas were women;
- In the urban sector, women employed in non-rural occupations formed 13.9% of the working force, distributed as follows:
 - 71.2% of all the working women were employed in administrative and general services, including teaching and nursing.
 - 50.4% of the teaching personnel were women.
- Women also formed 20.4% of the industrial workers.

Woman's participation according to districts

The proportion of working women is higher in urban than in rural areas, and among Christian than among Moslem women, who are still more hampered by local traditions disapproving their contact with men.

The district of Amman, including the capital, which groups most of the industrial and commercial organizations, in 1970 accommodated 85% of the total working forces and 97% of female workers. In 1975, due to the efforts made by the government to generalize education, the proportions dropped to 70.9% and 70.8% respectively.

Woman's work in relation to category

Women participate in about 40 occupations, divided according to differences in training, into four categories:

- The first includes occupations requiring a university degree.
- The second is that of technicians, requiring two years of training after the secondary diploma.
- The third is that of skilled workers, requiring a secondary school diploma.
- the fourth, that of workers with limited skills, requiring an indefinite level of education.

The first category included: 1) women employed as librarians and curators, representing 33% of those employed in this field; 2) women dentists: 17.2% of the entire group; 3) women pharmacists and economists: 10.9% of the whole.

The second category includes women in medical and chemical fields, the highest being 8-11% and the lowest, 4-1, covering assistant engineers.

In the category of skilled workers (No. three) the highest proportion is represented by women employed as shorthand-typists: 41-67% of the whole. Next come those working as dress-makers and seamstresses: 45-61% of the whole. The lowest proportion is represented by workers in specific occupations like manual skills and electronics.

In non-traditional occupations, i.e. other than teaching, nursing, midwifery and social work, the proportion of women in 1975 was the following:

6% of the whole of those employed in scientific professions.

(1) Abstract of a study prepared for the Institute of Women's Studies in the Arab World by Dr. Kamel Abu Jaber, Dean of the Economics and Commerce Department at Jordanian University, 1979.

- 5% of those working in leiterary fields.
- 2.5% of workers in technical areas.
- 9% of secretarial employees (skilled occupations).
- 13.7% of manual labor employees.
- 3% of workers in limited skills

Between 1970 and 1975, the proportion of women working in urban districts increased from 9.6% to 13.9% more particularly in professions requiring technical training:

Obstacles faced by working women in Jordan.

Though the disappearance of the veil has permitted women to move about freely and to work side by side with men, the traditional belief still prevails «that a woman's place is at home», and continues to influence a large number of the population.

Information regarding women should cover two objectives. The first consists in developing woman's faith in her capacity for self-realization. The second implies the ability to change public opinion, which still considers woman as an object or an appendage to her husband and children, with no personality of her own.

Other obstacles to woman's work consist in the reluctant attitude of business and industrial organizations towards woman's employment. They show little faith in her ability and consider her as a temporary employee who will quit upon marriage. The inadequate training provided for working women and the shortage of day-care nurseries for the children of working mothers are additional obstacles.

Conclusions

1. Statistics published in 1976 show the preponderance of unmarried women in all fields of women's work: 73% of the whole. The average age of marriage for the Jordanian girl has lately risen to 21.5 instead of 18-20, which means that she has been able to benefit from a relatively longer working period. Efforts should be made, however, to eliminate the obstacles that prevent married women from a larger participation in development.

2. There is a positive correlation between woman's educational level and her attitude toward work. Over 60% of working women in 1975 were graduates of secondary schools. Woman's education equally affects the demographic situation because it generally leads her to practice birth control.

3. Woman's work tends to be concentrated in skilled occupations while among men, the majority of workers are employed in fields requiring restricted skills.

4. The highest proportion of working women exists in the sector of public administration, general services and education, where they attain 23% of the total number of workers. Next comes their proportion in the industrial sector: 22.8%.

5. The proportion of self-employed women increased between 1970 and 1975 while that of self-employed men showed a certain decrease.

6. Though the Labor Code requires for women equal pay for equal work with men, this regulation is not strictly applied. A certain degree of sexual discrimination exists; for example, in occupations requiring scientific training like medical and chemical employment, nursing and elementary education, women receive higher pay while men are better paid in the other fields.

7. Traditional occupations like teaching, nursing, dress-making, typing and secretarial work attract more women than non-traditional ones. In addition, the number of women occupying leadership positions is highly limited. On the other hand, women are not adequately represented in occupations which do not require physical exertion, like work in wireless and telephonic communications.

In vocational training centers, women have access to 14 out of 43 vocations. The proportion of women graduates of these institutions did not exceed 32% of the whole in 1976-1980.

As a conclusion, we may affirm that woman's work in Jordan has greatly developed within a relatively short period. A rational handling of the problem has favored successful solutions and a steady change. The wise guidance of the State, reflected in its social planning, information programs and continuous efforts to encourage woman's all-round liberation, leads us to be optimistic regarding the future of woman's work in Jordan.

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