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REPORT ON THE STATUS OF
WOMEN IN JORDAN

PREPARED FOR THE
USAID MISSION TO JORDAN

by

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INTRODUCTION

Jordan can be described as a developing country not unlike many of its Arab neighbours, but with special characteristics which sets it apart in some ways. Basically, it is a country with a small population compared to its size. This is not too surprising as geographically the country has large areas of desert and semi-arid land, with cultivable and rain-fed areas stretching in a narrow strip from north to south on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

This strip is the area with the highest concentration of the population. The tendency is towards settlement in urban areas, thus Amman, the capital, houses 61% of the population in the city and the surrounding area, with other towns taking up the remainder of the urban population, estimated to be over 70% of the total population of Jordan.

Another characteristic pertaining to the population is the high rate of migration, both internal and out-migration. There is a strong trend towards migration to urban areas, especially to the capital, from rural areas, as well as out-migration of educated and skilled Jordanians to lucrative job opportunities in the Arabian peninsula and the Gulf States.

Although this out-migration has an adverse effect on labour economy in the country, Jordan can boast a well-educated population with all indications pointing towards universality in education and eradication of illiteracy.

Women's development in Jordan is reflected in the development of the country as a whole, as one would expect. There is cause to be optimistic in this matter as women's involvement in development becoming more evident, at least as a result of education if not of concerted efforts. At least, the role that women can play in development is recognised by responsible parties and economic planners, and this report will try to describe the present status of Jordanian women, and ways and means to increase their involvement and participation in the development of the country as a whole.

This report will include a general background description of the Jordanian population, then will proceed to discuss women's participation and trends in education and employment, with an attempt to identify the existing bottlenecks in the system and ways to overcome them.

It must be pointed out here that due to the lack of extensive factual data, this study has had to depend on interviews with officials of the relevant government departments, interviews with people who have taken a personal interest in women's affairs, studies undertaken by planning agencies and studies by graduate students in sociology and psychology who have examined this field. As a result, one can only attempt to reproduce a general picture of the status of women, and to identify trends that could indicate the direction of women's development.

Finally, the report will set forth recommendations for projects that could be undertaken in specific areas, which would serve to promote the role of women in development.

1. Background

Population figures in Jordan are estimates based on the last census which took place in 1961. As such, they are unreliable, especially when one considers the demographic changes that occurred since due to war, internal migration and emigration to neighbouring Arab countries.

The Department of Statistics, using a population growth rate of 3.2% as index, and the 1961 census figure as the base, estimates the population of East Jordan to be 2,013,407 at the end of 1976 (see Table I.).

The highest estimate for the total Jordanian population at the end of 1977 was made by HRH Crown Prince Hassan during a discussion at the Science and Technology Policy Conference held in Amman in February 1978. This figure was between 2,800,000 - 2,900,000..

The following table shows comparative population statistics:

Table I. Estimated population of the East Bank at the end of 1976 and as at the census of population on Housing Day 8/11/61.¹

Governorate	1961			1976		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Amman	202,856	230,762	433,618	558,042	580,818	1,138,860
Balqa	30,730	40,277	79,057	66,013	67,620	133,633
Irbid	136,452	137,524	273,976	266,691	284,530	581,521
Karak	32,531	34,680	67,211	55,076	56,136	111,262
Maan	20,750	26,164	46,914	26,298	25,823	62,126
TOTAL	<u>431,369</u>	<u>469,407</u>	<u>900,776</u>	<u>992,125</u>	<u>1,026,282</u>	<u>2,018,407</u>

According to the above table, the proportion of females to the total population in 1976 is 49%.

¹ Department of Statistics, Statistical Yearbook 1976, No. 27, Amman, 1977.

The figure for the total population of East Jordan (2,018,407) is the one accepted by public and private agencies, and most studies requiring demographic data are based on this figure.

There is a high concentration of the population in urban areas, estimated at over 70%, with around 61% of the total population in the Amman region.² Furthermore, 30% of the total population is at school and 50% of the total population is less than 15 years old,³ which explains why the labour force is small.

Another characteristic of the population includes the fact that the average size of the family is quite high, about 6 or 7 persons per family, and only 1.4 persons per family are wage earners.⁴ This factor is important considering that the inflation rate is very high. It has been estimated by the International Monetary Fund as being 36.7% in 1977. Salaries have, as expected, not kept pace, thus making it imperative for more members of households to seek employment.

Although the above percentages are averages for all of Jordan, the effects are more characteristic of the urban rather than the rural areas. That is because a large proportion of the women who work in rural areas are not wage earners, but work within the family and are therefore not counted as part of the labour force.

A third characteristic of the population is that the average age for marriage for women is 20%. This factor, combined with the fact that families tend to be large contributes to the low participation rate of women in the labour force. There are social factors at play here, primarily the prevailing attitude that a woman's role is that of housewife and mother. This factor will be discussed in a later section.

² Amman Urban Region Planning Group, Amman Urban Region Planning Project, Amman, 1978.

³ Department of Statistics, Multi-Purpose Household Survey 1975, Amman, 1977.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Department of Statistics, Ibid.

2. Education

In general, indications are that, whenever the facilities are available, young Jordanians are likely to go to school. This is true both for girls and boys, though often the facilities are more available to boys.

Enrolment of females in general education is highest in the elementary cycle (age 6-11+), decreasing at the end of the preparatory cycle (12-14+)⁶, and again at the end of the secondary cycle (age 15-18+). The percentage of females enrolled in the elementary cycle, compared to the total number of students in that cycle is 46%. When compared to the total student population, the percentage of females enrolled in the elementary cycle is 28.4%. This percentage drops to 10.2% in the preparatory cycle, 5.2% in the secondary cycle and 1.2% in higher education. (See Table II.)

