

Second Family Planning Conference (Beirut, 3-5 November 1983)

While Lebanese Politicians met in Geneva for the first National Reconciliation Conference in November 1983, the **Lebanese Family Planning Association** was holding its **2nd Evaluative Conference on the Status of Women in Lebanon**.

Present at the conference was a large number of delegates from women's organizations, universities, government offices, the Lebanese Red Cross Society, IWSAW, and members of the Press.

At the end of the gathering the participants issued a **Seven Points Recommendation Paper** based on the following :

1. The situation of women in Lebanon cannot be looked at in isolation but only within the Lebanese social context. Women's problems are

social ones that should be the concern of all men and women involved in the social field. Therefore, any improvement of the women's status in Lebanon will have to be considered as an improvement in the status of her family as well as her society.

2. The situation of Lebanese women at present is tragic but not only because of war. It is in fact the result of a long history of discrimination and neglect and therefore cannot be solved instantly with a stroke of a magic wand.

The solution of women's problems in Lebanon needs an accurate knowledge of social reality and serious scientific investigation, as well as conferences, workshops and seminars which will help awaken public opinion and local leaderships.

3. The Lebanese National Council of women should take the initiative to push its affiliated societies to review their memberships and reorganize their executive committees. After that, the various local women's organizations should coordinate their activities in order to save time and duplication of tasks, to be more effective in the improvement of women's status in Lebanon.

4. The participants realize that a large part of women's problems in Lebanon stem from socialization at home which differentiates between girls' and boys' roles. It continues at school with sexist schoolbooks, then at the workplace where there are "feminine" and "masculine" jobs and prevails in all society."

The role of the media is important in this respect for it should educate people about sexual discrimination through special TV and radio programs.

5. Lebanese women suffer from poor working conditions and have a low participation rate in the workforce when compared to men. With increasing inflation, decreasing social services (due to their disruption by war), the participants called for a series of studies to be undertaken in order to analyze the economic situation of women during the war.

Some of the suggestions include:

- increasing the number of child care centres
- giving women the chance to do secretarial jobs at home
- giving them the opportunity to do "service-jobs"

at home (like ironing - mending - cooking for families)

- encouraging poultry and bee raising in rural areas
 - encouraging the creation of green houses.
6. Due to the war situation in Lebanon, women and their families are facing increasing problems that call for immediate action namely:
- problems of war widows.
 - unemployment due to closure of shop factories and offices
 - school absenteeism
 - increase in the level of illiteracy especially for women
 - lack of vocational guidance
 - lack of adequate health care facilities, health guidance, and family planning programs.
 - problems of orphans and outdated adoption laws
 - problems of citizenship for children of foreign fathers (the law in Lebanon gives the Lebanese nationality only to children born of a Lebanese father)
 - lack of specialized recreational and educational programs for children on radio and television
 - problems of rural women who have suffered differently as a result of the war.
7. The participants reiterate their belief that women's problems have a negative effect not only on women but on the family and society as a whole. Therefore, they urge all those responsible to take these problems into serious consideration.