

# Women in the Concept and Issues of Human Security Arab and International Perspectives

Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Arab Women Organisation Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 11-13 November 2008

## Under the Kind Patronage and Chairmanship of Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak

Editors
Bahgat Korany
Hania Sholkamy
Maya Morsy

Volume II

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Volume II

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Tel.: (+202) 2418 3301 - 2418 3101

Fax: (+202) 2418 3110

Website: www.arabwomenorg.org Email: info@arabwomenorg.net

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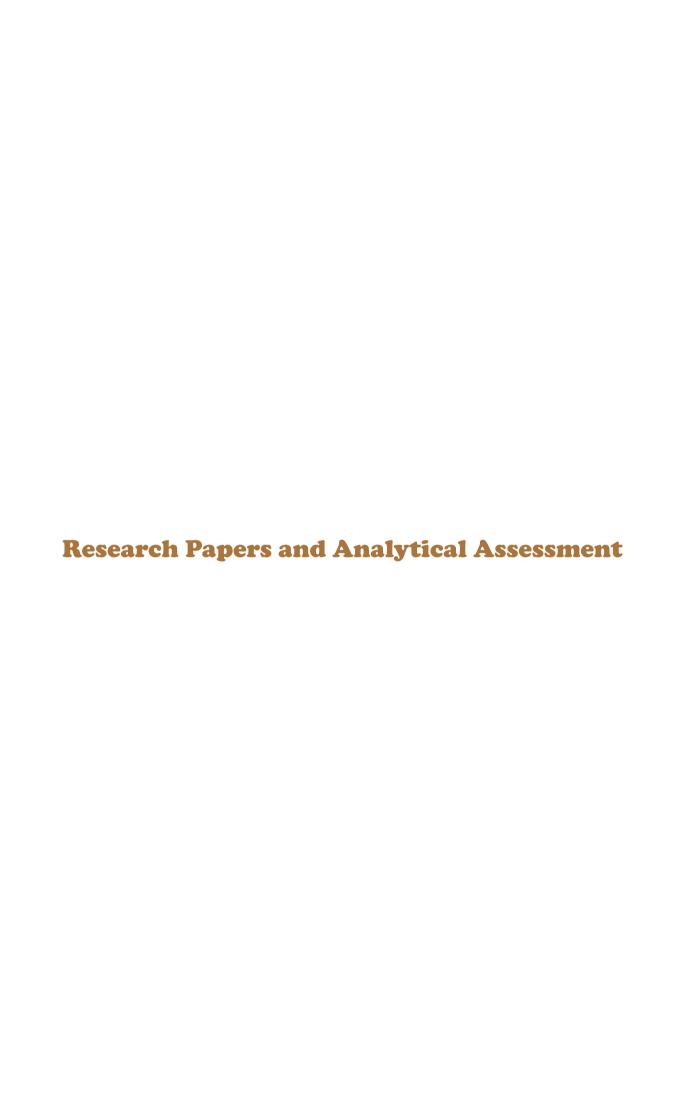
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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

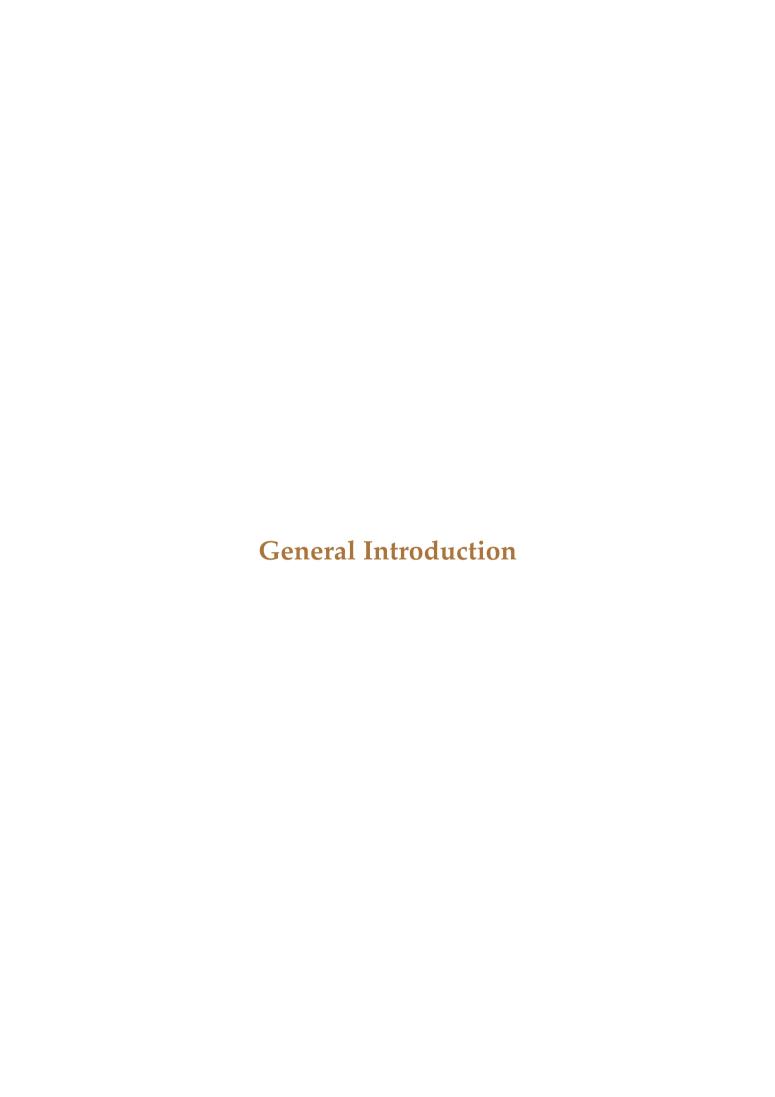
During the three years needed for the preparation of this work, the present editors incurred many debts.

Our gratitude must first go to AWO who invited us in the first place to set-up the scientific committee for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Summit conference and to carry out the editing of its proceedings. Special thanks go to AWO's Executive Council, its Director-General, Dr. Wadooda Badran and AWO's Director of planning, Dr. Ola Abu Zeid. It is important to mention that at the beginning of this enterprise we – as academics – were rather wary of any possible encroachment on our scientific independence. Now that the work is done, we are happy to note that AWO leadership has all along respected our independence. They thus proved that academic concerns and direct involvement in policy-oriented issues are not necessarily incompatible. On the contrary, they can be mutually reinforcing. Hopefully this successful experience will continue to guide collaboration among other parties in the Arab world.

Our gratitude goes, secondly, to our co-authors who produced first-rate research papers about issues that are still under-researched in our part of the world. We especially appreciate their readiness to implement suggestions for second and even third revisions. Discussants / commentators, both Arab and foreign, carried out their job so diligently that their contributions made the papers and the conference discussions richer in both scope and application.

Our greater thanks should go, however, to what we can call the 'behind the scene 'soldiers in this 3-year enterprise. The first one is Ms. Amal Monib, the Researcher of the Planning and Programs Department at AWO who followed scrupulously the written material from the tricky and long stage of editing to the final one of printing and publication. The second is Ms. Shaima Ragab, the assistant to the director of the AUC Forum. Ever since the set-up of the Scientific Committee, Shaima kept it on track, both efficiently and with good spirits.

Bahgat Korany Hania Sholkamy Maya Morsy



## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION\***

The march of women towards equality in civil and political rights started in the 20th century and led to decisive landmarks in Arab history. Arab women have won the right to work and to participate in all fields of public life, such as politics, as well as, civil and philanthropic activities. Women have also proven their capacities to perform both household and family tasks and to work outside home. Working Arab women were not excused from their traditional roles as wives and mothers, and so women often took on burdens that affected their health and safety. Women endured such conditions, nevertheless, because they did not want to give up the joy of being wives and mothers and of supporting and caring for their families.

Though progress has been made, women have yet to gain all their rights. The obstacles hindering their quest to assert themselves in public and in private should be removed. The way forward concerning equal rights for women is to prioritize security, human rights and development, three key elements that comprise the concept of human security. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of the year 2000, on women, security and peace, underlined these three elements as an avenue to fulfil their participation and safeguard gender equality. Since this historic resolution was passed, steps have been taken all over the world to ensure its implementation. Yet despite governmental and non-governmental efforts exerted in this direction, Arab awareness of the provisions of this resolution remains inadequate.

The current shift in the issues of women and social justice necessitates an integrated approach to development and human security, as it is not merely a one-dimensional issue devoid of national, political, or social significance. The Arab Women Organisation (AWO) has adopted the concept of human security as an approach that works towards achieving equality for women, as well as encouraging a national and Arab renaissance in terms of security and peace. As a way to support these efforts, AWO convened an academic international conference bringing together Arab and international scholars, decision-makers, politicians, and representatives of civil society to examine Arab women's issues from a human rights perspective and crystallise an agenda for future work vis-à-vis human security and national stability.

This volume contains the papers submitted during the conference held in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, 11-13 November 2008, upon the gracious invitation of Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak in conjunction with the United Arab Emirates. In addition to the papers of the conference, this volume also includes a short introduction on each section, to explain the importance of the commentaries and their relevance to the concept of security. Indeed, it is important to analyse this

<sup>\*</sup> The editors used papers submitted by the authors, discussants/commentators and rapporteurs to draft this introduction.

concept within a relevant academic, theoretical and social framework. By so doing, a link is established between human security and women's security and status.

The conference began by presenting a brief definition of the concept of security as "addressing threats", whether they military or non-military in origin. In security studies, there are two prevailing schools of thought in "addressing threats":

- The traditional view of security studies focuses on the concept of military aspects regarding the protection of the state. This school of thought still carries a great degree of influence, yet one of its principle weaknesses is that it does not account for security issues beyond the military aspect.
- The second school of thought, known as the "human security school", views world order in a broader sense, that is to say, not only restricted to a group of countries, but also including other international players, such as NGOs or multinational companies. This concept of security covers the response to diversified non-military threats as well.

Non-military threats include economic, cultural, political, social, environmental, health and personal security threats. Each requires decisive action. In terms of economic security, poverty is considered the most serious threat, while hunger is considered a threat to food security. All forms of diseases and epidemics pose threats to health security. Similarly, pollution, climate change and desertification in the Arab region threaten environmental safety and security. Personal security could be jeopardised by various forms of violence. Group security can be threatened by ethnic, religious or social factors.

Such a vision broadens the concept of what is considered a threat, but this concept contains shortcomings. The authors of the papers presented agreed on four of these shortcomings:

- The comprehensive and diversified concept of human security is more difficult to implement compared to traditional understanding. Furthermore, linking the concept of human security to freedom with needs and threats makes it difficult to implement without giving preference to one over the other.
- Promoting the concept of human security can lead to the traditional view of security, the military aspect, which can sideline the human aspect and focus on the security of the state.
- In some cases the human security is being exploited as a pretext for intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries.
- The concept of human security, though it has broadened and deepened the scope of threats, does not pay due attention to gender variance of security.

What is witnessed, therefore, is a shift in the concept of security from failing to separate between the security of the state and the security of citizens, to focusing on the general prosperity of humans. This approach rejects the use national security as a pretext to deprive humans of security, rights or to restrict freedoms. One example of such is the liberal use of the term terrorism as a pretext for depriving citizens of civil rights and basic freedoms.

Human beings comprise the core of the state, therefore freedoms and rights should be considered just as important as defending the frontiers and resources of the state. The question remains whether "human security" as a concept ensures the security of both women and men on equal terms, or the needs of women need to be taken into consideration specifically. Arguments were presented from both sides, with many of the papers calling for and providing suggestions on the integration of women, particularly Arab women, within the concept of human security.

The papers submitted have attempted to define the concept of human security in a way that is both accurate and relevant with the intent to underscore the importance and significance of safety and security for all. Furthermore, people's rights should not be compromised or confused by distorted concepts of security. It is important to capitalize on the information presented in the following papers in order to build upon past achievements, counter existing threats, and face the challenges of a changing world around.

## **Part One**

## From Traditional National Security to Human Security

## Introduction

Chapter One: World Visions of Security: How Far Have

Women Been Taken Into Consideration?

Bahgat Korany

**Chapter Two:** Armed Conflicts and the Security of Women

Ali Jarbawi and Asem Khalil

**Commentary Papers** 

**Discussions and Recommendations** 

## INTRODUCTION

The papers of Dr. Bahgat Korany and Dr. Ali Jarbawi are different in several aspects. While the paper of Dr. Korany was the first paper reviewed in the inaugural session of the conference, the paper of Dr. Jarbawi was one of the papers reviewed at the end of the conference. The paper of Dr. Korany focused on the theories of security and their development, and the impact of this on the status of women, while the paper of Dr. Jarbawi focused on conflict and Arab women. However, the papers shared several points:

- Both papers consider that "national security" the traditional concept of security
   has narrowed the understanding of security from a comprehensive concept to a limited one related to the security of the ruling regime more than the security of society or even the state itself.
- The papers agree that we cannot count on a partial concept of security, be it military or societal. In the 1970s, Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung pointed to the diversified nature of implicit or unstated violence, such as the siege currently imposed on Palestinians in Gaza or the violence enacted against Palestinians by Jewish settlers.
- The two papers also agree on the importance of broadening and deepening the concept of security to make it more comprehensive and able to address and reflect all patterns of threat facing state and society at the same time. Accordingly, the two papers adopt a comprehensive concept of security and safety, while most of the studies presented at the conference focused on certain aspects of security, such as education, health or environment.

In this context, Dr. Korany reviewed in the first part of his paper the early emergence of the concept of security and its development from a limited concept focusing only on military aspects to a comprehensive concept covering everything related to human security. In his analytical assessment of this development, Dr. Korany believes that the differences between the two uses of the security concept — military security and human security — reflect a deeper philosophical conflict regarding a vision of the international order and its elements. For instance, the traditional military concept of security focuses on the international order as relations between the states and their armies only, or what is termed by Dr. Korany "the militarisation of security". The concept of human security focuses on world order not in terms of relations between the states and armies alone, but also relations among societies forming an international civil society.

However, Dr. Korany also believes that the concept of human security — though modern and broader than the traditional concept of security — is incomplete, as it does not encompass the situation of women. Dr. Korany presents his critical assessment of the concept. He then focuses on an assessment of international studies on Arab women. Dr. Korany concludes by presenting seven proposals aimed at curbing the most domineering aspects of patriarchal culture, which represent a basic obstacle to the empowerment and progress of women.

On the other hand, the paper of Dr. Jarbawi begins from the position that we should not focus only on stated or clear violence, but that we should work to uncover all forms of violence targeting women. The paper analyses patterns of conflict and classifies them according to three categories:

- Armed conflict between states and armies.
- Armed conflict within the state (civil war).
- Armed struggle against occupation, as the case of Palestine or Iraq (where civilians also engage in armed conflict).

In all cases, women in particular suffer. Indeed, women's suffering is not only restricted to physical suffering but extends to psychological concerns (e.g., panic over what might happen to a husband, child or relatives). Under such conditions, women are often obliged to flee to other places where they can face other threats, such as need, loneliness and the possibility of being subject to rape or other forms of sexual aggression. Both Dr. Jarbawi and Dr. Korany agree that we should not separate, while addressing the aspects of violence against women, what occurs in times of war and in times of peace because violence against women, be it physical or psychological, is a continuous process in patriarchal societies. Instead, according to the two authors, we should focus on the empowerment of women at all times.

Despite loopholes existing in international law, many resolutions of the international Organisations and conferences outwardly focus on the empowerment of women. Indeed, this empowerment of women should be viewed as an integral part of the democratic shift, seen in the light of the efforts of society as a whole to apply the concept of human security. The integrated and comprehensive vision of the two papers places women as a basis for progress in society. Both authors underlined that women in the Arab region not only represent half of society and giving birth to and raise the other half, but they represent the totality of all life. As Dr. Korany noted, quoted Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, "I will not call you woman, I will call you everything."

## **Chapter One**

World Visions of Security: How Far Have Women Been
Taken Into Consideration?

Bahgat Korany

## WORLD VISIONS OF SECURITY: HOW FAR HAVE WOMEN BEEN TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION?

The beginning of the 21st century is characterised by raging debate in two crucial fields of analysis and policy: those of gender and security. Yet these two fields have not been systemically linked. Indeed, it might to be fair to say that their relationship is still very much terra incognito, both for the analyst and the policymaker. The importance of the second bi-annual conference of the Arab Women Organisation (AWO) is to link these fields together via culture, economy, education, social policy, health, environment and current conflicts. Though conflict situations are rampant, the argument of this paper (and probably the findings of my colleagues in other submitted papers) is that women's insecurity goes beyond explicit conflict situations.

At all times and at all levels security has been a basic need. This is why approaches to its realisation and its definition have been at the centre of both political analysis and policy formulation. For the purposes of this paper, security is defined as simply the empowerment of individuals or collectivities to cope with threats.

The conventional definition of security centres on "national security": the defence of the state against military threats in an anarchical world. The state is to be shored up as a guarantor of stability and order. This cult of the state stretches back to philosophers such as Englishman Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) or the Arab Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406). National security is the basis of the geopolitical power politics school and the whole field of strategic studies. Part I of this paper is devoted to an analysis of this influential school; a presentation and a critical assessment of the kind of (in)secure world it envisions and the means to attain a minimum of security.

Since this vision reduces the complexity of international relations to inter-state relations and military threats, Part II presents the alternative vision, increasingly understood by the concept of human security. This alternative's world is one of transnational relations and complex interdependence, or globalisation. Two diagrams and a table synthesise the differences in these two worldviews (Weltenchung). Their conceptions of (in) security differ also. Whereas the geopolitical vision is limited to military threat, the transnational / globalisation vision widens and deepens the list of threats. Part II shows how threats are increasingly people centred. Further tables are annexed to emphasise the multiple non-military dimensions of threats to human security. The basic assumption of this approach is that without its people's security as a base any collectivity's security is an empty shell.

Given the centrality of this concept to our conference, Part III traces its origins, presents its basics and discusses its problems of measurement and application. The operationalisation

and application of its multiple (wide and deep) threats are synthesised into two main categories: freedom from want and freedom from fear, freedoms for which the paper finds explicit mention in the Quran. As with the first vision, this second one is assessed too. Though superior to the geopolitical, reductionist vision, and much more reflective of the complex globalised world of today, it is found wanting in three major respects, including that of being gender blind.

The paper then focuses on the issue of gender to make a limited inventory of what we know in relation to Arab women. Part IV presents and content analyses three large research enterprises focused on Arab women: UNIFEM's Progress of Arab Women (PAW, 2004) project, the UNDP's Arab Human Development Report (AHDR, 2005-2006), and the ongoing six-volume Encyclopaedia of Women and Islamic Cultures (EWIC, 2003). To extract findings and evaluate policy implications concerning the (inferior) status of women, Part V inventories PAW and ADHR. Despite some improvement, there is still much room to reduce gender imbalances and consolidate women's capabilities to cope with threats. The paper believes that this can be done at the political level to guarantee women's effective participation in actual decision-making.

To initiate the discussion for effective women's empowerment, Part VI suggests seven actionable areas. They range from ironing-out aspects of patriarchy and negative stereotyping, redirecting public discourse and legal structures, to modifying election laws and practices for a women friendly political environment. Crucial to the success of these steps is — in addition to state adoption of feminism — the consolidation of women's civil society movements.

The paper's organisation is funnel-like, from the general and macro to the more specific and individual level. Its assumption is that the narrowing down of gender imbalances is a prerequisite for achieving the Arab Nahda or renaissance.

#### PART I: THE PROTECTION OF THE STATE

Because security has been basic to individuals as well as collectivities since the dawn of history it has been part of common parlance and a meeting point of many scientific disciplines, from psychology or anthropology to international relations. Since the beginning of the modern international system (that dates back to the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, ending the authority of the church in favour of the nation-state), the dominant security conception centred on "national security" — el-amn el-watani. Strategic studies — the military science of defining and protecting this "national security" — has in the last four centuries proliferated through military colleges, universities and think tanks. It magnified a state-centric conception of international relations; almost a cult of the state that has persisted since early modern times when the state was a newcomer, a symbol of stability out of disorder. Influential philosophers and shapers of thought — from East and West — show us why the state was afforded such a high regard.

#### i. State as guarantor amid permanent war

Thus the British political theorist Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), traumatised by the English Civil War, looked at the state as a saviour, a guarantor of a minimum of stability. Though natural law was respected, it could not be enforced in an anarchical state of nature, i.e., a

state of permanent war of man against man. The power of natural law needed an authority to enforce it. This authority is achieved by a social contract between men to choose a sovereign, a leader to incarnate this state authority and establish law and order, the "Leviathan".

It is important to emphasise that in this approach the alternative to the state is anarchy. Thus the state of nature is not only prior to the establishment of (state) authority, but can also return upon the decline of such authority. It could be a situation of political regression like the present case of failed/collapsed states — such as Somalia or Afghanistan. Though Hobbes conditioned the establishment of political authority on contract and consent, his aversion of the anarchical state of nature and his obsession with order associated him — like the French Jean Bodin (1530-1596) — with absolutism and the cult of the state.

Though marginalised in the dominant annals of political and social theory, the Arab medieval sociologist Abdel Rahman Ibn Khaldun is another admirer of the state, or dawla, or at least the dawla in a certain phase of its evolution (Al Muqadema, 1967; Azmah, 1982). Dawla is valued because it sustains "umran (truly civilised life), certain forms of conduct, such as kindliness to the subjects and ethics employed in the circle of power." Though inseparable from the "asabiyya" of a clan, Ibn Khaldun's dawla is — in its youth — the incarnation of political order and a prerequisite of human civilisation.

But differently from Hobbes or Bodin, Ibn Khaldun worries about the decline of the state because of its overuse of brutal power. The state is less legitimating when rulers are obsessed with worldly enjoyment at the expense of proper political management. For since it is asabiyya that makes dawla possible, once asabiyya begins to drain away, through luxury and other phenomena related to city life, rulers begin to lose political control and authority succumbs to another group with stronger asabiyya — as the Arabs lost power to the Turks of Beni Othman. To avoid the vagaries of the decline of the state, Ibn Khaldun spoke revealingly of "rulership as a relationship" (Muqadema: 152-153, as in Black, 2001: 180-182).

Revealingly, because "rulership and relationship" are significant, as we will see for the evolving conceptions of security: the traditional "national security" versus evolving "human security". Let us start with the first.

## ii. State security: the conventional definition

Ever since the institutionalisation of the inter-state system with the peace of Westphalia national sovereignty has been the focus of international politics. A state's security dilemma is the presence of other "sovereign" states, and the state's primary task is to assure its own survival. This survival may be guaranteed by developing the capabilities to defend its territory against external and military attack (See Korany et al, 1993). As Walter Lippman put it in 1943:

A nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by such victory in such a war. (Lippman, 1943: 51; Ayoob, in korany, et al 1993: 31-55)

Arnold Wolfers finds Lippman's definition a reflection of the general consensus in literature since it states that, "security rises and falls with the ability of the nation to deter an attack or to defeat it. This is in accord with the common usage of the term." (Wolfers, 1962: 150).

Contemporary classics in the field of strategic studies faithfully follow this tradition. In The Makers of Modern Strategy, Peter Paret states from the outset the object of modern strategy as:

... the ideas of soldiers and civilians since the Renaissance on the most effective application of their society's military resources: how can the fighting power available, or potentially available, be used to best purpose? (Paret, 1976: 3-4).

The revised version of another contemporary classic, Contemporary Strategy, elaborates on the discussion but finally comes to the same conclusion. John Garnett quotes approvingly Ken Booth's description of strategy as a "deadly business" and continues:

It is concerned with the darker side of human nature, in that it examines the way in which military power is used by governments in the pursuit of their interests. Now, because military power refers to the capacity to kill, to maim, to coerce, and to destroy, it follows that it is a crude instrument. Its use determines not who is right in any dispute, but whose will is going to prevail, and its utility arises, fundamentally, out of the depressing fact that human beings, their property and the society in which they live are easily destroyed. It is this fragility of human beings and their artefacts that is exploited by those who wield military power. (Garnett, 1992: 8).

This military straightjacket is also donned by analysts of the Middle East. In a review of Strategic Studies and the Middle East, P. Edward Haley shows awareness of some existing criticism of the militaristic definition of strategic and national security analyses:

It has long been fashionable in developing countries to condemn strategic studies. Arab scholars and analysts in particular speak and write of strategic studies as manipulative, biased toward the West and intellectually incomplete. The momentous recent changes in Central Europe and the Soviet Union also pose a challenge to strategic studies, although for different reasons. In a time of perestroika and free elections in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, many in Europe, the United States, and Asia increasingly regard the use of military force as irrelevant, as having been supplanted by international trade and investment. (Haley, 1991: 208).

But Haley shuns this criticism and, prefacing his analysis with a long quotation from Clausewitz, bases his survey of the literature on the standard definition of strategic and national security studies. It is worth quoting him in detail:

The research assistants who aided me in the preparation of this paper were instructed to follow Basil Liddell Hart's definition of strategy in determining whether to include an article in their lists. Liddell Hart defined strategy as 'the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy'. The researchers were also asked to count studies about grand strategy, or the coordination and direction of 'all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war. (Haley, 1993: 211, emphasis added).

One is reminded in this context of the saying of Professor Lawrence Freedman of London's University College: "I am professor of war studies, and proud of it." Indeed, this limited sampling of literature shows a surprising consensus. For both classicists and contemporaries,

generalists and regionalists, national security is the defence against military or external threats, perceived or real, potential or immediate. If there is a theory of national security it is geopolitical in orientation and its main philosophical assumptions are those of the "realist" school of power politics. Let us detail these two points.

#### iii. Geopolitics as the theory of national security

Geopolitics constituted the most prominent of early approaches to national security. This school of thought is perhaps best represented in the works of Alfred Mahan (1840-1914) and Sir Harold Mackinder (1861-1947) who associated either the seas or the heartland with the state's national power. The basis of the geopolitical approach (Eppe Haaglund 1989, for the Middle East, Kemp & Harkavy, 1997) can be synthesised into three elements:

- Geographic features constitute "immutable factors" at the basis of a state's power and status in the international system.
- But changing factors could still be a function of geography. Thus composition and density of population, immigration flows, endowment or poverty in mineral and natural resources (especially strategic resources such as petrol or uranium) influence a country's strategic position and power in the international arena.
- Consequently, the world with its divisions, similarities and differences is the sum total of these geopolitical determinants. As a result, geopolitics according to its advocates helps us to understand this "world" not only as it is, but also as it evolves.

In the most recent Atlas Strategique, for example, Gerard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau emphasise how "la geopolitique" determines power relations at the world level. Much the same could also be said of Ray Cline's work on global power distribution (Chaliand & Rageau, 1988).

Though still relevant, Geopolitics would have been more useful if limited to being one variable in an explanatory scheme, rather than posing as the overriding determinant of both past and future worlds. In addition to this reductionist tendency, the geopolitical approach has to overcome another disadvantage — that of being rather static and lagging behind growing changes in the world, both technological and political. Moreover, geopolitics is handicapped because its premises are entrenched in a philosophical vision, a paradigm that itself emphasises continuity in history from antiquity to the contemporary world: the power school, or realist school of international relations.

It is important to emphasise that this paradigm is presented as universal over time and space. Indeed, its proponents insist on tracing its roots back to the ancient Greece of Thucydides through Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Hobbes all the way up to Kissinger. The Prince's four chapters (XV-XVIII) that include the quintessence of "Machiavellianism" are based on the concepts of power and realpolitik. It is not a coincidence that the opening chapter of Paret's aforementioned classic is on Machiavelli as a contributor to the renaissance of the art of war. It is equally to Hobbes' Leviathan that contemporary realists go for inspiration, emphasising the state of nature and "the war of all against all" in characterising the international arena as a sphere of "anarchy". According to Hobbes, the social pact, by virtue of which each member of the republic has given up a part of his freedom in favour of a central authority, created a "state of society" within the republic. But such a pact does not exist between republics. Consequently, these inter-republic relations — contrary to intra-republic ones — are dominated by anarchy.

Raymond Aron, probably still the most influential theoretician of international relations in the French-speaking world, reiterates Hobbes's vision almost verbatim. Aron starts his magnum opus on the theory of international relations by observing that as long as humanity is not united in the form of a universal state there will be an essential difference between internal and international politics. In internal politics, the monopoly of the use of force will be in the hands of one legitimate authority, whereas at the international level no such monopoly or legitimate authority exists. On the contrary, this latter level is characterised by multiple centres of military power. And Aron adds that in this sense inter-state relations are still in "a state of nature" (Aron, 1962). In an oft-cited article that raises the crucial question about what is specific to justify a theory of international relations as distinct from political theory, Aron answers that it is the existence of the state of nature at the international level and the legality of the resort to force by the different centres of power — the various states (Aron, 1967).

Whatever the source of the problem, the result is persistent conflict, insecurity, and an ensuing struggle for power in the international arena. This is why the most important objective of each state is to look after its own "national interest", defined primarily in terms of national security and national power. Consequently, each state has to increase its (military) capabilities to deter any potential aggressor. In other words, if you want peace, prepare for war — even at the cost of a continuous arms race. In equally concrete political terms, realism advises alliances as potentially good means of deterring aggression, but admonishes the state to be "realistic" about its allies, who will aim to promote their own interests and plans. This is why realism has presented itself as an amoral theory of international politics: to achieve international stability a state cannot trust international Organisations or international law but must rely primarily on its own power.

The realists' conceptual system has thus managed to integrate the problematique of national security into a coherent description of both the wider international arena and of the human actors running it. This synthetic view is expressed in clear language and a literary style, which helped it to be absorbed by the public as well as specialists. Moreover, by emphasising the most conspicuous and newsworthy aspects of international relations — the question of power and war, or so-called "high" politics — it acquired the air of a proven truth. To both statesmen and the public, it appealed as an epitome of what is most important and relevant to know about the intricacies of the "outside" world. Realists profited from historical analysis, but they exceeded historians in so far as they offered a coherent conceptual framework for both intellectual analysis and practice, indeed both a theory of the international system and a programme for action. No wonder, then, that Hans Morgenthau's Politics Among Nations (1948) is still cited as the most popular textbook on international politics and the one that continues to shape policymakers' views (Rosenau et al. 1977; Vasquez, 1983).

#### iv. Critical assessment

Until as late as the end of the Cold War and the early 1990s the whole field of international relations and not only security analysis has been reduced to this state-centric view of the world. The dominant perception of the dynamics of the international system is that of a group of states still living in international anarchy where military force is the decisive factor.

What about the role of international Organisations? When they exist — like the League of Nations in the inter-war period, or the UN in the post-1945 period — they are not independent

international actors but the reflection of the will of the states that established them in the first place. A simple design of international relations as a purely inter-state system looks like this:



It is not that wars are absent in history, for World War I (1914-18) cost 8,500,00 lives, a figure that jumped about 150 per cent to be more than 20,000,000 in World War II — huge figures for world population at the time. Even a regional war like the 1980-88 Iraq-Iran war cost almost 900,000 lives (Hough, 2004: 22). But it is this reductionism of all international relations to the state and its warring relations that is anachronistic in the world of the 21st century.

Despite its popularity, this conceptual lens is an incomplete and even a misleading reflection of our present world. It is misleading because its seductive simplicity — with the convenient slogan of international anarchy — lulls observers into a partial understanding of world complexities, thereby distracting researchers from a multi-dimensional approach to the international system. Part of its problem stems from its state-centeredness (that is, states are the only international actors that count). Is Somalia really more influential than Shell, Exxon or General Motors? A multi-centric or transnational view of the international system thus provides a more comprehensive explanatory framework for the understanding of international relations. Even in terms of analysing trends in violence it is necessary. For instance, significant international terror attacks rose in 2004 compared to 2003, from 175 to 651 with a death toll of 9000 — double that of the previous year (Human Security Report, 2005: 44).

Equally important are the differences between the two visions as regards both the structure and processes of world interactions. For instance, whereas in the state-centric world the principal goals of actors are the preservation of territorial integrity and physical security, in the multi-centric one, the objective could be non-military such as an increase in world market shares, or maintenance and integration of social systems. Whereas the normative priorities of the first are the preservation of formal sovereignty, the latter might emphasise such "societal" aspects as human rights, justice or reduction of developmental gaps. In this case, cooperation – as a world characteristic — is as important as conflict, and the use of armed

force could be replaced by withholding cooperation. Even in many conflict situations, the use of military force — so dear to the established paradigm of national security — is not even thought of as a means of settling the issue, as the interdependence model of the international system pleaded years ago (Keohane and Nye, 1977 and 1996).

Leaving aside certain questionable philosophical assumptions, realism is characterised by two empirical deficiencies relevant to our specific concerns. First, its conception of international relations — as Aron underscored — is based on a separation rather than a distinction between internal and international politics, between (internal) "order" and (international) "disorder". But we must ask, what kind of order do we really have in Somalia or Sudan compared to the international relations between Sweden and Germany or the US and Canada? Second, international politics is traditionally the realm of "high" politics, whereas domestic politics — where national security is not supposedly threatened — is the realm of "low" politics. But in cases of internal ethnic conflict, or famine so great that it threatens the state's survival, does not low politics really become high politics?

History is not then reduced to inter-state tragedies, but intra-state ones can be just as deadly: e.g., between 1215-79 the Mongols killed 18.8 million of their Chinese subjects; between 1940-45 the Nazis killed 10.5 million Central Europeans; from 1959-2000, the Chinese killed 1.6 million Tibetans; and in only four years — 1966-70 — the Nigerian army killed one million Nigerian Ibos to end Biafra's secession (Hough, 2004: 108). The Taiping Revolution (1850-64) cost China 20,000,000 lives, followed 80 years later in the Chinese Civil War (1945-49) by 2.5 millions (Hough, 2004: 72).

But in addition to neglecting intra-state processes, the national security / power ideology was not only conflictual, but organically so. It is based on a zero-sum mindset, of complete loss or gain, with no prospect of a win/win situation. And when it aims to settle problems it limits itself to the symptoms, like controlling the arms race, but is incapable of facing up to the real sources of conflict or coping with them. Because of this vision's conception of international relations as inherently conflictual, we are asked to be "realistic" and to resign ourselves to the inevitability of war.

Moreover, the state is "black-boxed", particularly its internal dynamics and the pattern of state-society relations. It is indeed peculiar that the realist paradigm, characterised by its state-centeredness, has neglected to dwell on the basic properties of its raison d'etre: the state as principal international actor. As a result, the paradigm has simply transferred the specific pattern of the European state to the status of universal model. But Arab states — as part of the Third World — are different.

## PART II: GLOBALISED INTERDEPENDENCE AND SOCIETY-CENTERED SECURITY

Absent from the state-centric vision is the presence of any non-state actors, including multi-national companies (MNCs). As we know, Shell or General Motors' budgets are greater than the combined budgets of a dozen states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America or even in our region. Across history, some of these companies — for example in India in the 16th century, or in the Congo-Katanga in the last century — even had their own armies. Non-state conflicts are now more numerous than

inter-state conflicts (Human Security Report, 2005: 21, with a diagram on pp. 23-24). Moreover, not only are wars more non-state or within state than inter-state, but they are also becoming privatised (ibid: 38-39).

Thus, the geopolitical vision that conceives of the state as a monolithic and closed unit is out of touch with today's world. Society is absent. Consequently, no analysis is included on the social groups — e.g., gender — that shape state dynamics and resulting policies, including with regards to security. On the contrary, in a globalised world of complex interdependence inter-societal connectedness among multiple actors is paramount, and these have to be reflected in security and threats to it. The global system with its myriad interactions is necessarily more complex, as the following diagram and comparative table show:

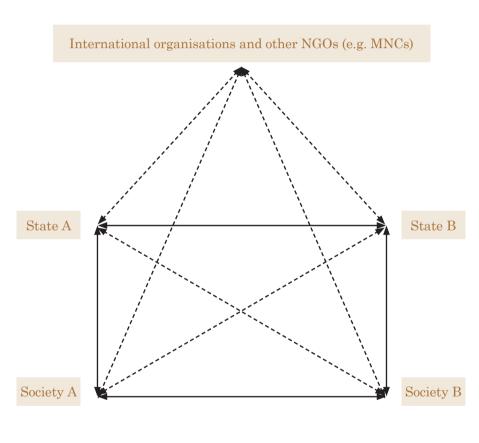


Diagram No. 2

The cobweb model in international relations

**Table 1:** Political processes under conditions of geopolitical power politics and complex interdependence.

interdependence.	Geopolitical power	Transnational complex
	politics	independence
Goals of Actors	Military security will be the dominant goal.	Goals of states will vary by issue area.  Transgovernmental politics will make goals difficult to define. Transnational actors will pursue their own goals.
Instruments of state policy	Military force will be most effective, although economic and other instruments will also be used.	Power resources specific to issue areas will be the most relevant. Manipulation of interdependence, international organisations, and transnational actors will be major instruments.
Agenda formation	Potential shifts in the balance of power and security threats will set the agenda in high politics and will strongly influence other agendas.	Agenda will be affected by changes in the distribution of power resources within issue areas; the status of international regimes; changes in the importance of transnational actors; linkages from other issues and politicisation as a result of rising sensitivity to interdependence.
Linkages of issues	Linkages will reduce differences in outcomes among issue areas and reinforce international hierarchy.	Linkages by strong states will be more difficult to make since force will be ineffective. Linkages by weak states through international Organisations will erode rather than reinforce hierarchy.
Roles of international Organisations	Roles are minor, limited by state power and the importance of military force.	Organisations will set agendas, induce coalition-formation, and act as arenas for political action by weak states. Ability to choose the organisational forum of an issue and to mobilise votes will be an important political resource.

Source: Keohane and Nye, 1977: 37.

As in Korany (1999), "The Arab World and the New Balance of Power in the New Middle East," in M. Hudson, Middle East Dilemmas, Columbia University Press.

More interactions can increase knowledge of each other, but can also increase threats. A case in point is contagious diseases. Hence the necessity of coming together to cope with common threats (i.e., international cooperation).

**Table 2:** Ten most significant global infectious disease threats

Disease	Cause	Main areas affected	Annual deaths
1. Lower respiratory diseases	Influenza and pneumonia virus passed on by coughing and sneezing	Global but most deadly in LDCs (less developed countries)	3.9 million
2. AIDS	Virus transmitted by bodily fluids	Global but principally Sub-Saharan Africa	2.9 million
3. Diarrhoea	Various diseases carried by waterborne viruses, bacteria and parasites (e.g., cholera, dysentery, e.coli)	India, China, Sub-Saharan Africa	2.1 million
4. Tuberculosis	Bacterial infection transmitted by coughing and sneezing	LDCs principally and South East Asia	1.7 million
5. Malaria	Parasites transmitted by mosquito	The Tropics	1.1 million
6. Measles	Virus affecting children	Global	0.8 million
7. Hepatitis B	Virus transmitted via blood (e.g., sharing needles) causing liver diseases	Global but principally Africa and East Asia	0.6 million
8. Tetanus	Bacterial infection affecting babies and mothers during birth due to unsanitary conditions	LDCs in Asia and Sub Saharan Africa	0.3 million
9. Pertussis (whopping cough)	Bacterial infection of the lungs	Africa	0.3 million
10. Meningitis	Bacterial infection transmitted by human contact	Global but most deadly in Sub-Saharan Africa	0.2 million

Source: Figures from Hough, 2004:155.

Consequently, the transnational complex interdependence vision results in different world dynamics characterised by:

- The multiplicity of threats
- Their non-military character
- The presence of joint interest among international actors and hence the necessity of coming together to combat joint threat. In the place of the geopolitical vision of zero sum strategy and inevitably escalating conflict, everyone can in this complex interdependence vision profit from a win/win situation.

Indeed, when we have been obsessed with (zero sum) military threats, common threats were proving more deadly (See Korany, 1986, for an early attempt to widen the security definition). For instance, in 2005 alone, 91,900 died of natural catastrophes and for the 17-month period of December 2004 to April 2006, this number reached 323,835 including Tsunami victims (Kadry, 2007). For other examples of deadly non-military threats please refer to the Annexes.

### PART III: HUMAN SECURITY IN FOCUS

Because of its attempt to include a huge list of threats, the "human security" concept runs the risk of becoming ambiguous and elusive. This ambiguity stems from its richness and from its attempt to reflect as truthfully as possible the present complex global system. A document of the regional bureau of the UNDP is to the point:

In the past 20 years or so, the concept of human security has entered international policy, diplomatic and developmental thinking under various definitions. Although the concept remains ambiguous around its edges, its core focus on safeguarding lives, livelihoods and basic human rights has shifted policy attention to people as the proper subjects of security. That focus has become increasingly pertinent in a globalised world undermined by jarring paradoxes. This is a world where the two top Fortune 500 corporations can earn more than all the least developed countries combined; where 21st century medicine performs daily miracles and yet three million people die every year of preventable diseases; where science probes deeper into remote universes than ever before, yet 130 million children cannot go to school; where despite multilateral covenants, institutions and coalitions of states, peoples in most regions live under multiple threats, ranging from terror and identity-based conflicts to climate change and the accelerating scramble for resources." (UNDP, The Human Security Framework: 4-5).

### i. Demilitarising security

In a nutshell, it is best to consider human security as a demilitarised concept of security, making it people-centred. It is not necessarily an attempt to exclude the traditional concept of state security, but to humanise and help it cope with myriad internal and external challenges (Korany, 2005). Again, from the UNDP:

In academic circles, it is commonplace these days to speak of the diminished State. In the post-Cold War world order, external and eternal challenges to the integrity of states have multiplied. From without, environmental pollution, international terrorism, large population movements, volatility in the global financial system and the rise of other cross-border threats such as pandemics, the drug trade and human trafficking have all laid siege to traditional notions of security. Within countries, spreading poverty, civil wars, sectarian and ethnic conflicts and state repression have sharply underlined the weak or negative role of many states in securing their citizens' lives and livelihoods. Not surprisingly, attention has shifted away from safeguarding the integrity of states to protecting the lives of citizens who reside in them. The concept of human security emerges from this shift (UNDP, Note From the Regional Office: 3).

The concept of human security attempts to adapt to the new strategic environment based on indirect deaths from disease or malnutrition, existing before military conflict or exacerbated by it. These non-military threats kill far more people than missiles, bombs and bullets (Human Security Report, 2005: 7).

The pioneering milestone that launched the concept was the 1994 Human Development Report, Dimensions of Human Security, under the leadership of Pakistan's ex-finance minister, Mahbub Al-Huq. The report posited seven components of human security:

- Economic security threatened by poverty
- Food security threatened by hunger and famine
- Health security threatened by injury and disease
- Environmental security threatened by pollution, environmental degradation and resource depletion
- Personal security threatened by forms of violence
- Political security threatened by political repression
- Community security threatened by social unrest and instability.

This widened concept of security posed, however, a problem, because it overlapped with another basic concept, that of human development. Consequently it risked losing its specificity, its own raison d'etre. If it covered existing familiar ground, why would it be needed?

The UN Commission on Human Security, recognising this overlap, emphasised, "The critical and pervasive dimension of threats to the vital core of the individual." (Commission on Human Security, 2003: 6, emphasis added). Critical threats are deep ones, and pervasive means they are large scale and recur over time.

In this case, the accepted definition of human security has tried to take the best of both the narrow and broad schools to be understood as "the protection of the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive environmental, economic, food, health, personal and political threats." (UNDP, Note from the Regional Office: 5).

In this sense, we can say that human security is the "rearguard", the infrastructure, or launching board of human development. It is, simply, its prerequisite. By coping successfully with myriad threats, it reduces desperation, a prerequisite for aspiring to human development.

Exemplifying this dialectical relationship between human security and human development is the case of illiteracy:

We are accustomed to seeing illiteracy addressed as a development ill. Combating this affliction is a cornerstone of human development. Yet illiteracy is also a source of extreme insecurity, as Amartya Sen and others have argued. People who cannot read or write face the certainty of deprivation. The certainty, not the risk. Whole worlds that enable them to lift themselves out of poverty are closed to them. They therefore cannot secure their lives in economic terms. An illiterate person is one who cannot easily understand or invoke his or her legal rights, which leaves that person unprotected by law. An illiterate woman is doubly disadvantaged since even literate men are not always interested in helping her to exercise those rights. Illiterates cannot participate fully in the political arena, or give effective voice to legitimate grievances, and are thus often excluded from decisions that closely concern them. They cannot absorb health messages or benefit directly from health education, or grasp the importance of such measures as birth control. Disenfranchised and vulnerable through life, they eke out precarious existences that constantly border on breakdown and the instability that flows from there. While people thus deprived can be reached by normal development interventions, in repressive political systems that perpetuate and exploit their exclusion, the severity of their condition can justifiably be seen as a threat to human security. (Ibid: 6).

## ii. From theory to policy application

No concept, however crucial or needed, can be seriously adopted if it cannot be operationalised, i.e., applied. Human security is no exception. This is why the attempt to measure the concept, to find its set of indicators, has given rise to a huge statistical industry — sometimes motivated by extrinsic needs of some think tanks (need for fundraising in the name of science?). I have counted no less than 156 suggested indicators in this rich literature (Korany, 2006, Paper to the Joint UN-AUC Forum Workshop on Human Security). The application of such a huge number of indicators would appear unmanageable and become, in the end, self-defeating. Consequently, the most practical compromise is to highlight the essence of human security: freedom from fear and freedom from want.

Freedom from fear may be divided into three sub-categories: personal security, community security and political security. As for freedom from want, it comes nearest to the concept of human development, and may be subdivided into four sub-categories: economic security, food security, environment security, and health security. Each of these sub-categories has its own indicators. For instance, food security has four: availability and supply of food, food production per capita, daily calorific intake as a percentage of basic human needs, and share of household budget for food. As for community security, it has three indicators: international/regional conflicts, internal sectarian or ethnic conflicts, and discrimination against sects/ethnic groups/minorities. All in all, the two main categories with their seven subcategories give us a total of 38 indicators — a much more manageable number than the previous 156!

I suggest leaving the number of specific indicators open to allow flexibility in application, depending on the specific context of the country or region. Our plan for application should be focused on the two main categories freedom from want and freedom from fear. They, interestingly, correspond to the definition of security emphasised by the Quran:

"لإيلاف قريش. إيلافهم رحلة الشتاء و الصيف. فليعبدوا رب هذا البيت. الذي أطعمهم من جوع و آمنهم من خوف" (سورة قريش. 1 - 4) For the tradition of Quraish.

Their tradition of travelling for winter and summer.

So let them worship the Lord of this House.

Who provides them with food lest they should go hungry, and with security lest they should live in fear.

God gives a parable, a town that was secure and at rest its provision coming to in abundance from every side, but it was ungrateful for the blessing of God, so God let it taste the garment of hunger and fear of what they were doing.

## iii. Critical assessment

The emerging human security vision certainly reflects the world of today. Despite the width of the phenomena it encompasses, it has tackled measurement problems and hence has become operational and applicable. It seems, then, to combine the two cardinal benefits of any successful research and policy-oriented programme: relevance and precision. Is it the perfect blueprint for the Arab world and Arab women? Three criticisms can be addressed in this respect:

a. Throwing the baby out with the bath water. In some versions, the human security blueprint is presented as an alternative to the traditional militarised concept; not to supplement, but to supplant it. It is presented as the only approach. In a region like the Middle East, still conflict ridden with traditional violent inter-state military confrontations, the old conception of security cannot simply be put aside. The list of traditional conflicts is not only long, but many of them are persistent and resilient. A paradigmatic case is obviously the Arab-Israeli conflict with its six deadly wars in less than 60 years, military incursions too frequent to count (e.g., the 1981 attack on the Osiris nuclear plant, or the 2007 air strikes close to Damascus). Wars can be destructive of both people and infrastructure. The last general Arab-Israeli war in 1973 killed about 21,000. As for destruction of buildings and infrastructure, Amnesty International, quoting Lebanese government sources, estimated the 2006 Hizbollah-Israel war losses to be \$3.5 billion.

Moreover, there are in our region traditional border conflicts, some of which can provoke not only military confrontations but also full scale wars. We should not forget that the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War that killed about one million and wounded many more was — ostensibly at least — about border demarcation around Shatt Al-Arab.

Border demarcation is of course associated with the concepts of state sovereignty and national security. In some places — in Europe specifically and in NAFTA countries — they might be old fashioned and concepts in decline. Not yet so in our region. The idea of dawla is still very much present. Witness the loss of life by Palestinians (and also Israelis) for the sake of their dawla. Dawla is still associated in the public mind with identity, and the best one can hope for here is that the state be on the side of human security (as we'll see in some examples of "state feminism"), be a welfare state and not principally a war state.

b. Abuse of the concept to serve vested interests. Though the human security concept per se cannot be held responsible, a second danger is its abuse. To defend their own vested interests,

outside powers can hijack the concept in order to justify intervention in the name of noble principles such as humanitarianism, a 21st century replica of the 19th century "white man's burden" at the basis of many imperialist adventures. UN circles now seem to be aware of this potential license for foreign interference, including military intervention. It is worth quoting a UN document in detail:

In the post-9/11 security environment, this concept has effectively been turned on its head. The need to ensure security is now driving the policy initiatives in engaging with factors of insecurity, thereby changing the calculus fundamentally. Whereas the goal of human security has been the empowerment of people and communities, the same cannot be said for initiatives undertaken in the name of human security in the post-9/11 world. The war on terror led by the United States, United Kingdom and the "coalition of the willing" countries is probably the clearest example. The war on terror seeks to address the problem of terrorism by using the right to human security of threatened populations as the necessary rationale for attacking the enemy. Often, given the very nature of terrorism, the enemy is not easily identifiable. As a result, large cross-sections of populations come under threat — as has been the case in Afghanistan and Iraq. The number of civilian casualties in both countries has largely been a direct result of coalition forces retaliating against terrorist attacks. Countless innocent children, women and men have lost their lives in the war on terror — an unmitigated disaster in terms of its ethos.

The United States Department of Homeland Security also poses a significant challenge to proponents of human security. The Department's work is based on the "... capability to anticipate, pre-empt and deter threats to the homeland whenever possible, and the ability to respond quickly when such threats do materialise." In this instance, the concept of human security is being mobilised to protect the security of US citizens and to promote the idea that this can only be achieved by directly projecting a military threat to others — using the logic of action based on pre-emption.

The continuing consequences of the Iraq war have already shown the extreme limits, if not basic contradictions, of this approach.

When the human security of people in other countries is largely ignored, this approach to human security must be judged as seriously imbalanced and far from the basic concept of human security. Human security properly conceived, is not a zero-sum calculation — the attainment of security by one party need not come at the expense of the security of another party. The notion of "homeland security" co-opts the concept of human security to suit the purposes of the American population, while ostensibly diminishing the security prospects of non-American populations.

#### And the UN document continues:

The report put forth by Canada's Independent International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, which debates the responsibility to protect, is another example where concepts of human security have been selectively applied to suit another agenda. While the authors state, "We have no difficulty in principle with focused military action being taken against international terrorists and those who harbour them," they qualify this by noting that "military power should always be exercised

in a principled way, and the principles of right intention, last resort, proportional means and reasonable prospects, outlined in our report are, on the face of it, all applicable to such action." The US's actions in its war on terror clearly rely on the first part of this principle of intervention, but as has been seen by the ferocity of the offensives in Afghanistan and Iraq, the proportion of force — never mind the justification and principles of right intention — has been overwhelming in comparison with other considerations, such as development.

How can one avoid the reframing of human security on occasion to suit the interests of dominant states and hidden agendas? The merits of human security as a framework for analysis and a generator of benchmarks are clearly evident — but there must be criteria to prevent misuse. Great caution needs to be exercised in the utilisation of this concept, particularly as the last examples have shown. The original rationale behind human security was that of human development — to empower individuals and communities to exercise agency over their own choices.

This ability to empower, however, has also proven to be easily corruptible, particularly in the hands of those who already possess the power to dictate global politics. It is therefore necessary to ensure that a comprehensive system of checks and balances is built into the analysis of human security to avoid distortions. The three main criteria can broadly be elaborated as follows.

The first criterion for testing against distortions checks to see if policies and initiatives strengthen people's capacities and abilities to make choices. If this is not the case, then such policies require much closer analysis.

Second, while human security permits the consideration of multiple threats, distortions can arise through "securitising" threats that do not apply to the target population. This may include making overwhelming military force the main mechanism for achieving human security — an approach unlikely to fall within the norms of a human development approach. In the case of the United States, the United Kingdom and some other Western countries at present, "the war on terror's constructions of threats and fear serve to individualise fear and atomise people based on the promise of a security that never materialises."

Finally, distortions can appear in the end results of policies and initiatives. Questions would arise, for example, about an approach that strengthens human security measures in one country only to weaken the conditions of human security in another. (UNDP, The Human Security Framework: 5-6).

Let it be said, however, that though serious such potential (ab)use of human security is not justification for Arab rejection of the concept or their boycott of venues where it is discussed. In the absence of the Arabs it could be easier to hijack the concept to later impose it in the name of "international legitimacy". In fact, this would be the best way to justify its (ab)use for foreign interference — as was the case with the Taliban in Afghanistan. A better Arab strategy in this respect is to encourage a more detached application of standards of humanitarian intervention, e.g., to alleviate human suffering in Palestine. After all, the UN Trust Fund for Human Security supported for the period 1999-2006 136 projects: eight in Latin America, 13 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 38 in Africa, and 66 in Asia Pacific but only one in the Middle East.

In other words, the solution to potential abuse of the human security concept is not rejection of the whole basis of the concept, nor absence from the arena. A much more effective way is more international participation to reveal the abuse and guarantee the proper application of human security.

c. Gender-Blindness? The third criticism is of direct relevance to the AWO conference. In both its conceptualisation and measurement, the concept does not include gender-specific components and indicators. In fact, it could be accused of being gender-blind. Proponents of the human security concept do not accept this criticism. They insist on being open to emphasis on gender and quote UN resolutions to support their claim:

Through the utilisation of a human security perspective, it is possible to generate policies that are at once sensitive to the insecurities of vulnerable women and integrate these concerns into a wider narrative of human threats. Gender is therefore a vital component of the human security agenda.

The institutionalisation of gendered perspectives in peace and security initiatives has been a relatively new feature of the UN's work. The adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 was an important step in the UN process of recognising and attempting to address gendered imbalances, but it took over two decades before there was any formal action on peace and security. In 2000, Security Council Resolution 1325 finally recognised the importance of integrating a gender perspective in peace-building and conflict resolution. The UN then issued a report in 2002 entitled Women, Peace and Security. The study acknowledged that there was indeed much more work to be done in order to integrate women's security needs and foster gendered perspectives on international peace and security. Then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan states in his introduction that "women still form a minority of those who participate in peace and security negotiations, and receive less attention than men in post-conflict agreements, disarmament and reconstruction." (UNDP, The Human Security Framework, 2006: 5-6).

Indeed the approach by human security is flexible and broad enough to integrate gender issues, but it is also fair to say that we are still at the level of generalities without building on existing gender-oriented research. For instance, as far back as a quarter of a century ago, the analysis of The Psychology of Women (Walsh, 1987) was already prospering, with courses in universities and books/articles multiplying. The field was also raging with at least 14 topics of debate. They ranged from the impact of mothers' outside work on family to biological differences to mathematical ability differentiation, multivariate impact of abortion and even the fear of success. We have not yet, for instance, reached the level of designing indicators that are gender-specific to help focus parts of the analysis on this group. Given women's number but disadvantaged status, one might even consider that they need to be prioritised — a replication in research and analysis of an affirmative action/positive discrimination approach.

# PART IV: TOWARDS A GENDER FOCUS

Individual research apart, the UN and its regional offices in the Arab world as well as international research enterprises have tried precisely to achieve this prioritisation by

conducting in-depth studies and evaluations of the status of Arab women. Three examples can be mentioned in this respect. Chronologically they are: the 2004 Progress of Arab Women (PAW) by UNIFEM's Arab States Regional Office; the fourth volume of the influential Arab Human Development Report, 2006, entitled Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World (AHDR-4); and the still ongoing six-volume Encyclopaedia of Women and Islamic Cultures (EWIC) under the editorship of Suad Joseph, a Lebanese-American anthropologist at the University of California, Davis.

Each deserves a short note.

## i. Progress of Arab Women report

Chronologically, PAW (2004) is the first international/regional organisation publication devoted entirely to the topic of the status of Arab women and their empowerment. It is international in the sense of coming from an international organisation, UNIFEM, a specialised body of the UN system. But it is also regional in the sense of being designed and carried out by UNIFEM's regional office, headquartered in Amman. PAW's direct inspiration was the 2002 Arab Human Development Report, which diagnosed three deficits that hinder Arab human development: deficits of freedom, of knowledge, and of the empowerment of women. As we shall see below, the fourth Arab Human Development Report will be entirely devoted to the topic of women's empowerment. But the 2002 Arab Human Development Report limited itself — probably expected at this stage — to diagnosing the problem and indicating in a general way improvements/lag in the status of women. It failed, however, to provide tools for measurement of the improvements/lag with benchmarks that would help to better understand the goals to be attained and the challenges to be overcome.

This measurement problem seems to be an impediment to quite a few endeavours, e.g., the BPFA (Bejing Platform For Action) that had as its main objective gender equity. NGO networks have tried for their part to develop skills for gender analyses, gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, data collection and the strengthening of national machinery for gender focal points. However, these advances needed to be brought forward and integrated in a research programme devoted to Arab women. This enterprise is not purely academic but mainly policy oriented, for in order to measure progress or the lack thereof, and identify accountability, indicators and tools of measurement have to be clearly specified.