Table II. Number of students enrolled at all levels of formal education in the academic year 1976-1977.⁷

Age	Sex		Female % of Total	Total Students Cycle
	Male	Female		
6-11+	197,321	169,506	46	366,927
12-14+	74,722	60,750	44.8	135,472
15-17+	44,180	30,813	41	74,993
18+	12,993	7,230	35.7	20,223
Total student population				597,515

The above table does not include students enrolled in vocational education systems. There are 18,433 more students enrolled in vocational education classes at the secondary and higher education levels, bringing the total student population up to 615,948.⁸

⁶ These two cycles constitute the compulsory education cycle in Jordan.

⁷ Ministry of Education, The Statistical Educational Yearbook 1976 - 1977, Al-Haj, Ahmad Hussain, ed.,

⁸ Ibid.

The breakdown of female participation in Vocational Education follows in Table III:

Table III. Number of females enrolled in Vocational Education System at all levels, 1976-1977.⁹

Type of Vocational Education	No. of enrolled female students	Female % of Total	Total No. of Students
Secondary Vocational Education	2117	27.7	7647
Higher Vocational Education			
a. Teacher Training	2723	38.9	7006
b. Trade Centres	403	21.3	1890
c. Para Medicine	200	54.6	366
d. Social Services	45	31.7	142
e. Engineering Technicians	0	-	826
f. Commerce	<u>158</u>	<u>28.4</u>	<u>556</u>
TOTAL	5646	30.6	18,433

Just one year ago, the Vocational Training Corporation was established to coordinate and develop vocational training programmes in the country. The aim is to increase skilled manpower in Jordan to meet the needs of Jordan's development plans, and to keep pace with the higher level of technical skills demanded for economic development. Although it is recognised that women should be more involved in vocational training programmes, it is yet too early to assess how effective these programmes will be in attracting female enrolment, or the impact of a greater number of female graduates on the labour force. So far, female participation in vocational education has been mostly in traditional fields, such as secretarial, nursing and teaching. There are many reasons for this,

mainly due to social attitudes, as well as for practical reasons. For instance, there are as yet too few training centres available that women could go to. Plans are underway to increase that number, and also to try to encourage more women to enrol. This may prove to be the more difficult to do. Obviously, social attitudes are difficult to change rapidly.

One basic attitude that needs changing is that it is less important for women to continue their education after the preparatory cycle, considering that the perceived role of women is that of home-maker. Although the percentage rate of increased female enrolment at all post-elementary levels is rising, indicating a positive trend, attitudes dictate that women should continue in formal education rather than vocational education, especially in traditional fields. However, few do go into professional fields in higher education, such as medicine, law and engineering.

The Vocational Training Corporation and the Ministry of Education would like to see this trend change towards more involvement in vocational training. Basically, most of the female students who enrol in vocational training courses do so for negative reasons: inability to continue in formal education, no acceptance at university, etc. Very few enrol for pragmatic reasons, and many do not take up employment, especially if they marry right after graduation. Some of the graduates who do seek employment end up taking jobs outside their area of specialisation. The exceptions to this trend are secretarial training graduates, because there is a high demand for secretarial skills, and such work could be lucrative.¹⁰ Graduates of teacher training colleges also work in their own field because they are required to do so by the Ministry of Education.

¹⁰ National Planning Council, Follow-up study of graduates of vocational training centres in East Jordan between 1971 and 1976, Vol. 2, Amman, 1977.

On the other hand, it is also true that present vocational training facilities do not offer training for women in most fields available to men. This is partly due to the fact that education is non-coeducational during the preparatory and secondary school cycles, and there are fewer centres for girls available at that level. Another reason is that the women themselves mostly choose to specialise in more traditional fields normally perceived as appropriate to her role. In order to combat this trend, the Ministry of Education is planning to initiate, on an experimental basis, a vocational education programme in schools, starting from the next academic year with necessary limitations due to lack of facilities.

It should be pointed out at this stage that vocational guidance could play an important role in boosting this programme and making it a success. There is presently no clear plan to incorporate vocational guidance in schools or training centers, but the idea for such a plan is being mooted. The Department of Women's Affairs at the Ministry of Labour is especially interested in seeing this development, and has proposed to carry out a project to establish such a system in cooperation with the Vocational Training Corporation and the Ministry of Education.

3. Vocational Training

There are three "levels" of vocational training available in Jordan at present, ranging between the end of the preparatory cycle and ending at the junior college level. The three types are secondary level trade training centres, secondary level technical and industrial (craftsman) level, and professional and industrial (technician) level which begins after the secondary cycle.

All of these types are taught in training centres apart from the formal education system, although graduates of the second level (craftsman) are eligible to continue on to the higher level. One exception is the comprehensive school system, a new concept with only two such schools operational for girls and none yet for boys. In this type of school, students go through the regular academic programme with each student selecting a vocation in which he or she is trained throughout the cycle. This means that graduates of this type of school have a choice of continuing their education at university or in higher vocational training centres, or going to work immediately.

So far, women enrolled in vocational training programmes are very few, as evident in Table III, for reasons mentioned earlier. The Vocational Training Corporation would like to see more girls enrolling, both in traditional fields as well as in industrial and engineering fields. (See Appendix B for a list of areas of specialisation available.) Until an extensive vocational guidance system is established to encourage candidates, the VTC is initiating non-formal on-the-job training programmes for women already employed. This is already being done for men by contracting with the employer, who pays a small fee for after-hours training of his employees.

