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To: Ann Fitzcharles

From: Andrea Rugh

Subject: Final Report, WID Projects in Egypt

The enclosed final report is based on work carried out between March 5 and May 31, 1979. During this period contacts were made and information solicited in support of the following specific goals that appeared in the original contract:

1. Survey the available literature on Middle Eastern women, particularly that related to Egyptian women;
2. Develop a sense of the kinds of existing Egyptian women's organizations and some of their functions;
3. Compile a basic list of women leaders active in decision making;
4. Evaluate the impact on women of selected AID projects;
5. Develop a framework for planning women's programs in Egypt with recommendations.

In addition to the specified contract goals, two weeks of the work period were spent as a seconded member of an AID-sponsored Educational Survey Team, at their request. The team felt that it was important to have someone look at the social aspects of education and the accessibility of the system to certain groups (women, rural, poor) in Egyptian society. As a result of the time spent with the EST some of the goals of the original contract were modified.

CONTACTS AND TRIPS

A good deal of the work period was spent in making contacts with individuals already involved in the field of women's interests. I talked mainly with Egyptians out of a concern to involve them as much as possible in the planning process. Some of the names of those contacted appear in the Van Dusen (Rugh Interim) Report of March 28, 1975. Others appear in the list of names of women leaders which is hereto appended. The list of the remaining individuals is lengthy and of interest less as specific names than as categories of people with special kinds of information. It is my firm conviction that information must be extracted from as wide a range of sources as possible so that appropriate development planning can take place. Following is a listing of sources by category.

Low Income Areas

Social workers in low-income areas
Clients of a welfare institution
Small business operators in low income areas (male)
Peddlars of vegetables in a low income area (male)
Community water tap watcher (male)
Women handicraft producers
Wage earners in small businesses (male and female)
Widows in low income areas
School children in a low income area (male and female)
Midwife in a low income area

Rural Areas

Fellaheen owners of 1-3 feddans (male)
Agricultural wage laborers

Apprentices to skilled workers (male)
Social unit personnel
Mill owner (male)
Citrus fruit grower (male)
Landlord of 40 feddans
Villagers who commute to rural industries (male)
Village women
Weavers in Kerdasa and Harraniya (males and females)

Researchers

Independent anthropologists working specifically on women oriented projects (Dutch, American, Egyptian)
Researchers at the Social Research Center, American University in Cairo
Urban planners (Egyptian)
Women working in renovation of a low income area
Women rehabilitating low income schools
Women working in post-harvest food loss conservation programs
Women working in family planning and legal reforms

Other sources included women politicians, journalists, artists, professors, volunteers, members of leaders of women's associations. Some of the people listed are already known to me through my research experience in a low-income Cairo community. I went to all those listed during the contract period in order to question them further on aspects of acceptability or nonacceptability of certain program ideas, or to find out more about how they as individuals with special interests fit into their own social and economic environments.

Beyond these sources of information, there were also the contacts made through traveling with the EST. These included education administrators, teachers, students, parents, employers and Nubian villagers.

During this period I also attended on the average of two seminars a week where topics were presented that related to women or rural poor. Most of the seminars or film showings were attended by a majority of Egyptian participants.

A major source of information was trips made during this period either with the EST or on my own. The following places were visited:

With the EST: Aswan

Luxor

Qena

Assiut

Sirs El Layyan

Alexandria

Independently: Minya

Sendyoum (with the Cairo Women's Association)

Shirbin (village near Mansoura)

Basaisa (village near Zagazig)

Village on the outskirts of Cairo

El Qanatir el Khairiyya (village near the Barrages)

Kerdasa (village near Giza pyramids)

Harraniya (weaving center, near Giza pyramids)

Benha (city north of Cairo)

Mehall El Kubra Spinning Mills

Resulting from this information gathering process has been a series of short papers on selected subjects which are appended to this final Report:

Appendix:

- A. Van Dusen Trip Report (March 19-28) and Rough Interim Report
- B. With Van Dusen: Women in Rural Development; Program Opportunities and Obstacles
- C. Answer to J. Brener's Comments on above Report
- D. Comments on Agricultural Communities
- E. Social Work: Its Prospects and Problems in Egypt
- F. Memo on Proposed Small Scale Enterprises Project
- G. List of Industries that Hire Women and Ways Women's Handiwork is Marketed
- H. Comments on the Scope of Work for the Educational Sector Assessment
- I. Memo of Conversation Concerning Income Generating Project for Women in the Ministry of Social Affairs
- J. Memo of Conversation with the Social Affairs Training Team
- K. An Anthropologist in AID-land: A Personal View

The materials gathered during the EST trip will come out later as part of the final report of that group. It will include sections on women's access to education programs.

Other appendices deal more specifically with the contract goals of developing resource materials on Women in Egypt. To give each subsection its full measure of attention would have required much more time than was available to me. As a result, I have concentrated on identifying where such sources of information can be found rather than on listing them exhaustively myself. The final appendices are:

- L. Bibliographies on Women
- M. Women's Organizations

- N. Prominent Women in Egypt
- O. Some Selected Findings from the Literature
- P. Some Selected Comments by Egyptian Social Scientists on WID
- Q. Some Projects which Deserve More Attention

WID PROJECTS IN EGYPT

FINAL REPORT

Introductory Note

Developing a framework for the planning of women's development programs in Egypt is at best a difficult task and perhaps an impossible one. There is obviously no single framework that can accommodate the variety of needs which exist for 50% of the Egyptian population. Even when we narrow the focus to the urban and rural poor women, the task is still formidable.

There may be some usefulness however in considering some of the problems that have plagued programs for women elsewhere. It helps to make more explicit the rationale for taking one approach rather than another and bring out into the open the assumptions that underlie program design. Further, it demands that attention be given to how the assistance is offered as well as to the content of the programs themselves. And finally, it requires that thought be given to how the assistance will fit in with the socioeconomic environment found in Egypt.

Taking an approach of this kind means assuming a broader perspective than one would find in a report about a smaller segment of the population with more congruent characteristics or a single well defined problem. The emphasis here must be on trying to develop the complexity of the factors involved rather than in trying to reduce them to a limited number. Much of the failure of programs in the past has been the lack of sensitivity to the full complexity of issues.

Neither the literature nor census materials on Egypt does much to make the work of analysis any easier. The great bulk of the literature concerning Egyptian women focuses on the vague subject of status, either decrying the relative social inferiority of women, or conversely, applauding their improvement under Islam. Specific case studies, on the other hand, concentrate on such issues as attitudes toward family planning or traditional health care practices.

Census materials, of course, have numerous hidden variables that make their reliability suspect under even the best of conditions. In Egypt, even when rigorous methods of collection have been applied, the statistics show clear-cut errors such as the under-representation of females or the aggregation of ages around five year intervals. Of special difficulty in the present work is the fact that census materials are often not reported in published materials in sex-segregated form. Or, from one census to another the categories are not comparable. Nevertheless, and keeping in mind their potential unreliability, significant inferences can be made with what is available, especially in the areas of women's education and employment. For finer distinctions and an understanding of the processes involved, however, one must rely on qualitative materials for more productive results.

This report will therefore: (1) attempt to raise some of the issues involved in planning women's programs; (2) indicate the special circumstances that exist in Egypt; (3) describe some of the variety involved in the group called "women;" (4) suggest an approach that might be appropriate; (5) identify some particular problem areas, and (6) recommend some specific kinds of projects that might form the nucleus of a comprehensive program for women in Egypt.

A FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING WOMEN'S PROGRAMS IN EGYPT

GENERAL ISSUES IN WED PROGRAMS

Despite an increasing world wide interest in development programs oriented toward women, there is as yet no convincing evidence of what kinds of programs are effective, what goals can be realized, or what approaches are appropriate for women. This makes the planning of women's programs at best still a highly experimental task for which no conclusive a priori answers are possible. The most realistic framework for developing women's programs may therefore be one that is frankly exploratory with enough flexibility to absorb mistakes, make mid-course corrections and adjust to new possibilities as the results come in. In the absence of clear solutions an essential ingredient must be the least possible disruption of existing modes of social organization while seeking qualitative improvement in people's lives.

Difficulties in Incorporating Women in the Development Process

There are several reasons why development programs oriented toward general populations have tended to have less direct impact on women. Many would argue that the impact is there, but that it is indirect and in the balance, negative.¹ A few of the most obvious reasons for an indirect as opposed to a direct impact suggest themselves immediately:

1. Formal channels for development funds: Development funds tend to be funneled through formal public bureaucracies -- credit banks,

¹See: Tinker, I., and M.B. Bramsen, Eds., Women and World Development, Overseas Development Council, Washington, D.C., 1976.

schools, public and private enterprises, etc., all structures to which men by reason of their more public postures have greater access. In other areas, too, women have access to valued commodities only through males.

2. Male administration: Development planning has often been dominated by male administrators with greater sympathy and understanding for male needs.
3. Women's needs unarticulated: More often than not, the public articulation of women's needs is accomplished by men. They have few channels through which to articulate their own needs. Even census data tend to pick up the matters of more concern to men, by reason of the kinds of public counting that is employed.
4. Family responsibilities take priority: Development planning has often ignored the fact that women's accepted roles in society direct their attention first to fulfilling household responsibilities and only secondarily to taking advantage of extra-domestic possibilities of any kind. Unless some provision is made to assist with family responsibilities, it is difficult for women to actively grasp other kinds of opportunities.
5. National vs. local priorities: Development programs often emphasize national priorities which in some cases conflict with local and individual priorities. Women tend to identify with local priorities. Family planning for example, as a national priority, may not be highly regarded by the woman who is trying to improve her status in the family through frequent childbearing.

These are only the most obvious reasons why it has been difficult to incorporate women in the development process in a positive way, but they suggest several broad considerations for program planning:

1. Women planners are more likely to understand the needs of women and to be sensitive to the subtle constraints that women face.
2. It is necessary to understand the informal systems of social organization that have more relevance to women's lives than formal economic, political and administrative structures.
3. Development funds need to be introduced at levels and through systems where women can take advantage of them. Funds are more effective when they come directly to the recipients rather than filtering through a number of mediators.
4. Women's needs generally come in comprehensive packages rather than as self-interested individual desires. This reflects their reflexive roles in society, in the community and in their own households.
5. Women's needs must be articulated in some more effective way than at present, through new and better channels, needs assessment studies, encouraging spokeswomen, and by directing the attention of demographers to areas that have largely been ignored.

These considerations suggest that the approach used to more effectively respond to women's needs may be as critical if not more critical than the specific content of the programs themselves. Of course one would ideally like to orient development programs to allowing individuals, regardless of sex, the realization of their desired goals. But the undeniable fact is that the approaches heretofore used have usually discriminated (perhaps

unintentionally) in favor of one sex and against the other, and rarely have given full appreciation to both at the same time. This reinforces the contention that each sex responds in different ways to opportunities presented and that the channels by which assistance is offered basically determine who the recipients of a program will be. This is no less true for other identifiable groups in the society that have recognizably special characteristics or special needs: the poor, ethnic groups, the urban, the rural.

Women as a Separate Category of Development

In the past women have been differentiated as a separate category for development attention partly because it has been assumed that certain kinds of problems belong to men (e.g., farm credit) and certain problems to women (e.g., family planning). The legacy of this kind of thinking has contributed its share to ineffective "solutions."

Is it valid to treat women as a separate category in development programs? As mentioned above, most Egyptian women face special circumstances which affect their accessibility to programs. This is reason enough to give attention to the analysis of the constraints, incentives and motivations that affect women's participation in certain kinds of activities. But an additional reason is that women, simply as individuals, have the right to separate desires, goals and fulfillment and these individual considerations should be given as much attention as possible. Ferber² supports this view. Her contention is that women's labor force participation and contribution to family income are important determinants of individual status in the family and so

²Ferber, M.A., and B.G. Bunbaum, "The New Home Economics, Retrospect and Prospects," 1976, unpub. Dept. of Economics, University of Illinois, Urbana.

need to be considered in their own right. She feels that housework and market place work have changing significance over the life cycles of women which need to be reflected through studies of women themselves as well as through studies of other basic social units.