Building on previous efforts by UNIFEM and the UNDP Arab Human Development Report, the UNIFEM plan was to publish its report in 2005. It was first named "From Decade to Decade: Past, Present, and Steps Towards the Future of Arab Women, 2005". The report's main aim was to track the major challenges to women's advancement, achievements, and lessons learned in the various areas of Arab society. Moreover, the planned report, "From Decade to Decade", aimed to promote knowledge networks across countries and to share methodologies and innovative practices in assessing progress towards women's empowerment and gender equality in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The report was also planned to assess and examine progress made since the Bejing Conference in relation to women's political, social and economic security, looking into the present and future simultaneously and trying to respond to the lack of information concerning the status of women in specific areas. In the process, the project's title was changed to the current "Progress of Arab Women, 2004".

Initially, UNIFEM commissioned an outside body — the Institute of Gender Studies at the American University in Cairo, under the leadership of distinguished American anthropologist, Professor Cynthia Nelson — to set up a team and carry out the project. But after a year or so, the Institute apologised for its inability to carry out the project (Professor Nelson was suffering and shortly thereafter died of leukaemia). There was no alternative but to execute the project in house, under the leadership of Dr. Haifa Abu-Ghazala, UNIFEM's able regional director. A young PhD candidate, Maya Morsi, was put in direct charge and acted as rapporteur. Five well established specialists were commissioned to write the four chapters dealing with bases of gender inequality, social protection, economic security, and security in the political sphere. In addition there were two review groups at the regional level in Amman and one at the global level in New York. There was also a group of regional experts in different fields to review the various chapters. All in all, the team, from regional to international experts, including translators, other technicians and research assistants, numbered 59 members.

Compared to other major team publications, PAW is distinguished by its focus on the general human security paradigm. The title and especially the subtitle are clear in this respect: "Progress of Arab Women: One Paradigm, Four Areas, and more than 140 Million Women". As Maya Morsi told me, focusing on women's security for the first time in the Arab region was not easy. The team tried to study the concept and based its analysis on the UNDP 1994 definition of human security. Several meetings were conducted with each researcher to guarantee consistency in handling the concept. PAW was the first review in the Arab region of the CEDAW reservations, discussing the public and private spheres and their linkage to women's human security. Ideational change was also emphasised as the key concept to enhance the empowerment framework for women. Red alerts were highlighted throughout the report to attract the attention of policymakers.

Though the initial outline was more ambitious than the published volume, and though the separate chapters did not seem to be integrated into a whole, PAW was a pioneering — and remains a milestone — publication. With its 25 figures, 38 tables and 24 informative boxes, it is both an inventory of research at the time and a guide to policy. Not only did PAW reveal missing ingredients but also, through its definition of basic concepts and data collection, set the standard to be applied for women's advancement.

## ii. Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World

From the start the UNDP report clearly emphasises the "inferior" status of women and aims to redress this situation, as evident in the very title. Its 313 pages are based on intensive research, supported by generous UNDP funding, a 25-member board that was supposed to be "advisory" but — given the specialisation and academic production of many of its members — was very involved, and finally a seven member core team of authorship under the leadership of Egyptian political economist Nader Fergani. This impressive financial and organisational / intellectual infrastructure was supported by 62 background papers by most of the well established researchers of the region in different fields (see detailed list, pp. 245-247 of the report). The whole is then supplemented by a critical 24-member readers group, 11 for the Arabic edition and 13 for the English.

The result of this huge intellectual enterprise is a tracing of the status of women in various fields, from literature to politics and economics. It is also an impressive databank with 34

tables and a 14-page summary of survey data on the status of women in four Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco).

### iii. Encyclopaedia of Women and Islamic Cultures

Initially this project was to be published as three volumes (1.5 million words). It ended up being six volumes totalling 1246 articles and two million words. In addition to the 907 authors who contributed articles, the research provides a database of 4,000 scholars (3,800 are already listed) working on Islam/Islamic countries and women. Indeed, it is one of the few published research enterprises looking at the relationship between women and Islam. But Islam is not treated essentially as a religion but rather as a civilisation. The approach is thus civilisational, emphasising — in addition to politics — issues such as culture or architecture.

The original title suggested by the publisher was "Women in Islam". "I declined that title," asserts S. Joseph, EWIC's editor, "because it implied an essentialisation of Islam that needed to be problematised. The editorial board deliberated collectively about the title over a number of meetings. What drew us to the title EWIC was the emphasis on the idea of examining the relationship between women and cultures ... Islamic cultures. The emphasis is on the civilisational histories and not on an essentialised depiction of 'Islam'." (See Joseph's interview with Religioscope, 20 March 2006; also my talk with Joseph, Cairo, 16 December 2007).

The result is a "global, cross-cultural and comparative project, the first ever of this international and interdisciplinary scale and scope ..." (Ibid). On the editorial board are four anthropologists, an historian, a political scientist and a literary scholar, and a religious studies scholar — coming from the Middle East, South Asia and the US. Equally interdisciplinary and international are the authors of the different articles.

"I would say," asserts Joseph, "the majority of EWIC authors are from Muslim countries, but that does not mean that they are living in the countries they are from. For that matter, given our globalised migratory world, many authors might even have a hard time identifying a single place they are from."

The entries are neither alphabetical nor chronological but thematic. Different from many "area studies" based research outputs, there is a consciousness of social science conceptualisation and methodologies. Thus Volume I, after dealing with the spread of Islam in different regions and countries, including "Western Europe: 1945 to Present," has 22 disciplinary entries from anthropology, political science, demographics, oral history, and "Euro-American Women's Studies". It ends with a 120-page bibliography of books and articles published in European languages on women and Islamic cultures since 1993. Even before it is completely ready, EWIC is thus a moving library in its own right on the subject at hand.

## PART V: WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM GENDER-FOCUSED RESEARCH?

Given the number of authors and differences in approach, it is hard to extract any one pattern of information or action from EWIC in the limited space we have. As for the other two research publications, they are similar in approach and objective; they even overlap in many of their contributors. They are also much more focused, with their emphasis on Arab women — as

their titles indicate. To evaluate their contributions, it might be useful to follow a medical doctor's methodology: talking about symptoms and diagnosis before ending by specifying remedy and prescription.

## i. Symptoms and diagnosis

The 2005 AHDR is critical of the present status of women and links this to the underdevelopment — economic, political and ideational — of Arab society itself.

In reviewing the situation in 2005 compared to that of 2002, when the first AHDR volume was published, it emphasised the decline of an "Arab Spring". "Arab governments," it states, "announced a host of reforms targeting freedom and good governance, most of which remained on the surface of their ambitious agendas." (p. 2) Consequently, "violations of individual and collective human rights worsened ... and public freedoms in the region, especially those of opinion and expression, came under pressure." (p. 3) Moreover, "international and regional conditions arising from the 'war on terror' and the occupation of Palestine and Iraq continued to undermine human development and human rights in the Arab world." (p. 4)

Thus despite their women's distinction, "Arab society does not acknowledge the true extent of women's participation in social and economic activities and in the production of the components of human well-being, and it does not reward them adequately for such participation." (p. 6) Many women are indeed distinguished, and the AHDR documents such distinction in literary and artistic creativity (pp. 103-106), social science, natural and exact sciences (see the excellent figure on p. 102), athletics (p.109), and business (pp. 110-111). But all suffer from gender imbalance and bias — "regardless of their age, education or access to the public sphere". (PAW, 2004: 2) As a result of this gender discrimination, "women in Arab countries, especially the least developed countries, suffer ... high rates of risk morbidity and mortality connected with pregnancy and reproductive functions." (AHDR-4: 7) Moreover, "despite the tremendous spread of girls education in Arab countries, women continue to suffer more than men do from a lack of opportunities to acquire knowledge." (Ibid: 6)

This discrimination seems to be pervasive and not limited to health or education:

The participation of Arab women in the labour force remains the lowest of any region in the world. Indeed, whereas in 1996, women composed 40 per cent of the world labour force, the participation of Arab women in the Middle East and North Africa region at the time did not exceed 26 per cent of the labour force. (PAW: 5)

## And AHDR-4 concurs:

A tight job market, slow job creation and the spread of women's education, along with society's irrational preference that men should take what jobs there are, have combined to increase the unemployment of women, even in Arab countries that import non-Arabs in the form of the "... abundance of qualified female human capital suffering from above average rates of unemployment." (Ibid: 201).

The situation can be even worse for some, e.g., women under occupation (AHDR-4: 118); nomadic and remote rural women (Ibid: 118-119); migrants (Ibid: 120-121), domestic workers (Ibid: 121); women living in squats (Ibid: 120); female-headed households of the divorced, widowed or deserted who remain on the margins of society. These cases are not at all a minority.

Dependency ratios in the Arab region remain the highest in the world with each worker supporting more than two non-working people, compared to less than one in East Asia and the Pacific. The principal reason for this is the low rate of participation by women. The situation becomes even graver when the high level of family maintenance occurs in combination with absence of pension plans and of a National Insurance network covering all worker cohorts. (AHDR, 2005: 8)

Why does Arab society have such waste, indeed a disinvestment of the potential of about 50 per cent of its population? Both documents agree that part of the problem is the "prevailing male culture". "Furthermore, although in some countries there have been impressive changes on the legal front, customary treatment of women frustrates steps towards full and equal citizenship." (PAW, 2004: 2).

#### As a result:

Arab personal status laws remain conservative and resistant to change because a number of Arab states are reluctant to develop a national personal status code. Instead, they leave matters to the judiciary, which is heavily influenced by the conservative nature of classical Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). (AHDR-4: 19)

It is partly because of the involvement of this figh that many Arab countries express serious reservations towards articles of international treaties or resolutions aiming to bolster the status of women: e.g., CEDAW and Security Council Resolution 1325.

### ii. What is the way out?

Whereas PAW deals in a masterly way with four areas touching on policy, society, economy and polity, the 2005 Arab Human Development Report seems to prioritise two areas for women's empowerment: health and education. "The maternal mortality rate ... averages 270 deaths per 100,000 live births. This rises to over 1,000 deaths in the poorest Arab countries (Mauritania and Somalia) ..." (AHDR-4: 7). As for education, or rather lack thereof, the situation is not better. "The Arab region has one of the highest rates of female illiteracy (as much as one half, compared to only one third among males). It also displays one of the lowest rates of enrolment at the various levels of education ..." (Ibid: 42).

PAW goes in the same direction by showing that at birth there is a female life expectancy advantage in all Arab countries (e.g., 3.4 years in the UAE or Oman and 3.5 years even in Mauritania (p. 42)). Then comes gender-precipitated mortality — probably indicating some discrimination against women in nutrition and health care. (Ibid: 43) The accrued disadvantage is replicated in education. Gender differentials (i.e., the percentage difference between females and males aged 8-10 not attending school) in rural areas can be large: Egypt seven per cent, Sudan 7.8 per cent, Algeria 12.5 per cent and Yemen a staggering 40.2 per cent. (PAW: 45-46) Even increasing efforts in continuing education (Ibid: 47-49) cannot eradicate this knowledge poverty.

PAW does attract attention to an important qualitative dimension:

Analysis has to look beyond the numbers of girls in school, and the number of women employed to understand their experiences. Girls are in schools but what are they taught about themselves and their rights in schools? Women may be employed but what are the terms of their employment? (PAW: 307).

Similarly, AHDR-4 attracts attention to an important — and counter-intuitive — point: "The Report questions the extent to which the increased number of Arab women in the media positively influence the general orientation of programming and the popular image of women." (AHDR-4: 14).

Quantitative indicators — though an important reflection of progress — are not enough by themselves. The problem of coping with gender biases is not limited to health and education. It goes deeper. Both AHDR-4 and PAW seem aware of this. PAW insists on an "enabling environment", from the legal sphere to the importance of "social watch". (pp. 60-66) In addition to addressing, again, the gender knowledge base (pp. 70-71) it is necessary to integrate private and public spheres (pp. 69-70) and especially work for "ideational change" to ensure "rights-based perspectives". (Ibid: 70).

For AHDR-4, this last aspect is indeed basic. The report thus comes back to legal structures, from labour relations to personal status laws or nationality laws (AHDR-4: 179-200). But the real challenge for ideational change is societal context. For instance, there is the issue of culture (e.g., traditional religious heritage, image of woman in popular proverbs, in the novel or in cinema (AHDR: 143-159). There is also the presence of unfriendly social structures (pp. 163-176, e.g., authoritarianism and tribal solidarity).

# iii. A prerequisite remedy: political security

Fields of health and education are certainly crucial. Without them, any efforts to empower women will be incomplete or not credible. Education's contribution is mandatory, especially if interpreted as re-socialisation on a wider scale through school curricula, media, popular images and fatwas and preachers. But for these advances to materialise, the prerequisite is political action to carry out the change — i.e., women's participation in effective decision-making.

Indeed, the lag in the political sphere is flagrant. Both research teams agree and are explicit in this respect. Through AHDR-4 data, we can actually identify a contradiction: the positive disposition of Arab public opinion in the four countries surveyed (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco) versus the actual situation on the ground. Thus the survey data indicate that 79 per cent of public opinion is in favour of equal rights for women in the political sphere; 76 per cent agree that they occupy ministerial positions; 55 per cent that they may become prime minister; and 51 per cent that they may become head of state (AHDR-4: 94). Though this last figure is relatively low, it is still above 50 per cent of those surveyed, and the percentage reached as high as 80 per cent in Lebanon. This positive disposition is supported by the fact that 72 per cent believe that women perform "better than/close to" men in leadership rates, again with Lebanon in the lead with just above 80 per cent. But the gap with other Arab countries is smaller: 62 per cent in Morocco, 60.5 per cent in Jordan and 59 per cent in Egypt (Ibid: 97).

Though not at all yet sufficient, the improvement in the situation on the ground could reflect this evolution in public opinion attitudes. Except for one country, women's right to vote is now an accepted fact in all Arab countries, and in many they have the right to stand for elections (Ibid: 95). Their percentage of seats in parliament as of 2005 was as follows: 25 per cent in Iraq, 23 per cent in Tunisia, 15 per cent in Sudan, 12 per cent in Syria, a surprisingly low figure of five per cent in Lebanon, three per cent in Egypt, and none in Bahrain (Ibid: 96). Indeed, the share of women in parliament by world region shows Arab states at the very bottom, less than half that of sub-Saharan Africa (eight per cent compared to 17 per cent) and only a fifth of Europe's Nordic countries (compared to 40 per cent). (Ibid: 95) As the 2008 legislative elections in Kuwait show (where no woman was elected) most of these parliamentary seats could be by appointment.

This is indeed an important contribution of "state feminism". Women have been securing some gains in political participation in the last few years. For instance, appointing a woman minister has been accepted as a general rule since the 1990s. However, "the essential ministries that allocate resources, define foreign policy and safeguard internal and external security remain in the hands of men." (Ibid: 203) Moreover, in "women's matters, the common legacy of political parties ... has been the complete restriction of female political activity." (Ibid: 205)

Indeed the evolution of Moroccan women's representation in parliament between 1995 and 2003 confirms the contribution of quota/appointment: about one per cent in 1995 and 12 times as much eight years later; Mauritania is a close second with a 400 per cent increase (because it started from zero in 1995) with a 200 per cent increase in Jordan. Otherwise the increase is much more modest: Tunisia 70 per cent, Syria 50 per cent and Egypt about 10 per cent, whereas Lebanon was at a standstill and women's parliamentary representation is actually regressing in some countries (Algeria and Yemen).

Other than by appointment, then, women's parliamentary representation has been modest. In Jordan, the number of women candidates has increased from three in 1993 to 54 in 2003 (Sabbagh, 2005: 71-72), an increase of 1,800 per cent. However, only six were elected, or less than one in nine of the candidates, but still in the number of women actually elected an increase of 600 per cent (from one to six) is registered. This was better than Jordan's 1997 election where 17 women candidates stood for election and none was elected.

The situation of Jordanian women is better than that of Yemenis where between 1993 and 2003 the number of women candidates declined by about 75 per cent (from 44 to 11). And only one woman out of 11 was elected in 2003. Yet this is better than other Gulf countries: in the 2007 Shura Council of Oman, 20 women stood for election, but none was elected, and in the 2006 Kuwait National Asembly elections 28 women were candidates and again none was elected. In the UAE, in the 2006 legislative elections, a staggering 165 women stood for election but only one was elected. We find the same modest level of women's representation (not by elections but plebiscite) in the 2006 legislative elections in Bahrain and the 2007 municipal elections in Qatar. The first elections ever to take place in Saudi Arabia were the municipal elections in 2005 where there were no women candidates and consequently none elected. The result is a low ranking of Arab countries internationally among members of the International Parliamentary Union (2005 data).

Whereas Iraq's case is a very special situation at rank 15, and Tunisia is almost an exceptional ranking at 27, Syria is down at rank 71, followed by Djibouti and Morocco (2002) at 78. Sudan (2000) at 85 and the rest are above 100: from Algeria (2002) at 105, to Jordan (2003) at 109, Mauritania (2001) at 117, Egypt (2000) at 120, Oman (2003) at 121, Lebanon (2000) at 121. This data needs updating, but it is still a valid indicator of women's political security status — as the absence of women in the 2008 legislative elections in Kuwait confirms. The only change that takes place is by appointment or quota, as in Morocco's case and the 2006 Palestinian elections. Much more recent is the case of the UAE where women's representation jumped to 22.5 per cent, making this country first among Arab countries (Abdel Khaleq, Views on the Gulf Magazine, February 2008).

But if women's formal parliamentary representation is modest and their election rate even worse, there are other sectors that register a more active women's presence. The ratio of women to men in NGOs is as much as 2:3 in Bahrain, Egypt or Morocco and almost equal

to men in Palestine (about 90 per cent). (PAW, 2004: 280) Though intensified efforts are needed to improve explicit political representation as MPs or even ministers\*, success at the level of civil society seems to be much more attainable in both the short and medium terms. Women's representation in and promotion to decision-making positions is advancing rapidly in universities and in the health sector.

The number of businesswomen is also increasing. For instance, the Economic Development Unit in Dubai was receiving in 2007 about 15 applications daily by women for enterprise licensing (Ibid). And business associations of women are mushrooming across many parts of the Arab world.

## PART VI: THE ACTIONABLE WAY AHEAD

Looking back now in 2008 along the road to the empowerment of women we realise there have been quite a few achievements. Even the critical 2005 AHDR admits this fact (pp. 215-216). They relate to the establishment of a few mechanisms to empower women and the appearance of Arab institutions for their advancement, institutions such as the AWO. There is also a rising trend of intervention by "state feminism", networking by NGOs, and cooperation/coordination between governments and NGOs.

Yet it is also fair to say that the road ahead is still long, and that the idea itself of women empowerment has to sink in. For instance, with the beginning of the 21st century, an influential pan-Arab think tank — the Centre for Arab Unity Studies — launched its "Arab Renaissance Project". In a huge volume of 1,167 pages published later, the role of women was dealt with in two paragraphs (pp. 1010-1011). Among the more than 45 participants, there were only two women. Since they were discussants, their names were not mentioned on the cover page (See Belqaziz et al. Toward an Arab Renaissance; Beirut, Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2001).

This recent example of male centrism contrasts with evolving public opinion data. Thus 88 per cent of Arabs surveyed in four Arab countries believe that building an Arab human renaissance demands the rise of Arab women (AHDR-4: 220). All research enterprises agree that women's empowerment is a prerequisite for Arab renaissance (Ibid: 219-231). PAW put it explicitly:

We cannot ignore the conflicts that continue to rage in Arab states. We also cannot ignore the occupation of Palestine, the destruction of large parts of Sudan, the failure to restore and evacuate military powers from Iraq and the insecurities that these conflicts have created throughout the region. Large numbers of forced migrants continue to live without a home and many communities have been deprived of their livelihoods, land and future. But this does not mean that gender justice and women's empowerment can be sidelined until these other issues are resolved. On the contrary, it is now that the voices, capabilities and vision of women are most needed to weather this distressing storm. (PAW, 2004: 308)

<sup>\*</sup> In this respect, "state feminism" should not be overlooked. Foreign ministries (including that of Saudi Arabia) are increasing their proportion of female diplomats, many at high ambassadorial level.

Consequently, we need a general thrust and a mindset that is gender sensitive and where loyalty should not be at the expense of efficiency. The aim is to redouble efforts for effective strategies that are both bottom-up and top-down. More specifically, action needs to take place on the following seven fronts.

- a. Facing up to patriarchy and cultural stereotyping. These beliefs are ingrained in popular proverbs or films. They affect even the judiciary where the appointment of female judges is still resisted by many. They are closely related to female circumcision, domestic violence or so-called "honour crimes". The need is no less to refute and defeat them through media and school curricula for instance than to "indigenise" modernity.
- b. Reduce the public/private divide. "A woman's body moves within a social sphere, the boundaries of which are clearly defined and demarcated ... A woman's right to personal and bodily safety is still the object of abuse accepted under prevailing values." (AHDR-4: 173). "Even in school curricula, the gap between women's progress and stereotyped images of women remains enormous ... seventy-five per cent of pictures (in a 4th Grade reading book) gave men a social advantage over women, who were usually dumped in the kitchen." (Ibid: 177).

Not only have these pictures to be modified, but also alternatives have to be included in curricula and popularised in the media. Men and women have to be active to promote them.

- c. Marginalise conservative religious interpretation. Whereas the Quranic texts and Sunna tradition are sacred, nothing is sacred about some of their interpretations or those who expound them. Is a woman's place only at home and is polygamy a natural order of male-female relations? The globalisation of networks intensified the promulgation of edicts (fatwas) and provided many traditionalists with a new platform. To counter this pervasive tendency, the door should now be more open for ijtihad.
- d. Reorient dominant discourses. There is indeed a Western discourse about women's empowerment. But the issue of Arab women's empowerment is so important as to be sui generis and not dependent on any external conception. Nor should women's rights become purely a type of democratic facade. The question, for instance, is how the status of Arab women is to be compared to the 1995 Beijing Conference Platform and at what level action should be taken? Is it acceptable that with a few exceptions the ownership of political and hard news media remains despite female quantitative presence a male bastion? (ADHR-4: 207)

But there are encouraging signs that should be consolidated. In an attempt to show that reforms come from within, the 2004 Tunis Arab Summit committed Arab heads of state to "promote the role of women, consolidate their rights, and encourage their effective participation in development and their role in political, economic, social and cultural fields." This is the first reference to women in the history of Arab summits (Sabbagh, 2005: 55). To "indigenise" cultural equality and carry out attitudinal shifts there should be follow-up to enforce these summit decisions alongside work in the media and in school curricula.

e. Reform legal structure. About 68 per cent of Arabs surveyed agree that women should have the right to initiate divorce (ADHR-4: 192) while 69 per cent agree that children should have the right to acquire the mother's nationality (Ibid: 196) and 62 per cent agree that women should be able to become judges (Ibid: 199). But Arab penal codes contain no concrete

definition of the crime of sexual harassment. On the whole, laws are gender-biased, for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. For instance, most incrimination in adultery cases suffers — contrary to the Quran — from gender-imbalance.

In fact, most Arab countries that ratified CEDAW and other gender-related international conventions have included reservations that limit application of the spirit and substance of these conventions. (Ibid, p. 179, especially p. 180 for a useful table). However, the Maghreb countries have progressed concretely in legal reform, and Tunisia is still an exceptional model in abolishing polygamy.

There is a need to continue action, then, on both the domestic and international fronts.

f. Promote affirmative action in election laws and practices. Women are often fearful of active involvement in politics. All data indicates that women election candidates suffer from insecurity, harassment and even bullying. There is a need to make electoral environments more womanfriendly. Moreover, with election campaigns becoming at present increasingly costly there is also a need for a financial "affirmative action" in favour of women candidates.

g. Reinforce Arab social movements. Historically, the role of women across different Arab countries and periods of history has been crucial in the struggle for national independence (e.g., Algeria, Palestine). The conversion of present women's associations into self-reliant, sustainable institutions (Ibid: 227) is a sine qua non for the elimination of pockets of backwardness, the growth of institutional awareness, and effective participation in decision-making. "For despite there being 87 women's associations in Yemen, the proportion of women in decision-making does not exceed six per cent." (Ibid: 132)

Though objectives may take time to be attained, women's associations have progressed and their impact increased, as shown in Tunisia's family laws and more recently in the 2004 Family Code in Morocco (Ibid: 135-138).

## CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to both present and evaluate the raging global debate about a basic need of both collectivities and individuals: security. It reviewed the traditional means suggested to attain this basic demand and vis-à-vis new threats in the 21st century. If the demand at present is increasingly for human security, how this quest can be linked to gender issues and how will it empower Arab women is still relatively unknown. It is time for a systematic Arab contribution to this debate, a contribution inspired by the Arab context and its specific strategic position on the world map.

For instance, in the present polarisation between "a state-centred militarised security" and "people-centred human security" where do Arab thinkers and policymakers stand? Are these two conceptions of security mutually exclusive, or can they be combined in both analysis and policy planning? The paper believes that in the conflict ridden Arab context the combination is mandatory. In fact, combining both strands of security could, in the present Arab context, lead to comprehensive security. For "national security" without "citizen's security" (especially

for the female half of society) could be an empty shell easily destroyed. At the same time, the state's contribution to reinforcing women's empowerment is still very much needed, including in the political sphere.

This is why it is no longer acceptable to maintain two solitudes, so to speak, in discussing security and gender. These two sectors of analysis and policy are — and have to be — interlinked. Consequently, this paper passed from reviewing global security debates to establishing an inventory of what influential international and regional research teams tell us about the status of Arab women. While these international/regional research teams seem to give priority to the sectors of education and health, and they are indeed important, this paper argues that they are not enough in themselves and gives priority to the political sphere. Women's active political participation and effectiveness in decision-making is crucial. Having reviewed first the symptoms and diagnosis of Arab women's (in)security, the paper suggested seven actionable ways to help women's empowerment as the most effective means to comprehensive Arab security and renaissance.

# Annexes

**Table 3:** Average annual death toll by types of natural disaster

1. Windstorms	20,564
2. Floods	9,775
3. Earthquakes	5,925
4. Avalanches / landslides	955
5. Extreme temperatures	912
6. Tsunamis	426
7. Volcanic eruptions	94
8. Forest fires	63

Note: Figures cover 1991-2000. Source: Hough, 2004: 181.

**Table 4:** The world's worst transport disasters

Place	Date	Type	Number killed
1. Philippines	1987	Ferry crash (Dona Paz)	4,386
2. Salang Tunnel, Afghanistan	1982	Fire in road tunnel	2,000
3. Haiti	1993	Ferry sunk (Neptune)	1,800
4. Mississippi, USA	1865	Steamship exploded (Sultana)	1,800
5. North Atlantic	1912	Ship sunk by iceberg (Titanic)	1,500
6. Japan	1954	Ferry (Toya Maru)	1,172
7. Canada	1914	Ship sunk (Empress of Ireland)	1,014
8. New York, USA	1904	Ship fire (General Slocum)	1,000
9. Philippines	1980	Ferry sunk (Don Juan)	1,000
10. Baltic Sea	1994	Ferry sunk (Estonia)	909

Source: Hough, 2004: 201.

**Table 5:** The word's worst structural accidents

Place	Date	Туре	Number killed
1. Santiago, Chile	1863	Fire in a church	2,000
2. Chungking, China	1949	Spread of dockside fire	1,700
3. Canton, China	1845	Theatre fire	1,670
4. Hakodate, Japan	1934	Urban fire caused by chimney collapse	1,500
5. Mecca, Saudi Arabia	1990	Collapse of pedestrian tunnel	1,426
6. Shanghai	1871	Theatre fire	900
7. Vienna	1881	Theatre fire	850
8. St Petersburg	1836	Fire at circus	800
9. Antoung, China	1937	Cinema fire	658
10. Hong Kong	1918	Sports stadium collapse and fire	604

Note: Structural disasters instigated by natural phenomena excluded.

Source: Hough, 2004: 201.

**Table 6:** The world's worst industrial disasters

Place	Date	Туре	Number killed
1. Bhopal, India	1984	Chemical Leak	Approx. 2500
2. Hineiko, China	1942	Mining disaster (explosion)	1549 a,b
3. Nigeria	1998	Oil pipeline fire	1082 b
4. Courrieres, France	1906	Mining disaster (explosion)	1060 a,b
5. Chelyabinsk, USSR	1989	Gas pipeline explosion	607 b
6. Oppau, Germany	1921	Chemical plant explosion	600 b
7. Texas, USA	1947	Ship carrying fertiliser exploded in port	561 b
8. Mexico City	1984	Petroleum gas plant explosion	540 b
9. Cubatao, Brazil	1984	Petroleum fire plant	508 b
10. Lagumillas, Venezuela	1939	Oil refinery fire	500 a

Note: Excludes disasters instigated by natural phenomena, military strikes, or military accidents.

As examples of natural phenomena, lightning strikes caused explosions of arsenals in Rhodes, Greece in 1856 and in Brescia, Italy in 1769, claiming around 4,000 and 3,000 lives respectively (Ash, 2001: 215). Dam bursts are also excluded. Notable examples of military accidents include the explosion at an ammunition dump in Lucknow, India in 1935 that killed 2,000, the explosion of the ammunition ship Mont Blanc after collision near Halifax, Canada in 1917 that killed 1,963, and the explosion of ammunition trucks in California in 1956 that killed 1,200. (Hough, 2004: 204)

Table 7: Ten deadliest disease epidemics and pandemics of all time

Epidemic / pandemic	Location	Date	Death toll
1. Black Death	World	1347-51	75 million
2. AIDS	World	1981-	23 million
3. Influenza	World	1918-20	21.64 million
4. Plague	India	1896-1948	12 million
5. Typhus	Eastern Europe	1914-15	3 million
6. "Plague of Justinian"	Eastern Mediterranean	541-90	Millions
7. Cholera	World	1846-60	Millions
8. Cholera	Europe	1826-37	Millions
9. Cholera	World	1893-94	Millions
10. Smallpox	Mexico	1530-45	Up to 1 million

Source: Hough, 2004: 151.

**Table 8:** Ten worst natural disasters in history

Place	Date	Туре	Fatalities
1. Huang Ho River, China	1931	Flood	3.7 million
2. China	1959	Flood	2 million
3. Upper Egypt and Syria	1201	Earthquake	1.1 million
4. Huang Ho River, China	1887	Flood	900,000
5. Shaanxi, Shanxi and Henan, China	1556	Earthquake	830,000
6. Huang Ho River, China	1938	Flood	500,000
7. China	1939	Flood	500,000
8. Bangladesh	1970	Cyclone	300,000
9. Tong-shan, China	1976	Earthquake	242,000
10. Nan-shan, China	1927	Earthquake	200,000

Source: Hough, 2004: 180.

**Table 9:** The top causes of accidental death

Form of accident	Annual deaths
Road traffic injuries	1,194,000
Drowning	403,000
Falls	385,000
Poisoning	343,000
Fires	309,000
Others (see Note)	874,000

Note: 'Others' include exposure to animate and inanimate mechanical forces (including firearms); exposure to electric current, radiation and extreme ambient temperature and pressure, and to forces of nature; and contact with heat and hot substances, and venomous plants and animals (McGee, 2003).

Source: WHO, 2002b: 190.

Table 10: The top ten famines in history

Table 10: The top terrial lines		
	Deaths	Principal cause
1. China 1958-62	30 million	Political: Forced urbanisation and collectivisation of agriculture
2. China 1876-78	12 million	Natural: Drought
3. Bengal 1770	10 million	Natural: Drought
4. India 1976-78	6 million	Natural: Drought
5. Ukraine 1932-33	5 million	Political: Harsh USSR quotas on Ukranian grain collected centrally
6. North Korea 1995-	2 million	Natural: Drought and floods
7. Bengal 1943-44	1.9 million	Political: Supply and price of rice negatively affected by Second World War
8. Raiputana, India 1869	1.5 million	Natural: Drought
9. Orissa, India 1865-66	1 million	Natural: Drought in 1865 followed by floods in 1866
10. India 1897	1 million	Natural: Drought

Source: Hough, 2004: 86.

The idea of the presence of multiple threats and possible primacy of non-state and/or non-military threats is finally catching on.

Table 11: Fears of individuals living in the European Union in 2000 (per cent)

1. Organised crime	77
2. Nuclear power plant accident	75
3. Terrorism	74
4. Ethnic conflict	65
5. Spread of weapons of mass destruction	62
6. Epidemics	57
7. Accidental launch of nuclear weapon	55
8. World war	45
9. Conventional war	45
10. Nuclear conflict	44

Note: 15,900 people across the 15 EU states in November and December 2000 were asked the following question: "Here is a list of things that some people are afraid of. For each of these, please indicate if, personally, you are afraid of it or not."

Source: Hough, 2004: 10.

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**Chapter Two** 

**Armed Conflicts and the Security of Women** 

Ali Jarbawi and Asem Khalil

# ARMED CONFLICTS AND THE SECURITY OF WOMEN

Since the dawn of time, humankind has been situated in a dialectical conflict between good and evil. Humanity has always sought to achieve the values of justice, security, safety and stability for all human beings, both within their own communities as well as with other communities. All people are equal and deserve to live in dignity and in a manner that safeguards their full and integral humanity, without discrimination or prejudice. However, due to limited resources, these values of humanity have and continue to clash with the needs of both societies themselves and the relationships between societies, resulting in a perpetual struggle to take control of as many resources as possible. The bitter but real result of such a struggle has been the division of humans into contentious and hostile nations, classes and groups. As some groups have appropriated a larger portion of resources than others, opportunities and capacities have been disproportionately distributed. Instead of all members of the human family achieving justice, equality, security and safety, some groups have arguably achieved these values at the expense of others, thereby consolidating discrepancies, discrimination and exploitation, creating a parallel track of fortunate and vulnerable and marginalised groups.

The combination of historical male hegemony with the dominance of need-driven conflict, rather than a drive towards reconciliation stemming from the rule of law, has controlled human relations, resulting in vulnerable status for women. Although women have a low status in peacetime, it further deteriorates during and after armed conflicts, whether the conflict is internal or between states. Armed conflicts cause catastrophic social problems, not least the suffering, exploitation, and countless human rights breaches of vulnerable and marginalised groups.

With growing awareness of grave rights breaches against women, particularly in armed conflicts, as well as enhanced public exposure of these breaches in the media, and increasing international concern for the expedient termination of such suffering, the 20th century witnessed a transformation the status of human rights in general, and women's rights in particular. This transformation was not only restricted to defining and clarifying concepts, but also brought to bear a distinct shift in priorities and norms. For example, controls have been applied during armed conflicts, such as the protection of groups who refrain from use of arms. States have also been encouraged to take positive measures in peacetime as in wartime. These measures have sought to positively protect by promoting freedom from need and fear, and establishing the dignity of life.\*

<sup>\*</sup> These efforts culminated in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000, which is highlighted later in this paper.

This transformation in human rights has also covered women's status. This interest in human rights is no longer limited to protecting women in armed conflict, but extends to promote women's role and to strengthen their status in society in peacetime, to facilitate the preservation of civil peace and societal stability. It should also be noted that the shift in human rights reflects consolidation of the relation between international human rights law and international humanitarian law; the enforcement of the latter in armed conflict does not exempt states from their duties derived from the former (Abresch, 2005: 2).

This paper sheds light on the status of women during and after armed conflicts. It explores how international law deals with this reality in light of the developing concept of human security. The paper also highlights that achievement of women's security is no longer restricted to provision of necessary protection and aid, but is also a fundamental, expedient condition to bring about the societal stability. Women's security is now a compelling societal and international issue that serves peace and security on the general human level. The paper concludes that the empowerment and promotion of women's status establishes national security in respective states. Indeed, the attainment of human security is a prerequisite to states' achievement of national security, and promotes a state of peace, stability and security at the international level (Aolàin, 2006: 847).

## ON THE RELATION OF NATIONAL AND STATE SECURITY TO HUMAN SECURITY\*

Modern states were constituted in the 17th century and later developed into nationalistic states based on international relations and the system of states. Ever since, the concept of national security has been closely associated with state security. Essentially, a state's national security (including its components) is attained by achievement of state security; that is, the preservation of a state's existence, entity and stability is based on the fact that it is the most important, central structure that regulates internal and external relations. In relation to the state, the concept of national security developed along two distinct and largely contrary paths derived from the discrepant political theories and differing visions of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke on the regulation of human nature through the state (Commission on Human Security, 2003: 2-19).

Hobbes' conviction is that voluntary cooperation between human beings is impossible is due to self-seeking individuality and personal interests outweighing collective ones. This led to a theory of statehood aimed to contain constant conflict in society, and to replace anarchy with security and stability. Hobbes justifies the absolute power of the state to regulate society and individuals, theorising that the authoritarian state is necessary to prevent social disintegration based on human weakness. According to Hobbes, the state is the means towards establishing security for both individuals and society. From this perspective, national security and state security is assured through the compliance of subjects to the demands of the state, and putting in place a vertical, top-bottom relation, starting from the head of state and ending with the individual.(Al-Ghali, 1997: 78-79; Schedler, 1997: 165-170; Martel, 2000; Martinich, 1996: 273-283).

<sup>\*</sup> For more on the relation between national security and human security, see (Jackson, 1957: 364-380), and Raskin, 1976: 198-220.

Contrary to Hobbes, Locke grounds his political philosophy on the possibility of achieving cooperation between humans based to their intrinsic goodness, thereby excluding the contradiction between achievement of individual and personal interests and society's collective interest. In light of increasing population and limited resources, individual interests may clash, thereby necessitating regulation and codification. Hence, citizens — not subjects as in Hobbes — endow some of their redeemable rights to the state to administer and manage their affairs. As such, the state is created not to exercise hegemony, but is bound to popular consent, which is dependent on good performance. To Locke, national security will be established by providing security to citizens, who authorise the state to rule over them by their own free though conditional will. Against this background, the security of the state stems from its citizens' permanent satisfaction with its performance, and their support of its policies. According to Locke's theory, from which the democratic nature of the state is derived, national security is a bottom-up phenomenon, starting from individual (the citizen) and ending up with the state.(Al-Ghali, 1997: 79-80; Schmidgen, 2007: 205-223).

For several centuries, the above contradictory perspectives have produced conflicting accounts of the legitimate existence of the authority of the state and justifications of its actions. Connected to this has been the ongoing controversy over the concept of national security. On the one hand, national security means protection of the state, as institutions and regime against external threats from other states, as well as against internal threats from subjects who attempt to undermine its components in order to achieve personal goals. Accordingly, the relation between the state and its subjects is permanently tense, disallowing the development of positive human security. On the other hand, national security is still deemed to be an inevitable outcome of the realisation of citizens' security in a state that respects their rights and freedoms and treats them in an equal and indiscriminate manner.

Over time, more weight has been given to the democratic approach over the authoritarian one, reaching a breakthrough at the end of the 20th century with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Apart from rejection of the authoritarianism of the state, other causes promoted the democratic approach. States of the new world have been composed of diverse migrant nationalities that — due to their migrant status — could promote the concept of citizenship, and accordingly shape the concept of national security. In contrast, drawing the borders of postcolonial states in Asia and Africa in line with colonial interests created varying and discrepant nationalities. Efforts made by these states over past decades to adjust their status by dominating over respective subjects have largely failed. Currently, many of these states suffer from internal disputes and armed conflicts, demonstrating that their national security will not be attained unless they treat their citizens equally, regardless of race and ethnicity.

The globalisation era, in which state sovereignty has been exposed and authoritarian powers increasingly criticised, has had a positive impact on the promotion of the connection between state and national security and human security (Commission on Human Security, 2003: 5). Such promotion is now particularly important because of increasing armed conflicts, which mostly convert into internal struggles and in which civilians are the most vulnerable victims. Therefore, the status of women has been of increasing concern in armed conflict; the suffering of women (as well as other vulnerable groups) demonstrates that the ongoing association of the concept of national security with state security has not been sufficient to protect these groups.

This shift in the concept of national security was accompanied by a development in the performance of international organisations, international law and the concept of international criminal liability. In the 1990s, the United Nations (UN) carried out more peacekeeping missions than ever before. The UN also contributed to innumerable negotiations aimed at endorsing international agreements that would eliminate certain new threats and promote regional cooperation to confront them (Commission on Human Security, 2003: 2). Also with the onset of the 21st century, the International Criminal Court was formed to monitor violations and crimes against humanity (Mitchell, 2005: 219); (Meier, 2004: 83) McCormack and Robertson, 1999: 635).

Although significant progress has been made in transforming the concept of national security from one focused on state security to one centred on human security, one should not assume that securing vulnerable groups' rights and preventing relevant violations is no longer needed. Infringements are numerous. Under the pretext of "human rights", wars continue to be waged and are presented as "humanitarian" (Khalil, 2006: 303). Therefore, violence against women in and after armed conflict should continually be examined and highlighted. (Young, 2003: 17-18).

### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING AND AFTER ARMED CONFLICTS**

In general, violence against women is exploitation of an unbalanced, unequal relation between two (or more) parties, allowing the stronger party to deliberately injure the weaker without fear of possible retaliation or deterrence. To prevent and stop such injury, external intervention is needed. Across a variety of communities, and for a variety of reasons, women constitute a vulnerable group and are individually and collectively subjected to various forms of violence. Women are abused because they are members of a vulnerable group or have special needs, and primarily because they are intrinsically women. In other words, women are subject to violence and assailment due to discrimination on gender grounds. Violence targeting women is any act of gender-based violence that results in — or is likely to result in — physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life in times of peace or in times of war (Abu Al-Qumsan, 2008: 35). This form of violence is a widespread phenomenon around the world. As Boutros Boutrous Ghali, former secretary general of the UN, emphasised in his speech before the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, violence against women is an international problem and thus in need of international denouncement (Adams, 2007: 57).

In times of peace, women are subject to various forms of violence, in particular: domestic violence (including beating and rape); violence in society (including prostitution and forced labour); and violence by the state, whether structural (discriminatory legislation) or through condoning those who commit so-called "honour" crimes. Many believe that such violence is exacerbated during and after armed conflicts, whether the conflict takes place between states or internally within the state. These conflicts naturally produce hostile environments and patterns of behaviour and help spread a military culture, which legitimises the violation of controls regulating societal and international life in peacetime (Amnesty International, 2004: 5-6). Therefore, civilians become more vulnerable, and liable to violations by military personnel and members of armed groups. Women are more prone to these violations not only

because they are women, but also in light of discriminatory treatment originally in place (Bennoune, 2006/2007: 368).

According to the remarks of Kofi Annan, former UN secretary general, before the Inter-Agency Videoconference for a World Free of Violence Against Women, held in New York on 8 March 1999: "Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace. We have made some advances. States have adopted international instruments prohibiting violence against women ... Governments have passed national laws banning all forms of violence against women. They have introduced more effective protection services; they have mounted campaigns to drive home the point that no act of violence against a woman can or should be tolerated." (Adams, 2007: 57).

It should also be noted that targeting women as a group does not necessarily derive a default conclusion that each woman is subject to the same violations and same degree of violence and suffering, whereby a general and acceptable addressing of the issue can be possible. Women's backgrounds, conditions, abilities, experiences, violence imposed on them and resulting suffering differ from case to case, as well as from woman to woman. This means that each abused woman's particular conditions need to be heeded. One should not make generalisations and stereotypes, which may conceal identification not only of individual suffering caused to each woman by these collective grave violations, but also of the collective suffering of women as a group (ICRC, 2003: 13).

Although an absolute majority of women affected by armed conflicts are civilians, a number of women take part in these conflicts as combatants; that is, as part of the forces involved in hostilities in a direct manner, or within reserve units or military support and logistics units. Particularly when an armed conflict takes place between hostile parties within a state, women's involvement might be compulsory.\* Since internal armed conflicts have been increasing in comparison with conventional wars between states, discriminating combatant and civilian groups is declining. This means that more women are taking part in hostilities in internal conflicts, and that civilian women are subjected to even more suffering and violence (Lindsey, 2003: 11-12).

According to international human rights organisations, female combatants are not only subjected to harsher living and mental conditions than those imposed on male combatants in wartime, but also to a special kind of violence and abuse by enemy combatants as well as by comrades.\*\* Especially in internal conflicts, female combatants may be exploited by male

<sup>\*</sup> In World War II, the role of women involved in armed conflicts was most visible as part of the reserve, in logistics and support units in the German and British forces. Totalling eight per cent of troops involved in the war, women also participated in the Soviet forces. Ever since, women have played an increasingly active role in the armed forces. In addition, women take part in ethnic conflicts, in which whole tribes or groups are parties to a conflict. In these cases, women help and support combatants. Whilst some are obliged to do so, women are sometimes forced to have sex with soldiers. This was the case with the so-called "pleasure girls"; Korean and Chinese women whom the Japanese army exploited in World War II. In Palestine, women have also taken part in armed resistance. See (Holt, 2003: 29; Lindsey, 2003: 11-12).

<sup>\*\*</sup> Nonetheless, recruited or combatant women are the exception rather than the rule. Women's involvement in hostilities is viewed as incompatible with femininity. Even if encouraged by society to enlist in the army (the Israeli army for example), women are seen as relief for soldiers who are away from home for a long period of time. See (Gardam and Jarvis, 2000: 40).

comrades or captors to deliver services traditionally seen as the preserve of women, such as cleaning and laundry. Without taking into any account their will, female combatants may also be forced to deliver sexual services to men. Often women are raped not only by their captors, but also by their male comrades.\* Adding more concern and anguish to such violence is the fact that such known and documented abuses are viewed by several authorities within respective states, and worldwide, as a matter that can be overlooked as part of the "difficulties" associated women's participation in the military profession.

When combatant women are captured, detention conditions are largely harsh, subjecting them to horrendous suffering. In armed conflicts, detention centres are established on the assumption that they will hold men in custody. Those who design them do not take into account special needs of female detainees. Most often, women are held in narrow wards arbitrarily designated to them in detention centres, which are originally designed for men. Largely overcrowded, these confined wards lack proper physical conditions to preserve women's dignity and privacy. Special hygiene facilities, including appropriate and separate toilets, are also missing. As female gaolers are unavailable, male wardens watch over female prisoners. In most cases, female detainees lack supplies necessary for personal hygiene, or other needs in case they are breastfeeding or are expectant mothers. Furthermore, officers in charge of detention facilities do not respect detained mothers' rights to see their children. Female detainees are also subject to a severe psychological pressure due to threats of sexual violence and rape during interrogation in order to force confessions. In short, female detainees' detention experience is entirely arduous in physical and psychological terms.\*\*

Armed conflicts have a huge negative impact on civilian women as well. Most often, civilians are attacked during armed conflicts; they are deliberately killed, caused to be killed, or allowed to be killed.\*\*\* According to available statistics, civilian casualties are nine times more likely to be killed than combatants (Benjamin, 2003: 169). Sometimes, women are targeted and deliberately killed not only by enemy forces, but also by "friendly forces" allegedly because women carry out tasks deemed by such forces to contravene social customs and conventions.\*\*\*\*

<sup>\*</sup> Amnesty International reports cases of targeted sexual violence and exploitation against young recruited women in several countries, including Angola, Burundi, Cambodia, Liberia, Mozambique, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Uganda. (See Amnesty International. 2004: 7).

<sup>\*\*</sup> According to a report released by the Palestinian Ministry of Detainees and Released Detainees on 17 April 2008, Israeli authorities have arrested over 9,750 Palestinian women since the State of Israel was established. Of these, 97 detainees — one per cent of the total number of Palestinian political prisoners — are still held in custody. According to the human rights group Al-Haq, detained women suffer from declining prison conditions, which are such that they are unsuitable for women's hygiene requirements, most notably childbirth. In addition, interrogators abuse women and threaten to assault their families if they do not collaborate with the Israeli authorities. Attended by male wardens, detained Palestinian women are often subjected to humiliating physical searches. See (Al-Haq, 2005: 230-232).

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> According to certain reports, 238 Palestinian women (excluding those under 15 years of age) have been killed, and hundreds others injured, by the indiscriminate use of force against civilians by Israeli occupation forces during the second Intifada. See (Holt, 2003: 28). Other reports state that a large number of women gave birth at Israeli checkpoints set up throughout the occupied Palestinian territories. According to official reports issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Health, over 68 expectant mothers could not reach hospitals, forcing them to deliver their babies at checkpoints. As a result, four mothers died while 34 miscarriages have been reported. For more information, see (UNFPA, 2005: 10; OHCHR, 2005: 2 and OCHA, 2007: 4).

<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup>According to Amnesty International, insecurity in Iraq forced countless women to abandon public activities. Armed groups have targeted women, either as victims of violence against civilians or as victims of abduction and murder. Such violence is most normally associated with threats against female activists working for women's rights organisations, and female political leaders. See (Amnesty International, 2005: 24-26).

Armed conflicts may also fragment social structures within the respective society, further debilitating women, marginalising their status and consolidating gender-based inequality. Such a situation may also be associated with increasing violence against women, within both the family and society.\*

Even if not killed in armed conflict, women's suffering is severe and harsh. The distress women undergo occurs at more than one level. Whilst women's traditional sphere is to preserve the family's welfare, the man's traditional role is as the primary source of income. In internal armed conflicts, women carry out conventional functions of taking care of their family, as well as domestic and extra-domestic (mostly agricultural) activities, whilst men become involved in the ongoing combat. When this happens, women find themselves alone and in charge of running all the affairs of their families, without any help from the traditional head of the household and protector. Hence, women must shoulder a weighty responsibility for providing sustenance and protecting their families under exceptional and unbearable conditions, a responsibility they are mostly unprepared to meet.\*\*

Due to this new heavy burden, women become both mentally and physically exhausted. On the one hand, women are worried for their husbands, and perhaps children, who fight or disappear without the women knowing their fate. Given that the battlefront in internal armed conflicts might affect the whole country, women also have to be worried for other family members. On the other hand, women are physically tired because they have to carry increased burdens both inside and outside the home.\*\*\* As many are unqualified and untrained, women may well be forced into the labour market to perform marginal and laborious work, which can often times also be humiliating and degrading. Some women work as prostitutes, in order to make a living (Benjamin, 2003: 154). In general, this fatigue debilitates women's ability to look after themselves, resulting in deteriorating health conditions in circumstances where necessary healthcare services are lacking.

A number of men involved in armed conflict do not come back home, either because they are killed or disappear. In these cases, women's sole responsibility for the family moves from

<sup>\*</sup> Domestic violence is common in numerous societies. See (Adams, 2007: 70-71). However, statistics report rising violence against women in societies that have witnessed — or are still undergoing — armed conflicts. In the Palestinian territories, for example, reports released by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2005 state that 62 per cent of single women were subject to psychological violence, 23 per cent to physical violence, and 11 per cent to sexual abuse at least once before marriage (PCBS, 2006: 23-24). Other reports have shown a correlation between violence inflicted on Palestinian men by Israeli occupation forces (especially interrogation techniques), and men's violence against female relatives at home. Furthermore, the complete closure imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories and escalating unemployment have forced men to stay longer in their houses, which has resulted in increasing violence against women. See (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002: 15).

<sup>\*\*</sup> According to one human rights activist, a Palestinian Gazan woman said: "Only 50 dollars would help me buy a cage for rabbits and solve my problems. Then, I will often visit you to ask for legal and psychological aid." See (The Humanitarian, 2007: 15). According to a Somali woman who suffers from the calamities of armed conflict in her motherland, "I know that humanitarian organisations, which work here, distribute food supplies. I am not thinking of the future, but of the present time — the food that I must secure for my children tomorrow. Empty bowls do not know hope." (Parke, 2007-08: 24)

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> According to Widad Halawani, whose husband was abducted in September 1982 during the Lebanese Civil War and remains disappeared, "My calamity was doubled as Adnan's disappearance was combined with losing his salary. A compelling need pushed me to find an additional job. Along with my salary, revenue of the extra work would meet my family's essential needs ... Hours of the day have no longer been sufficient to do all my tasks. I always wish they were longer. I work overnight and all day long!" Widad Halawani, "Justice is a Right for All Persons in the Face of Any Tyrant". (Halawany, 2007/2008: 14).

a temporary to a permanent state.\* In the cases of men who are missing, women become mentally pressurised, as their lives turn into a state of constant alert. Moreover, family members of those missing are often confronted with legal difficulties, making their daily lives more complex.\*\*

Further to the problems of the missing and dead, armed conflicts are a major cause of internal and external civilian displacement. Currently, over 40 million displaced persons and refugees are dispersed both within and outside of their home countries. Of these, 80 per cent are women and children — the most vulnerable groups (Amnesty International, 2004: 14). Women suffer various forms of displacement-driven problems, including loss of home, property and relatives, and separation from their families.\*\*\* As they flee from hostilities to safe areas, women not only suffer from fear, fatigue and exhaustion, but also are at risk of being raped or killed.\*\*\*\* Their journey back home is often no less harsh than their escape, and can be more severe.\*\*\*\*

Displaced people and refugees often experience wretched living conditions. In refugee camps or temporary residential sites, refugees suffer from overcrowding as well as a lack of essential services and facilities, including loss of privacy. Women are the most affected by the lack of basic services. If available, bathrooms are few and public. Potable water is also scarce along with electricity. The situation is especially bad in winter; rainwater leaks into tents, which also lack heating. In combination, these conditions cause the spread of epidemic diseases,

Fagen, 2007: 4; IDP Working Group, 2008: 1).

A wife of a missing Iranian soldier asserts: "My husband wanted to go. His dignity did not allow that he stay at home and let his son go to the war alone. Thus, he went to the front. Ever since, we have heard nothing of him. I was forced to raise my four children on my own." See "Stories about Painful Vacant Places", (The Humanitarian,

<sup>&</sup>quot;Um Firas was occupied with her daily concerns ... seven children in need of care, expenses and education ... A journey of suffering that is severer than all her past history has started ... All that has passed is by now sheer memories. What she witnesses every day is the bitter reality ... The austere woe is to obtain identification documents. Most of her children were born abroad without any such documents. It was a primitive life ... no documents ... no identity cards ... Today her children are not enumerated in the population census ... Without an identity ... she knocks at door after door ... Every door has a booth ... Each booth demands a paper from another ... and so forth in an endless cycle." (Al-Maghour, 2007-2008: 14).

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> According to a report on the current situation in Iraq, "Iraqis have lost fundamental security and safety in various daily life details. Roaming massacres slay scores of civilians. Sectarian categorisation of the population results in increasing displacement and forcible migration." The report also estimates that approximately 100,000 Iraqi families have been displaced since February 2006. See (The Humanitarian, 2007: 6-9). According to other reports, over four million — the majority of whom are women and children — have been displaced in Iraq by August 2007. For more information on Iraqi refugees, see (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2007: 3-10;

<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> Jamilah, a Somali woman, relates her story of the tragic "Death Journey" where Somalis take to the sea to Yemen to escape war: "Smugglers have a sharpened iron spear, which they insert in the abdomen of any women who complains of or refuses their orders." Jamilah goes on: "Astonished as I was, I cannot forget the tragic scene of two smugglers raping my sister Asma (20 years) before us. As we cried in protest against this crime, they stabbed her with the spear and threw her into the sea. I was in the company of my mother. Unconscious, she collapsed due to this horrible incident. Before she was raped, my sister complained of hunger, but she was attacked by human beasts, who took away her virginity and life before our eyes." (ASharabi, 2008: 31).

<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup>On their journey back home west of Bahr Al-Ghazal in Sudan, after the war ended in the South, 5,000 refugees took a "journey in which they struggled against landmines, mosquitoes, Guinea worm disease, tsetse flies, swamps and predators. They were also forced to negotiate with insurgent militias and look for food when supplies were late. It was a mentally and physically exhausting journey to all returnees, most of whom were housewives. Planned to last 30 days, the ignominious journey took three and a half months. 66 persons died and 34 infants were born." (Bashir, 2006: 19-20).

particularly amongst women who need special healthcare and attention.\* Due to traditional values, men are privileged over and above women in the provision of healthcare services. There is also a preference to provide healthcare to children, meaning that women are the last to receive medical attention. As with healthcare, so with food. When there is a shortage of food supplies, food becomes a commodity, used by those who distribute it in refugee camps to blackmail and sexually abuse women (Al-Qadhi, 2008: 43). As women are forced to leave refugee camps in search of water, food or firewood, they can find themselves unknowingly walking through fields of landmines, resulting in death or loss of limbs (Benjamin, 2003: 151). Should these women survive, they may be raped.\*\* And when the conflict ends, women are usually the last to be compensated for suffering by respective states (Gardam and Charlesworth, 2000: 148-166).

It seems clear that the most common form of violence against women in and after armed conflict is sexual abuse. This type of violence violates women's humanity, privacy, body and mental health. This gender-based violence takes various forms, including rape, pornography, imaging of sexual violence, sexual servitude, forcible marriage, sex-based detention, trafficking, forced prostitution, destruction of reproductive organs, performing medical tests on reproductive organs, pregnancy complications, delivery distortion, sterilisation due to the use of weapons containing various toxins, forced pregnancy, abortion or sterilisation, deliberate HIV/AIDS infection, forcing women to strip in public places, or sexual humiliation. This sexual abuse or sex-based violence that affects women may take place in various places and under diverse circumstances. It can occur at home, before family members, in public places, at military checkpoints, in prisons and detention camps, upon crossing borders, or in refugee camps. Despite the fact that enemy forces are most involved in this form of violence, statutory forces as well as non-statutory armed groups and militias are no exception to it. Moreover, members of international peacekeeping missions in areas of conflict, as well as international relief workers in refugee camps, have been implicated in this type of violence. (Bennoune, 2006/2007: 368; Gardam and Jarvis, 2000: 63-64).

Due attention should also be paid to civilian men who commit sexual assaults against women, including family members, in armed conflicts. Over prolonged intervals, many women are subject to sexual violence by their husbands after they return home from the battlefield. Still harsher is the pressure placed by family members, and society in general, on abused women, which forces them to endure the physical violence inflicted on them by their husbands, ostensibly to protect their children.

In armed conflict, women are sexually abused for several reasons. They are exploited to gratify men, including both combatants and civilians. In the turbulent conditions of war, men

<sup>\*</sup> Jamal Jawad, an UNRWA school principal, describes the situation of Palestinian refugees who were displaced from the Nahr Al-Bared Refugee Camp and relocated to the UNRWA school for temporary residence: "About 160 families, approximately 950 persons, share 24 classrooms. Sometimes, 60 persons amass in a single classroom. Humanitarian conditions are difficult and heartbreaking ... We permanently monitor any epidemics, such as lice. Such diseases can easily spread among the displaced refugees in light of this large number of people." (Al-Qadhi, 2007: 6). Nicole Widesham describes women's suffering in Darfur as follows: "The war has caused immense suffering. Until now, women suffer consequences of this war. Violated women found themselves responsible for wounded, disunited families, while at the same time they were poor and needy due to displacement and violence." (Widesham, 2008: 27).

<sup>\*\*</sup> In Darfur, women are raped outside refugee camps while they are looking for water or working on agricultural land. See (Human Rights Watch, 2008: 13).

can abuse and rape women at gunpoint. Further promoting such phenomena are offenders' common belief that gender-based violence is "justified" within the turmoil and stress of war and armed conflict and can be overlooked. This has resulted in offenders not being subject to severe punishment, if any penalty is imposed at all. In other words, perpetrators are secure in their belief that they can easily abuse women and not be punished. Additionally, women are sexually abused by enemy forces not only for sexual gratification but also to send a message of hatred to the women themselves, their families, people and culture. To most communities, dishonouring women means disgrace to that family, community and nation. In the culture of war, especially civil wars, the rape of women is considered a "victory" and major humiliation of the enemy. Moreover, women are sexually abused by enemy forces in revenge for similar assaults inflicted on their own women; that is, revenge for "stained honour". As such, women's bodies are converted into battlefields and areas of reciprocal attacks between combatants.\*

Sexual violence is also used as a means to torture women and obtain information about their families and communities. Particularly in civil wars involving various racial, ethnic or religious groups, women are also subject to sexual abuse to achieve ethnic cleansing goals of forcing groups to evacuate certain areas or to change a given demographic equilibrium (Lindsey, 2003: 13). The stated objective of such abuse can also be to "produce enemy children". In the latter case, the sexual abuse of women becomes a military weapon or technique that aims to subordinate and defeat the enemy as well as degrade their morale.\*\* More often than not, sexual violence against women is perpetrated under conditions of implicit approval by military leaderships (Campanaro, 2001: 2559). Under the notion that they bring disgrace to their families and communities, women are likely to suffer further once armed conflict comes to an end. In this case, women suffer twice over: once via the enemy and once via their own families and communities.

Gardam and Jarvis claim that women's experience of cruelty in the exceptional circumstances during and after armed conflicts opens up new horizons to them, empowering them and positively shaping the course of their lives. Accordingly, women who live such an experience become proficient in carrying responsibility and become independent decision-makers. This experience emancipates women from masculine hegemony and places them in the position of leadership and control within their own families, and in the surrounding society (Gardam and Jarvis, 2000: 30). Leaving the domestic domain, in which women are manipulated by men, for the public domain, in search of a source of income to sustain them and their families, endows women with a freedom in the decisions they make for their families. This may also gradually allow women to participate in public decision-making. Although this never justifies the pain and suffering inflicted on women in and after armed conflict (which is undoubtedly

<sup>\*</sup> The rape phenomenon has traditionally been associated with armed conflict. Before and during the American Civil War, innumerable black women were raped by white masters. In the Chinese city of Nanking, Japanese forces raped and tortured over 20,000 Chinese women. In 1945, 120,000 to 900,000 women were raped in the area of Metropolitan Berlin. During World War II, 100,000 to 200,000 Korean women were raped and tortured in Japanese army encampments. In revenge of German armed forces' hostilities in Russia, Russian forces raped more than two million German women. In addition, US troops were charged with 86 cases of rape. Of these, 50 soldiers were found guilty. In 1971, Pakistani troops raped 200,000-400,000 Bangladeshi women, resulting in 25,000 pregnancies. See: (Nebesar, 1998: 149-150).

<sup>\*\*</sup> Amnesty International documents testimonies of 250 women who were raped during the conflict in Darfur. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against women are widespread not only as a result of conflict, but due to the conduct of undisciplined soldiers. Testimonies indicate that rape and other forms of sexual violence are used as a weapon in the war in Darfur to humiliate women and their communities, as well as punish, terrorise and displace them. See (Amnesty International, 2004: 1).

not the intention of the two scholars), such an outcome can still be used to improve women's status in the future.

Whatever the good intentions of the authors, Gardam and Jarvis's conclusion seems premature. There is no evidence of women's enhanced status following their experience of armed conflict. On the contrary, numerous reports and studies show that women's empowerment during armed conflicts is mostly conditional and coercive, and that this ends as the armed conflict does. When men return from the battlefield, women's role becomes marginalised once again; for as the armed conflict ends, so the old stereotypes return, forcing women back into their traditional roles. Seemingly automatically, women are ignored in decision-making around the issues of aid, peace building, and the reconstruction of shattered communities (Benjamin, 2003: 167-168). Because of this, many thinkers demand that women be involved in all aspects following armed conflicts.\*

More aggravating than women's return to traditional stereotypes is the fact that women's status declines not only during but also in the aftermath of armed conflict. In addition to immediate loss of independence they might have acquired in the armed conflict, the violence and alienation inflicted on women by men returning from the battlefield may be crueller than the violence and alienation inflicted on them during the conflict. This increase in aggression towards women is due to returning men becoming accustomed to high levels of violence, as well as war-induced psychological disorders (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002: 15).

#### INTERNATIONAL LAW AND WOMEN IN ARMED CONFLICT

In the modern age, the changing nature of armed conflicts and the nationalistic nature of a state's use of the concept of national security have driven distinctions between states of war and peace between states, between armed conflicts within a state and among states, between states and non-state actors, between the concepts of combatant and non-combatant, and between periods and geographies in which conflicts take place or not. Although international law and associated objectives derive from one vision, which composes an integral whole, international law has distinguished between periods of peace and war, between states of emergency and normal conditions, and between the foreigner or the external and the internal (Brooks, 2004: 676). Such distinctions are made in light of differing levels of relative violence and violations inflicted on human beings in general and on certain people in particular. Special components under the international law were introduced to deal with such distinctions. However, these components need to be integrated and support one another in order to produce a complete model that aims to safeguard human dignity and protect human rights in various conditions and times; or, more accurately, regardless of changing conditions and times.

International human rights law is a comprehensive legal framework that comprises norms and principles necessary to guarantee human rights and dignity under various conditions and

<sup>\*</sup> For example, Nicole Wildesheim calls on women to be given the right to choose the method of assistance that they believe are the best to empower them: "Provision of various programmes for women in emergency times does not only empower women and furnish opportunities of choice and dignity, but it is a real necessity to provide women — whom the war made de facto head of households and pioneers of society — with services needed to play their new role as well as take care of their families in the best manner possible. Thereby, women will be effective social stakeholders as well as a component of peace building and restoration of their countries." (Wildesheim, 2008: 28)

times. By distinction, international humanitarian law addresses armed conflicts and military occupation and is therefore applicable only to those instances and events. International refugee law, on the other hand, only concerns displaced civilians, including the suffering and violence inflicted on them. Finally, international criminal law aims at regulating the prosecution of persons charged with perpetrating international crimes, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Although many recent indications point to the fact that violence against women during armed conflicts is largely an extension of violence exercised in times of peace, the international community's interest in addressing this issue began with the enforcement of international humanitarian law, and was only expanded later. It is only since the 1990s that the international community has been applying international human rights law, international refugee law and international criminal law. This trend reflects a typical shift in the international community's recognition that violence against women is not only limited to times of armed conflict. Gender-based violence cannot be isolated from women's particular situations, whether that be as a normal citizen in peacetime, a combatant, a civilian in wartime, or a displaced person or refugee. The international community's understanding has now become more inclusive; concluding that violence against women is a general and permanent phenomenon that has special consequence on women's lives.

#### INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

International humanitarian law is the most prominent legal achievement to express an international consensus on laying constraints on state practices during armed conflict in order to moderate human suffering.\* International humanitarian law concentrates on restraining the means and methods of warfare (the Hague Regulations). The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocols of 1977 (the so-called Geneva Law) highlight protection of victims of armed conflicts, particularly "protected groups", including civilians. However, the nature of contemporary armed conflicts, which have transformed from statutory wars to civil wars between hostile groups within the state, has made the distinction between combatants and civilians increasingly difficult to uphold, leaving civilians without full protections afforded by law.

Carefully selecting the term "person" in relevant provisions, international humanitarian law does not differentiate between men and women, and does not obligate High Contracting Parties to exercise gender-based discrimination. Article 3 under all four Geneva Conventions binds High Contracting Parties to humane treatment "... without any adverse distinction founded on ... sex ... " This principle is further confirmed in several other articles under the four Geneva Conventions, especially articles 13, 15, 27 and 96 under the Fourth Convention relative to the protection of civilians in time of war. In addition, Geneva Law recognises that women should be given special protection in view of their special needs. Of the 560 articles that make up the Geneva Law, approximately 40 (Krill, 1985: 359) or 50 (Amnesty International,

<sup>\*</sup> In this section, Geneva Conventions will be highlighted. These include the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 as well as the Additional Protocols of 1977. Other components, including treaties and customs of universal or regional nature, will not be addressed. Moreover, non-obligatory international declarations and instruments will not be examined. For further details on how international humanitarian law addresses violence against women in armed conflicts, see (Amnesty International, 2005: 8-21; Bennoune, 2006/2007: 370-384; Lindsey, 2003: 11-18).

2005: 48) articles prohibit non-discrimination against women or demand the provision of special protection for them. It should also be noted that the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions use the term "adverse distinction" to denote all forms of discrimination rejected by Geneva Law. However, this would mean that non-adverse (or positive) distinction is permissible, particularly if it achieves an interest of a certain targeted group, such as women or children.

Designating special articles on certain groups of women, including female prisoners and women held under administrative detention, Geneva Law aims to ensure that they are not subject to torture, which includes sexual abuse. These articles take into account women's special needs, including physical and hygiene necessities, in designing specialist detention facilities. Moreover, Geneva Law treats expectant mothers in a manner resembling the treatment of sick and injured persons. In this context, Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states: "Women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault." The Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions also change the emphasis of sexual abuse, from an act that has a negative impact on the honour of women, families and their communities to one that degrades women's human dignity.

#### INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

In line with international humanitarian law, international human rights law addresses violence against women and prohibits gender-based discrimination. The infringement of women's rights is no longer an internal affair exclusive to states; states are now required to end discrimination against women and to pass the relevant necessary laws that protect women against violence, including domestic violence, and hold perpetrators accountable. In this regard, the concept of human rights is based on an ethical truth, stating that all humans — including women and men — enjoy a human dignity that cannot be transgressed. They also enjoy unalienable rights — the right to be free of fear or need, and the right to equality under law.\*

Despite calls to respect human rights and public freedoms, and to combat gender-based discrimination, as provided for by the UN Charter of 1945 (articles 1, 13, 55, and 76) and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (articles 2, 7, 16, and 23), holding

<sup>\*</sup> In this section, reference will be made to certain international conventions. As they lack treaty-based obligation, other highly significant conventions are not included. These include, but are not limited to, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (General Asembly Resolution 48/104, 48 UN GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 217, UN Doc. A/48/49 (1993)), the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict (General Asembly Resolution 3318 (XXIX), 29 UN GAOR Supp. (No. 31) at 146, UN Doc. A/9631 (1974)), the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation (General Asembly Resolution 37/63, 3 December 1982), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, 15 September 1995, A/CONF.177/20 (1995) and A/CONF.177/20/Add.1 (1995). Other initiatives have also been in place to develop model strategies and practical measures to eliminate discrimination against women. These include General Asembly Resolution 52/86 on crime prevention and criminal justice measures to eliminate violence against women, dated 12 December 1997, and "Frameworks for Model Legislation on Domestic Violence: Its causes and consequences", submitted by Ms Radhika Coomaraswamy, special rapporteur on violence against women, submitted to the 52nd session of UN Human Rights Committee in accordance with Commission on Human Rights Resolution 1995/85. To view these documents, see the University of Minnesota Human Rights Library: http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/.

accountable states that do not take measures against human rights violations, including discrimination and violence against women, under international human rights law is relatively tardy if compared to international humanitarian law.\*

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, which came into force in 1967, is particularly important because it obliges State Parties to adopt and enforce legislation that safeguards the respect of human rights, including the prevention of gender discrimination and holding accountable those who perpetrate violence against women. In times of peace and war, as well as in normal and exceptional circumstances, state parties must respect the right to life (Article 6), prevent torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 7), prevent slavery and servitude (articles 8/1 and 2), safeguard the right to recognise a person before the law (Article 16), and guarantee freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Under exceptional circumstances and within specific restraints, state parties may be exempted from complying with other obligations prescribed by the covenant, provided that this does not contradict other due obligations under international law. In addition, such exemptions may not imply discrimination "as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, or national or social origin".

Despite the fact that it does not directly address violence against women, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979, which came into force in 1981, defines discrimination (Article 1) as: "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." In addition to obliging state parties to not discriminate against women, CEDAW also stipulates that state parties take "all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organisation or enterprise" (Article 2). The convention also demands that state parties "modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women" (Article 5).

The UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which came into effect in 1987, also prohibits torture. Article 1 under the convention defines torture as "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity ... "According to Article 2, state parties are obliged to take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction, and not invoke as a justification of torture any exceptional circumstances whatsoever.

<sup>\*</sup> For more information on international human rights law see (Adams, 2007: 103-122; Amnesty International, 2005: 11-45).

Come consider that certain forms of violence against women in times of peace and war, whether in the private (domestic violence) or public domain is included within the definition of torture under this convention. Therefore, state parties are asked to prevent this form of violence.

#### INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE LAW

International norms concerning refugees are part of international human rights law. Since displacement is also a consequence of armed conflict, these norms are also closely associated with international humanitarian law. As the absolute majority of refugees are civilians, and because an overwhelming majority of civilians are women (and children), international refugee law — the Geneva Convention on the Protection of Refugees of 1951 — is particularly important in the provision of protection to women, if not explicitly.

According to the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), 75-80 per cent of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons are women and children who have not crossed international borders (Amnesty International, 2005: 64). To provide protection to these displaced people, representative of the UN secretary general, Mr Francis M Deng, developed the "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement" (Ding, 1998). The principles promote non-discrimination and stress women's special needs (Al-Mubarak, 2006: 30-33). Principle 4 provides that "These Principles shall be applied without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex ..." The same Principle 4, however, states that "Certain internally displaced persons, such as children, especially unaccompanied minors, expectant mothers, mothers with young children, female heads of household, persons with disabilities and elderly persons, shall be entitled to protection and assistance required by their condition and to treatment which takes into account their special needs."

Furthermore, Principle 7 provides that the "authorities concerned shall endeavour to involve those affected, particularly women, in the planning and management of their relocation." According to Principle 18, special efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of women in the planning and distribution of basic supplies, which includes essential food supplies and potable water, basic shelter and housing, appropriate clothing, and essential medical services and sanitation. Additionally, Principle 23 (3) obliges states to make special efforts "to ensure the full and equal participation of women and girls in educational programmes". In the treatment of wounded and sick internally displaced persons, "special attention should be paid to the health needs of women, including access to female healthcare providers and services, such as reproductive healthcare, as well as appropriate counselling for victims of sexual and other abuses."

The "Guiding Principles" also oblige states to safeguard the right to recognition of a person before law. In this context, Principle 20 (3) prescribes: "Women and men shall have equal rights to obtain such necessary documents and shall have the right to have such documentation issued in their own names."

#### INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL LAW\*

International criminal law addresses international crimes, even if committed by or charged against individuals. International criminal law entails a transformation in the traditional concept of international law with respect to the regulation of relations between states. Relatively modern, international criminal law originates from the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg and the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, formed by the victorious powers of World War II to hold the defeated accountable in line with the principle of victor's justice. As such, these tribunals cannot be described as neutral. In the 1990s, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) were established to bring justice to these states; however, these tribunals can be considered selective, limited and temporary. Latterly, the International Criminal Court (ICC) was constituted in line with the Rome Statute of 1998, coming into force in 2002. The ICC is a standing international criminal court.

The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg failed to incorporate crimes of a sexual character, particularly rape, into indictments filed against convicted persons. Although international humanitarian law then lacked implementation mechanisms, it did entail provisions regulating such crimes. Later, however, Article 5 under the Statute of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia classified rape as a crime against humanity.\*\* Despite the fact that the statute of this tribunal does not consider other sexual abuses against women during armed conflicts as grave breaches of law applicable in wartime, the tribunal proceedings, as well as the resulting action of the chief prosecutor, have contributed to expanding and promoting international interest in violence against women. Above all, the tribunal entered decisions that established judicial precedents. These addressed sexual abuses against women in a more comprehensive manner than mere reference to rape, irrespective of the fact that these abuses were included on an indictment of crimes charged, not as a single crime. Importantly, charges were not brought because violations were committed by convicted persons, but because they were carried out by their subordinates in the armed forces with their knowledge and consent.

The ICTR was influenced by the ICTY, although the former did not address crimes perpetrated in armed conflicts of an international character, but in internal conflict. The indictment charged against convicted persons in the tribunal did not include charges of sexual abuse. However, collated testimonies and pressure brought to bear on the tribunal by human rights organisations resulted in the addition of these sexual crimes to relevant indictments. Expressing the tribunal's willingness to prosecute offenders or those who allowed the perpetration of these crimes, a number of judgements adopted broad definitions of sexual abuse.

Even though the ICTY and ICTR have largely contributed to developing the concept of international crimes of a sexual character against women, neither created binding norms for other states on how to deal with violence against women in armed conflict. In contrast, the Rome Statute of the ICC established for the first time that rape and other forms of sexual abuse are war crimes. However, it failed to categorise these crimes as serious breaches. According to Article 7, crimes against humanity include rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced

<sup>\*</sup> For more information on international criminal law, see (Campanaro, 2001: 2572-2586).

<sup>\*\*</sup> To view this statute, see http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/icty/statute.html

pregnancy, enforced sterilisation, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity. On the other hand, Article 8 of the Rome Statute provides that war crimes, which also include actions during internal armed conflicts, feature "committing outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment" as well as "committing rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy ... enforced sterilisation, or any other form of sexual violence also constituting a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions."

#### THE ABILITY OF INTERNATIONAL LAW TO PROTECT WOMEN IN ARMED CONFLICT

A key debate currently taking place is about the capacity of international law to prevent violence against women in and after armed conflicts. Some scholars believe that international humanitarian law is neither appropriate nor sufficient to fulfil this goal. Firstly, principles of international law reflect sexual stereotypes that promote discrimination against women while at the same attempting to protect them. Secondly, if applied in armed conflict, international law is largely enforced in isolation from other relevant components, particularly international human rights law, thereby rendering it incapable of preventing violence against women. Thirdly, international law is not concerned with the status of women following the end of armed conflict, when women also suffer. With concern for these points, scholars demand that substantive changes be made to international law, especially to international humanitarian law, in order to ensure that recent developments in contemporary armed conflicts are effectively addressed.

Relevant criticism of international humanitarian law derives from the following criteria (Bennoune, 2006/2007: 384-385; Aoláin, 2006: 831-846; Copelon, 1994: 243-266; Durham, 2002: 655-659; Byrne, 2002: 31-34):

#### i. Criticism of the essence of international humanitarian law

International humanitarian law is time-bound and biased (even if unintentionally) against women. It deals with women not as human beings but as "weak" persons or emblems of "honour", or associates them with reproduction. International humanitarian law also makes special reference to women with a view to provide "protection", not to "prevent" or "prohibit" abuse against them in armed conflict. Being subject to sexual abuse, for example, is an aggression against women's honour, but not against their intrinsic human dignity. Such considerations yield serious results — discrimination against women will be sustained. International humanitarian law does not treat women equally to men, but rather on the assumption that they need permanent protection by the latter.

## ii. Criticism of the exclusion of gender-based crimes from grave breaches

Geneva Law classifies contraventions against the Geneva Conventions into grave and non-grave breaches. As such, the "High Contracting Parties undertake to enact any legislation necessary to provide effective penal sanctions for persons committing, or ordering to be committed, any of the grave breaches of the present Convention." Additionally, "Each High Contracting Party shall be under the obligation to search for persons alleged to have committed, or to have ordered to be committed, such grave breaches, and shall bring such persons, regardless of their nationality, before its own courts. It may also, if it prefers, and in accordance with the provisions of its own legislation, hand such persons over for trial to another High Contracting Party concerned, provided such High Contracting Party has made out a prima facie case."

With respect to non-grave breaches, the Geneva Conventions provide that "Each High Contracting Party shall take measures necessary for the suppression of all acts contrary to the provisions of the present Convention." Of course, this formula fails to prevent non-grave violations. Importantly, however, gender-based crimes and violations are not listed as part of grave violations under Geneva Law. For critics, these are not adequately addressed by the law in question.

## iii. Criticism of short protection in armed conflicts

Critics of international humanitarian law believe that protection of women in armed conflicts is only limited to sexual violence and enforced pregnancy but does not extend to include all forms of potential violence inflicted on women, both directly and indirectly. Such restriction does not give sufficient attention to other forms of violence that require action to prevent them. In reality, violence against women transcends sexual abuse, involving both physical and mental factors.

#### iv. Dissociating violence against women in wartime from relevant discrimination in peacetime

In addition to the fact that violence against women in peacetime generates abuse in wartime, post-conflict situations mostly feature continuing violence against women. Appropriate and effective protection mechanisms are also lacking. Often times, there is not sufficient consideration of discrimination against women in post-conflict situations. Then again, gender-based discrimination perpetuates. In the process of reconciliation, these issues are not considered to be of relevance. Critics ascribe such lack of interest to masculine hegemony over the negotiation process as well as to the exclusion of women from taking part in this process or playing an efficient role in establishing rules of peace in the post-conflict period (Aoláin, 2006: 830).

Such political alienation extends to the social and economic domains as well. It prejudices women's rights, debilitates not only women's ability to confront violence against women, but also that of society. Against this background, critics stress that limited protection of women during and after armed conflicts, as provided by international humanitarian law, should be raised for public discussion. From their perspective, necessary amendments should be introduced into international humanitarian law so that it conforms to the current states of affairs and becomes capable of providing expedient protection to women.

Notwithstanding the fact that the above criticisms are substantial, an opposite opinion, expressed by experts of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) — the guarantor of the Geneva Conventions — states that the basic issue in continuing violence against women in and after armed conflict is not a product of ineffective international humanitarian law in particular, or international law in general. On the contrary, ICRC experts believe that legal provisions safeguarding women's rights are in place and that the relationship between international law's components is now more coherent and cohesive. In their opinion, the essential problem lurks in feeble — or even lack of — commitment to implement provisions by parties in armed conflicts (Lindsey, 2003: 18). The majority of these conflicts have become internal, taking place in states in which women are viewed in a traditional and inferior manner. In these states, respect of laws (both domestic and international) is usually inadequate.

ICRC experts reject that international humanitarian law be a subject for public discussion. They believe that a great deal of time and effort have been given to reach a common conviction

amongst states and stakeholders. Elaboration on international humanitarian law might now give rise to a latent desire of certain parties to revoke positive provisions currently in place, thereby stepping backwards instead of forwards. Therefore, proponents of this viewpoint insist that international humanitarian law should not be "tampered with" in order to preserve its positive features. Nevertheless, this does not mean that international humanitarian law cannot be developed by new special treaties and conventions that empower and add new dimensions (Amnesty International, 2005: 67). Parallel to, or more relevant than, the foregoing opinion is the fact that serious action must be taken to enhance the mechanisms of implementation of applicable law. Tools and mechanisms, which have until now only been available to international criminal law, are believed to be a proper approach towards achieving this goal.

In order to achieve the high-priority goal of bringing about better protection for women, especially in and after armed conflict, positive factors of the above dissenting perspectives can be built on. As such, protection of women's rights currently safeguarded by international humanitarian law can act as a point of departure and be developed by either one of two methods: a new binding international treaty in the form of a third additional protocol to the Geneva Conventions; or an international convention on violence against women. Unlike previous conventions, the new convention should be valid in times of peace and war, to bridge the gaps highlighted in international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The new convention would also address gender-based violations in a complementary and inclusive manner. Alternatively, international principles or norms would be approved. These can take the form of a UN General Asembly resolution, or guiding principles, that aim to stop violence against women in general, as well as during and after armed conflict in particular, taking inspiration from analogous standards prepared on internally displaced persons not covered under international refugee law.

In reality, several initiatives utilising both methods have been released. A number of conventions or protocols of international character have been passed. These include the Convention on the Political Rights of Women of 1952, which entered into force 7 July 1954, CEDAW, which entered into force 3 September 1981, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women of 1999, which entered into force 22 December 2000. Additionally, the UN General Asembly adopted a number of declarations, including the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women of 1967, the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict of 1974, the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation of 1982, and Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women of 1993.\*

In the pursuance of such considerable international activity on the issue of violence against women, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 at its 4213th meeting on 31 October 2000.\*\* The first of its type, this resolution has crowned a decades-long process of relentless effort made by local and international feminist and human rights organisations and movements. It recognises the central status of women in respect of international peace and security, as well as expressing the international community's awareness of the gravity of violence inflicted on women and serious willingness to eliminate it decisively. The resolution

<sup>\*</sup> All these conventions are available on the University of Minnesota Human Rights Library website: http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/

<sup>\*\*</sup> See http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf

calls for an increased participation of women in peace negotiations, planning of refugee camps, distribution of humanitarian aid, peacekeeping operations, and reconstruction of communities tormented by armed conflicts. Moreover, the resolution urges member states to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions, and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.

The latter demand is consistent with the trend of the Beijing Conference of 1995, which confirms that: "Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace." (Otto, 2006: 126)

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 also encourages the UN secretary general to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes. In addition, it urges the secretary general to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys. The resolution further urges the secretary general to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in UN field-based operations, especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel. It also calls on "all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, inter alia: a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; and b) Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of peace agreements."

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is a remarkable turning point in the quest to end violence against women. In particular, the resolution adopts a vision to promote women's participation in several spheres that contribute to ending gender-based abuses and infringements. The resolution also features new capacities, the application of which will undoubtedly curb many violations and negative practices against women. However, state parties should take the resolution seriously and implement its provisions that have, so far, not been put properly in place. (De la Vega and Nelson 2006: 437-464; Cahn, 2005: 217-291; Barrett and Little, 2003: 30-85).

#### **FUTURE HORIZONS**

Against this backdrop one might say that many international achievements have been made over past decades in the consolidation of women's status and the abatement of gender-based violence and abuses, particularly in armed conflicts. But one must also admit that numerous corresponding failures have taken place over this period too.

The international community does not realise its failures except in armed conflicts, which effectively result in innumerable victims and abuse of vulnerable groups, including women. The situation is further worsened when armed conflict is internal and neither heeds ideal values, nor implements international law principles or respect for human rights. With women's suffering reaching a climax, ordeals perpetuate even after armed conflict ends.

The world's memory of forcible transfer, collective displacement, the raping of women and the starvation of children fades in the intervals between one war and another, and one genocide and the next. What has been achieved is notable, but is not adequate to eliminate all forms of suffering and distress. Much waits to be done on several intertwined levels.

In the first instance, international activity should continue to support women and to eradicate gender-based violence. With the intention to empower and develop relevant international laws, such activity must be underlined in all international and regional arenas. To avoid being restricted to abstract legal frameworks, a campaign should also be launched to call for the development of mechanisms necessary to enforce valid laws; resorting to the ICC will play a central role in ending violence against women worldwide.

Secondly, the distinction between violence and abuses against women before, during and after armed conflict should cease. Such a mechanical distinction between phases appears to minimise and restrict grave violence and abuse to the period of armed conflict only. Moreover, such a separation suggests, perhaps deliberately, the elimination of violence from its root in society by ascribing its outbreak to armed conflict. It has by now been proved that increasing violence against women in armed conflict dates to the preceding phase — to a form of violence that is deeply-rooted in the given society, which practiced various forms of violence against women in peacetime, before the conflict took place. When armed conflict erupts, women's status deteriorates and violence escalates. The same situation pertains after the armed conflict ends. In short, violence against women constitutes a complete and perpetual cycle that undergoes phases and levels before, during and after armed conflict. Raised awareness of this predicament is indispensable; work should continue to devise links to develop a system of integral international laws — not a set of fragmented regulations — that will eliminate violence against women in various circumstances.

Thirdly, though important, international effort alone is no longer adequate. Side by side with international activity, individual states should also raise awareness and promote commitment by taking all necessary internal legislative, executive and judicial measures to eliminate violence against women. If not accompanied by sanctions on non-compliance, international law will not be capable of penetrating state borders and effecting enforcement. Thus it should be emphasised that states need to adapt their respective domestic legislation to be consistent with international law norms in all aspects related to violence against women. As such, women's salvation from such violence is not only an international responsibility that attempts to cross national borders. The converse is also true. States' liability will be supported by international law, which provides further external enforcement mechanisms. If domestic legislation falls short in its elimination of violence against women and does not punish offenders, and not only in armed conflict but also in peacetime, before and after the outbreak of conflict, international law will be of little use in the cessation of this cycle of violence, which will more than likely perpetuate. Importantly, pressure should brought to bear on various states to demand that they amend their respective national legislation or promulgate necessary new regulations to address this issue, ensuring that they take all actions necessary to ensure the effective enforcement of such legislation. A state that does not neglect violence against women in peacetime will be more capable of committing to and respecting relevant international norms in wartime.

Finally, developing and enforcing internal legal structures is essential to eliminate violence against women. However, this action alone is not sufficient to produce the desired transformation.

A substantial transformation of negative and stereotypical views of women should be take place in the societal domain. Often, violence against women is generated by such views that convey prejudices against women and afford men preferences over women. Naturally, this cause societal inaction — if not acceptance — of the abuse of women by men. Unless changed, violence against women will still be rooted in the respective cultures of several societies. To effect the desired transformation, continuing education on the values of gender equality and respect of human rights is of paramount importance.

Additionally, a substantive transformation should be introduced to target political cultures; particularly those suffering from internal armed conflicts. Mostly located in the southern hemisphere, these states are authoritarian, with political regimes that monopolise authority and power. A typical state would treat its people as subjects who are obliged to fulfil its wishes and implement its demands, not as citizens who have the right to participate and demand accountability. Discarding human security for their respective citizens, these states believe that their national security is associated with bringing about state security. Repression, though at times unapparent, is inherent in such states; it shifts from the state to society, from society to individuals, and from men to women, who are treated as inferior and made to assimilate and admit all prejudice and abuse inflicted on them.

Women's security will not be attainable except in a secure society, which cannot be established in the absence of a prevalent democratic political system. This form of political system will not be put in place without safeguarding equal and proportionate citizenship rights for both men and women. As a point of departure, a state's national security cannot be brought about but by achieving its citizens' human security. It should be highlighted that human security, both domestically and internationally, cannot be brought about except by safeguarding women's security; not because women are a core unit of society's sustainability, but because they are intrinsically human beings who have a safeguarded human right to a decent life and dignity.

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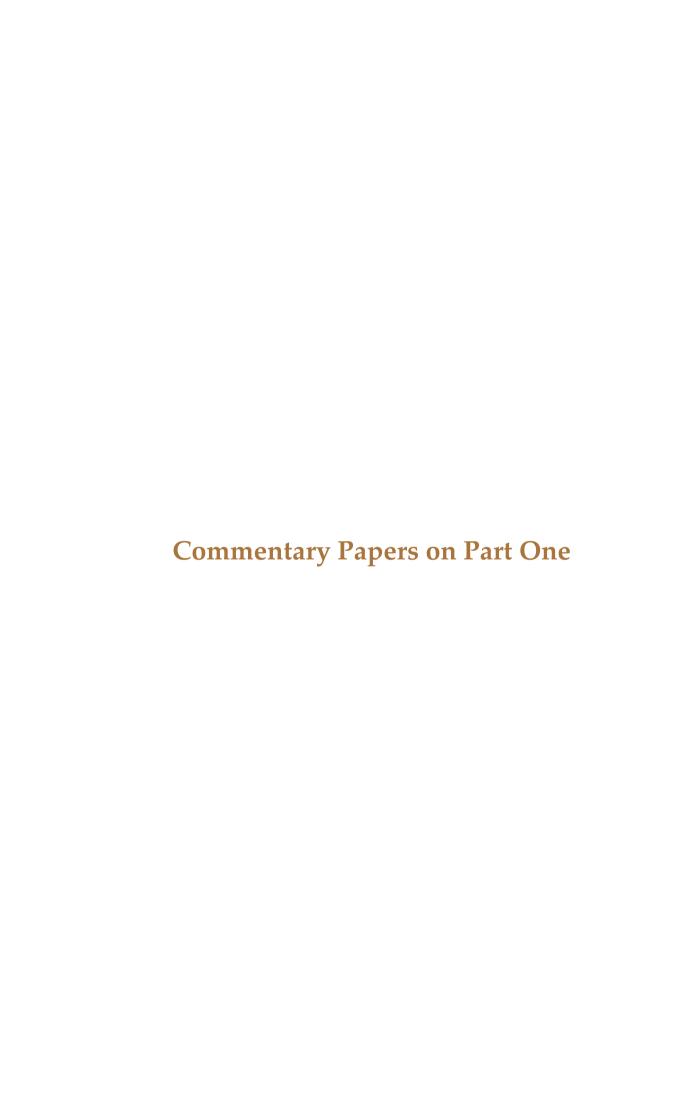
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# **Chapter One**

# **Arab Commentary Papers**

Zhour Horr

Nassif Hitti

# Foreign Commentary Papers

Lloyd Axworthy

Robin Ludwig

Anne Helen Cubilié

# **Zhour Horr**

It is certain that international peace and security is closely linked to the fulfilment of citizens' social, political and economic rights within society. The traditional vision of peace is not sufficient to this task, either at the national or international level. It has become necessary to find mechanisms to build relations within societies on the basis of social justice, equality, sharing, fairness, and good governance. Therefore, within this context it is important to involve women, who comprise half of society, in all aspects of social reform and development.

Some may argue that Arab society has for a long time held women in a lesser view and as playing secondary roles. Women have been confined to certain limits, which did not allow them to contribute towards building society and playing a role in overcoming the major challenges facing Arab and Islamic nations. This has caused the Arab World to lag behind in terms of worldwide progress and development. Thus it has become necessary to establish an Arab strategy for promoting Arab women's involvement in sustainable development and decision-making at the social, political and economic levels, in order to realise peace and security on both a national and international level.

In this regard, the Moroccan experience can be examined in terms of improving the conditions of women as a main force in all reform and change processes. By reviewing this experience, we can identify steps that enabled the creation of an appropriate climate for women's empowerment in a society that once looked upon women as subordinates under the custodianship of men, to the extent of choosing their life partners.

It is important to recognise that social, economic, political and legal conditions of women are often times closely linked to the existence or absence of democracy and human rights. In other words, there is a direct relationship between the empowerment of women and the available scope of democracy, human rights and good governance in any given country, both in theory and in practice.

To address the problem of women's empowerment it is important to adopt a comprehensive approach by establishing mechanisms and institutions that advocate human rights and the rule of laws and equality, as well as, ensure the full integration of international conventions ratified by the state into national legislation. The purpose of this is to spread of the culture of human rights, social peace and economic security, as well as establish mechanisms for their implementation.

In Morocco, for instance, some established institutions contributed to the crystallisation of several new concepts, which helped women achieve more progress and register gains, such as the following:

- Establishing the Human Rights Ministry, now known as the Human Rights Studies and Research Centre.
- Upgrading and restructuring the Consultative Council on Human Rights.
- Upgrading the Consultative Council on Social Dialogue, to maintain good relations with employer associations and employee syndicates.

- Establishing the administrative courts, which enable citizens to take legal action against administrations for their rights.
- Establishing the Grievances Council, which plays a mediating role to protect the rights of citizens.
- Establishing the Fairness and Reconciliation Authority to settle the cases of political detainees and cases of forced disappearance and detainee abuse.
- Liberating the audio-visual media fields and supporting the freedom of expression and freedom of opinion, as well as and conducting transparent polls.

In addition to these institutions, other institutions were established to protect the rule of law and establish equality among citizens, both men and women. Progress was achieved through dialogue and embracing innovative methods for addressing the marginalisation of women in society; encouraging the treatment of women as full-fledged citizens; and dismantling patriarchal hegemony. The latter has been resistant to the concept of gender equality, often times attributing traditional or cultural practices to Islamic laws in order to validate them, which made reform and change both complicated and difficult. Such practices propagated false concepts and sayings that had no basis in Islamic heritage and Sharia Law. Nonetheless, these concepts and sayings are part of the traditions and customs that have been passed from previous generations. A fundamental interpretation of some religious texts actively curbs the freedom of women, although Islamic Law was one of the first religions that improved the rights and status of women. Islam was the first religion that rectified distorted views held about women. It underlined the equality of woman and men in terms of responsibilities, penalties and rights. Furthermore, in terms of the unity of creation women should have their own independent identities and be not considered subordinates or followers of men.

The paper under consideration focused on the importance of women's empowerment as a means to achieve social peace and balanced relations based on fairness and equality, laying down the pillars of comprehensive development. In fact, this cannot be achieved without reconsidering many matters in Arab and Islamic society, whereby traditional perceptions and behaviours often run contrary to human dignity and equality. A society with half of its citizens paralyzed cannot take proper strides towards development and progress. It is inconceivable to waste the energies of half of the society in the third millennium. We cannot introduce changes without practical mechanisms and strategies that pull all of society's components together.

With regards to Moroccan experience, it can be said that success in pursuit of change has been based on two pillars:

First, the presence of a strong political will and a constant promotion of the status of women at the highest level towards achieving equality and participation.

Second, the presence of an active civil society that can initiate action for change and move towards that end. Such a civil society includes national parties, human rights organisations, women's associations and development organisations.

These two key pillars have helped in securing gains for women in the social, economic, political and legal domains. Furthermore, the following points highlights the involvement of women in several senior decision-making positions:

- The appointment of women in various fields and sectors once confined principly to men (e.g. traditionally male-dominated careers such as governor or postman).
- The appointment of seven women ministers since 2007.
- The approval of a quota system in parliamentary representation and the national elections. Efforts are being exerted to ensure that the representation of women in parliament reaches 30 percent.
- Encouraging women to have an influential role in economic decisions. For example, women are encouraged to work in the field of construction whereby, there are currently more than 6000 construction operations run by businesswomen. In addition, more than 30 percent of the active labour force in cities, and more than 40 percent in villages, are women. There are also many small and medium enterprises in cities and villages that are run by women.
- Allowing women to reach their full cultural and educational potential through a
  policy that makes education compulsory for both genders, with an emphasis on
  gender equality in educational curricula.
- Approving programmes on the eradication of illiteracy, especially targeting women and girls.
- Changing the stereotype of women in terms of their role in society through a national commitment to improving the image of women in the media.
- Comprehensive revision of all national laws and legislation to ensure they are in line with ratified international conventions that call for gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Furthermore, the programme of the National Initiative for Human Development, which was adopted 18 May 2005, sets out a policy that works towards forging partnerships between all stakeholders and local authorities. The goal of this policy is to end the suffering of marginalised and impoverished sectors of society, especially women, youth and children, and to equip them with the knowledge and economic skills that can enable them to escape social exclusion.

Within this context, a national strategy has been put in place to achieve gender equality through mainstreaming gender issues in governmental policies, developmental programmes and the national budget. This was indeed an excellent mechanism for fighting discrimination and achieving equality. This strategy aims to achieve two objectives: 1) equal participation of both men and women in preparing, steering and influencing governmental policies and developmental programmes; and 2) equal enjoyment of the outcome of this participation for both genders.

Governmental sectors, associations, political agencies and syndicates have taken part in preparing this strategy. This is in addition to consultations undertaken with international organisations to address specific challenges, such as low levels of participation of women in local elections.

I believe that the prevailing patriarchal mindset and the reality of women's conditions in Arab and Islamic society needs to be changed. This can be achieved through promoting a change in behaviour and the development of new social concepts. I believe that legislation and the legal system can play a key role in the adoption of better principles and values, such as advocating justice and equality within society, as well as, within the family. Law plays a major role in regulating social relations and establishing the pillars of stability, security and

protection of social and familial rights. As we know the family is the foundaiton of the community and a strategic tool to develop and implement major reform efforts in society.

Reforming the legal system functions as a principle gateway to reform other domains and is an effective mechanism to introduce change by giving women a legal position whereby they can contribute to the establishment of democratic institutions and participate in decisionmaking. Legal empowerment would also encourage women to play their due part as fully fledged citizens in achieving development in all its human dimensions, on both national and international levels. The contribution of women is necessary to establish a strong and cohesive society that can remain steadfast in face of the major shifts and changes taking place in the contemporary world.

It is also important to highlight the Moroccan experience in the context of mainstreaming women's rights in the legal domain relative to civil, criminal and administrative law. The aim has been to strike a harmonious balance between Morocco's Islamic identity with international experiences in the struggle for justice, fairness and equality, values that are common among all civilisations.

This was done through an open-minded reading of religious texts and a better understanding of the objectives of the Sharia. In fact, the interpretation of jurisprudence should first be based on the text and its significance and secondly within the context of modernity, which has undergone a transformation over time. Keeping this balance in mind, reforms should be based on the Islamic Sharia in conjunction with all juristic opinions, as long as it draws on appropriate solutions for the issues relevant to this time and place. Although the Islamic Sharia gives decisive answers on crucial matters, it also left considerable space for Muslim leaders to make decisions based on interpretation of emerging matters, and according to context of modern times (e.g. the age of marriage).

The Family Law issued on 5 February 2004 represented a quiet revolution in Morocco, redefining relations within society and shifting family relations from a vertical sequence to a horizontal one. It has led to the most profound reform in Moroccan society since its independence more than 50 years ago. This law removed many of the obstacles that hindered gender equality, asserting women's status within the family. The changes were based on equality and joint responsibility in the administration of family affairs through dialogue, consultation and participation, instead of blind control and unilateral decisions. It provided for a new version of the marriage contract based on respect of the will of the two partners. Furthermore, it has granted each partner the right to legally end the marriage, with protection of rights afforded to children as well as wives with regards to efforts and financial contributions during the life of the marriage.

This law enabled Moroccan society to better regulate family law relations among its citizens. However, the project of the National Plan on the Integration of Women into the Development Process faced many difficulties followed by a controversial debate. The debate reached the extent of causing two large demonstrations in Casablanca and Rabat between those in favor of reform and those holding more conservative views. The escalation was contained through the formation of a Consultative Royal Committee to consider the reforms of the Personal Code and to adopt a modern approach to introducing changes and reform. This move provided a platform for all parties to express their opinions on preparing a project that seeks to spread

equality, the culture of rights, duty and dialogue ensure security and familial harmony. These discussions led to a conscensus on the matter, which was drafted into law, discussed and later approved by parliament. Following that, another battle ensued concerning the implementation of the law, which entailed changing traditional mindsets and perceptions through legal mechanisms and regulatory procedures in a bid to achieve security within the family as the nucleus of the community.

Family Law reform henceforth became a launchpad for achieving several gains for women, including:

- Setting up a national strategy for combating violence against women by drafting legal provisions that address all forms violence (both at home or elsewhere). Moreover, it included the criminalisation of sexual harassment.
- Establishing a national pact was with the objective of improving the image of women and appointing women in decision-making positions.
- Reforming the Nationality Law in 2007 that now allows children to take the nationality of mothers married to non-Moroccan spouses.
- Increasing awareness of the importance of the improvement of the conditions of women in order to promote the general conditions of the country.
- Preparing a strategy for mainstreaming gender issues in government policies and budgets in order to achieve gender equality.
- Removing reservations (or replacing them with explanatory statements) regarding the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), many of which in fact, have become irrelevant after reform of the Family Law.

Despite many gains, there is still a long way to go in order to achieve equality, as well as, social peace and security in Morocco. To this end, the matter requires the mobilisation of all possible resources. We should, through dialogue based on a comprehensive and integrated vision via mechanisms formulated on a national level with an open-mind, engage parties that are resistant to reform and modernisation.

I have attempted through this comment to underline what is mentioned in the paper under consideration, especially in connection with the proposals submitted to improve the conditions of women in Arab society. I have also attempted to highlight the importance of the intervention of the state through championing measures to eliminate gender discrimination; enabling the political empowerment of women; giving women access to decision-making positions; modernising the legal system; and activating civil society as a way to change prevailing patterns of thinking and behaviour towards women in our societies.

## Nassif Hitti

The paper submitted by Dr. Bahgat Korany on "World visions of security: how far have women been taken into consideration?" raises several questions regarding basic and essential concepts in the field of international relations, in terms of the changes introduced to these concepts and their content, as well as a better understanding of the progression of this subject in international politics. The paper also sheds light on the conditions of women and the means to empower them amid current international developments and their impact on various cultures and societies.

The paper, undoubtedly, is a valuable theoretical contribution that identifies the basics through which one can understand a world order that is still emerging with some aspects remaining uncertain. Such a valuable contribution was expected from a scholar like Dr. Korany, who has a remarkable record of contributions to the theory of international relations and to the comparative study of foreign policies.

Allow me to add some remarks in connection with the conceptual framework of this paper, as well as the parts related to women, with the hope that these remarks enrich the discussion.

First, the definition of the concept of security touches on various elements of power (e.g. strength, steadfastness and intelligence). In other words, it addresses the successful handling various threats and challenges in a proactive manner. The paper reveals that the meaning of the concept has changed over time, as well as from one place to another.

Second, there are different types of security that are integrated, linked and renewable. We can start with personal or individual security, which includes the citizen within a medical, educational, social, legal, economic and psychological network within which he/she can feel safe and protected. Then there is what is known as "national security", which is the responsibility of the state and is expressed through raison d'etat. This type of security emerged mainly as a result of the interests of the ruler, group and community as a whole via the establishment of the modern state, and is expressed by key institutions.

There exists also societal security, which is based on a mutual feeling of members of the community regarding the legitimacy of a pact, or social contract existing between them and its importance for their protection. This in turn is coincides with the legitimacy of the social contract existing between society and the state, which assumes the preservation of the basic and vital objectives and interests of society.

There is also regional security, whereby the term "regionalism" has become more open and elastic with regards to membership and geographical interactions. The structure of regional security could be an official, institutional shape, or it could be formed through a number of unwritten understandings which are the basis and framework for a given group, regulating the conduct of the parties concerned. Regional security could still exist in somewhat instable circumstances, such as intermittant turmoil as a result of imbalances of power. Indeed, the balance of power is a determinant of regional stability and security.

International security is also present which determines the distribution of power, creating certain balances. International security may include mutual deterrence, which creates a kind of stability based on mutual interests and risks.

There is also human security whereby the emergence of related issues and threats has necessitated interaction and interdependence among various populations in the world, transforming the global arena into a village. These issues, which represent collective interests, require international cooperation, or at the very least, collective action, to handle them successfully. The ultimate successs or failure in dealing with these problems can result in a victory or defeat for all. Among such issues are climate change, pollution, immigration and disease. Achieving human security requires cooperation among players in a global order that is still in the process of being shaped.

Third, there are concepts and challenges that stem from changes in international politics, such as the reemergence of the role of the state, particularly in the context of the recent international financial crisis. Another phenomenon is the what is sometimes referred to as a "failing state," which can be considered a threat to stability, both internally and with neighbours. Failed and failing states are linked to the worst tragedies of humanity, resulting in considerable harm to the weakest sectors of society, namely women, children and the poor. There are indeed many countries that may succumb to this fate, which is why their cases need to be addressed both on a strategic and sociological level.

There are also struggles around the concept of identity, as complex variations sometimes unravel vis-à-vis one's experience living within the state. In both contexts there is an urgent need to define the modalities of outside intervention for the sake of the protection of human rights. Sometimes intervention under the guise of human rights is used as cover for other strategic objectives and interests, despite the fact that intervention might be necessary in certain cases. Thus, certain standards and conditions have to be established for outside intervention as such, along with legal and moral reference points. The U.N. as a universal decision-maker with the interests of all in mind, should be responsible for establishing norms and reference points in order to avoid double standards or selectivity in the handling of cases.

Fourth, with regards to the conditions of Arab women, despite progress achieved in several fields, more efforts are needed. We must be bold enough to raise certain questions and to find answers to them. Such questions may include: whether it is too late to address the conditions of women, and what factors stemming from cultural heritage and traditions constrain our consciousness of the conditions of women. Frankly speaking, it can be argued that a primitive attitude is still prevalent in dealing with women, as a result of cultural traditions. This attitude has an influence on women in different ways whereby some are willing to relinquish their rights while others boldly demand them. While law is necessary to protect rights, the progress of society is necessary to validate laws.

Finally, it is necessary to remember that comprehensive human development is an multifaceted concept and that the individual, whether male or female, is the vehicle as well as the first target of this development process. In our societies there is a structural gap between comprehensive human development on the one hand and efforts towards the empowerment of women politically, economically and socially on the other.

To conclude, those who are interested in bridging this gap through the spread of a culture of equality and citizenship should coordinate their efforts. The empowerment of women, which can be achieved via education and positive reform efforts, is vital to overall progress. This comprehensive human development can be achieved in particular through the creation of a knowledge-based society.

# Lloyd Axworthy

In the closing decades of the last century, as the Cold War ended and the inadequacies of the nation-state system to meet the demands of globalisation began to be understood, the concept of human security emerged, signifying a revolutionary transformation in global politics. By insisting on placing the individual front and centre in security calculations, this new conception of security defines the primacy of the individual as the essential referent for international peace and security.

The UN Development Programme's Human Development Report of 1994, based largely on the seminal writings of economist Mahbub ul Haq, adopted a broad definition of human security insisting that human development and human security are interdependent and are not complete unless they address the economic, nutritional, health, environmental, personal, communal and political needs of the individual. Indeed, the threats of our increasingly globalised world—climate change, food insecurity, international crime, global health crises and economic instability—call out for such an innovative definition of security.

UN initiatives to this end merged with a corresponding view articulated by the Canadian government. Arising particularly in the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda was a growing awareness in my country of the inability of the international system to deal with issues of mass atrocity. When I was foreign affairs minister in 1996, Canada adopted human security as a central guiding principle for foreign policy decisions. Without challenging the broader definition of human security offered by the UNDP, we determined that for pragmatic reasons related to issues of immediate relevance and urgency, we would begin by focusing primarily on the protection of people under direct threat of war and conflict.

One of Canada's earliest human security initiatives addressed the global scourge of landmines. Along with a number of like-minded governments, we partnered with a powerful coalition of humanitarian groups to achieve a universal ban by focusing on the risks of landmines to individuals, moving the discourse out of the realm of diplomatic and military arms control language and shifting the focus instead to the devastating impact on innocent civilians. Through coalition building, intensive networking and negotiation, we were able to rally the commitment of 122 nations to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Landmines and on their Destruction. Today, the production and use of landmines around the world has been dramatically curtailed.

The success of the landmines initiative was the spawning ground for the development of new ideas and practices centred on the human security paradigm. It was also the beginning of the emergence of a permanent international human security architecture. Building on the success of the landmine treaty in effectively addressing overt threats of violence, Canada worked towards the advancement of global human security through a number of initiatives such as the establishment of the International Criminal Court and the creation of a protocol for the protection of child soldiers.

Recognising the unique experience of women and girls in conflict situations, we worked in the Security Council to protect the rights of women in Afghanistan, and we ensured that rape as a weapon of war was included in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We also worked with our development agencies towards implementing a broad human security

agenda where initiatives fundamental to the security of women — such as education and health — were funded and supported.

#### RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

The success of these human security initiatives demonstrated that international politics could be conducted with a focus on the protection of people within a human security framework and naturally led to a normative challenge to the traditional precepts of national sovereignty. In the aftermath of the numerous mass murders, genocides, and ethnic cleansings that marked the end of the last century, with the anguish and effort of trying to mount humanitarian interventions in the Balkans, Rwanda, East Timor and elsewhere still fresh in the minds of decision-makers, and with the crisis in Kosovo at hand, a fundamental debate arose concerning when, where and by what means the international community has a responsibility to override the rights of oppressors to hide behind a wall of sovereign jurisdiction and come to the aid of people under threat.

In 1999 the Canadian government sponsored the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) — a broad-based, international dialogue of scholars and policymakers charged with the task of making the human security concept in internal conflicts operational by reconciling sovereignty and intervention. ICISS crafted a definition of sovereignty centred not on the prerogatives of the state, but on its primary responsibility to protect (R2P) its own citizens. In essence, if a state legitimately protects its citizens then it is fully entitled to its sovereign power. However, if it fails to do so, or if it is, in fact, the perpetrator of a massive attack on the rights of its people, then the international community must assume the responsibility to protect.

Unanimously adopted by world leaders as part of the reform package of the 2005 UN World Summit, R2P pays homage to the human security approach in a number of fundamental ways. It focuses international attention where it is most needed — on the victim. It focuses on what sovereignty obliges rather than what it endows. Under the principle of R2P states can no longer harm their populations with impunity. And if for some reason a state is unwilling or unable to protect its citizens, the task defaults to the international community.

Clearly, ever since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the act of international intervention has become anothema to many — especially in the global South — and the support for international engagement to protect civilians has suffered from a misreading of the purposes of international intervention under the R2P concept. R2P prescribes strict and rigorous threshold criteria that must be met before intervention by military means is justified. Nations not only have a primary responsibility to react with peaceful means to situations of mass human atrocity, but they also have a prior duty to prevent such atrocities and rebuild once conflict has subsided. This trio of responsibilities are mutually reinforcing components of any strategy for dealing with threats of mass atrocity.

The ICISS report identifies the need to recognise equality, economic deprivation, legal protections, political deficiencies, and security reforms as part of both the root causes of conflict and prevention efforts. Particular attention must now be given to the role of gender in strengthening the R2P framework.\* The original ICISS report did not take into account the unique experience of women and girls in conflict situations. Indeed, the word "gender" does not appear at all within its pages. Yet we know that it is women who are often the main victims in humanitarian tragedies around the world.

This central reality should become a major new dimension of the R2P rationale. At the prevention level, gender perspectives must be built into early warning analyses and must be reflected in data collection processes. At the level of reaction, gender awareness training for all peacekeeping personnel is essential. The participation of women must be promoted at all levels of an intervention — from the appointment of women as special representatives and envoys, to the representation of women in civilian and military police and humanitarian personnel. At the rebuilding level, the role of women has been proven vital in local conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives. There is increasing recognition that the empowerment of women can have salutary impacts on the reduction of potential violence, the mobilisation of democratic and economic forces, and the creation of a political culture of stability. The original R2P argument misses these crucial points; they must now be built into the equation.

#### LEGAL EMPOWERMENT

I recently served as a member of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor that brought together a group of thinkers, former senior government officials, scholars and jurists to address this problem. The Commission developed a comprehensive framework for legal empowerment with four mutually reinforcing pillars, each with a special focus on women: access to justice and the rule of law, property rights, labour rights and business rights.

At its core, the Legal Empowerment Agenda is about unlocking human potential. By giving the poor access to legal protections such as property rights and security of tenure, labour rights and business rights, we allow the poor to get the maximum value for their work, enabling them to lift themselves from the grips of poverty. The Commission found many examples around the world where ensuring the rule of law for women living in poverty resulted in significant progress in spurring self-help, development and entrepreneurship.

The post-9/11 world is in need of the kind of creative navigation the human security model can offer, with its emphasis on the protection of the vulnerable, on civility and on respect for law. It represents, in short, a comprehensive call for global citizenship. As we move forward on human security initiatives, more must be done to integrate a broad and far-reaching gender perspective into the concept.

<sup>\*</sup> See Jennifer Bond and Laurel Sherret (2006), "A Sight for Sore Eyes: Bringing Gender Vision to the Responsibility to Protect Framework," INSTRAW, March.

# **Robin Ludwig\***

Over the past 30 years, discussions of changing security paradigms have been as heated and controversial as debates concerning the advancement of women and their changing roles in society. Many of these discussions have taken place at the United Nations or under its auspices (the first global UN Conference on Women took place in Mexico City in 1975). Both issues are of continuing international interest at the global, regional, national and sub-national levels. No single theory or action plan will satisfy the concerns of every region. The paper that we have before us brings together these two debates, tracing the origins of current discussions on human security and relating this concept to the transformation of the role of Arab women in society. A particular asset of this paper is its combination of theory, analysis and practical suggestions for action.

In discussing the theory of human security and earlier security paradigms, the paper offers a nuanced approach, advising that traditional state-centric security concerns will remain salient and should be combined with a human security outlook. In seeking such a combined approach, both old definitions and new assumptions are challenged. The traditional state-centred, "black box" approach to security cannot provide assurances against global warming or pandemics such as HIV/AIDS or avian flu. Human security theory, in contrast, shifts the emphasis away from governments to individuals and groups that may collaborate at various levels and across borders depending on the threat involved. The paper also questions the continued relevance of established labels, such as "low" and "high" politics, while cautioning against premature acceptance of new frameworks for action such as the "Responsibility to Protect". A helpful distinction is made between human security and human development, which are closely related and often confused. Human security is not as neat and tidy a theory as realism and more traditional security theories. It is, however, a truer framework and lens for understanding and addressing the security challenges of life today.