A similar idea will be applied to women employees who have a skill, such as typing, but require upgrading in that skill.

Simultaneously, more centres for both boys and girls are planned or under construction. New courses are also being added to curricula, with an emphasis on the more technical side. There are many fields in technical vocational education that are suitable for women, such as electricity, electronics, librarianship, drafting, etc., that few girls are as yet involved in.

4. Labour Force

The Labour force is estimated at 19.9% of the population.¹¹ Female participation as a percentage of the labour force is approximately 16%, and the percentage of women who are working¹² compared to the total female labour force is approximately 4.8%.¹³ In agricultural areas, the labour force is about 30.5% of the population of Jordan, and female participation was 28.1% of the total labour force of those areas.¹³

¹¹ Azar, Wasef, Social and Economic Survey of the East Jordan Valley 1973, Department of Statistics, Amman, 1973.

¹² Ministry of labour estimates (unpublished) for 1976.

¹³ Azar, Ibid.

The labour force in Jordan is characterised as being relatively skilled, with a high rate of emigration to the Gulf States and the Arabian peninsula. As a result, the requirements for skilled labour are not being met in Jordan. However, the employable female population is a source that can be tapped for manpower needs, a factor recognised by the government and economic planners. As such, there are plans to develop this potential and so far efforts are being made in assessing the female labour force, needs in terms of training women for vocational purposes, and means of attracting and encouraging women to participate in the labour force.

Of the 4.8% of women in the labour force, around 70.8% of them are in the Amman region, for the most part working in the civil service sector as teachers, secretaries and nurses.¹⁴ Considering that the trend for women in education is on the up-swing, their participation in the labour force seems quite meagre. One reason for this is that education is a generally more attractive proposition than working, especially when taking social factors into consideration.

It has been seen in the previous section that the skills taught to girls in vocational fields are few compared to the skills needed for economic development in the country. Coupled with a higher school drop-out rate than boys, the result is a greater number of less qualified girls who may or may not enter the labour market. It is clear that the development of new programmes in education and vocational training would alleviate this situation.

However, new educational policies alone are not sufficient to increase female participation in the labour force rapidly. Besides the lack of training, other factors come into play which prevent women from seeking work in the first place, or remaining in their jobs.

Traditional social attitudes are prevalent, though fortunately not static. The woman as home-maker role is a pervasive attitude on the part of both men and women. A girl's aspiration to marriage and having a family takes priority over working. This attitude explains why many women quit their jobs after marriage, or simply view their work after graduation as a transitional period. Considering that most women (77.9%) between the ages of 20-80 are married,¹⁵

¹⁴ Abu-Jaber, Kamel, et.al., Conditions of some working Women in Jordan, University of Jordan, Amman 1977.

¹⁵ Department of Statistics, Multi-Purpose Household Survey 1976., opcit.

it becomes clear why these attitudes contribute to lower participation of women in the labour force.

Furthermore, even those women who are married and who would like to remain in their jobs, face difficulties if they have pre-school age children, because there are hardly any facilities to care for their children while they are at work.

On the other hand, the trend in female employment is towards greater participation in the labour force. Some of the factors which have contributed to this trend are: a simultaneous increase in women's education; the rising cost of living which create greater economic needs; and the effects of the media and rising living standards which increase the expectations and encourage women to seek work in order to achieve some of these material benefits.

Along with increased participation in the labour force, society's attitudes towards women working change as the benefits of their employment (both material and psychological) become felt.

However, the bothneck between educational achievements and employment remains, and more specific efforts should be taken to achieve greater female employment, rather than let things develop at their own slow pace. The following section will describe some of the most active groups who aim at increasing women's involvement and develop, and some of their proposed and on-going projects.

5. Organizations Involved in Women's Affairs

Out of 202 registered voluntary and charitable organizations, 20 are concerned primarily with women's affairs. Most of these are involved in teaching sewing, giving literacy classes, or carrying out fund-raising activities to help needy women and children.¹⁶ A few are more active and have programmes geared especially towards women's development.

The Young Muslim Women's Association is presently undertaking to build and run a junior college for girls. This college will be

¹⁶ Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Labour, list of women's organisations in Jordan.

oriented towards training women in fields that will prepare them for employment. Besides training in traditional fields such as secretarial and home economics, new options will be open in areas such as computer programming, architectural drafting, electronics, etc. Included will be a programme for women in the community, of all ages, who wish to continue their education, or relearn unused skills, or learn new skills. The YMWA is hoping that this college will serve as a model for others to follow in the field of women's education.

Another active organization is the Rural Development Organisation. This group has set up, in a village, a carpet-weaving factory, where women are taught spinning and weaving and work in the factory to produce carpets which are then sold on the market.

The Arab Women's Organization is active in campaigning to improve working conditions of women in industry. Along with the Union of Jordanian Women, they also provide literacy classes for lower-income groups and provide information, especially to working women, on their legal rights.

Womens's Affairs at the Ministry
On the government level, the Department of Labour has, since its establishment one year ago, devised a programme to promote and upgrade the status of women in Jordan, and to involve them in economic and social development. The DWA is acting as coordinator and initiator of programmes which would be carried out by the concerned agency or agencies, private or public. At present, the status of the DWA is unclear as its present position in the Ministry of Labour makes it difficult, for bureaucratic and budgetary reasons, to carry out its plans in any effective way. This position should become clarified after a regional conference on women in development is held in May, which should make recommendations on national policies for the integration of women in development.