But it would be too narrow a focus to insist inflexibly on giving attention solely to the individual needs of women. We must be realistic and consider the broad context of development programs that are designed to provide widespread benefits to all people. In any case, women, themselves, are often incapable of differentiating their own needs from those of others dependent upon them for physical and psychological support. As a result, ignoring the complex of women's needs may result in less appropriate action. Therefore a more realistic unit for attention is probably the family, since it functions as a fundamental psychological, social and economic unit in most countries of the world. By addressing attention to the needs of the family, we are likely to develop more realistic notions about contextual variables. Specifically:

1. Our statistical information becomes more useful when we are able to assess the combination of inputs provided by various household personnel. For example, the mixed economy practiced by a rural family where one son farms the land, one works in rural industry and another migrates to an urban area while women fill in during peak agricultural seasons, proves more effective in combination than the actual sum of the parts.
2. Noting missing personnel in a household (widows, for example) helps us to categorize some of the special problems faced by X number of households.

3. We become more aware of the constraints on individual women when we consider them within the context of their family responsibilities. And we understand their inability to take advantage of what in isolation appear to be "golden" opportunities.
4. When looking at the variability of individual contributions to family maintenance we may be less compelled to evaluate all our development successes in dollars and cents terms. For a farmer to work full or part time in rural industry, for example, requires adjustments in family work loads to free him for this effort. The women's contribution by taking over his farming responsibilities may be necessary for this increase in the family income. Or, a conservation in family resources may, in the end, reduce the need to develop greater earning capacity.

If we frankly set out with the intention of evaluating development plans in the light of family³ concerns, we may thereby have more positive results since we are more accurately assessing needs, than if we separated and individually consider women's, men's, or children's needs as divorced from the family. An even better approach is of course to simultaneously consider family needs through all of these three channels. In other words, approaching the needs of families through the vehicle of women's goals allows greater sensitivity to the contextual nature of human relationships and helps alleviate some of the negative results caused when they are ignored.

³The definition of the "family" of course varies in different social communities.

Rationale for Approaching Family Concerns through Women

There are numerous reasons -- national, community and individual -- that argue for expanding the opportunities for families through women. Repeatedly, it has been reported that women's fertility is related to their education and employment, and this in turn affects achievement of the national goals of population control, national economic productivity, uplifting of social standards, etc. Research now in process suggests that increasing women's income may also have more beneficial effects on the quality of family life than a corresponding increase in men's income does. According to this theory, women are more apt to spend the added income in the areas which improve living standards, i.e., housing, hygiene, education of children, medical facilities, etc. An increase in men's income, by contrast, may be used for luxuries such as (for lower income groups) cigarettes and visiting coffee houses rather than for essentials.

The simple fact that a relatively large number of households are headed by women argues for the importance of providing employment opportunities for women to keep these families viable. The alternative in lower class neighborhoods is to spread the burden of poverty to other already economically over-burdened families.

Within the normally constituted lower class family, it is common for cycles of relative financial sufficiency and insufficiency to follow each other in rather quick succession. These periods are related to the number and kinds of personnel of the family and the regular and special demands such as weddings, illness, death, and schooling. Of all family members, women may have the most latitude in role flexibility, and the time and inclination to increase the resources of the family when needed by filling in

for missing household members, meeting peak season work demands or compensating for cyclical economic crises. An added benefit is that they can relieve children of the responsibility for income generation and permit them to pursue longer periods of academic and vocational training. This may be the most valuable, though generally unrecognized, contribution that women make to the family economy -- the capacity to fill an expanded need in a household that with only one male wage earner has little elasticity.

Neglecting the interests of women, intentionally or unintentionally, reduces the effectiveness of development programs. Too active an intervention, on the other hand, can be at least as damaging as inattention if it disrupts local established solutions without providing suitable substitutes. At the same time, allowing the effects of programs to impact indirectly on women, unanalyzed, runs the risk of producing the kinds of unanticipated negative results that some researchers have felt are the inevitable consequence of development programs in the past.

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING FOR WOMEN WITHIN THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

CURRENT TRENDS

Egypt is presently in a transitional stage in its socioeconomic and political development. It is not clear at the present time which direction the current tendencies will finally take, but it is inevitable that the direction taken will significantly affect the position of Egyptian women.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

Economically the country's resource base has been limited, defined as an area of arable land which is difficult to expand, a single major water source, and a shortage of capital investment, all of which have restricted its capacity to utilize existing resources in a more productive way. In human terms, this has resulted in a tradition of elitism where numerically small groups of the population (foreigners or indigenous) have used stringent measures to obtain disproportionate shares of the limited resources for their own use. The measures have produced one of the most socially stratified societies of the Middle Eastern area, even without a correspondingly wide gap in income distribution.

Men in this context measure their success by their ability to manipulate economic and political resources. Women occupy a shadow system of status that derives directly from the male members of their households and bears little relation to any successes of their own in economics and politics. As one Egyptian writer put it,

[The fact that so few] Egyptian women work [paid jobs] can be attributed to the Middle Eastern culture that has allotted to women a position of economic dependence regarding their earning a livelihood, and this is due to the fact that Arab men have always undertaken the responsibility of supporting all the women in their families, and have regarded this responsibility as a matter of personal honor and pride. Therefore, women have come to be regarded as a dependent 'part of a home group,' and not as 4 independent members of society.

⁴Saneya Saleh, "Leaning Across Cultures: Egyptian Life and Social Customs," unpublished paper prepared for the Harvard-Cairo Seminar Group, 1979. (Italics added).

Traditionally, two factors have affected women's participation in the national economy: (1) widespread male unemployment discouraged any aggressive efforts to incorporate women on an equal basis into the regular wage and salaried work force (except in certain fields mentioned below), and (2) though it was recognized that men should be gainfully employed, a woman's unemployment was often viewed as proof of her husband's ability to earn sufficient surpluses to keep her relatively idle at home. Women's withdrawal from the work force originated first as a mark of upper class status and later spread through the class levels until it reached the lower urban and rural socioeconomic groups where, ironically, it has even stronger support today than among higher socioeconomic groups where it originated. So much is this true that a fellah (Egyptian peasant) can reflect his community's attitude when he says, "No man shall let his wife work outside the home when he has sufficient to support her. It would shame him in the eyes of the community." For lower class urban dwellers such an attitude presents a dilemma. On the one hand, with low wages, rising costs, dependence on a monied economy, and the temptations of ostentatious consumerism all around, it has become necessary for families to depend upon more than a single wage earner as its source of income. On the other hand, the persistence of male unemployment among the unskilled groups, and the social norms which value keeping women at home usually work against the wife-mother making any but very minor contributions to family income.

The educated classes are less affected by these restrictions and are often not aware of the dilemmas of the poor, rural or urban. When the educated are hurt by rising inflation they are usually willing to send their women out to work -- as long, that is, as the work is of sufficient prestige

(government employment, professional and teaching fields) to reflect well on the status of the family.

The changing economic forces have therefore affected women's life in different ways on different levels of the social spectrum: the lower classes are still seeking to capture the prestige that comes with keeping women idle while the middle classes assume as a foregone conclusion that women will work. While lower class families curb their consumerism, living in simple multi-functional rooms, eating subsidized foods, and requiring only a restricted range of household goods, middle class families have higher expectations and standards which they feel must be met. It seems fairly certain, however, that in the years to come, financial pressures on the family coupled with so much visible consumerism will encourage families on all levels, including the lower class, to press into wage earning capacities as many members of the family as is possible, men and women.

POLITICAL TRENDS

Politically in Egypt, a quick succession of ideologies ranging from nationalism (under the British occupation), through a somewhat repressive socialism during Nasser, to a form of neo-capitalism at present under Sadat, has left the majority of the population without a firm or clear political philosophy. Most Egyptians in fact accept the views of the leader, whoever he may be, and do not develop independent political philosophies of their own. Only some of the intelligentsia have done so and form the bulk of the critics of the political regime. For women, this has meant that their political goals have depended at each stage largely on the particular whims of the leadership which in its turn responds according to the then current political environment. Women critics as a political element have

not had the power and influence to force a resolution of their problems by any but indirect means.

One of the strongest of these indirect means has been in the person of Mrs. Sadat, who has persisted in her attempts to try to improve the circumstances of Egyptian women. She reportedly goads the President into appointing women to Parliament (the decreed minimum number in the Parliament now being elected is 30), she sets an example by accepting positions generally reserved for men (i.e., chairperson of a local council in Menu ia governorate), and she tirelessly promotes the services that provide for women and demonstrates the active role women can play in trying to solve social problems. As a model, she has had a certain success in encouraging among the elites the beginnings of a revival of volunteerism that had its heyday under earlier Egyptian feminism but has declined⁵ in recent years as young educated women seek gainful employment instead.⁶

Certainly the greatest disappointment for Egyptian feminists in recent years has been the collapse of attempts to develop more equitable Family Law provisions. Many are of the opinion that in order to be effective, social change must be preceded by and institutionalized through legal efforts. Earlier gains were begun by this means. The National Charter of May, 1962 declared unequivocally that:

Woman must be regarded as equal to man and she must therefore shed the remaining shackles that impede her free movement, so that she may play a constructive and profoundly important part in shaping the life of the country.

⁵ Volunteer social agencies have not declined however in recent years. At present they number about 8000. Their functions cover a wide range of services however that are not all "charitable" in the sense of providing services to the underprivileged. Most of the charitable institutions' personnel are older and they have no influx of young blood to enliven them.

⁶ For further discussion of the generational gap related to volunteerism, see Kathleen Howard Merriam, "The Emergence of Egyptian Women into Public Life of Contemporary Egypt," American Research Center in Egypt Newsletter.

Yet the nation has not been single-mindedly in favor of emancipating women in public and private life. As late as 1952, Al-Azhar was issuing statements asserting that women should not take work in public places, "because of their feminity which makes them likely to quit the path of reason and moderation." They could work in jobs "where strength of judgment and will are not required," as for example as teachers, physicians and nurses.⁷

In some areas, however, women made progress. In the Constitution of 1956, women received the political right to vote, but in general they have not taken advantage of this right. It is estimated that not more than 2.7% of the total voters are women.⁸ A few years later (in 1962), to symbolize their participation in the Government, the first woman minister was appointed, as Minister of Social Affairs. Labor legislation now guarantees the right of women to equal opportunities (at least in theory) and equal (within the government bureaucracy, where pay can be controlled). Legislation passed in 1978 went even further in the direction of protectionism for women, a tendency that has steadily been gaining ground in the last few years. Now, companies must not only provide day-care centers when they employ more than 99 women, but they must also give liberal maternity leaves and continue to hold the jobs and provide benefits for mothers who wish to remain at home with their babies for the first two years. Another measure that would have provided women with up to one half of their salary if they wanted to stay home and care for children, was defeated.

⁷Goode, W.J. World Revolution and Family Patterns. New York, Free Press of Glencoe, 1964. p. 152.

⁸Fahmy, S. "The Role of Women in Modern Egypt," in Education and Modernization in Egypt, Y.S. Kotb, ed. Ain Shams University, 1974.

The Government has felt secure about making very rapid changes in the civil laws concerning women. But it has not felt confident enough to move ahead in the area of personal status law, where religious authorities have a strong interest.

Many Egyptian women leaders feel that family (or personal status) law reforms are essential if they are to obtain a greater sense of security in society. Unlike American feminists, they are not asking for equal rights with men. It is recognized that in the Koran, from which the family laws are taken, women and men are regarded as having essentially different roles in life. As a result, each sex has different rights and different obligations. Most Egyptian women who are interested in reform want changes but within a more liberal interpretation of the Koranic writings. Other Islamic countries, Syria, Morocco, Yemen, Tunisia, Jordan and Iraq, have already developed more liberal family legislation.

The Seminar on the Legal Status of Women, held as part of a project on the relation between the law, women and family size, in the Cairo Family Planning Association, has been the active arena through which, since 1977, studies and recommendations on the laws have been made. In a paper⁹ on the subject the seminar participants point out that it is the insecurity of the woman's position in the household that frequently prompts her to continue childbearing in order to secure the affections of her husband. Her insecurity stems, they feel, from the inequalities in the divorce and polygamy provisions of the legal codes. A woman can be divorced at any time without recourse to a judicial proceeding and she has the right to only one year's maintenance from her husband.