Conceptually, the paper raises essential considerations for both theory and practice regarding those who may contribute to security. Since human security is people-centred rather than state-centred, one would assume that women and men should be equally concerned and involved. Given the percentage of women in the world's population, the numbers certainly suggest that they have an equal stake in seeking a secure existence. Human security theory suggests the importance of contributions by all people and does not distinguish between the contributions to be made by men and women.

In terms of measurement, both the concepts of human security and women's evolving role in society raise problems for theorists. Human security was broadly defined by the Commission on Human Security as having three pillars: freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live with dignity. The latter "freedom", however, is particularly difficult to define and measure. Many theorists, including researchers at the World Bank and the Human Security Report Project in Vancouver, Canada, have taken a narrow approach and concentrated exclusively on freedom from fear, which is of particular interest in North America and Europe and offers a variety of elements for measurement. The focus in this paper on freedom from fear and from want is of more universal relevance and data

<sup>\*</sup> The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations.

is readily available for both. A particular asset of this paper is found in its annexes, which clearly highlight the lacunae in traditional security thinking and public awareness of non-traditional threats to human survival. The annexes alone make a strong case for the human security approach.

Although the findings of the paper as related to Arab women and human security rely primarily on three recent studies, these studies converge on several key points. One is the need for "ideational change in the societal context". While difficult to define, this is an essential consideration in terms of culture, history and established societal norms.

Another point of convergence is the finding that public opinion generally favours equal rights for women despite their current status. The fact that women are making positive strides in the academic and health sectors suggests that other sectors may soon be ready to acknowledge the contributions being made by women. Of primary concern, however, is women's role in politics and decision-making. This area may lag behind others and could easily justify the organisation of a related conference or workshop. A variety of questions arise as a result of the three studies cited here; among them are: a) which sectors are ripe for broader acknowledgement of women's contributions; b) how can "ideational change" best be broached; and c) what may be the best means of accelerating women's empowerment within Arab society?

After highlighting the need for a new conceptual approach to security and examining the available gender-based research on Arab women's current status and potential, the paper concludes with seven action points that provide an encouraging and practical point of departure. The action points follow naturally from the theoretical discussion and analysis that precede them and offer a somewhat rare example of theory and analysis translated into practice. A further benefit is that many of the action points are also relevant for women outside the Middle East.

A 2004 Roundtable on Human Security in the Middle East, held in Amman, Jordan, concluded that, "The wider Middle East demands that we connect local and geostrategic perspectives, [and] the lens of human security makes that possible...Reform initiatives, however, need to emphasise local ownership of the concept, for initiatives originating from the region will have greater legitimacy." Several of the action points, such as "facing up to patriarchy and cultural stereotyping" and "reorienting dominant discourse", clearly require efforts emanating from within Arab societies.

International contacts and assistance may be helpful, however, in following up on many of the suggestions. For example, the United Nations and many regional organisations provide electoral assistance and advice. Women's experience as voters and/or political candidates in other countries or regions can be helpful for women in the Middle East, and vice versa. With the support of the United Nations and regional organisations, governments have also elaborated legal norms related to individual rights and freedoms, as well as. more specific codes of conduct and best practices in a variety of fields, including peacekeeping, human rights and labour law.

Through contact with international and regional organisations, civil society can enhance their efforts for change, drawing on experience, advice and support that are readily available within the international community.

In conclusion, it might be useful to return to the title of this paper. It poses the question, "How far have women been taken into consideration in world visions of security?" Until relatively recently, the answer would have been, "not very far". However, as the world has changed and new transnational threats to security have emerged, the concept of human security has helped to identify women as an underutilised or hidden resource. Based on the data presented, support for women's empowerment is already growing. This paper has identified the theoretical framework, data suggesting public support, and action points for women's increased participation in the promotion and maintenance of security.

The important question now is what actions women will take next in order to assume their rightful place in creating a more secure and peaceful world. There are several related issues that might be interesting to discuss further:

- 1. A priority area for action is women's participation in the political process, especially related to elections.
- 2. The conflict between human security and traditional security concepts at the United Nations; and the practical steps being taken at the United Nations towards gender mainstreaming.
- 3. Information sharing/collaboration: international coalitions, the Human Security Network, comparative studies and collaborative projects.

#### Anne Helen Cubilié

"The United Nations Commission on Human Security (CHS) defines human security as the protection of 'the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfilment' ... Human security is far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance and access to economic opportunity, education and healthcare. It is a concept that comprehensively addresses both 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' and is based on a framework that emphasises both 'protection' and 'empowerment'."\*

The relationship between gender and human security is a vastly overlooked cross-cutting issue in the work of today's humanitarian, developmental and governmental actors, to which Dr. Bahgat Korany's groundbreaking paper makes a key contribution, helping to build important bridges between the study of these two crucial arenas though a consideration of their role in supporting women's empowerment in the Middle East. Through a survey of the relationship between conventional notions of "state security" and the emerging notion of "human security," his paper considers the work of three recent studies that specifically locate women's empowerment as a key to increased regional security and development. Building on this, Dr. Korany then suggests seven concrete actions to be taken to help increase women's empowerment and participation in political decision-making structures.

Building on an analysis of the conventional definition of "state security" in international relations, Dr. Korany locates two important points of critique of the traditional realist view of state security. First, internal crises can be as threatening to state survival as external ones, especially in the case of conflicts or disasters that involve a large percentage of the population. Second, it is based on a conflictual model of state relationships that fail to encompass a "state of peace" over a "state of nature" at the international level. Rather, it is simply a universalisation of the traditional European state model, which does not take into account the complexities of today's international system, whereby cooperation between states can be as significant as conflict between states.

The traditional/conventional definition of state security, as Dr. Korany so skilfully outlines, also characterizes the state through the most conventional, patriarchal gender norms, just as Thomas Hobbes's "state of nature" defines the constant struggle of man against man, with the social contract whereby men enter into the rule of law under the sovereign. This definition of natural law defines the hierarchical relationships of the state, with the family as the most basic element of its stability. Thus, the woman's relationship to the man within the family structure is understood to function as the man's relationship to the sovereign as an element of the "social compact". Just as state security is concerned with inter- rather than intra-state issues (the realm of "high" rather than "low" politics), gender becomes associated with the woman and family, and thus occupies the realm of purely intra-state concerns.

Even working within this paradigm, the question of how best to secure the "internal" security of the state is directly connected to the status and well-being of women, as well as men in society. If a state's ability to project power beyond its borders on the international stage

<sup>\*</sup> United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security website, "What is human security".

is directly connected to factors such as a dynamic economy, a healthy and properly skilled workforce, a stable social and political base, etc., then women's roles in both the public and private spheres become crucial. Human security, taking these factors among others into account, must even more directly address the role of gender with its multi-dimensional approach to supportive human environments free of "want" and "fear" and safeguarding human lives and livelihoods. In cases where the internal stability of the state is threatened by crisis, the necessity of maintaining gender as a key cross-cutting issue becomes even more crucial.

Dr. Korany's paper constructs a detailed argument in support of his conclusion that women's inclusion in state decision-making structures is a crucial regional priority. This argument includes the following four key points:

- 1. Human security is a concept that is rooted in a variety of global intellectual traditions, including that of Arab/Muslim thought. This paper complicates the easy critique of human security as originating primarily from a so-called "Western" intellectual tradition. As Dr. Korany notes, "Ibn Khaldun spoke revealingly of 'rulership as a relationship' (Mugadema, pp. 152-3, as in Black, 2001, pp. 180-82). Revealingly because 'rulership and relationship' are significant, as we will see for the evolving conceptions of security: the traditional 'national security' versus the evolving 'human security'." Specifically, he points towards the key elements of human security — freedom from want and from fear — as directly in keeping with those outlined by the Quran.
- 2. Common threats are a growing danger to the international system, and to global humanity, reinforcing the need for a robust understanding of human security as a lens through which to address these complex and multi-layered human and institutional relationships and their concomitant risks. A growing number of people are affected by natural disasters, climate change, regional character conflicts, pandemics, etc., and recognition of this at the international, regional and state levels is leading to an increased interest in strengthening human security.
- 3. Gender is a blind spot of human security practice, in terms of the development of specific planning, programming and indicators of achievement. Only recently has the full necessity of women's participation in peace-building and the transition process come to be realised. Furthermore, little literature exists on the specific relationship between human security and women and girls-centred programming.
- 4. As the UNDP's Arab Human Development Report notes, health and education are two priority areas for women's empowerment in the region. This therefore poses the question of what steps can be taken in the region to help create the "ideational change" necessary to fully realise an environment where these two key areas can be addressed. Dr. Korany suggests the necessity of women's full participation in the political sphere and in decision-making processes.

Some important questions raised by his paper are expanded on below:

 Human security as a concept is directly focused on the empowerment of individuals and communities to exercise agency over their own choices. Is this sometimes perceived by states as against their own interests? If so, how can women's already active participation

- in NGOs and growing participation in decision-making structures help to alleviate such concerns?
- Although there is robust participation by women in a number of civil society organisations, are there clear and equitable avenues for the advancement of women from the NGO sector to that of state and regional decision-making bodies?
- How can the seven steps outlined by the paper as necessary for reducing the public / private divide and increasing women's and therefore all human security in the region be accomplished? Is an NGO/academic partnership platform a possible organisational starting point? How can Dr. Korany's call for a robust Arab contribution to the debate on gender and human security best be realised?

# **Chapter Two**

# **Arab Commentary Papers**

 $Nassif\ Hitti$ 

 $\it Khaldoun Al-Naqeeb$ 

# **Foreign Commentary Papers**

Earl L. Sullivan

 $Cilja\ Harders$ 

#### **Nassif Hitti**

At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation for the valuable study jointly prepared by Dr. Ali Jarbawi and Dr. Asem Khalil on armed conflict and women's security. The study adopts a comparative and comprehensive approach while presenting an analytical assessment of the conditions of women during and after armed conflicts. It also offers an analytical reading of — and deep insight into — the position of women under international law, wherein various declarations and conventions aim to protect, promote and further empower women both universally and in their national context. The key question is: how can the gap between the de facto and de jure status of women be closed?

Allow me to add some remarks that, I believe, will enrich the discussion of this topic.

First, at the theoretical level, which has many ramifications and is also challenged by what happens in practice, it is necessary to differentiate between five stages in post-conflict situations:

- 1. The stage of overlooking women in post-conflict situations, when no attention is given to their conditions, which often continue to deteriorate.
- 2. The stage of institutional reconstitution or state restructuring. This is meant to create cohesion in terms of the social fabric, give stability and comprehensiveness to a firm national identity, and harness the presence of active NGOs. In this case, the restructuring of the state is done in order to reconstitute the basic functions of the state, as a result of war having undermined the capabilities of its institutions.
- 3. The stage of national reconstruction. War, whether it is a civil conflict or with an external entity, destroys social and national structures, rendering them incoherent and difficult to reonstruct. War further deepens already existing rifts within established societies. Therefore, it is necessary to build up a comprehensive and united identity that can form a sound basis for the successful reconstitution of state institutions. It is also necessary to build a new national pact taking into account all parties, and not just a singular national pact between state and society.
- 4. The stage of national construction. Sociologists and political analysts believe that this stage is different from the stage of national reconstruction in the sense that deep rifts and the absence of a common approach within society existed well before a particular war. It is also believed that this stage is the most difficult to fulfil compared to other stages.

Second, in all cases of internal or external conflicts some parties gain influence and power whereas others are marginalised and weakened at a certain stage. In this context, it is common that certain marginalised sectors of society suffer more financially, economically and socially more than others. Ironically, the more the suffering of women increases, the more responsibilities they often have towards the family. The most important among these responsibilities is preserving the unity of the family and the moral and psychological balance of its members. Deeply rooted heritage and traditions in certain societies – both in times of peace and war – result in a tendency towards violence against women. This violence takes different forms and is inflicted by various means. Such violence increases in times of sharp crisis because of the pressures and fears individuals are exposed to in such circumstances.

Third, in times of internal conflict, all members of society are engaged in the conflict often times with one party or several attempting to exercise power and influence over the others. Under such conditions, the physical, psychological, economic and social security of women are threatened. In this context, we may recall that civil unrest, internal strife and ethnic cleansing - though different in scale from one case to another - have become features of the post-Cold War world, increasing the threats and risks women face. It is also a dramatic paradox that women, who suffer a lot under conflict, continue to suffer from marginalisation even after conflicts are over as a result of prevailing mindsets and antiquated traditions. Thus, the post-conflict reconstruction stage is very important with regards to the positive change it could effect.

Fourth, forced displacement represents a major problem and puts additional pressure on weaker segments of society, especially women and children. UN statistics indicate that about 77 million people are forcibly displaced due to wars, natural disasters, economic deprivation and urban sprawl. International institutions often pay little heed to those displaced in view of the fact that they did not actually leave their country of residence, and therefore cannot be classified as refugees. Internal displacement tends to affect women and children the most, which entails considerable psychological, financial and social suffering. Set against a general backdrop of illegal immigration, many other problems surface in parallel in countries of the south, such as slavery or human trafficking, especially for low skill labour sectors that depend on women and children.

Fifth, the state of the national health sector often fails to provide for the appropriate treatment measures for women. Child delivery is often risky for women of a lower socio-economic status due to a lack of health awareness and unreliable medical services. Failing to address such vital medical provisions, tacitly suggests that the lives of those women are of no value. A report issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2005 indicated that giving birth, which is one of the most natural experiences in most women's lives, has become for many one of the most serious threats to women's health. According to the report, more than half a million women worldwide die in delivery every year. Needless to say, this number is not distributed equally across developed and less-developed countries. Figures revealed that there is one death per 2,400 deliveries in Europe, versus one death in every 20 deliveries in Africa.

The question remains, what are the solutions to these problems? I believe that what is needed is enhanced access to the means that can enable women to be practically — not theoretically — empowered. Although women's rights are enshrined in law, it is important to remove the social obstacles that hinder the full implementation of the relevant declarations and conventions. Bridging the gap between theory and practice can begin with empowerment of women in the home, in the workplace and in political life at the local and national levels. At the international level, it is necessary remain apprised of international declarations and conventions, in order to keep pace with relevant developments. It is also important for organisations such as the Arab Women Organisation (AWO) to be active in networking with other organisations. The AWO should embrace and encourage other local and national to take into account women's issues, while raising awareness both on the regional and international levels, on the importance of women's empowerment in light of the new threats women are facing. As far as the economic level is concerned, several case studies revealed that the micro credit system launched by economist, Muhammad Yunus, contributed greatly to the empowerment of women in harsh economic and social conditions.

## Khaldoun Al-Nageeb

The two writers, Dr. Ali Jarbawi and Dr. Asem Khalil, start the paper with two generalisations. The first one states, "Since the dawn of history, there has been always a conflict between good and evil." However, I believe that the paper should have, in the context of the topic, started instead with the observation that there is an ongoing conflict "between sex and power", which is also the title of a book written by Goran Therborn. The second generalisation is that patriarchy has rendered women weak and in poor conditions. But over the course of long periods in history, women, as pointed out by Barbara Ehrenreich in her book Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War, have struggled to secure food for their families. Many generalisations are used to promote the myth of "man as the hunter", with women staying at home, to justify the predominance of patriarchal culture.

Of course, I do not accuse the two authors of trying to promote this concept, but these generalisations could unintentionally justify to some extent this stereotypical way of thinking. Across human history violence has been committed against women before, during and after armed conflicts. International organisations and the major countries dominating the international scene have started drawing attention to the immoral and criminal nature of violence committed against women only since 2000 with the issuance of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The question is why? Why now? Why did humanity wait for 10,000 years to reach an international consensus on the criminalisation of violence against women? Another question is: after we have reached this international consensus, are there enough guarantees to implement the laws formulated by these major countries? The short answer is "no", and this is what I will prove in the following commentary.

The authors present two philosophical viewpoints (one by Thomas Hobbes and the other by John Locke) that motivated the quest for reaching an international consensus on the issue of violence against women. The first argument is introduced by Hobbes where he theorises that the evil nature of men necessitates the intervention of the state to halt the aggression of some parties against others. On the other hand, Locke argues that the instinctively cooperative nature of men makes them put the public interest over their own private interests, and thus security can be voluntarily achieved. In fact, the dominating states believed in Locke's argument in theory, while they practiced and applied, Hobbes' argument on the ground. This was obvious in the practices of colonization.

The two authors attempt to study the conditions of women during and after armed conflicts, in addition to explaining how international law dealt with such situations. They were successful in their efforts regarding the second topic of study, but concerning the first, they merely reviewed the suffering of women and the violence practiced against them without giving a more detailed explanation. This is natural in light of the specialisation of the two authors.

With regards to the second topic, the authors spoke about international law and the conditions of women during armed conflicts. In fact, they have authenticated well the march of laws introduced to protect women and the link between the international humanitarian law (the Geneva Conventions of 1949) and the international human rights law (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). They also mentioned the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of 1979, which was established in 1981. At the end, they highlighted the system of

the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which classified rape as one of the crimes against humanity.

The two writers have also presented their evaluation of these laws, of which the most important criticism, is that they subscribe to stereotypical patterns of thinking, considering women as objects of "honour". Moreover, these laws do not give heed to women's conditions after the end of armed conflict. We can sum up the points of criticism to these laws as follows:

- There is a stereotypical pattern of thinking that considers women as the weakest party and not full-fledged citizens with rights.
- International laws are more concerned with protection rather than prevention and prohibition.
- Differentiating without justification between grave and non-grave violations without stipulating the procedures to be taken to stop all acts committed in violation of CEDAW.
- Grave violations are restricted to sexual violence only.
- The major criticism is that many entities are not committed to CEDAW. The worst example of violations is what happened in occupied Iraq, and official agencies took action only when scandals became public.

From a sociological point of view, I would have liked if the two authors had given more detail on the first topic, namely, the suffering of women under armed conflicts. It should be noted though that they have presented some aspects of this suffering. For instance, they mention:

"There is violence against women at times of peace and it is aggravated under conditions of armed conflicts and amid military culture, which legalises the violation of women's rights. This is in addition to the status of women fighters who are likely to be subject, in times of conflicts and war, to rape at the hands of either their colleagues or enemies. On the other hand, women who are forced out of their homes under conditions of armed conflicts suffer tough living conditions and are obliged to work in different professions, sometimes in prostitution, to earn their living. This is apart from the rape of women by civilians during armed conflicts."

In fact, I believe that each of the abovementioned points can be a topic for field research programmes to make recommendations on addressing the status of victims of physical and moral violence during and after armed conflicts. I think that the Arab Women Organisation is an entity capable of adopting such research programmes. I would like to briefly give some examples of what some of these research programmes can deal with as case studies.

- The status of women under the Japanese occupation of Korea. Wherever a large number of fighters are present, women become an object of entertainment for them. Accordingly, prostitution tends to surface under such conditions and it is often times linked to poverty in the countries that host military bases and camps. If poverty is coercive, prostitution becomes coercive as well, especially if those in combat are foreigners.
- The status of women in Bosnia, which is not a unique situation in the modern era. In fact, mass rape incidents, which took place under armed communal and ethnic conflict, can reveal deeply rooted or temporary feelings of hatred. I do not know whether or not there are field studies that document the fate of the raped women and those who raped them.

- The cases of rape that happened in Iraq at the hands of occupation forces that were not revealed or reported. There are unique cases in which women are the ones who rape men, such as happened at Abu Ghraib Prison. I do not think that the perpetrators of such crimes at Abu Ghraib Prison, starting with Lyndie England through to other officers in the chain of command, were appropriately punished. This matter underlines the most important point of criticism, which is that the laws protecting women are not applicable unless there is a responsible entity in charge of implementing them.
- The fate of women in Darfur. The western media and political agencies used to speak about genocide in Darfur and violence against women there, but we do not know the actual conditions in this territory. Western media agencies are routinely biased against non-Western peoples. I find this situation similar to the false propaganda on the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. So we, as concerned parties, should verify the claims of the West instead of leaving the whole matter to Western media agencies that lost much credibility in the era of the war on terror.

## Earl (Tim) Sullivan

The paper by Dr. Ali Jarbawi and Dr. Asem Khalil entitled "Armed conflicts and security of women" is well organised, well written and well documented. It clearly addresses several key issues related to the special problems and threats that women face in times of armed conflict. When reading it, please pay special attention to the numerous footnotes, many of which are substantive in their own right, not mere citations of sources.

#### HOBBES, LOCKE AND THE CENTRALITY OF DEMOCRACY

Jarbawi and Khalil develop their argument in the context of the theories of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. According to Thomas Hobbes, the state must have a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Once order is established the state is expected to provide for the security of the people within its borders and under its jurisdiction.

In Hobbes's world, unless the state is secure, disorder and chaos will prevail, and therefore, the citizens cannot be secure. The domestic political, economic, social and cultural life of a country, as well as the security of the population, is entirely contingent on the ability of the government to establish order and keep the peace. By contrast, the international system in a Hobbesian world is made up of independent states in a condition of anarchy in which each state pursues its own interests, often in conflict with other states. In the absence of world government, states may decide to create laws to regulate interstate behaviour, including laws related to war, but all international laws are based on the consent of states that are members of the system. In this framework, while international law exists, enforcement may be weak or inconsistent.

The English philosopher John Locke outlines a more optimistic vision. According to the authors, in a Lockean world, legitimate states are democratic and government rests on the consent of the governed. In their view, "the security of the state stems from its citizens' permanent satisfaction with its performance and their support of its policies." It is this perspective, derived from the author's reading of Locke, that animates this paper.

Locke's focus is on the internal organisation of the state and he says little about international relations or such topics as war. Other theorists discuss the relationship of democracy to these issues, and the paper would be stronger if some of these ideas were addressed. For example, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant articulated seminal ideas that are relevant to Jarbawi and Khalil's theoretical framework. Kant envisaged a world of democratic states that would be likely to compromise and cooperate with each other rather than go to war to advance their interests. He foresaw the possibility of a virtual utopia of "perpetual peace" in a world of democracies.

Following Kant's lead, some contemporary theorists have proposed that a world of democracies would produce a "democratic peace" and a much greater degree of human security than would be possible otherwise.\*

Although a democratic state — and a global system composed of democratic states — would presumably be highly attentive to the needs and interests of its female citizens, the theories of Hobbes, Locke and Kant are not gendered; that is, they do not specifically address the special issues that are directly related to women's welfare and security. To their credit, the authors of this paper focus on the particular problems that have a direct impact on women's security as a distinct aspect of human security in war and its aftermath.

Jarbawi and Khalil's paper discusses the relation of national security to that of human security, concentrating on a variety of issues related to how women are likely to be subjected to violence prior to, during, and following armed conflicts. The focus is comprehensive and includes interstate war as well as other forms of civil unrest. Rather than arguing that the security of women is a consequence of the security of the state, the basic thesis is "that the empowerment and promotion of women's status establishes national security in respective states". The authors conclude with this bold statement: "Women's security will not be attainable except in a secure society, which cannot be established in the absence of a prevalent democratic political system. This ... will not be put in place without safeguarding equal and proportionate citizenship rights for both men and women ... It should be highlighted that human security, both domestically and internationally, cannot be brought about except by safeguarding women's security ..."

Democracy and law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law, international refugee law, and international criminal law are put forward as essential to the provision of protection for women during and after armed conflicts.

### INTERNATIONAL LAW AND WOMEN'S SECURITY

"Armed Conflicts and Security of Women" devotes considerable attention to various issues involving violence against women in times of war and the aftermath of war, and places a great deal of importance on the role of international law for the protection of women. The paper contains a wide-ranging overview of the ways in which international law addresses specific issues related to this general topic; this is probably the strongest aspect of the essay. There is no need for me to repeat what they have said, or to quibble with them about small points, as they have done a good job of outlining the major issues and I agree with most of what they have said. I do, however, have a few comments on some of the limitations of the approach they have taken to analyse this complex topic.

The authors are aware that there are limitations to the ability of international law to provide protection to women in times of armed conflict. As they correctly point out, even during peacetime women are vulnerable to various forms of violence and it is not surprising, therefore, that the

<sup>\*</sup> See Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace, New York: Columbia University Press, 1939; Paul Huth and Todd L. Allee, The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

vulnerability of females increases markedly during war or civil disorder. The authors argue that in order to protect women during outbreaks of violence and war, societies must start by providing more legal rights and greater protection for them during peacetime. War is obviously a dangerous time for all concerned, but women and girls face special hazards, including rape and other gender-based forms of violence. Unfortunately, as the authors point out, there are deficiencies in international humanitarian law that deal with this central issue.

Historically, rape and other forms of sexual violence have unfortunately been common in times of war and its aftermath. In recent times, rape has even become a weapon in war: female members of the enemy population are systematically raped as a matter of government or military policy. Under current international law, although rape is defined as war crime, for a number of reasons identified by the authors, enforcement and punishment are exceedingly rare. In this important case, laws exist but they do little to protect victims, and those who violate the law essentially do so with impunity. The need for legal reform and substantially improved enforcement of laws is obvious.

#### ADDITIONAL KEYS TO WOMEN'S SECURITY: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The authors stress the importance of democracy as a means of achieving both the security of the state and of its citizens. If the essential key to human security for all citizens is the establishment of democracy, then we may have a very long delay before a reasonably satisfactory degree of security can be established. In the Arab world, democracy is the exception rather than the rule, but that does not necessarily mean that people have to wait until full democracy is established to advance the cause of human security. Quite independent of the pursuit of a fully democratic society, there are a number of steps that can be taken to improve human security, especially for women, including legal reform, education and substantially increasing opportunities for employment.

Focusing on legal rights and protections will not be sufficient to provide the high degree of human security for all citizens — both male and female — that professors Jarbawi and Khalil so rightly seek. Laws that specifically address security for women may be necessary conditions for the attainment of these goals, but they are not likely to be sufficient to insure that the goals will be achieved. It will also be necessary to take positive and proactive measures to ensure that women are educated and that they have a substantial role to play in the economic life of their countries.

One of the problems with a focus on legal rights and privileges is that these rights and privileges are not always exercisable. In many countries, rights exist in theory only, especially in war and its aftermath. In order to make rights operational, citizens, most notably members of vulnerable groups such as women, need to know what their rights are and have the means to pursue them. In most human societies it is common for women, particularly poorly educated or illiterate women, to be unaware of legal provisions that pertain to them. Even if they know what the law says, they may not have the financial or other resources necessary to enable them to pursue their rights or seek the protection afforded to them by law. When they are educated and employed they are better able to understand and secure their rights, even in

times of war, and not be dependent on others for their physical wellbeing. Furthermore, the advancement of women's rights often entails participation by women in the political processes of the country, but in many cases women are poorly prepared for participation in the political and economic life of the nation, and furthermore, in many countries women confront cultural and even legal barriers to such participation.

There has been significant progress in many Arab and Muslim countries in the field of education, and in some countries, including the UAE, women now constitute over half of the university-level student population. However, the percentage of women employed outside the home in the Arab world has not yet caught up with levels of education. The rate of female participation in the labour force is particularly low in the Arab world and this has a negative impact on economic development and productivity, as well as on human security. Even in countries that are not unduly dependent on foreign workers, the economic life of the country would be more vibrant if more women, especially female citizens of Arab countries, are productively employed. In addition to employment in private firms and the public sector, many women can be self-employed in cottage and other micro industries, especially if credit is available to enable them to get started. Regardless of the sector in which they are employed, increasing the rate of female participation in the economy will contribute to the development of the country, to the welfare of its citizens, and to the human security of the entire population.

No single factor will ensure that the security of women will be at least equal to that of men, but democracy, legal rights in times of peace as well as war, high rates of education for all, and high rates of female participation in the labour force will each substantially improve the odds that the goals outlined in the excellent paper by professors Jarbawi and Khalil will be achieved. Although none of these conditions are sufficient in themselves to enable societies to attain the level of human security that is required, each is an independent and vital prerequisite for the pursuit of human security. Even in the absence of full democracy, legal rights can be established and enforced, all citizens can be educated, and people, including women, can be very productively employed. As progress is made on these fronts, human security for all citizens can be significantly advanced in times of war as well as peace.

# Cilja Harders

This interesting paper argues that international law, human rights law, and international humanitarian law can contribute to the security of women and thus further human security in a broad sense. In my understanding, the authors deal with the question of how "freedom from fear", as one of the main dimensions of human security, can be reached by making use of the diverse aspects of international law.

The paper first discusses the linkages among national security, state security and human security. It then deals comprehensively with the global issue of multidimensional violence against women: domestic violence; violence against combatant women; violence against women in detention (combatants and civilians); targeting of women in war crimes of mass rape; new domestic responsibilities and burdens; women and children as refugees; and women living under harsh social, economic and political conditions in camps and in exile. Next the authors present the different components of international law that deal with questions of women in war and conflict, such as, international humanitarian law, international human rights law, international refugee law and international criminal law. Finally, the authors critically assess the ability of international law to protect women against violence and close with comments on possible future developments.

The authors stress five points that seem of special importance to me:

- Support women to eradicate gender-based violence and make use of the International Criminal Court in this respect.
- 2. Drop the distinction between violence against women before, during and after armed conflicts
- 3. Reform and enforce domestic legislation concerning violence against women.
- 4. Change the culture of violence in respective societies.
- 5. Understand the connection between authoritarian and repressive political orders and violence against women.

I would like to comment in detail on three aspects of the paper. I will refer to feminist research in order to make my points, thus using the same starting points as the authors but try to identify possible contradictions and incongruencies in the field of international law, state security and human security possibilities, in order to measure the relative success of international law and the domestic and social dimensions of the prevention of violence against women.

#### STATE SECURITY, NATIONAL SECURITY AND HUMAN SECURITY

The authors assert that there has been a conceptual shift in the understanding of state security, from one related exclusively to issues of hard security to a concept that takes the rights and participation of citizens into account as aspects of national security. This is a fundamental feminist claim. Feminist thinking has an ambivalent relationship to the state. The "rule of right" in the modern nation state is a rather partial one. Instead, the "rule of

might", which realist international relations scholars attribute to the "anarchic" international sphere, stretches out to the private homes of citizens (Tickner, 1992: 58).

Widespread and continuous domestic violence against women renders a nation-state insecure if it does not interfere with such gendered human rights abuses because of their assumed "private" nature (Enloe, 2000). Thus, security has always been perceived in a broad way as: " ... the achievement of peace, economic justice, and ecological sustainability is inseparable from overcoming social relations of domination and subordination; genuine security requires not only the absence of war but also the elimination of unjust social relations, including unequal gender relations." (Tickner, 1992: 128).

Even though I agree that this perspective has gained normative ground, I hold that in practice the domestic and international relations of states in the North and the South are dominated by hard security concerns. Especially after 9/11, we witnessed a general militarisation and securitisation of politics. Under these conditions, is it feasible to endlessly broaden the concept of security and human security? Shouldn't we then rather talk about social and international peace, instead of security, when it comes to developing future scenarios?

At the same time, states have been failing, weakened by protracted violence, and therefore have been unable to sustain the legitimate monopoly of violence. These states are incapable of producing any degree of security in the public sphere, and this is endangering women in a substantial way, as the examples of Somalia, Bosnia or Iraq show. Still, strengthening the state and its hard security capacities can thus lead to more public security, and at the same time to more repression and infringements on human rights of citizens. Thus, to me, it is an open question of how much hard security and how much of a working state is necessary in order to provide for human security. Maybe we don't need new and diversified conceptions of security but rather new ideas about sovereignty in a global and interventionist age.

#### **EVALUATION OF SUCCESS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW**

The authors suggest that international law is indeed a suitable means to further women's security and thus human security. It would have been interesting to discuss the problems of evaluating the relative success of these aspects of law. I would hold that the prevention of violence is the most ambitious aim and the most difficult to measure: successful prevention is a non-event if we look at warring parties in conflicts. In examining domestic violence, statistics can at least show if these incidents are on the rise or not. Bringing justice to victims by way of the International Criminal Court can be quantified, but the social dimensions and dynamics around the victims of sexualised violence are more complex and quite outside the reach of the court.

We could then evaluate the law according to the question of whether it reflects feminist scholarship and the experiences of women. Here, the answer is not obvious. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is an example of modern international law, which addresses many concerns in a rather comprehensive way. Yet it is difficult to hold states accountable as the last eight years of the experience of NGO and state activity with the resolution have shown. The ad hoc tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia set new standards in the way rape as a war crime and crime against humanity is treated, but the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court has been weaker in this respect.

Furthermore, it is problematic that some parts of the laws discussed in the paper have been accepted by many states but with exceptions: many Arab countries made some exception to CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women; and the US failed to sign the Rome Statute, etc. Finally, international as well as domestic law has been plagued by huge inconsistencies between what the law asserts and the actual practices of states and individuals. A final way of evaluating success could be to look at the role of international law in supporting and furthering social change, as it offers a legitimate frame for the articulation of concerns and grievances. Here I think international law from the Geneva Conventions to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been a huge success in the international and domestic field.

#### **VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

The authors rightly stress that the legal regulations that are not accompanied by social change will remain weak. Thus, gender perceptions and practices have to be addressed. This includes both women and men. Unfortunately, the "men question" is absent in the paper.

First, it is important to stress that violence is a social phenomenon; it is embedded in social relations such as family relations, communities and gender orders. War then, can be understood as a gendered process in terms of escalation of collective violence within a specific institutional (political, economic, cultural) setting. It is important to stress that women are also part and parcel of a culture of violence and destruction. "Wars are perceived of as legitimate means of last resort of conflict regulation domestically and internationally. These national societies with their norms, values and laws are constructed and defined through individual men and women — even though with thoroughly different access to power and social roles." (Wasmuht, 2002: 88).

In this sense, men and women might be a victim of war or a perpetrator. Still, overwhelmingly men carry out militarised violence in wars and many of their civilian victims are women. This is due to the "gendered division of violence" that organises men and women into different relationships to violence (Cockburn, 2001: 10). This specific gendered access to the societal means of violence basically excludes most women from the executive institutions of the monopoly of violence in modern states, such as the military and often times the police, as well. Thus, the fact that women are more often victims than perpetrators of wartime violence is a product of a specific gendered division of violence and not a product of women's peaceful "nature".

This becomes even more obvious if we look at the deeply rooted gendered perceptions of masculinity and femininity in relation to war and violence. If war and violence are social phenomena, men and women are involved in sustaining or changing such a social process. Thus, both genders carry a civilian and a militarised identity, which are intimately linked to their access to political and social rights. Structurally, two complementary gender constructions are central to the development of militarised security cultures. The idea of the citizen-soldier links maleness to the capability and willingness to fight and die for one's nation. This willingness was historically rewarded by full citizen rights. These rights are in turn denied to those "beautiful souls" of the "weaker sex" that need to be protected, as well as to other men because of class and ethnicity.

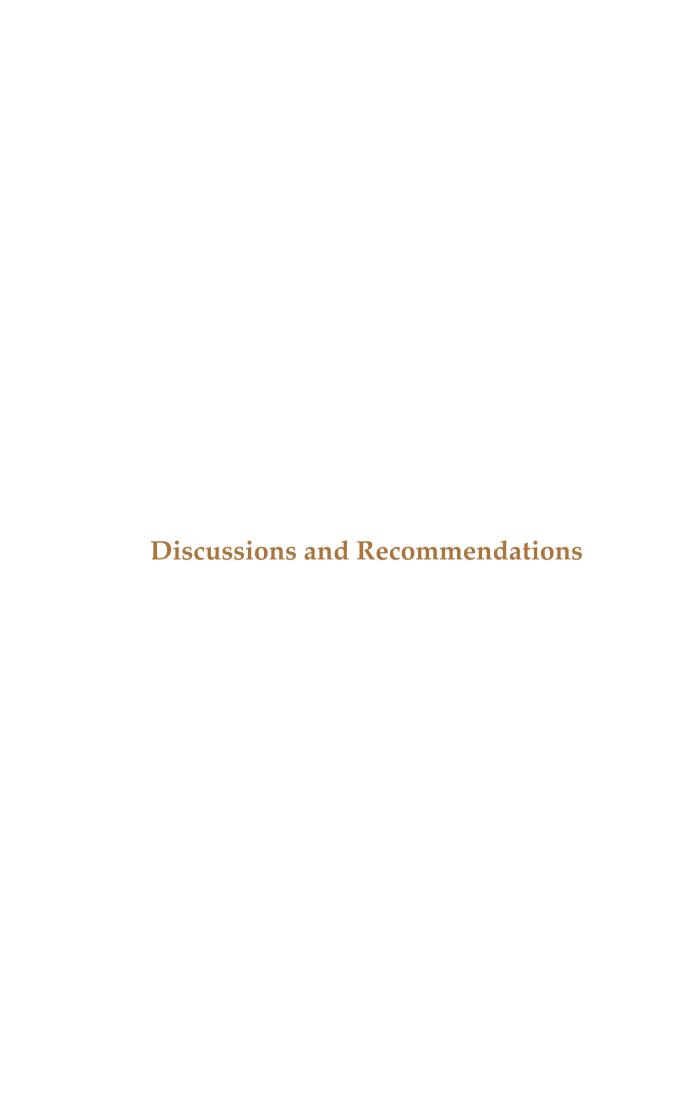
The complementary militarised female identity is that of the "Spartan mother" (Elshtain, 1995). Women have fought as warriors, have supported their warring men or have been otherwise actively involved in violent acts, e.g. the female "cheerleaders of genocide" in Rwanda (Zdunnek, 2002) or female war criminals of Nazi Germany (Kretzer, 2002). Women's involvement in war and violence has often been perceived in terms of deviance and abnormality. The predominant gender stereotypes stress the idea that women are essentially peaceful, whereas men are biologically prone to violence. But there is nothing "natural" about militarised maleness and femaleness. Taken to extremes, constructions of maleness and femaleness that stress complementary, essential and strictly different gender roles often prevail in nationalist, Christian fundamentalist or Islamist ideologies (Moghadam, 1994). These gendered constructions of militarised "maleness" and "femaleness" legitimise existing gendered mechanisms of exclusion, discrimination, suppression and militarised insecurity.

These gender stereotypes are not only an important means of producing legitimacy for war and violence, but they also reflect on the education of our children. Furthermore, according to feminist findings, it is here where societies start to produce militarised masculinities (Goldstein, 2001: 251): through the "hardening" of boys, through organising female support of formal aggression, and through devaluating femininity. Thus, in order to tackle violence against women we have to talk about men and masculinities and about how to change them. But here again, new dilemmas arise, as changing deeply rooted gender regimes can be highly contentious and at times also violent.

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# POINTS RAISED DURING THE CONFERENCE BY ARAB AND FOREIGN PANELISTS AND ATTENDEES ON CHAPTER ONE

Some Arab panelists focused on the importance of setting up a practical mechanism for implementing policies, and the policies to be implemented have to be more expressive of social justice and gender equality. They underlined that social justice is the right approach to realising women's empowerment. Others noted there is a close link between the available scope for democracy and the status of human rights in society in general, as well as progress achieved in terms of women's status and conditions. Both are required to spread the culture of citizenship, equality and empowerment of women. The best means of addressing these issues is via a comprehensive vision which everybody contributes to the spread of a culture of truth, duty and good governance.

One Arab female panelist underlined the necessity of modifying many behaviours and concepts that run contrary to the values of justice and fairness, which currently represent an obstacle to the march towards reform. For instance, several opinions and sayings, which are derived from traditions, customs, heritage or deeply rooted practices in society, have been wrongly attributed to religion and the Islamic Sharia to make them appear as if they are set in stone. Accordingly, this makes the process of change and modernisation more difficult and more complicated. It may be said that, these ideas are the result of erroneous interpretations of religious texts, on the one hand, and restrictions imposed on rational interpretations of holy texts on the other. The outcome runs contrary to the fact that the Islamic Sharia was one of the first legislations to correct the negative perspective of women and stress the importance of the dignity of women.

One panelist stated, "Change and modernisation, to succeed, should not focus on sensitivity and identity, but should be open to common values and be based on two main pillars: first, strong political will that should push forward the status of women through taking decisions supporting their participation and gender equality; second, the presence of an active civil society that represents the main locomotive of the struggle for change. The partners of this societal movement are national parties, women's rights organisations and developmental organisations that call for implementing reforms and oversee their implementation."

In concluding, the panelist referred to her belief that legislation has a key role to play in decreasing stubborn views, as it is a necessary mechanism for changing behaviour, developing concepts, and identifying the path to achieve justice and equality. Law can be used as a tool to ensure the rules of fairness, and legislation can offer legal protection that in turn regulates and controls gender relations. Laws also can lay down the foundations of stability and security and safeguard rights in society and the family - the basis of the human community - and is a strategic option to endorse reform.

The contribution of foreign experts enriched the session with further points, including drawing attention to:

• The importance of governments creating an appropriate climate for the empowerment of citizens.

- Criticism of the gap existing in terms of the number of female employees in various agencies and entities, at both the private and public levels, even in the UN.
- The importance of the role being played by civil society organisations in bridging gaps that hinder the participation of women in general and in the political field in particular. In this context, women face obstacles as candidates or even as citizens seeking to cast votes and register their opinions. It was underlined that the quota system, which some parliaments (including some Arab parliaments) have started adopting, ensures the allocation of a certain number of seats for women.
- The importance of gender equality as an index of national progress. There is a general trend towards support for women in many countries, including in some parts of the Arab world, such as Lebanon for example, where women are permitted to run for high office. In practice, few women hold political positions in the region at the present time. with this in mind, some participants referred to the importance of the role of civil society organisations in achieving this objective; namely, the active political participation of women, through intensifying their activities within society and lobbying governments to address the situation.
- The concept of human security calls for gender equality in terms of having equal access to available economic opportunities.

The panelists talked at length about the concept of human security and its link to gender issues. The relationship between gender and human security falls under the responsibility of both the state and individuals alike. It was noted that the concept of human security does not merely mean the elimination of differences, but also the recognition that the status of women is more vulnerable than that of men in several instances, such as in conflict, in poverty and in the application of laws. Therefore, the state has to work to realise gender equality. In this context, one female foreign panelist raised a serious question: "Could the empowerment of individuals be against the interests of governments?" She added, "The intellectuals who drafted the concept of the social contract included some standards and regulations related to the participation of individuals in the society. They indicated that the relationship between a man and a woman within the family is an example of what is happening at the level of the state in general. Moreover, the relationship between a man and a woman can be allegorical to the relationship between man and power, and this was stressed through the theory of the social contract."

The concept of security at the state level, according to the panelist, deals with the security of both men and women, as well as the responsibility of protecting them at the community level. In view of the important role women play in both the private and public sectors, the state, if it wants to achieve stability at the political and economic levels, has to take this issue into consideration. The state has also to deal with the problem of gender and address it through creating a climate within which all individuals can feel free from fear and need. She indicated that whenever the domestic stability of any country faces a crisis, the importance of addressing the problem of gender surfaces. Moreover, the role of women should be a factor in the resolution of these conflicts at the local and national levels, as well as for the protection of women amid conflict. She pointed to the importance of the participation of women in peace building, as women's involvement in such situations can be pioneering.

One female panelist drew the attention of attendees to the absence of security for women, especially those living under occupation, such as in Palestine and Iraq, as women are subject to mounting psychological pressures.

To conclude, many attendees agreed that the empowerment of women cannot succeed without merging political and popular will. Popular will is represented in the dynamics of an effective civil society. Attendees also expressed that the process of empowerment should start from the bottom up, though promotion of the capacities and skills of all sectors of society, men and women, and the youth at all social levels, so all can take part in taking decisions related to their own lives. They also affirmed that protection is the responsibility of governments and its agencies and can be achieved through establishing procedures and policies to ensure this.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON CHAPTER ONE

- 1. Underlining the importance of women's participation in the process of decision making at all levels, as a basic precondition for women to enjoy security and safety.
- 2. Removing all obstacles that hinder women's participation throughout society. This can be achieved through creating a safe atmosphere within which women can enjoy physical safety outside their homes.
- 3. Taking all possible measures to curb and contain the erroneous interpretations of holy texts, as such ideas derive from traditions, customs and popular heritage and result in the creation of beliefs and behaviours that run contrary to the values of justice and fairness.
- 4. Enhancing political will is an important component in ensuring women's security through instituting actions to ensure gender equality.
- 5. Increasing the role of an active and influential civil society that is well aware of the obstacles facing women and can lobby for their elimination as a vital effort in ensuring women's security.
- 6. Viewing the issue of women's security as an integral part of the security of society in general.
- 7. Legislative reform is an essential and effective tool to counter the various challenges threatening women.
- 8. Mechanisms should be developed that can bridge the gap between laws supporting women and their implementation on the ground.
- 9. The UN should move towards defending and enforcing international humanitarian law in a serious manner.
- 10. Spreading the culture of citizenship and equality through positively raising the young generation on the values of democracy as part of an essential effort to underscore the security of women and society.

# POINTS RAISED DURING THE CONFERENCE BY ARAB AND FOREIGN PANELISTS AND ATTENDEES ON CHAPTER TWO

One panelist referred to the importance of setting up pre-emptive policies to support socially and economically marginalised sectors of society, on top of which are women and children. Another female panelist underscored the necessity of giving more attention to women in the context of conflict, especially in Iraq, where women suffer from violence, need, displacement and poverty. A female panelist from Sudan criticised foreign intervention in the internal affairs of countries under the pretext of protecting human and women's rights, as in the case of Darfur. She also criticised the sensationalism of the Western media. Another female panelist called on certain parties to stop backing warlords and arms traders and to refrain from agitating old disputes. She indicated that women could play an important role in bringing about peace in conflict areas.

A foreign panelist indicated that most of the provisions of international law regarding wartime or post-war focus on men, though the real victims of wars are often times women and children. He said that some conflicting parties resort to acts of violence against women, such as rape, as a weapon in some confrontations. He highlighted that addressing such matters is better than waiting for the spread of the values of democracy, which might not come. Another foreign panelist stressed the importance of acquainting women with their legal rights. He indicated that the high literacy rate among young women is not reflected in the labour market, expressing his astonishment at this contradiction. Finally, a Western female panelist underlined the importance of laws supporting women and their implementation on the ground by relevant authorities. She also underlined the importance of the education of children and the value of gender equality.

The issue of rape was one of the issues on which discussion focused. An Arab female participant referred to the fact that the soldiers of some major powers, like the United States, do not appear before the International Criminal Court, even if they commit serious crimes. This impunity and the freedom of such soldiers to do whatever they want constitutes a doublestandard in practice. A Western panelist confirmed this and said the reason behind these rape crimes is that the perpetrators know well that they will go unpunished, and furthermore that if it were known that such crimes would be tried they would not be committed in the first place. The same panelist underlined the importance of increasing the awareness of men on such crimes. He asserted that anyone convicted of committing a rape crime should be tried before courts of universal jurisdiction, as is the case with the crime of piracy.

The panelists further raised a series of important questions: "Is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) just ink on paper? Why doesn't the US and some Arab countries sign this convention? And why do some Arab countries that signed the convention voice so many reservations on the convention?"

#### RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON CHAPTER TWO

- 1. Avoid describing violence as a routine practice that is committed against women because of their sex, as this means dealing with all cases of violence from a single perspective, as one must give due attention to each individual separately.
- 2. Avoid presuming that all armed conflicts are alike, especially in terms of their impact on women. Armed conflict amongst armed groups within a single country is a common type of conflict in the Arab region and is the toughest for women as it is difficult to differentiate between the combatants and civilians.
- 3. Violence practiced against women under armed conflict cannot be separated from the other forms of violence practiced against women in peacetime. Countering both types of violence against women requires changing the culture of society and introducing legislative reform that criminalises the use of violence against women.
- 4. Sexual violence against women, though reprehensible, is one form of violence practiced against women and should not receive more attention at the expense of other forms of physical and psychological violence against women.
- 5. The emergency responsibilities and burdens women shoulder amid conflicts do not lead to their empowerment.
- 6. Chanels should be identified for Arab women to have a say with regards to the settlement of existing conflicts as well as during the reconstruction stage in post-conflict situations.
- 7. Measures should be taken to enforce the provisions of international law that protect women.
- 8. The crime of rape in the context of civil war should be treated as an international crime.
- 9. The world community should be encouraged to deal with domestic violence as an issue plaguing society and not to consider it a personal affair. Locally, countries should make use of national judicial institutions to act on this matter.

# **Part Two**

# **Socio-Economic Dimensions of Security**

# Introduction

**Chapter Three:** Women's Security and the Impact of Social Policies *Kamal Hamdan* 

Chapter Four: Education: The Effective Route for Women's Security

Munther Wassef Masri

**Chapter Five:** Globalisation and Women's Status in the Arab World: Blessing or Curse?

Fatima Al-Shamsi and Hassan Y. Aly

**Commentary Papers** 

**Discussions and Recommendations** 

# INTRODUCTION

The paper 'women's security and the impact of social policies' looks at the concept of social protection from a comprehensive perspective, entailing "setting up policies and programmes aiming at eliminating poverty and marginalisation through enhancing the effectiveness of the labour market and reducing the possibility of exposing individuals to risk and promoting their capabilities to be able to protect themselves against losing their income." This paper believes that the concept of "protection" should include protection against conflict and violence (including legal protection) in addition to social protection, which includes ensuring social security and welfare. Protection is an integral part of human security and has to be actively pursued in order to ensure respect for the human rights of individuals.

#### ASPECTS OF HUMAN INSECURITY OF ARAB WOMEN

Attention was drawn to the necessity to assess these aspects, to discuss available means of protection, and to identify the role of the state and civil institutions in ensuring women's security. This is in addition to highlighting the features of human insecurity related to women, specifically those resulting from political, economic and societal dynamics affecting the lives of women. Arab women face three forms of human insecurity: insecurity related to conflict; insecurity related to individual violence; and insecurity related to the vulnerable economic and social conditions of women. The presence of any of these forms of insecurity and their intensity might vary according to the situation among Arab countries. Arab countries are classified into three groups: those rich in natural resources and with low population; those rich in natural resources but with a large population; and those having few natural resources and with a large population.

The paper identified that the responsibility of providing protection to counter human insecurity depends on various players from the governmental and nongovernmental sectors. The primary responsibility falls on the shoulder of the state. However, civil society and other players from the nongovernmental and private sectors — in addition to international and local organisations — play a pivotal role in protecting people against existing threats. Agencies in charge of providing protection have been classified into three groups: governmental agencies in charge of programmes of protection and protective initiatives, including the social insurance system and other social welfare programmes; nongovernmental agencies, such as international organisations, civil associations and civil society organisations; and informal groups, such as family networks.

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN SECURITY AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

The paper "Education: The effective route for women's security" addressed the extent to which women's education in Arab communities has been reflected in their economic security in general and employment in different fields of work. Human security is one of the key and direct reasons, results and outcomes of women's education. The education of women and achieving equality in terms of access to education contribute to ensuring human security for women in particular and for society in general through promoting the level of women's participation in public life and in economic activities. In this way, women's social status will be promoted.

A basic level of human security, whether in connection with political and public freedoms, social justice and positive societal practices, or economic conditions and equal opportunities, will result directly or indirectly in enhancing educational services and facilities, and offering equal opportunities for all individuals of society to benefit from these services and facilities.

## CHALLENGES TO THE EDUCATION OF ARAB WOMEN

The education of Arab women faces several challenges, such as a lack of services and resources provided by the government, obstacles within society, viewing women as wives and mothers rather than potential economic contributors, and the relative weakness of civil society organisations. Arab women suffer also from illiteracy, making their economic conditions even more vulnerable than those of men. Comparisons between the educational status of men and women, in many Arab countries show that women are in a worse position. Women's convictions, which constitute an important dimension of their inner security should include the importance of education and security and all that entails. Women's education can be instrumental in providing experience and not information only.

Statistics reveal there is some degree of development in the education of women in terms of quantitative aspects. These challenges can be summed up as:

In relation to the culture of society, which plays a role in limiting the exploration in the education of women in their human security. In fact, this way of thinking is an accumulation of centuries of backwardness. Therefore the development achieved pertain to women's education is not reflected in the ratio of women in the labour market, especially in the private sector in spite of legislation ensuring equal opportunities. Arab and international laws and conventions include numerous provisions that reinforce gender equality in terms of opportunities.

• Factors such as the repercussions of fluctuating economic growth rates and high population growth rates negatively affect the economic position of women and constrain the benefits of education. Indeed, the negative consequences of such factors are proven to affect women more than men.

# ASSESSMENT OF THE CONDITIONS OF EDUCATION FOR WOMEN IN ARAB COUNTRIES

Any assessment of the conditions of education in Arab societies, including qualitative and quantitative aspects, and the content of education and education methods, should include the extent to which curricula covers the concepts, components, requirements and skills of human security. This includes the depict on women in text books, as well as, how women are qualified and prepared for work, public life and family life. The relationship between cultural roots and the culture of society is a mixture of genuine and valid believes as well as widely practiced antiquated customs and traditions accumulated over years of traditional thinking. The paper indicated that there are three standards for assessing education and its relevance related to the position of women:

- Quantitative standards, especially the number of females enrolled in various stages of education. The author of the paper indicated that there is relative progress in this direction.
- <u>Qualitative standards</u>, entailing the depiction of women in text books and within the nature of school activities. The development of this aspect has been limited.
- <u>Regular standards</u>, related to the position of women in legislation and policies, and women's contributions to planning and high-level posts. The development achieved in this aspect has also been limited.

The paper highlighted a number of other aspects, including:

- There is a difference in efforts exerted regarding women's education in rural versus urban areas.
- The issue of gender continues to be weekly addressed within curricula and text books.
- There are a limited number of academic specialisations that females join, especially at the level of university education.
- There is weak participation in the promotion of gender equality within private educational and civil society organisations.

The key indicators highlight successes and shortcomings with regards to illiteracy are:

- a. The illiteracy rate amongst females is more than double its percentage among males in the Arab world.
- b. The measures taken for the spread of education have been effective than those adopted for the elimination of illiteracy among adults. Most Arab countries have failed in efforts to eliminate illiteracy, but have achieved progress in standardising basic education.
- c. There are tangible differences among Arab countries in terms of rates of female illiteracy. However, the rate of female illiteracy in general is double that among males. For instance, preschool education is confined to males. This could be attributed to the fact that preschool education is not compulsory and is generally run by the private sector. Therefore, children (both males and females) of rich families are the principle beneficianes of this type of education, Whereas the middle class and poor families give priority to males in this matter.

#### THE IMPACTS OF GLOBALISATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The paper "Globalisation and women's status in the Arab world: Blessing or curse?" addressed the impact of globalisation on women and the extent to which women have contributed to the economic openness the world has witnessed, as well as the effect of this on women's economic security. There are some who see globalisation as having given new work opportunities for women, while others believes that globalisation has had a negative impact on women. The latter opinion is often based on the view that women are less skilled than men and so their opportunities within the context of globalisation are diminishing in light of severe competition. The paper also referred to clear differences between the incomes of women and men, despite the fact that laws and legislation in many Arab countries ensure equal pay for both men and women. This is in addition to difficulties and obstacles facing women regarding their access to the labour market.

Despite the abovementioned points, new patterns of work, dictated by information technology, telecommunications and globalisation, will likely increasingly support and promote the employment of women. Is globalisation a blessing or curse for women in the Arab region? The paper referred to the importance of considering the social dimension while drafting economic policies, as most studies conducted related to female participation in economy focus on the impact of macroeconomic policies on women and women's issues. The studies also highlight how these policies are not usually designed to specifically take women into consideration. Although Arab women have achieved remarkable feats in the fields of education and healthcare, they still suffer from a considerable gender gap which reflected in the low representation of women in economic activities.

#### SOCIETAL OBSTACLES IMPEDING WOMEN

Women may have achieved progress in certain fields but they still face obstacles that hinder their march forward in social and economic domains and in education abroad. Regarding legislative bodies, they tend to deal with citizens in general legislation pertaining to women often views them within the context of mothers or wives rather than economic contributors. In fact, there is a lack of legislation supporting women in the field of labor force, especially in the private sector, where there flagrant discrimination occurs. It is suggested that women may not face the same degree of discrimination in the public sector.

The study of the economic security of women has two main objectives:

- To present a descriptive analysis of the position of Arab women compared to men in terms of: literacy, ratio of enrolment in various stages of education, levels of participation in the economic field, and the extent to which the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to women have been achieved.
- Making available data in the Arab world and presenting a study on the impact of globalisation and economic openness on the status of women in the Arab region.

The results of the study, supported by statistics, confirmed that economic growth and openness in the Arab region\_ though it has contributed to the increase of the share per capita of GDP\_has not translated into positive results for women and did not contribute to an increase in the level of women's participation in economic activities.

The recommendations of the study confirmed that the government, in addition to the traditional role it should play to bridge the gender gap and gender discrimination, should partner with the private sector in order to further ensure gender equality through a series of measures including:

- 1. Standardising salaries and privileges for both men and women.
- Create a women-friendly atmosphere that takes into consideration flexible working hours for women and that gives women the same opportunity to be promoted as men.
- 3. Offering appropriate training opportunities in order to promote women with skills in practical and managerial experience, especially in fields involving the use of advanced technologies.
- 4. Females in Arab countries, especially young women, should join non traditional sectors and should obtain education and training in fields that require high skills.
- 5. Women should be encouraged to build their capacities in the economic field and to establish their own enterprises.

