

## Social Welfare Activities in Bahrain:<sup>(1)</sup> Problems of Family Planning<sup>(2)</sup>

In 1978, a five-year plan for social welfare and development was initiated by the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs. A new plan for 1983-85 will be soon laid out. Among the questions that have recently occupied the planning committees is that of family-planning and parental awareness in response to the changing social status of our times. The last issue of **Al-Nashra ad-Dawriyya**, bulletin of the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs, has published three important articles relating to the above general topic. The first is a field study on the evaluation of the efficiency of "Parental Awareness Programs" used in Bahrain; the second, an Arab panel on parental responsibility and the third, a training course in the use of audio-visual aids for social development projects. This article tries to condense the contents of the first two items.

### I. Field-Study

On May 15-22, 1982, a field-study was made by women experts in the role of the demographic element in development with the cooperation of the Unit of Social and Statistical Research. The aim was to evaluate the efficiency of the Program of Family Awareness and its influence on local communities after two years of active service.

Questions raised regarding the beneficiaries of the programs were the following:

1. Are they better informed about the problem of family-planning and its importance?
2. Have they adopted a new attitude?
3. Did the wife's conviction help to change her husband's attitude?
4. Did it lead to an actual practice of birth control?
5. If the effect was limited to pure information, what is the cause of the restraint?

The sample chosen for study consisted of women, 18-35 years old, who attended sewing classes organized by the Social Development Section and were present at the sessions on "Family Awareness".

The information gathered in the field-study included:

1. The intellectual level of the sample
2. The marital status: single, married, divorced, widow
3. Social and economic standing
4. If married, husband's occupation
5. Age at marriage

6. Number of pregnancies, their spacing.
7. Number of children
8. Living conditions

Other questions included the opinions of the sample members regarding the proper age for marriage, the ideal number of the family, knowledge about contraceptives, and attitude toward birth control.

### II. Report of an expert in family-planning on a demographic project in Bahrain.

Miss Boushra Jabre, an expert in family-planning, reported on the activities of the group in charge of the 3 year project (1980-1982) of "Strengthening the demographic element in the social development programs of Bahrain". The project, she said, was financed by UNESCO, the UN. Fund for demographic activities and the Bahraini Ministry of Social Affairs. In her introduction, she stated that 60% of Bahraini women allowed less than a year's spacing between childbirths.

#### Aim of the Project

The aim of the project was to awaken in families an awareness regarding their parental responsibilities, to inform them of contemporary changes in living conditions, to help them acquire the necessary skills to face the present changes and to plan a better future for themselves and their children.

#### Execution of the Project

The execution required the training of employees taken from the ranks of those who had received some instruction and experience in the social field: social researchers, local pioneers, members of voluntary associations.

In launching the project, the following methods were used:

- Getting acquainted with the problems on hand.
- Classifying and analyzing the problems.
- Taking decisions and planning solutions.

#### Nature of the training courses

The training courses included:  
Individual and group studies based on personal experiences.

Group work forming a sort of laboratory for suggested methods.

Application and evaluation of training activities.

#### Activities of local pioneers

The activities of local pioneers consisted of:

- Holding meetings with parents.
- Persuading them to attend courses.
- Visiting service centers.
- Giving direct information on family-planning.

<sup>(1)</sup> See **Al-Raida**, nov. 1, vol. V, n<sup>o</sup>. 22, p. 8

<sup>(2)</sup> Abstracts and excerpts from **al-Nashra ad-Dawriyyah**, a quarterly bulletin published by The Ministry of Work and Social Affairs in Bahrain, n<sup>o</sup>. 29, April-May-June 1982.

### Voluntary Associations

Four associations are carrying out programs of "Family Awareness", under the guidance of trained employees.

### Social researchers

They conduct information sessions for village women sponsored by local pioneers.

They contact families with financial difficulties and help them solve financial and other problems.

### Cooperation with other organizations

1. With public health nurses.
2. With students of arts and crafts.
3. With Family-Planning and Family Welfare Associations.

### Positive results of the experiment

As the experiment draws to an end (in 1983), it is possible to report the following positive results:

1. The introduction of the programs of Family Awareness into all the Bahraini towns without any objection.
2. The arousal of the interest of all social workers and employees in adopting the programs.
3. The preparation of instruction material for the different topics of family awareness.

### Limitations of the Project

The limitations of the project are:

1. Only women were able to benefit from the programs. Though it is usually men who make the final decisions regarding family-planning, it was found impossible to address the Family Awareness Programs to them.
2. The same difficulty was met in trying to reach the large public.
3. The absence of an official demographic policy led to the scattering of activities and the limitation of their effects.

### III. Arab Panel on "Parental Responsibility"

The first Arab Panel on parental responsibility was held in Bahrain on May 25-27, 1982. It was organized by the Bahraini Association for Family Planning and Welfare, with the joint cooperation of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). It was attended by delegates of IPPF from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Arab United Emirates, Syria, Lebanon, the Royal Hashemite Kingdom, the Yemenite Arab Republic, Tunisia, Maghreb and Sudan.

The aim of the panel was to study the Arab public and private experiments in handling the demographic problem in the Arab world, to note their positive results and to suggest ways of utilizing them. Most of the participants reported on the experiments and programs of their respective countries in family-

planning and parental responsibility using the following topics:

- Role of the voluntary sector.
- Demographic policy and family-planning.
- Official programs in Bahrain and Tunisia.
- Societies' programs in Sudan.
- Family-Planning Associations in Lebanon and Maghreb.

A number of documents and publications on the above topics were made available to the delegates.

### Recommendations of the Panel

The final recommendations of the panel are:

1. Policy-making and administration of service concerning family-planning is a state responsibility.
2. Policy-making should be based on field-studies scientifically prepared by specialists.
3. The private sector should have a pioneering role in shaping the given idea, publicizing it, and preparing the way for its adoption by the public.
4. Educational programs are important in arousing the interest of young people and adults in information about social problems, including planned parenthood.
5. The information given must be adapted to the various stages of people's lives.
6. Problems of demography, unemployment, social welfare, care of the orphans and the aged, and other similar problems should receive special care in governmental plans and budgets.
7. A local committee should be created for the purpose of promoting and coordinating all social activities and projects in the Arab countries and organizing more panels in the future about this topic.

## Nobel Prize for Peace

October 1982 — Alva Myrdal<sup>(1)</sup>, a Swedish writer who for 20 years has led a movement for peace and disarmament, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace jointly with a Latin American writer, Alfonso Garcia Robles. She is the third WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) member to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Jane Adams, first international president of WILPF and a pioneering social worker, won the prize in 1931; Emily Greene Balch, first international secretary of WILPF, won the prize in 1946.<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) See *Al-Raida*, Nov. 1, 1982, vol. 5, no. 22, p. 3.

(2) *Peace and Freedom*, vol. 42, no. 9, Dec. 1982, p. 24.