⁹The information here and following is taken from mimeographed materials distributed by the project.

Specific objections to the codes are apparent in the recommendations made by the Seminar, and are summarized briefly below.

1. To draft a comprehensive code which would make clear individual rights and obligations, "instead of leaving these matters to the subjective interpretation and possible controversial views of jurists."
2. "To raise the minimum marriage age to the age of legal capacity for civil transactions for both sexes."
3. To make it impossible to restrict women from working because of marriage.
4. Polygamy: To marry a second wife a man must have permission from a judge granted only for justifiable reasons and on condition that he maintain both wives. He must advise both wives of his marriage. If the first wife objects she can sue for a divorce and ask for an indemnity.
5. Divorce should only take effect upon the pronouncement of a judge.
6. Girl children should be in their mother's custody until her marriage and boy children until the age of 14 at which time he may choose which parent to stay with.

In 1978 the project met its goal of drawing up a new set of laws and bringing them to the attention of the public along with information on the adverse effects on women under the current laws. They were so successful in informing the public, in fact, that they aroused "the reactionary elements who suddenly rose up fighting us to the extent of alarming the government." Yet, while the religious elements opposed reforms, the project participants got an unexpected boost in the reference by President Sadat in a speech in the spring of 1979 to the need for giving women their full rights in the family under Islamic law. The more realistic advocates of the reforms, however, feel disheartened by the climate of public opinion in Egypt after the revolution in Iran. They feel that even those who would welcome such reforms are reluctant to promote them for fear of antagonizing Islamic purists.

The implication for development planning in this present standstill is that women in Egypt because of their legal position are not able to act autonomously and independently. For the most part their economic security comes from a male protector and their emotional security from retaining his affections. Under these circumstances a woman's attention is given to cementing these relationships rather than to developing her own skills and capacities. Is a woman justified in her fear that a husband will take another wife or divorce her? Between 1965 and 1969, the number of men taking second wives was 8.08%. The divorce rate is a relatively high rate of 2%, but remarriage of divorced women is also high, at 66 in 100.¹⁰ In any case, the ease with which men are able to put aside their wives leaves a deep feeling of insecurity among Muslim women.¹¹

The third major area where present undercurrents appear to be shaping women's perceptions of themselves is found in the Islamic fundamentalist movements. Though to date no one has adequately analyzed their effects, a few observations can be made. The movement probably emerges out of both rejectionist and activist concerns. On the one hand, its members reject Western models as ineffective in providing Egyptian society with any solutions to its problems. On the other, they want to develop indigenous models and identifiably Egyptian answers. Along with this they seek to create an uplifting ideology that can coalesce people into aggressive social action.

¹⁰ Statistical Yearbook, A.R.E. Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics. 1978. p. 15.

¹¹ For more details, see A. Rugh, "Religious Community and Social Control in a Low Income Area of Cairo." Unpub. PhD dissertation, 1978.

Unfortunately, women appear to be participating in the movement largely as symbols of those characteristics of Islam which are socially reactionary and repressive of women. Interestingly, however, adopting dress styles that keep women covered virtually from head to toe has not inhibited the same women from pursuing their education, working in offices or otherwise indulging in the same kinds of activities as their less conservatively clad sisters.

The movement is perhaps most significant in terms of women because of the kinds of new perceptions it reveals: it expresses the desire for a new model of purity (opposed to the corrupting Western model), a search for a common indigenous identity, and a willingness to dispose of certain kinds of freedoms (body exposure) while hanging on to the more essential gains (education and employment). Significantly for the nation, it is an ideology that potentially cuts across all strata of society, providing common concerns for those of different class, regional and ethnic backgrounds.

"EGYPTIAN WOMEN"

Though much of the literature presumes to speak of Egyptian women as if they comprise a single category with uniform characteristics, the reality is much more complex. What follows is an attempt to show some of the variety in the lives of Egyptian women that affects both the way their needs are felt and the way they can make use of opportunities. The problem is posed here as "need for employment opportunity," and surveys a variety of types of women in order to hypothesize how each type would respond as a result of its particular structural position in society.

Personal Status Categories

Young unmarried girls: Half of Egypt's population is under 15 years of age. Ideally, the culture considers that girls in this age group should be preparing for their future careers whether in the work force or as housewives and mothers. Pursuing an academic or vocational education provides the widest range of options. But many feel that the best training comes through working alongside their mothers helping with child care and housework. The choice of which kind of training is valued by an individual is generally related to what makes a girl more marriageable in her sub-culture: for the educated classes it may be an income generating skill, while for the rural peasant it may be more important to have housewifely and agricultural skills.

Young girls who find work before an academic course is completed, as illiterates or even as literate up to a certain level, are often the most exploited of the entire work force in terms of wages. As field hands, for example, they command only half the salary of men in many areas (around 40 piasters a day in parts of Upper Egypt and up to LE 1-1.5 in the Delta). In the city, they usually work in private businesses (macaroni packaging, seamstress assistant, etc.) where wages are sometimes as low as 15 piasters a day. If they are young, employers feel they can ignore wage guidelines. If they are only minimally educated, they cannot compete with the excess numbers of university graduates who take the better jobs. For the most part, the employment of young girls remains for these reasons transitory, incidental, seasonal, or in some other way irregular and not the kind of continuous employment that brings a major contribution to the family.

Statistics show that the maximum period of income employment activity for women occurs in the age category 15-24 years.¹² That they seek work opportunities is due to the fact that at that period in their lives, women are relatively unencumbered by family responsibilities.

Married women: The actual necessity to supplement family income may become greater as the family increases. But because of the married woman's responsibilities in the household it is difficult for her to seek employment (if she wants employment) without first finding a substitute to do her tasks in the home. This is true on all levels of Egyptian society.¹³ The fairly rigid segregation of certain kinds of male and female roles makes it difficult for men to conceive of taking on "women's functions." Women usually must face the choice of staying home and doing these chores themselves or assuming the responsibilities of two jobs, one at home and one outside the home.

Widows: There are disproportionately large numbers of widows at all levels of Egyptian society as a result of demographic factors and social customs. Life expectancy rates are still relatively low in Egypt: 51.6 years for men and 53.8 years for women.¹⁴ Husbands in the majority of cases predecease

¹² Population and Development: A Study of the Population Increases and its Development in Egypt. Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, A.R.E., Sept. 1978.

¹³ Stino, L. "The Working Wife: Attitudes, Perceptions and Role Expectations of Five Male Cairens." MA Thesis, American University in Cairo.

¹⁴ According to the 1966 census as reported in R. Nyrop, Area Handbook for Egypt, 1976, American University, Washington, D.C., p. 73

their wives, not only because of their lower life expectancy but also because social norms encourage men to marry women considerably younger than themselves, often 10 or more years younger.

Custom also discourages a woman from remarrying after the death of her husband in order that she remains "true to his memory," and so that the children may be brought up without what is considered the disadvantage of having a stepparent. Because a woman marries young and may bear children up until the time of her husband's death, it is very likely that a widow will have young children to support. Widows who need to earn incomes have a number of serious disadvantages to contend with: they may not have completely developed marketable skills during their marriage if they were entirely dependent upon their husbands for support; or, they may have lost over the years what marketable skills they had had before marriage. Other males in their families may assume the responsibility for them and make the decision on whether they are permitted to work. Finally, they have two sets of responsibilities to deal with, housework and child care on the one hand and the support of the family on the other -- the energy required in each reduces what is left to cope with the other. When another male relative assumes the support responsibilities, the woman usually feels obligated to accept the social standards set by him. A study is now in process (Nowal Nadim) which will give us more detailed understanding of the needs of widows and their strategies for dealing with their problems.

Socially Stratified Categories

Lower class traditional urbanite: This category divides into at least two fairly easily identified groups: the fellaheen (peasant) migrants, and

the awlad al balad, or urbanites.¹⁵ The first are usually recent migrants from the countryside who because of illiteracy and lack of skills have only marginal capacity to get along in the city. Their husbands work as porters, bread distributors, fruit and vegetable pedlars, and in other kinds of unskilled labor. Because they lack understanding of the opportunities in city living, they may miss even the few possibilities open to them. For example, they may not take advantage of training programs or education that would make them or their children obtain higher levels of employment, or they may not know how to use available public medical and welfare services. Reinforcing this inability to make use of the opportunities is an inflexibility in their lives that comes from the immediacy of their needs. If tomorrow's food money comes from today's pick-up earnings, there is no time to waste in seeking novel solutions. For women among this group, to earn regular income is at once a necessity and an almost foregone impossibility. Unskilled labor tends to depend on physical strength which automatically excludes women from competing for the kinds of jobs that are available. When urban fellaheen women earn money it is usually through the sale of the eggs their chickens lay, food they have produced, or chores they have performed for others such as water carrying or clothes washing. But none of these is sustained or adds more than an incidental amount to family income.

The fellaheen survive in the city only because their expectations are so low: they generally live in a multi-purpose room, cook on the cheapest kind of kerosene burner, require only a basic set of furniture that rarely

¹⁵ See S. El Messiri, Ibn al Balad: A Concept of Egyptian Identity. E.J. Brill. Leiden. 1978.

exceeds a bed, bench, table and wardrobe, they carry water from a community tap, eat subsidized food and wear the same clothes year after year.

The second of this lowest social stratus, the awlad al balad, are often better off economically than the fellaheen. They have usually lived in the city longer, either as descendents of an urban family or from a migrant family that has lived one or more generations in the city, and as a result they know better how to make use of opportunities that exist. Many have received a moderate level of education supplemented by skills learned in apprenticeships that help them command relatively high wages. The men work as plumbers, carpenters, galabiyya makers, electricians, mechanics, machinists, etc., with wages that normally exceed those of low and middle grade government employees of the middle class. These men pride themselves on providing adequate income so their wives do not need to work, and the women pride themselves on their housekeeping. Some women, however, own shops and conduct their own businesses, but in general, role segregation is fairly sharply defined and men and women seem to like it that way. As parents, the awlad al balad can be aggressive in seeking opportunities for their children through education, training, employment and whatever other possibilities present themselves.

The middle classes: There are also at least two distinct groups within the middle class that for convenience may be called the lower-middle and upper-middle classes. The most significant characteristic that defines the difference between lower and middle class is education. The middle class have normally completed at least secondary school and usually university. The lower middle class generally earn their income from poorly paid

governmental jobs. Of all the groups in society, they suffer the widest gap between expectations and ability to attain them. Middle class families want multi-roomed flats with modern plumbing in middle class areas of town; they want sets of furniture for dining, sleeping, sitting. Their clothes require variety and are expensive in relation to their small incomes. They are consumer oriented, wanting the TV sets, butagas stoves, refrigerators, etc. that soften the drudgery of their otherwise work-oriented lives. To acquire these things, many families need two incomes, either from the husband's holding down two jobs or from both husband and wife working. If a wife has the opportunity to work there is often no question of whether she wants to or not. Once the family becomes dependent on her wages there is little alternative. But also, if she is employed by the government, discontinuing work for a period of time without permission may lose her her tenure in the system and the security of a permanently guaranteed job. Families expect to sacrifice so that their children can complete lengthy periods of education, up to and including university. When women work they normally are able to do so by entrusting their household and child care duties to grandmothers or to young servant girls, or part time elderly servants, the lowest paid levels of household help.

The upper middle classes by contrast have profited from the "Infitah" (the "open door" policy initiated by Sadat), parlaying their education on less secure but more lucrative private enterprise positions and often faring very well. Women in this class do not "need" to work but often do so because they are better educated and want "to keep busy." Almost all women who graduate from universities work at some period in their lives. What in the end may convince them to discontinue their employment are the hassles of

finding competent household help, commuting daily through traffic-choked Cairo, or a host of other kinds of inconveniences. They have little fear of not finding work again if they want it, through the personal connections that most have at this level. Stino,¹⁶ in a discussion of upper class male attitudes towards working wives, gives some very good descriptive detail of people of this stratum of society, whose lives are similar in many ways to what we have been describing as the "upper middle" class.