- 6. The self-confidence of women in their own capacities should be reinforced so they do not feel afraid to enter fields of work usually restricted to men. Women have to assert their skills and educational qualifications in the labour market. Educational, cultural and social programmes targeting women and female teenagers should be given the most attention. Adequate support should be given to women to promote the values of productive work, and spreading the message of the importance of economic participation of young women.
- 7. Highlighting the importance of women's participation in the labour market in support of growth and progress and the contribution of women towards pushing development forward.
- 8. The necessity of a precise database on the economic conditions of women, as the scarcity and inaccuracy of data represents a key impediment to studying and responding to the economic conditions of women. It also hinders comparative analysis between given Arab countries and other countries of the world on this point.

**Chapter Three** 

Women's Security and the Impact of Social Policies

Kamal Hamdan

# WOMEN'S SECURITY AND THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL POLICIES

This paper aims at reviewing the key human insecurities that Arab women currently face. It seeks to assess a range of these insecurities and to discuss the modalities of protection and the role of state and non-state actors in provision of and in ensuring women's security. The paper considers those human insecurities that either target women directly or those that create specific social, economic and political dynamics that affect women's lives. The paper argues that Arab women face three key human insecurities: conflict-related insecurities; insecurities related to personal violence; and insecurities related to women's social and economic vulnerabilities. Addressing these three types of insecurity embraces two foundations of the human security concept: freedom from want and freedom from fear.

This paper asserts that security moves beyond the mere absence of violent conflict to encompass "human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her potential ... Freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment" (Annan, 2000). The paper adopts the UN Development Programme's broad conception of human security, which sits on two main foundations: "safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression" and "the protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life — whether in homes, in jobs or in communities" (UNDP, 1994). Protection, the paper posits, is a comprehensive approach that goes beyond the provision of social security and assistance to include protection against political, social, economic, environmental and physical threats that women might face.

The paper starts by conceptualising women's human security. It introduces the human insecurities that women in general face and draws inter-linkages between them. It also proposes a framework for the protection of women from these human insecurities. Thereafter, the paper provides an overview of the human insecurities that Arab women currently face, citing examples and case studies from relevant Arab countries. The paper then presents the modalities of protection of women in the Arab world. In concluding, the paper proposes several policy relevant recommendations.

# **CONCEPTUALISING WOMEN'S HUMAN (IN) SECURITIES**

The concept of security has evolved significantly over the last two decades from a state security and sovereignty focus to a more comprehensive approach encompassing various human, environmental, social, political and economic dimensions. Risks and threats to human security are universal. Nonetheless, women are subject to particular — and many times

acute — human security concerns. In the events of conflict and war, women may face direct security threats as they become targeted and violently abused by combatants. Evidence from conflict areas shows the degree of abuse, including sexual and physical abuse, that some women have had to endure (UNICEF, 1996, United Nations, 2000). Women continue to be discriminated against in post-conflict contexts. Domestic violence, rape, forced and child marriage, harassment and trafficking are often witnessed in post-conflict countries (Ki-moon, 2008).

# **Human Security Versus Human Development**

It is important to differentiate between the concepts of "human security" and "human development". Human development focuses mainly on building individuals' human capacities and skills through the implementation of development-oriented strategies and programmes that function at the macro level of an economy. The main aim of building capacities is to help individuals enhance their standards of living and free themselves from vulnerability and poverty. The concept of human development thus refers to an interaction between the state and citizens following simultaneously a down-up and up-down approach to implementation.

On the other hand, human security focuses on the concept of protection, which reflects an up-down approach where the government and its various agencies carry a great part of the responsibility to protect individuals from the risks of poverty, vulnerability and exclusion.

Women face as well gender-based personal violence that is not necessarily related to conflict. Gender-based violence is defined by the Bejing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as "any act ... that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life". Physical and psychological personal violence — including domestic violence — remains a major threat to women, restricting their mobility and their ability to lead full and productive lives.

Social and economic vulnerabilities remain major contributors to women's human insecurities. The 1994 Human Development Report identifies a range of social and economic insecurities including economic insecurity, food insecurity, health insecurity, and environmental insecurity (UNDP, 1994). It is very likely that women who are vulnerable to these insecurities are often deprived of capabilities that would allow them to overcome these insecurities and assist them in managing the risk of falling into poverty. Sen asserts that: "deprivation of individual capabilities can have close links to the lowness of income, which connects in both directions: 1) low income can be a major reason for illiteracy and ill health as well as hunger and malnutrition, and 2) conversely, better education and health help in the earning of higher income (Nussbaum, 2007).

# UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S HUMAN INSECURITIES AND THE MODALITIES OF PROTECTION

We argue in this paper for a framework that views social protection as a comprehensive approach. While some see social protection as "the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and the interruption/loss of income" (Asian Development Bank, 2008), we see protection to be more comprehensive, to encompass protection against conflict and violence (including legal protection) as well as social protection that usually comprises the provision of social security as well as social assistance. Protection is part and parcel of human security and should be practiced proactively to ensure the respect of people's human rights. Here, the human security approach "urges institutions to offer protection which is institutionalised, not episodic; responsive, not rigid; preventative, not reactive. In this way, people will face inevitable downturns 'with security'." (Alkire, 2003)

Active participation of women in the **Improved** Active participation of women in the participation and policy making process decision and policy making process Level of Security Events of Non-state Successful (NGOs) **Efforts** Human violence Are addressed by State Inse<u>curities</u> Unsuccessful physical & Informal **Efforts** human (families) capital

Figure 1: Women's human insecurities and protection mechanisms

We argue that responsibility for the provision of protection against human insecurities lies with various actors, state and non-state. "States have the primary responsibility to implement such a protective structure. However, international and regional organisations, civil society and non-governmental actors, and the private sector also play a pivotal role in shielding people from menaces." (United Nations, 2003) We classify providers of protection into three groups: 1) formal or state providers that lead protection programmes and initiatives, including social security schemes and other social protection programmes; 2) non-state providers such as international organisations, NGOs, CBOs etc; and 3) informal providers such as families and kinship networks.

In the proposed framework, the protection of women should not be confined to the role of passive recipients of service provisions. Women should be seen as "capable of creating positive change" (Anderlini and El-Bushra 2000). Women's participation in social protection policymaking mechanisms is fundamental for constructing optimal protection programmes. Particularly important is to receive women's views on the quality of protection programmes

and initiatives when available. "Participation also has intrinsic value for the quality of life. Indeed being able to do something not only for oneself but also for other members of the society is one of the elementary freedoms which people have reason to." (Dreze and Sen, 1995)

#### ARAB WOMEN'S HUMAN INSECURITIES

This paper looks at women's human (in)securities from three main angles/dimensions, which embrace two concepts of human security: freedom from want and freedom from fear. The three dimensions are: conflict-related human insecurities; human insecurities related to personal violence; and social and economic vulnerabilities

#### i. Conflict-related human insecurities

The Arab world has currently three of the most active armed conflicts in the world, namely: Iraq, Palestine and Sudan.\* These three conflicts produce enormous human insecurities on residents and citizens of these countries. Women are highly affected by these conflicts. The paper looks at two of these active conflicts: Iraq and Palestine. It assesses the human insecurities that women in these two countries face.

*Iraq*: Iraqi women are among the most affected groups by the war in Iraq. Before the invasion, Iraqi women were among the most educated in the region and were economically active in the labour force and in the state bureaucracy. Five years after the invasion, the physical security of Iraqi women remains a serious issue. Currently, Iraqi women "are prevented from leaving their houses by fear and a great sense of insecurity. Violent burglaries, mafia-like gangs that roam the cites at night, increased sexual violence, including rape, as well as militant resistance and US snipers have pushed women into the background." (Al-Ali, 2005: 739-758)

Palestine: Palestinians continue to endure the viciousness of the Israeli armed forces after decades of occupation. Around 95 per cent of Palestinians have restricted movement and are usually confined to their villages, towns and cities (Ricks, 2005: 88-103). Palestinian women are directly targeted in events of violence. They also often carry the burden of responsibility within the household because of the death, imprisonment or unemployment of male members.

Palestinian women suffer from limited access to healthcare. Consequently their health is in decline. According to a recent World Health Organisation study, 70 per cent of new mothers suffer from anaemia. Girls' school attendance and female teachers have also dropped despite generally high enrolment rates (Ricks, 2005: 88-103).

#### ii. Non-conflict related gender violence

Protection from physical and psychological violence is a basic human right and the unfortunate reality is that in many cases this basic right is violated in a woman's own home. The mere discussion of violence encounters serious resistance in Arab societies and therefore the first and most important step in fighting all forms of violence against women is to break the silence around this issue and to fight its concealment and justification.

<sup>\*</sup> Somalia suffers from protracted armed conflict but for reasons of lack of data it will not be included in this paper. Political violence in Lebanon and Algeria are considered low-intensity and will be omitted from the analysis in this section.

Domestic violence ranges from the beating and sexual assault of wives to the sexual abuse and rape of girls by male relatives. Although these practices are not limited to Arab countries, the disturbing fact is the refusal of many Arab societies to acknowledge their existence let alone to protect their victims. Currently, the penal code of many of the region's countries does not grant women adequate protection from crimes such as "honour" killings and sexual assault (The World Bank, 2007). Penal codes reflect this situation by not acknowledging marital rape and suspending kidnapping sentences if the aggressor agrees to marry their victim (Consultation and Research Institute and UNDP, 2006), for example, in Egypt and Lebanon.

#### iii. Treatment of "honour" crimes and domestic violence in the region

Many countries of the region still report cases where a woman is killed by a male relative (father, brother, husband or son) under the pretext of defending the family's "honour". Between May 2004 and March 2005, 20 "honour" crimes and 15 attempted murders were reported in the West Bank and Gaza. Jordan reports an average of 20 such murders annually (UNDP, Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2006). In a study conducted on the court transcripts of "honour" crimes committed in Lebanon, the female victims in most cases were portrayed as having an irreverent and defiant attitude toward the rules and gender roles imposed by their familial and social environment (Beydoun, 2008).

In recent years, many countries, including Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco, amended their penal laws to classify "honour" murders as crimes. However, most codes still call for light sentences (Consultation and Research Institute and UNDP, 2006) due to "extenuating circumstances", and judges continue to use their discretion to impose light sentences on perpetrators (Ibid). In its 2007 human rights report, Amnesty International states that a man in Jordan was given a sentence of six months imprisonment for having killed his pregnant unmarried sister "in a fit of fury" (Amnesty International, 2008).

#### SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES

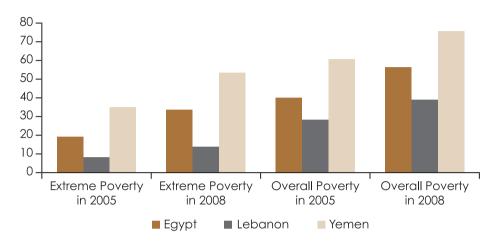
Before moving on to the discussion of different vulnerable groups of Arab women, it is essential to set this discussion in the general macroeconomic framework of Arab countries today. We need to heed the fact that growth and development patterns as well as social and economic structures vary across Arab countries. In international economic discourse, Arab countries are divided into three main categories: 1) resource rich/labour importing; 2) resource rich/labour abundant; and 3) resource poor/labour abundant.

Even though the traditional and cultural differences between Arab countries are not as vast, the wide social and economic disparities make comparative analysis a difficult task in terms of determining the major problems facing Arab women's human security in these countries, and recommending reform in this respect.

An illustrative example of the disparities between the three types of Arab countries is the widening discrepancy in average income per capita between countries of the first category (the Gulf countries) and the rest of the Arab world. Although incomes have been increasing, levels of poverty and vulnerability, especially in countries of the third category, have been rising, especially after 2005, as appears in the graph below. Therefore, there are varying trends

between standards of living in the different categories of Arab countries that reflect significant structural differences in the societies and economies of those groups. These discrepancies are bound to affect the status of women in each of those states.

Figure 2: Comparative poverty levels in selected Arab countries (2005-2008)



Source: UNDP, League of Arab States, "Food Security and Poverty in Arab Countries: Facts, Challenges and Policy Considerations," June 2008 (Draft).

That being said, poverty should not only be viewed from an income perspective, but as a multidimensional phenomenon reflecting a lack in people's capabilities. While poverty is usually not a gender specific issue (UNDP-Regional Office for Arab States, 2006), many women in the Arab world are more vulnerable to social and economic changes and to loss of livelihood, including the various aspects pertaining to acquiring their social rights and the opportunity to use their capabilities. Among those affected are women that head households, unemployed women or those in the informal economy, and elderly women. These women groups lack formal mechanisms for protection against social, health, economic and environmental insecurities.

#### i. Female-headed households \*

Arab women head households as a result of separation, desertion and migration of their husbands. Studies show that one in every nine households in Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen is headed by a woman. Urban-rural differences exist, where this phenomenon is mostly urban in Egypt and Algeria compared to being rural in Sudan and Yemen (UNIFEM, 2004). In Lebanon, studies show that female-headed households represent 14.2 per cent of total households and that their average annual revenue is less than 60 per cent of the national average annual income (UNDP, MOSA, 2004). In Egypt, a UNIFEM study in 2002 showed that 87 per cent of all women heads of households were either completely illiterate or semi-illiterate.

Women heads of households face a plethora of structural and cultural obstacles that contribute to their social insecurities. Proving guardianship of their children is a major hurdle that these women face. A product of legal and cultural factors, this process often proves to be a traumatic

<sup>\*</sup> There could be an overemphasis on female heads of households in the literature of gender poverty while this group might not be the most vulnerable. This paper is guided by Chant's (2006: 214) suggestion in retaining differentiation in household headship while at the same time "disaggregat[ing] female heads according to stage in the life course, [and] marital and fertility status". See (Chant, 2006: 201-220).

experience for these women. In the same vein, women heads of household face difficulties in acquiring access to property, insurance and credit schemes (UNIFEM, 2004).

#### ii. Unemployed women and women in the informal economy

Over the last 50 years, the participation of Arab women in the labour force has increased by a significant 50 per cent (World Bank, 2004); however, their rate remains the lowest in the world today. In the North African Arab countries, the female employment rate is as low as 14.7 per cent, and the gender gap in labour participation is dangerously large. In the Middle Eastern Arab countries, this rate increases to 33.3 per cent, which ranks the region second lowest in the world. In those countries, even the women who are part of the labour force are facing serious difficulties in getting employed.

The low levels of women labour participation and employment reflect that women remain an unexploited economic resource in Arab countries, a factor that is hindering the overall process of development and growth in those countries and increasing the risk of families falling into poverty. For example, in the oil exporting countries of the Arab Gulf, female labour participation rates are exceptionally low (refer to Figure 3) since existing income levels are sufficiently high and thus put downward pressure on both supply and demand for national labour. In resource poor countries, the rate of female labour participation is higher since those countries depend to a higher extent on labour-intensive production.

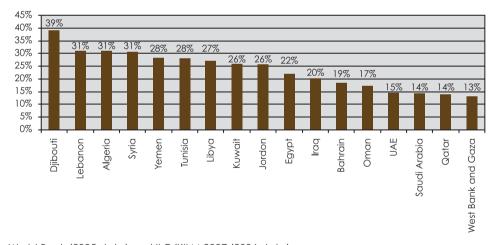
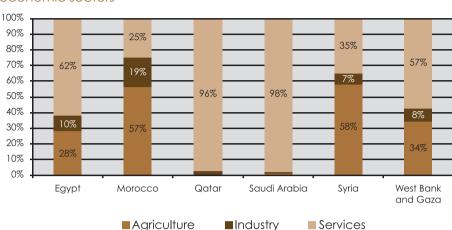


Figure 3: Women's share of the total labour force

Source: World Bank (2005 data) and ILO/KILM 2007 (2006 data)

Women's participation in the labour market is characterised by gendered career choices. The larger part of working women is located within the services sector and the agricultural sector (refer to Figure 4) where their employment is mostly informal. A study of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on the working status of women showed that women in Middle Eastern Arab countries are more likely to work as contributing family workers than as salaried workers (ILO, 2008).



**Figure 4:** Percentage of women out of total employed females in different economic sectors

Source: World Bank (2001-2003 data)

Due to their low participation in the labour market, especially in the formal public or private sectors, women rarely have full access to public or para-public social security benefits, since such benefits are given only to continuously employed formal workers. Their state of economic dependency has serious repercussions on women's vulnerabilities and increases their human insecurities. It should be noted here that some countries do provide free healthcare to all their citizens irrespective of their employment status; however, the access to and quality of these services are often inferior to social security schemes.

#### iii. Elderly women

Despite the large proportion of youth in the Arab world, the number of elderly in general — and elderly women in particular — is growing. Arab elderly women face serious social insecurities that stem from lack of formal protection institutions and processes. Because of their low participation in the formal labour force, women benefit from social security systems mainly as surviving spouses. In addition, medical benefits are often inadequate. Elderly women need special healthcare that is often lacking in low-income countries in the Arab world. In Egypt, 13.1 per cent of the population over 60 evaluated their health as poor (UNIFEM, 2004).

Studies suggest that while marriage rates remain relatively high, women are less likely to marry than men, and in recent years there has been an increase in the number of never-married women (Olmsted, 2005: 53-78). In addition, women have higher life expectancies. Therefore, for various reasons, women are less likely to be married than men and more likely to be living alone and hence economically vulnerable (Olmsted, 2005: 53-78). For instance, in Jordan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, women above 60 years of age are around three times more likely to be divorced or separated than men of the same age. The discrepancy is even wider in Palestine (refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Percentages of divorced or separated elderly in selected Arab countries

	Percentage of divorced/ separated men aged 60 and above	Percentage of divorced/ separated women aged 60 and above
Jordan	0.5	1.4
Occupied Palestinian territories	0.2	1.7
Qatar	1.2	3.6
Saudi Arabia	1.1	3.5

Source: Gender Info Database, 2007 (2004 data)

### PROTECTING ARAB WOMEN FROM HUMAN INSECURITIES

Based on our broader definition of human security to include physical and social, economic, health and environmental and political security, protection is seen comprehensively to encompass protection from conflict-related violence, protection from domestic violence, and protection from socioeconomic vulnerabilities. These three dimensions of protection are provided by the state, non-state institutions such as religious and non-sectarian NGOs, and by informal kinship-related mechanisms. This section looks at these three types of protection and the role of state and non-state actors in providing them.

#### i. Protection from conflict-related violence

It is certain that during war and armed conflict, the entire civilian population suffers from acts of violence, killing, and abuse, etc. However, women in particular face specific forms of violence, including physical and sexual violence, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. Such cases are addressed by Recommendation 19 of the Committee on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEDAW Committee) that defines gender-based violence as "directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately." (CEDAW Committee, 1992) This section discusses the gender-related impact of violence in the context of conflict, and the role of government agencies, NGOs and other informal community networks in mitigating this impact.

In conflict-ridden countries, such as Iraq and Palestine, the lack of official government and institutional mechanisms hinders law enforcement and the protection of women from violence and social and economic vulnerabilities. For instance, the Palestinian Authority (PA) cannot sign or ratify international human rights treaties because it is not a sovereign state; however, it has committed itself to abide by international law (Amnesty International, 2005). On another front, the lack of law enforcement institutions in Palestine has increased the popularity and credibility to armed groups, as well as traditional, religious and tribal authorities among the people. This has contributed to strengthening gender inequality and forcing women to follow traditional norms.

The role of Palestinian women's rights advocates has been crucial in promoting and protecting women's rights. Women's organisations and activists provide legal advice, medical care

and counselling for women at risk. PA institutions cooperate with these organisations to a certain extent, especially the Ministry of Social Affairs. In 2003, a Ministry for Women's Affairs was established to protect women and integrate their rights into PA institutions (Amnesty International, 2005). NGOs have also been active in raising awareness of women's rights through organising conferences, workshops and training sessions, in addition to conducting research studies. However, since the Intifada in 2000, these efforts have decreased due to increased tension in the political, social and economic situation.

Amidst continuous destruction, bombings and killings, cases of rape and sexual assault are overlooked since they are not considered issues of priority, neither by police authorities that are supposed to investigate these violations, nor by hospitals and medical centres that have limited resources and facilities.

Evidence from Iraq shows that rape and kidnapping significantly increased since the beginning of 2003 war. This has restricted women's freedom of movement and increased their state of vulnerability. A report by Human Rights Watch (2003) points out that many women and girls who have been victim of sexual violence and abduction have sought medical help at hospitals but were refused because "some hospital staff do not regard treating victims of sexual violence as their responsibility, or give such care low priority given their limited resources due to the war and its aftermath." (Human Rights Watch, 2003: 8) In addition, receiving forensic examinations requires referral from the police. However, police authorities underplay the seriousness of rape and sexual violence and give more importance to other crimes such as theft, carjacking and murder.

When interviewed, many officers further explained that these issues do not fall under their responsibilities, as "families resolve such cases between themselves" (Human Rights Watch, 2003: 8). The report also mentions that US military police units do keep some record of such cases, but turn them over to Iraqi police investigators when the assault is "Iraqi on Iraqi". When these reports are transferred to Iraqi criminal justice institutions they are almost always disregarded.

#### ii. State protection from non-conflict related gender-based violence

Arab governments are signatories to several international treaties that require the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence and discrimination, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) whose committee notes that "states may also be responsible for private acts if they fail to act with due diligence to prevent violations of rights, or to investigate and punish acts of violence" (CEDAW Committee, 1992), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) that requires governments to ensure the rights to life and security of all individuals without distinctions of any kind, including gender (Human Rights Watch, 2004: 1-37).

Most governments have not so far been successful in their mandate of protecting their female citizens, especially when the threat comes from within their own communities. Even though CEDAW specifically instructs state parties to ensure that their laws governing gender-based violence "give adequate protection to all women" (CEDAW Committee, 1992), the legal system of many Arab countries continues to discriminate in favour of aggressors by allowing "accentuating circumstances" even in cases where adultery is merely suspected, thus placing

the burden of proof on the victim instead of her attacker. In Jordan, several attempts to repeal Article 340 that provides for a reduction in penalty for a man who kills a female relative in an "unlawful bed" have so far failed to obtain enough votes in the lower house. Article 98 allows for halving the sentence if the family waives its right to file a complaint, something that almost always happens in the case of "honour" crimes where the family is complicit in the murder (Human Rights Watch, 2004: 1-37).

Even when laws have been amended, as they have in some Arab countries like Lebanon more recently, oftentimes police officers and judges continue to use their discretion to discriminate in practice. For instance, Article 17 of the Egyptian penal code allows judges to reduce murder sentences to as little as six months when they deem that the conditions of the murder call for such a reduction (Khafagy, 2005).

CEDAW also requires governments to "establish or support services for victims of family violence, rape, sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence, including refuges, specially trained health workers, rehabilitation and counselling" (CEDAW Committee, 1992). However, in many countries, governments have not yet established shelters to protect women from domestic abuse and honour killings. In Jordan, the women who are removed from their homes under threat from their relatives are placed in prison and may remain there for years (Human Rights Watch, 2004: 1-37).

#### ii. Non-governmental protection from personal violence

Nongovernmental institutions, including international and national human rights organisations and women's advocacy groups, have been very active in raising awareness on domestic violence and in breaking the silence around these issues in Arab societies.

In the mid-1990s, the Beijing Conference spurred the emergence of several organisations whose mission it is to engage their societies in an open debate on violence against women, exercise pressure to change laws that continue to discriminate in favour of aggressors, and provide women with assistance, including hotlines, shelters and legal advice. In Lebanon, for example, one of these organisations is the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women, which calls on the government "to be a fair arbitrator and the ultimate authority in protecting women, especially legally" (Beydoun, 2002: 56-61). The organisation also calls for work on the community level to change misconceptions held about women.

The council's work has so far included establishing a hotline and categorising the received complaints into various forms of violence, engaging in public battles in defence of various abused women, and organising campaigns to eradicate "legal illiteracy" and lobbying the government to amend discriminatory laws and enact laws that protect women from violence. The council also provides legal consultation services to abused women (Beydoun, 2002: 56-61).

Similarly in Jordan, the Jordanian Women's Union established the first domestic violence hotline in 1994 and runs a small, six-bed shelter in Amman. In 1999, a powerful grassroots campaign was conducted against honour killings with arguments based on the Jordanian constitution, Islamic law, and international human rights law (Human Rights Watch, 2004: 1-37).

In Egypt, the Association of Legal Aid (CEWLA), established in 1995, is specialised in providing legal aid to low-income urban women to help them regain their rights in the domain of personal status law. The association also works on combating domestic violence and launched the first campaign against honour crimes in Egypt in 1997. The campaign consisted of collecting and analysing information on honour killings, including court rulings and sentences, holding discussions with legislators and the media, raising public awareness of the issue, drafting amendments to discriminatory laws, and establishing with other NGOs a national network for the elimination of violence against women (Khafagy, 2005).

#### iii. Community protection from personal violence

Domestic violence, including honour crimes, battering, and marital rape, is a domain where the patriarchal kinship system fails to protect its female members. Even worse, in many cases the family and the wider community are the aggressors.

Honour killings are often meant as a public statement. According to a Human Rights Watch counsellor, "[the murder] is not an individual decision. It's the decision of the whole family. [The killer] feels supported." (Human Rights Watch, 2004: 1-37) In a study on domestic violence in Syria conducted by UNIFEM (UNIFEM, 2006), it was found that 71.8 per cent of assaulted women were attacked by a family member, 12.4 per cent by an acquaintance, and only 7.6 per cent by an unknown person. In 62 per cent of bodily assault cases, family members blamed the women for causing the attack.

Although domestic violence is a worldwide phenomenon that is in no way restricted to the Arab world, the phenomenon continues to be shrouded with silence, and only recently has there been effort to discuss these issues openly.

### PROTECTION FROM SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES

Special groups of women are among the most vulnerable categories in most Arab countries where divorce, separation, or the death, work disability, or unemployment of the spouse places them at significant risk of falling below the poverty line. In Egypt, poverty is more often found among unmarried, divorced, widowed or abandoned women than in any other social group. In fact, more than one third of Egypt's female-headed households live below the poverty line (Loewe, 2004: 3-14).

Hence, despite the scarcity of resources and the economic problems that plague many of the region's countries, Arab governments and communities have a responsibility to ensure that their citizens have a minimum of social security that stands between them and destitution. Nasr defines social protection as "a fundamental and central feature of the social contract that any state makes with its citizens and that citizens make among themselves" (Nasr, 2001).

#### i. State-provided protection

Arab states are most active in the arena of socioeconomic protection even though services that specifically target vulnerable women remain lacking. State socioeconomic protection comes in two main forms: 1) social insurance or social security, which pools contributions made by individuals or households to protect themselves against future risk; and 2) social assistance or

safety nets that transfer resources to vulnerable and deprived members of society (Nasr, 2001). These two types of protection tend to target different categories of individuals. In most Arab countries, social insurance schemes target the wage-earning, urban and less poor categories, whereas social assistance programmes target informal workers, self- or family-employed, the unemployed, and other poor or vulnerable segments of the population (Nasr, 2001). Because of their low participation in the formal wage-earning labour force, women are more represented among safety net beneficiaries.

#### ii. Social security

The social security schemes of most Arab countries have been criticised for being highly segmented, providing incomplete protection against social risks, covering a small percentage of the population, and suffering from inefficient administration. In a global ranking of national social security systems (Dixon, 2000: 109-122), Tunisia's system ranked the highest among Arab countries (30th in the world), followed by Algeria (51st), and Libya (54th). Benefits differ substantially within the region. For instance, maternity leave ranges from 7 weeks in Lebanon to one year in Morocco (refer to Table 2).

Most pension schemes are based on employment history and limited to formal-sector employees. The high unemployment rate means that coverage remains low for both men and women, but the situation is much worse for women who constitute a much larger share of informal employment (Olmsted, 2005: 53-78). The percentage of women in the ranks of the informally employed tends to be underreported because informally employed women often do not view themselves as workers. Informal employment ranges from street vending to home-based work (crafts, catering, etc) and subcontract work (garments, leather, etc) (Esim and Kuttab, 2002). Therefore, women tend to benefit from pension programmes primarily as surviving spouses (Olmsted, 2005: 53-78).

**Table 2:** Social security schemes in selected Arab countries

	Pension	Disability insurance	Death insurance	Paid maternity leave	Medical benefits	Work injury benefits	Family allowance	Unemployment insurance
Bahrain	Yes	Yes	Yes	45 days		Yes: employers contribute	No	No
Egypt	Yes	Yes	Yes	50 days	Yes	Yes: employers contribute	No	Some
Jordan	Yes	Yes	Yes	10 weeks	Yes	Yes: employers contribute	No	No
Kuwait	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	No	No	No
Lebanon	Partial <sup>1</sup>	Yes	Yes	7 weeks	Yes	For workers with employment contract	Yes	No
Morocco	Yes	Yes	Yes	1 year	No	For workers with employment contract	Yes	No
Oman	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	Yes: employers contribute	No	No
Saudi Arabia	Yes	Yes	Yes	10 weeks	Yes	Yes: employers contribute	No	No
Syria	Yes	Yes	Yes	105 days	Yes	Yes: employers contribute	No	No

Source: Social Security Programs Throughout the World (SSPTW); Asia and the Pacific, 2006, and World Bank, 2004.

<sup>1</sup> Not a real pension scheme; only a lump sum and end-of-service indemnity.

<sup>-</sup> Not available.

#### ii. Safety nets

Gulf States, which have considerable financial resources, have the most comprehensive social assistance programmes. However, most Arab countries have programmes that specifically target widows and orphans, although payments are usually small (Olmsted, 2005: 53-78).

Cash transfers are among the most common government-sponsored safety nets. In Egypt for instance, the Ministry of Social affairs manages three main social assistance funds: 1) a permanent pension fund for special categories like orphans, widows, divorcees, totally disabled, nevermarried women, families of convicts, etc; 2) a temporary assistance fund for pregnant women, partially disabled individuals, funeral care, emergencies, natural disasters, and accidents; 3) a fund for low-income families of former government employees who need assistance with expenses for sickness, education, or marriage (Nasr, 2001).

This programme excludes several categories of people, including the working poor, wives of unemployed men, and female heads of household (Bibars, 2000).

In Lebanon, the Ministry of Social Affairs spends around 13 per cent of its budget on food and housing subsidies to needy categories like orphans, the handicapped, and the homeless, and around 26 per cent of its budget on educational and vocational training allowances for the same categories and very low-income individuals in low-income areas (Nasr, 2001). Lebanon's social action plan entails providing social assistance of \$600 per year to poor female heads of household (Republic of Lebanon, 2007).

Arab governments also subsidise the price of basic commodities, including bread, sugar, powdered milk, etc. This indirect social assistance aims to raise the real income of poor households by reducing the price of basic goods that take up a large percentage of their budgets (Nasr, 2001). However, the better off in society benefits along with the poor, making these kinds of subsidies less equitable and efficient than direct transfers.

#### NGO-SPONSORED SOCIOECONOMIC PROTECTION

As Arab state economies go towards gradual liberalisation, tending to retreat from several domains of social service delivery, NGO participation is being increasingly sought. Religious charities have been playing a considerable role in providing social services to vulnerable groups for centuries, and they continue to represent 80-85 per cent of all welfare apportioned by NGOs (Nasr, 2001). Governments have begun to increasingly rely on these organisations for the delivery of social services to the needy. For instance, in Lebanon, the Ministry of Social Affairs has established partnerships with several NGOs that are partially reliant on public funds and execute social programmes in collaboration with — and often under the supervision of — government agencies.

The Nasser Social Bank (NSB) in Egypt runs a social assistance and credit programme administered by local zakat (the religious duty of giving alms) committees that collect zakat from local donors and transfer the funds to the NSB. These funds are then returned to the committees on request and are used to grant stipends, support poor or unemployed individuals, or assist divorced women in obtaining their rights from their ex-husbands. The programme is described as efficient in being administered by local committees that know their communities' needs (Loewe, 2004: 3-14).

Despite many success stories, there is a view that states may be contracting out what many see as basic governmental functions. This active disengagement of government from the delivery of social services engenders three types of concerns: 1) the accountability of non-governmental actors, including NGOs; 2) the degree to which social services reach all vulnerable segments and are not delivered on the basis of political, religious or other affiliations; and 3) changing the perception of social services from a right of every citizen in need to a gift of charity.

Another issue that may be raised in this respect is the degree to which women activists who are working on changing patriarchal values can do so while relying on the services and assistance of religious NGOs and community organisations that tend to reinforce these patriarchal norms. On the one hand, these NGOs play an indispensable function of providing basic social services and safety nets; on the other, they have their own agendas and objectives that may not intersect with objectives like empowering women, reinforcing equality through changing existing laws, and providing women with their civil rights.

This situation appears as a vicious circle that is difficult to escape in the absence of a strong governmental apparatus that can be the main provider of social services, especially to poor and vulnerable households.

#### INFORMAL MECHANISMS OF SOCIOECONOMIC PROTECTION

While the formal safety net provides some assistance to groups identified as particularly needy, there are large gaps in its fabric, and the family remains the primary source of assistance, particularly for elderly women (Olmsted, 2005: 53-78).

Due to the patriarchal (Beechey, 1979: 66-82), local, and kinship-based nature of important segments of Arab societies, informal and even formal sector workers, vulnerable individuals and poorer families resort to lending and relief grants from such sources as family, villages, informal mutual associations, and local religious charities (Nasr, 2001).

Based on what Olmsted calls the "patriarchal contract" that exists in Arab societies, most women are economically supported first by their fathers, then by their husbands, and eventually by their sons. As a result, most elderly women are protected from economic hardship and even tend to acquire more power as they age. The patriarchal contract defines kinship rather broadly meaning that even unmarried women or women without children are often provided for by close male kin such as uncles or nephews.

However, as Arab society changes and the predominant household structure changes from an extended to a nuclear one, the strength of the patriarchal contract begins to erode. Moreover, difficult economic conditions — including high unemployment — place additional strain on the patriarchal contract making it increasingly difficult for men to support their female kin. Even when men are legally required to provide financial support, that support is not guaranteed. For instance, although marriage laws are explicit about the economic responsibilities of husbands towards their wives and children, the level of enforcement of these laws is left to the discretion of judges, most of who are men (Olmsted, 2005: 53-78). As a result, women with few kin members, or kin members who are unable or unwilling to provide for them, become economically vulnerable, a situation that is becoming increasingly more common as the demographics of Arab societies change.

However, despite the erosion of the patriarchal contract and its decreasing ability to protect women from economic hardship, the ability of the public sector to provide a social safety net for the elderly remains severely limited.

In conclusion, the creation of strong state-based social safety nets would increase women's choices and reduce their need to marry and have families in order to secure their economic futures. It would also relieve the social and economic pressures on young men, among whom unemployment rates are extremely high, making them unable to fulfil the patriarchal contract, especially in its broad definition (Olmsted, 2005: 53-78).

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has looked at the human insecurities that Arab women face. It suggested three types of women human insecurities: i) conflict-related insecurities; ii) those related to personal violence; and iii) social and economic vulnerabilities. The paper also assessed the role of state and non-state actors in providing protection, arguing for a comprehensive approach to protection that goes a step beyond the provision of social security and social assistance. The paper did not intend to make an assessment of all protection programmes in the Arab world, but only looked at certain case studies; it aimed in this regard to foster debate on women insecurities and on the best modalities of protection.

In light of the above, the paper suggests a number of recommendations regarding steps to be taken by governments as well as civil society.

#### i. Recommendations to governments

- Penal codes continue to provide ground for discriminatory treatment in cases of honour crimes and domestic violence. Legislators need to pay special effort to making these codes more gender neutral. Gender-neutral penal codes do not ensure a positive outcome in gender-violence cases. Therefore, judges and prosecutors need to be trained to handle cases responsibly and prosecute them effectively.
- Although most Arab countries have non-discriminatory labour laws, Arab women continue to face difficulties in access to the labour market. Consequently, governments need to provide them with legal recourse in case of discrimination. In addition, whenever financially possible, governments are encouraged to institute measures that facilitate women's participation in the labour market, such as subsidising nursery care.
- Provide women with ex-ante mechanisms, such as improving their access to better quality education, better healthcare services, and more equitable inheritance and divorce laws, which would reduce their vulnerability to social risks.
- Provide women with ex-post mechanisms that relieve the impact once the risk materialises.
   Examples of such efforts include small and micro community development projects like
   Egypt's Social Development Fund and Jordan's Social Safety Net.
- Hold public education campaigns to change the public mindset regarding the rights of women and their personal safety

- Adhere to and promote the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1820 that recognises sexual violence as a war crime and calls for strong guidelines to involve UN peacekeepers in protecting civilians from sexual violence.
- Build government capacities to undertake and institutionalise gender-responsive budgeting where it can increase budget allocations to enhance women's human security, create special programmes for women survivors of violence, and other livelihood programmes.
- Involve women in local and national decision-making bodies and legislatures. This would help in placing human security issues and gender-responsive budgeting issues on policy agendas.

#### ii. Recommendations to NGOs and civil society

- · Conflict- ridden states are usually characterised by weak governments that are no longer able to protect their citizens, and by overloaded public institutions (hospitals, police, schools, etc). Under these circumstances, gender-based violence is no longer a priority; therefore, regional and international NGOs need to step in through the provision of a support system, including hotlines, shelters, and basic assistance to female victims of violence.
- In every Arab country there is a large information gap as to the way social systems function and women's rights under each of those systems. Therefore, NGOs need to organise awareness campaigns, national conferences, and workshops to inform women about their rights and guide them through application processes.
- Very often Arab women are reluctant to seek legal remedies for their problems. In a culture where family problems (divorce, inheritance, custody, etc) are supposed to be handled within the family, there is a large need for programmes that provide women with legal advice, encourage them to seek legal redress and represent them in court cases.

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**Chapter Four** 

**Education: The Effective Route for Women's Security** 

Munther Wassef Masri

# **EDUCATION: THE EFFECTIVE ROUTE FOR WOMEN'S SECURITY**

The World Conference on Human Rights that was held in 1948 refers to the right of education for every individual. Nonetheless, it is obvious that this right has remained until now, six decades since it was adopted, more of a target or a wish that has not been fulfilled in a comprehensive manner, neither quantitatively nor qualitatively, nor in its potential social reflections, especially as far as the education of women, their social status and empowerment are concerned.

Towards this purpose, and to explore the relevant themes, this paper deals with a number of concepts and issues such as human security in its relation to the education of women, the criteria for the assessment of gender issues in education, and the extent of linkages or schism between Arab cultural roots on the one hand and the prevailing societal culture on the other. In addition, the paper presents samples of Arab and international treaties, conventions and declarations that are of relevance to education, taking into consideration, in particular, the dimension that is relevant to women's education and their human security.

In addition, the status of women's education in Arab countries is assessed from the point of view of the national legislative tools as well as characteristics of the various stages and fields of education as reflected by available data and information. On the other hand, the paper deals with the influence of globalisation and modern information and communication technologies on education in general, and on women's education in particular. It explores, furthermore, the extent to which women's education in Arab countries is reflected in their economic security, and on their employment in the various sectors of the economy.

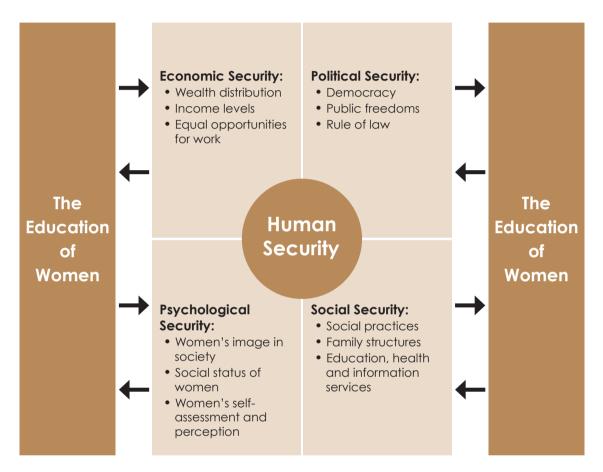
#### **WOMEN, EDUCATION AND HUMAN SECURITY**

It is not the intention in this paper to discuss the various concepts, dimensions or requirements that are related to human security, except in as much as these are of relevance to the education of women. For this purpose, it can be stated briefly that human security in any society incorporates four types or components of security. These are:

- Political security, which includes the requirements for democracy, public freedoms and the rule of law.
- Economic security, which involves the distribution of wealth, income levels and equal opportunities for work.
- Social security, including social practices, family structures, as well as education, health and information services.
- Psychological security, which incorporates women's image and social status, in addition to their self-assessment, perception and degree of confidence. (It should be stated here

that although this type of human security can be considered part of social security, it is treated here as a separate type, due to its importance and unique characteristics, especially in Arab societies).

The following figure illustrates the four components of human security, and their relation to education in general, and women's education in particular.



Women's education and the components of human security

The view is adopted here that the relation between human security and education, especially women's education, is at the same time causal and reciprocal on the one hand, in the sense that the one is both a cause and a result of the other, and inclusive and integrative on the other hand, in the sense that each one is part of the other and is included in it. In order to shed light on the concept and content of such a relation, the following four dimensions will be explored, where the causal and reciprocal relation is clear in the first two dimensions, whereas the inclusive and integrative relation is clear in the other two:

1. Spreading educational services to women on the same level as men contributes to women's human security in particular, and to that of society in general, through the enhancement of women's social status and their participation in public life and economic activities.

The education of women contributes to their human security, and enhances human security in society at large.

2. The availability of a reasonable degree of human security, in its general and comprehensive concept, that incorporates the political environment, public freedoms, social justice and practices, economic conditions, equal opportunities in public life, leads directly and indirectly to the universalisation of educational services and facilities, and to the provision of equal opportunities for all.

The availability of the various requirements and elements of human security in society leads to taking proper care of — and giving due importance to — the education of women.

3. Any assessment of the conditions and status of human security in society deals usually with the various components that constitute the comprehensive concept of such security, including its political, economic, social, cultural and other aspects. Education in general, and the education of women in particular, are examples of such components.

Education in general, and the education of women in particular, constitutes one of the components according to which the status of human security in society is assessed.

4. Any assessment of the conditions and status of education in society, including its qualitative characteristics, curricula content, teaching methodologies, etc includes usually the extent to which human security concepts, requirements and skills are incorporated. Needless to say this includes such gender issues as women's image in curricula and textbooks, as well as the role of the school in preparing women for public life, employment and family life.

Human security, with its various requirements and components, which include gender issues, constitutes one of the components according to which the status of education in society is assessed.

In general, therefore, the causal-reciprocal relation on the one hand, and the inclusive-integrative relation on the other, between the education of women and human security can be summarised as follows: the education of women constitutes at the same time one of the inputs and causes, as well as one of the outputs and results, of human security. Also, human security constitutes at the same time one of the inputs and causes, as well as one of the outputs and results of women's education. On the other hand, women's education constitutes one of the components and ingredients of human security, while at the same time, human security, including relevant gender issues, constitutes one of the components and ingredients of the education system.

In this respect, it is worth noting that despite the noticeable progress achieved in the field of women's education, to the extent that, quantitatively, equal participation rates have been achieved for males and females in a number of Arab countries, such progress has not been accompanied by similar progress in achieving the economic dimension of human security that is reflected by employment criteria and labour market characteristics, as the available data shows that the participation rate of women in the labour force on the regional level does not exceed 20 per cent and is even less than 10 per cent in a number of Arab countries.

As a result of the aforementioned criteria, concepts and indicators, and in light of the progress achieved in the education of women here and there, accompanied by wide differences among countries, and also in light of the multifaceted and reciprocal relations between the education of women and their human security, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The progress achieved by a number of Arab countries in the field of women's education has not been accompanied by similar progress in the different dimensions of their human security in the political, economic, social and psychological fields. Thus, greater efforts, and maybe longer periods of time, are needed for women's education to influence and be reflected in their human security in Arab societies, especially that such influence is linked to the convictions of both males and females at the family as well as the society level.
- The quantitative dimension was the predominant factor in the progress of women's education in Arab countries that achieved noticeable progress in this field. This is apparent in the relevant rates of participation in various educational stages. The qualitative dimension, which concerns a content-based approach to various gender issues in the education system, seems still in need of better treatment.
- Relatively high population growth, on the one hand, and slow economic growth that was accompanied by limited availability of job opportunities on the other, led to high unemployment rates in most Arab countries. As expected, the resulting negative consequences affected women more than men, due to various societal factors.
- There are still obvious reservations on the family and society levels regarding women's employment in some sectors and types of work, even if they are qualified for such work.
- The degree of availability of human security for males in Arab societies is greater than that for females. The reasons include the higher educational level of males, relevant societal and family prejudices, the concept of the family provider, which is biased in favour of males, and the fact that the psychological security of males regarding their self-perception and confidence in their abilities and role in society exceeds that of females. As expected, this is reflected in the performance and practices of men and women in their societies, and in their approach to different life activities. Furthermore, it is reflected in the other components of human security — the political, the economic and the social. Consequently, in view of the causal-reciprocal and inclusive-integrative relation between education and the various dimensions of human security, any effort that is exerted towards the education of women contributes to their human security, and hence to the human security of the family and society at large, more than a similar effort that is exerted towards the education of men. But if the societal environment is not friendly to women regarding the investment of their education in enhancing their human security, and if there is lack of compensatory measures through governmental and non-governmental efforts, and through cultural and information related services,

then the opportunities that are available for men will exceed those available for women to utilise whatever services, facilitates and opportunities (economic, social and political) are available.

In Arab societies, the value added due to a certain effort that is exerted to educate women exceeds the value added due to a similar effort that is exerted to educate men.

It is taken for granted nowadays, as referred to in many studies, that a proportional relationship exists between the educational level attained by the individual, on the one hand, and his income and standard of living, on the other. In fact, a causal-reciprocal relation exists between knowledge poverty and material poverty, as each supports the other and contributes to its enhancement. And since females in Arab societies suffer more than males from knowledge poverty, females are exposed more than males to be affected by the fragility of the economic situation and economic insecurity. This becomes even more obvious when women assume the role of heads of household and providers to families, or when they live independently.

It is worth noting that there are communities that suffer from both a noticeable gap in educational opportunities that are available for men and women, and a lack of societal convictions regarding the importance of equal opportunities in education and the need for the empowerment of women and the enhancement of their role in society. In such communities, it is not unusual to find that such lack of convictions is not restricted to males, but is adopted by females as well. Consequently in this case, the weakness of women's convictions in their capacities, abilities and role in society, weakens the possibility of their education contributing to their human security, as well as to that of the family and society at large.

The concept of relevance between education and the requirements of the labour market assumes an extra dimension for women when compared to men. This is so because work skills for women necessitate taking into consideration the requirements of both the traditional labour market, on the one hand, and those of the "social and family labour market", so to speak, on the other hand. If this applies to both men and women, it has a deeper and wider dimension for women.

Expanding the traditional concept of the labour market, which has so far been dominated by the economic dimension, so as to incorporate the social and family dimension, as well as life skills in general, would contribute to emphasising the need for women's education. In this respect, can we expect to start talking in the future about the "life market" and "life skills" instead of the "labour market" and "occupational skills"?

# CULTURAL AND SOCIETAL ROOTS

A clear schism exists in Arab societies between cultural roots and the prevailing societal culture. This paper is concerned with the effects of such a schism on the three-dimensional issue of women, education and human security. Cultural roots, a great part of which emanates from Islamic teachings, encourage life-long education, "from the cradle to the grave," for men and women without discrimination. National legislative tools, whether old or new, reflect this concept to a great extent. This is also reflected by the positive response to relevant international treaties, conventions and declarations that rarely face any reservations from Arab countries, due to their concurrence with relevant cultural roots. This is not usually the case with other international treaties and conventions that are concerned with fields other than education where not infrequently Arab countries make reservations concerning the provisions of some articles.

When discussing social and cultural issues in Arab societies, and the influence of such issues on women's education and their human security, this paper adopts the term "societal culture" to mean a mixture of original cultural roots on the one hand, and those inherited cultural features that accumulated through centuries of backwardness on the other. In this sense, societal culture is of special relevance when exploring those limitations in Arab societies that stand in the way of the full utilisation of women's education for the enhancement of their human security.

One relevant example concerns some aspects of economic security. Here, the cultural roots that emanate from Islamic teachings grant economic independence to women. Thus women have the right to possess and manage any belongings without any restrictions. Women have the right also to manage their income independently from their husbands or any other members of their families and without the need for their concurrence. They can also sign contracts and undertake various deals. These and other similar rights are indicators of economic independence that constitutes a basic element of human security for women. Nevertheless, actual practices that are dictated by societal culture stand frequently in the way of women's rights to economic independence. As expected, this leads to a lack of conviction about the importance of women's education, as long as such education does not contribute to a reasonable extent to their economic — and hence human — security.

#### GENDER AND EDUCATION: CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

The assessment of gender issues in education and the extent of progress of women's education in comparison with men, without taking into consideration reflections on human security issues, requires the adoption of three groups of assessment criteria to enable us to form a comprehensive view of relevant gender issues. These are:

· Quantitative criteria concerned mostly with quantitative indicators in education, such as the extent of universalisation of free and compulsory basic education, and the extent of the provision of educational services in various geographical areas at the national level. Quantitative criteria in this respect can be defined as those criteria that help to measure the extent of attaining equal opportunities for males and females to access available educational services and facilities and to progress on the educational ladder so that the social and economic status and background of the student does not stand in the way of such accessibility or progress, and so that the individual attains the highest educational level that his abilities qualify him for.

- Qualitative criteria deal with the approach adopted towards gender issues, the image
  of women in school curricula and textbooks, the nature of extracurricular activities
  regarding their approach to gender issues, and the extent to which individuals of
  special needs males and females are taken care of. Qualitative criteria include
  also the size and nature of educational and vocational guidance and counselling
  services that are available inside or outside the education system.
- System-related criteria are concerned with the status of women and the approach to gender issues in national legislative tools, policies and official educational strategies, as well as the extent to which women participate in policymaking and planning efforts through their participation in relevant councils, boards, commissions, etc. These criteria include also the role of women in the governance of the education system as active members and leaders at the institutional (school), local and central (headquarters) levels. They include also the extent to which women participate in professional associations as members and leaders in relevant student unions, teacher syndicates, etc.

It is worthwhile noting that the progress achieved in Arab countries regarding the status and conditions of education in general and that of women in particular has so far been more of the first kind of criteria, namely quantitative, which can be easily assessed and measured as will be shown later in this paper, taking into consideration the great variations that exist between the countries. Furthermore, if we exclude some aspects of the qualitative criteria, such as special services for those of special needs, and some aspects of the system-related criteria, such as legislation, then one can see that the assessment of progress and change is not usual outside the quantitative criteria framework. Nevertheless, assessment efforts of the qualitative and system-related criteria are sometimes undertaken through research work and studies that point to slow and modest progress.

The criteria for the assessment of gender issues in education can be approached from a different angle that concerns the concept of the democracy of education, which is, to some extent, a refection of democracy in society at large. The education system can be judged democratic if:

- It avails equal opportunities to all social groups in society, including males, females, the underprivileged, the talented, slow learners, etc.
- It is organised, governed and administered by the utilisation of democratic principles and processes that highlight the participatory approach to learning by males and females and that empowers the school as the basic unit and active cell in the system.
- It avails the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to the student, including gender issues, related to democratic systems, models, principles and practices through relevant educational material, as well as in-class and out-of-class activities.

The substantial progress in the Arab world vis-à-vis the first criterion (quantitative) above is not matched by the status of the two other criteria. This is clear from the fact that the organisation, administration and content of the system lacks democratic approaches, principles and processes.

# ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL TREATIES, CONVENTIONS AND DECLARATIONS

It is well known that treaties, conventions and declarations, on the bilateral, Arab (regional) and international levels, are replete with explicit or implicit references to gender equality issues and the need for equal opportunities for males and females. They frequently call for the elimination of gender gaps in the various educational stages, and emphasise the importance of education on the individual and societal levels. They also frequently deal with issues related to human rights and human security. Nevertheless, they rarely refer to the causal-reciprocal or inclusive-integrative relations between education and human security.

On the other hand, education has been one of the main core themes in many international conferences and events. Examples of such major conferences include those that were held in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and the Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), where issues related to equality, development, peace, education, labour and health were frequently dealt with as major areas to enhance the status of women in society. As for Arab efforts after Beijing, issues related to education and women have been continuously tackled in conferences and forums. At the UN level, the theme of the elimination of all kinds of discrimination against women has been a predominant one in relevant documents, with occasional reference to education in particular. This has been the case ever since the adoption of the UN Charter (1945) that emphasised the equal rights of men and women, as well as the international declarations, treaties, agreements and conventions that followed.

In what follows, a summary of some chosen models of Arab and international declarations and conventions are presented.

#### ARAB MODELS

## i. Arab Declaration on Family Rights

This declaration was adopted by the General Secretariat of the Arab League in its meeting that was held 2-5 May 1994, following UN Resolution No 44/32 that declared 1994 as an "international year for the family". As expected, the Arab declaration dealt with gender issues explicitly and implicitly through different frameworks and dimensions in harmony with the concept of human security. Item 3 of the declaration objectives asserts the need to make education services compulsory at the basic stages, and free at all stages from pre-school until higher education for those who are able to proceed with their studies, without any discrimination due to economic or social status, political affiliation or gender. On the other hand, Item 6 of the principles on which the declaration was based emphasises the need for:

- Rectifying society views regarding gender issues.
- Developing family values and legislation to enhance women's role, on the family and societal levels.
- Highlighting the importance of women's role in development.
- Ensuring women's rights in education, culture and work, and involvement in different economic and social activities.
- Taking the necessary measures to avail adequate facilities and services for working women.

Furthermore, Item 5 of the requirements for implementation, as stated by the declaration, emphasised the need for leadership training and capacity building for grassroots organisations in such fields as family, mother and childcare services.

Looking at it from the perspective of the family as the basic cell in society, or from that of the individual members of the family and their specific needs, the Arab Declaration on Family Rights has greater effect on women's rights than on those of men, since women are the less privileged group in society.

#### ii. Arab Development Plan for Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research

The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO) prepared a development plan for education, higher education and scientific research in the Arab homeland in light of the report of the secretary general of the Arab League and the Action Plan of ALECSO. The development plan was adopted in the extraordinary meeting of the organisation that was held in Tunisia in July 2007. The corresponding document incorporated plans to develop literacy and adult education programmes, vocational and technical education, secondary education, higher education and scientific research. As expected, the quantitative and qualitative aspects of women's education had a good share in these plans.

#### iii. The Jedda Pledges for Sustainable Development

The Jedda Pledges for Sustainable Development project was adopted by the second Islamic Conference for Ministers of Environment that was held in Saudi Arabia 13-15 December 2006. These pledges incorporated the formulation of a common comprehensive Islamic strategy for sustainable development, the eradication of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment, the development of educational services, and providing support for the participation of youth and women, as well as civil society in sustainable development. Needless to say, a good part of the elements of women's education and human security is incorporated into these pledges.

#### **INTERNATIONAL MODELS**

#### i. Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The UN adopted the Universal Desecration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948. Article 26 of the declaration dealt with the following targets and needs:

- The right of every individual for education.
- Free education, at least at the primary and basic stages.
- Compulsory education at the primary stage of education.
- The provision of vocational and technical education services.
- The provision of higher education for all on a merit basis.
- Directing education towards the comprehensive development of the individual's personality and the enhancement of respect for human rights and basic freedoms.
- Directing education to enhance understanding and friendship among nations and among religious and ethnic groups, and to support UN peacekeeping activities.
- The right of parents to choose the type of education for their children.

One can see from these targets and needs the relation between the right to education for all and many of the dimensions that concern human security, whether on the individual level that is related to the full development of the learner's personality, the family level that concerns the right of parents to choose the kind of education for their children, the society level that pertains to respecting human rights and basic freedoms, or the international level that deals with peace and friendship among nations.

#### ii. UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) was adopted by UN Resolution No 57/254 on 20 December 2002 following the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in South Africa in 2002. This summit adopted, as a slogan and target, the concept of sustainable development in its relevant social, economic and environmental dimensions. The definition of "education for sustainable development" as adopted from the beginning of the summit by experts in the field of education and training is acquiring and practicing knowledge, values and skills that realise a balance among the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development, taking into consideration the growth and progress of the individual and society at large.

# **EDUCATION, LEGISLATION AND SOCIAL PRACTICES**

Any comprehensive look at Arab legislations, including constitutions, laws and bylaws, would reveal clearly an approach that is built on gender equity and equal opportunities in the field of education. Thus, in general, legal provisions were articulated without reference to gender, but when they did sometimes, they emphasised gender equality by using such terms as "boys and girls" or "males and females". In other cases, they referred directly to the specific rights of females. This applies in general to all fields and stages of education, including its formal and non-formal systems, and leads to the conclusion that the legislative dimension does not stand in the way of women in the field of education. On the contrary, it provides an incentive for females and for society at large to attain the highest appropriate educational levels on the same footing as males.

Nevertheless, the availability of the appropriate educational legislation constitutes in practice one side of the coin. The other side is the extent to which such legislation is applied and translated into action and practices, and the effect on the various components and elements of human security for women.

In what follows, a summary of the challenges and obstacles that concern the education of women in Arab countries is presented, taking into consideration that such challenges and obstacles have social and economic dimensions, and vary considerably from one country to another, while their severity and importance increase in those countries that have not attained the minimum requirements for the quantitative dimension of equality that is revealed by rates of participation in the various stages of education.

