

Al-Nashra Al-Dawriyya

nos. 24 and 27

A quarterly published by the State of Bahrain, reporting on social activities carried out through the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

The above numbers, published in 1981, contain reports on training sessions organized for women in adult education, manual skills, child care and training of social pioneers. Other reports deal with units of social aid, child welfare and elimination of begging.

The following paragraphs condense a report on a child welfare conference, attended by Bahraini and other Arab delegates, held at New Delhi, 16-18 november 1981.

Delegates from 20 Asian countries, including 8 Arab and 12 non-Arab countries, met at New Delhi, India, to discuss the basic needs of childhood and lay down strategies for the implementation of recommended policies.

Two sub-committees were formed. The first discussed general problems of childhood, especially in rural districts, and governments' role in handling them. The second concentrated on child health and the disabled child. Reports and work documents were presented by the delegates. Among the topics treated were the following: A report on the aid given to disabled children in Kuwait; treatment of delinquency in Kuwait; protection and rehabilitation of the disabled in Saudi Arabia; general policy of child welfare in Bahrain; status of children in the Democratic Republic of Yemen; child welfare and development in India, Iraq and the Philippines; aid to disabled children in Pakistan; child and family welfare in Bangladesh.

The following are the principal decisions taken by the participants:

1. Creation of an executive commission for child welfare in all countries.
2. Aid to needy families should not take the form of random money gifts but should be restricted to those willing to share in production.
3. Development of work opportunities for women.
4. Creation of an Asian fund for the purpose of fulfilling immediate needs of children.
5. Dissemination and implementation of the recommendations of the International Charter for the rehabilitation of the Disabled during the eighties.
6. The All-India Union for Children's Welfare should be considered as the coordinator of non-government organizations working for the disabled.

Ban on Female Circumcision

A seminar on Bodily Mutilation of Young Females was held in Cairo in 1980. Organized by the Cairo Family Planning Association and attended by representatives of the Arab League, the UN agencies, local non-government organizations, it was inaugurated by Egypt's minister of Social and Insurance Affairs, Dr. Amal Osman.

The religious scholars who participated in the seminar declared that no religion recommends female circumcision. The medical specialists agreed that there are no medical advantages to be gained from this practice. On the contrary, the operation is harmful from both the physical and the psychological points of view.

The seminar recommended that a national campaign involving religious scholars, women's organizations and the mass media be launched in order to inform both rural and urban people about the health, psychological and social damage resulting from female circumcision.

Among the papers presented at the seminar was one from Professor Marie Bassili Assaad, an Egyptian social scientist of the Social Research Center of the American University in Cairo.

Professor Assaad said that she did not wish to draw generalizations from the limited survey she had carried out with clients at a family planning clinic in Cairo. But other researchers seemed to support her impressions that about 75 percent of women and girls in Egypt practise circumcision, irrespective of their religion.

(Abridged form of an article published in *International Women's News*, vol. 77, No. 1, March 1982 p. 6)

Courage

An illustrated feminist magazine of 60-67 pages, published in I Berlin, West Germany. Presented as a supporter of women's rights, it tries to bring out their role in society, culture and politics, particularly in the fields of pacifism, support of workers' claims, domestic economy and aid to the suffering. The following are some of its interesting themes: Biographies of militant or outstanding women, women's health and sex problems, reports about women's concerns and achievements in Germany and in other parts of the world. Through the diversity of its topics and interests, this magazine expects to attract a large reading public and to secure a good number of subscribers. Address: **Courage** Frauenverlags. Gmb. H. Bleibtreustr, 48, 1 Berlin 12, West Germany.

Femmes et Multinationales (Women and Multinationals)

by **Andrée Michel, Hélène Agbessi-Dos Santos,
and Agnès Fatoumata Diarra⁽¹⁾**

In the first section of this book, entitled "Women and the new international division of work", Andrée Michel discusses the growing divergence in income between developing and developed countries and its influence on women's conditions. The "new" division of work between the industrialized North and the pauperized South is essentially the work of multinational banks and enterprises. The extroverted development imposed on the countries of the South by the Multinationals is expressed in their growing dependence on the countries of the North from the economic, technological, financial, cultural and political points of view.

Foreign firms share the economic control of the African continent by virtue of the colonial heritage. The alimentary dependence of African countries keeps growing. The cereal trade is monopolized by seven families heading five giant enterprises which compete with local producers in order to eliminate them. The same stratagems are used to perpetuate the technological and financial dependence of the Third World.

In their exploitation plans, the countries of the North benefit from the complicity of the administrative, industrial and commercial bourgeoisie of the South who blindly imitate the Western way of life.

On the other hand, revolt against humiliating traditional practices such as excision of women, polygamy, etc., is limited to the women of the educated bourgeois society, while such a revolt is far from reaching the majority of African women, engrossed in the struggle of making a living.

In the categories of unprivileged classes, women constitute the largest numbers because they are most vulnerable. Girls are less nourished, less taken care of than boys, they receive less education and they rarely benefit from vocational training.

The following statistics made by international organisations reveal that:

- Women constitute 50% of the world population and 33.3% of the official labor force.