One programme which is being undertaken by the DWA this year, with financial assistance from USAID, is a campaign, country-wide, to raise the self-awareness of Jordanian women. This will be done by holding regional meetings and seminars which will help to identify needs and delineate action to be taken to develop potential projects. One object of this is to be able to establish women's clubs or unions which would undertake developmental projects, both

social and economic, in the community. An outgrowth of this would be community centres where special skills could be taught and adult education made available. Such centres would also provide services and education in family affairs, child-rearing, health, nutrition, day-care facilities, and civics.

The DWA is also undergoing a study of working women's needs for child-care facilities. The aim of this study is to set up "neighbourhood nurseries" for children of working mothers by the end of this year, and 20 more next year.

There are other organizations which are, in one way or the other, auxiliary to programmes concerning women. One such is the Social Work Institute, an organization which trains social workers. Established in 1965, the Institute provides two years of training in social work fields such as community development, vocational education, medical social work rural development, etc. The courses consist of both theoretical and applied fieldwork education. Graduates are employed in social service centres or in the Ministry of Health, and the methods are classical.

The SWI is interested in increasing the number of female students enrolled. There are presently more female students than male. More women are needed because it is felt that community development social work could be better undertaken by women, considering that this type of social work activity is directed towards women in the household.

Plans are underway to move the SWI from Amman to a community development centre in 'Allan (a rural area) where the two-year course will eventually be expanded to four years. It is also hoped that more students can be trained from non-urban areas in order to develop a cadre of social workers specialized in community development in rural areas.

6. Recommendations for Action in Developing Projects for Women in Jordan

The outstanding lack in carrying out any projects is in adequately trained people. Although there is also a lack in many services for women, both in education and employment, it is necessary to develop the expertise along with the services. Because of the shortage of time, it is necessary to consider projects that would have a ripple effect. Following are some areas where expertise is needed:

APPENDIX A

Interviews
by
Diane Ponasik and Rima Tutunji

and women who show some leadership qualities could benefit from exchange programmes where they could attend seminars or courses in other countries.

d. Day-care Facilities and Nurseries

As has been seen in the report, day-care facilities and nurseries are barely existent in Jordan. Along with this is the lack of trained staff. Considering that building such centres are very important, especially as a service to working mothers, it may be possible to train personnel for such centres as may come into being through the efforts of the Department of Social Affairs and the Department of Women's Affairs.

Another possibility, and this is an idea which both the University of Jordan and the planned YWCA junior College have proposed, that an experimental day-care centre be set up for children of students and teachers on those campuses that would also train personnel who could then work in other centres in Jordan.

e. Miscellaneous

Basically, most of the people who were interviewed for this report that education was a primary factor for development. Formal education cannot be ignored, yet few women are benefitting from higher education programmes, partly for economic reasons. Besides encouraging women to go into higher education or graduate study, material encouragement such as scholarships should be made available directly to women.

Interview with
Mohammed Barhoum, Sociologist
Jordan University

Barhoum did a study several years ago of divorced women in urban areas. This was a small sample of just 30 women. He is now planning to enlarge the study to include both urban and rural women of various socio-economic groups. The sample will be 100.

According to Barhoum, the divorce rate is rising rapidly, and is now about 10%. The rates are highest among more educated classes, where there are more working women. Also in instances where men are educated but not their wives.

He is also hoping to do a study of family organization. This would be starting with engagement patterns to determine how people choose their mates; how much the traditional wasta pattern is still used, and in how many cases men & women choose each other. He would then like to study correlations between these various engagement patterns and resulting household structures.

In most cases, according to Barhoum's study, divorced women return to the paternal household. Fathers consider themselves to be financially responsible for divorced daughters, so the women are rarely in the position of being divorced heads of households. However, there is a great stigma attached to divorce, and the women are always considered to be the ones at fault. Lower class women find it especially hard to remarry under these circumstances. This group in particular are often forced to work to support themselves and their children, since their families are not economically able to assume this.

The laws in Jordan have recently been changed to allow children in divorce to stay with their mother: boys until age 11 and girls until age 13. However, although this is the law, it is not always enforced.

As far as university women are concerned, Barhoum felt that most women do not go to University primarily to prepare themselves for a career, but rather to find a good husband. Most women do not want to work, but see themselves in the traditional role of being a good wife and mother. The main incentive for working in economic. However, where both husband and wife work, it has contributed to the disorganization of the family. Much of this can be attributed to men's attitudes, since they feel that women are responsible for the house and children regardless of whether they work outside or not.

The main reasons that Barhoum felt contributed to the drop out rate of girls at the 9th grade level: 1) the lower income groups think education for girls is a waste of money, since they won't earn with their education; 2) they feel girls will leave the family on marriage and any contribution will be to another group rather than their own, so the investment would be wasted.

In fact, Barhoum pointed out that lower income groups, especially rural ones, have not caught up with reality. They don't see women working as a form of social security, and instead still regard large families as economic protection. As he pointed out, educated women are good security in case the husband dies young. Furthermore, the more a woman is educated, the more liberty society gives her to work. On the other hand, the young girl with just a 9th grade (preparatory education) is not free to leave her village to look for work.

In rural areas most women who work in agricultural labor do so as part of a sharecropping family. In this case women do not receive separate salaries, but are paid as part of a family. As far as seasonal labor goes i.e., picking fruit, weeding, etc. this is done mainly by pre-adolescent boys and girls.