The upper class: It is very difficult to identify the upper classes nowadays. Nelson¹⁷ localizes the basis of the pre-1952 stratification system in "wealth (based on ownership of land or large private industry), power (based on closeness to the Khedivial authority structure), and family name (the ability to trace one's family line to a "great family" or Turkish aristocracy even though one possessed neither wealth or power)".

The leisured class that existed before the 1952 Revolution is not much in evidence in 1979. Now, most men of upper class families work, their position in the upper class differentiated from the upper-middle class only by greater wealth, greater power or greater social prestige.

Recently, the changing perceptions of the upper class have given a new meaning to women's education. Aziza Hussein¹⁸ observed that it was a very small liberal segment of the population and lower middle class women

¹⁶ Op. cit.

¹⁷ Nelson, C. "Changing Roles of Men and Women: Illustrations from Egypt." Anthro. Quarterly: 41 (April, 1968), p. 62.

¹⁸ Hussein, A. "The Role of Women in Social Reform in Egypt." Middle East Journal: 7:4 (Autumn, 1953), p. 446.

who first sought university degrees as a means of social mobility, while women born to status positions were satisfied with high school education. After land reform, mothers felt there was less chance for their daughters to marry rich men so "they compensate by sending them to university."

Women of the upper classes form a range of characteristic types:

(1) some blend in with the upper middle classes working even without the incentive of economic need; (2) others devote themselves to furthering their husbands' social and political interests; (3) a few are activists promoting favorite causes or working in the area of social reform; (4) a number of older women continue the volunteer work that was the main outlet for energetic upper class women in the pre-revolutionary period.

What is pertinent to this study is not whether upper class women need to find employment or whether they have the training or inclination to seize employment opportunities. Development agencies are not much concerned with these questions. However, it is worthwhile to diverge from the general "need for employment" theme of this section to note what has been a significant part played by upper class women in the development process. This has been the strong tradition of volunteerism that these classes have shown throughout much of the first half of the 20th century. Today there are still approximately 8000 voluntary agencies that provide many of the social services in Egypt. With the increase in upper class working women, however, there has been a corresponding lack of interest in offering volunteer services. Now, aging women carry on many of these functions without the benefit of new blood to enliven their activities. It seems inevitable that there will have to be some readjustments in social services that result from these

changes. The few signs of activity at the present time appear to be coming out of groups reflecting the new spirit of religious revival and through the example of the wives of several prominent political leaders.

Rural Society

L. El-Messiri¹⁹ reports that village social stratification systems are based on wealth (class), prestige (status, honor) and power (party). She divides rural society into two major groups. (1) Al ayan, the elite group, which inherits a position of importance: the village is normally administered by the ayan and makes its contacts with the outside world through them. They normally have wealth, live a life of leisure, are educated and command a position of authority (sulta) in the community. The fact that they are largely freed from daily economic preoccupations means that they have time to devote to providing wasta (power brokerage) services for others. This in turn consolidates their position of power in the locality. (2) Fellaheen, peasants, are the other large stratum. They are generally uneducated and live at a subsistence level, where the majority of their time is devoted either to agricultural activities or to the supervision of these activities for other people.

Other, peripheral groups mentioned by El-Messiri include offendi (government bureaucrats) and police officials, both distinctly distrusted kinds of positions when occupied by individuals from outside the village.

My own observation of village life leads me to make one more distinction. The fellaheen group appears to break down into those who are hard put to

¹⁹El-Messiri, L. "Legal Perception of Social Stratification in an Egyptian Village." M.A. Thesis, American University in Cairo, 1969.

provide themselves subsistence from the land they work or the job they hold, and those who make enough to provide a few surpluses for their families. A great deal of scholarship has gone into trying to define where the line is drawn between these two groups, whether it can be determined by amount of land owned, total family income, domestic expenditures, or in any other way.²⁰ Fellaheen have expressed to me a belief that there is no clear cut formula, that sufficiency depends upon the kind and quality of the land ("maybe 3 good feddans in the Delta and maybe 10 in Upper Egypt"), the kind of crops planted ("one feddan may be enough if it is planted in citrus fruits or vegetables"), how much a family obtains from the land for its own use, the number of livestock owned, and what kinds of other income are brought in by household members. Nevertheless, the categories of "bare subsistence" and "sufficiency" are real in village life. And the distinctions are important for women because they determine the attitudes about the extent to which women should work in the fields, whether they should seek outside employment, or whether help will be hired by the family to perform some of the labor that the women otherwise do.

A single extended kinship group in the village can include all these levels with the exception of positions that are filled by outsiders. In addition, this kinship group may have attached to it non-kin families which have historically had commitments to it to provide work for remuneration either in money or in kind. Most people living permanently in the community

²⁰ See Radwan, S., Agrarian Reform and Rural Poverty: Egypt 1952-1975, ILO, Geneva.

Also, I. Harik, Socio-economic Profile of Rural Egypt, The International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research and the Rural Development Committee, Cornell University, 1978.

are tied into networks of this kind with each member providing for the whole the kind of service or resource at his/her disposal. There are, for example, the daya (midwife), the khubaza (breadmaker), washing woman, the bedouin scorpion-bite healer, curers of psychological ills, barbers with health functions, potion makers, curse-removers, etc. Each generally has regular customers and most, with the exception of the professionals, come from the poorer families where the added income is welcome. Under normal circumstances, each village has this kind of complex network of support systems that are reasonably comprehensive. As long as enough resources are available, it assures the basic survival of all the inhabitants. To stop using these local practitioners or to go to those outside of the normal support networks indicates a lack of confidence in local resources and jeopardizes one's position in the system. Normally, only individuals who are marginal to the community or who obtain the blessing of the local specialist seek the services of outsiders.²¹

In the rural community, then, it is necessary to consider more than "employment" as the family resource base. One must also give attention to the wide range of resource savings, skills, service-exchanges, and the kinds of patron-client arrangements which provide alternate forms for economic exchange. The concept of employment as a means to self-realization and a stronger power position for women may also be absent in the village, replaced by the concept of employment as something for those who "have to work," while leisure is the ideal mode of gaining independence.

²¹For more descriptive detail on the relationship of traditional practitioners to modern specialists, see El-Hamamsy, L., The Daya of Egypt: Survival in a Modernizing Society, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo, Reprint Series No. 22.

Other Groups

There are numerous other categories of Egyptian women, each with special constraints and specific responses to the idea of employment. To name a few, there are the fisher people who work the Nile in Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt along with their husbands and children. With little in the way of possessions they are confined to eating, sleeping and working almost exclusively within the confines of their small boats. These women are such an integral part of the fishing and marketing operations that their contribution cannot be separated out and given a value of its own.²²

There are also ethnic groups who feel the special constraints of a minority position that seeks to protect its boundaries from possible inroads. Women are an important element in this concern, since permitting their free movement in public spaces runs the risk of losing child-bearers to other communities.²³

A third group are the bedouin. Nelson²⁴ notes that bedouin women who become sedentarized "perform many more of the economic and productive roles in the community than in a nomad situation." She is supported in this view by Khayreya²⁵ in a study on women in El-Hammam in the Western Desert. By

²²See Atiya, N., unpublished life story of a Cairo fisher woman.

²³See A. Rugh (1978), op. cit.

²⁴Nelson, C., "Women and Power in Nomadic Societies of the Middle East," in C. Nelson, ed., The Desert and the Sown, Research Series #21, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1973; p. 54.

²⁵Khayreya, A. "The Women in El Hammam in the Western Desert," Thesis for diploma at the Institute of Social Sciences, Alexandria, Egypt, 1969.

implications from these studies we can assume that the nomadic life puts restrictions on the kinds of contributions women are able to make to the household economy.²⁶

Trying to put people into neat categories runs the risk of oversimplification. The point here has been not to erase the complexity but rather to illustrate that the term "Egyptian Woman" has a wealth of meanings. The second point of this section has been to note that there is no gradual ascending/descending line by which, through changes in class, personal status or regional characteristics, one can predict desire for employment or the ability to take advantage of employment opportunities that exist. To the observer, behavior may seem to be economically irrational. One can be poor yet not feel it possible to work because of social constraints, or rich and feel the psychological compulsion to work in order to do something useful. This is not to say that the decisions for people themselves are not rational. The cost-benefits are probably toted up quite intelligently. The problem for the development planner is that the equation has more than strictly economic variables. If we do not examine closely the complexity of the components or if we attempt to project into it our own cost-benefit equations, we may fail to respond in an appropriate manner to the needs of individuals. In all, there are at least three main factors that enter into the employment equation:

- (1) The structure of job opportunities available, their fit and convenience in meeting the needs of prospective employees;
- (2) The sum total of the responsibilities, social constraints, predispositions, etc., that determine an individual's ability to take

²⁶ See also Bujra, A., "The Relationship Between the Sexes Amongst the Bedouin in a Town," Paper delivered at the Mediterranean Social Science Council Conference, Athens, 1966.

advantage of and continue to work at an employment that is available;

- (3) The personal summations of cost-benefits that in total express the needs of an individual to seek employment or reject employment as a way to solve life problems.

Development agencies can operate on the first category of constraint: they can help relieve some of the obstacles in the second; but the third is the special province of individuals to decide.

PROBLEM AREAS

Without sacrificing the basic tenet that people need to set their own priorities for development assistance, it is still possible to explore the areas where evidence indicates potential needs may lie. We do that here by identifying "unnatural" statistical arrangements for women which, when compared with other LDC totals or within the country figures for men, suggest abnormally wide disparities that may need further consideration. The two areas where the disparities appear most evident are those of women's employment and education.

Employment

Youssef²⁷ sums up the case for the female labor force in Muslim Middle Eastern countries -- and this applies generally to Egypt -- as follows:

In terms of quantitative comparative data Middle Eastern countries report systematically the lowest female participation rates in economic activities outside of agriculture. This behavior represents a deviation from the current experience of other developing nations and from the historical experience of the now industrialized West...the low level and particular character of women's involvement in the work force in the Middle

²⁷Yousef, N. "Social Structure and the Female Labor Force: The Case of Women Workers in Muslim Middle Eastern Countries." Demography 8:4 (November 1971), pp. 427-439.

East can be explained by institutional arrangements contingent upon aspects of social structure....Middle Eastern women are absent systematically from occupational and industrial sectors of employment which involve public activity and presuppose contact with males.

Using figures from 1960, Youssef reported that the mean female activity rate for participation in non-agricultural economic activities in the industrialized countries was 28.1 percent, while the mean rate for a representative sample of less developed countries was 12.3 percent. The mean rate of 3.5 percent in Egypt is markedly lower than this LDC average, and considerably lower than the LDC identified by Youssef as occupying a relatively similar level of development to Egypt. She also comments on what appears to be this inconsistency in the way in which the female labor force reacts to economic development. There seems to be no parallel increase in their participation that corresponds to higher stages of economic development; she explains this phenomenon by stating that:

Women's work participation is in large part dependent upon the particular response of women to the labor market situation, on the one hand, and to the occupational opportunities that are in actuality made available to them on the other. Both these factors are intimately related to the cultural definition within a society regarding the type of work deemed appropriate for women to pursue.

28

Youssef places much of the blame for Middle Eastern women's lack of participation in the non-agricultural labor force on the tradition of informal female seclusion and exclusion patterns. Formal official policies for the most part give equal employment rights to both men and women but the realities are in fact different. Youssef finds evidence of seclusionary patterns in the statistics on domestic servants. In Egypt, 80% of domestics are men as compared with only 7% in Chile and 33% in Mexico. Egyptian women avoid

²⁸ Ibid., p. 427.

these occupations primarily because of the frequent and unsupervised contact with men. Industry is another sensitive area for the same reasons. In Egypt, where 80% of manufacturing production takes place in factories, women make up only 2% of the working force. In non-factory production they make up only 6% of the work force. Women workers in factories are often segregated in particular areas or, in what accomplishes the same goal, limited to certain kinds of specialization in the industrial process. In activities related to trade and sales occupations, also requiring public contacts, males similarly command a majority. Women provide only 5.5% of the work force in these areas, in sharp contrast to the nearly 30% participation in Chile and Mexico.

