



Women's Participation in Development

It is now government policy in many 3rd world countries to mobilize women to help implement development plans. This policy has met a favorable reaction from the majority of respondents, although a few groups, responding specifically to the issue of housewives working outside the home, have reacted negatively⁽¹⁾. There is no doubt that the efforts spent by the U.N.O. toward the affirmation of the Rights of Man, including sexual equality, have been largely responsible for the promotion of this policy.

Not only does woman's participation play a necessary role in the economic development of 3rd world countries, it also plays a role in the solution of their demographic problems. **Their high dependency ratio**, due to the high percentage of children and the increasing number of the elderly, necessitates the participation of all women of working age in development. This participation affects the policies of family planning, because woman's work outside the home makes her opt for a smaller number of children. In addition, it helps eliminate sexual discrimination, modify the concept of woman's social role and abolish the traditional division of labor, If also leads to the gradual elimination of the veil which forms a handicap to her outside work and her social contacts.

Woman's participation in development is a key to her total liberation. In order to participate in development she must be engaged in meaningful work; in order to engage in meaningful work she must be liberated and well trained. Therefore, a woman who lacks education and training should join a literacy course and search out training centers which prepare adults for productive work. Her liberation from ignorance and stagnation will raise her morale and increase her self-confidence. It will make of her a new person. Education and work are intrinsically related; one imposes the other. Work without education has little value; education without work is sterile.

These factors have resulted in an abundance of studies, all over the world, on two closely-related topics: 1) struggle against illiteracy, especially among women, who have a higher illiteracy rate than men; 2) full participation of women in development, including analysis of the situation which would make this participation possible.

(1) See *Al-Raida*, Feb. 1, 1982, Vol.V, No. 19, p. 8

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