If we exclude educational legislation, many of the other legislative tools in the social and economic fields contain in practice obstacles that restrict the role and standing of women in their societies. Thus although such legislations seem not be concerned with education,

their indirect influences are negative regarding the seriousness with which society looks at women's education, and regarding the weak influence of such education on their human security with its different political, social, economic and psychological dimensions. Without going into the details of the weak points in such legislations, it is enough to mention one general weakness regarding the predominant legislative approach to women as housewives and mothers, and less as members of the labour force.

Frequently, commitment to the implementation of legislation that concerns women is restricted to the public and governmental sector, without extending such commitments to the private and non-governmental sector, especially if such legislation is vague in its provisions. One prominent example is the different articles that deal with wages and wage structures in labour laws.

Despite the continuous improvement of the literacy rate among females in Arab societies, large differences exist in the literacy rates of females in urban and rural areas. Even in countries where the illiteracy rate decreased considerably, the number of illiterate women is still high in absolute figures. Despite efforts that are exerted regarding the universalisation of basic education, the sources of illiteracy have not been completely dried up. This is manifested by such practices as dropping out of school at an early stage, or even not joining school at all. In many cases, the concept of compulsory education is applied in practice in the sense that the state is obliged to admit all those who wish to join the education system, and thus to avail all the necessary facilities and services, without really obliging families to send their children to school. This is clear from the fact that the relevant legislations do not specify penalties in the case of non-conformation.

Gender issues and gender stereotyping in school curricula and textbooks need to be properly dealt with. It is worth noting that such stereotyping affects negatively the qualitative dimension of the gender gap, despite the decrease or even the disappearance of the quantitative dimension of such a gap in education. Needless to say, this leads to the weakening of the impact of women's education on their human security in the political, economic, social and psychological fields.

Despite great improvement in the rate of participation of females in university education, their fields of study remain mainly in the human and social sciences, with very low participation rate in the applied sciences. As expected, this reduces their opportunities of employment after graduation, and consequently it reduces the impact of women's education on their human security, especially in the economic field.

It is well known that the participation of civil society enterprises and organisations in those efforts that are directed towards the enhancement of women's education is weak and limited. The reason can be attributed to the weakness of such enterprises and organisations on the one hand, and to the national legal and organisational frameworks that entrust mainly the government sector with such efforts on the other, although such participation can play an effective role in supporting female education issues and the resulting human security ones.

Examples of potential participation fields include the eradication of illiteracy, gender issues in curricula and textbooks, the rationalisation of family attitudes towards the education of males and females, and acting as pressure groups in women's human security issues.

To summarise, it can be concluded that if differences exist in the education of males and females, these cannot be attributed to national approaches or legislations regarding the issues of equity and equal opportunities, but rather to the qualitative characteristics of the education system and also to family and social attitudes and practices, as well as to the effect of some legislation other than educational legislation.

Finally, the following questions can be asked to help in the assessment of the qualitative dimension of gender issues in education, even in those countries that realised equal opportunities and the quantitative dimension of equality: What kind of female image is reflected by available curricula and textbooks, especially regarding the role of women in society? What are the convictions and prejudices, if any, that male and female teachers adopt in dealing with gender issues when they teach and interact with learners inside and outside the classroom? To what extent do out-of-class and out-of-school extracurricular activities enhance or help to reduce gender stereotyping in society?

#### PRIVATE EDUCATION AND GENDER

The size of private education, whether for profit or not-for-profit, varies considerably in Arab countries, although available data show a great expansion in such education during the past two decades, especially in the fields of higher education and the different modes of open education, including virtual or e-learning. The characteristics of private education, especially those that have an effect on women's education and their human security in Arab countries, can be summarised as follows.

Private education addresses all educational stages, including preschool, primary, secondary and higher education. It tends to expand more in the non-compulsory stages, such as higher education and preschool education in kindergartens.

The majority of private education institutions are for-profit enterprises that charge high fees from learners. Even in not-for-profit institutions, such fees are usually relatively high to cover operational costs. This has some negative effects on girls' education, because families of modest income tend to invest more in the education of their male — rather than their female — members.

Due to the high cost of the services of private education institutions, especially for-profit ones, their social mission stops usually short of providing services in activities or programmes that are not economically feasible, such as serving remote areas or groups of special needs. As an example of the resulting negative effect on women's education, it can be said that the lack of some educational facilities, such as secondary or higher education in a remote or rural area where the nearest such facility needs special effort and cost to access, leads to the utilisation of this facility by males more than females. This is because the social mobility of males exceeds considerably that of females. In this context, the summary of the Arab Human Development Report (2002, p. 29) states that "In the existing institutional context, it would be difficult for the profit-driven incentives to provide a basis for fulfilling the educational needs of vulnerable groups ... Such vulnerability worsens if the government does not assume its role in securing education for these groups".

What has been referred to in Item 3 above applies in particular in the case of traditional educational institutions that require face-to-face presence of teacher and learner inside the educational institution during the implementation of the educational service. It does not necessarily apply in the case of open learning institutions, especially those that utilise modern information and communication technologies in what has come to be called e-learning that will be discussed, and its effects on women's education highlighted, later in this paper.

Accepting private education, or even encouraging it, on the one hand, and limiting some of its negative social effects that are displayed by its elitism, on the other hand, is possible if suitable formal policies and legislations are in place, such as adopting the system of educational brochures that is of special relevance in the case of basic and secondary stages of education, and according to which public funding is secured to pay for private school fees on behalf of the brochure holder. The amount paid is equal to the estimated cost per student in a government educational institution, while the student's family pays for the difference — if any.

Another approach adopts a system of social quotas that secure the admission of different social groups in private educational institutions where school fees are in proportion to family income. In return, concerned institutions receive material and other kinds of incentives from the government. Such policies and approaches are not easy to apply, unless an adequate political and organisational system exists that secures efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of application on the national level.

In general, therefore, it can be stated that private education, especially in non-compulsory stages, including secondary, higher and preschool education, enhances elitism in the education system and accentuates social strata. This would be revealed both at the dimension that concerns the individual's income and his economic status, as well as the one that concerns gender discrimination and bias. Thus, although a certain degree of elitism exists even in public/governmental free or low cost education due to social and economic considerations, despite declared policies to minimise or eliminate such elitism, the dilemma appears bigger in size and effect in private education due to additional factors related to high cost that stand in the way of low income groups educating their children in general — and females in particular — there.

#### ILLITERACY AND KNOWLEDGE POVERTY

It is well known that dealing with illiteracy with the objective of its eradication requires two sets of measures, the emphasis on each of which varies from one society to another. These are:

- Preventive measures that require drying up the sources of illiteracy through the universalisation of compulsory basic education, and securing equity and equal opportunities related to gender in this stage of education.
- Remedial measures that require the introduction of effective programmes for the eradication of illiteracy that are directed usually to adults who have missed the necessary educational opportunities, or have dropped out of school at an early stage, or became illiterate although they completed a number of school years due to unfavourable social and economic environments and conditions.

It is worth noting that the activation of these two sets of measures, especially remedial measures that target adults, require two kinds of efforts. The first kind concerns the need to avail and make accessible the necessary facilities and services, such as appropriate locations, teaching staff, adequate funds, etc. The second kind of effort concerns the availability of socioeconomic incentives that help to convince the target groups to utilise the available facilities and services, and whose mere availability is thus not enough to motivate some of the target groups, especially females, because of family-related obstacles and social limitations, or because of old age and lack of conviction regarding the feasibility of literacy and its practical reflections on life, or because of the difficulty to secure time for learning activities due to poverty and the burdens of life.

Furthermore, it should be stated here that the development and activation of the eradication of illiteracy measures, especially remedial ones, requires active contribution from and participation of the media and civil society organisations, in addition to the public/governmental efforts.

#### Box 1: Literacy indicators in Arab countries

Literacy rates for the adult population, 15 years of age and above, (1995-2004) varied as follows:

For males: between 60 per cent and 95 per cent For females: between 35 per cent and 91 per cent

For the whole population: between 51 per cent and 93 per cent

The expected proportion of illiterate females compared to the total illiterate adult population (15 years of age and above) by the year 2015 is expected to vary between 31 per cent and 81 per cent.

Source: UNESCO (2007), Education for All Global Monitoring Report, p. 252.

The following conclusions can be derived from the information shown in Box 1 and the source referred to: literacy rates vary considerably among Arab countries; literacy rates vary considerably between males and females in favour of males; the gender gap in the field of literacy exceeds that in the field of participation in primary education, as shown later in this paper. This is an indicator that the efforts exerted in Arab countries are directed mainly to preventive measures through the universalisation of basic education, while remedial measures were modest.

On the other hand, it is well known that data on literacy rates conceals variations that might be considerable across geographical areas, such as urban and rural areas, or among various population groups, such as the poor and the rich. In general, such data conceals the poor distribution of "knowledge wealth", which is as bad as — or even worse than — the poor distribution of "material wealth" in society. In brief, therefore, the enhancement of literacy and the eradication of illiteracy necessitate the following measures:

 Strict application and universalisation of compulsory education, taking care of its quality and efficiency dimensions. Compulsory basic education, or at least primary education for a period of not less than five to six years, is of special importance because dropping out of school before this minimum number of years of schooling can lead back to illiteracy. Such a possibility is even more evident in the case of females because of additional social influences and limitations.

- Availability of effective literacy services, including easily accessible locations, qualified teachers, appropriate learning material, supporting legislative tools, and the necessary funding resources.
- Enhancing demand for available facilities and services in general, and of women in particular, through relevant social work and information and media efforts, to raise awareness and convictions of the target population about the importance and feasibility of literacy.

#### PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

The importance of preschool education is attributed not only to its mission that aims at the development of the child's personality — as is the case with other educational stages — but also to the nature of the concerned age group, 3-6 years, since most aspects of the individual's personality develop and their features are defined before joining school, which usually takes place at the age of six. The future effects of such development before this age on the requirements of human security are clear.

It is worth noting that the 2002 Arab Human Development Report emphasised the importance of the early childhood stage in planting the seeds of human security requirements, including gender issues.

In the knowledge era, the meaning of security, for both the individual and society, should be the availability of opportunities to develop the individual's talents during childhood, especially early childhood (summary of the Arab Human Development Report, 2002: 32).

#### Box 2: Preschool indicators in Arab countries, 2005

Pre-school education varied between two and three years before the age of six. The proportion of females to the total varied between 39 per cent and 51 per cent. The proportion of children in private pre-school education institutions (kindergartens) varied between 31 per cent and 100 per cent. Gross enrolment rates varied between one per cent and 74 per cent, and were nearly the same for males (one per cent-75 per cent) and females (one per cent-74 per cent).

Sources: UNESCO (2007), Education for All Global Monitoring Report, pp. 268-269.

The following conclusions can be derived from the information presented in Box 2, and from the source referred to: the gender gap in preschool education is much less than in basic education and in literacy. In many Arab countries, such a gap is almost disappearing. This can be explained by the fact that the population groups that benefit from preschool education tend to be of relatively high income, and thus can afford the cost involved, especially that such education is non-compulsory, and is looked after to a great extent by private institutions. Private institutions play a greater role in preschool education than in basic education. This is because the former is non-compulsory. Gross enrolment rates for both males and females in preschool education are very low in most Arab countries. This indicates that such education has not been a priority in relevant national educational plans.

#### **BASIC COMPULSORY EDUCATION**

The available data and information concerning gender issues in the basic compulsory education stage in Arab countries show considerable differences amongst the countries. Some realised complete equality in the relevant rates of participation for males and females, while others achieved noticeable progress in narrowing the gender gap in this education stage. Nevertheless, such a gap remained relatively large in a few countries. This can be illustrated by the data shown in Box 3.

Box 3: Primary and basic compulsory education indicators in Arab countries, 2005

Admission age to primary education in all countries: six years.

Basic compulsory education varied between five and 10 years.

Legislation regarding free primary education exists in all countries.

Gross enrolment rates for new entrants in primary education varied as follows (per cent):

Males: 45-123 Females: 40-119 Total: 43-121

Gender index indicator (females: males): 08-1.05

Net enrolment rates for new entrants in primary education varied as follows (per cent):

Males: 33-93 Females: 28-91 Total: 30-92

Gender index indicator (females: males): 0.85-1.04

The proportion of females in primary education varied between 35 per cent and 49

per cent

Gross enrolment rates in primary education varied as follows (per cent):

Males: 44-127 Females: 36-121 Total: 40-124

Gender index indicator (females: males): 0.74-1.01

Net enrolment rates in primary education varied as follows (per cent):

Males: 37-97 Females: 30-97 Total: 33-97

Gender index indicator (females: males): 0.73-1.02

Drop-out rates in primary education varied as follows (per cent):

Males: 0.4-14.7 Females: 0.7-10.4 Total: 0.6-12.7

Completion rates of primary education varied as follows (per cent):

Males: 38-100 Females: 41-99 Total: 39-99

Sources: UNESCO (2007), Education for All Global Mentoring Report, pp. 276-277, 284-285, 292-293 and 300-301.

The following conclusions can be derived from the information presented in Box 3 and from the source referred to: the number of compulsory years of schooling in primary and basic education vary considerably among Arab countries; there still exists a gender gap, although relatively small, regarding the gross and net enrolment rates in primary education. This is reflected in the gender index indicator — the ratio between female and male participation rates. The gender gap in primary education, which is about to vanish in many Arab countries, is much less than the gap in literacy programmes. Repetition and dropout in primary education, which are indicators of the internal efficiency of this stage of education, are less in the case of females than males. This indicates that although the proportion of newly admitted females to primary education is slightly less than that of males, the completion rate for females is higher than that of males.

In general, the concept of compulsory education in those Arab countries that achieved noticeable educational progress is in practice applied to mean "compulsory to the government" to provide the relevant services, and not "compulsory to the learners and parents" to benefit from such services. This is clear from the fact that education laws do not usually refer to any legal action against parents whose children drop out from school before completing basic compulsory education. The weaknesses of basic compulsory education in a number of Arab countries become even more serious, due to the fact that underprivileged groups of the population, such as the poor and inhabitants of rural areas, are more affected by the gender gap in education. Special efforts are thus needed to target such underprivileged groups.

It is worth noting here that the realisation of equal opportunities and equal rates of participation for females and males in basic education guarantees the quantitative dimension only of gender equity in education. The need would still exist to realise the qualitative dimension, which is related to curriculum content, the approach to gender issues in textbooks, and the role played by women in the teaching profession, and in the planning, management and organisation of the education system on the central, local and institutional levels.

## SECONDARY EDUCATION

As in the case of primary and basic education, the available data and information about the status of females in secondary education reveal great differences among Arab countries, whether regarding the rate of transfer from primary to secondary education, or regarding the participation rate in secondary education. Box 4 shows a summary of secondary education indicators.

Box 4: Secondary education indicators in Arab countries, 2005

The rates of transfer from primary to secondary education in 2004 varied as follows (per cent):

Males: 48.3-100 Females: 43.4-99.7 Total: 45.9-99.9

The proportion of females in secondary education varied between 32 per cent and 54

per cent.

Gross enrolment rates in secondary education varied as follows (per cent):

Males: 22-101 Females: 19-115 Total: 21-105 Gender index indicator (female: male): 0.49-1.21

Net enrolment rates in secondary education varied as follows (per cent):

Males: 17-92 Females: 14-98 Total: 15-95

Gender index indicator (female: male): 0.66-1.09

The proportion of females in technical and vocational education varied between 0 per

cent and 46 per cent.

Source: UNESCO (2007), Education for all Global Monitoring Report, pp. 308-309.

It is clear from the data and information in Box 4 that a gender gap still exists, although narrow, regarding gross and net enrolment rates in secondary education, and regarding the rates of transfer from primary to secondary education. This is reflected, as expected, in the gender index indicator. In general, the status of females in secondary education seems to be similar to their status in primary and basic compulsory education.

#### VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND WOMEN

The limitations that stand in the way of women's participation in education in general in Arab countries increase by at least one extra limitation when considering vocational education that aims at the preparation of skilled workers at the basic occupational levels. Such limitations, as already referred to, have quantitative and qualitative dimensions, and are of both a social and economic nature. In this respect, it can be asserted that even in countries that have realised full gender equality regarding enrolment rates in various educational stages, such "quantitative" equality conceals noticeable differences in enrolment rates in vocational education to the benefit of males.

Here again one can feel the unbalanced social views concerning gender issues and social practices that are biased against women. In general, the limitations concerning the enrolment of females in vocational education can be summarised as follows:

- Admission to vocational education takes place usually after completing basic compulsory education. In most cases this happens at the age of 15 or less, and lasts for two or three years. Females at such an age are usually considered by their families too young to join the formal labour market.
- In most cases, vocational education prepares individuals for jobs and professions that fit the traditional labour market in its narrow sense that is biased towards male

interests. The training programmes of such education rarely deal with the needs of home industries or self-employment or micro and small businesses that can be attractive to females.

• Vocational education necessitates, in many cases, direct contact with enterprises for on-the-job training, which can be of a complementary nature or basic requirement as in apprenticeship schemes. Typical Arab families are too conservative to have their daughters involved in such schemes at an early age.

In this respect, it is worth mentioning that vocational education by its nature prepares individuals for employment. Consequently, such education comprises at least two human security components that are related to its economic and psychological dimensions. In the case of women, social limitations and family obstacles stand in the way of utilising the potential of vocational training.

#### HIGHER EDUCATION

Available data and information show that the status of females as opposed to males in higher education is better than in secondary and primary education, despite great variations among Arab countries as is the case in other stages of education. Box 5 shows a summary of higher education indicators.

#### Box 5: Higher education indicators in Arab countries, 2005

The proportion of females in higher education varied between 25 per cent and 68 per cent.

Gross enrolment rates in higher education varied as follows (per cent):

Males: 3-54 Females: 2-59 Total: 2-56

Gender index indicator (female: male): 0.33-3.45

The proportion of females in the various fields of specialization varied as follows (per cent):

Education: 17-89, and the ratio was more than 50 per cent in the majority of Arab countries.

Human sciences: 24-87, and the ratio was more than 50 per cent in the majority of Arab countries.

Social sciences, administration and law: 26-69, and the ratio was more than 50 per cent in almost half the Arab countries.

Natural sciences: 8-75, and the ratio was more than 50 per cent in almost half the Arab countries.

Engineering, industry and construction: 15-50

Agriculture: 0-54

Medical sciences and healthcare: 41-100, and the ratio was more than 50 per cent in

the majority of Arab countries.

Services: 15-71

Source: UNESCO (2007), Education for All Global Monitoring Report, pp. 324-325.

The source referenced in Box 5 reveals that the enrolment ratio of females in higher education exceeds that of males in more than two thirds of Arab countries. This is reflected by gender index indicators to the benefit of females. On the other hand, the data and information in Box 5 indicate that female enrolment is particularly high in such fields as the humanities, arts, the medical sciences and healthcare. Furthermore, such enrolment is generally equivalent to that of males in the natural sciences and services, but considerably less in engineering, industry, construction and agriculture. Needless to say, as is the case in other educational stages, female enrolment in higher education varies considerably amongst Arab countries. In general, the participation rate of females in higher education exceeds corresponding rates in the other educational stages.

#### **AVERAGE YEARS OF SCHOOLING**

Table 1 shows the average number of years spent at school in formal education, including primary, secondary and higher education in Arab countries in 2005. The data shown in this table shows that the average years of schooling varies considerably amongst Arab countries, although the average exceeds 10 years in most countries. Furthermore, it seems that the gender gap regarding average years of schooling has vanished to a great extent in most Arab countries, and has been even reversed to the benefit of females in a number of countries. But as mentioned earlier, this encouraging development has not so far been accompanied by a similar development in the influence of women's education on the requirements of their human security, politically, economically, socially and psychologically, due to social limitations and family environments. This is in addition to the fact that the positive image reflected by the data in Table 1 conceals a less positive image regarding the approach to gender issues in the content of school curricula and textbooks.

**Table 1:** Average years of schooling in Arab countries, 2005

Country	Total	Males	Females
Algeria	13	13	13
Bahrain	14	14	15
Djibouti	4	5	4
Egypt	13		
Iraq	10	11	8
Jordan	13	13	13
Kuwait	13	12	13
Lebanon	14	14	15
Lybia	16	16	17
Mauritania	8	8	7
Morocco	10	11	9
Oman	11	11	11

Palestine	13	13	14
Qatar	13	13	14
Saudi Arabia	13	13	13
Sudan			
Syria			
Tunisia	14	14	14
United Arab Emirates	10	10	11
Yemen	9	11	7

Source: UNESCO (2007), Education for All Global Monitoring Report, p. 277.

#### PARTICIPATION IN TEACHING STAFF

Box 6 shows the degree of women participation in the teaching staff of various educational stages in 2005, which varied considerably amongst Arab countries.

**Box 6:** Women participation in the teaching staff of the various educational stages in Arab countries, 2005

The proportion of females in the teaching staff of preschool education varied between 47 per cent and 100 per cent. It exceeded 90 per cent in the majority of Arab countries. The proportion of females in the teaching staff of primary education varied between 27 per cent and 86 per cent. It exceeded 50 per cent in the majority of Arab countries. The proportion of females in the teaching staff of secondary education varied between 21 per cent and 77 per cent. It exceeded 50 per cent in more than half the Arab countries. The proportion of females in the teaching staff of higher education varied between 4 per cent and 41 per cent. It was less than 35 per cent in most Arab countries.

Source: UNESCO (2007), Education for All Global Monitoring Report, pp. 332-333, 340-341.

It is clear from the data and information in Box 6 that there are three patterns of the proportion of women in the teaching staff in Arab countries. The first is in preschool and primary education where coeducation prevails and where priority is given to the recruitment of females. The second pattern is where the proportion of females in the teaching staff is nearly equal to their proportion in education, which is the case in secondary education where a system of separation between female and male schools prevails. The third pattern is where the proportion of females in the teaching staff is much less than that in education, which is the case in higher education.

# WOMEN, EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Despite the prevailing judgement that concerns the weakness of the different fields of scientific research in Arab countries, what is of concern here are those weakness aspects that are relevant to women's education and human security.

In this respect, two scientific research dimensions are of relevance. The first concerns gender issues including women's status and image in education systems, as well as the analysis and assessment of the extent to which the quantitative, qualitative and system-related criteria referred to earlier are realised.

The second dimension deals with developments in women's education and the influence on their human security, politically, economically, socially and psychologically. It deals also with the relevant challenges and obstacles that stand in the way of the good performance of education systems, including:

• The relatively low "freedom ceiling" that is available for researchers when dealing with gender issues.

The resulting limitations are sometimes imposed directly or indirectly by official authorities, or they could be the result of social pressures that generate "self-censorship" or self-imposed limitations by researchers themselves. In both cases, many researchers avoid being exposed to official or societal accountability that can harm their interests and careers.

• Many scientific theories, initiatives and breakthroughs have external — usually Western — sources of funding. This is not restricted to the fields of the natural sciences, but is to be found in the humanities and social sciences as well. The relevance to Arab societies, socially and culturally, would thus be incomplete, to say the least.

As an example, one would rarely find references to Arab and Muslim philosophers and scientists in educational studies and research work, while such studies and research efforts would be full of references to Western scientists. Consequently scientific research in Arab countries is affected more by external influences and societal culture than by the influence of the cultural roots of researchers.

• The contribution of women themselves to scientific research efforts, in the social and educational fields, and in gender issues, is modest. Such research efforts thus loose a special flavour that concerns personal feelings and practices, in addition to the aforementioned challenges and obstacles that affect female researchers more than male researchers.

#### WOMEN, EDUCATION, GLOBALISATION AND MODERN TECHNOLOGIES

Globalisation is a phenomenon whose effects and extensions are evident in one way or another in almost all societies. Disregarding globalisation might lead to marginalisation and isolation. Therefore there is no alternative but to deal with the challenges it presents in a practical and logical manner, to maximise its benefits and minimise its shortcomings.

It can be taken for granted that good quality education at all levels and in all fields, whether through formal or non-formal systems, is a major tool in dealing with the challenges of globalisation, utilising its potential, and avoiding its pitfalls.

Technological developments as well as information and communication technologies (ICT) are considered important features that accompany globalisation and act both as driving forces as well as outputs. In this respect, the challenges that face education systems in developing countries, including Arab countries, seem clear enough due to the continuously widening scientific and technological gap between such countries and developed ones.

In particular, what is known as the "digital divide" is real and must be addressed. In addition, this gap can be found between Arab countries themselves, and between different social groups within the same country. What is of relevance here is the extant to which the status of Arab women affects or is affected by this gap. In this respect, many gender related aspects lead to the widening of this gap and consequently the human security gap. These aspects include:

- The low literacy rate among Arab women in general.
- The low participation rate of females in the various stages of education in many Arab countries.
- The need to develop the qualitative dimensions of education, especially in gender related issues.
- The need to enhance the system-related participation of women, as referred to earlier.
- The weakness of female human security in Arab societies.

Nevertheless, these discouraging aspects regarding the potential negative influences of globalisation and modern technologies on the status and human security of women would not conceal another side of the coin where potentially bright features exist if they are well utilised and made use of. These include:

- Growing consciousness about the need to build democratic societies and enhance respect for human rights.
- The influence of national, regional and international pressure groups.
- The growing participation of females in the various stages of education.
- The expansion that is taking place in the utilisation of ICT in education systems.

All this should help keep the door wide open for developing countries that are serious in their efforts to deal rationally with the digital divide and with the gender gap that concerns human security.

Open and distance education that utilises modern technologies is one of the fruits of trailblazing ICT developments. The influences of e-learning on the education and human security of women, and on gender issues in education in general, can be summarised as follows:

• E-learning — as one mode of distance learning — is characterised by the potential to avail educational services to a wider spectrum of societal groups than can be realised by traditional educational institutions. Such groups include housewives and women whose social circumstances and geographical locations stand in the

way of joining traditional educational institutions, for example, residents of remote areas and many groups of special needs.

- E-learning upgrades the capacity of learners for self-learning and entrepreneurship. It also enhances their contacts with a wide spectrum of sources of knowledge. This is expected to contribute to improvements of quality of education in general, and to those aspects that are related to gender in particular, and that need special attention as referred to earlier.
- E-learning supports both formal and non-formal education. This helps to open new horizons that are not restricted by time or place for continuous education and life-long learning if such learning is well utilised and made available to various societal groups. It is expected that the value added in this case would be greater for women than for men, because of time and place limitations had a greater impact on females.

# WOMEN, EDUCATION AND WORK

It has already been mentioned that developments that have been realised in the field of women's education were not reflected to a reasonable extent in their human security, whether at the economic, social, political or psychological levels. What is of concern in particular here is that aspect of economic security that deals with work and employment issues — especially that women's participation rate in the labour force in Arab countries does not exceed 20 per cent, and is even less than 10 per cent in a number of countries. This is despite the fact that, as in the case of educational legislation, labour laws provide for equal job opportunities for males and females, the basic right to work for all, equal wages for similar jobs, etc. Nevertheless, the situation in the case of employment is different from that of education, as the legal provisions for equality are applied to a lesser extent in the labour field, especially in the private sector, than they are in the field of education.

On the other hand, labour laws usually prohibit the employment of women in some kinds of work, such as dangerous and strenuous jobs, or those jobs that entail a health risk for pregnant women or that require working underground. Other limitations on women's employment include special provisions for night work and for the number of daily working hours. All this influences the fields of education that attract females after the basic education stage.

A relevant issue here is poverty that could be due to low income as well as to unemployment. In both cases, females are affected by poverty before and more than males. Most of the efforts undertaken to alleviate poverty are of the curative type, through such measures as direct financial help, the provision of loans to establish productive projects, and the provision of training services in employable skills. Preventive-type efforts for the alleviation of poverty, such as intelligent tax structures, legislative tools and fighting corruption are not as effective as needed. Education can play a role in efforts to alleviate poverty by promoting its relevance to developmental needs and labour market requirements, and by expanding its non-formal and adult education services that enhance the employability of the poor and empower them locally and regionally.

Some potentially positive indicators within two main dimensions are emerging. The first concerns the gradual influence of developments in women's education on their human security in the labour market and their contribution to national economies, especially with the support of other forces of change that undertake pressures in the same direction. The second dimension deals with the consequences of the forces of globalisation and the accompanying ICT's that are expected to lead to new modes of labour that would affect women's work and open new horizons for their employment, especially if proper preparations in the fields of education and human resource development are undertaken.

In this respect, new developments in the modes of work and employment comprise two major types:

- Some modes of work that are common now will become more common due to economic and social developments. These include part-time work, outsourcing of services, and sub-contracting that are affected less by work rigidities and limitations.
- New modes of work ushered in by the forces of globalisation and ICT's, including "distance" or "virtual work", will become more established.

It is clear that developments in modes of work are potentially of special benefit to women in general, and especially to those who cannot work full time away from home, such as housewives, residents of remote areas away from centres of economic activity, women whose social or health conditions reduce their mobility, and groups with special needs. Developments in modes of work thus help women to undertake the responsibilities of work, on the one hand, and other responsibilities and social requirements on the other. Nevertheless the ability to utilise these new work modes and opportunities, supported by the forces of globalisation, requires similar developments in the services and skills to be provided by the educational system, and that include:

- Proper academic and pedagogic qualifications.
- Efficient utilisation of ICT.
- Adequate linguistic abilities, including learning a foreign language.
- Life-long education services to keep up with scientific and technological developments.
- S f-learning.
- Good planning abilities to combine the requirements of new non-traditional modes of work and other living requirements.

In addition to all this, the required change due to the development of women's education necessitates adequate leadership that should be shared by men and women, taking into consideration that women's presence in leadership positions in Arab societies is still limited, whether within the legislative, the executive or the judicial authorities, or even within the fourth "information authority". Such a situation affects negatively the social culture, and is at the same time one of its products.

To avail equal educational opportunities for women as for men in the different stages of education is a necessary but not sufficient requirement to influence their human security. Therefore, efforts need to be exerted in different fields to utilise the knowledge capital and knowledge wealth that accumulated due to the enhancement of women's educational level, and to maximise the resulting outcomes for society at large. The challenges are many and there is a long way to go, yet it is hoped that the glass is at least half full.

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# **Chapter Five**

Globalisation and Women's Status in the Arab World:

**Blessing or Curse?** 

Fatima Al-Shamsi and Hassan Y. Aly

# GLOBALISATION AND WOMEN'S STATUS IN THE ARAB WORLD: BLESSING OR CURSE?

While globalisation is a complex term and can be defined from political, cultural and geographical dimensions, the agreed upon economic definition is the one to be used in this study. Namely, globalisation is the process in which the mobility of capital, organisations, ideas, discourses and peoples has taken on an increasingly global or transnational form. As such, waves of globalisation can be identified throughout history (e.g., the well documented 1870-1914 period), however, it is believed that international trade, capital movement, and technological advances and transfers since the 1970s are more intensive and extensive than any earlier periods (Moghadam, 1999).

Globalisation has been hailed as an engine of growth by some economists (most notably Bhagwati, 2004) who credit globalisation for stimulating economic development through an increase in exports. This increase reduced the isolation of many developing countries and facilitated their access to new technologies and information. Also, global capital market mobility assisted in the flow of international finances to developing countries and has assisted in accelerating growth and generating higher standards of living for millions of people. On the other hand, some economists (most notably Stiglitz, 2002) argue that free trade, as prescribed by the so-called Washington Consensus, produces high levels of unemployment in affected sectors. While agricultural products of developed countries (DCs) were protected and sometimes subsidised, LDCs were asked to open their markets at the expense of employment in a duplicitous move by DCs.

In terms of the effects of globalisation on women, the same controversy exists. Opponents of globalisation accuse new free zones and multinational corporations (MNCs) of gender discrimination and exploitation of women and young girls. Pictures of women working in unsafe, unhealthy, and congested sweatshops are becoming synonymous with the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) to LDCs. Also, deepening poverty among women and the spread of prostitution are frequently cited as by-products of globalisation. On the other hand, proponents of globalisation, explain that worldwide competition makes discrimination too expensive to sustain. Bhagwati (2004) cites studies on controversial export-processing zones that find conditions for women are typically much better inside the zones than outside. He further argues that the relevant comparison for studying the impact of globalisation is local conditions in the absence of global market influences rather than DCs standards.

It is, however, agreed upon among economists that women's empowerment is conducive to development, and promoting decent work is the only sustainable way out of poverty. Access to labour markets and to decent employment is crucial in the process towards improving equality between men and women (ILO, 2008: 1). The empirical evidence suggests that LDCs

with less gender inequality tend to have lower poverty rates. Gender equality represents an untapped source for stimulating economic growth and promoting social development. This is particularly true in LDCs, where women are systematically deprived of equal access to social services, protection, and physical and social capital. In LDCs, women are often confined to work in less productive sectors and in types of employment that carry higher economic risk and a lesser likelihood of meeting the characteristics that define decent work. As a result, women often earn less than men. Hence, empowering women by improving their living conditions and enabling them to participate actively in the social and economic life of a country may well be the key for long-term sustainable development (IPC, 2008).

The Middle East in general, and Arab countries in particular, is no exception as the impact of globalisation on women's status and advancement in society is inconclusive. The region ranks among the lowest in the world in terms of FLFP; however, the unemployment picture for women seems to have improved over the 10 years 1993-2003 (see Figure 1). Other regions of the world saw little or no change in female unemployment rates over the same period. In 2007, female labour rate participation in the Middle East reached 33.3 per cent. But the number of unemployed women stood at 15.6 per cent in comparison to 2.7 per cent in East Asia and 6.7 per cent in the developed countries for the same year. According to an ILO report, "in the Middle East the situation for women is difficult." For comparison, while there are 61 million women who are of working age and 67 million men, only 17 million women have jobs compared to 47 million men (ILO, 2006: 11).

Attracting more women into the labour force requires, as a first step, equal access to education and equal opportunity in gaining the skills necessary to compete in the labour market. While data shows that more women are gaining access to education in Arab countries, equality in education is still far from a reality in some (ILO, 2008: 3). A key prerequisite to improve women's participation in labour market in the Middle East "will depend not only on their motivation, but also on the ability of society to accept new economic roles for women and remove existing barriers to economic integration" (ILO, 2006: 3).

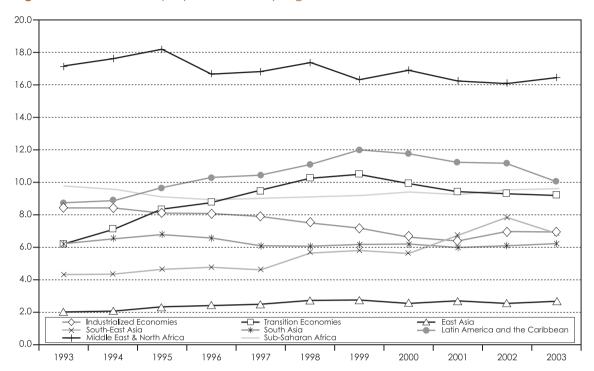


Figure 1: Female unemployment rates by region, 1993-2003

Source: GET Model, 2003; see also GET, 2004, technical note.

Our research objectives are two-fold; first, a descriptive analysis of the current status of Arab women in relation to men in the areas of literacy, formal education, economic participation, and achieving the MDG (Millennium Development Goals) with respect to gender equality will be provided. Second, and subject to the limitations of data availability in the Arab world, the research intends to examine, empirically, the impact of Globalisation on women's status in the Arab region. A pooled time series-cross section of available data for the Arab countries will be used to answer the question: Did women's labor force participation improve as a result of integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, direct foreign investment, short-term capital flows, international flows of workers, and flows of technology? The paper will be divided into five sections. Section I is the introduction and Section II will contain a brief review of the literature on gender inequality in LDCs. Section III will detail the current status of Arab women in terms of literacy, formal education, and labor force participation. The levels and trends of these variables in the Arab states in comparison to other regions will be explained as well as comparing individual Arab states to each other. In section IV, the empirical methodology will be delineated and the functional form used to estimate the impact of Globalisation on the Arab women labor force participation will be presented. Also, detailing the data sources, variables used, as well as presenting and explaining the empirical results will be included in that section. Finally, in section V, the paper will conclude by highlighting policy implications in terms of addressing obstacles, and suggesting strategies for promoting effective gender equality and empowering women's status in the Arab world.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender inequality and discrimination against women in the workplace has been a hot topic tackled by many researchers in different parts of the world. However, a new wave of literature has focused on the importance of institutional policies, including constitutional reforms and legislative revisions, as effective tools to support and enhance women's access to job opportunities and economic security.

Achieving gender equality is becoming ever more central to advancing the human development process. Gender equality is not only a legitimate policy goal, but also a desirable target from an efficiency perspective. The role of gender equality and women's empowerment in reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth has been investigated by many researchers and development specialists. Increases in opportunities for women lead to improvement in human development outcomes, poverty reduction and potentially accelerated rates of economic growth (World Bank, 2007). A number of empirical studies find that increases in women's education boosts their wages and improves human development outcomes such as child survival, health and schooling.\* Morrison and others (2007) present evidence on the impact of women's access to the market and decision making power within the household on poverty reduction and productivity at the individual and household level.

Institutional reforms have been proven to be effective means to promote gender equality, female empowerment, and achieving one of the most important MDGs. Gender biases embodied in institutions, and manifested in market outcomes and economic processes, remain underresearched and sometimes reinforced by macroeconomic policies and development strategies (Kabeer, 1995; Bakker, 1998; and Elson, 1991).

International institutions, like the World Bank, pay great attention to gender issues. In fact, the "Operational Policy on Gender Dimensions of Development" was introduced in 1995 and the relevance and results of this policy were evaluated and examined in 2005. In 2001, a study by the World Bank examined the conceptual and empirical links between gender, public policy and development outcomes and demonstrated the value of applying a gender perspective to the design of development policies. To promote gender equality, the report proposed a three-part strategy emphasising institutional reforms based on a foundation of equal rights for women and men; policies for sustained economic development; and active measures to redress persistent gender disparities.

It is important here to contrast the World Bank's approach with that of linking the economic and social dimensions of macroeconomic policy in feminist economics, focusing more on the social content of macroeconomic policy (Elson and Cagatay, 2000). The World Bank and the IMF's approach favours balanced budgets and removing budget deficits, regardless of the implications on social spending, whereas the feminist economics approach gives more attention to distributive outcomes and social justice than balanced budget policies may produce. Feminist economics accuses the World Bank and the Fund's approach of having a "male breadwinner bias" that does not take into account the reproductive responsibilities of women in terms of childbearing, childrearing, domestic work and caring for the sick and the elderly (Duran, 2002). Also, the same critique is extended to literature on women's employment in the export sector in the current globalised economy (Pearson, 2004)

<sup>\*</sup> See, for example, (World Bank, 2001), (Schultz, 2002), (Thomas and Strauss, 1991), (Klasen, 1993).

International experience has proven that support for a stronger role for women in society contributes to economic growth, thus the World Bank (2003) approached the gender inequality issue for Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries in terms of economic necessity. The study analysed the potential for women's greater economic contribution to the region's development and identified the costs of low-level female participation in the labour force. It also discussed the economic and social constraints on women's entry into — and attachment to — the labour force and presented a framework for developing an agenda for change. The study argued that gender equality in terms of access to opportunity and security is intimately tied to good governance. It suggested that a new agenda for change with respect to gender should to be integrated into a new development model in order to ensure the region's economic efficiency and social equality.

One form of discrimination is the under-representation of women in certain professions. This is more apparent when society believes that certain types of jobs are to be reserved for men. According to Greenhaus et al (1990), under-representation can take two forms: access discrimination and treatment discrimination. Access discrimination tends to limit the number of women who enter — or remain in — the profession while treatment discrimination tends to limit the number of women who rise to managerial positions.

Many researchers in the past decade have tackled the relationship between work and family. A new wave of policies has concentrated on family behavioural patterns and work issues, but also involved the role of government in impacting labour force decisions through rules and regulations governing the relationship between employees and employers. Kristin Smith and Asmara Bach (1999) found out that women's labour force participation and issues of parental leave have been of utmost importance, not only to families, but also to policymakers and — most importantly — employers.

Hofferth (1996) showed that job flexibility in terms of the availability of part time work opportunities is a significant factor in determining whether a mother will return to work after childbirth. Hofferth also found that the availability of unpaid leave, a flexible spending account, permission to work at home and availability of childcare at the workplace are statistically significant predictors of whether a mother will return to work. Glass and Rily (1998) demonstrated that the amount of leave, the ability to avoid overtime hours, and having supervisors' and co-workers' support, are significant employer-based variables in job retention. Waldfogel (1997) illustrated that women who maintain employment continuity over childbirth were more likely to have higher pay at the age of 30 than women who left the labour force around childbirth. She also indicated that women who were covered by formal maternity leave policy and returned to their original employer had higher subsequent wages.

#### THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF ARAB WOMEN

Economic empowerment of women relates to their ability to participate in labour markets and to secure decent employment. Accordingly, education is a very important instrument in the process of securing such opportunity and in achieving both equity and equality. In other words, education affects employment opportunities and pay for both women and men. It is the tool that opens doors to employment and influences socioeconomic conditions like

health, marriage and fertility. For women to be able to contribute to economic growth and development, they need to acquire suitable education and advanced workplace skills that are required to make them more effective participants in labour markets.

Thus, the initial step towards increasing women's participation rate in economic activities is to reduce disparity between boys' and girls' educational access and attainment at all levels. According to the UN Millennium Declaration in 2000, there were a total of 113 million school age children not enrolled in primary education; about 60 per cent of them were girls. The situation in Arab countries is no exception. Disparity between boys and girls in their access to education is one of the major problems facing Arab countries. In 2002, ESCWA (the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia) reported that the illiterate population in the Arab region amounted to some 68 million and estimated a number of 11 million children who do not attend school (ESCWA, 2002: 2). How many of those are women? We will attempt to answer this question by reviewing the level, trend and progress of women's education in the Arab world, as well as the issue of gender disparity in the region.

#### i. Arab women literacy rates

Gender parity indices (GPIs) are measures of equality in educational attainment between men and women. GPIs for some Arab countries indicate disparity and inequality. Overall, Arab women are significantly less literate than Arab men. The GPI for adult literacy for the age of 15 and above for 2003 — except for Qatar and the UAE — is less than 1, which implies inequality. There is also inequality with regards to youth literacy rates for all Arab countries, with the exception of Palestine. On the other hand, access to primary education shows that GPIs for Arab countries ranged between 0.66-1.01. This indicates that there is equality in net enrolment in primary education for the year 2001/2002 only in four Arab countries — Bahrain, Jordan, Oman and Palestine. Net enrolment rate in secondary education for the same year shows that the number of Arab countries having equality increases to nine, adding Algeria, Kuwait, Qatar, Tunisia and the UAE to the previous list of four. Also, gross enrolment rate in tertiary education for 2001/2002 reveals that in six Arab states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Oman and Saudi Arabia) the GPI is greater than one, which implies inequality in favour of women. In Jordon and Libya, the GPI is equal to one, which implies equality for both genders. In the rest of the Arab states, GPIs imply inequality in favour of men at all levels (see Figure 2).

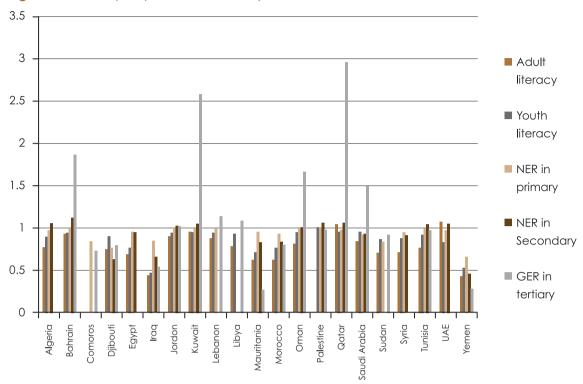


Figure 2: Gender parity indices for literacy and enrolment levels in select Arab countries, 2003

Note: GPIs are calculated as the ratio of women to men. A value less than 1 implies an inequality in favour of men; a value greater that 1 implies an inequality in favour of women, while a value of 1 exactly implies equality.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) databases and ESCWA Social Statistics datasets 2003.

According to ESCWA (2004), the adult literacy rate of Arab women was found to be significantly lower than that of men, at 51 per cent and 73 per cent respectively. Wider gender gaps in adult literacy were recorded in Yemen, where 30.1 per cent of women were found to be literate compared to 70.5 per cent of men. On the other hand, women tend to be marginally more literate than men in Qatar, with corresponding rates of 85 per cent and 81.4 per cent, and in the UAE, with 81.5 per cent compared to 76 per cent. The highest adult literacy rate of Arab women was observed in Jordan at 86.6 per cent, with the corresponding rate for men estimated at 95.8 per cent. By contrast, the lowest adult literacy rate of Arab women prevailed in Iraq, at 24.4 per cent, with a corresponding 55.9 per cent for men (see Figure 3).

120 100 80 60 ■ Female 40 ■ Male 20 0 Saudi Arabia FUNCIT Motocco Oman OCTO! Jordon ibyo 10mer 400,

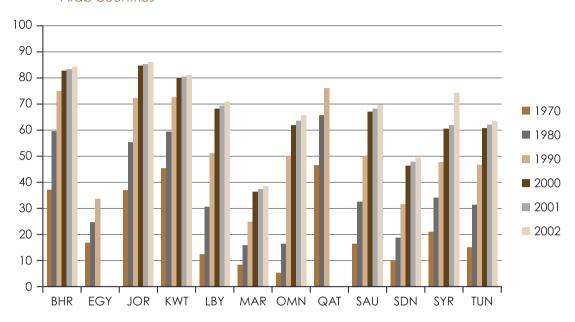
Figure 3: Adult literacy percentage rates of women and men in select Arab countries, 2003

Sources: WDI & ESCWA (2004) and CIA World Factbook, 2008.

The trend over time in women's literacy rates in the Arab world indicates progress in the past few years. According to available data, progress has been dramatic in almost all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, as well as Jordon, where literacy rates increased for Bahrain from below 40 per cent in 1970 to 85 per cent in 2002. In Oman, female literacy rates increased from less that 10 per cent in 1970 to 65 per cent in 2002. In Syria, women's literacy rates reached 75 per cent in 2002 from a rate of 20 per cent in 1970. Female literacy rates are still low in Morocco — below 40 per cent in 2002 (see Figure 4).

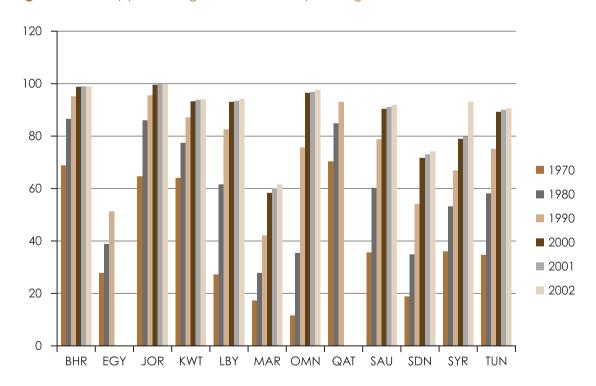
Literacy rates for Arab youth aged 15-24 years followed the same upward trend, increasing during the past three decades from 38 per cent in 1970 to 79 per cent in 2002. At a national level, youth literacy rates in 2002 ranged from 60 per cent or less in Morocco to 95 per cent or more in Bahrain, Jordan and Oman (see Figure 5). Figure 6 indicates a gender gap in youth literacy rates and illustrates disparity in most Arab countries, except Bahrain, Jordan and Oman. Disparity is more pronounced in Egypt and Morocco with female youth literacy rates around 60 per cent for both countries in 2003.

**Figure 4:** Literacy percentage rate for adult females aged 15 and above for select Arab countries



Source: WDI.

Figure 5: Literacy percentage rate in female youth aged 15-24 for select Arab countries



Source: World Bank WDI, 2007.

120 100 80 60 Female 40 Male 20 0 **EGY JOR** KWT LBY MAR OMN QAT SAU SDN SYR TUN

Figure 6: Literacy percentage rates of women and men aged 15-24 in select Arab countries, 2003

Source: World Bank, WDI 2007.

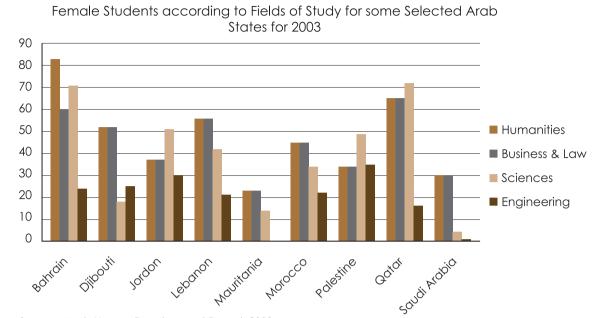
#### ii. Arab women's education and equal pay

During the past decade, it has become increasingly evident that simply attaining a particular level of education or literacy is not enough to produce secure employment opportunities. Globally speaking, skill-biased technological change is occurring. Education does make a difference in acquiring good paying jobs; however, the type of education (engineering versus literature for example) is becoming very important. Moreover, technological skills' differences between individuals are also having an unambiguous impact. These differences are observed by employers and rewarded in the market place.

For instance, consider two college graduates with liberal arts degrees. The one who has the skills to use a computer to collect, analyse, and synthesise data may have a distinct edge in the labour market over the other who lacks those skills. Similarly, a government clerk with a high school diploma who can use computers effectively will tend to be promoted and earn more than a co-worker who is a technophobe. While some data exists on the choice of education, it is very hard to find data on skill differences. Thus, we will focus on the types of education that are acquired in this case.

For Arab women it is noteworthy that they are more likely to study education, arts and humanities as opposed to engineering and other sciences. From Figure 7 it is clear that the majority of female university students are enrolled in the fields of education, the arts and humanities, and comparatively few women are studying engineering and other so-called hard sciences. This results in more disparities with regards to employment opportunities and earned income (see Table 1).

Figure 7: Female fields of study in select Arab countries



Sources: Arab Human Development Report, 2003.

**Table 1:** Estimate and ratio of female and male earned income for select Arab countries, 2005

Country	Female	Male	Ratio
Kuwait	12623	36403	0.35
Qatar	9211	37774	0.25
UAE	8329	33555	0.25
Bahrain	10496	29796	0.35
Libya	4054	13460	0.30
Oman	4516	23880	0.19
KSA	4031	25678	0.16
Lebanon	2701	8585	0.31
Tunisia	3748	12924	0.29
Jordan	2566	8270	0.31
Algeria	3546	10515	0.34
Syria			0.34
Egypt	1635	7024	0.23
Morocco	1846	7297	0.25
Mauritania	1422	2996	0.50
Sudan	832	3317	0.25
Djibouti	1422	2935	0.83
Yemen	424	1422	0.30

Sources: Human Development Report, 2007/2008.

Unequal pay is another source of gender inequality. There is no available gender disaggregated data on pay and income for all Arab states. However, the available data confirms such inequality. Table 1 and Figure 7 illustrate the gender income gap in some Arab countries. It is worth mentioning here that the income of women as a percentage of men varies between Arab states. This ratio is the lowest in Saudi Arabia, at 16 per cent, and in Oman, at 19 per cent. The ratio is the highest in Djibouti, at 83 per cent, and in Mauritania, at 50 per cent. In the rest of Arab states, such ratios ranged from 23 per cent to 35 per cent (see Figure 8). Thus, in addition to income discrimination, differences in education and the set of skills acquired might explain earned income disparities.

0.9 8.0 0.7 0.6 0.5 0.4 0.3 0.2 0.1 0 Mauritania Saudi Arabia Motocco JAE Bohroin Lebanon Turisio Jordon FOND ibyo Alderid LUNGIT Syild O<sup>dtot</sup>

Figure 8: Ratio of earned female to male income for select Arab countries, 2005

Sources: Human Development Report, 2007/2008.

#### iii. Arab women's labour force participation

Access to labour markets through employment is a very important aspect in achieving gender equality. Actually, it is considered to be the key transmission mechanism through which the benefits of growth can be distributed to poor and disadvantaged groups. Accordingly, the international community increasingly stresses the fact that promoting decent work is the only sustainable way out of poverty. In addition, a new target was recently introduced in the MDGs calling for "full and productive employment and decent work for all." Both the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action stress the importance of women's equal participation in the workplace. In Arab countries, a conference held in Amman expressed collective agreement on the importance of national governments' concrete action to ensure equality and equity for women in the labour force.\*

There also is growing recognition that decent work for women is a precondition for economic development, because "economies cannot afford to ignore an untapped resource such as that which could be offered by female labour." (ILO, 2008)

<sup>\*</sup> Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for Fourth Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995, "Peace for the Advancement of Arab Women," held in Amman, 6-10 November 1994

At a global level, data indicates that during the past 10 years education levels for women around the world have continuously improved and gender gaps for certain labour market indicators are decreasing in many countries. Therefore, the number of women in the labour force has increased by 18.4 per cent, approaching 1.2 billion women in 2007. Nevertheless, women still incurred a higher rate of unemployment compared to men. Specifically, the number of unemployed women grew from 70.2 to 81.6 million over the same period. The female unemployment rate stood at 6.4 per cent compared to the male rate of 5.7 per cent worldwide. In addition, women earn less than men because they are confined to work in less productive sectors and in status groups that carry higher economic risk and a lesser likelihood of meeting the characteristics that define decent work, including access to social protection, basic rights and a voice at work (ILO, 2008).

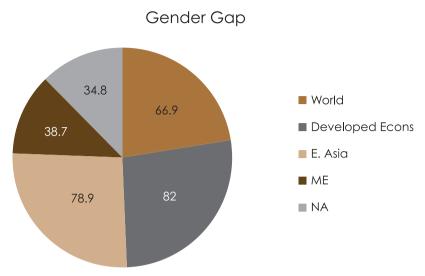
Even though evidence suggests that women's share of the total labour force in the Arab world increased in the past few years, there is still a greater disparity between female and male labour force participation in comparison with other regions of the world. Arab women are less visible economically and they encounter many difficulties and obstacles that reduce their potential despite an unequal share inside the household and other activities outside family life. It has been stated that, "women do not enjoy equality with men in work conditions, or in terms of opportunity for promotion to the top of the decision-making ladder in public and private enterprises." (UNDP-Regional Office for Arab States, 2006: 88)

An interesting observation in the Arab region is that higher levels of female education do not necessary translate into lower female unemployment. "Such low rates of female labour force participation mean that the region is forgoing much of the potential return on its investment in women's education." (World Bank, 2007: 6)

Even today, the situation for women is difficult and this can be seen from a comparison of population versus employment numbers for men and women. Available data indicates that in 2003, the total population in the Arab region was estimated at 307 million, of which approximately 50 per cent were women. Data for 2007 indicates that in Middle Eastern (ME) and North African (NA) countries, there are 128 million women who are of working age and 132 million men, but only 32 million (25 per cent) women have a job compared to 93 million men (70 per cent). Despite the considerable increase in female employment-to-population ratios, Arab countries remain the lowest in the world — 49 per cent of the world average. They accounted for 28 per cent for the ME countries and 21 per cent for NA countries in 2007. Arab male ratio ranged between 69-70 per cent for both regions. The situation is even worse for female youth since their population ratio is only 19.5 per cent for ME countries and 14.7 per cent for NA (see Figure 8, and Table 1).

In the Arab region there is indication of an increase in female labour force participation rates. Between 1997 and 2007, the rate increased by an impressive 7.7 per cent for ME countries. However, in comparison to the rest of the world, where women's participation ranged from 42-70 per cent, Arab women's participation rate constituted only 33.3 per cent for the Middle East group and 23.8 for North Africa in comparison to 53 per cent world wide and 67 per cent for East Asian countries (see Table 2). Overall, Arab women's participation rate is the lowest worldwide. It does not exceed 42 per cent of men compared to 83 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific and 73 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP-Regional Office for Arab States, 2006).

Figure 9: Number of economically active females per 100 economically active males



Sources: Table 1.

#### iv. Arab women's unemployment rates and sectoral employment

On average, the unemployment rate is higher for Arab women than men (16 per cent for women and 10 per cent for men in 2007). This higher unemployment rate can be attributed partially to higher turnover rates (entry and exit rates into and from the labour force). It is also clear from Table 3 that young women face even greater challenges in term of employment. When compared to adult unemployment, the youth unemployment rate is even higher in the Arab region compared to the rest of the world. Female youth have a 32 per cent unemployment rate in comparison to 21 per cent for males in 2007 (see Table 3).

The sectoral distribution of women's employment in Arab countries shows very little change over the past 10 years. Arab women's participation in non-agricultural industries is significantly lower than in other developing countries, and more than half of working women in the Arab world are working in the services sector. Contradicting global trends, Arab women's share in agriculture increased from about 28 per cent in 1997 to 32 per cent in 2007 for the ME countries and from 31-33 per cent for NA. This is a worrisome trend given that the chance to find a decent job is often much higher outside the agricultural sector.

There is also, as shown in Table 4, a decline in women's share in industry in both ME and NA countries during the past 10 years. On the other hand, there is a pronounced sectoral shift in male employment. Male employment in the agriculture sector decreased by over seven percentage points and stood at 12.5 per cent for the ME region and by four per cent for the NA region in 2007. Most men moved out of agriculture into jobs in the services sector and their share in services increased from 53.3-59.4 per cent for ME countries and from 43-45 per cent for NA countries.

With regards to the type of employment Arab women have, there has been a substantial increase in the share of women in wage and salaried work over the 10-year period, such that their share is now 55 per cent and 58 per cent respectively. This is almost equal to men's 65 and 60 per cent share in 2007. In 1997, the female share in wage and salaried work was 44 and 49.3 per cent compared to the male share of 59 and 57.1 per cent for the two regions. The recent share is higher — or at least as high — than the world average (46 per cent in comparison with 42 per cent at a global level). Such change is partly due to heavy investment in female education in recent years. However, there is evidence of gender bias in Arab countries when measured in terms of employment status.

