

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

Under the sponsorship of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World a Workshop on Arab Women in Industry was held in Ayia Napa Cyprus from May 21 to 23, 1984.

The workshop, which was financed by a grant from the Ford Foundation, had as its main objectives the identification of relevant research topics and methodology in the Arab countries. Delegates from Egypt, Jordan, Tunis, Algeria, Yemen and Lebanon presented country reports. Dr. Barbara Ibrahim of the Ford Foundation, gave the working paper in which she set a frame of reference for the activities of the following three days.

Research reported revealed that industrialization is opening new opportunities for gainful employment for women. However, such industrialization is creating new problems (e.g. reinforcing occupational segregation, exploitation of female labor) for women themselves and their families.

The getting together of a group of women researchers in the Arab World was helpful in identifying priorities for further work in the area. An agenda for research with emphasis on methodology was developed on three levels: societal, household, and factory. The following are recommendations that emerged from this encounter:

The participants agreed that it was important to pool efforts in order to come up with methodological guidelines based on their research experience. The main purpose of this exercise was to give researchers general recommendations and guidelines to help them design specific methodologies for data



collection and analysis that would be appropriate for regional comparisons.

The following guidelines and recommendations were suggested:

A. Preliminary Tasks:

Develop a network of Arab scholars, researchers and planners in order to:

1. Establish common definitions of key concepts, e.g. economic activity, types of industry.
2. Collect and review existing work (both within and outside the region) on each research topic.
3. Disseminate, and circulate research results.

B. Research Design and Execution

1. Build on existing data sources, either by undertaking secondary analysis or adding time points in order to design longitudinal studies. There is a general need for longitudinal approaches in many of the

research areas proposed.

2. Show greater sensitivity to the historical context, and concern for establishing the linkages between macro and micro levels of analysis.
3. Use an approach where interdisciplinary research teams may be genuinely cooperative.
4. Define the sample population rigorously. In most cases, it will be preferable to focus the analysis on the household of manual workers.
5. Avoid large-scale research or complicated analytic schemes because the returns do not generally justify cost and effort. For many of the proposed topics, clearly-defined designs and basic methods are appropriate.
6. Define target beneficiaries of the research carefully and then involve women, wherever possible, in planning and implementing projects.

Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr.