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THE PROBLEMS OF WOMEN IN EQYPT

by

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Introduction

Women have always been numerically significant in the human population, a sufficiently compelling reason perhaps to explore their problems.

Great efforts have been exerted during the past three decades to grant women many rights and privileges previously denied to them, efforts aimed at ensuring their equality with men in the cultural, social, financial and political spheres of life. The state is acting to provide women with full facilities and opportunities in various fields. In spite of this, Egyptian women still suffer from many problems. In this paper, I shall try to present to you some of the problems of women in various aspects of life. I will try also to examine how the problem manifests itself differently in the urban and rural areas.

Education

There can be no doubt that illiteracy is an impediment to women's participation in social, economic, cultural and political development. Society should not be deprived of the full participation of half of its population by leaving women in ignorance. Women's problems are basically due to illiteracy. The wider extension of education is the solution to many problems.

The percentage of illiterate women or those who just know the alphabet is 95%. This percentage is far higher in rural than in urban areas, indicating that the old traditional attitude towards women is stronger in rural than in urban areas. An illiterate person refuses change, adheres more to customs and traditions and is usually unaware of his problems. The traditional attitude towards women is that women are inferior human beings, weak, stupid and subservient to men. Their position in the society is confined to the role of a housewife -- running a home and bringing up the children. All the problems of women in rural areas stem from this traditional attitude, which in turn is basically due to illiteracy.

Education makes women aware of the problems of society. An educated woman can use contraceptives more efficiently than an illiterate women, and thus women's access to education may be very effective in solving the population growth problem. An educated woman can take care of her health; she is aware that family planning is the way to a better future for her and for her family.

Education will give women qualifications for better jobs and enable them to be economically independent. The relation between an educated husband and his wife is not based on subservience and subsistence; rather, it is based on equality and understanding.

Educated women can better understand the importance of their participation in political life, to protect their rights and privileges and to alert the authorities to their problems and needs.

According to statistics the percentage of polygamy and divorce is higher among the illiterate classes, which means that polygamy and divorce might eventually disappear with the spreading of education. The percentage of polygamy is:

44% among illiterates

51% among those who can just read and write and

4% among the educated

The percentage of divorce is:

35% among illiterates and

55% among those who have no certificates (Badran 1972)

Islam gave women the right to be educated and cultured. During Islamic rule, there were women poets, writers, doctors, teachers and politicians. In Egypt, women have been educated since Pharaonic times. It was only during the Ottoman rule that education was neglected. During the Ottoman period there were only a few religious schools for men only. Women who wanted to learn reading, writing and basic arithmetic had to go to the local mosque. Girls from the upper classes had private tutors to prepare them to be wives and mothers. In the 19th century, reformers like Rafea El Tahtawi, Abdulla El Nadim, Mohamed Abdou, Kasem Amin, Ali Mubarak, Ahmed Lotfi Issaid, Aisha El Taymoureyya, Malak Hefni Nassef, Hoda Sharawi and Nabaweyya Moussa began to advocate women's rights to an education, although they were attacked severely by

conservatives. In 1923, the recognition of the right of women to receive an education came in the constitution which included an article (19) that made elementary education a minimum requirement for Egyptian children of both sexes from 6 to 12 years of age. Primary education became compulsory for both girls and boys in 1923 (Abou Zeid, 1970).

In 1927 only 2.3% of all women were literate as compared to 11.4% of all males. Moreover 10 years later, after the enactment of supposedly compulsory primary education, the relative position of women had deteriorated: a further 6.5% of all women were literate, while the male figure had risen to 23.5%. Of this small group of literate women, only 0.9% had an intermediate or high school certificate (Census Book of Egypt, 1960, Vol. 2 quoted in Abdel Kader, 1973:28). In 1980 the percentage of females registered for primary education is 69% compared to 89% for men (Ramzy, 1985).

Until 1964, there was no real equality in education. A smaller number of places was allocated for females. Girls were required to have higher grades than boys to qualify for entrance into preparatory and secondary schools. In 1963, girls were granted equal rights with boys with respect to their grades. In spite of this the percentage of illiteracy is higher among women. Cairo University admitted women to the Faculty of Arts with the first class of women graduating in 1933. Women were accepted in the Faculty of Medicine in 1928, Law in 1929, Commerce in 1936, and Engineering and Agronomy in 1945. In 1952, on the eve of the Nasserite revolution, 4,033 Egyptian women had received university degrees (Shafia and Bassyouni 1974).

Education of girls is not impeded by law and religion, as much as by tradition and values, such as early marriage and the expectation that girls will do housework. We should also keep in mind that although tuition in government schools is free through all stages of education, parents of school children incur many expenses for transportation, books, educational materials and proper clothing. Thus most women who continue their higher education, especially in the universities, come from middle and upper-class families. Less well-off parents cannot afford the extra expenses of education for both sons and daughters. However, the extension of education to women in Egypt compares favorably with the record of many other Arab countries (Ramzy, 1985).

Research should be conducted to study the social, economic, cultural, religious and demographic obstacles that impede the progress of women's education in Egypt. More efforts should be made to obliterate illiteracy among women at the international, regional and popular and non-governmental levels.

Employment

Labor Law in Egypt grants women equal opportunity to work. Islam encouraged women to work; work is a duty for every Muslim. There is no distinction between males and females in the field of work. In ancient Egypt, women were respected and they took an active role in all walks of life. All leaders of Women's Liberation Movements encourage women to work and take part in the development of society. Women in Egypt started to work as midwives and teachers. Now all jobs are open to women. At the international level, treaties, documents and recommendations advocate equal rights for women. All United Nations Organizations state that women should be given all facilities to encourage them to reconcile their responsibilities inside and outside the home. In spite of all this, there are many objections against women working outside the home, with conservatives saying that a women's main duty is as a housewife and mother, and that women should devote their efforts to their husbands and children.

Mixing with men in the workplace is the source of corruption in society, they claim. Nowadays in Egypt suggestions are offered in the People's Assembly and published in the newspapers, to the effect that working women should go back to their homes at half-pay. The idea is that not all working women can maintain the proper balance between their duties as mothers and housewives and their active contribution in the development of society.

In rural areas women suffer mainly from hard work in the home, in addition to assisting their husbands in farm work. In spite of the double role of the rural women as a housewife and an agricultural laborer, her work is not recognized as productive. The economic importance of her work is not evaluated statistically in the country. Farm women receive no payment for their work, and their husbands continue to look upon them

as a burden. They do not enjoy economic independence, and they have to rely on their husbands. In addition, no efforts are made to train women in the rural areas for non-agricultural professions.

In urban areas, women started to work as nurses, doctors and teachers. Now nearly all specializations are open to women according to their qualifications and capacities. We have women as ministers in the cabinet, as ambassadors in foreign office. Now, new job opportunities are offered to women in tourism, hotel management, business enterprises and scientific research. There are still some jobs that do not attract women. We have no women judges, for example. Also some jobs do not suit the physical nature of women, like work in the mines.

Work for Egyptian women is a must. For economic reasons many men in Egypt now prefer to marry a working woman. Egyptian men now welcome the idea of a wife's contribution to the household budget in order to raise their standard of living. Work for women is useful not only for moral satisfaction and social status, but for economic independence as well. Work for unmarried women, widows and divorced women guarantees them a stable income, the respect of society and gives them the opportunities to make use of their time and be active, legitimate participants in the life of society.

Working women in urban areas face many other problems as well. Babies do not get enough care and time from their mothers, nurseries are few and far between, family relations are weakening. In addition, many mothers now bear the entire responsibility for the family, because many husbands are now working abroad in other Arab countries to raise their standard of living. Also we should be aware that Egyptian men still cannot tolerate the idea of helping to take care of the house and children.

Egypt suffers from other problems that make things even worse for the working women: overpopulation, housing, transportation, shopping, inflation, etc. If we also realize that the average family cannot afford to buy and maintain electric equipment nor pay the high cost for the electricity that such appliances require, we can see that labor-saving electric appliances that can facilitate housework are for the privileged few -- well-off families with high incomes.

There is another responsibility for the working mother. She has to work in the evening as a teacher to review her children's class work, because the children do not get enough attention and care from their teachers in schools, burdened by large class sizes.

Problems also arise out of the nature of the work itself. Some jobs are not suitable for women. There is still, in some areas, inequality in promotion, appointment and pay. A woman overburdened by responsibilities may also have problems of regularity, absenteeism, and punctuality. Thus the working woman is always in conflict between her desire to work outside the home, develop a career and be independent economically, and her desire to be a good mother and housewife. As a result working women in Egypt are more subject to physical and psychological diseases.

The government in Egypt is aware of the working woman's dual roles in society. Important laws have been promulgated in Egypt to protect women and to give them job security. For example, a working woman is entitled to a paid maternity leave, or a leave without pay to take care of her children. A nursing mother is only required to work half days. Nurseries have been established, but they are not sufficient in number and inadequately supervised. Nurseries are often far away from women's homes. Considering Egypt's transportation problems, we can realize how difficult it is for the mother to take her children to the nursery first and then arrive at work on time. Servants in Egypt are often not available or ignorant. Grandmothers do not always have the health, patience or time to take care of their grandchildren.

Women and Political and Social Involvement

Historical Background

In ancient Egypt, women ruled the country. We know from history that Egypt had strong queens like Sobekneferu, Nefertiti, Hatshepsut, Nefertiti, Cleopatra, etc. After Islam we have Shajar el Durr. During the French campaign in 1798, Egyptian women participated in defending their country. Again Egyptian women took an active role in the 19th century Revolution against British occupation. Similarly the issue of the liberation of the Suez

Canal aroused women in 1952 and 1954 (Berques, 1960:165). Women also took an active role after the War of 1967, and in the October War of 1973.

Women and Elections

After a long struggle the Egyptian women succeeded in gaining political rights. Although, according to Law 13 in the Constitution of 1956, any women 18 years of age can exercise her political rights, the number of female candidates and even voters in the election that followed was very small. This might be due to widespread illiteracy among women and to the fact that many women did not recognize the importance of their participation in elections. Also many conservatives in Egypt think that women should refrain from involvement in politics, although the younger generation is in favor of women's participation in political life.

Women and Political Parties

The programs of the different parties stipulate the necessity of equality between men and women in duties and rights. Women joined the membership of the parties and have had active roles since 1919. Safeyya Zaghloul founded a Committee for Women of the Wafd Party. It was due to the efforts of Hoda Sharawi, the first chairman of the executive committee of Women of the Wafd Party, that the Egyptian Feminist Union was founded to defend the rights of women at the regional and international level. In the thirties other women's parties appeared, for example the Girl of the Nile Party, the Egyptian Woman Party and others. In 1953 a legal decree was issued to liquidate all parties in Egypt. When the parties resumed their activity in Egypt in 1983, the Committee of the Women of the Wafd Party became active again.

Women in the People's Assembly

For the first time, the constitution of 1956 gave women the right to participate in Parliament. In 1979, Law 22 gave women 30 seats in the parliament. Three women were elected, Olfat Kamel, Fayda Kamel and Nawal Ammar. The of the low percentage of women representatives is due to the fact that participation in the parliament is a new experience for women. In some provinces, especially in rural areas, people still do not tolerate the idea of electing a women to represent them. Males think it degrading to their prestige, as men, to elect a women. There are slogans to the effect that "If you elect a woman you are a woman." This shows that they hold women to be the weak part of society. Women have also been elected as members of the local councils for the various governates of Egypt.

Women in the Cabinet

The appointments of Dr. Hekmat Abu Zeid in 1966, Dr. Aisha Rateb in 1971 and Dr. Amal Osman (who still occupies her post at the present) set a precedent for women's greater participation in social and political life.

Women and Voluntary Organizations

Women in Egypt like to participate in organizations that have a social welfare orientation. According to the directory of associations and organizations for social affairs of 1975, we have more than 72 associations directed by women. These include nurseries, vocational training centers, family planning centers, maternity hospitals, child care, educational associations, refugee associations, clubs, guest houses, women's hostels, offices for family affairs, literacy centers, centers for the care of the elderly, religious assistance, assistance for families of imprisoned people, care for the disabled and associations for friendship between Egypt and other countries. A study of the organizations affiliated with the Cairo Regional Council for Social Agencies indicates that

three-fourths of the members were women and that women comprised 83% of the board memberships (Badran, 1972:47).

Educated women of high social status are more involved in women's voluntary associations, which concentrate their efforts on social welfare projects. One accusation leveled at them is that they seem to imitate the fashions of European ladies (Abdel Kader, 1973:87). These voluntary associations started in the early twentieth century, e.g. Mabarrit Mohamed Ali 1908, The New Woman 1919, The Red Crescent 1939, etc.

Equality in Family Relations

The problem of women in Egypt is basically a problem of inequality between men and women. We have seen so far that women suffer from discrimination in the field of education and work especially in rural and lower-income urban areas. But the problem of inequality is becoming more apparent to women in the personal status laws, where men and women are treated very differently with respect to polygamy and divorce.

Polygamy

Polygamy is one of the problems that threatens the happiness of the family in Egypt. According to Islamic Law men have the right to marry up to four wives. Islamic Law grants this right to a man only if he can be fair to all his wives, and this is very difficult to achieve. If the man cannot guarantee equal rights for his wives, he is deprived of this right, so this right is very restricted in theory. But in practice, men exercise this right freely, and do not care if equality is achieved or not, especially in the urban lower classes and rural areas, where illiteracy and ignorance make the application of this right possible and easy. Since polygamy increases among the less educated classes, the practice might eventually disappear with the wider extension of education.

The last amendment of the Personal Status Laws of 1985 states: "If the husband takes another wife, the first wife should be notified and has the freedom to ask for divorce." Yet the problem remains, because polygamy is common among illiterate people,

and illiterate women tend to be unaware of their rights, and usually do not know that the personal status laws can guarantee more equality for them, if these rights are stated in the marriage contract.

Divorce

The proportion of adult women reported in census counts as "currently divorced" which was 2% in 1960 and 1.7% of all adult Egyptian women in 1966 (Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, 1976:10), does not accurately reflect the divorce rate because most divorced women are young and remarry quickly. The divorced women is not welcomed in Egyptian society. She returns to her parents' home and waits for another husband. She is rejected by married couples, and she has to be very careful of her reputation. She is actually under the same restrictions and controls as a single girl. Single women in Egyptian society are exposed to criticism and must be very careful to protect their name and the reputation of their families. Chastity of the daughter and sister, fidelity of the wife, continence of the widowed and divorced daughter and sister are the basic principles on which a family's reputation and status in the community depend (Dodd, 1973; Hilal, 1970). If we know from statistics that 74% of divorced women are illiterate and 21% just know how to read the alphabet, we perceive that 95% of the divorced women are not qualified to hold jobs which can provide adequate economic support. If we also take in account that most cases of divorce occur in families of limited income, we can expect the divorced wife to suffer from economic problems herself as well as her children.

The Personal Status Laws, Law 100, 1985 states: "In case of divorce against the will of the wife she should be compensated by the husband paying her food, housing and medical care expenses for at least two years" . . . "If she has children she has the right to stay in her flat with her children, if she does not marry again." Although the personal status laws were amended in 1985 to give more rights to women, the struggle is still going on to restrict divorce. Women are trying now to deprive men of their right to unilateral divorce at any time, and to give this right to the judge in the court of law, in order to

secure the welfare of the divorced woman's family.

I think that more reform in the personal status laws is needed. The current custody law deprives the mother of her children, after a certain age, after all the efforts and money she has spent in bringing them up. This is very hard for the mother, especially when children are a main source of a woman's status and value in society. The mother's access to her children after divorce should be protected.

Inequality in personal status laws goes so far as to give the husband the right to obtain a court order to stop his wife from going to work. The husband also has the right to prevent his wife from traveling abroad. In addition, he is entitled to force the rebellious wife to return to their conjugal home.

These rights are often used by men as weapons to threaten women, and destroy their prestige in the family and society. Women, especially in the rural areas and among the urban lower classes, suffer from feelings of insecurity, anxiety and fear of tyrannical husbands. This is why women tend to think that a large family can protect and secure her life as a married woman.

Women and Health Care

Maternity and Child Care

The state is continuing to make considerable and effective efforts towards improving maternal and child health. There is a rapid increase in maternity and child welfare centers. In urban areas, these centers increased from 79 in 1951/52 to 201 in 1970/71. In rural areas maternity and child welfare sections increased from 216 in 1951/52 to 1,827 in 1970/71 (The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, 1975). In addition, efforts have been devoted to establishing specialized hospitals in the field of gynecological diseases and obstetrical services. The number of new maternal health workers increased from 166,000 in 1951/52 to 268,000 in 1970/71. Deliveries in M.C.H. centers increased from 128,000 cases in 1951/52 to 195,000 in 1970/71. The improvement of methods of treatment, in addition to the expansion of social services programs, have also contributed to the

reduction of the material mortality rate. Maternal mortality rates, due to complications of pregnancy, childbirth and the puerporium, have fallen from 1.4% per 1,000 childbirths in 1952 to 1.0 per 1,000 childbirths in 1971.

Article 132 of the Unified Labor Code stipulates that women may not be employed in work which may harm them physically or morally. Articles 133, 134 and 135 of the Labor Code deal with the problems of working women during pregnancy and childbirth. Article 135 stipulates that no woman employee can be dismissed for non-attendance during childbirth. In addition, Article 135 goes on to say that a woman may not be dismissed for absence owing to an ailment resulting from pregnancy or childbirth which may prevent her from returning to work, on condition that such absences total no more than six months.

Women and Family Planning

Although overpopulation in Egypt is a basic problem that can destroy all attempts to raise the standard of living, pronatal tendencies still persist in the rural areas and among the urban lower classes. What are the factors behind these tendencies? Illiteracy, early marriage, erosion of the incentive for employment, prohibitions imposed by religious beliefs, the importance of marital status and motherhood for commanding respect and status in Egyptian society, fear of divorce and polygamy, the desire to have a large family to help in field work, the low expense of raising children in rural areas? More extensive research should be conducted to determine the factors that encourage people to have large families.

Women should be alerted to the importance of birth control for the welfare of their families and the welfare of the community at large. Women should also be aware that repeated delivery and pregnancy endanger their health. Birth control centers should be established to teach illiterate women how to use simple contraceptives. Contraceptives should be available in these centers free of charge. In contrast working urban mothers and those from high-income families are aware of the expenditures of money, time and effort required by additional children. This divergence involves fundamental differences in

what the family will do for the child in terms of investment in education, medical care, food, clothing and shelter; but it also results from the educated woman's lesser dependence on children as a source of security and status (Badran, 1972). Education also makes women more aware of the types of contraception available and enables them to be more efficient users of contraception. In spite of this, the progressive decline in women's fertility during the last 10 years, though still not of sufficient magnitude to dramatically lower the rate of population growth, provides another indication that forces are currently restructuring women's role options (UNESCO, 1973:473).

Female Circumcision

Research at the regional and international level verified the practice of female circumcision in more than 20 countries, among them Egypt.

The World Health Organization issued an official statement in 1982, expressing deep concern for the serious health problems resulting from the practice of this custom. The World Health Organization supported the recommendations of the symposium held in Khartoum in 1979 about traditional practices that affect the health of women. These recommendations appeal to governments to adopt policies to put an end to this practice. This health problem should be studied in the public health curriculum of medical and nursing schools and colleges. Women's educational programs in the mass media should clarify the physical and psychological health problems which this practice causes for women. Non-governmental associations concerned with maternal health should be more active in this field.

In March 1983, Aziza Hussein issued a pamphlet to give scientific facts about female circumcision. In Egypt ministerial decree No. 74 was issued in 1959, prohibiting this practice. The association of family planning in the Cairo district organized a symposium in October 1979, which studied this problem from various aspects. It showed that this custom is still practised in rural areas due to widespread illiteracy and the strength of traditional beliefs. This custom has no religious basis. There are indications that it was practised in ancient Egypt.

This practice of mutilation of the genitals of young girls (age 3-10) is practised due to the belief, that it lessens the sexual desire of girls and thus protects their chastity. Traditional beliefs and ignorance encourage this practice, to the extent that men in the village might refuse to marry a girl if she is not circumcised. This operation of circumcision is very painful, because it is conducted without the use of anesthesia. Complications often occur because the operation is not done by a doctor, but usually by a midwife. The most serious complication is hemorrhage. Inflammation or infection of the sexual organs can cause sterility or deformation in the future. All this causes psychological and physical problems for women that can destroy sexual enjoyment and desire. Sometimes husbands become addicted to drugs to satisfy the weak sexual response of their wives.

Women and Tradition

Values, customs and traditions in rural areas stress the superiority of the male over the female. According to tradition, a woman should not be educated, and should confine herself to her role as a mother and a housewife. A woman working is a sign of need of money, which is painful to the arrogance of the village man. Girls do not have the right to choose their future husbands. Early marriage is encouraged, because it is seen as protecting girls from temptation. The husband usually welcomes the idea of an early marriage. In fact, the wife is not a burden on him. She acts as a servant for him and his family, as well as helping him in the fields to cultivate the land and rear the cattle. The man wants to marry to get male children to help him in his work. He does not welcome the birth of a girl, because a girl can bring shame to her family if she loses her virginity. If the wife does not bring forth children, she is blamed for this failure. Her husband might divorce her or marry another wife.

This traditional attitude towards women is stressed in the rural areas, because the rural environment is underdeveloped. Rural areas suffer from economic, social and cultural problems that enhance this attitude of male superiority. Marriage law and religious and civil legislation are interpreted and exercised in a way that reinforces this

attitude. The image of women in the Egyptian cultural heritage, school books, magazines, newspapers and the mass media is as a dependent, inferior, passive, emotional human being, unable to face problems. Advertisements focus on the sexual attractiveness of women. Household products and electrical appliance advertisements picture women doing the housework. What complicates things more is that most women in the rural areas are satisfied with their roles as housewives and mothers, and do not conceive their status as inferior or subordinate. It is only in urban areas among highly educated emancipated women, who are in contact with new ideas about emancipation, that this feeling of subordination, oppression and injustice prevails.

Women and Modern Life

One of the problems that the educated Egyptian woman faces is the conflict between her desire to catch up with western trends, and to be like western women, to wear the western-style clothing and to mix with men and enjoy the freedom she enjoys. At the same time there are certain restrictions imposed on her by religion and tradition. It is true that Islam gave Egyptian women many rights, which no other religion gave: Islamic women have the right to inherit, to have independent legal property rights, and to keep an independent budget of her own. Her husband has no right to interfere in her financial affairs, and she keeps her maiden name. This gives her a certain prestige. But at the same time Islam put many obligations and responsibilities on females. Muslim women should cover all their bodies, only the face and hands being left unveiled. Sex is a taboo. It is practised only in marriage. Sexual freedom is condemned. This does not mean that Islam deprived women from mixing with men, but women can mix only under certain conditions of chastity and purity. Women can learn and work side by side with men, but they should be veiled. Veiling of women protects men from temptation.

However, Egyptian society resists the application of a conservative interpretation of verses in scriptures relating to women.

Conclusion

The General Assembly of the United Nations and the specialized agencies have demonstrated a great interest in women's issues and problems. In 1975 the General Assembly in its 30 sessions considered 1976-1985 the United Nations Decade for Women. It was recommended that efforts should be doubled to give women equal rights in education, work and family relations. The image of women in the mass media should be changed, with women no longer being pictured only in the old traditional role of the housewife. In 1976, the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) asked its member states to expand social and health services for maternal care. In 1976 the Social and Economic Council of the United Nations adopted measures to realize definite aims for the international plan for women. The European Council, in February 1976, recognized the economic value of housework. These are only a few of the measures adopted at the international level to show the increasing interest in the role of women and their problems.

In Egypt the national Charter presented by Nasser in May 1962 states: "Women must be regarded as equal to men and must therefore shed the remaining shackles that impede their free movements, so that they may take a constructive and profound part in shaping life" (The Charter 1962:74). Article 71 of the Constitution of 1971 states: "The state shall guarantee the proper coordination between the duties of women towards the family and work in society, considering women equal with men in the field of political, social, cultural and economic life without violation of the rules of Islamic jurisprudence" (Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 1971:11). The Program of National Action during the rule of President Anwar El-Sadat acknowledges the participation of women in the political life. On the subject of women's participation in social life it exhorts that "the feminist movement is storing valuable capacities which should be given the opportunity to fully perform their mission in the field of national action" (The Program of National Action, 1971:83). The reform of the Personal Status Law, Provision 1979, during the reign of Sadat, and its amendment during the reign of Mubarak, was welcomed by women as elevating their status and providing them with greater security.

In spite of all the efforts to improve the status of women and to give them equal rights at the international and regional level, there is still much left to do. Egyptian women still have a low rate of participation in education, employment and political activity. More equality is needed in the personal status laws to protect women and ensure the security of family life. More attention should be given to the problems of women in the rural areas, where the traditional attitude towards women prevails and where services for maternal and child health are not always available. Efforts should also be doubled in family planning, because underdevelopment in these areas makes birth control very difficult. The old traditional image of women should disappear from children's textbooks, television programs and the press.

It is very difficult to predict future trends with regard to the future role and status of women in society, and to foresee how Egyptian women can contribute more positively and effectively towards progress and the future of Egypt.

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