Interview with
Dr. Jawad Anani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labor,
and
Dr. Bassam Saket, Director of Research at the Royal Scientific Society

At present most women who are employed work as teachers; this is especially true at the secondary level, but also at other levels. Women tend to study mainly social sciences and humanities and until now have not been encouraged by society to study the hard core sciences or more technical studies.

The Labor Seminar in 1976 made several suggestions for more training programs for women; among these were to encourage part time work for married women, more in traditional fields, and also to expand participation of women in modern professions and in cottage industries.

There is a high domestic demand for skilled, or middle level labor. The Government supports training women in these areas because they are less likely to leave the country after being trained. The rate for working women was 4.9% of the female labor force in 1975, but it is undoubtedly much higher now. There are more women working in industry, but the majority still have traditional jobs. Attitudes are changing toward employing women. Also, the ages at which women enter the labor market are changing. Many young girls at the end of preparatory school (age 14-15) now go to work. This can be attributed primarily to the high rates of dependency in families, as well as the cost of living. Included in the rise in cost of living is the fact that it has become very expensive to marry; this is causing later ages at marriage and has thus also had an impact on women in the labor market.

The decision for women to work, however, is a family and individual decision - not a national policy. It is therefore household heads whose attitudes must be affected if more women are to work. In Jordan today, there are many women employed in industry, but mainly in traditional women's work (packing mainly). There is also a high percentage of women in medicine - in fact, the medical field is probably overcrowded, while the supporting services are lacking. There are few women in the field of engineering, those who are engineers are mainly administrators or designers and not field workers. There is a need in Jordan for more women in nursing. Many nurses today are foreigners: Indian, Egyptian, Pakistani, and Missianaries. There has been a stigma attached to this profession, probably because it is not well paid. However, the rising demand will probably affect this. There is also a need for more teachers, especially in special fields, such as social work, mental retardation, etc.

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Interview with
Dr. Jihad Khatteeb, Vocational and Educational Counsellor
Department of Education, University of Jordan

The University offers courses in counselling, both at the undergraduate level and at the Master's level. The MA graduates teach in elementary, preparatory and secondary schools. At present there are 52 counsellors in schools throughout Jordan. This program began in 1970 and classes are for both men and women. In addition, the University has a counselling center for university students which actually began working this year. This center does psychological counselling, offers its services on a contract basis to other government agencies, and also helps place university students in jobs. They maintain a continuous survey of the industries and government agencies in the area in order to ascertain the demand for various skills.

Ms. Khatteeb felt that the participation of women in the labor force has improved tremendously. There are many women working in industry, although in most cases they are given administrative jobs. She felt there was little bias against accepting women in jobs.

In discussing vocational education needs, she mentioned the new junior community college which has been proposed by the Moslem Women's Association. This will offer many new fields of vocational education to women. In addition, there is a center at Zarqa which trains both men and women in engineering (middle level skills). This is a two year program for high schools graduates.

Contrary to Anani, Khatteeb felt there were many women studying the hard core sciences at the university. She said they also are anxious to get into the engineering faculty, but many are turned down because their tawjihi secondary school certificate scores are not high enough. In general she also felt that most university women are sincerely interested in working after they finish school (contrary to Barhoum's opinion).

Ms. Khatteeb felt that a real training priority was for nursery school teachers (or day care center people). Women should be trained for this, so that other women would be able to leave their children and work. Also, more women with young children could work at home - typing, for example. A third possibility she suggested was more substitute teaching.

For training, Jordan's first priority is to increase vocational education, both for men and women. Up till now, the educational system has been more traditionally oriented toward a classic education, and has not stressed vocational education. Now, however, students are beginning to recognize the demands in this areas, and in fact the vocational education schools have more applicants than they can accept. However, these vocational education schools are almost all for men. They need to have a pilot center for women to experiment in training women in fields traditionally reserved for men, as well as in new fields not yet reserved for one or the other. There is also a need for vocational counselling in the schools, to direct more women into these fields.

Anani felt that it might be possible to combine training for men and women in one school. He said there are now men teaching at some women's schools. This would be a question to resolve in any vocational education projects, since trainers for these courses would most probably be men. He also felt, in addition to vocational counselling, that more incentives should be given to encourage women to enter these schools - scholarships was one suggestion.

Probably the best way to approach vocational education for women would be through the public school system. This would have the advantage of reaching most of the population, at an age when they are most impressionable and most easy to train. The Ministry of Education is also in charge of most vocational education schools, so there would be a natural link. Another possibility would be to have some links to the Vocational Training Corporation.

The idea of training women to maintain electrical appliances and make house calls was felt to be practical. Anani mentioned that at present a recent survey showed that there are 1800 Jordanian electricians working in Kuwait, while there are almost no electricians in Jordan. Therefore, it might be a good idea to train women in this field, since they are less likely to leave.

Ultimately, a problem that has to be coped with is to change the attitudes of household heads towards training their daughters in these fields. Perhaps in addition to vocational counselling, there could be some work by the media - both radio and TV - showing women working in different fields and being trained.

She mentioned that a primary difficulty today is the attitudes of husbands and fathers. Until men help share household responsibilities, it is difficult for women to assume the extra responsibility of working. However, this is changing, and young husbands are beginning to help. Also, modern mothers are teaching their sons to help at home, to cook, etc. This is needed for young men in any case, since many continue their studies abroad and must know how to take care of themselves.