The share of women in vulnerable employment is much higher than that of men. It is 43.2 and 38 per cent for women compared to 28.2 per cent for men in 2007 (see Table 5). Women are also more likely than men to be a contributing family worker (25.3 and 26 per cent in comparison with 5.2 and 12 per cent for men), and less likely to achieve wage and salaried work (55.3 per cent versus 65.2 per cent for men). However, in comparison to other regions, the share of vulnerable employment is comparatively low. One supporting factor is increased female employment in the public sector and the fact that "women who do manage to find work there can be considered relatively well off in terms of access to benefits and job security." (ILO, 2008: 11) Thus the result is a phenomenon in which a minority of women have attained decent employment while the majority — 66.7 per cent — remains economically inactive and outside the labour market.

#### v. Comparative position of women in different Arab countries

It is not easy to compare individual states in the Arab region since there is a lack of data for a good number of Arab countries. However, depending on the available data from the World Bank, the highest rate of female labour force participation among Arab states is in Morocco, where women account for 35 per cent of total labour force participation, followed by Tunisia at 33 per cent. Egyptian female participation accounted for 31 per cent in 2003, and both Lebanon and Sudan registered 30 per cent for the same year. Female employment in Jordan (26 per cent) and in Libya (25 per cent) were both below 30 per cent, even though the proportion increased by more than 50 per cent between 1990 and 2003 in Jordan (see Figure 10).

On the other hand, countries with higher GDP per capita have the lowest share of women in the workforce. Data from GCC countries indicates that female participation rates are as follows: 17 per cent in Qatar, and 23 per cent in Kuwait and Bahrain. The ratio is 20 per cent for both Oman and Saudi Arabia in 2003. GCC data is coloured since it includes migrant female workers. Outside of the GCC, women are concentrated in the services and agricultural industries.

The largest gap between women and men's economic activities occurs in the occupied Palestinian territories, where women's participation reaches no more than 14 per cent of that of men (UNDP-Regional Office for Arab States, 2006). The reason for such low rates in occupied Palestine is most likely due to the lack of employment opportunities for both male and females and the danger of taking jobs under occupation conditions.

40 35 **1960** 30 **1970** 25 **1980 1990** 20 **2000** 15 2001 10 **2002** 5 2003 0 JOR KWT LBY LBN MAR OMN QAT SAU SDN

Figure 10: Trends in women's labour force participation in select Arab countries

Source: World Bank (2005), World Development Indicators.

Unemployment as a percentage of the total female labour participation rate, according to the available data in Figure 11, is the highest in Morocco for the year 1995 (above 30 per cent), followed by Jordon in 1993. Syria comes next with around 25 per cent for the year 2002. Egypt female unemployment ranged between 11 per cent and 23 per cent during the period 1990-2002. The lowest female unemployment rate was registered in Kuwait at slightly above one per cent for 1995. Saudi Arabia's female unemployment reached nine per cent in 2001.

With regards to the sectoral distribution of jobs for women among Arab states, there is not enough data to enable clear comparison. However, according to Arab Human Development Report data that is only available for five Arab countries and highlights only three sectors, it is clear the majority of women in the UAE are working in the service sector that accounts for 86 per cent compared with 55 per cent of male employment. On the other hand, the majority of Yemeni women are employed in the agricultural sector at 88 per cent, and nine per cent in the service sector. In both Egypt and Morocco 54 per cent of female are employed in the service sector. However, in Morocco 40 per cent of females are employed in industry and only six per cent in agriculture, while in Egypt 39 per cent of women are in agriculture and only seven per cent in industry. In Palestine the majority of women are employed by the service sector (62 per cent), with 26 per cent in agriculture, and only 11 per cent in industry.

In comparison, Arab men sectoral employment is concentrated in the service sector; their employment share is high in industry and they have the lowest share in agricultural employment.

**Figure 11:** Trend of female unemployment rate as percentage of total female labour force participation for select Arab countries

Source: World Bank.

**EGY** 

**JOR** 

The share of women's wages in non-agriculture employment is still low for most Arab countries and shows a decreasing trend in many countries. The share has decreased in 2002 for most Arab countries (Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, UAE and Yemen). It has only increased for Bahrain, Oman, Palestine and Syria. Morocco attained the highest share for 2002, followed by Oman (see Figure 12).

MAR

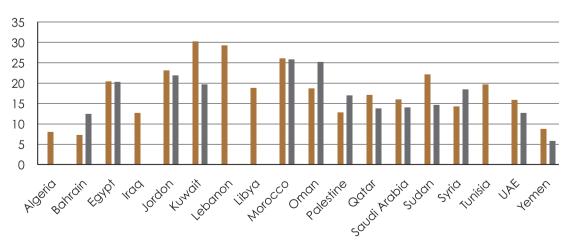
SAU

SYR

**Figure 12:** Trend of share of women's employment in non-agriculture sector for 1990 and 2002 in select Arab countries

**KWT** 

Women's wage employment in non-agriculture sector as % of total non-agriculture for 1990 and 2002



As for the status of Arab women in employment in individual countries, there is a great disparity in the nature of work for non-salaried workers. Most men working as non-salaried employees are either self-employed or are employed by others, while the greatest numbers of women in this category work as "family workers"; that is, they work in the informal sector, most of them in unpaid work. The available data suggests that the number of women under this category is 20 per cent in Egypt, 52 per cent in Morocco, and 33 per cent in the occupied Palestinian territories. In those same countries, the percentage for men in the same category is eight per cent, 22 per cent, and seven per cent respectively. This gap, which may seem at first glance to favour women, is actually a burden added to their daily responsibilities (UNDP-Regional Office for Arab States, 2006, p. 89).

Finally, Arab countries were compared (based on available data) on two of the most important gender-bias indicators. The two indicators are: the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). GDI measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the Human Development Index (HDI)\*, but takes into accounts inequality in achievement between women and men. The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower a country's GDI compared with its HDI. The GDI is simply the HDI discounted, or adjusted downwards, for gender inequality. On the other hand, GEM is a measure of inequalities between men and women's opportunities in a specific country. It combines inequalities in three areas: political participation and decision-making, economic participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources.

Applying GEM and GDI to the Arab states illustrates a wide gap and disparities among and within selected countries. Table 2 reports the GDI for some Arab states. It indicates that four of the GCC countries are among the highest GDIs in the group where values range from 0.884 to 0.855. The other two GCC countries follow in the rank along with Libya. GDI values for the rest of the Arab countries ranged between the lowest at 0.472 for Yemen and the highest at 0.760 for Jordan. Adult literacy rates are the lowest in Yemen, where only 35 per cent of female at the age of 15 and above are literate in comparison to 91 per cent in Kuwait. Female combined gross enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education in 2005 put Libya first with a rate of 97 per cent followed by Bahrain at 90 per cent. The lowest rate recorded was Djibouti at 22 per cent. The ratio of estimated earned income shows great disparity between men and women in all Arab countries (see Table 2).

<sup>\*</sup> The HDI is a summary composite index that measures a country's average achievements in three basic aspects of human development: longevity, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy at birth; knowledge is measured by a combination of the adult literacy rate and combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio; and standard of living is measured by GDP per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity.

Table 2: Gender related development index (GDI) for select Arab countries

Iuble .	<b>2.</b> Gender i	Cidico	deve	Ортпо	i ii ii ide	,	1 101 30	ieci Ai	<u>ub co</u>	01111103		
HDI	State	GDI		Life Adult expectancy literacy rate, years 2005 percentage, 15+ 95, 2005		Combined gross enrolments, percentage, 2005		Estimated earned income		HDI rank minus GDI		
		Rank	Value	F	М	F	M	F	M	F	M	
33	Kuwait	32	0.884	79.6	75.7	91	94.4	79	71	12623	36403	0
35	Qatar	37	0.883	75.8	74.6	88.6	89.1	85	71	9211	37774	-3
39	UAE	43	0.855	81	76.8	87.8	89	68	54	8329	33555	-5
41	Bahrain	42	0.857	77	73.9	83.6	88.6	90	82	10496	29796	-2
56	Libya	62	0.797	76.3	71.1	74.8	92.8	97	91	4954	13460	-9
58	Oman	67	0.788	76.7	73.6	73.5	86.9	67	67	4516	23880	-13
61	KSA	70	0.783	74.6	70.3	76.3	87.5	76	76	4031	25678	-13
86	Jordan	80	0.760	73.8	70.3	87	95.2	79	77	2566	8270	-2
88	Lebanon	81	0.759	73.7	69.4	93.6	93.6	86	83	2701	8585	-1
91	Tunisia	83	0.750	75.6	71.5	65.3	83.4	79	74	3748	12924	-1
104	Algeria	95	0.720	73.0	70.4	60.1	79.6	74	73	3546	10515	-2
106	Palestine			74.4	71.3	88	96.7	84	81			
108	Syria	96	0.710	75.5	71.8	73.6	87.8	63	67	1907	5684	0
112	Egypt			63	68.5	59.4	83			1635	7024	
126	Morocco	112	0.621	72.7	68.3	39.6	63.7	55	62	1846	7297	-1
134	Comoros	116	0.554	66.3	62	63.9	63.9	42	50	1337	2643	0
137	Mauritania	118	0.543	65	61.5	43.4	59.5	45	47	1489	2996	1
147	Sudan	131	0.502	58.9	56	51.8	71.1	35	39	832	3317	-3
149	Djibouti	129	0.507	55.2	52.6	79.9	79.9	22	29	1422	2935	1
153	Yemen	136	0.472	63.1	60	34.7	73.1	43	67	424	1422	-3

Looking at the GEM for Arab countries, available data suggests that the UAE comes first in the rank at 29 with the value of 0.652. Yemen occupied the last position and ranked 93 with value of 0.129 (see Table 3). Syria has the highest percentage of professional and technical women (40 per cent) and Saudi Arabia has the lowest percentage (six per cent). However, Saudi Arabia has the highest percentage of women as legislators and senior officials among Arab states.

Table 3: Gender empowerment measure (GEM) for select Arab countries

HDI	State	GEM		Female seat in parliament, percentage	Female legislators, senior officials, and	Female professionals and technician,	Ratio of estimated income
		Rank	Value	F	managers, percentage	percentage	
33	Kuwait			0			0.35
35	Qatar	84	0.374	0	8	24	0.24
39	UAE	29	0.652	22.5	8	25	0.25
41	Bahrain	**		13.8			0.35
56	Libya			3.3			0.30
58	Oman	80	0.391	7.8	9	33	0.19
61	KSA	92	0.254	0	31	6	0.16
86	Jordon			7.9			0.31
88	Lebanon			4.7			0.31
91	Tunisia			19.3			0.29
104	Algeria			6.2		32	0.34
106	Palestine				11	35	
108	Syria			12		40	0.34
112	Egypt	91	0.263	3.8	9	30	0.23
126	Morocco	88	0.325	6.4	12	35	0.25
134	Comoros			3.0			0.51
137	Mauritania			17.6			0.50
147	Sudan			16.4	••		0.25
149	Djibouti			10.8			0.48
153	Yemen	93	0.129	0.7	4	15	0.30

Source: Human Development Report, 2007/2008.

#### **EMPIRICAL STUDY**

To measure the impact of globalisation on Arab women, the relationship between globalisation, female labour force participation, GDP growth, and GDP per capita was modelled. It is important to mention here that from the theoretical standpoint the relationship between globalisation and women's labour force participation could be positive or negative. This means that globalisation may increase women's labour force participation. That would be the case if linking national labour markets to international markets would lead to a higher volume of exports, higher demand for labour, and higher employment levels for women—especially if women constitute the dominant workforce in the export sector, like textiles, food processing and Asembly type industries.

For instance, some studies reveal that gender inequality in wages has stimulated growth in semi-industrialised economies. The examples of Thailand and India are often brought up. In these cases, the pressure for lower prices led to an increase in employment for women who have lower wages than men. This implies that export-led growth is actually achieved at the expense of women (Seguino, 2000). However, it is also plausible that globalisation or increasing trade has the opposite effect. Namely, increasing the demand for more educated or skilled workers and reducing the demand for unskilled labour. Women will not benefit in this case.

Conceptually, globalisation, whether measured by increasing trade or increasing FDI, could lead to an increase or decrease in women's labour force participation. That is why the question is an empirical one. This part of the study will try to ascertain how Arab women fare in this globalisation game. Has globalisation helped or hindered their participation in Arab labour markets?

A test of FLFP as a function of globalisation measured by three proxies was attempted. First, trade openness, the ratio of total import to GDP (GLOB1), capital openness, measured by the ratio of FDI to GDP (GLOB2), and stock market openness, as the percentage of stock market value owned by foreigners to total stock market valuation (GLOB3), in addition to GDP growth rate, and GDP per capita. The control variables in the model are lagged globalisation variables and GDP growth rates. The econometric technique used allowed the data to determine the optimal number of lags. Thus, the full model tested the effects of globalisation on female labour force participation:

$$\begin{aligned} &\operatorname{Lon}\left(\operatorname{FLFP}\right) = \alpha + \beta_1 \ln \left(\operatorname{GDP} \operatorname{growth}\right) + \beta_2 \ln \left(\operatorname{GDP} \operatorname{per} \operatorname{capita}\right) + \\ &+ \beta_3 \ln \left(\operatorname{GLOB1}\right) + \beta_4 \ln \left(\operatorname{GLOB2}\right) + \beta_6 \ln \left(\operatorname{GLOB3}\right) + \beta_7 \ln \left(\operatorname{GLOB1}\right)_{.1} + \beta_8 \ln \left(\operatorname{GDP} \operatorname{growth}\right)_{.1} + \epsilon \left(1\right) \end{aligned}$$

The model was estimated to individual Arab countries — as much as available data permitted — then time series and cross section data was pooled together in a panel data format to get a feeling of the impact of globalisation on Arab women in general.

The model should help answering the main questions of the study, and should provide some policy implications with regards to reducing the gender gap and improving female labour force participation in Arab countries.

The estimation of the reduced form model above was implanted using the OLS method and provided an estimate of the elasticity of FLFP with respect to each of the independent variables. In the second stage, the model was estimated using Logit\* functional form to provide the conditional probabilities of joining the labour force given the average values of the independent variables.

It is worth mentioning here that a female education variable was dropped from the estimation due to lack of data for most Arab countries. Efforts to collect more data on that particular variable were exerted and are still underway in order to include them in a revised version of this paper. The other variable that also was dropped for lack of data is stock market openness (the percentage of stock market value owned by foreigners to total stock market valuation, or GLOB3).

The following tables present the results of the estimation of the model above for seven Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco, Kuwait and Algeria). These are the countries where data were reasonably available for most of the required variables. The countries represent all labour markets and all regions of the Arab world. Resource rich, labour scarce GCC countries are represented by Kuwait. Resource poor, labour abundant countries are represented by Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Resource poor, small labour market countries are represented by Jordan and Lebanon.

#### **Egypt**

Predictors	Coefficients	t	P-value	F	P-value	R-square
(Constant)	1.862	10.64	0.000			
GDP growth	0.004	2.40	0.023			90.1 percent
ln(GDP per capita)	0.227	12.21	0.000	63.5	< 0.005	
ln(GLOB2)	-0.012	-3.51	0.002			
ln(GLOB1) <sub>.1</sub>	-0.043	-1.96	0.060			

(n = 33)

<sup>\*</sup> A cumulative probabilistic statistical functional form usually used to estimate the chances of a certain event occurring (women entering the labor market in our case) if specific conditions (characteristics) exist.

# Jordan

Predictors	Coefficients	t	P-value	${f F}$	P-value	R-square
(Constant)	11.91	4.77	0.005			50.1 percent
ln(GDP per capita)	-0.67	-2.45	0.022	7.71	0.001	
ln(GLOB1)	-0.92	-4.27	0.005	7.71	0.001	
ln(GLOB2)	0.07	2.18	0.040			

(n = 27)

# Tunisia

Predictors	Coefficients	t	P-value	F	P-value	R-square
(Constant)	1.156	19.42	0.005			
GDP Growth	-0.002	-3.23	0.003			
ln(GDP per capita)	0.264	21.39	0.005	692.5	< 0.005	99 per cent
ln(GLOB1)	0.056	2.97	0.006			
ln(GLOB1) <sub>.1</sub>	0.024	1.81	0.080			

(n = 34)

# Lebanon

Predictors	Coefficients	t	P-value	${f F}$	P-value	R-square
(Constant)	3.156	14.04	0.005			
ln(GDP per capita)	0.067	2.84	0.016	135.1	< 0.005	96.1 percent
ln(GLOB1) <sub>-1</sub>	-0.087	-8.54	0.005			

(n = 14)

# Morocco

Predictors	Coefficients	t	P-value	F	P-value	R-square
(Constant)	2.443	49.12	0.005			96 percent
GDP growth	-0.001	-5.99	0.005	202.0	< 0.005	
(GDP growth)	-0.001	-2.86	0.008	202.6		
ln(GDP per capita)	0.157	22.16	0.005			

(n = 29)

#### **Kuwait**

Predictor	s Coefficients	t	P-value	F	P-value	R-square
(Constant	9.021	6.63	0.005			
ln(GDP pe	r -0.632	-4.55	0.005	15.5	< 0.005	60.8 percent
ln(GLOB2	0.097	2.57	0.018			

(n = 23)

# **Algeria**

Predictors	Coefficients	t	P-value	F	P-value	R-square
(Constant)	5.134	13.67	0.005			
GDP growth	0.019	3.20	0.006		< 0.005	86.3 percent
ln(GLOB1)	-0.400	-2.98	0.009	25.2		
ln(GLOB2)	0.035	7.03	0.005			
ln(GLOB1) <sub>-1</sub>	-0.204	-1.86	0.081			

(n = 21)

Only the statistically significant coefficient estimates are reported above. The results are mixed and differ by country. Overall, the model shows statistical significance and ability to explain variation in the dependent variable (FLFP) for all countries. However, the best fits for the model are Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco and Algeria, and the worst fits are Jordan and Kuwait.

It is interesting to contrast the impact of the GDP growth on FLFP with the changes in GDP per capita. The impact of GDP growth is positive for Egypt and Algeria. The sign is negative, however, for Tunisia and Morocco and the coefficient is not statistically significant for the rest of the country. While the positive impact warrants little explanation, since higher rates of growth indicate availability of job openings and rising wages that will induce higher rates of labour force participation, the negative impact may need more explanation. As incomes increase with growth, there is less pressure for women to contribute to family incomes. Thus, female labour force participation rates may lag behind.\* However, FLFP rates can recover when the proportional contribution of additional income to family welfare declines, as GDP per capita increases.

Thus, female labour force participation can increase due to rising wages that produce a higher opportunity cost for time spent at home.\*\* This encourages women to participate in the labour force. Alternatively, higher income may weaken female labour force participation, as explained above. Consequently, and since both effects are conceptually plausible, the answer is in the empirical results. The results above describe positive per capita income effects in Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Morocco. Only in Jordan and Kuwait, is the per capita income coefficient negative.

The two variables reflecting globalisation and of main interest to this research project are trade openness, the ratio of total import to GDP (GLOB1), and capital openness, measured by the ratio of FDI to GDP (GLOB2). Again, the theory explains that the impact could go in either direction (increase or decrease the FLFP as explained earlier). The empirical results, however, show that trade openness (GLOB1) produces a positive impact on FLFP in Tunisia only, and the impact is negative in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Algeria (for the current and the lagged variable). In the rest of the countries, the coefficients are not statistically significant. As for the second globalisation variable (GLOB2), the impact is positive in Jordan, Kuwait and Algeria and negative in Egypt only. For the rest of the countries, statistical insignificance prevails.

In order to explain these results we should know that trade policies may affect each gender differently due to inequalities in accessing and controlling economic resources. Also, the impact of trade may differ based on differences between the genders in the decision-making process. Men and women play different roles within society. They are usually employed in different sectors that differ in their openness and trade volume. Even when they are in the same sector, they carry out different responsibilities and duties. This usually leads to "compartmentalised" activities that yield different rewards and different costs and benefits. Thus, trade liberalisation may lead to an increase in employment opportunities for women — particularly in export-oriented sectors such as textiles (it seems like this is the case in Tunisia). However, trade liberalisation may also lead to unemployment and the restructuring of labour markets — a situation that tends to affect poor and marginalised groups of women more than men. This could explain the situation in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Algeria.

For the second globalisation variable, Egypt still has a negative sign where Jordan, Kuwait and Algeria enjoy a positive impact of FDI. The picture in Egypt may be further explained by the need to expand the numbers of informal sector workers, of which a high percentage

<sup>\*</sup> This is known as the "income effect" in economics.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Economists call this a "substitution effect".

are women, in order to respond to changes in the import and export sector. Thus, it is clear that while Egypt has seen a negative impact on FLFP due to globalisation, measured by both ratio of import to GDP and the ratio of FDI to GDP, the impact on the majority of other Arab countries is relatively positive, or negligible.

In order to test the impact of globalisation on the FLFP in the region as a whole, cross section and time series data for the seven countries were pooled to estimate the same reduced from the model above.\*

The results of the pooled regression produced below confirm the general conclusion outlined when explaining the results of the individual countries above. GDP growth and globalisation has a negative impact on the FLFP in the Arab region while GDP per capita has a positive effect. The results did not change when using the lagged variables, but both of the globalisation indicators turned out to be statistically insignificant. The explanation of the results in the individual country case is very much validated by the results of the pooled regression. Thus, attention must be given in future research to the specific country effect that may explain such interesting and rather intriguing results.

### Reduced Model Estimates (Pooled regression with fixed effects)

Predictors	Coefficients	t	P-value		P-value	Adj. R- square
(Constant)	2.93***	5.54	0.0000			
GDP growth	-0.0045**	-2.39	0.0186			
(GDP growth) <sub>-1</sub>	-0.0044**	-2.33	0.0216	98.97	0.0000	0.87 percent
ln(GLOB1)	-0.130**	-2.06	0.0414	90.91		
ln(GLOB2)	0.010 1.08 0.2819					
ln(GDP per capita)	0.122**	2.18	0.0314			

(n = 116), \*\*\* and \*\* indicates significance at 99 per cent and 95 per cent level of confidence

<sup>\*</sup> Since non-stationary time series yield spurious regressions (Phillips, 1986), and invalidate standard diagnostic tests (Stock and Watson 1989), we used Pesaran and Shin's method (2003) to test for the stationary variables and to ensure that our inferences regarding the stationary requirement are reasonably robust. The test indicated that all variables are stationary except for one variable (Glob1) that will be used lagged for one period.

Reduced Model Estimates with one lag (Pooled regression with fixed effects)

Predictors	Coefficients	t	P-value	${f F}$	P-value	Adj. R- square
(Constant)	2.93***	5.53	0.0000			
GDP growth	-0.0045**	-2.28	0.0242			
(GDP growth) <sub>.1</sub>	-0.0044**	-2.32	0.0222		0.0000	0.87%
ln(GLOB1)	-0.1272	-1.32	0.1874	87.14		
ln(GLOB1) <sub>.1</sub>	-0.0043	-0.05	0.9624			
ln(GLOB2)	0.0106	1.07	0.2868			
ln(GDP per capita)	0.122**	2.16	0.0328			

(n = 116), \*\*\* and \*\* indicates significance at 99 per cent and 95 per cent level of confidence

#### CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The analysis in this research has shown that significant advances have been made in the Arab region since 1990 in health and the education of women. However, the analysis also highlights the fact that Arab countries continue to suffer from gender bias and low status of women. This is reflected in high rates of illiteracy among women. Illiteracy, in particular, is described as a cancer since it eats up women's self esteem and personal fulfilment (Digby Swift, 2003). Illiteracy not only constitutes a cause for poverty, but also limits the individual's ability to get out of poverty. An illiterate person is far less likely to be able to improve his or her own dire situation. Thus, it is rather vital to eliminate this problem to achieve higher growth rates, development levels, and overall higher standards of living for concerned citizens. Serious efforts, through programmes, public service by college graduates, and a system of incentives and penalties aiming at eradicating women's illiteracy, is probably the most important step an Arab government may take to deal with the issue of women's poverty and gender bias.

The gender gap in education in the Arab region is decreasing significantly; however, the disparity between the male and female unemployment rate is considerable. Many factors are responsible for this disparity. The most important of which is the prevalence of a traditionalist approach that favours men as better "fits" for certain jobs and as the primary breadwinners. Also important is reluctance in recruiting females due to added costs such as maternity leave. In more affluent Arab states, like GCC countries, economic downturn has increased women's participation in the workforce due to the need for two incomes to support the household. It is promising, however, that available data signifies that in some Arab countries women are becoming well educated and their enrolment rate in tertiary education is higher than that of men.

In addition to the traditional policy implications that centre on the government spending more on educating females and paying the same wages and salaries for the same kind of work regardless of gender, the eradication of gender disparities in education and earned-income in the Arab world requires the collective efforts of society as a whole. Private sector companies should do their part by offering the same pay, allowing more flexible work schedules, offering opportunities for promotion and advancement, allowing inexperienced young females to benefit from training sessions or structured on-the-job instruction, and making sure that financial incentives are given equally to both genders to take on more demanding jobs.

Females in Arab countries, especially the youth, also should get involved in more untraditional sectors, and take on education and training in fields that are highly skilled, sophisticated and demanding. They should not be apprehensive about building their own entrepreneurial abilities and starting their own projects. Above all, women should not shy away from the kind of work that was previously reserved for men and they should impose their skills and education on the labour market and not let the market impose marginal and secondary positions on them. Thus, educational, cultural and social programmes aimed at young and teenage girls, in addition to media support in publicising and reinforcing these new sets of values in young girls, are necessary to move forward.

While it was challenging to compare individual states in the Arab region due to lack of data for a good number of Arab countries, it is important to note for effective understanding of gender issues and perspectives, sex-disaggregated data is very important. It is also crucial to monitor regularly and measure progress and development. Availability of data is vital not only to understand the problem and measure its impact, but also to assist in allocating resources towards achieving equality. Reporting weaknesses and problems, measuring the consequences of problems, understanding the cultural situation surrounding the causes of the problem, and finally implementing plans and recommendations in order to eliminate problems, all need reliable data.

The lack of data availability is not merely a serious issue; it is a scandal when such a dearth of statistical data in some Arab countries is the major reason for not allowing the basic issues of gender inequality to be addressed, or the progress — or lack thereof — towards equality to be monitored.\*

The analysis in this research indicates that in the Arab world, women's participation in economic activities is still far below the world average, which makes these women economically dependent on men. The priority in the region should be to focus on integrating more women into the labour force and improving their chances of attaining decent jobs. Well-educated, economically active women have to be given a fair chance to contribute to the developmental process in the region. Increasing women's participation will depend not only on their motivation, but also on the ability of society to accept new economic roles for women and remove existing barriers to economic integration (ILO, 2008).

Two significant factors may be cited as responsible for the low level of female participation in the Arab world as well as the gender inequality in pay that this research documented. The first factor is family related, and the second is related to limited employment prospects due

<sup>\*</sup> For a useful study on the lack of data pertaining to gender issues in Arab countries, see ESCWA, 2007.

to lack of education or training needed for specific jobs. In the Arab world, it has been argued that the marginalisation of women in the labour market may be attributed to traditional stereotyping. We have seen from the data provided in this research the high women's share in vulnerable employment, the low share of non-agricultural wage employment, and over-representation of women in lower-paid and non-decision-making positions, combined with inflexible working hours for nursing mothers and the restriction on or lack of paid maternity leave that hinders women's economic participation and career development. This must be dealt with both in the public as well as the private sector.

The interesting and intriguing results that empirical research reveals have to do with globalisation and its impact on FLFP in the Arab world. It seems that globalisation factors (mainly increasing trade and FDI) may account for rising inequality and gender disparities in the Arab world. If we take a very cautious approach in interpreting the results of the study, we may say that the impact of globalisation on gender disparities in the Arab world has been rather neutral or ambiguous. The negative impact of globalisation may be explained plausibly, however, as follows: increasing globalisation of labour markets in the Arab world might effect inequality through trade, which has raised substantially both imports and exports as a share of GDP in most of these countries. Since Arab countries tend to export goods that are resource intensive (oil and primary products) and to import goods that are labour intensive, increased trade has, on balance, reduced the demand for less-skilled and labour intensive products. Demand for skilled and more technologically-adapt workers has increased. Since women are concentrated in low skilled and technologically disadvantaged industries, they are the first to feel the impact of globalisation.

Also, in more traditional Arab societies where women are employed in the marginal and informal sector, they are in effect used as buffers to hedge against rising unemployment rates for men. When the demand for labour in the more modern sector declines, and men have to move to the marginal and informal sector, this comes mostly at the expense of employed women or women who are looking for jobs in this sector.

To sum up, globalisation coupled with advances in technology, especially communications technology, could explain many gender employment and income disparities. At the upper end, it has boosted demand for those who have the skills to manage and deal with globally changing conditions. In contrast, it did not increase the demand but rather depressed wages for jobs that lie at the low end of the wage scale (held by women mainly).

In order to deal with issue of gender disparities in the Arab world it is important to consider all the factors mentioned here in addition to changes in technology and growing globalisation.

# **Annexes**

Table 1: Male and female employment to population ratios, total and youth

	Male youth		Female	Female youth		Male total		e total
	2007	1997	2007	1997	2007	1997	2007	1997
World	55.1	58.3	40.1	42.5	74.3	75.7	49.1	49.5
Developed Economies	45.6	48	42.8	42.1	64	65.9	49.1	47.2
East Asia	61.6	66.8	64.5	69.8	78.4	80.9	65.2	68.7
Middle East	44.3	42.3	19.5	15.3	70.3	68.7	28.1	20.8
North Africa	39.8	42.1	14.7	15.4	69.1	67.8	21.9	19.9

Source: International Labour Organisation (2008), Global Employment Trends for Women (Geneva: March, 2008).

Table 2: Male and female labour force participation rates (LFPR) and the gender gap in economically active females per 100 males

	$egin{array}{c}  ext{Female LFPR} \  ext{percentage} \end{array}$		Male I perce		Gender gap*	
	1997	2007	1997	2007	2007	
World	52.9	52.5	80.4	78.8	66.9	
Developed Economies	51.3	52.7	70.8	68.2	82.0	
East Asia	70.9	67.1	84.5	81.4	78.9	
Middle East	25.6	33.3	77.5	78.3	38.7	
North Africa	23.8	26.1	75.5	75.9	34.8	

<sup>\*</sup> Number of economically active females per 100 economically active males

Source: International Labour Organisation (2008), Global Employment Trends for Women, (Geneva: March, 2008).

Table 3: Male and female unemployment rate, total and youth, 1997 and 2007

	Male	youth	Female	youth	Male total		Female total	
	2007	1997	2007	1997	2007	1997	2007	1997
World	12.2	12	12.5	12.3	5.7	5.8	6.4	6.5
Developed Economies	13.8	14.4	12.5	15	6.2	6.9	6.7	8.1
East Asia	7.9	8.7	5.8	6.3	3.8	4.2	2.7	3.1
Middle East	21.1	23.3	29.5	33.5	10.3	11.5	15.6	18.6
North Africa	21.2	22.2	32.3	30.3	9.0	10.1	16.2	16.5

Source: International Labour Organisation (2008), Global Employment Trends for Women, (Geneva: March, 2008).

Table 4: Male and female employment by sectors (as share of total employment)

	Services				${\bf Industry}$				Agriculture			
	2007		1997		2007		1997		2007		1997	
	М	F	М	F	М	F	М	F	М	F	М	F
World	40.4	46.3	36.1	34.6	25.6	17.6	24	16.8	34	36.1	40	43.5
Developed Economies	61.1	84.3	56.1	78.1	34.3	12.5	37.1	16.7	4.6	3.2	6.7	5.3
East Asia	35.7	33.5	29.8	25.3	28	25.5	25.6	22.8	36.3	41	44.6	51.9
Middle East	59.4	50.2	53.3	51.6	28	18.8	27.1	20	12.5	31	19.6	28.4
North Africa	44.8	52.2	43.3	49.7	22.3	15.2	20.1	19.1	32.9	32.6	36.6	31.2

Source: International Labour Organisation (2008), Global Employment Trends for Women, (Geneva: March, 2008).

**Table 5:** Male and female status in employment (as share of total employment)

	Vulnerable Employment			Contributing Family Workers		Own Account Workers		Employers			rs	Waged and Salaried Workers								
	20	07	19	97	20	2007 1997		2007 1997		2007 1		19	997 2		2007 1997					
	М	F	M	F	М	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	М	F
World	48.7	51.7	50.7	56.1	11.3	24.9	13.5	34.5	37.4	26.9	37.2	21.6	3.4	1.8	4.3	2.1	47.9	46.4	44.9	41.8
Developed Economies	10.1	8.1	11.3	10.7	0.8	2.3	1.2	4	9.3	5.8	10.1	6.8	7.9	3.9	8.1	4.2	82.1	88	80.6	85.1
East Asia	52.3	60.1	57.9	69.6	11.8	23.3	18.1	44	40.5	36.8	39.8	25.7	1.3	0.7	3.7	1.6	46.4	39.2	38.4	28.7
Middle East	28.2	43.2	35.5	55.2	5.2	25.3	7.4	29.4	23	17.9	26.1	25.7	6.7	1.5	5.8	1.1	65.2	55.3	58.7	43.7
North Africa	28.2	38.4	33.5	48.4	12	26	15.6	32.3	16.2	12.4	17.9	16.2	11.9	3.2	9.4	2.2	59.9	58.4	57.1	49.3

Source: International Labour Organisation (2008), Global Employment Trends for Women, (Geneva: March, 2008).

Table 6: Assessment of data availability in Arab countries to promote gender equality and empowerment of women

Indicators	Countries with no data points	Countries with only one data point	Countries with at least two data points	Countries with only one sex disaggregated data point	Countries with at least two sex disaggregated data points
Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education	Somalia		Algeria Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic Tunisia, UAE Yemen		

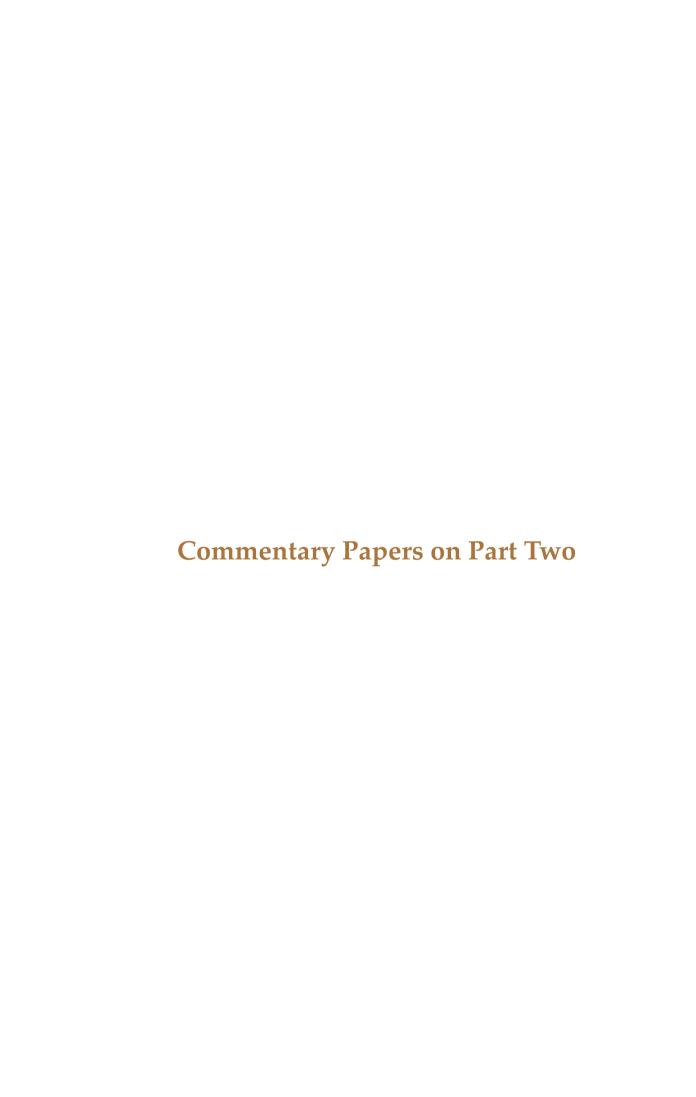
Poverty gap ratio	Comoros, Djibouti, Lebanon, Somalia	Algeria Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Oman, Sudan, Tunisia	Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, UAE Yemen	
Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old			Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, UAE, Yemen	
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector		Comoros, Djibouti, Iraq, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Somalia	Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Palestine, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, UAE, Yemen	
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament			Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq Jordan Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, UAE, Yemen	

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# **Chapter Three**

# **Arab Commentary Papers**

Saida Rahmouni

 $Thuraya\ Al\text{-}Turki$ 

# Foreign Commentary Papers

Robin Luckham

Joanne Sandler

#### Saida Rahmouni

I would like to extend my deep thanks to Professor Kamal Hamdan, Chairman of the Economic Section at the Foundation for Research and Consultation, for his valuable paper, "Women's security and the impact of social policies". In the paper Dr. Hamdan analyses the status of Arab women in terms of human insecurity: in terms of disputes, violence, and fragile economic and social conditions. Dr. Hamdan is keen to present prospects for overcoming such challenges, underlining the importance of social activists in ensuring social stability and security. He further emphasises integration between the roles of the state and civil society in achieving social security as a precondition for achieving women's security and ensuring their active contribution to overall development and modernisation.

The paper tackles important topics in detail, and I found myself in agreement with Dr. Hamdan on many topics. However, I will try here to go beyond the problems he presents and add to them in a way that can enrich our discussion. I will speak about two integrated issues and attempt to address them in a practical way.

#### STATE AND SOCIETY - WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND SECURITY

Addressing the issue of women's security and the security of society in the Arab world brings us to a vital issue, namely, the issue of human rights and democracy as the base that regulates the relation between state and society and allows for the active participation of all individuals on equal footing in comprehensive and sustainable development. It is, in fact, a relation that is based on a political and social pact, reflected in freedom of choice and participation, whose objective is the fair distribution of power between state and society.

The question is: To what extent does this relation guarantee the rights and security of women in their capacity as fully-fledged citizens? While the importance accorded to women's rights, freedom and security, and ensuring their participation in political, economic, social and cultural domains, is determined by the core policies adopted by the state, in a society aspiring to democracy in practice, the principle of gender equality and partnership should top the political and social agenda (Selim, 1999). Indeed, gender equality is a key and necessary condition for real democratic practice. If women are not full and equal participants in social life, building a democratic society will come to nothing. Keeping women as blind followers of men will block any radical change in society.

The Arab reality in this regard is a mixture of contradictions and paradoxes. Both men and women bear the resulting social pressures, but they also share responsibility for putting an end to this situation and creating a better one. Women in particular are subject to pressures: direct social pressures; reflections of social pressures on men; other challenges caused by deeply rooted customs and heritage; and tensions between tradition and modernity, and around the tools of introducing change and achieving progress and development.

To what extent do Arab societies ensure real participation for women? Do they employ gender responsive approaches and women's empowerment strategies to achieve gender equality in terms of rights and opportunities? The security of women and the security of society are closely linked; neither can be achieved without the other. Women cannot perform their duties

without a supportive civil society and without a private sector contributing to generation of wealth and investment. The legitimacy of the state is latent within institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector, underwriting political and social development in a way that boosts the feeling of social solidarity among individuals (Al elwy, 1992) The conditions of women's rights and their role as full and active partners in development and modernisation differ from one Arab society to another according to the political and social structures present. For instance, Tunisia has always been keen since independence in 1956 to promote women and give them the status they deserve. The Personal Status Code issued on the 13th of August 1956 (Center for Legal and Judicial Studies, 2008), was not in the interest of women alone, it was in the interest of the family and society at large. Tunisia worked to ensure the integration of women into society and to advocate their role as active partners in comprehensive development. Legislators in Tunisia were keen to upgrade the legal system, especially laws related to women, in line with the development of modern social values. And Tunisian policy, under the leadership of president Zine el Abidine Ali, has

terms of human resource development in the country.

Elsewhere the Arab reality is diverse, which is why we felt it useful to present the following recommendations:

continued to enhance and develop the legal and social gains of women and the family, firmly establishing the principle of gender equality in terms of rights and duties. This is reflected in

in an appropriate manner without enjoying the social security that gives women the will to fully invest their capabilities and sharpen their skills. This integral relation is reflected in the democratic practice adopted by the state and can be felt in the key role played by women in societal shifts. It is very difficult to imagine a state enjoying the support of individuals

- Arab countries have to adopt women's rights and related issues within an integrated framework or system based on gender equality as a launching pad. They should underline the right to education, the right to health, the right to work, the right to participate in political life, the right to hold office, and the mainstreaming of women's rights in all developmental programmes and policies at the local, national, and regional levels.
- Arab countries should continue to preserve women's rights and security through enacting appropriate laws in different fields and reviewing these laws in accordance with the pace of development of Arab societies in a manner that ensures gender equality.
- Arab civil society has to take part in changing societal reality for the better. Democratic participation should be reflected in the room given to all citizens, men and women alike, to participate in all fields they are interested in.
- The role of the private sector in increasing investments, generating wealth and achieving growth should be activated. This is the key to progress and development, while taking into consideration both the social and economic dimensions of development.
- Policies should be developed in the fields of education, health, social protection and addressing the situation of those with special needs, such as the elderly, handicapped and low-income families.
- The reform tendency should be sustained in order that security, safety and stability in society are enhanced. This requires:
  - Strong political will that can push the reform process forwards to development and progress.
  - Enlightened values should prevail in religious matters in line with the spirit of developments in society, thus helping to change mindsets in favour of women's rights.

#### A REFORM APPROACH TO SECURITY FOR WOMEN AND SOCIETY

Equality among individuals is the basis for justice within humanity regardless of nationality, ethnicity or ideology. Traditions and laws deprived women, in many societies all over the world, of the right to independent legal and social status, thus rendering women for a long period hostage to men — subject to the power of the father and the family. Further, women were subjected to various forms of discrimination and violence.

In view of such conditions, the international community attributed special attention to women's issues as an integral part of human rights. The recognition of women's rights introduced a historical shift across the world, leading to many international meetings and conferences\*and the issuance of declarations and plans of action meant to promote women's empowerment. Special committees were formed with the aim of monitoring the conditions of women. Follow-up mechanisms were also established to oversee the removal by UN member states of social, cultural, legal and political impediments to the empowerment of women.

The UN Charter considers gender equality as a key objective, stressing the importance of international action towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Thereafter, non-discrimination on the basis of sex was introduced in all human rights agreements\*\* as a general principle. Most Arab countries have signed and ratified international agreements related to human rights in general and women's rights in particular (UNDP, 2005), including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)\*\*\*, entailing a gender responsive approach to policy and a commitment to address and enhance the social conditions of women in recognition of their rights and status.

How far have the social and cultural structures of Arab societies accepted gender responsive approaches in concept and practice?

Arab societies are known as patriarchal societies (Bourdieu, 1998). Men are omnipresent, controlling the decision-making process in most respects. Women are given authority over household affairs, such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of children (Durkeim, 2004). This inequality of power between male and female reflects the marginalisation of women overall, deeply rooted in social and cultural structures, creating a gender gap and establishing patriarchal hegemony in the collective mindset of society. Such cultural and social accumulations shape the social relationship between men and women in all fields and at all levels. The predominant mindset also makes difficult the move towards a more modern society, where gender equality and partnership is a basic principle for social relations between men and women.

To overcome this reality, gender responsive and empowerment approaches are necessary, including equal opportunity and equal access to education, information, resources, and decision-making positions (UNRISD, 2006). Tunisia has managed to mainstream gender responsiveness in all sectors. Today, women representatives make up 22.7 percent of the Tunisian parliament, 15.2 percent in the Advisors' Council, and 37.9 percent in the Central Committee of the Constitutional Democratic Rally. Some 30 percent of lawyers and judges

<sup>\*</sup> Conferences: Mexico 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985, Beijin 1995.

<sup>\*\*</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Culture Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Tunis joined the Optional Protocol to CEDAW according to law no. 35, June 2008.

are women, along with 72 percent of pharmacists, 40 percent of teachers in postgraduate education, 48.4 percent of teachers in secondary schools, 51.2 percent of teachers in primary schools, and 59 percent of postgraduate students.

The promotion of women's status is one of the necessary conditions for their active presence and contribution to development. It is also a necessary condition for preserving social security and the principles of citizenship. Having invested in its human resources, both men and women, Tunisia has been able to better pursue societal development overall (CREDIF 2005, 2007, 2008).

#### FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above, the following is recommendations have been made:

- Expand the scope of political and social dialogue on the status of women and their role as active partners in the development process.
- Review predominant concepts and adopting plans and approaches that enhance the role of women and generate fresh job opportunities for them.
- Establish action plans to address the needs of women, especially in the rural areas.
- Adopt measures to ensure women's access to decision-making positions.
- Embody in practice the principle of gender partnership and appreciation of the role of women in maintaining family balance.
- Facilitate women's access to resources and funds independently.
- Encourage comparative research on the conditions of Arab women and their contribution to the process of development (the Arab Women Organisation could coordinate the different stages of research). Resulting studies should be integrated into developmental programmes and plans.
- Draw up a gender responsive strategy for addressing the Arab media that contributes to the establishment of the values of gender equality and partnership and raising awareness of the rights and achievements of Arab women in various fields.

It is necessary to intensify intellectual meetings on the role of Arab women and their contribution, on an equal footing with men, to the development of Arab society. Interest in women's issues should not be confined to women alone, but rather become part of a comprehensive political and social analysis of the conditions of social development. Only via effective gender equality can men and women march together, shoulder to shoulder, towards a better, more stable future.

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# Thuraya Al-Turki

At the outset we should record that this valuable study deeply explored the various dimensions of human security for Arab women. It starts with expanding the concept of security with it covering important aspects of human life such as disputes, individual violence, and economic and social marginalisation. By so doing, the paper reminds us of what happened to the concept of development in the 1990s, as it went beyond its economic and material boundaries to include comprehensive and sustainable development that takes into consideration the social dimension in the development process. The concept also covered other areas such as education, health and political rights.

Here, I would like to focus my contribution on four main points:

First, the concept of human security can be compared to the concept of comprehensive development. We should mention that the concept of human security is shrouded in ambiguity in terms of its components and the standards for measuring these components. Academic writings introduce dozens of definitions of human security. Despite all these definitions, which may contain distorting the value of the concept of human security for policymaking is clear (Chen, 2004). The majority accepts the definition of human security as identified by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): "Free from need and free from fear" (Caballero- Anthony, Mely 2004).

In this context, I believe that we should clarify the important differences between the concept of comprehensive development as defined in the 1990s and the concept of human security as raised today. The most important difference is that the concept of development focuses on capacity building of individuals, in addition to other elements. Although the process of development is oftentimes a top down approach, focusing on the development of policies and programmes that are related to macro processes, the process mainly seeks to improve the skills and capacities of individuals to enable them to overcome economic and social marginalisation (Thomas, 2001). In this model, we find there is an interaction between the state and the individual, or between the top and the bottom.

As for the concept of human security, it focuses on protection and reflects a change in the conception of the relation from top to bottom. In spite of the importance of "protection", there is a fear that this protection unintentionally results in further deepening of existing balances of power in the family and society. In view of this, we can see that it is important to link the concept of human security with the concept of protection — as well as to comprehensive development — in a clear and detailed way, which is not achieved in the paper.

Regarding the issue of measurement, I mean how to measure and identify the components shaping human security. How can we compare any given area to another, especially in view of the radical changes taking place in Arab countries? And by this we do not mean that there is a qualitative change in the conditions facing women. I will address other related issues, such as individual violence and economic and social marginalisation. We can highlight the example mentioned by the paper. Are women in Palestine more or less secure than women in Iraq? Has the invasion and the devastating war on Iraq undermined the security of men and women in the same way? How could we measure this?

In fact, actual measurement requires documentation. But do we have enough detailed documentation of the results of the wars witnessed by the Arab world and their impact on women in particular? There are studies on the expense of Palestinian women and Lebanese women during wars, but most of them are in the form of reports by international agencies and are not easy to obtain.

Documentation and availability of data gives us the opportunity to draft policies and programmes that can address the issue of human security on a solid scientific and realistic basis.

Second, I would like to shift to what is mentioned in the paper about insecurity related to disputes and insecurity related to individual violence. Undoubtedly, we can see these phenomena in various parts of the world, though at different levels. The most important question is, what are the differences between us and other societies in connection with these two phenomena? In my opinion these two phenomena are also linked to each other.

Regarding the phenomenon of repeated wars, we can see that the Arab region is a special case, which is also linked to economic conditions and the ability to deal with the results of these wars, namely destruction and recession. Moreover, the world political system and the major powers have a hand in the emergence of these wars and their continuation.

What is the impact of the continuation of these wars for long periods on individuals and the structure of the family? The destruction as a result of wars affects both men and women equally, We find that wars have ravaged family cohesion in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon and Sudan, and destroyed to a great extent the social network the family has used to provide for individuals. How can we ensure that the family, whose individuals (both males and females, young and old) are threatened by poverty, violence, humiliation and assault (like the assaults on men in the prisons of Iraq), enjoys human security once again?

It is certain that the feeling of human insecurity affects all classes of society, and especially the poor. Though it is impossible to accept the individual violence to which women are exposed \_especially the phenomenon of honour killing mentioned in the paper\_ individual violence is linked to society's vision of women, and women's opinion about themselves. So we have to understand the parameters and background of this phenomenon in Arab society in a bid to address it in an appropriate manner. This is why it is important to study cultural factors, the frustration caused by wars, and the difficult economic and social conditions in Arab countries. In fact, all these factors push some men to be violent towards women, and also make women passively accept such violence. We have to understand that individual violence against women has nothing to do with the class to which women belong: both rich women and poor women can be exposed to such individual violence.

Once again, I would like to emphasise that this individual violence against women could be a result of other cultural factors in addition to the general feeling of depression caused by security, political and economic conditions, especially in countries where wars have become a chronic phenomenon. Thus, we have to put all these factors and points into consideration while thinking of drawing up policies for addressing individual violence in a comprehensive, deep and realistic manner.

Third, regarding the socio-economic component to human security, as mentioned in the paper, the author addressed the economic dimension in a comprehensive way, so I will not speak about this point here. The paper also dealt with security amid disputes and this point is important for human security. Nobody can deny that work and peace are essential to human security. To better understand the impacts of poverty and wars on women, we have to understand the social dimension, to which the paper did not give due attention despite its importance to families in the Arab world. It is true that there are class and ethnic differences amongst families in the Arab world, but we will speak in this part about family in general.

When we speak about social security and the family, we need to think of ensuring security for all family members. At the same time, women in family life have more duties and missions, which could render them subordinates and followers of their husbands. The Arab family, as described in social studies, is based on the patriarchal model in terms of power and influence, by which men and senior members in the family are more powerful than women and junior members (Abu- lughod, 1998; Hopkins, 1997; Altorki, 1999). Many people believe that this model wrongs women because it makes them followers (Sharabi, 1988; Barakat, 1993), also undermining women's security within the family.

In spite of the availability of studies, we still need to understand this phenomenon, especially in Arab countries. Economic security is very important and social guarantees in different forms are indispensable. However, the benefits of these shrink in view of men's tight grip on all powers and influence in the family. Studies also refer to the fact that the majority of families in the Arab world are not financially supported by husbands only (including the middle and lower classes). This raises the question: Has women's contribution to the budget of the family translated into more security for women?

Male dominance within the family exists in many countries, but we establish and codify this patriarchal system with personal status law that deals with the family as the basis of society and man as the head of the family. These laws give men more privileges in terms of inheritance, custodianship of children, and the right to divorce their wives, in addition to other matters that render women's position in the family fragile and weak. This marginalised position of women continues even after education and joining the labour market.

Fourth, the paper speaks about the role of non-governmental organisations in providing a network of services that can ease the marginalised position of women, promote their skills and capabilities and improve the healthcare services provided for them. Indeed, this matter is very important because it concerns the needs and requirements of a vast sector of society. If we look at these NGOs, we find out that most of them are either religious associations or get their funding from abroad. Thus, each has its own agenda and objectives. This is obvious, for instance, in Lebanon and Iraq.

It is not known whether we can do without these resources, but it is important to take these points into consideration while setting up developmental policies and programmes.

In conclusion, I have some recommendations:

We can start with the legal aspects with regards to women's rights. The laws that are unfair to women have to be amended (such as the penalties law, inheritance laws, divorce law, and

also nationality law) so they can keep pace with changes taking place in the Arab world in view of the high percentage of educated women and their contribution to the budget of the family from paid work. Efforts in this direction have already started in North Africa. But how can this be translated on the ground?

In this context we can ask: Who is drafting these laws? Who interprets them? Who amends them? And who enforces them?

I will not go into details of the class of those enacting such laws and their links to the ruling powers. But all these procedures are totally confined to men. Matters could be different to a great extent if Arab women managed to have access to the field of law as active and influential players in the processes of drafting and implementing laws. This has already happened in Morocco and other Islamic countries such as Iran, where women managed to introduce changes to existing laws that particularly related to women. Compensations and privileges gained there for divorced women are more than those given in some Western countries.

It is not sufficient that women gain access to the field of law and be active players in law; the image of women in Arab society has to be changed from one of subordinates to full partners with men. Amending of laws, in spite of the difficulty, is easier than changing the visions associated with those laws, as visions are based on deeply rooted cultural values passed on through various generations and classes. What I mean by the word "visions" is the group of prevailing social values and cultural perceptions about the nature of women, their merits and capabilities. These visions cover how women perceive themselves and how society perceives them. Changing these visions can be achieved through different channels, such as awareness raising campaigns, education and media. We can start with schoolbooks and TV programmes, for example.

To be sure, changing these values and perceptions is not easy and it is a challenge for government and non-governmental agencies. I believe that this is the main path to addressing the insecurity that women feel in Arab countries.

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# **Robin Luckham**

This comprehensive, well-researched paper uses the framework of human security to spell out the different insecurities facing Arab women, including: a) conflict-generated insecurities; b) personal violence directed against women; and c) insecurities stemming from women's social and economic vulnerabilities. Based on this analysis it then discusses some of the ways Arab governments and civil society organisations have tried to develop protection mechanisms, and concludes with a number of recommendations about how these might be improved.

As not only a man but also a non-Arab, I confess to some trepidation in commenting. I cannot contribute to the deep insights of a woman or draw upon extensive knowledge of the Arab world. I hope you will forgive my ignorance.

Instead I propose to situate the paper in the context of wider debates on human security. As Hamdan contends, there has been a significant shift from the state as the fount of security to the idea that security is a right or entitlement of all human beings. But how much difference has this made in practice to the security and entitlements of women in the Arab world, especially vulnerable women? Has enough emphasis been given to women's capabilities, as well as their vulnerabilities, including their ability to organise within civil society and put pressure on governments?

Rather than trying to answer these questions myself, I suggest a number of discussion points, to enable us to draw on the experience and suggestions of participants in our deliberations:

- 1. How can Arab women's particular experiences be captured in discussions of human security? The paper demonstrates in some detail that women have different gender-related vulnerabilities from men. But do they in addition define security differently and have their own priorities that policymakers should be more responsive to?
- 2. How can and do Arab women develop and build upon their own capabilities? The paper argues that human security involves more than protecting women from violence and poverty; women themselves should be "capable of creating positive change." But whilst the paper deals in depth with the various protection mechanisms deployed by governments and NGOs, it contains less discussion of what women themselves can achieve. How can women ensure accountability for violence against them and for violations of their rights and dignity? How can they influence social policies, so as to make them more responsive to their specific needs?
- 3. How do different sources of insecurity interact and reinforce each other notably in conflict environments? What are the relationships between political violence and domestic violence against women? How does violence impact on poverty and other sources of vulnerability and exclusion? One is struck, for instance, by Figure 3, showing that Palestine has the lowest share of women's participation in the labour force among all Arab countries and that Iraq, too, has relatively low women's labour force participation (despite previous high participation). On the other hand Lebanon (which has also had its share of violent conflict), has succeeded in maintaining relatively higher women's labour force participation. Why do they differ?

- 4. What is the role of history, culture and religion in shaping women's insecurity and responses to it? What are the salient differences amongst the Arab countries and between them and other regions? Outsiders tend to forget the impressive diversity among Arab countries. The paper analyses differences in economic structure, using them to explain variations in women's security. It suggests, for example, that high incomes in resource-rich, labour-poor countries in the Arab Gulf reduce women's labour force participation by depressing the supply and demand for national labour. But this assumes that the slack is taken up by migrant labour, as well as discounting the role of culture and class. Furthermore, Libya and Kuwait, which are also resourcerich, labour-poor countries, enjoy relatively high women's labour force participation. In sum, economic variations are only part of the story and more attention should be paid to other variations among Arab states.
- 5. How does international migration (including conflict-driven migration) affect women's vulnerability and rights? Such migration is a surprising omission from the paper. Both poverty and conflict force women (and men) to migrate from countries like Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq to other Arab countries and elsewhere. Female migrant workers are especially vulnerable to exploitation, mistreatment and sexual abuse, and lack the means to assert their rights, not least in some Arab Gulf states.
- 6. How can Arab women challenge state-centred security policies, insist upon greater accountability and ensure that state protection mechanisms are more responsive to women's security needs? The paper describes significant but limited progress made in ratifying and implementing international norms outlawing violence against women, as well as the protections available to women under state-provided social protection and safety nets. But the central issues seem to concern implementation, transparency and accountability, rather than the formal existence of social security schemes. How can women assert their rights and ensure that they are protected in political contexts in which governments are at best indifferent, at worst hostile, to their participation?