Even among the more privileged classes of Egyptian women, Youssef notes the restraints on participating in employment opportunities which assume contact with the opposite sex. This, she feels, explains the low numbers (4.5%) in the ranks of white collar workers (clerical, managerial, administrative). Until recently, when these positions happened to be filled by women it was mostly by those in the non-Muslim population, foreign or indigenous Christian.

In the professions, the situation is quite different in Egypt, where women have done better than in many LDC's. One Egyptian woman worker in every five works as a professional, and women fill 23% of all professional positions in the country. However, as Youssef points out, the full range of professional positions are not open to women: a rigid occupational structure restricts women to two sub-professions, school teaching and nursing. Ninety-six percent of all women in professional and technical capacities fill

positions in these sub-fields. Because of the prevalence of sex-segregated post-primary educational institutions, a woman who teaches can remain in an exclusively feminine environment. Nursing, too, performed by both male and female nurses, tends to be sex-segregated though not always. Youssef concludes by commenting:

Even when economic development levels are kept constant, social institutional arrangements and their cultural adjuncts have deep repercussions on the extent to which women participate in economic activities outside of agriculture and on the particular patterns this participation takes....criteria related to family standing and to male honor in the community are powerful instruments in reducing participation rates of women in non-agricultural economic activities....Other factors related to the supply side, such as the demographic composition of the female population or female achievement in the educational sphere, may also contribute their share in accounting for the unequitable sex distribution of the labor force in Middle Eastern countries.

29

Youssef's materials were based on 1960 census data and therefore it is unclear what kinds of changes have taken place in the intervening years. Some more recent figures are available, but it is impossible to find figures that are comparable. If one looks, however, at crude activity rates (percentage of the population over 6 years of age that is economically active) between 1937 and 1976, some changes become apparent. In 1937 there were 7.9% females economically active; in 1947, 7.8%; in 1960, 4.8%; in 1966, 4.2%, and in 1976, an impressive doubling of the last figure to 9.2%.³⁰ Still, only about 14% of the total labor force is female. This compares, for example during the 1960's, unfavorably with Latin America (23%), Asia (30%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (32%).³¹

²⁹ Ibid., p. 439.

³⁰ Reported in "A.R.E., Economic Management in a Period of Transition," Human Resources, Vol. II, World Bank, May 1978, p. 17.

³¹ Ibid.

World Bank sources support Youssef's contention that the low participation rates of Egyptian women in the labor force reflect the society's emphasis upon the seclusion of women and the domestic nature of their roles.³²

Rural Activities of Women

By focusing primarily on non-agricultural employment, Youssef's conclusions tend to be more applicable to urban environments. As one would expect, women's rate of labor participation is higher in urban areas (6.8% in Cairo and 5.7% in Alexandria, 1974 figures) than in rural areas (2.8% in Lower Egypt and 2.2% in Upper Egypt).³³ Table 1 below gives figures which show the occupational distribution of the female labor force in urban and rural Egypt. As is to be expected, considerably larger numbers of females in urban areas fill scientific, technical, clerical, service and manufacturing jobs than in rural areas, while rural women are mainly involved in agriculture and animal husbandry (and these figures are probably grossly deflated). This is, of course, directly related to the employment opportunities available in the two areas.

An FAO study completed in 1978³⁴ gives us the best of our scanty information on the economic activities of rural women. The total number of

³² Ibid., p. 19.

³³ Population and Development: A Study of the Population Increase and its Development in Egypt. A.R.E. Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics. September, 1978. p. 224.

³⁴ Abou El Seoud, K., and F. Estira, A Study of the Role of Women and Youth in Rural Development with an Emphasis on Production and Consumption of Nutritive Elements. FAO/Middle East Office. 1977-1978.

the sample was small, consisting only of 259 cases, divided between Upper Egypt (92 cases from Giza, Minya and Sohag) and Lower Egypt (167 cases from Sharkiya, Menufia, Qalubia and Kafr el Sheikh). Still, the results suggest the kinds of labor that rural women engage in and provide us with information on some important differences in women's agricultural participation in Upper and Lower Egypt. The study points to a much wider range of participation than one would expect if traditional definitions

Table 1. Distribution of the Female Labor Force in Rural and Urban Egypt by Occupation (in Hundreds)

Occupation	Urban		Rural		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Scientific/technical	971	17.0	134	2.3	1105	19.3
Administrative	80	1.4	2	-	82	1.4
Clerical	584	10.2	27	0.5	611	10.7
Sales	216	3.8	206	3.6	422	7.4
Services	815	14.2	165	2.9	980	17.1
Agr. & animal husbandry	70	1.2	1367	23.9	1437	25.1
Manufacture workers	408	7.1	144	2.5	552	9.6
Others	458	8.0	78	1.4	536	9.4
TOTAL	3602	62.9	2123	37.1	5727	100.0

Source: Abou El Scoud, K. and F. Estira, A Study of the Role of Women and Youth in Rural Development with an Emphasis on Production and Consumption of Nutritive Elements. FAO/Middle East Office, 1977-78

of "men's jobs" and "women's jobs" in agriculture are considered.

Table 2 summarizes some of the conclusions.

Activity	Participating Females in Lower Egypt		Participating Females in Upper Egypt	
	No.	%	No.	%
Plowing	83	49.7	10	10.9
Harrowing	83	49.7	38	41.3
Drilling	91	54.5	38	41.3
Cultivation	105	52.9	31	33.7
Irrigation	104	62.3	32	34.8
Fertilizing	95	56.9	35	38.0
Resowing	107	64.1	32	34.8
Thinning	111	65.8	32	34.8
Hoeing	93	55.7	34	37.0
Insecticide spraying	93	55.7	35	38.0
Reaping	113	67.7	35	38.0
Transporting crops	117	70.1	25	27.2
Packing crops	109	65.3	38	41.3
Animal husbandry	28	20.3	19	28.4
Curing animals	34	24.6	7	10.5
Milking	101	73.2	37	55.2
Raising poultry	132	79.0	75	81.5
Home agricultural manufacturing	107	64.1	42	45.65

Source: Abou El Seoud, K. and F. Estira, A Study of the Role of Women and Youth in Rural Development with an Emphasis on Production and Consumption of Nutritive Elements. FAO/Middle East Office, 1977-8

If there are surprises in the results reported in Table 2 above, they related mainly to the following:

(1) It has been a held assumption that "Upper Egyptian women do not work in the fields,"³⁵ while Lower Egyptian women are active in agricultural production. The figures show significant differences between the two regions but clearly indicate that an important part is played by Upper Egyptian women in agricultural activities.

(2) Animal husbandry has generally been considered an area of major activity for women. Therefore it is surprising to find a relatively small percentage of women engaged in this activity.

(3) It is surprising to find the number of women engaged in the "men's jobs" of plowing and irrigation. This suggests the importance of flexible work assignments in agricultural production. When necessary, women can take over almost any type of labor activity.

The large numbers of women in both Upper and Lower Egypt who engage in poultry raising, home agricultural manufacturing and dairy production points to these areas as significant ones in supplementing rural family incomes. What the figures do not show and what is necessary to a better understanding of women's economic contribution to agricultural production, are data on the proportions of time spent in various household tasks as well as on each of the agricultural activities noted in the Table. Similarly, longitudinal studies which indicate the variability of women's participation under certain circumstances and through seasonal fluctuations are important if we are to have more accurate information.

³⁵ See Critchfield, R., "Egypt's Fellahin. Part II: The Ant and the Grasshopper." American University Field Staff Reports, NE Africa Studies, Vol. XXI, No. 7, 1976.

A now somewhat out-dated study³⁶ gives us some of the general gross figures for how working hours break down for various activities in rural communities. This material is summarized in Table 3.

The actual proportion of time spent in agricultural production by unpaid household members is difficult to gauge. Harik reports that opinions differ on the subject, ranging from "estimates of 10% of the man-hours put in by regular workers to estimates of 50 percent for children and 33% for women."³⁷ Harik also notes that it is difficult to get accurate figures since women and children also work in agriculture-related activities at home and these are often either not reported at all or are under-reported.

There are important differences in the amount of contribution unpaid family labor makes to urban and rural economics. Figures for the distribution of labor force in urban and rural areas by employment status give us some idea of the differences that generally occur. In rural areas, in 1974, 16.05% of the labor force consisted of unpaid family workers, presumably women and children (there is another category of worker, classified as "self-employed," a generally male-dominated category). The contrasting figure for urban areas is 2.55%.³⁸ Assuming that unpaid workers as a category are probably grossly under-reported, there is every likelihood that the unpaid family worker's contribution to the rural economy is even higher than it appears in the figures.

³⁶ Hansen, B. "Employment and Wages in Rural Egypt." American Economic Review, June, 1969.

³⁷ Harik, I., op. cit., p. 55.

³⁸ Population and Development: A Study of the Population Increase and its Development in Egypt. A.R.E. Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics, Sept. 1978. p. 225.

TABLE 3. AVERAGE ANNUAL WORKING HOURS ACCORDING TO SEX-AGE GROUPS, TYPES OF HOUSEHOLDS, AND TYPES OF WORK

Type of Household	Sex-Age Group	Number of hours Worked Annually	PERCENT OF ANNUAL WORK TIME SPENT ON				
			Field Work	Animal Husbandry	Process- ing farm Products	Other Agri- cultural Work	Nonagri- cultural Work
Farmers	Men	2,280	53	21	3	13	10
	Women	869	19	63	11	3	4
	Children	<u>1,022</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>
	Total	1,642	48	30	4	10	8
Farm Laborers	Men	2,324	58	13	3	11	15
	Women	904	31	35	4	8	22
	Children	<u>1,374</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>13</u>
	Total	1,716	53	15	3	10	16
Others (nonagri- cultural)	Men	2,482	8	4	3	3	82
	Women	697	14	29	6	2	49
	Children	<u>1,087</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>46</u>
	Total	1,738	11	10	3	2	74

Source: B. Hansen, "Employment and Wages in Rural Egypt," American Economic Review, June 1969, p. 300.

Until better data are available, we can do little more than conclude what is already apparent, that women play a significant part in agricultural production, a part that would undoubtedly be difficult to substitute for if women's energies were diverted elsewhere. One can also safely conclude that since their contributions in this area are so important, assistance in improving their efficiency in agricultural tasks or in using agricultural products with fewer losses would do much to improve total family labor and commodity resources.

EDUCATION

Youssef (op. cit.) mentioned briefly the importance of accessibility to educational opportunities as a factor in women's employment. It has also been generally demonstrated that education of women brings them a variety of benefits ranging from lowered fertility rates to improved hygiene, health, higher female status, and more liberal attitudes toward sex roles which are developed in the children of educated mothers.³⁹ McNamara⁴⁰ summarized the importance of education to fertility control as follows:

Of all aspects of social development the education level appears most consistently associated with lower fertility. And it is significant that an increase in the education of women tends to lower fertility to a greater extent than a similar increase in the education of men.

According to the census figures of 1976, the number of illiterates in Egypt aged 10 and over totalled 15,611,162 of which 60% were female. In all, 71% of the female, and 43% of the male population are illiterate. This shows an improvement for women over a 30-year period of 17 percentage points from

³⁹ See Dodd, P., "Youth and Woman's Emancipation in the U.F.R.," Middle East Journal (Spring, 1968), pp. 159-172.

⁴⁰ McNamara, R. Address at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, quoted in World Bank Report No. 1815-EGT, Washington, D.C., April, 1977.

a high figure of 88% in 1947. However, as a result of the natural rate of increase in the population as a whole, the actual number of female illiterates increased during the same period and so the "geometric" effects of a factor such as fertility must be taken into account. The attempts to eradicate illiteracy through non-formal education programs sponsored by the government have not measurably affected the situation for women. Of the 169,313 attending such programs in 1978, only 11% were women. And of the successful candidates who passed literacy tests, only 5% were women.⁴¹

In the formal educational sector, rates of female enrollment are also generally low. In 1978/79 female enrollment figures were as follows:

<u>Education Level</u>	<u>Percentage Females</u>
Primary	39.6
Preparatory	36.7
Technical Education	37.1
General Secondary	36.1
Teacher Institutes	47.5

It has been estimated that 68.2% of the total age group 6-12 is enrolled in primary schools. If that is the case, then female enrollment constitutes only about half of the total female population in this age group. The high ratio of women enrolled in teachers' training institutes, however, supports Youssef's observation that teaching is considered a "safe" profession for women.

