

A Wave of Reaction Sweeps Over Several Third World Countries.

(Source: WIN NEWS, vol. 8, no. 4, Autumn 1982, pp. 54-66)

1. Child Marriage in Kenya

"Child marriage has struck certain parts of Kenya where some schools have held whole classes running without girls. Worst hit have been certain areas of the Coast Province where a District officer for Northern Division of Kilifi District, Mr. Alex Kabugua, alarmed by the absence of girls from classes, launched an operation that netted 40 girls, aged between 10 and 13 who had been married away by their parents ... It also came to light that their husbands were rich old men".

2. The New Regime in Iran, Harsh on Women

The regime has been encouraging women to leave their jobs and has forced mandatory veils on them.

In June 1982, a campaign of execution destroyed 15,000 people, including pregnant women, school girls, nurses, teachers, housewives and women activists. Women prisoners were raped before being executed.

Women skiers have been banned from the slopes of Dizin, Iran's most popular winter resort.

On the whole, Iranian women are considered as second class citizens. They enjoy no equality with men in any sphere of social life.

3. India (From Hindustan Times, Sept. 4, 1982)

Dowry deaths doubled in seven years.

"Dowry deaths — a euphemism for cold-blooded murder of brides — have almost doubled in seven years. In Delhi alone, 500 brides were reported to have been done to death last year Mrs. Butalia says marriage has now become a market transaction with the groom's party seeking a dowry under a "get-rich-quick" scheme and the bride's parents eager to buy their daughter a comfortable home".

4. Pakistan

Under the present regime, existing social taboos and prejudices are being legalized: Women's staying in purdah (seclusion), the closing of co-educational schools, the legal enforcement of the chador, the discrimination against women in medical and other professional colleges. There is the fear of returning to the situation of a man being able to get an immediate divorce by saying 'talaq' (divorce) three times.

Women Organize to Fight for their Rights

1. In Algeria

Proposed family law rejected by women (See Al-Raida, no. 23, p. 11).

2. In Iran

Women's National Alliance, Moslem Women's Association in South Tehran, Groups of Women Workers, and Moslem Iranian Students' Society (Britain) are all active supporters of the National Council of Resistance and of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran.

3. In Iraq

Sixteen women have been elected to the National Assembly.

4. In India

a. Evelyn D'Souza writes from Calcutta that she and her husband have started a sponsorship program for destitute children and orphaned kids who roam about in the streets and have no one to look after them.

b. Tara Ali Baig, President of International Union for Child Welfare, India, proposes to set up a "Mothers' Training Center and Young People's Hostel" for SOS program, where it will be possible to incorporate a shelter for deserted women. A creche will be built for the babies and educational facilities will be provided for the older children so that the mothers can work".

c. A march to the Indian Parliament against dowry was organized (July 1982) by several hundred women demanding political, legal and administrative action to eradicate the evils of dowry. Relatives of several dowry victims marched with the demonstrators.

Mrs. Vimla Farooqi, General Secretary of the National Federation of Indian Women, called for equal share for women in property. The march organization demanded a ban on ostentatious marriages.

5. In Pakistan

The Women's Action Forum (WAF) has brought together nine women's organizations working for women's rights. They denounced current laws which allow women to be lashed or stoned for adultery and a variety of other "sins".

They condemned a plan for setting up a new university for women as a new means of segregation and a burden on the country's limited resources. They suggested that money should be spent on improving existing co-educational institutions instead of setting up new ones. The forum insisted on the promotion of sports for women, a program currently discouraged by General Zia.

The WAF has chapters in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad.

The Sudan Fertility Survey 1979 ⁽¹⁾

The Setting

The Sudan is the largest country of Africa: 2.5 million sq. kilometers, a predominantly rural population of 14.1 million in 1973, an estimated population of over 19 million in 1981. Recently, the educational system has rapidly expanded. About one-half of the boys and more than one-third of the girls from 7 to 12 are currently enrolled in primary schools.

Findings

Over 47 percent of the population enumerated in the household survey are less than 15 years old, which means a very young population for the Sudan and conforms to the pattern observed in most developing countries.

Average household size: 5.3 for the whole sample, and about 6.0 and 5.0 for the urban and rural areas respectively.

About 90 percent of sample urban households have piped water inside or outside the house; only 24 percent of rural households have access to piped water.

Electric lighting: 44 percent of the urban households, 3 percent of the rural.

Radios: 2/3 of the households in urban areas, 27 percent in rural areas.

