

## Continuing Education For Arab Women

The issue of Continuing Education for Arab Women was the theme of a workshop sponsored by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World and the Middle East Church Council and was held last May in an old monastery in Ayia Napa, Cyprus. A group of educators representing Egypt, Jordan, Tunis, Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon, Cyprus and the West Bank attended the workshop. A working paper was presented by the Director of the Institute defining continuing education, emphasizing its importance for the Arab countries, and giving suggestions for possible programs.

What is a continuing education? Why is it important? Is continuing education an issue for the Arab woman? According to Eva Shipstone, continuing education is a human resources development which is not bound by time or age. It



From left to right: (standing) Mrs. Irene Lorfin (Lebanon), Miss Yvonne Angilious (Egypt), Mrs. Farquad Kazhem (Iraq), Mrs. Rebecca Salti (Jordan), Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr (Lebanon), Miss Juliette Haddad (Lebanon), Dr. Agnes Hanania (West Bank), Mrs. Elizabeth Areh (Sudan); (kneeling) Mrs. Monica Ioannou (Cyprus) and Miss Nibal Eskandar (Egypt).

may be pursued individually or institutionally, and it may go under any one of several names: adult education, extension program, lifelong learning, self-education, Continuing education is generally viewed as a means for personality development which helps the individual gain self-reliance, acquire new skills, up-grade one's present skills, gain insight into the meaning of life, promote personal fulfillment, and become a more active participant in the process of development.

Continuing education is provided to motivate adults with specific needs, and is most meaningful when adequate planning is applied, with such needs in mind. Arab women in general lack this motivation, hence, there is a need to arouse awareness among them to overcome their apathy and fatalistic acceptance of their lot.

The three-day discussions produced a list of suggestions for continuing education programs, strategies for their implementation, and an evaluation scheme.

**The programs included are varied and among them are the following:**

- Literacy programs
- Vocational training
- Extension education
- In-service training

- Informal education
- Re-entry into the formal education stream

**Strategies for Promoting and Implementing Continuing Education includes:**

1. Developing a philosophy of action.
2. Specifying objectives both general and specific.
3. Investigating the feasibility of action programs with respect to prevailing socio-cultural context.
4. Providing alternative strategies to meet unexpected circumstances.
5. Developing awareness among women of the importance of continuing their education and of their role in promoting this kind of education.
6. Raising men's awareness to the value of continuing education.
7. Motivating women to seek continuing education which would help their personality development, intellectual growth, liberation, personal fulfillment, social concern and a commitment to human rights and social justice.
8. Urging educators to review admission policies to the formal system of education which would pave the way for women to continue their formal education.
9. Encouraging educated men and women to initiate and /or participate in continuing education programs for other women and help recipients realize their potentials.
10. Identifying leaders among participants in continuing education programs who may help in promoting such programs.
11. Emphasizing the importance of contacting women's organizations and other organizations in the Arab world involved in continuing education to share programs and experiences (such as making use of the Iraqi literacy campaign).
12. Making use of local resources within the ecological and cultural context of the community.
13. Emphasizing to educators the importance of planning continuing education programs which respond to individual and community needs.
14. Investigating and encouraging the use of a variety of means and media to introduce continuing education programs such as: field visits, seminars, mobile libraries, clubs, audi-visual materials, free university, correspondence, etc.

15. Making known and encouraging the use of materials prepared for an integrated program, called the Basic Living Skills Projects (BLSP) which includes management, general education health, nutrition, childcare, consumer education, family planning, laws and civic education. This program is now under preparation by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at Beirut University College.
16. Encouraging the use of formal government and private facilities already available (schools, churches, mosques, clubs, etc.) to conduct continuing education programs.
17. Benefiting from and coordinating with the

Arab Board Literacy Adult Education of the Arab League.

The enthusiasm of the participants was inspiring indeed. It is hoped that the interest that was apparent in the workshop will motivate the delegates to implement continuing education programs, in their respective countries to help Arab Women fulfill their role as active partners in the process of development.

**Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr**

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\* For more information on program suggestions, write to  
IWSAW:  
Beirut University College  
P.O.Box 13-5053  
Beirut, Lebanon