

The Role of Women in Development Projects in The Syrian Arab Republic

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The primary issues that concern the Arab individual today are:

- 1) The right to life.
 - 2) Environmental deterioration.
 - 3) The shortage of resources and the pollution accumulated from repeated wars and the military activities.
 - 4) The brain drain from the Arab countries.
 - 5) Population growth which threatens to eradicate progress already achieved.
- Population growth rate in Syria between 1985 and 1989 reached 3.5 percent or 35.5 per thousand, which implies that the population will double in 21 years. It is expected to reach 32.3 million by the year 2025. If the present fertility rate continues, population growth would average 42.9 per thousand between 2020 and 2025.



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Socio-economic Conditions of the People

Education: Literacy levels were 78 percent for males and 51 percent for females in 1990. Secondary school enrollment between 1983 and 1991 was approximately 63 percent for males and 45 percent for females.

Fertility and Family Planning: Fertility rates, which were medically supervised between 1983 and 1991 were 61 percent, keeping in mind that use of birth control was 20 percent between 1985 and 1991. Research results from the Syrian Family Planning association

show that 85 percent of men do not object to using birth control once the family size reaches 4 persons. Available health and medical care facilities throughout the country reached 75 percent between 1985 and 1988; clean water supply reached 75 percent between 1985 and 1990. **Income Levels:** Per capita food production of the Syrian citizen was 83 percent between 1988 and 1990 and per capita income was equivalent to \$1,000 in 1990.

Population Growth and the Environment

The Syrian Arab Republic, aware of the dangers of population growth and the environment, established a Ministry of Environmental Issues responsible for preserving and integrating the environment in all development projects. Laws and regulations were devised to safeguard environmental parameters notably water, forestry and soil from different forms of pollution. The Syrian Government is also exerting

efforts to create an outfit in the Arab League, which would concentrate on matters related to the environment and sustainable development. In Syria, the government implements a number of projects to deal with desertification, and erosion by conducting national tree planting activities, hence planting millions of trees. Forested area in Syria reached 733,000 hectares in 1991, representing 4 percent of the total country's area.

Protection of Water Resources

The Government has established a Ministry for the Protection of Water Resources in Syria. Syria is considered poor in water, and its most important source is the Furat River. However, water supply has decreased because dams and water management plants in Turkey prevent adequate supply to Syria. Hence, Syria's projects to manage its water resources to avoid waste and misuse included building 133 dams and a storage capacity of 15.6 billion cubic meters of water, in 1992.

Hence, water supply was made available to 1.1 million hectares. Women form approximately 47 percent of the labor in the project, concentrating mainly on administrative rather than technical tasks.

Some of the Steps Taken by the Syrian Government Towards Environment and Sustainable Development:

- 1) The creation of a population council in July, 1986.
- 2) The creation of an Association for Population Affairs and Development, a relevant documentation center in the People's Council, the Parliament and the Prime Ministry.
- 3) The creation of Population Study Centers at the Universities in Damascus and Aleppo and the introduction of population studies in formal and non-formal educational curricula.
- 4) Activate the role of the Syrian Family Planning Association.
- 5) The creation of a Ministry of Environmental Affairs.

- 6) Efforts to create special outfits in the Arab League for Environment and Sustainable Development.
- 7) The government's delegation of popular and non-governmental groups to disseminate environmental education throughout the country.
- 8) The establishment of facilities for water purification and measurement of pollution levels.
- 9) The creation of sanitation and waste disposal facilities.
- 10) Enhancing women's role in development through education and training.
- 13) The establishment of pollution control department in the Ministry for Water Management.
- 14) The creation of a Higher Committee for forestation.

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The Role of the Media in Integrating Rural Women in Development

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Development is an inter-disciplinary process that utilizes the skills and resources of economists, health specialists, urban and rural planners, and social workers, to name just a few. The integration of women in the process cannot occur arbitrarily. It requires the intervention of the media and communication, which will motivate them and create incentives for effective and efficient participation.

Developmental media can play a direct role by changing their self-image from a negative one to a positive one.

The following are recommendations about how the media can contribute to integrating rural women in development.

- 1) Persistence in research and collection of ground data thus, identifying needed information and devising valid and reliable education and communication designs.
- 2) Train teachers in communications fields in order to improve their skills in the planning and the integration of women in development.
- 3) Improve communication with rural women.
- 4) Prepare a program for testing,

evaluating and following-up related campaigns for rural women.

- 5) Include a large number of journalists, women, youth, workers in the projects devised by The Family Planning Association and other development agencies.
- 6) Call on the local media to pay more attention to rural women's issues in order to promote awareness.
- 7) Concentrate on educational media.
- 8) Prepare special programs for training young rural women inskills and environment friendly habits.