

World Assembly on Aging (WAA)

"For the first time in human history, this generation has seen the creation of a new age group — the aging... Improved health conditions and control of killing diseases has permitted life expectancy in developing countries to increase at a much more rapid rate than at present anticipated and possibly sooner than anticipated".

The above quotation is taken from a statement made by Mr. William M. Kerrigan, Secretary-General of the World Assembly on Aging (WAA), published in its newsletter no. 1, December 1981.

In the paper "Feature", published by the Division for Economic and Social Information, Department of Public Information no. 124, nov. 1981, we read that "women already form the majority of the aging in industrialized societies and will actually predominate in the Third World".

Since women in all societies are trained for dependency, it will not be easy for them to overcome this condition in old age, even in countries where they have traditionally been a part of economic life. According to the same paper, throughout the world, in industrial or agricultural areas, women over 60 are the **"poorest of the poor"**.

What should be done to handle the emerging

problem of the needy elderly? Our answer is to make it easier for men and women to remain in employment and also to remove impediments to the elderly seeking jobs, particularly women.

It is interesting to note that the participation of older people in the economy is much higher in developing countries, partly because social security in these countries is less available.

The World Assembly on Aging will be held by the United Nations in Vienna, Austria, in July-August 1982. Its Advisory Committee is made up of representatives from 22 member states of the United Nations, half of which belong to the Third World. Lebanon is included in this committee and in compliance with the recommendation of the Assembly, a report is being prepared by the Lebanese Government on the conditions and needs of the elderly.

In a country which has been suffering from war for the last seven years and has lost a large number of its youth as a result of war or emigration, the mobilization of all its potential, including elderly men and women, for the process of reconstruction, appears as a necessary step, which will solve, at least partially, the problems faced by the old.