

Women Employment in Lebanon

Women's Education and Employment

In Lebanon, in 1970, 17 per cent of girls aged 6 to 14 were out of school. This percentage increased to 38 per cent for girls between the ages 14 and 19. After 19, only 8.9 per cent continued their education.

Percentage of illiterate women in 1970: 53 per cent.

Recently the demand for women's education has increased and more opportunities have been made available.

Main jobs open to women

There are about 33 varied careers available to women, some intellectual, others manual.

New professions include: medicine, engineering, architecture, pharmacy, nursing, law.

Traditional careers: teaching occupies 77 per cent of the professionally trained women, regardless of their training. A large percentage of these women teach on the preschool and elementary level. Only 14 per cent of them are university professors.

Other careers: Secretarial work, stenography and typing jobs are occupied by women in the proportion of 61.6 per cent of the personnel.

Servants and housemaids: 66.9 per cent women.

Craftswomen (Industry): 69 per cent of the whole are women.

The agricultural sector employs women at the rate of 91.7 per cent, classified as agricultural laborers. Of this group, 75.6 per cent are considered as family aids and receive no salary.

Women who work as employers do not exceed 1.5 per cent of the whole body of working women while men employers reach 8.9 per cent.

51 per cent of employed women are salaried, the rest are self-employed as crafts women.

35 per cent of employed men are salaried, the rest being employers.

Women often accept jobs that require lower qualifications than those they have. This is deemed necessary to enable women to keep a balance between a career and a family or to abide by traditions that restrict her choice and/or mobility. Existing discrimination regarding education opportunities and employment is mainly due to traditional attitudes of both men and women and not to law.

Women are still traditional in choosing careers. They need better counselling. A change in the attitude of society toward women's work is also necessary.

National Programs for Women

A. Government programs

1. The Ministry of Planning elaborated a six

year-plan, 1972-1978, which aimed at providing educational opportunities to all children, boys and girls, of all social classes, with the hope of integrating them in the economic and social development of the country. A total of 987 schools should have been ready by 1978. Due to the political situation, the plan was not executed.

2. Ministry of Social Affairs

This ministry has planned a project for the creation of a unit which would establish projects in rural areas, aiming to reduce unemployment, reorganize educational curriculae and expand vocational education.

3. Office of Social Development

This office, which is related to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, offers financial and technical aid to women's private charity organizations which rendered various services related to social development, such as: curative and preventive medical services, health education, training in home economics, sewing, handicrafts, child care, literacy courses.

B. Non-Governmental Programs

1. In 1965 there were 405 private organizations working in the field of social service. A more recent report by ECWA, 1974, mentions that 53 of these organizations were identified as sponsoring developmental programs related to women.

2. The Lebanese Red Cross has a department of health education and a school of nursing. It administers programs in schools, dispensaries, social health centers, factories etc.

3. The Middle East Council of Churches encouraged the development of functional literacy materials for educating illiterate rural and urban people.

4. The Young Women's Christian Association has literacy programs and vocational training for semi-literate and literate girls; educational programs in nutrition, physical training, summer camps for youth.

5. UNICEF

A joint project of UNICEF and the Lebanese government for training social workers was established in Hadeth, a suburb of Beirut. It created in Borj-el-Barajneh a field training center which has comprehensive services, including one which trained young girls in functional literacy, home economics, health education, child care and vocational training.

6. The Village Welfare Society

This society is involved in community development programs for rural women. It aims to make of the Lebanese rural woman a "community-conscious bread-winner and a responsible citizen." Its activities cover 22 villages.

7. The Mouvement Social

It has 26 socio-medical centers, of which 16 are connected with the Office of Social Development. Their objectives are curative medicine, social welfare and health education to mothers attending the clinics. Some literacy programs were launched in Hermel, Baalbeck, Sidon and Beirut's prison for women.

(1) Condensed from a report presented by Dr. J. Abu Nasr at a Far Eastern Conference on Career Counselling for women, held in New Delhi, May 1978.