The Ministry of Education is now trying to expose children less to stereotyped sex roles, as well as to widen their exposure to practical jobs. They are also trying to change text books and curriculum showing traditional roles. Today the problem with training women is not lack of formal preparation, as much as simple lack of money. Lower income families, if they must make a choice will train their boys. Scholarships might help this.

She felt that requirements in training women to run day care centers would be for a tawjihi. Training should include nursing some kind, as well as courses in child psychology. The counselling center staff would be happy to work as advisors in such a program.

The University has just begun discussions to start a day care center on the campus. This would be for the children of students and teachers. They would be interested in using a nursery as a pilot project.

Interview with
Priscilla Basson, Sociologist
Yarmuk University, Irbid

In this area people are landowners, but don't actually work the land. Instead, most is rented out to Palestinian sharecroppers. Palestinian women, probably from a nearby camp, work at harvest time, but otherwise women are not involved heavily in agriculture. The main crops grown are wheat, lentils and water melons, none of which require intensive care. The main occupation in the area seems to be the army; most families will have at least one member working for the army and his income will support them. People have supplemental gardens where they may grow some lentils or vegetables, but most food is bought with cash.

The area is quite conservative. Unlike the Jordan Valley, women are not well educated; most girls are withdrawn from school after 6 to 9 years. Women do not run shops, nor do many work. Most women do not leave the house, except to visit other women of the family, who tend to live nearby, in the same quarter. Cousins still have first rights in marriage and just last week a young doctor who was engaged to a local girl was killed by her cousin, who did not consent to the match. Most women in the area still give birth at home, and many are not assisted by midwives. There is a MCH center in the area, but women have heard that the nurses slap women, so they refuse to go there. Most homes (all in the villages) do not have indoor plumbing. Instead, they have a faucet in the outer courtyard and an outhouse behind the house. Many women are illiterate.

The University has been in operation two years. It is primarily for education and agriculture. There are 1500 students, many of whom are Palestinians. However, it does give work to local people, and all the secretaries working there are from Irbid. These women are very poorly trained, if at all, and this might be a possible area for training. The town itself is lacking in most services, such as mechanics, electricians, etc. As far as Dr. Basson knew, there were no vocational training schools in the area. 40% of the students at the university undergraduate level are women, but only about 5% at the master's level.

Ms. Basson felt that the idea of social centers for the women was impractical, since they rarely leave their houses. However, it would probably be reasonable to have social workers in the homes to give lessons.

The extended family or lineage structure is still very strong in this area. This means there is little problem here with looking after children. However, women have a hard time leaving the young children, since they tend to breast feed for one or two years. In addition, Ms. Basson felt that there was little desire or need at present among women for additional sources of income.

Interview with
In'am Mufti: ex-Director of the Department of Women's Affairs, now
principal of Amman Training Centre for UNRWA

Ms. Mufti has recently submitted a proposal describing plans to establish a junior community college which would offer practical vocational education for men and women. This will offer courses for women such as :

1. architectural drafting
2. executive secretarial training
3. middle level business administration
4. home economics/community development (this would include courses in fields such as health, nutrition, family planning, legal status, vocational education and functional literacy).

In a second phase they hope to offer courses in paramedics, dental technology, physical therapy, printing and TV and radio repair, assembly and maintenance. This college will charge students, but will be partly government sponsored.

Ms. Mufti sees one of the primary needs for training to be in child care; that is, training women to run nursery schools for all ages of children under five. Without facilities such as this, it is difficult for many Jordanian women to work. The GOJ is in favor of such a plan, but has no money to fund nursery schools. At present, there are a few sponsored by the Department of Social Affairs, and by private organizations. In Ashrafiya there is one school funded by UNICEF which provides training for women. However, most existing centers have untrained personnel.

Such training would have to be coordinated by a joint committee of the Department of Women's Affairs and the Vocational Training Corporation. As it now stands, DWA has no power or authority. This will be discussed at the regional conference in May. They feel placement in any one Ministry inhibits it; yet whether they should set up a separate Women's Ministry is open to question. There is also expected to be a Royal Commission established which will investigate and make recommendations: this will include leaders both women and government leaders and they will make a report to the King about the future status of the DWA.

The DWA envisions itself very much as a planner and coordinator: it will work with women from outside its office in training or any of its programs. However, at present, although 28 women had been envisioned as a core staff; there are only five.

Ms. Mufti has at present \$25,000 from AID to use as seed money. This will be spent to employ a group of women to begin raising community consciousness. They plan to have meetings throughout the country to discuss local women's needs and hope that these meetings will generate the establishment of local women's clubs or unions, which can later be used as the nucleus for community development.

For the moment they hope to concentrate their efforts in 2 areas: the Jordan Valley and 'Allan. JVA was chosen because of the enthusiasm and support of Omar Abdullah, Director of the Jordan Valley Authority, as well as because of its good infrastructure and development plans. Furthermore, there is an obvious need in this region to assist women in the transition to new life styles occasioned by new homes, schools and other services being brought into the area.

'Allan has been identified as a second site because there is a community center already existing there which serves 16 villages. They plan to train community workers here.

Ms. Mufti said that urgent needs are for help in establishing training programs, training curricular and methodology. They also want assistance in planning for vocational education programs aimed at:

1. women dropping out of High School;
2. women with only a high school diploma;
3. non-formal education for older women wishing to work.

At present the vocational education is in fact, if not in theory, not open to women. This is mainly because the system operated on the apprenticeship system, which would be unsuitable for girls. Ms. Mufti wants to expand the schools and types of training to fit each regions' resources. She would also like to see different methods of training which would be less formal.

