

For A More Productive Role Of Lebanese Women in Society

Lebanon, December 4-5, 1992

The purpose of the lectures of this conference was to examine women's needs and problems that must be addressed for development. The Lebanese Family Planning Association, organizers of the event, intends to develop workshops, action programs and bring forth women's needs to government officials based on these revised studies incorporating suggestions and corrections brought forth.

Hence, the 11th Congress, to evaluate the condition of Women in Lebanon, by The Lebanese Family Planning Association covered three basic issues: 1) The Role of Women in Political Leadership; 2) The Pressures of Familial Responsibilities on Working Women; and 3) The Role of Women as Educators in Assimilating the Effects of the War on Children.

Dr. Fahmieh Sharafeddine⁽¹⁾ on The Role of Women in Political Leadership insisted that the problems lie, essentially, in the patriarchal division of labor in society, not in men themselves. She proposed shifting the prevailing feminist approach from

protest (against discrimination) to emphasis of women's potentials. Sharafeddine suggested focusing on women in three sectors: a) the family, b) social work associations, and 3) the productive sector. They were selected because of women's abundant participation and involvement in them, and would consequently, serve as initial areas in which women may advance into political leadership. The specific action and measures to be taken by these women, she explained, would be based on extensive research and analysis of women's status, extent of participation, quality of participation, positions, decision making power and authority.

Dr. Bushra Qubaisi⁽²⁾, on *The Pressures of Familial Responsibilities on Working Women*, explained that women did not join the labor force by choice but out of financial need. All other social roles and duties remaining more or less the same, work becomes an additional load and puts more pressure on women. According to Qubaisi, research has identified three pressure areas in domestic life for working wives and mothers: 1) domestic duties; 2) time spent with children, needing care and attention; 3) possible strain on the marital relation. Qubaisi suggested that a census be conducted to measure the number of working women and closely examine their problems. Only then can policies and reliable strategies be devised to relieve some of the

tension.

Dr. Fadia Kiwan⁽³⁾, on *The Role of Women as Educators in Assimilating the Effects of War on Children*, identified three sectors where women can effectively reverse the destructive effects of the war on children: 1) the family; 2) social work institutions; 3) social and educational posts. Women are the ones most qualified in reversing war traumas on children where society's other institutions seem to fail, she noted. Dr. Kiwan based her observation on women's basic maternal instincts combined with the fact that they form the majority of school teachers and educators in the country. Thus, women have an advantage in this perspective and they have earned credibility for sustaining the family during the war. Whereas, violence in the media in general and television programs in particular not only tend to reinforce violence, latent aggression caused by the war, they also offer poor quality educational programs. Furthermore, Dr. Kiwan called upon the government to mobilize its various departments to take the necessary steps to create healthy social conditions

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Scholars attending the Congress