

## Social Welfare Activities in Bahrain

In several issues of *Al-Raida*<sup>(1)</sup>, we reported on the increasing interest in social welfare projects which distinguishes the State of Bahrain. The last issue, no. 28, of *Al-Nashra al-Dawriyya*, a quarterly published by the Unit of Social Research in the Social Development Section of the Ministry of Social Affairs, reports, in 75 stencilled pages, on the intensive activity displayed in the field of welfare work during the first three months of 1982.

1. The first article relates the program and decisions of the 4th Session of the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs in the Gulf States. The decisions emphasized the necessity of effecting a closer cooperation among those states in the field of social affairs. A follow-up committee was established, whose responsibility was to prepare the program of the Annual Social Work Week in the Gulf States, including the exchange of periodicals, reports and pamphlets issued by the local ministers; the preparation of statistical studies regarding the work potential of each country, its training centers and participation possibilities. The creation of Social Development Centers in each locality was subjected to a number of conditions and obligations, ensuring their integrated and coherent activity.

2. Seminar on the development of local communities in Oman.

The Seminar was held in Muscat, the capital. It was attended by 96 delegates representing the ministries of social affairs in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, the Arab League Secretariat and the follow-up Office of the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs in the Gulf States. Delegates of international organizations like ECWA, the U.N. Development Office in Oman, UNICEF, FAO and UNESCO, were also present.

The committees created by the participants included: Health, Agriculture, Women's Affairs, Building, Structural Organization, Education and Information.

A long list of decisions was prepared, confirming the establishment of a National Program for the development of local communities in the Sultanate and the continuation of a coordinated and integrated program of activities consisting of: mutual field visits, financing projects, local participation, improvement of

rural and industrial products, provision of technical and financial assistance to projects representing personal effort and the continuation of technical assistance from U.N. international agencies in the fields of training and programming.

Several documents were presented by delegates of local and regional organizations, relating past experience and future prospects.

3. The said issue also reported on the items of the Sixth Annual Family Festival, which took place in Bahrain on March 21, 1982 and was organized by the following: Women's societies in Bahrain, Social Centers, folkloric music groups, the Institute for the Blind (Ma'ahad-un-Nour) and the Bahrain Red Crescent.

During the festival, a collection of children's books were distributed among Bahraini kindergartens and nurseries. They amounted to 6030 volumes, purchased for 4200 Bahraini dinars.

The Association of Struggle against Smoking, comprising 2200 members, reported on its activities and its participation in the first seminar organized for the above purpose by the Gulf States in November 1981.

4. Reports were also published on the following activities:

A training session for Women Local Pioneers, begun on February 2, to be continued through June 23, 1982. The project was part of the Five Year Plan. It aimed at training 20 pioneers per year along five principal lines: a) leadership and family guidance, b) economic skills, hygiene and general culture, c) field study, d) demographic and family planning problems, e) foods and manual work.

5. The training session organized for housewives between Nov. 16, 1981 and Feb. 11, 1982 (about 2 months), was intended a) to train women directors of the social centers and to guide social researchers in executing local programs for the benefit of rural and semi-urban women; b) to train pioneers in spreading awareness and arousing social interest among the inhabitants; c) to make women aware of the opportunities open to them as homemakers, wives, mothers and producers.

6. Other training sessions revolved around the following:

— Women's role in family guidance and family planning.

— Principles of house decoration, family hygiene, family relations, nutrition, sewing and budgeting.

— Improved methods of local arts such as the production of incense, perfumes, care of flowers and

(1) See *Al-Raida*, Nov. 1978, no. 6 p. 10; Nov. 1979, vol. II, no. 10, p. 14; Feb. 1981, vol. IV, no. 15, p. 12; May 1, 1982, vol. V, no. 20, p. 9; Aug. 1, 1982, vol. V, no. 21, p. 14.

gardens, care of retarded children, hair dressing, cooking, manual work and food canning.

The trainees numbered 21. They all agreed that the session was of great help to them. The majority asked to have it extended.

7. The other welfare projects reported were: the Social Welfare Unit, the Unit for the Elimination of Begging, the Child Welfare Center, the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped and Help of the Elderly.

During the first three months of 1982, 268 Bahraini families received financial help. The sums spent on the elimination of begging reached 2786 dinars during the same period.

A lecture was given on child delinquency by the supervisor of the Child Welfare Center at a training

session organized for the Female Police Section.

As for the help given to the handicapped and the elderly, it consisted of the purchase of wheelchairs and paying those who took charge of training in their use. It also included the distribution of money and gifts and the preparation of 120 slides on the activities of elderly women in the Rehabilitation Center.

The Higher Council for Vocational Training offered 3000 dinars for the Children's Rehabilitation Center.

Finally, on the occasion of the closing of the International Year for Disabled Persons, the National Committee organized, on January 30, 1982, a big reception for workers and participants in IYDP activities under the patronage of His Excellency the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs and other ministers of the State of Bahrain.