- They perform about 66% of the totality of work hours (merchant and non-merchant, domestic, craftsmanship, paid, etc.)
- They receive only 10% of the total world income and possess only 1% of the world property.

The second part of the book, "Peasants, multinationals and development", is also introduced by Andrée Michel who says that in Africa, 80% of the feminine population live in the country and cultivate the soil. Yet women are deprived of the right to land ownership. Their salaries are handed over to their husbands. There is a noticeable increase in the number of women who act as household heads because they were abandoned by their husbands.

In this part, Hélène Agbessi-Dos Santos discusses changes in masculine and feminine roles in production, consequent to economic transformation. She says that imported technologies increase the profits of multinational enterprises and do not contribute to women's or family's welfare. In the Benin Gulf, Nigeria, women play an important role as economic agents. Their economic independence is more frequent. On the other hand, more fathers are leaving to their wives the care of children, which imposes on women a double burden. The present imbalance in traditional social structure is detrimental to the condition of the child who is left without any one to take care of his education, because the mother's role is reduced to providing mere subsistence needs.

"We are not here preaching a return to traditionalism", says the author, "but it seems necessary to seek a new equilibrium versus a new model of development."

The new development has resulted in more monetarisation of economy, generalized sale of livelihood production and increased purchase of imported products. The result is a growing alimentary dependence and the rise of more and more serious alimentary and nutritional problems. The equilibrium that is needed is the local industrialization, resulting in a reduced sale of livelihood production and decreased purchase of imported products.

⁽¹⁾ Editions Karthala, Paris, 1981 — Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique.

Women at Work⁽¹⁾

Divorce rates continue to grow everywhere in the industrialized world and so does the number of women-headed families. The largest growing group of poor families in the U.S. is made up of women-headed families. Recent studies of working hours by sex show that, in all industrialized societies, women work much longer hours than men and that housework contributions of men are negligible, while child care by men for the most part does not exist. Yet the man-made labour market rules discriminate against women who do part time work.

Child care is totally inadequate in all Western countries and economies, while men everywhere disregard and shun their parenting and child care obligations. Sweden is perhaps the only Western country where child care is taken seriously, though the community-provided facilities are insufficient. In Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union, organised child care has been given priority though the problem has not been solved there either.

Women who work at home perform thousands of

⁽¹⁾ Abridged form of an article by Fran P. Hosken (Editor, WIN NEWS). Published by International Labour Office, Geneva.

essential services for their families and society. That this important work is not counted constitutes an injustice that must be done away with, because it is one of the main causes of discrimination against women, especially in industrialized economic systems.

Discrimination against working women is shown at every level: entry, promotion, training for higher skills and management. Women in the U.S. earn 59 cents for every dollar men earn. The gap is similar in European and other countries. Other built-in discriminatory factors that are shared world-wide are the segregation of women to low-paying, dead-end jobs and the failure of labour unions to help them. The segregation of females into the work areas with the least rewards starts often in elementary school by channelling girls away from the essential mathematics and science classes. Socialization teaches girls not to compete, to defer to boys and to regard college as a marriage market instead of a place to acquire the necessary background, learning and skills for independence and economic support. Libby Koontz, a former member of the U.S. Presidential Advisory Committee on Women said: "Young girls must disabuse themselves of the still persistent notion that marriage means permanent support and security."

Introducing "Manushi": An Indian Feminist Journal⁽¹⁾

"Indian women.. are among the most brutally oppressed in the world to-day. They are victims not only of sexism, but also of caste divisions, class hatred, poverty, and feudal social relations. In India, we find young brides sprinkled with kerosene by their mothers-in-law and set ablaze if they fail to bring a sufficient amount of money and goods as dowry for the groom's family... In 1975, three hundred and fifty women were burnt to death in Delhi alone. These were reported as suicides to the police, but in reality they were dowry deaths".

Genocide is not restricted to young brides. Among female infants, the mortality rate is higher than for male babies. A greater incidence of malnutrition also occurs among women which in turn contributes to the ill-health of both mother and child.

In middle-class society, the confinement of women

is strict. In women's university hostels, women are literally locked in: they are forbidden to smoke, to drink, or to receive female guests in their rooms. They are even discouraged from whistling or singing. Similar restrictions do not weigh upon the male students nor on working-class women.

"Manushi", the journal about women and society in India is the pioneer publication of its kind in India. It appeared in 1979 and is produced by a group of women feminists committed to break the long silence of Indian women who suffer torture, starvation, infanticide, suicide and murder.

Published in two separate editions, English and Hindi, it is priced at half the cost because the editors want to reach as many people as possible.

Subscriptions for one year (six issues) cost \$3 plus \$8 air mail postage. Single issues may be ordered for \$.50 per copy plus \$1.20 air mail postage. Write Manushi c/o Ms. Madhu Kishwar, A-5 Nizamuddin East, New Delhi 110013 India.

⁽¹⁾ Condensed from an article by Tobe Levin, published in Women's Studies Newsletter, winter 1980, vol. VIII, No. 1, p. 30.

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