Television sets: 22 percent in urban areas, 1 percent in rural ones.

Summary of Findings

Marriage is universal but age at first marriage rose from 19.3 years in 1973 to 21.3 in 1978.

- Divorce is the most important form of marital dissolution, but the incidence of remarriage is relatively high.
- Fertility is high.
- Both infant and child mortality are relatively high.
- Sudanese women prefer large families.
- Knowledge of family planning is moderate and use of contraceptives is very low.

Breastfeeding is almost universal and prolonged and acts as a major constraint on fertility.

Sudan's population is increasing very rapidly, at the rate of 3 percent per annum. The population of Sudan will double in 23 years, rising from 19 million in 1981 to 38 million in the year 2004.

(1) The Sudan Fertility Survey was carried out during Dec. 1978 – April 1979, by the Department of Statistics of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan as part of the World Fertility Survey. Financial Support was provided by the Overseas Development Administration of the Government of the United Kingdom, London, U.K.

The Married Woman's Name

Denmark is introducing legislation allowing married women to retain their maiden names. Unless they expressly wish it, they will no longer automatically assume their husband's surname on marriage. Parents will also have the right to decide which of their two surnames their children take.

In Spain, it is customary but not compulsory for a married woman to add her husband's name to her own; in practice she is free to continue to use her maiden name or add her husband's. Only her maiden name is used on her personal papers.

(IWN vol. 77, no. 2, June 1982, p. 18).

In Arab countries, according to an old Arab custom, dating from pre-Islamic days, a woman has the right to keep her maiden name after marriage and refuse to take her husband's name. In our time, this custom has been abandoned by those who have adopted Western manners, and retained only by a few conservative people. There is however the possibility of reviving it.

(Editor)

Reducing Child Mortality

At the Tenth International Conference of the "World Federation for Gynecology and Women's Diseases", held in October, 1982 in San Francisco, California, Dr. Keith Russel, President of the Federation, spoke on the prevention of child mortality. He reported the projection that 40 million children will die during the next two decades. Dr. Russel asserted that a space of two years between one pregnancy and another tends to reduce by half the ratio of child mortality; he further asserted that in regions suffering from malnutrition and poor sanitation, the interval should be extended to three or four years.

The most popular method of contraception is the IUD (intrauterine device), adopted by about 100 million women each year. Some 54 million women use the pill, and 40 million resort to illegal

abortion. Because abortion sometimes results in the woman being injured it would seem necessary to find new ways of reducing the number of abortions. One way is to extend the period of breast feeding.

The mother's age and health are essential factors in determining the child's health. Child mortality is lowest when the mother's age is between 20 and 30; it is higher with adolescent mothers and still higher with women over 30.

In 1980, 130 million children were born; by the year 2000 the number will increase to 163. Thirty percent of the increase will occur in developing countries, those countries which have the highest proportion of child mortality at birth.

(An-Nahar, 20/10/1982)

Female Circumcision

Sir— I would like to add some facts to your article on female genital mutilation (September 18th). According to my research for the WHO, there are more than 74 million women and children in continental Africa alone who are now mutilated. This figure is probably much too low, because for several countries no documentation is as yet available. Many thousands of children are operated on every year and their number is steadily increasing with population growth. Operations in the cities are done at an ever younger age, for fear the daughters will resist if the father waits until the traditional age of puberty.

The operations are also performed in the southern part of the Arabian peninsula and in Indonesia, where they are practised in a less drastic form than in most of Africa.

Due to the failure of development programmes to discourage these mutilations, they are now being introduced into hospitals all over Africa, and are becoming a very lucrative practice for physicians (including those trained in the West). Health programmes financed by western organizations are in fact introducing the operations into the modern health sector, where excision and infibulation are

now performed without any traditional rites. This insures the male head of the family a guaranteed, intact girl, whom he can sell to the highest bidder on the marriage market as soon as she reaches puberty.

It was interesting to read that Dr. Koinange of Kenya, following the edict against the operations by President Moi, issued a decree prohibiting the operations in all government hospitals and in both public Catholic and Protestant missionary hospitals as well. This shows that missionary hospitals have been carrying out the mutilation of female African children.

The report on the Khartoum WHO seminar on this subject is available from WHO/EMRO, POB 1517, Alexandria, Egypt.

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The above letter was addressed to the Economist by Fran Hosken, author of "The Hosken Report on Genital and Sexual Mutilation of Females", Oct. 30, 1982. See *Al-Raida*, Feb. 1981, vol. IV, no. 15, p. 16.