At the junior college mentioned above, she envisions two tracks: one would be short term and night courses; the other would be a more formal training. This would ensure that centers are fully utilized, and would make classes available to more people. It would also obviate the need for large scale construction, since in many cases existing schools could be used in free time. However, she also hopes to establish one training center as a model for the country.

The plan originally put forth for the DWA still stands and has been expanded, even though Mrs. Mufti is not formally at its head. She will still be assisting through the Royal Commission. She feels that they need Cabinet authorization to give it necessary authority. The King and Crown Prince are in favor and have expressed support of the idea. However, the DWA plans to have only a small budget and staff and to work thru other ministries.

Ms. Mufti, in discussing bottlenecks in the educational system for girls, first stressed the fact that girls are well represented in the educational system. However, after about 9 years of school, there is a noticeable drop in girls' enrollment. Much of this is due to the fact that in rural areas there are often no local schools beyond this point. Parents are reluctant to allow the girls to travel to another village to continue their education. Other contributing factors are that lower income groups often need to send their girls out to work. Marriage is legal at 15, and this is a third contributing factor to drop outs. Nevertheless, 43% finish 9 years.

At this time what is needed in Jordan is to identify more precisely what the needs are for skilled labor. Then courses for women can be instituted. In some cases, such as electricians, there is a problem in that there are generally no institutions offering this service. However, she thought this might be solved by the establishment of cooperatives of electricians. An alternative suggestion was that wealthy women might consider funding such an enterprise. There is a great need in Jordan for maintenance of household appliances, and very few skilled electricians. The idea of training women is attractive, since they would be more acceptable for household visits than men. Another possibility would be to establish craft shops to produce for the local market (replacing imported goods), and later for tourism.

Another possibility suggested by Ms. Mufti was that UNRWA could be used as training center for some of these projects. The coordinating institution would be the Ministry of Education, and classes would be expanded to include 200 Jordanian women, both in long term training and in night classes or short term classes. All students at this facility board, and they pay according to their income.

Priorities in Training Needs

1. Nursery School Training. These women would be absorbed by the Department of Social Affairs and voluntary organizations, both of whom are planning to open more day care centers.
2. Industrial and Electronics Training.
3. Para Medical Training. Dental Technicians and Physio-Therapy.

Interview with
Laurice Hlass, Advisor at the Department of Antiquities
and
Head of Delegation to Mexico Conference, 1975

Priorities for improving status of women:

1. research to establish better picture of status & problems.
2. improve image of women through public relations campaign.
3. strengthen leadership capacity.
4. establish interministerial link for women's department.

Training goals:

1. high school graduates trained to do community development work at village level.
2. leadership training for women - maybe in Tunisia or Syria - to get an idea of models used in other Arab countries.
3. seminars and conferences to gather together Arab women leaders from all Arab countries.

The community developers would be working with village women to identify their "felt" needs, design programs to increase their productive capacity (based on local possibilities). This might be in such fields as cottage industry or part time work, and would vary in urban and rural situations.

Miss Hlass said at present women meet and discuss their problems, but there is never any follow through. This has become discouraging to Jordanian leaders. They lack power at the highest levels which would enable them to implement change. For this reason, they are dissatisfied with the recent creation of the Department of Women's Affairs, which was placed in the Ministry of Labor. This placement has at least two disadvantages: it is in only one Ministry, which implies difficulties in coordinating programs with other Ministries. Secondly, they are under a Minister (not terribly dynamic) and must await his decision. She, and other women, feel they need to be more directly represented at the Cabinet level, if they are to take action.

The Department of Women's Affairs is at present in a kind of limbo. Mrs. Mufti resigned in the middle of February, feeling that she had more leverage working from outside a Ministry, in that she

could contact people directly rather than working through a hierarch, or deliberately going around the Minister. The next structure is at present being reconsidered and its fate awaits several factors:

1. A regional conference to be held May 28 - June 5 in Amman. This will be Pan Arab and may involve other women such as Arvonne Fraser. It is hoped that they will have some constructive suggestions on the best structure and placement of the DWA.
2. Decision of the King.

Ideally, the new structure should involve both government and private organizations, in its planning council. In any event, it will be a small department involved primarily in program planning and policy; actual programs will be placed in the proper ministries of voluntary organizations within the country and only overseen by the DWA.

Miss Hlass sees the primary goal of such an organization as training community development workers who would serve as catalysts in local communities. They would concentrate on making women express their own needs and the needs of the community and ways in which they perceive involvement in the labor market. This group would be primarily illiterate, but would include women with as much as junior high school (preparatory level). Another need at the village level is for basic adult education - this would include basic math and practical education.

Men as well as women are interested in improving the status of women. Two names mentioned were Munther Masri, head of the Vocational Educational Corporation, and Jawad El Anani, Under-secretary of Labor.

Women at the university level are now increasingly entering fields previously thought of as mens' - these include architecture, medicine and engineering.

Although there are some very high ranking women in Jordan, such as Laurice Hlass, In'am Mufti, Nimra Tannous Said, they are rare - maybe about 10 at the highest level. There are also about 20 middle level influential women. According to Hlass, the problem is not really lack of women, but a lack of involvement.

Discussion with Mrs. Widad Bulos, Retired Principal of
Ahliyya Girls School (C.M.S.) and presently Member of
the Education Council

Mrs. Bulos believes that education is an important factor in building up positive attitudes to women working outside the home. Although the society at large is still traditional in its outlook, young women are beginning to be more active in seeking employment than in the past. Motivation for education is quite high, and more parents, especially in urban areas, are taking their daughter's education for granted.