A breakdown of some of the vocational schools (1976/77 figures) shows more clearly the approved occupations for women. Commercial secondary

⁴¹Unless stated otherwise, the figures in this and following paragraphs concerning literacy and school enrollment statistics are taken from the translated summary of a "Report on Illiteracy" presented by the Ministry of Education to a USAID-sponsored Educational Survey Team in May, 1979.

schools have a ratio of 50:50 boys to girls, reflecting not so much an equal utilization of the facilities as much as the fact that within this kind of institution one finds preparation appropriate to both "male" and "female" occupations. Men often state that they intend to become accountants or go into business, while women more often plan to work as typists. Most students who choose these commercial schools, it must be noted, do so because of having made low marks in the preparatory examinations (disqualifying them from general secondary studies, sometimes without even recourse to opportunity to retake the preparatory exams), and not because of a special or individual interest in commercial studies.

Secondary industrial (90% boys, 10% girls) and agricultural schools (96% boys, 4 % girls) have the greatest disparity in male/female ratios, reflecting the general perception that both of these skills are the province of men. There are signs, in 1979, however, that women are beginning to be admitted into these schools in larger numbers. The decision appears to be mainly in the hands of policy makers who can determine the ratios of students permitted into the schools.

Perhaps the most interesting tendency reflected in the mainstream academic figures is the generally consistent rates of boys and girls that continue from primary school through university. There is only a slight rise in the ratio of boys to girls (not exceeding 4%) between educational stages. This suggests two possible conclusions. One is that there is a fairly basic perception of differences in male and female need for education that runs continuously throughout the school years, without major consideration for such events as puberty or early marriage of girls. The other is that these considerations are in effect for girls, reducing their number considerably

at each succeeding school level, yet moving in tandem with other factors that also reduce male enrollment at about the same ratio. From the materials at our disposal, it is difficult to know which is the correct assumption.

There are two other factors that appear to correlate with the access of women to educational institutions. One is a regional factor and the other is an urban-rural dichotomy. Because the figures are only sketchy and in some cases inferential, it is difficult to do more than mention the existence of a tendency. Critchfield⁴² reports from his experience in Lower and Upper Egyptian villages that in the latter, "illiteracy [is] widespread and almost universal for women," while in the former, "literacy [is] general among present and younger generations; illiteracy common among older people." It is difficult to confirm or refute these observations because of the lack of specific data. However, if one takes general literacy figures, after excluding the four urban governorates of Port Said, Suez, Alexandria and Cairo, one finds that the remaining "rural" Lower Egyptian governorates have an average literacy score of 42% while the Upper Egyptian governorates score is the considerably smaller figure of 33%. One must assume that were the figures sex-segregated, the proportional disparities would be at least as great for women.⁴³

The second main tendency is an urban/rural disparity in which rural females have much less access to schools than males. Again, if we take

⁴²Critchfield, R., op. cit., p. 14

⁴³Literacy scores are from the 1976 CAPMAS household census, as reported by Field, J., "Development in the Egyptian Governorates: A Modified Physical Quality of Life Index," Draft Paper, MIT Technology Adaptation Program, p. 9.

general literacy scores as we did above, we find a literacy average of 61% for the four urban governorates (Alexandria, Cairo, Port Said and Suez) and an average 38% for the rural governorates.

There are no available statistics on how the averages break down for males and females. But my own observations suggest that indeed there is a significant disparity between female access to education in urban and rural areas. A small informal sample of primary school enrollment ratios in various urban areas of Egypt in the spring of 1979 produced a surprisingly similar ratio, of around 55% boys to 45% girls, varying not more than 2 or 3 percentage points despite the fact that the schools were in lower class and middle class neighborhoods. If urban ratios indeed tend to be so nearly similar, then by inference the rural ratios must show a greater sex disparity in order to produce the national ratio of boys to girls of 60.4% to 39.6% in primary, and 63.3% to 36.7% in preparatory. Data studied from a few isolated rural schools suggests this is true. One, the Kulsna Preparatory School in a rural area near Minya had a ratio of 82% (568) boys to 18% (122) girls. Abu Zeid⁴⁴ reports that among the tarahil seasonal workers in 1972 the illiteracy rate for males was 79% while for females it was 92%. This exceeds the average rate of 65% for rural Egypt in 1970. A study of education in the reclaimed lands⁴⁵ gives a ratio of 76% (1247) boys to 24% (388) girls on the primary level, 90% (159) boys to 10% (18) girls at preparatory level and 95% (54) boys to 10% (5) girls at secondary level. Clearly, the above figures indicate

⁴⁴ Abu Zeid, H., "The Economic and Social Conditions of Tarahil Laborers," Al Katib 15:166 (Jan. 1975).

⁴⁵ Tadros, H., "The Study and Evaluation of the Rehabilitation Process in the Newly Settled Communities in Land Reclamation Areas," Social Research Center, AUC, 1975.

that for whatever reasons, girls have not had the same opportunities to pursue academic studies as boys have. Considering also that the rate of enrollment has only recently (1978-79) reached a high point of 86.4% for the entering year of primary schools, and that the drop out rate is also relatively high, one can conclude that large numbers of women have received little or no education, particularly in the rural areas. Since, as Youssef mentioned, it is generally socially acceptable for women to take employment (outside of agriculture) only in certain professional fields, limits on their capacity to obtain the required academic training effectively cuts many out of the non-agricultural labor force altogether.

CONSTRAINTS ON FEMALE ACTIVITY

We have briefly noted some of the variety in the experience of the Egyptian woman, and described in the two areas where the best statistics are available -- education and employment -- the patterns of her unequal participation. In this section we move on to a general review of some of the constraints that limit or define the kind of responses Egyptian women are capable of making within their social environments. Household roles and in particular women's roles are often determined more by tradition than by rational decisions to maximize economic well-being. This is important to keep in mind when developing assistance programs for women in order to assure that appropriate opportunities and approaches be provided. Because the lower income groups are of greater importance to development planners, we have focused on them in this section.

Social Constraints

Fox⁴⁶ suggests that there are three basic strategies used worldwide to regulate and control the behavior of women: (1) confinement, which restricts a woman to her home and proscribes much independent movement outside; (2) protection by designated protectors who accompany a woman out into public areas, and (3) normative restrictions, such as are found in value constructs such as "nice girl," i.e., sex guidelines for what behavior is appropriate for a "nice girl."

Confinement and protection in their purest forms generally require substantial family resources in order to provide the kind of facilities, confined areas and surplus personnel to act as protectors, that assure the inaccessibility to females. Among the urban and rural poor these strategies are generally reduced to vestiges of their pure forms and incorporated into the normative construct of "nice girl" behavior. For example, among the lower classes in Egypt women feel it necessary to ask their husbands' permission before they go any place other than on a simple errand; separate lines are formed for men and women to buy tickets or buy goods in stores; the government provides separate school facilities for boys and girls on certain levels; women try to move in public spaces accompanied by someone else, even if it is only a child; women symbolize their modesty in public space by wearing black over-dresses; and women do not go out of their homes at night unchaperoned. In terms of these vestiges, the concept of "confinement" carries with it the implication that, for females, there is a

⁴⁶Fox, G.L., "'Nice Girl': Social Construct of Women Through a Value Construct." Signs 2:4 (Summer, 1977), p. 805.

right space for doing something and a wrong space. "Protection" implies that there are right people to be seen with and wrong people and that an unaccompanied female leaves herself open to contact with the wrong people. Separate evaluatory frameworks exist for different kinds of people, however, and what is required behavior for a village woman may not be as stringently compulsory for a woman health official in the same village's social unit, or a foreign woman, or an educated female of another class level.

Fox notes that normative restrictions have five "advantages" over other kinds of control strategies: (1) there is the appearance of relatively unrestricted movement in public; (2) the controls are internalized and do not require external agents; (3) normative control extends over the entire life cycle of a woman; (4) there is coverage over all behavior rather than just over behavior related to male-female interaction, and (5) normative control is affordable by all the segments of the population and not just the segments which can afford the costly forms of protection and confinement.⁴⁷

Taking the first point, one finds that indeed, rural and urban Egyptian women give an appearance of freedom of movement. They may go where they wish, provided they have husband's permission, are accompanied (unless on a quick errand) with approved companions, use an approved form of transportation, go to approved places, have legitimate purposes and go at appropriate times. These requirements are not immediately obvious to the outside observer but they make up the critical set of limitations that most women feel at all times.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 805-811

"Nice girl" constructs are internalized. They are basically self-imposed, since any single constraint can be sidestepped in a way that no amount of external control can guard against. They are also characterized by an emphasis on appropriate public behavior since it is what things appear to be rather than what they actually are that provide the basis for public reputation. People are willing to internalize norms partly because they are interested in the rewards that accrue to those who do so. The rewards of being a "nice girl" are first and foremost that one's chances of realizing a good marriage are greater. After marriage, the desire to be a "nice girl" continues with an obligation to keep the family's reputation spotless so the next generation will also marry well. A person in this setting is not easily disassociated from his or her group and therefore the woman is taught from early childhood that it is not only her own individual needs but also the needs of her group that demand "nice girl" behavior. The onus is definitely on the woman to preserve her own reputation but her behavior has the added burden of reflecting on others.

"Nice girl" controls persist over the life time of the woman. The elderly crone is just as likely as the young woman to cover her "charms" in public places. In fact, the elderly woman, responding to more stringent customs of her youth, may even feel a greater compulsion to wear more concealing, opaque garments,

Normative controls are therefore widespread and pervasive, affecting almost every aspect of a woman's life. They set limitations which she

cannot easily afford to transgress if she wishes to remain an approved member of her community.

Other Variables in the Lower Class Environment

There are several factors that either modify normative constraints or contradict what appear to be "economic realities," with the result that the whole complex of social variables must be considered before conclusions can be drawn.

First, there is a sliding scale of social constraints women are expected to observe that is affected by social position and economic necessity. As Khuri⁴⁸ observes: There is "no yardstick cultural or otherwise, by which modesty, honor, and shame may be measured. These vary with economic classes. A mini-skirt worn by an affluent is fashion, by a self-sufficient it is presumption, by a poor person it indicates immodesty." Similarly, economic necessity releases women from a number of constraints. Women can be excused almost any kind of behavior (outside of sexually prohibited behavior) if it is clearly related to satisfying an economic need. In such instances, a woman can work as a servant in a private home for example, work in a public place or sell food on a street corner, without gaining the disapproval of the community. It would be considered "good that she wants to work to help support her family."⁴⁹ Yet by doing so, she nevertheless puts her family in the jeopardy of being known as "a poor family that no one wants to marry into."⁵⁰

⁴⁸Khuri, F.I. From Village to Suburb, Order and Change in Greater Beirut. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1975. p. 88.

⁴⁹Comments made by people in Bulaq

⁵⁰Ibid.

Second, and related to the point above, women and their activities tend to symbolize aspects of the status ranking of families. If a lower class woman is fat, people think this demonstrates the capacity of her menfolk to provide more than enough for their family. If a woman with many children does not have to work outside the home, or can afford the luxury of someone to carry her water and wash her clothes, people tend to estimate highly her husband's abilities as a supporter. Since it is of major importance to proclaim such status considerations publicly, even the family which could use supplementary income is often reluctant to send women and girls into the labor force, thereby reducing the family's prestige.

Third, there is a psychological effect that is found frequently among the poorer classes: that is, the poor often develop a perception of their environment as unchangeable and themselves as passive objects of malevolent events, unable to make an impact or to change what is going to happen. Women of the lower classes are as privy to this feeling of helplessness as men. They may reject opportunities because they can not imagine positive consequences coming from any quarter or they continue in inefficient pursuits because they have produced some kind of results before and therefore are secure.

Fourth, there is the fact, mentioned earlier, that lower class women in rural and urban areas are emeshed in complex social networks, where most of their pressing needs are met, at least minimally. Alternative solutions or substitutes, when introduced from outside the village or urban sub-community, meet with certain kinds of resistance, if not from the clients themselves, then from the practitioners being replaced,

Relevance to Development Programs

Much of the information above is based upon observations that any careful observer may make, both from the literature and from personal observation and study and inquiries. The result is a body of "common sense" which, distressingly, is often ignored or not properly weighted in planning processes. Specifically, these kinds of information should be useful to development planners in the following ways.

