

The General Federation of Iraqi Women



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The General Federation of Iraqi Women (G.F.I.W.) is the only mass organization representing Iraqi women. It was established in 1969 and held its first conference on the 4th of March, 1969. Ever since, this day became the Iraqi Woman's Day celebrated by all the people of Iraq every year.

The Federation aims at raising the social, economic, cultural and health standard of Iraqi women, promoting sisterly relations among Arab women, advocating a unified Arab women's movement and supporting liberation movements around the World.

It endeavours to achieve its goals in different sectors:

1. **The Political Sector** through women's participation in the National Council as candidates and voters, and in the decision-making process of workers and professional organizations.

2. **The Judicial Sector**, by studying personal status laws in Iraq, and the effect of their implementation on women and the family. The Federation has given recommendations to concerned authorities in order to revise some laws, and has taken part in specialized committees of reform of the judicial system in the country. It has also information services for women about their legal rights and duties.

3. The Educational Sector

The Federation has helped the Iraqi Government implement the "Eradication of Illiteracy Campaign" which makes it obligatory for every illiterate man and woman between the age of 15 and 45 years to enrol in literacy centers. It has reinforced legal measures to be taken against those who refuse to enrol in such classes. The Federation encourages women to continue their education, supports scientific and intellectual activities, organizes conferences and seminars for women and publishes or helps publish research and studies on women.

4. The Economic Sector

The Federation concentrates on making women aware of the importance of work, which is envisaged as a patriotic duty. It organizes professional and leadership training courses, and has opened employment units in its local branches to coordinate between employment offers and demands. It has also carried research on methods that would increase women's productivity, and has called upon government departments to increase the rate of women they employ.

5. The Employment Sector

The Federation has fought for opening up fields traditionally inaccessible to women in the cultural, artistic and sports sectors. It has set-up workshops in some densely populated areas to provide women with job opportunities, and change the social attitude that does not encourage women to work in areas far from where they reside. It has intensified efforts related to the training of women leaders, and provided opportunities for their training in technical skills.

6. The Social Sector

The Federation, supported by the Iraqi government, has tried to change the attitude of people and society vis-à-vis their view of women, as well as to improve the way women view themselves. It has encouraged women to participate in developing and building-up their country, and in the process of social change. It has also given great attention to its members' family problems and has set up various councils for the needy in its different branches.

7. The Health Sector

The Federation has worked to promote women's consciousness of their health and that of their families through lectures on hygiene, film-shows, vaccination campaigns and distribution of pamphlets on health care. It has coordinated its efforts with health institutions in the country to improve health services offered to mothers and children. It has also encouraged women to work as nurses.

8. The Information Sector

The Federation has concentrated its information activities on organizing seminars for women on the problems that they face, and has published a monthly magazine "Al-Maraa" (The Woman) which reflects the progress and achievements of Iraqi women.

9. The Household Sector

The Federation has emphasized to family members the importance of women's participation in the workforce. It has coordinated its efforts with the appropriate institutions so that electric time-saving devices are made available for women at cheaper prices. It has also established day nurseries for children of working mothers, and has encouraged employers to increase the number of these nurseries as well as to improve their condition.

10. The Sports Sector

In Iraq, before 1978, girls in general were kept away from sports activities and most families refused to let their daughters train in sports fields and gymnastics. This issue was given special attention in the 1978-79 campaign which called for all the Federation's centers to form sports teams in basketball, volleyball and table tennis; as well as equestrian games, gliding, parachuting, judo, karaté and shooting. The Federation has provided all the equipment and trainers for these teams. It has also coordinated with the "General Federation of Iraqi Youths" to ensure that sports activities are practiced by both young men and women.

11. The Art Sector

The Federation has given special attention to women's participation in artistic activities by means of an intensive programme requiring all its centers throughout the country to form acting, music, singing and folkloric groups of men and women.

The groups affiliated to the G.F.I.W. have been able to win the admiration of the public by:

- presenting a model for non sexist social relations between men and women.
- contributing to the cultural and artistic education of women and,
- changing social attitudes towards women's participation in the artistic field by presenting good performances.

12. Rural Women

Sixty per cent of the activities of the G.F.I.W. have been directed to improve the state of rural women because of their importance for the economy, especially in food production.

- a) It introduced "Rural Tents", a large tent set up in the countryside, especially in remote villages where basic services are not available. A number

of Federation members accompany the tent; they include experts on various subjects related to women. These experts work in coordination with various government departments. The programme, which usually lasts from 3-5 days, includes seminars on different issues relating to women.

- b) The G.F.I.W. has also adopted the method of "Rural Caravans" which lasts 10-30 days, during which the caravan tours villages and provides services to them.
- c) In remote areas, the G.F.I.W. has formed "liaison committees" to coordinate between the Federation's nearest centers and rural women. Each committee represented the nucleus of a potential new center.

13. Regional Activities

The Federation has developed and reinforced its relations with Women's Organizations in the Arab World. It exchanges experiences with them, organizes common working programmes for development and has hosted the headquarters of the "General Arab Women's Federation" and the "Training Center for Arab Women's Federation" and the "Training Center for Women's Leadership". It has established links with Arab research institutes and universities, the "Arab League" and departments of women and family affairs.

14. International Activities

The Federation gives special importance to its relations with women of Islamic, non-aligned, developing and socialist countries as well as with women's movements in industrialized countries. It is a member of the "Democratic World Women's Federation", the "International Federation of Family Institutions" and the "International Federation for Children's Welfare". It has also signed cooperation agreements with a number of women's organizations and has hosted several "World Women Meetings", the last meeting was convened in Baghdad, 4-8 March 1985.

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References

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