However, Mrs. Bulos finds that women generally have little confidence in themselves when it comes to employment. For the most part they have come from sheltered, simple homes where the prevailing attitude towards women is that of subjugation to the father or husband. Education plays a vital role in changing these perceptions and attitudes, and Mrs. Bulos feels strongly about developing healthy attitudes in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities.

Up till now, women's work outside the home was considered to be incidental to the family income. Most girls started work after finishing school and stopped when they got married. This picture is changing rapidly, partly due to education, but also because the cost of living is rising so rapidly that both men and women are forced to work. The mass media is also playing a role in attracting women to work as it raises expectations so that more people are interested in augmenting their income to attain greater material benefits.

Vocational education plays an important part in preparing women for work. As skilled labor, women graduates are more likely to remain in Jordan to work after their

training than men, who tend to emigrate to the Gulf States seeking better paid jobs. Although setting up vocational training centres is more expensive than other schools, the investment is worth the effort in training girls.

As an educator, Mrs. Bulos sees the role of schools as vital in building up healthy attitudes in boys and girls, and the earlier the start, the better. The Education Council is presently engaged in formulating a new curriculum policy for schools, where they hope new non-discriminatory syllabi and modern teaching methods will be applied from the first grade onwards. Such a curriculum will provide at least two periods a week for extra-curricular activities designed to enlarge the students' experience in any subject that is taught, as well as giving them the chance to apply what they have been taught in class. This type of activity would be expanded at the preparatory and secondary level to teaching of skills that would be useful in seeking a job. The trend will be towards less sex-discrimination in subjects such as home economics (presently only available for girls) and workshop (presently only for boys).

Another group, the Jubilee Fund, is collecting funds to build a model school which will serve as an experiment in the application of new curricula and modern teaching methods. It is hoped that this school will serve as a model for other schools to follow. This project is still in its initial stage.

Mrs. Bulos also places great importance on day-care centres and preschool education. There is a deplorable lack of such facilities in Jordan, and the need is becoming more apparent, both for working mothers, and from the point of view of education. Pre-school age children would gain from

Interview with Dr. Kamel Abu-Jaber, Dean of the Faculty
of Economics and Commerce at the University of Jordan.

Dr. Abu-Jaber describes the Jordanian society as basically conservative, and this reflects on the low participation rate of women in the labor force. Up till now, society viewed women's work outside the home as "shameful", in the sense that it reflects an economic need in the family, and that somehow the head of the household was unable to support his family. This attitude is changing, as to be expected with greater educational achievement, though in some areas faster than others.

It is also expected that economic development encourages changes of attitudes towards work. It is becoming more acceptable to see women working outside the home, and more women are in fact joining the labor force.

The tendency in Jordan is for women to choose teaching. Dr. Abu-Jaber feels that this is because women have a natural inclination towards teaching, as a function of their natural role in child-rearing. It was relatively easy for women in the Arab world to become involved in the teaching profession, especially at the elementary school level, both because of natural inclination and because teaching is viewed as a respectable job by the community at large.

Dr. Abu-Jaber feels that it is necessary to communicate, in one way or the other, to women both the country's labor needs and the opportunities and rewards for women who enter the labor force. It is important that the Ministry of Labor and the Department of Women's Affairs expend greater efforts in encouraging presently un-employed women to go to work.

Training women in skills that would encourage greater participation in the labor force is another way to encourage female labor. Some of the skills that are needed in Jordan's economy and in which women could be trained are:

1. Telecommunications and switchboard operating.
2. Printing.
3. Assembly plants.
4. Maintenance of precision tools.
5. Surveying.
6. Soil analysis.
7. Para medicine.
8. T.V. and electronic maintenance.
9. Accounting and bookkeeping.

There should also be supporting services for working mothers, such as day-care centres, and more use of time-saving appliances in homes to overcome housekeeping difficulties.

Dr. Abu-Jaber has also been involved in carrying out a study on the Bedouin of Jordan. A survey has been carried out which included a questionnaire for women which inquired about attitudes towards child-rearing, their children and family life in general. Although the final report is not yet available, some of the preliminary results give some idea of the badi~~a~~ society.

The mean age of marriage for women is 18 years, and marriage is almost universal. Illiteracy is the highest relative to the rest of the country, and most of the ever-married women were illiterate. Of the literate female population, 5% have completed the elementary school cycle, 1% the preparatory cycle, and less than 1% the secondary school cycle. In the area that this study

was carried out in (northeast region of Jordan), there are no high schools for girls except in the provincial capital of the region. Considering that the bedouin settlements are rather scattered, it is no wonder that few girls find opportunity to continue their schooling. In Mafraq (the capital) there are presently four girls enrolled in high school.

Most of the women interviewed were not satisfied with their educational achievements. Their aspirations for their children's education showed that they would like boys to achieve university level education, but that high school is enough for girls.

Most women in that area are confined to their homes due to the large size of families and lack of skills. If they work at all, they do so within the family tending flocks or raising chicken. In general, they were tolerant towards the idea of girls working outside the home.

When asked about their job preference - aspirations for their daughters, they listed, in order of priority, teaching, nursing and civil service jobs. They prefer their daughters to marry early, at least by the time they are 18 years old.

As for marriage, about half of the respondents claim they had a say in choice of marriage partner. The trend seems to be heading to greater liberalism in marriage-choice.

The overall economic situation of the badia society is poor. At least one male member of each family is employed by the armed forces, thus family income relies heavily on outside sources. The average monthly income per family is JD20.