(1) Social constraints give us some idea of how well projects will be accepted. They suggest what the appropriate kinds of designs are that will make for greater success and they indicate some of the areas where the most resistance to programs will be encountered. In the Egyptian case, they suggest the importance of attention to the smallest details: the social acceptability, for example, of where a water well or a social unit is placed, the appropriate times and places for activities, and the appropriate kinds of participants. Ignoring these issues may mean failure of a project.

(2) Status restraints suggest that woman's economic behavior may be organized by different principles than a man's. As main supporter of a family, the man is more given to "economically rational" behavior than a woman, who has other family concerns such as prestige and reputation to contend with. Improving a woman's capacity to contribute economically to the family may lie, instead of with wage labor, in improving her capacity to save family resources or to more efficiently carry out her own family work responsibilities within the framework of what are seen as socially acceptable activities for one of her position.

(3) Psychological barriers take time to overcome but the process may be hastened by taking advantage of demonstrable success. Villagers who see a new well or road being built already have a sense that their lives can be materially improved. This is the point at which other programs can be initiated to take advantage of the critical reassessments that villagers tend to make at such times. In fact, one of the most useful contributions that development programs can make is to encourage people to reassess the conditions of their lives for novel solutions.⁵¹

(4) Finally, understanding the constraints people face in their lives gives a more sophisticated appreciation of the cost-benefit equations people are toting up in their minds when presented with development programs. Obstacles known can often be confronted.

CONSTRAINTS FACING DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

From their side, development agencies suffer from constraints in dealing with women which are primarily bureaucratic, institutional, philosophical and other ethnocentric. In many cases they are a result of ignorance about the people whom they are planning for, which means that a critical gap is left at the level where the impact of programs is felt by real live people.

The problems are generally well known and need not be elaborated here other than to list a few that have the potential for obstructing the development of effective programs for women. These problems I consider to be as follows.

⁵¹ A useful book describing the benefits of this approach is Duvignaud, J., Change at Shebika, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1970.

- (1) Centralization: planning for large areas of the country without regard for regional and local differences.
- (2) Institutions: channelling programs through institutions with entrenched systems for delivering services that have proved ineffective in the past.
- (3) Administrators: dealing through administrators with elitist perceptions that lack sensitivity to local environments and as a foreign donor, do not develop independent sources of evaluation.
- (4) AID flexibility: our own susceptibility to imposing solutions as the most "efficient" way; indices of "success" that are measured in terms of dollars and cents, effectively restricting the kinds of successes that are possible; the need for a priori end-goals that eliminate the possibility of an experimental approach to determine what local goals are; a rigidity of approach that does not permit readjustment of the program as new factors arise.
- (5) A tendency to create a solution to a single local problem instead of using a coordinated approach that deals with many problems at once.

Women's programs are particularly vulnerable to these kinds of problems because the variables involved are not well known and do not always come out in assessment surveys. The successes of these programs are more difficult to measure and are not susceptible to the same kinds of concrete measurement that, for example, a farm credit bank program is.

Women's needs tend to be extremely varied and complex with one deficiency arising out of and contributing to another. For example, women cannot take advantage of educational and employment opportunities until other of their problems are solved, such as the need for day care services and help with household responsibilities, etc. Dealing in a coordinated way with the complex of needs is more productive in solving any single one of them, than attention focused on one alone.

PROGRAM PLANNING

DESIGNING A DISCRETE WOMEN'S PROJECT IN EGYPT

Given the limited nature of our knowledge about the needs of Egyptian urban and rural poor women, the most appropriate approach to planning discrete women's programs is one that is commonly used in the design of scientific research projects. With slight modifications, it has the advantages of allowing people to participate in solving their own problems, it provides us with data from which we can make more sophisticated designs in the future, it has flexibility, and it develops criteria on which evaluation is based. The approach takes little for granted but where assumptions exist it attempts to make them explicit.

The two major assumptions are: (1) that a scientific approach is a valid one for dealing with human problems, and (2) that the end-goal of development programs is to bring about positive changes in the quality of life for individuals (rather than seeing the instrumental variables of income generation, family planning and improved health, etc., as end-goals).

The approach then takes the form of any good research design:

(1) A general area of program activity is selected by a local community. Example:⁵² Families may express an interest in expanding their resource base.

(2) Hypotheses are chosen to be tested. Example:

- a) Families are better off if women have opportunities to earn income
- b) Families are better off if labor-saving devices release women to put their energies into other household activities
- c) Families are better off if the resources already available to them are used more productively and with less wastage

Auxiliary hypotheses are also tested:

- a) Women can better take advantage of employment opportunities if their educational and skill levels are increased; or if other programs such as day care services, better medical facilities, etc., are available; or if more flexible hours of employment are available
- b) Women's energy resources can best be conserved by more convenient water sources, mechanical aids, cooperative work efforts, etc.
- c) Family resource conservation can be best effected by better crop storage, novel uses of waste materials, improved food preserving techniques

⁵²The example used throughout this design proposal is one that springs naturally out of what one supposes to be the concern of urban or rural poor families. The supposition of course must be tested.

(3) Base data is collected and the criteria of success are set.

Example: Gathering data on present ways of organizing household economic behavior and deciding what kinds of qualitative and quantitative measures will show an improvement in the quality of family life

(4) Role of program coordinator: In her capacity she provides what in good scientific design is known as "the introduction of the independent variable." With wider experiences, outside resources and outside contacts, the coordinator is in a position to suggest alternative solutions to problems, call on technical assistance, and act as a power broker for people to get the services they as citizens are already entitled to.

(5) Collect data on the changes that have occurred as a result of the program.

(6) Evaluate the kinds of inputs that have appeared to contribute most to family well-being, the kinds of conditions under which they are most effective, and ways in which they can be improved in the future design of programs.

Obviously, dealing with human communities does not permit rigid control of all the variables, nor aggressive attempts at being exhaustive. A design like the one above is useful only inasmuch as it gives a framework within which systematic and potentially useful work can be carried out. The disadvantage of this kind of design, however, is that it requires a fairly comprehensive control over the implementation of the program in order to assure that the approach is carried out as planned.

PARTIAL INPUTS

There are several levels at which women's concerns can be met in the Egyptian context that do not involve the kind of full-scale project suggested in the previous section.

(1) At the most general level there is a need to implement some of the statements made in earlier parts of this document, that is, to consciously review each AID project for its impact on women. This needs to be done by someone who has had training and experience in evaluating projects in this way. Slight modifications in program design from the beginning can often make important differences in how effectively women's needs are incorporated in them.

(2) Where there is little control by AID over the long-run operation of a program, the safest kinds of projects are those that provide more and better infrastructure and better services, and which involve themselves less in activities that rapidly change fundamental modes of social organization. That is not to say that a project will not have social consequences nor that its social impact should not be evaluated. Rather, it means that providing, for example, more convenient water sources, roads to markets, electricity, storage facilities, accessible schools, better medical facilities, is providing benefits that people are already geared to receiving and may already be receiving though insufficiently. Priority areas for women should be health and both formal and non-formal educational opportunities.

(3) A more risky approach but one with potential benefits if it works out well, is to strengthen Egyptian institutions that aim at improving women's conditions. Some, like the Productive Families Program of the

Ministry of Social Affairs and the Local Leaders Program began with fundamentally sound ideas but somewhere went off the track and did not become as effective as they might have. With so many social services in Egypt provided by voluntary agencies, this is another area where quality could be improved by offering training and marketing assistance. A potentially promising institution (discussed in the Van Dusen trip report of March 28, 1979) is the Al-Azhar Center for Women's Development. The comprehensive facilities available to this institution can be drawn on to provide a complex of medical, social and income-generating services to the designated rural and urban areas they have identified as their clients. At the same time, young doctors and social workers can receive practical field experience and courses could be developed that are appropriate to the program's needs. Strengthening indigenous organizations has the advantage of qualitatively improving services while at the same time leaving behind institutionalized channels for their continuation after the assistance is discontinued.

CONCLUSION

What should be the priority concerns of women's programs in Egypt? Which areas of activity have the most potential for proving productive of the investment dollar? Certainly the following areas require urgent attention:

- (1) Young women and girls make up a quarter of the Egyptian population. Before marriage there is still time for educational and vocational training, family planning instruction, employment. The social value is considerable and immediate when changes in these areas positively affect their lives.
- (2) The urban poor live in a sub-standard environment on a monetized economy. They have little elasticity to improve their incomes. Their needs are as basic as clean potable convenient water sources on the one hand and on the other, ways for women to contribute more meaningfully to the family resources.
- (3) The rural poor are better able to subsist off the land with their limited resources. Their needs are primarily those that come from lack of access to schools, medical services, nutritional information, and basic utilities.

The concentration on education and employment (within the broader context of resource management) in these pages has been intentional. The logic of the evidence indicates that these are the two areas where development funds can properly be placed with the most return for the investment dollar. This is true, however, only if programs are especially designed to demonstrate their relevance to local desires and contexts.

APPENDIX "N"

PROMINENT WOMEN IN EGYPT

Note: The following list comprises only a portion of the women active in public positions. Egypt has had a long tradition of women leaders active in social welfare, academic pursuits and political affairs. The following list has been chosen on the basis of three criteria:

- (1) Women who occupied high positions in government or in organizations
- (2) Women who demonstrated active participation in public discussions, seminars, and activities on national issues
- (3) Women whose work demonstrated an interest in women's concerns.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Research</u>
Abaza, Tagriid	Director, Sendyoum Program, Cairo Women's Club	
Abdel Kader, Soha	Researcher, Social Research Center, AUC	Role of mass media in Egypt; status of women; modern and conservative Egyptian families
Abdel Latif, Nafoussa	Technical Member, Central Agency for Organization and Administration	
Abdel Rahman, Moufida	Lawyer	
Abdel Malek, Nazik	Lawyer, Cairo Women's Club	Islamic law
Abdel Rehim, Mahasen	Director, Central Bank	
Abdin, Zahira	President, Rheumatic Heart Center	
Abu El Seoud, Khairy	Cairo Univ., Faculty of Agriculture	Rural women
Abu Ghassi, Dia	Head, Egyptian Museum	

Abu Saoud, Suad	President, Egyptian Woman's Organization	
Abu Saif, Laila	Theatre director, film producer, Professor	Feminist; playwright
Abu Zeid, Dr. Hekmat	Prof. Sociology, Cairo University	Education; social & cultural development, urban & rural communities
Allouba, Naila	President, Family Planning Society	
Aly, Dr. Hekmat	Director, Nutrition Institute	
Asker, Fatma	Director, Sendyoum Carpet Weaving Project	
Assaad, Marie	Researcher, Social Research Center, AUC	Traditional health practices
Azmy, Enayat	Dean, Higher Institute for Ballet	
Badran, Dr. Hoda	Director, Women's Committee, UNICEF	
Bahey El-Din, Fatma	Undersecretary, Min. of Social Affairs	
El Bannan, Laila	Owner, LUNA Trading Co.	
El Darini, Shahira	Chairman, Light and Hope Association	
Doss, Lily	Women's Health Improvement Association	
Elwy, Elweya	Head, Home Economics Association; FAO	
Erder, Leila	Population Council	
Fahmy, Dr. Noha	Urban Unit, Natl. Center for Social and Criminological Research	
Fahmy, Dr. Someyya	Director, Sendyoum Literacy Program	
Farid, Busseena	Cairo Women's Club Pres.	

Estira, Prof. Flora	Home Economics, Helwan University	Writer on rural women
Ezzat, Zeinab	Head, Productive Families Unit, Min. Social Affairs	
Fahmi, Hoda	Researcher, writer	Women's affairs; income budgets, Akhmim weavers
Farag, Alexandra W.	President, Assoc. for the Protection of Women and Children	
El-Ghamrawy, Nefissa	Vice Pres., Egyptian Woman's Organization	
El-Hamamsy, Laila	Director, Social Reserach Center, AUC (former)	Extensive publications on social subjects
Hassan, Farkhonda	Chairman, Materials Eng. & Phys. Sciences Dept., AUC; Head, Rural Development, Natl. Democratic Party	
Hassan, Nawal	Director, Center for Egyptian Civilization Studies	
Heikal, Tahany	Director, Women's Committee, Arab League	
El-Hefny, Dr. Amina	Vice Pres., All-Arab Women's Organization	
Husain, Aliyah Hasan	Lecturer, Girls' Faculty, Al-Azhar University	Economic anthropology; social change, planning and development of new settlements
Hussein, Aziza	Hon. Pres., Cairo Women's Club; Women's Representative to UN; Director, Family Planning Org.; Cairo Family Planning Association	
Ibrahim, Fatiha		Study of cognitive perceptions of women in villages
Kalamawy, Suhair	Pres., Arab Women's Fed.; Professor, Cairo Univ.	

Karam, Baheya	Director, Amoun Institutions	
Kassem, Fakriya	Cairo Family Planning Assoc., Cairo Women's Club	
El Katsha, Samiha	Senior Research Assist., Soc. Res. Center, AUC	Nubian settlers
Khater, Moatazzaa	Women's Secretariat, Arab Socialist Union	
Khattab, Hind	Researcher, Soc. Res. Center, AUC	Population; birth control; status of women
Loza, Dr. Sara	Researcher, Natl. Center of Soc. & Crim. Research	Women's employment
Madkour, Malak	V.P., Hoda Shaarawi Society; Reg. Dir. for Middle East & Member of Board, Internatl. Alliance of Women; Sec.-General, Mother and Child Organization	
Mahfuz, Dr. Afaf	Prof., Pol. Sci., Cairo Univ.	
Maklouf, M.	Pres., Juvenile Delinquents Welfare Society	
Mankabadi, E.	V.P., YWCA	
Mansour, Aleya	Director, Public and For. Relations Dept., Sport Council	
Marzouq, Zahya	Family planning, Alexandria	Literacy programs
Mehanna, Sohair	Sr. Res. Assist., Soc. Res. Center, AUC	Family planning programs and values
Mehdi, Ida	UNICEF	
Mehrez, Sherifa	Pres., Women's Health Improve- ment Assoc.	
Mehrez, Zeinab	Director General at Min. of Education	

El-Messiri, Sawsan	Researcher, writer	Mehalla spinning industry; migrant workers; lower class neighborhoods
El-Mewaled, Afaf	Vice Manager, Second Channel Program (radio)	
El-Mossalami, Salwa	Director, Central Bank	
Mubarek, Susanne	Director, Bulaq Model School Project	
Muhandis, Safia	Director, Eg. radio	
Nadim, Nawal	Researcher, Soc. Res. Center, AUC	Widows; economic role of children
El-Naggar, Zeinab	Director, Women's Affairs, Min. Social Affairs	
El-Niklawi, Tahiyya	Party Chairwoman, Cairo Women's Club	
Noman, Yildes	Director, Television Corporation	
Osman, Dr. Amal	Minister of Social Affairs	
Rashid, Bahiga	Pres., Hoda Shaarawi Society; Amateur Musical Assoc.	
Rateb, Aisha	Past Minister of Social Affairs; Prof. of Law; Ambassador, Min. of Foreign Affairs	
Riad, Sawsan	VP, Cairo Women's Club	
El-Sa'ati, Sanya	Lecturer, Ain Shams Univ.	
Said, Amina	Chairman of Board, Dar el Hilal (publishing co.)	
Said, Imam	Director, Sendyoum poultry project	
El Said, Karima	Pres., Boulaq Social Services	

Saleh, Saneya	Researcher, Soc. Res. Center, AUC; Bulaq Model Schools, Integrated Village Services projects	Migration; women in Islam
El Samaa, Akila	Pres., Al Nour Wa Amal (Light and Hope Society)	
El-Sayed, Ehsan	Dir.-General, Internatl. Relations Dept., Min. of Manpower	
El-Shaal, Nabila	Prof. of Management, Islamic Girls College	
El-Shahed, Dr. Leila	Director, Central Bank	
Shahara, Taghreed	Researcher, Natl. Center for Soc. & Crim. Research	
Shaheen, Zeinab	Researcher, Natl. Center for Soc. & Crim. Research	
Shalaby, Samia	Chairman, Women's Secretariat, Sharkia Governorate	
Shehata, Samira	Researcher, Soc. Res. Center, AUC	
Shenawani, Kamilya	Women's show on TV	
Shukri, Samia	Correspondent, <u>October</u> magazine	
El-Sobhi, Dr. Zeinab	President, Blood Donation Bank	
Tabet, Elsa	Director, Bulaq Social Services	
Takla, Laila	Chairman, Arab and Foreign Relations Committee, Socialist Labor Party	
Tawfiq, Tumadir	Journalist	
Tawfik, Yvonne	President, YWCA	

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN EGYPT

For a short paper on the part played by women's organizations in Egyptian social history, see M. Badran, Women's Movements as Vehicles for Development: Reflections from the Egyptian Experience, paper presented at a Symposium on the Changing Status of Sudanese Women, Feb. 23 - March 1, 1979.

It is possible to obtain a directory of organizations either through the Ministry of Social Affairs or the Cairo Family Planning Association: "Itihad il kilimii il gamayaat" (Regional Union for National Organizations).

Mary Boesveld of the Dutch Institute in Cairo is presently in the process of compiling a list of Egyptian women's organizations with comments about their principal members, activities, goals and systems of organization.

The following list contains a selected sample of Egyptian organizations which are either operated to deal with women's concerns or are primarily run by women.

1. All Arab Women Federation
2. Association of Islamic Women (social and religious; boarding facilities for out of town students)
3. Association for the Protection of Women and Children
4. Boulac Social Services
5. Cairo Women's Club
6. Egyptian Women's Organization
7. Family Planning Society
8. Feminist Union
9. Hoda Shaarawi Society and Amateur Musical Association

10. Juvenile Delinquents Welfare Society
11. Higher Institute for Ballet
12. Light and Hope Association
13. National Committee for Women
14. Rheumatic Heart Center
15. Tahsiin el Sahha
16. Union of "Bint el Nil"
17. Women's Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs
18. Women's Committee, The Arab League
19. Women's Committee, UNICEF
20. Women's Health Improvement Association
21. Women's Secretariat, The Arab Socialist Union
22. Women's Secretariat, Sharkieh Governorate
23. Young Women's Christian Association

LITERATURE ON MIDDLE EASTERN WOMEN
WITH PRIMARY FOCUS ON EGYPTIAN WOMEN

Notes:

1. Soha Abdel Kader recently completed a bibliography of research on women in the Arab countries since 1960, with critical comments, which will be published by UNESCO before the end of 1979.
2. The National Library of Egypt has published a list of all of its holdings concerning women up to the year 1950 (in Arabic).
3. The Reference Librarian of the American University in Cairo Library, Aida Nosseir, is working on an exhaustive bibliography of women's literature that will be completed in approximately two years' time.
4. A good source for original studies on women is found in the graduate degree theses and dissertations of local universities, in particular, Cairo University, Ain Shams University, and Alexandria University. The best sources in English of this sort are found in M.A. theses at the American University in Cairo.
5. For a list of literature on Middle Eastern women, see Roxanne Van Dusen, "The Study of Women in the Middle East, Some Thoughts," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, May, 1976, pp. 1-20.
6. A useful reference work on Middle Eastern social scientists and their publications is found in a publication of Sophie Rentz by the Organization for Promotion of Social Sciences in the Middle East (OPSSME), 1977.

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SOME PROJECTS WHICH DESERVE MORE ATTENTION

Over the course of the contract period, either because of visits made to the site or through literature reporting on them, several projects came to my attention which seemed to warrant further study. Some may be worth replicating in whole or in part.

(1) Basaisa Experiment

This experiment is sponsored by the Materials Engineering and Physical Sciences Department and Anthropology-Sociology Department of The American University in Cairo. An announcement of an exhibit at AUC of handicrafts made by the villagers states:

The specific objectives of the project are: (1) To explore the potentialities of village-source energy for strengthening rural development in Egypt; (2) to critically examine and evaluate these processes involved in the 'transfer of technology' in the context of a Delta rural village; and (3) to facilitate and encourage the maximum participation of villagers in the initiation and development of village-oriented educational programs.

What is impressive about this project is not so much the sum of the technological benefits that have been introduced (a solar energy cell, baking oven, hot water source, water distilling machine, milk separator), but the way the project itself has been carried out and the social benefits that have resulted. Villagers have themselves been totally involved, deciding their own priorities and then outside "facilitators" have aided in seeking solutions. Villagers have learned how to operate all the devices, can repair them, and understand the scientific principles upon which they operate. If something breaks down, it is the responsibility of the villagers to repair the item and if they do not, then the project directors consider that that

item has little relevance. If it is worth fixing it will be fixed!

The social benefits have been considerable. All parts of the project have been built on village institutions. The local mindara (community center) was refurbished and activated to decide how the benefits of technology would be shared by the villagers. The people decided to use the two hours of electricity per day furnished by the solar cell for powering a television set. Later, some of the women and girls decided they wanted both a milk separator to ease the arduous cheese making process and a knitting machine so they could earn money. By working out a cooperative credit group, based on the traditional gam'iyya, the women now have both items and are paying back for them over time. Next, the women actively involved in the knitting project wanted to learn bookkeeping and literacy in order to keep records for the project. They have now learned how to keep very good books and are working on their literacy skills.

The lesson learned in this project is that an innovation introduced at the request of villagers and at an appropriate time when there is a felt need, is something relevant that will endure. In the next year, more systematic evaluation processes will be set up at Basaisa and should give a better basis for judging the impact of its progress.

At the last village meeting I attended, some of the successes in Basaisa were crystallized in the requests of nearby villages to have a program like this one brought to them. Later, a large crowd of farmers debated the merits of a solar energy irrigation pump against the traditional ox and water wheel, and decided in favor of the ox until the pump's price could be reduced. There is much still to criticize at Basaisa (for example, the relative prosperity of the village) but it seems to be a good start in what is needed --

an experimental action oriented development program.

(2) El Birins Project

I am familiar with this project only through hearsay and an article appearing in Population Studies, A Monthly Review (Population and Family Planning Board, #36, Cairo, September 1976). The project started as an attempt to establish a training program for midwives but, as a well-designed project should, it had enough built-in flexibility to expand in other areas where it was apparent that opportunities existed. The instigator was Mme. Zahia Marzouk, well known in the field of family planning for her innovative approaches.

As she reports in her article, the project began by identifying and forming a committee of both male and female leaders in the community to discuss family planning and other problems which were of concern to the village. As a result of these discussions, several programs were initiated: (1) Literacy program: Based on a card game that is simple to play and which can be taught by one villager to another, Marzouk's literacy program is simple and is reported to be effective. (2) Home industries: (a) Bee-keeping; both sexes are encouraged to establish hives to produce honey for their own consumption and for sale in the market; (b) Silk worm industry for the production of surgical thread and to supply regional silk factories with cocoons; (c) Poultry production with an emphasis on ducks and geese so that feathers can be sold to the Mehalla El Kubra factories; (d) Pasta production, for marketing; (e) Other home industries such as jams, pickles and drinks which are later sold; (f) Training school drop-outs in skills such as

*These comments are from a translated version of the article, courtesy of Amani Selim.

embroidery, making toys, rugs, handbags; (g) Finding work opportunities with nearby companies for women outside their homes, when circumstances permit.

During the period of work in the village several projects were initiated by the villagers to meet other felt needs: (1) the building of a community hall; (2) supplying the mosque with water and increasing the number of taps in the village; (3) filling up swamps with dirt; (4) using educational films to improve cleanliness; (5) a course in first aid (this was during war time).

If this project is indeed as good in real life as it appears on paper, then it may well be worth replicating. The best features appear to be: (1) the integration of both sexes in the development process; (2) the response to local priorities and needs; (3) the potentialities of the local economy have been well-researched in order to identify "real" as opposed to artificial solutions to people's needs for, for example, income generation; (4) the encouragement of local systems of cooperation.