Hence women's capacity to assert their rights cannot be separated from wider issues of political reform. Arab governments tend in practice to prioritise traditional state security concerns in a region that has become an epicentre of global as well as regional violent conflict. They operate in secrecy and resist accountability, especially on politically sensitive issues. They tend to be heavily masculinised and to be reluctant to upset vested interests in largely patriarchal societies. All these aspects increase women's insecurity and pose formidable obstacles to women's struggles. The latter are necessarily linked to the wider politics of democratic change in the Arab world.

7. How can Arab women mobilise to control their own lives and security, given the patriarchal nature of large segments of civil society and the immense influence of religious organisations? The paper includes case studies of NGOs that have assisted particular groups of women in need, notably victims of domestic violence and elderly and divorced women. At the same time, religious organisations continue to represent the bulk (80-85 percent) of all non-governmental welfare providers. Governments in the region have become increasingly dependent upon them to fill large gaps in state social welfare provision. They deserve even more discussion than provided in the paper.

One should not underestimate the importance of religious bodies, together with that of local networks and family structures, both in ensuring the welfare and security of large numbers of women, and in shaping social attitudes. Yet they present women's activists with difficult dilemmas. How can they work with religious and community organisations to help vulnerable women without thereby reinforcing the "patriarchal contract" that makes them dependent upon male relatives? What spaces exist for women to challenge patriarchal values without endangering themselves and their cause in the process? To what extent are religious organisations open to influence, and can they also play positive roles in expanding women's rights and participation?

I have no answers to any of these questions, but hope they will provoke further discussion.

### Joanne Sandler

I want to begin by extending my congratulations to Dr. Kamal Hamdan for a thought-provoking treatment of a complex and contentious question: How do we advance human security — and particularly women's human security — at the national, regional and global levels? This requires deepening our understanding of human security in general, of the gender dimensions of human security in particular, and of the significant progress that has been made in pursuing these goals, the gaps that remain, and the new challenges that globalisation, modernisation, conflict and other processes create in our pursuit of human security. Dr. Hamdan has done a formidable job at covering all of these fronts.

My task was to provide comments and an international perspective on the paper. I will first highlight some of the important international dimensions of the concepts that Dr. Hamdan raised. Second, I will talk about some of the most recent developments in international agreements related to these issues. And finally I will end with some concrete recommendations to add to those that Dr. Hamdan has identified to push the boundaries of human security from a gender perspective.

Dr. Hamdan explores human security through the lens of conflict-related insecurities, insecurities related to personal violence and insecurities related to women's social and economic vulnerabilities. It is particularly important that in doing so the presentation highlights different groups of women — the elderly, female heads of households and others — which is critical in helping to nuance our understanding and is aligned with a rights-based analysis that asks us to identify those who are most excluded. In highlighting the issue of protection, the paper makes the critical point that women should not be seen as passive recipients of protective services but must be seen as capable of creating positive change, and as key interlocutors in defining and managing the types of social protection that are needed.

The focus on addressing violence against women is of significant relevance. It is interesting that this second Arab Women Organisation (AWO) conference is taking place at the midpoint between the annual open UN Security Council debate on Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security — a date on which advocates for women's rights worldwide take action to highlight conflict related insecurities that women face — and the launch of the 16 Days of Action to End Violence against Women, from 25 November to 10 December, a period during which many thousands, if not many millions, of women and an increasing number of men organise at all levels to raise awareness about the multiple manifestations of violence that women confront in all societies.

I mention this because it is important to note how rapid has been the progress in putting these issues on the global policy agenda. Just 15 years ago, the international community viewed violence against women — especially intimate partner violence — as a private, domestic issue that did not merit a public sector response. Today, we have the secretary general of the United Nations Global Study on Violence Against Women (from 2006), annual General Asembly resolutions since 2006 on "intensifying actions to end violence against women", and the secretary general's global campaign to address violence against women, launched in 2008, as examples of how far the international community has come in recognising violence against women as a global pandemic.

These topics have made it onto the international — and increasingly onto regional and national — agendas because women academics, advocates, policymakers and activists have worked together to generate the evidence, conceptual frameworks and advocacy strategies to secure commitments to address the issue. So the deliberations at this meeting are critical because of the potential that you have to push for greater attention to and action on these issues regionally, nationally and locally.

Action is the key word here. A great deal of the effort to advance women's human security and rights has focused on advocacy and securing policy-level commitments. This effort is still needed. For instance, ending violence against women is not reflected as a target in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) despite global acknowledgement that it is a pandemic of enormous proportions. Advocacy to secure its representation as one of the targets for the MDGs would result in a great deal more action and resources to confront it.

The Financing for Development Conference that will take place in Doha later this month will involve the international community in discussing how to finance commitments that have been made, particularly in the light of the global financial crisis; financing commitments to women's rights and security is sorely lacking from this agenda and could come under further threat because of the financial crisis. Greater advocacy and monitoring are required. Likewise, as Dr. Hamdan points out, there are many Arab countries that still lack adequate legislation, aligned with agreed human rights norms, to end impunity for violence against women both in stable and fragile countries. Advocacy to secure national policy commitments to address these gaps is required and remains critical.

Yet, we also now have to drill down to the all-important issue of action. Yes, we have Security Council Resolution 1325, but UNIFEM's recent research on women in peace negotiations, for example, shows that — eight years after agreement to Resolution 1325 — women averaged just seven percent of negotiators in five peace negotiations for which data was available. This is a far cry from the 30 percent critical mass that we know is needed for women's voices to make a difference. And despite commitment to improve maternal health in MDG-5, over half a million women die every year during pregnancy or childbirth, with over 90 percent of these largely preventable deaths in developing countries. This is one of the most off-track MDGs and the litmus test of national and international accountability to women's human security and rights.

This is the time for a greatly increased and coordinated push for action on the commitments already made to women's human development, rights and security, which we see as interconnected and indivisible. UNIFEM recently published the fourth edition of its biennial publication, Progress of the World's Women, which focuses on gender and accountability and asks the question: Who Answers to Women? What we find, which is relevant to all regions, is that while commitments to women's human rights and security have been visionary and profound — extending from the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) and Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820 to the Millennium Development Goals and countless regional and national-level commitments — accountability for moving from words to action has been inadequate.

We see accountability as having two dimensions: first, that power-holders give an "account" of what they did to make good on their commitments; and second, that corrective action is taken for failure to deliver on commitments.

So, I would add three key points to Dr. Hamdan's recommendations, within the framework that has been laid out.

First, because it was agreed recently — in June 2008 — there was not much attention to UN Security Council Resolution 1820 on sexual violence as a tactic of war in Dr. Hamdan's paper, or in other papers on conflict and security issues for this conference. This resolution is an essential complement to Resolution 1325 and — most importantly — recognises that efforts to prevent and respond to sexual violence as a tactic of war may be linked to the maintenance of international peace and security so that it deserves a security response, recognises sexual violence as a war crime, and calls for strong guidelines to involve UN peacekeepers in protecting civilians from sexual violence. I hope that further work on promoting implementation of Resolution 1820 — especially in Palestine, Iraq and Sudan, but also in any other conflict-related situations in the region — will make it onto the agenda of the Arab Women Organisation, as the potential of implementing the resolution to enhance protection and redefine security from a gender and women's rights perspective is significant.

Second, in relation to the insecurities created by violence and economic and social vulnerabilities, and the critical need for rights-based protective services and policies that address gender inequalities, it could be effective to recommend that both governments and civil society build their capacity to undertake and institutionalise gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). Accountability for addressing women's human security requires budget allocations that enable relevant services to be provided. There is a need for spaces where women survivors of violence can heal and rebuild their lives, for gender-responsive legal services, for livelihood programmes and many others. The GRB programmes that UNIFEM has supported in partnership with the governments of Egypt and Morocco — and those we hope to build with many other governments and civil society partners in the region — are already showing how collective and informed engagement in these processes, with the leadership of the Ministry of Finance, can make a difference in increasing budget allocations to enhance women's human security.

And, finally — going back to Progress of the World's Women — research shows that when more women are involved in local and national decision-making bodies and legislatures, issues related to women's human security more easily find their way into policy and budget discussions. Research in Norway, India and many other countries has shown that when women are represented in local councils, issues of human security are more frequently raised. When the 1992 constitutional reform in India required that one-third of all local council seats and council heads were reserved for women-only competition, the composition of the councils changed. Years later, research showed that there was 60 percent more clean drinking water projects in areas that had female-led councils than in those that were male-led. Given still low numbers of women in national and local decision-making bodies in the Arab world (and acknowledging that special temporary measures and quotas have been the most effective path for changing these numbers), recommendations to consider special measures to significantly increase women's role in decision-making bodies in the region could have reverberating effects.

UNIFEM's efforts to draw attention to the issues and actions central to addressing women's empowerment and human security are longstanding. Another paper prepared for this conference by Dr. Bahgat Korany points to the grand-breaking work of the UNIFEM office in Amman in producing one of the first international/regional organisation publications devoted entirely to Arab women's empowerment under the leadership of Dr. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh and

with Dr. Maya Morsy. UNIFEM remains committed to working with important networks like the Arab Women Organisation, and with researchers and academics, leaders and organisations committed to women's human security and rights, like those represented at this conference, to continue to generate the evidence, ideas and political will that are critical to the progress of Arab women, women worldwide and, indeed, to the progress of all citizens and nations.

As one of the slogans that UNIFEM uses most often notes: "Progress for women is progress for all."

# **Chapter Four**

# **Arab Commentary Papers**

Mohammad Akram Al-Kech Mariam bint Hassan Al-Khalifa

# Foreign Commentary Papers

Lisa Anderson Philip Robins

### **Mohammad Akram Al-Kech**

At the outset I would like to extend some words of thanks to Dr. Munther Wassef Masri for his distinguished research paper in which he managed to cover all basic aspects of the topic raised. The paper considers that education — or the educational process — can be a key means by which to achieve security for individuals in society, especially women. Education enables the individual to improve his conditions and invest his capabilities and potentials in a way that is beneficial for him and society, thus achieving his physical, economic and political security. In other words, the individual will be able to enjoy human security in all its dimensions.

This is why the paper gives a detailed and in-depth analysis of the status of illiteracy and education at different levels in the Arab world, and is supported with updated statistics. Dr. Masri highlighted that there are obvious differences between one Arab country and another, as well as differences in terms of literacy in urban and rural areas within particular Arab states. The paper makes it clear that although the Universal Convention on Human Rights established the individual's right to education in 1948, Arab women have not enjoyed this right equally. The paper stresses on several occasions the gender gap in education in terms of quality, quantity and subsequent employment. It also shows how the literacy rate among males is higher than among females, and the types of education and specialisations available to males more than those available to females. Thus men will be in a position to achieve human security in its four main dimensions (physical, social, economic and political) much more than women.

The spread of education, as highlighted in the paper, should cover all members of society, male and female, across the country, and in rural and urban areas. At the same time, efforts have to be exerted to improve the quality of education in terms of curricula, methods of teaching, and all other factors related to the education process. Moreover, education level and professional efficiency have to be the key criteria for promotion at work, and this is the key to achieving human security in its integrated dimensions (physical, social, economic and political). In other words, the relation between education and human security in general, and women's security in particular, is a causal relation in a way that each is a cause and a result of the other. It can be also said that each contains and is part of the other. The rule of law, a free democratic atmosphere, insurance of basic freedoms for all members of society, the distribution of wealth on fair grounds and equality in terms of opportunities, are basic indicators for the assessment of human political and economic security, and ensuring the achievement of the social and psycho-biological dimensions of human security overall.

Undoubtedly, education — as a factor of development — is a key element in the promotion of the social conditions of individuals and their communities, thus achieving their psychological, social, economic and political security. However, there are questions to which we should find answers in this regard, such as: What type of education do we mean? Under what kind of social environment will this educational system work? What is the objective of education? What is the position of scientific thinking in the life of individuals, as well as social, economic, cultural and political institutions? What is the value ranking of education — and the educated — in terms of prevailing social values? Are social, political and economic developments in our societies introduced according to developments in education and science?

In a bid to find answer to these questions we should think first about the production, development and application of scientific knowledge. We, in the Arab world, remain more consumers of scientific knowledge and their applications than creators or developers of knowledge. If the creator/producer determines what he is going to create/produce and export, the options of the consumer are limited to what is offered to him in the market of knowledge. Second, the value of education itself and its role in the life of individuals and of society as a whole. So far, education does not top the list of social values in Arab society. Third, taking into account the nature or mechanisms of social and professional promotions and role of acquired skills, such as education, experience and efficiency as compared to other factors such as nepotism.

As far as the role of education in achieving security for women in particular, abilities of educated Arab women, in the present social environment in Arab nations, to achieve security for themselves in its integrated dimensions, is limited. Education is a necessary condition, but it is not sufficient for achieving security for Arab women. In fact, educated Arab women are among the sectors of society that do not feel full security (psychological, social, economic and political). Only educated Arab women in some cases can achieve one or more of the dimensions of security, but under a society controlled by patriarchal values, traditions and norms they find difficulty to achieve all dimensions of human security.

Some social controls and criteria in our societies militate against a real assessment of the skills of educated women, the most important of which are (al kesh: 2007) discrimination by gender against which other factors, such as education, skills, capabilities and specialization, are secondary; an imbalance rights and duties whereby society admits certain rights for women and denies others, such as the type of education available and the non-recruitment of women in certain professions. At the same time, society requires women to perform their duties as females from early childhood.

There is also some discord between the role of the individual and his position in society to the extent that there can be flagrant contradiction in some cases, especially for women, who do not enjoy due social recognition despite the diverse and multiform roles they perform, including educated and working women. The development and change of social roles have not been moving at the same pace in all fields and do not cover all sectors of society in the same way as half of society — namely women — is forced to maintain its traditional role. There is a wide gap between material development and socio-cultural changes in society. For instance, we find that most laws stress gender equality in terms of rights and duties. However, this is not reflected in the conditions of women in society. In fact, predominant social traditions and norms pay no heed to these laws; cursed is the one who dares question custom.

The real problem facing those interested in women's issues is that these issues are addressed individually and not in the framework of the predominant social structure with its traditional customs and values, which are the main criteria for assessing and judging individuals' behaviours. The main foundation of the social system in the Arab world is still the family and not the individual (male or female), though modern social institutions now perform several of the traditional tasks of the family. Within the framework of the Arab family, there are stereotypical tasks for men and women. In the event that any of these tasks was taken up by the other partner it would be deemed assistance to that partner. For instance, when women accept paid work outside the home they are considered, according to social norm, as assisting

their partners in their basic role as breadwinners for the family. When men perform household tasks it is considered as assisting their wives in their basic tasks.

In light of the predominant social system, education for women is supplementary to other features considered more important, such as youth, beauty, fertility and experience in cooking and housework. On the other hand, the education of men comes highly ranked in the family system. In this case, education becomes one of the factors that enhance the stereotypical role of women instead of being an agent for changing it.

Male family members control the relation between the family and the surrounding environment. Moreover, any interaction from society with the family comes through its males. In light of such a situation, women's interest in political, economic and cultural affairs is shaped and affected by men. Thus, patriarchal concepts and culture control the political, professional, economic, cultural and social activities of women. The options of men in education, work and political and social participation are much broader than those of women and this is not only because of the patriarchal views of society on women, but also of women about themselves. So women's security in all its different forms and dimensions is achieved only through the family, particularly male members of the family who are, according to social norms and traditions, in charge of ensuring the psychological, social, economic and political security of all members of the family, including women. Women do not bear responsibility in general except in the absence of male members of the family.

Accordingly, women are not present on the social scene outside the framework of the patriarchal family and they cannot go beyond socially accepted and expected roles. Otherwise, any change in these traditional roles, which are proscribed by society for women, will be considered infringement and violations of predominant social traditions, norms and values, and in this case social pressures will be practiced on them to either go back to proscribed limits or they will succeed in establishing a new social system, whose survival and spread will depend on appropriate conditions, such as education, knowledge and modern institutions. In such a situation, education will play its role in advocating a new pattern of behaviour and creating an appropriate social environment matching change in the cultural classification of gender roles, so that women can achieve their own human security in all dimensions.

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# Mariam bint Hassan Al Khalifa

In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the most compassionate

Embracing its responsibilities towards women, the Arab Women Organisation decided to hold conferences, symposiums and workshops, and prepare studies and conduct research that work towards the achievement of the organisation's objectives. Our conference today is part of these efforts. Dr. Munther Wassef Masri was given the responsibility of preparing a study on the role of education as a route to achieving women's security. In-depth reading of the paper presented by Dr. Masri reveals the great efforts he exerted in terms of data gathering, statistical analysis and developing a comprehensive scientific approach to the relation between education and women's security.

The paper begins by identifying the legislative basis for the relationship between education and women's security, represented in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights that underlines the universal right to education. The author highlights the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the realisation of this right. The author then shows how the right to education, in its comprehensive dimensions, promotes the status of women, investing in their capacities and potential, while aiding the comprehensive development of society.

As the research focuses on the role of education and its link to women's security, it pinpoints the role of deeply rooted cultural traditions and social heritage, and their link to the role of education in achieving women's security. The author underlines, also, the influence of specific types of education — either in terms of quality or scientific basis — on women's security. In terms of the quantitative dimensions of education, the research praises the equality principle inherent in the universal right to education and the equal opportunities stipulated in international or regional conventions and national laws, as well as the efforts of multilateral conferences sponsored by the UN on the conditions of women in general.

While the research takes for granted that there is legislative equality in terms of women's quantitative access to good education, it clarifies that this equality is superficial due to the impediments present in society, such as traditions and other duties that stand in the way of actual equality. The clearest example of the ineffectiveness of actual quantitative inequality is the penetration and spread of illiteracy among women compared to men.

### The question is now: How can education help in achieving women's security?

The researcher presents the role of the legislative aspect in ensuring equality and equal opportunities in education. within this connection, the researcher reviews international efforts, such as the agreements or outcomes of UN conferences. He also presents Arab regional efforts, in addition to national laws. Furthermore he does not overlook the role of Islamic Sharia law, which stresses that the right to education for women is an integral part of human rights as prescribed in the holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him).

Yet despite these clear cut and abiding principles, societal culture plays a role in undermining available opportunities of education for women, and education's role in achieving security for them. Such is the complexity of problems that the research fails to present solutions to, or

even recommendations that would lessen the negative impact of social traditions on women's security. As such the research stands deadlocked, able only to analyse existent problems and unable to address how to turn education into a means to ensure women's security.

In the very first paragraph of his paper, the researcher admits that although the right of every individual to education without discrimination has been established six decades ago, this right has not been reflected in all societies, either qualitatively or quantitatively, especially with regards to the education of women, the promotion of their status, and investment in their potential. This clear recognition, frankly stated at the outset, did not however push the researcher to explore the paradox of the adoption of women's rights to education as stipulated in national, regional and international conventions and societal non-observance of this right. The problem of social heritage — or what the researcher terms deeply rooted cultural traditions that represent an impediment to women's attainment of full rights and security — is not adequately addressed.

Instead, the paper focuses on presenting the current conditions of women's education. It outlines the concept of women's security and its political, economic, social and psychological dimensions, positing a mutual causal relation between education and human security — especially women's security. In other words, each is the cause and result of the other; each contains the other and completes the other. The conclusion reached is that education of women is one of the keys to — and the results of — human security more broadly, and that women's education is crucial to achieving security within society as a whole.

I have no disagreement with this clear theoretical introduction, but I do not exaggerate when I say that the researcher, when addressing existing legislation and the quantitative and qualitative realisation of education in light of the requirements of the labour market, faced realities that contradict his theoretical suppositions. These realities also contradict presuppositions on the mutual causal relations — or integral relations — between education and human security. Most of the paper focused on the quantitative dimensions of education. Moreover, the statistics presented are based on one source only, which is the UNESCO report of 2007. These statistics reveal that the status of education in most Arab countries is developed, with women attaining an equal share to men, and even more so in some stages of education. However, the researcher ignored gender issues and regulating standards (both legislation and policy) and did not present any practical insight in this direction for Arab societies. He is to be excused for this, as this is a complicated matter and there are no studies available on the gender aspect of legislation in practice, in Arab countries.

The reality of the development of education in general, and women's education in particular, marks a contradiction between theory — as presented in the paper — and practice. According to quantitative measures inputs of the educational system regarding opportunities of education for women in the Arab world in recent years were high and competitive with international levels. However, outputs of the educational system are not consistent with their quantitative indicators. Despite empowerment opportunities provided by policies, regulations and conventions, women status still lags behind. Admittedly the researcher expressed regret at this situation on several occasions, but the conclusion should be that his posited mutual causal relationship between education and security is imprecise and ought to be reconsidered.

All said, the contradiction in the paper is positive for our conference, as it has become clear to us that education alone is not the key to women's security. Indeed, discussion of the issue of women's security should start by addressing societal culture, with its patterns and accumulative heritage. Major shifts in this culture due to wars, disasters and cultural and scientific developments ought also to be considered. In fact, societal culture is the key issue and challenge, for issues of women's security and education are but elements that fall within an overall culture. I differ with the researcher in his definition of security and in categorising it into economic, social and physiological, along with his including health, media and education services within this context. Hence our conference should work towards identifying the outlines of how societal culture impacts women's security, and to move from this understanding to the issue of education. Indeed, societal culture does not only represent a challenge to women's security, but also human security as a whole. Arab and Islamic culture includes strong instructions on ensuring women's security. The problem is that this cultural heritage is mixed up with countervailing traditions and customs, to the extent that social norms can at times become more powerful than existing law.

The pressures of societal culture represent a problem today regarding the adoption and activation of laws and legislation. Some Arab countries are not able to enforce laws and achieve the principles of justice and equal opportunity. So we should not feel too disappointed at the outcomes of the research, "Education: The effective route for women's security," because education in any society where the application of law is incomplete, and where legislation and policies aimed at protecting equally the security of both women and men are overlooked, will never be able to overcome the constraints of societal culture. So education without political systems capable of turning plans and policies into reality on the ground will be useless, for education in general — and education of women in particular — depends on the harmony of state and citizen together.

To this end, I would like to suggest more research be done along three tracks that address and push forward the issue of women's security:

First, study of the aspects affecting women's security in societal culture, and to work towards addressing these aspects through the activation of laws and undertaking the reforms needed to study the impact of this activation. Second, undertake the study of gender issues in the entire educational system — its plans, programmes, laws and standards. And third, examine to what extent laws and conventions have been applied. Comparative studies should be conducted on administrative and legal conditions in Arab countries, and on how existing structures and institutions can develop their legal instruments.

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon you all.

### **Lisa Anderson**

This paper contains a wealth of information and analysis and would be a useful read for ministries and school administrations around the Arab world. Dr. Masri provides insights on all levels of education, from preschool to university, throughout the region, and discusses how we might evaluate the changing landscape, He further points out that quantitative gains in enrolments and literacy do not necessary translate into enhanced human security for women, in part because of deficiencies in curricula and in part because education is only one element of the complex of factors that contribute to human security.

Although there is much to be said about the paper I will highlight only a few issues.

Dr. Masri describes an interesting paradox in the patterns of female education in the Arab world: although girls are typically underrepresented in secondary education, in much of the Arab world (and indeed throughout the entire world) women are overrepresented at the university level. In other words, a gender gap continues to exist, but its sign reverses. Why is this? And more importantly, and more interestingly, what effect will it have on human security?

In most of the Arab world, decisions about sending children to school are family decisions and the decision is typically different for sons and daughters. Whereas it has never been unusual or costly, in social or familial terms, to send sons for formal education, until quite recently daughters were often rendered virtually unmarriageable if they were "overeducated," exposed to formal education that would provide knowledge and skills designed for life and work outside the household. This, obviously, was a risk many families did not want to run. In the last few decades, however, families who have had access to good primary and secondary schools have been sending their daughters not only through those programmes but to universities as well.

There seems to be little research about what these young women and their families expect for their lives. Will they work outside the home? Are their marriage prospects enhanced or diminished by the increasing likelihood that they will be better educated than their husbands? What is the expected return on this investment, by governments and by families, in women's education?

I suspect the answer lies in another feature of the education landscape that Dr. Masri highlights: the changing technologies of education and of work. Modern educational systems were designed in the 19th century to provide a suitable workforce for growing industrial economies. Pupils were taught not only basic literacy and numeracy, but also a variety of life skills necessary to employment in industrial factories — the importance of time management and conformity, for example. The schoolroom, with bells that marked the beginning and end of the day, with rows of neatly arranged desks, mimicked the factory shop floor, with whistles that marked the beginning and end of the shift and its regular rows of work stations along Asembly lines.

By and large, the industrial revolution was disadvantageous to women. Unlike agricultural life, in which family members typically worked on different kinds of tasks but in close proximity, the industrial world took men to workplaces away from home, separating them from the daily rhythms of family life, while leaving women at home, responsible for managing the household, but without genuine access to the market. Primary schooling was of modest utility for women in these circumstances, except as mothers of the next generation of industrial

workers and managers. As such, schooling for girls emphasising "efficient management" of the household — transforming it into a version of the industrial factory — became widespread in the industrial world during the late 19th and 20th centuries. Only lately, and belatedly, did women enter the "formal" labour market, however, and not until universal primary education was so widespread that they could leave home without abandoning their children.

Interestingly, the technological revolution of the late 20th and 21st centuries is likely to have very different consequences for men and women, in the Arab world as elsewhere. Modern information and communication technologies are changing human relationships in both time and space everywhere thanks to the "24/7" information age and to remote networking, both men and women can work whenever they want and wherever they want. This will not only transform education, but also redefine work and — I suspect — reshape familial relations.

The positive impact of technological change is likely to be felt disproportionately by women, who can now work from home (or from anywhere), not merely producing handicraft piecework but taking up everything from telemarketing to running online business empires. The flexibility afforded by these technologies permits accommodation of more varied social, cultural and family norms and practices. This will not only permit and foster global cultural diversity; it will open new avenues to women. Women will probably be early adopters of new paradigms of education, less concerned with certification and more open to "life-long learning" models of skills enhancement. But, perhaps more importantly, these new technologies may also permit the retention or reconstitution of the family as the primary economic and social unit, since the need to separate work and home will be diminished.

All of which is to say, we need to be thinking about the role of education in human security, particularly the human security of women, in ways that reflect the impact of changing technologies. These technologies will have different consequences in different cultural contexts.

In the Arab world, the two factors highlighted here: the willingness to educate girls and young women in large numbers, and continuing importance of family, are likely to mean that the embrace of new technologies. Take as an example the popularity of the ubiquitous mobile phone is fast and positive, for women and for their families.

I am grateful to Dr. Masri for having provided a stimulating introduction to these kinds of issues.

# **Philip Robins**

"Security studies" remains a masculinised discipline. It is intimately connected to hard power preoccupations, and their associated institutions, such as ministries of defence and security agencies. Regional conflicts helped ensure this to be so in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. The Iraq war and the Russia-Georgia conflict have helped to underpin the centrality of this approach, the latter on the border of — and hence jeopardising — one of the world's few post-conflict spaces, namely the continent of Europe.

By contrast, the "new security agenda" of the 1990s has not delivered on its promises. As a project it was always intellectually fragmented, an aggregate of disparate issues and concerns that lacked coherence. The fruits of its concerns have been disappointing, even in such an important field as the environment. Gender and security studies have remained a marginal part of this newly articulated discipline. Only in a heightened consciousness of, and desire to act against, human trafficking has the women's agenda been furthered by security studies over the last two decades. Meanwhile, sexual violence remains an ever-present possibility in civil and inter-state conflict, as evidenced in the appalling aspect of internal upheaval in the Congo.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSTABILITY

In their pursuit of human security, Arab women encounter multiple contextual problems. These are a function of the instabilities that characterise the region. From periodic threats of conflict and high levels of militarisation, to fiscal fluctuations and competition among a baby boomer generation for scarce jobs. Such insecurities discourage the voluntary or negotiated softening of patriarchal systems of control. Opportunities for women tend to be limited and precariously accessible. Even the consequences of war, the great gender leveller in 20th century European labour markets, have proved to be easily reversible, as evidenced by the lot of Iraqi women since 1988.

Women, and more precisely the hierarchy of women, are the key to development and a healthy society across the globe. A matriarch (that is to say, a woman of age who has borne children, thereby generating social respect) aware of hygiene and disease is more likely to result in a family free from serious health afflictions. A matriarch with some education is more likely to result in a family that takes education seriously, and is consequently able to take advantage of better opportunities in the job market.

A place to begin is certainly literacy. Literacy is a crucial safeguard against the precipitate decline in a family's fortunes, say if the patriarch of the family dies suddenly and prematurely and without adult sons. Literacy is likely to ensure that a widow or her children do not have to demean themselves in generating income for the family in the absence of their male head. In turn, literacy is key to the acquisition of all types of skills through training. In the absence of revolution as the old opportunity for economic and social mobility, education is now the principal vehicle for advancement within Arab society.

#### MANAGING PATRIARCHY

Every strategy for women's security has to ask the question: How should patriarchy be handled? This is particularly important because of the entrenched, conservative nature of the patriarchal system in the Middle East, and the cultural values that are mobilised to justify its position atop the social order. At one end of the continuum is conflict at the other is acquiescence. The shrewd approach is to look for weaknesses in the edifice of patriarchy and concentrate on accelerating their erosion. Periodically, there will be patriarchal reaction, in which case skirmish if you have to, but try to avoid open battle!

As Dr. Masri makes clear, the pursuit of women's security is not devoid of strengths. The proportion of women in full time education (especially at the primary and university levels) underlines that Arab females neither lack intelligence nor ambition. The important question is an incremental one: How do we best take the next step? For Dr. Masri that means: 1) shrewd presentation (the narrow preoccupation with the labour market, for example, with all of the difficulties involved around unemployment, is represented in more socially acceptable terms, as education for "life skills" and the "life market"); 2) the expansion of e-learning (if the biggest obstacle to young women studying at the tertiary level is to do with family honour, then bringing the classroom to the home is a neat way of side stepping the issue); and 3) expanding part-time work (although I have my doubts about this, part time work being a byword for poor pay and few rights, even in the mature economies of the world).

## A LONG WAY TO GO

The causes of women's security, education and literacy clearly have a long way to go. Part of this, notably the low qualitative aspect of education, belongs to the broader regional education agenda and is not specific to females. In the context of the present resource surge, born of higher oil rents, there needs to be more of a debate about which sectors should do best allocatively — both between education and other areas and within education. Why is it assumed that higher education is the key to national development and poverty eradication? The fashion for creating knowledge cities in the region threatens to choke rival sectors of resources. Dr. Masri shows how desperately these are required in the vocational sector, and in addressing rural female illiteracy.

One specifically academic contribution would be to generate more research from a public policy perspective, an approach sadly lacking in the Arab region, especially since the untimely death of Nazih Ayubi well over a decade ago. Process tracing decision-making might be one way around the low "freedom ceiling" that self-consciously hinders gender research.

One thing that the paper brings out is that there is no room for pessimism. The present does not merit it, and besides, pessimism never put food on the table.

# **Chapter Five**

# **Arab Commentary Papers**

Ebtesam Abdul-Rahman Rashed Raed Safadi

# Foreign Commentary Papers

Frances Lund
Emma Murphy

### Ebtesam Abdul-Rahman Rashed

The paper, as suggests by its title, focuses on the current situation of Arab women and the impact of globalisation on their economic security. It raises the following question: Is globalisation a blessing or curse? In other words, has globalisation boosted women's economic security, improving their participation in economic life, or has it contributed to the deterioration of women's conditions? The paper addresses two basic topics:

The first is the conditions of women in the Arab region compared to those of men in terms of rates of literacy, enrolment in different stages of education and the type of education in which women tend to specialise. The paper points out that there is a predominant stereotype of women as having weak educational and training skills. It also blames the traditional mindset that believes that women, regardless of high skills and qualifications, are not competent or efficient enough to occupy certain positions. Such notions negatively affect women's opportunities to gain access to appropriate jobs at reasonable salaries. The growth rates achieved in the Arab region, however, were not followed up regarding this topic to the extent that we can have a full account of the reasons behind the increasing rise of unemployment rates among women over the years, in spite of the fact that the rate of educated women has been on the rise over the recent years.

The second topic addressed is how to practically assess the influence of globalisation on the share of women in the labour market. As far as this topic is concerned, I have the following remarks.

For the assessment of the impact of globalisation on of the share of women in the labour market, is important to base studies on a statistical model that has been applied in a certain number of countries. Presenting a standard model that, due to a shortage of information, depends on only a few variables is cause for reservation with regards to results. For instance, dropping the variable of the education of women from the standard model leaves results unreliable, as the model in such a case overlooks the factor of skills and capabilities, which plays a key role in either strengthening or weakening the position of women in the labour market in the light of globalisation that tends to value highly-skilled workers and marginalises the under-qualified. In other words, the standard model should not ignore the strong link between women's education and the impact of globalisation. There are also contradictory results in connection to the growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as well as the impact of the other variables of globalisation (e.g. trade and foreign investment) on the share of women in the labour market. The above factors make it difficult to answer the question "Is globalisation a blessing or a curse?" or "Has globalisation enhanced the economic security of women?" In this regard the paper under consideration offers but a brief summary rather than considering the status of women and the impact of globalisation from all aspects — especially the economic performance of the countries in question. The status of woman there, and the level of openness of concerned economies to the world economy. Thus, the results presented in the paper are ambiguous and unclear. For instance, the contradiction in the link between the growth of GDP and the share of women in the labour market is not mentioned because growth rates in these countries are not discussed. Are growth rates in these countries high or low? If the growth rate is high, the positive correlation in an increase in women's share of the labour market are self-explanatory. If low, we have to identify the

economic sectors that achieved growth and the level of their openness to the outside markets. If neutral, we have to know the reasons: Is there an economic growth that generates job opportunities and another that does not?

I shall try to answer the main question raised by the paper: Has globalisation boosted women's economic security through improving their share in the labour market, or has it contributed to the deterioration of conditions for women? My approach will centre on available data on the conditions of Arab women with regards to all aspects addressed by the paper in the first topic, in addition to reports published on the influence of globalisation on the economies of the Third World (with the Arab region clearly being part of the Third World).

Today, all world countries have been influenced by globalisation either positively or negatively; no country in the world is able to isolate its economy from the impacts of globalisation. Three decades after the emergence of globalisation, the rate of economic growth in most developing countries — including our Arab region — is still far below the level that can enhance the economic empowerment of the people, especially marginalised and weak sectors, such as women. Published reports on economic growth rates in many countries of the Arab region indicate that achieved growth rates since 1990s are more than the general average (between 3.2 and 5.5 per cent). However, unemployment rates are consistently increasing, especially among women. Poverty is also common among this category of the population. So Arab countries are in need of increasing levels of investment to bolster economic growth rates, which can enable them to generate more job opportunities and absorb increasing unemployment, especially of young men and women.

The impact of globalisation on women in the Arab region is worse than on women in any other region in the Third World because of the weak economies in the region, and existing policies, in addition to the specificity of women's complex situation. Globalisation has resulted in the decline of women's contribution to economic activity, entailing a deterioration of women's economic security. We can summarize the negative impacts of globalisations on the economic conditions of women as follows:

- 1. The predominance of liberal economic theory, represented in the liberalisation of trade and an expanded scope for direct and indirect foreign investment, is supposed, to lead to increased economic growth and development according to economic logic. Liberalisation should also result in the generation of more job opportunities, with women getting an equal share, according to market theory, thus enhancing the level of women's contribution to economic activities. Reality, however, is totally different, globalisation has not resulted in real development for the Arab region. In fact, Globalisation may have ensured better opportunities for growth but without generating additional job opportunities, because the impact has been on improving economic policies and depending mainly on advanced technologies and skilled labor.
- 2. Many Arab countries enacted economic reform programmes on their economies during the 1990s, counting on the liberation of trade, privatisation, and the maximisation of the role of the private sector as means to achieve higher economic growth. A shrinking of the public sector and the withdrawal of the state from the economic and service domains was a result of the economic policies related to Globalisation. At the same time, the indigenous private sector was not able to lead the development process because

of lack of experience on the one hand and preference for short-term investments and quick profits on the other. Many women lost their jobs in the public sector, while the private sector claimed that the recruitment of women was more costly than that of men. The private sector also looks upon women as being less efficient than men.

According to reports released by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in March 2008, unemployment rates among females in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region were 18.6 percent and 16.5 percent respectively in 1997, against 11.5 percent and 10.1 percent among males in the same year. In 2007, unemployment rates among females in the same regions were 15.5 percent and 16.2 percent respectively against 10.3 percent and nine percent among males.

With regards to rates of unemployment among young women, the figure in the MENA region in 1997 stood at 33.5 percent and 30.3 percent respectively, against 23.3 percent and 22.2 percent among young males in the same year. Similarly, unemployment rates among young women remained high in 2007, at 29.5 percent and 32.3 percent respectively against 21.1 percent and 21.2 percent among young men. These high rates of unemployment among females in general and young women in particular reveal certain facts: first, available job opportunities for females are limited in view of economic changes, especially in the public sector; second, the weak skills and capacities of women curbed the demand for them in the labour market, which recognises only skilled labour; third, discrimination is practiced by many employers against women, as they prefer the recruitment of men over women.

- 3. The distribution of women across economic sectors reveals another aspect of the deterioration of the economic security of Arab women. Women labourers are mainly working in agriculture, industry, and services. According to the ILO report released in March 2008, the percentage of women in these three sectors in MENA were as follows:
  - I. agriculture, 28.4 percent and 31.2 percent respectively in 1997, increasing to 31 percent and 32.6 percent in 2007.
  - II. In industry, 20 percent and 19.1 percent respectively in 1997, declining to 18.8 percent and 15.2 percent in 2007.
  - III. In services, 51.6 percent and 49.7 percent respectively in 1997, registering to 50.2 percent and 52.2 percent in 2007.

### The above-mentioned figures reveal the following:

- In the agricultural sector the percentage of women working increased, reflecting a serious deterioration in the conditions of women in the labour market along with a shortage of available jobs in other sectors. At the same time, sectors that do not require high skills will attract more women in the years to come if women fail to empower themselves through education or other means. The high presence of women in the agricultural sector (more than two thirds of labour in the sector in some Arab countries like Yemen) results in increased poverty among women due to the low productivity and revenues of this sector.
- In the services sector, there is a slight improvement with regards to the recruitment of

- women, and it attracts the largest pool of female labour of all sectors. Yet in most Arab countries this sector suffers from low productivity and revenues. Hence employment in this section does not significantly enhance or guarantee the economic security of women.
- In the industrial sector, the percentage of women working is low. Released figures reveal a decline in the share of women in this sector, which is considered one of the most integrated and open sectors to world markets. Moreover, this sector has become heavily dependent on modern technologies, which replace unskilled labour. At the same time, this sector prefers recruitment of highly skilled men over women. Statistics here reveal the deterioration of skills and capabilities of women and their weak training and qualifications. In view of these facts, women's presence in this sector is declining and will remain so, unless women manage to become educated in state-of-the-art technologies and thus measure up to harsh competition in world markets.
- According to the ILO report of March 2008, the share of women in the labour market in the Arab region increased over the period 1997-2007 to almost match that of men. However, this does not mean that the gender gap in terms of economic security has been bridged, especially in view of other considerations such as the type of jobs taken and salaries paid. According to statistics of the World Bank, around 80 percent of working Arab women are in low-income jobs, because of illiteracy, weak training and low qualifications. This means that the economic security of women is deteriorating. Meanwhile, women's share in irregular jobs in the informal sector — that lack all aspects of security — remains high compared to men, which is in essence a function of limited job opportunities elsewhere. In fact, a large percentage of women are working in irregular jobs in the informal sector.

Globalisation, which demands highly skilled and qualified manpower, has resulted in a further deterioration of women's already precarious economic conditions.

### Raed Safadi

### WHY GLOBALISATION IS NOT THE CULPRIT

Ask Ahmed and Aisha, an average man and an average woman in the Arab world, what they think happened terms of Arab women's empowerment during the last decade. Chances are you will get two asymmetric answers. Ahmed will almost certainly "complain" that openness and advances in information and communication technologies have given a fillip to women's causes across the Arab world. He will point to "freedoms" Arab women have acquired: legal, political and economic. Aisha, on the other hand, will lament her status and that of her sisters. She will point to continued inequalities vis-à-vis the law, access to opportunity and economic participation, and inequality of voice. Can both Ahmed and Aisha be right? And if they are both right, who or what is to blame for Aisha's continued woes (and for Ahmed's complaints)? These are, in a nutshell, the main questions that the excellent paper by Dr. Al-Shamsi and Dr. Ali are trying to answer.

To better understand Ahmed and Aisha's views, Freedom House has conducted a survey on Arab women's rights (http://freedomhouse.org/). In the survey, each country receives a numerical rating for five broad categories of women's rights. The ratings give a clear picture of the main obstacles facing women in a particular country and can be used as a guide to formulate policies to advance women's equality. The five categories are: 1) non-discrimination and access to justice; 2) autonomy, security, and freedom of the person; 3) economic rights and equal opportunity; 4) political rights and civic voice; and 5) social and cultural rights.

In rating country performance, Freedom House has relied on a universal standard of comparability based in part on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The survey measures both the de jure and de facto status of women's rights in all the above-listed five categories. The ratings range from a low of one (indicating miserable performance) to a high of five (reflecting the strongest performance). The survey covers developments up to the end of 2003. The results of the survey are reported in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Arab women, what equalities?

	Non- discrimination and access to justice	Autonomy, security and freedom of the person	Economic rights and equal opportunity	Political rights and civic voice	Social and cultural rights
Algeria	3.0	2.4	2.8	3.0	2.9
Bahrain	2.2	2.3	2.9	2.1	2.8
Egypt	3.0	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.4
Iraq	2.7	2.6	2.8	2.2	2.1
Jordan	2.4	2.4	2.8	2.8	2.5
Kuwait	1.9	2.2	2.9	1.4	2.8

Lebanon	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.9
Libya	2.3	2.1	2.3	1.2	1.8
Morocco	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.0
Oman	2.0	2.1	2.7	1.2	2.1
Palestine	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.9
Qatar	2.0	2.1	2.8	1.7	2.5
Saudi Arabia	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.0	1.6
Syria	2.7	2.2	2.8	2.2	2.3
Tunisia	3.6	3.4	3.1	2.8	3.3
UAE	1.7	2.1	2.8	1.2	2.3
Yemen	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.6	2.1

Source: http://freedomhouse.org/Results

As the results reported in Table 1 show, rare are the instances where an Arab country receives a score of three in any of the categories — a rating that reflects an imperfect adherence to universally accepted rights standards. Some countries receive ratings in the range of the lowest possible score — 1.0. Two countries consistently earn the highest scores in the region: Tunisia and Morocco. However, Tunisia scores low in the political rights and civic voice category. In all other categories, Tunisia scores highest in the region. The country with the lowest scores in all categories is Saudi Arabia.

So it appears that Aisha is right and Ahmed has no reason to complain.

The findings in Al-Shamsi and Aly's paper actually concur with those of Freedom House. Their paper provides convincing quantitative and qualitative evidence that while Arab women have benefited significantly from public investments in education and health as reflected in high rates of literacy and life expectancy, and low fertility rates, these investments have not been translated into economic benefits for women and for their society as reflected in low female labour force participation. According to the World Bank, if female labour force participation had attained their predicted levels (on the basis of existing levels of female education, fertility and age structure), per capita GDP growth in the Arab world during the 1990s would have been 2.6 percent per year instead of 1.9 percent (World Bank, 2004). While traditionally gender equality issues in the Arab world have been examined through a social, anthropological or political lens, we now find out that they in addition exact a high economic cost on the economies of the region.

Inadvertently, Al-Shamsi and Aly give Ahmed arguments to support his view: the globalisation process has opened doors for women to assume their rightful place in society, but we know from Aisha and her sisters that this process has not translated into meaningful achievements — at the very least — on the economic front as Arab women continue to face a hostile market for their labour. Can we blame globalisation for this outcome? Al-Shamsi and Aly answer in the affirmative. I say that while the authors may have established a correlation between the

globalisation process and gender equality, they have not established causation. The rest of my comment will focus on this critical part of Al-Shamsi and Aly's investigation.

The world has undergone impressive political and economic transformations in the last three decades. The widely used term "globalisation" describes the forces that have produced rapid growth in world trade (at twice the rate of world output), even faster expansion of foreign direct investment, the integration of the world's financial markets, and the apparent acceleration in global diffusion of new technologies. The benefits from these forces can be large and they come from, inter alia, better allocation of resources and an increase in economic growth as investment expands. However, they depend heavily on the set of domestic policies pursued by individual governments.

Global integration was also quite advanced in the late 19th and early 20th century; but the world is not simply returning to the status quo ante - bellum. Important differences mark the new globalising world economy. The steamship and telegraph were the impetus to the earlier wave of integration, but the new one rests on a technological revolution of another order — in transport, communications and information processing. Movements of unskilled labour may be more restricted now than a century ago, but managerial and professional labour is highly mobile. Capital mobility has reached unprecedented levels with financial market deregulation, computerisation, and a stream of new financial instruments. Multinational corporations have achieved a truly global presence, spanning the full range of economic activities, and the number of countries with home grown multinationals has increased significantly.

New players have entered the stage or are readying their entrance. The benefits of globalisation, no longer confined to a handful of economic and military superpowers, are in principle, accessible to all countries. They are also, in principle, accessible to all men and women, skilled or unskilled. It is also the case that globalisation has given rise to real concerns about the pace and depth of economic and social changes it has brought in its wake. It is all the more important, therefore, that we get the diagnosis of the root causes of those changes right. Globalisation is held responsible for far more than the facts warrant on several economic, social and environmental fronts, including — as the paper by Al-Shamsi and Aly shows — the gender front.

This "assignment problem" in turn creates a two-fold risk: on the one hand, prescribing the wrong policy instrument to legitimate concerns; on the other hand, compounding problems by failing to address their root cause. Arresting the globalisation process through protectionist measures is hardly the best means of promoting effective gender equality and empowering women in the Arab world. It is, however, a fail-proof way of inflicting real pain on them.

Where matters concern new economic opportunities that globalisation provides for woman, it is, as the authors of the paper clearly show, easy to advance a competing hypothesis: some women will benefit from globalisation and some will be hurt as their status will improve in certain respects but not in others. The findings of this wide body of research should have received a critical review by the authors whose main objective is actually to add to this rich literature.

A number of studies have found a negative impact on women from economic globalisation as the process has confined them to low pay, low status, often part-time jobs, and reinforced

their subordination and the de-valorisation of their work (see for example Enloe, 1990; Pettman, 1996; Sassen, 1998; and Moghadam, 1999). The main culprit here appears to be multinational enterprises that seek cheap, flexible labour to fill their worst paying jobs in their offshore production operations. This has resulted in the exclusion of women from more stable and higher-paying jobs in heavy industry. Research has also found that competition from foreign firms has undermined women's efforts to establish local microenterprises. Furthermore, it appears that the structural adjustment and liberalisation policies that have driven the globalisation process have had a disproportionate impact on women. More often than not, in the wake of these policies were reductions in public expenditures that meant fewer jobs in the public sector where women are over-represented, as well as cuts in social programmes that benefit women.

Studies that have found a positive impact of economic globalisation on women centred on enhanced opportunities for non-household incomes. However, this has proven to be a mixed blessing since "on the one hand, they (women) are constituted as an invisible and disempowered class of workers ... On the other hand, the access to wages and salaries (even if low), the growing feminisation of the job supply, and the growing feminisation of business opportunities ... alter the gender hierarchies in which they find themselves." (Sassen, 1996: 26).

The authors also miss a critical dimension in the debate on globalisation and women. Absent from their analysis is the idea that the globalisation process is not just about opening up to trade and investment (important as they are), it is also about the free movement of ideas and ideals across borders. And herein lies in my own view, the most critical aspect of the globalisation process in as far as women are concerned, or more precisely in as far as society at large is concerned: globalisation provides for a more fertile environment to effect information exchange and cultural transformation that improves the status of women more than - its opposite - isolationism and retrenchment. Access to information is the first step to discover new options and opportunities and to ignite and nurture demands for change. Indeed and as Inglehart and Norris (2003) argue, economic growth is a necessary though not a sufficient condition for improving women's status in society; deep and sustained changes in social norms, beliefs and values are also necessary to bolster women's roles in society and politics. Inglehart and Norris also find that industrial and post-industrial nations are more likely to support gender equality than agrarian nations. Are Arab countries really open to information? Political freedom and freedom of the press is circumscribed in the majority of Arab states, and access to the Internet controlled.\*

This has important implications to our present analysis, not just in terms of the qualitative analysis that the authors develop, but equally importantly in terms of the adjustment that is required to the empirical model that the authors use. If information is a critical dimension in the globalisation process, and at the same time is a determining factor in triggering behavioural change in society, then omitting the role of information from the analysis would certainly bias the results.

Let us assume that somehow the dam restricting the flow of information into the Arab world crumbles. Will this serve to redress gender inequality in the region? Part of the answer lies in the extent to which, and the speed with which, the "adjustment cycle" of economies

<sup>\*</sup> Of course, the degree of information-restricting policies across the Arab world is different from one country to another.

and societies react to imported ideas and ideals, a challenge that applies just as much to governments as to firms and individuals. This in turn raises further questions, such as whether market-based initiatives will suffice to encourage required changes in attitudes towards women, or whether some form of government intervention will also be needed, and if so in what form?

For example, studies that have examined the impact of globalisation on jobs and wages have found that increased imports from developing countries place downward pressure on the wages of industrialised country workers. These studies agree that adverse labour market developments affecting low-skilled workers in industrial countries are primarily related to technology and changes in the organisational structures of firms, rather than to import competition from developing countries, a phenomenon economists refer to as "skill-biased technological change". This describes technology-driven shifts in labour demand away from less skilled workers and towards more skilled workers. Such shifts have resulted in increased income inequality in some countries, particularly those with more flexible labour markets, and higher unemployment among unskilled workers in other countries, especially those characterised by greater labour market rigidities. Are similar forces at work in Arab states placing women at a disadvantage? Are we observing "gender-biased technological change"?

What about the role of Arab social institutions, such as norms, traditions and family law (including marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance laws) in perpetuating gender-biased outcomes? Discriminatory practices through social institutions are often hidden, but nevertheless are an important source of gender inequality, especially in countries with weak formal institutions and governance structures — a condition that plagues most Arab economies. Fortunately, we can discern progress on this front in some Arab countries. For example, efforts are currently underway in Tunisia to change the institutional frameworks that limit women's employment and skills, and thereby their contribution to growth, and these efforts are paying off — currently 30-50 per cent of judges, physicians and schoolteachers are now women.

Having dealt with my primary concern over the thesis of the paper, I now turn to the econometric techniques that the paper uses to show that globalisation is inimical to women's empowerment. My main concern here is related to: 1) the omitted variables (openness to information and social norms and institutions referred to above); and 2) some of the problems that are inherent in the explanatory variables with which the authors chose to carry their investigation: trade openness (GLOB1), openness to capital (GLOB2), and stock market openness (GLOB3).

Actually, the globalisation measures (GLOB1, GLOB2 and GLOB3) that the authors use to capture some globalisation aspects measure outcomes rather than policy. A well-known problem with these measures of openness for a given country is that they depend not only on underlying trade, investment and capital control policies adopted by the country in question, but also on the geographical and economic characteristics of a country. All things equal, countries with large populations and diversified economies will trade less (as a proportion of GNP) and attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and capital flows more than small countries. In other words, for any given policy stance, variation in country size (population or land area), or geographical location, is most likely to affect the economic outcomes. One solution is to actually measure the policy stance itself; thus, in the area of trade, average tariffs and frequency of non-tariff barriers should replace GLOB1. Regulatory policies that restrict

FDI or capital are currently the subject of major international efforts at the OECD to measure them quantitatively using advanced econometric techniques. Until these efforts pay off, the authors will need to correct any outcome measure they use for relevant country characteristics.

Moving forward, we need to mount public education campaigns to stress that gender equality is not just for the sake of women; it is also for the welfare of the family, for the growth of the economy, and for the wellbeing of society as a whole. We need to revisit the institutions and the laws and regulations that have institutionalised discrimination against women in the Arab world. We need to promote labour market legislations that would create a level playing field between men and women. Addressing gender discrimination should also involve men much more than is currently the case. What good would come to women if guarantees of equal rights are written into the constitution, or national legislation (as is the case in the majority of Arab countries), but in no case are such guarantees effectively enforced by state authorities?

Too many reform programmes fail due to their heavy focus on women's needs, overlooking the fact that societies based on persistent discrimination generate advantages that men will not sacrifice easily. Engaging men in reform and providing incentives are important. Such a debate is now taking place in Kenya in the context of reforming discriminatory inheritance laws. Why not in the Arab world?

We all need to exercise continued vigilance in ensuring that our legitimate concerns over genderbiased employment practices are dealt with through appropriate policies and institutions and are not misdiagnosed, lest we risk throwing the baby out with the bath water.

I hope I have convinced you why Ahmed and Aisha are both right!

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#### Frances Lund

This paper by Dr. Fatima Al-Shamsi and Dr. Hassan Aly deals with the economic aspects of women's human security. Part I gives an overview of the process of globalisation, presenting different sides of the debate as to whether it is mainly advantageous or disadvantageous for women's economic status. The introduction confirms that the Arab region has far lower rates of women's participation in the labour market compared to other world regions (Chen et al, 2005). Part II provides a useful literature overview of gender inequality and discrimination in the workplace, mentioning the importance of the institutional approach to addressing gender inequality.

Part III deals with the status of women in a number of Arab states, showing the gender disparity in literacy and enrolment numbers at different levels of education, for all women and men, and for younger women and men. All countries show improvement over time, but with steep variations among countries. The paper shows how women in higher education are over-represented in fields of study that are likely to earn lower incomes. There is indeed a large difference in male and female incomes. There is again huge variation between countries — from a ratio of 0.16 for Saudi Arabia (women earn 16 percent of what men earn) to a high 0.83 for Djibouti (women earn four fifths of what men earn), but with most countries falling in the range of 0.25 to 0.35

Part III also provides data on unemployment and on participation in different economic sectors, making the important point that women's participation in non-agricultural activities is low, but is high in unpaid contributions in family agricultural work. The public sector has been an important and secure employer for an increasing number of (mostly highly educated) women in a number of countries.

Two things would have enhanced Part III: 1) more assistance was needed to understand what accounts for the large differences between countries, and 2) the introduction indicated that advances that had been made in health for women since 1990 would be shown, but the paper does not provide this. One health indicator is given, for one year: life expectancy for 2005, in Table 2.

Part IV uses econometric methods in an attempt to assess the relationship between globalisation and female labour force participation, making the point that globalisation could increase or decrease women's employment. The authors use measures of trade openness, capital openness, GDP growth, and GDP per capita.

Because I felt uncomfortable with the authors' use of data in this section, I asked for help from a colleague, James Heintz, an expert in this area who has worked extensively on gendered analysis of Arab country employment data recently. There are some significant problems with the analysis:

1.Omitted variables. The authors hoped to include an indicator of female education as well, but could not do this because of lack of data, and are pursuing this aspect of their study. They could also try to include age distribution and fertility rates, as these might be determinants of women's labour force participation.

- 2. The authors are working with a very small number of observations for some of the seven countries, which makes regression work unreliable.
- 3.In the pooled regression the authors combine all countries. However, the earlier Part III made clear that countries are very different in terms of how they respond to the different variables in the equation, which makes it questionable as to whether pooling is justified.

I would suggest that the other sections of this paper are stronger than Part III. It might be more useful to concentrate on a more detailed analysis of areas dealt with in the earlier section, such as participation in different economic sectors, and on other gaps identified below.

The final section of the paper draws out implications for policy reform and intervention and makes some very interesting points. I will integrate my comments on these with overall comments on the analysis.

First, the authors have tried hard to work with what they acknowledge to be gaps in the data sources. To address issues of women's employment and work-related security, worldwide and in Arab states, there must be urgent pressure for better official statistics. Women's work, and gender disparities in work, has to be made more visible. WIEGO's experience with participating in the improvement of statistics on women's employment has been that the demand for better data has to come from potential user groups and pressure groups.

Second, analysing data by gender is a good first step. However, there also needs to be a class variable built in to the analysis of gender segmentation of the labour market. It is widely known that globalisation and other forms of social change have offered new opportunities for a number of women, particularly those who are better off and members of social elites. It has also opened up work opportunities for many poorer women, but they may work hard all their lives, yet remain trapped in poverty because of appalling work conditions. It is not either a blessing or a curse: it will be different things for women in different religions, communities and classes.

Thus we need to look more at the conditions under which women are able to participate in the labour market, and at the quality of work that is found. We may want to push the analysis further:

- 1. Favourable inclusion (entry opportunity with potential for upward mobility and security, as suggested by Heintz, 2008).
- 2. Unfavourable inclusion (work with low pay, no prospects of improvement, and work that puts one's own health and that of one's children at risk).
- 3. Inclusion at the expense of other women (where women's employment depends on their own employment, at low pay, of other women, such as domestic workers and child minders).

Third, the paper demonstrates the significant improvements that have been made in women's education. An important policy issue is: How can improved educational access be translated into more secure access to employment? What are the barriers? The authors have very good ideas about what the market could do by way of intervening. Are there also barriers at the level of household, community and cultural or religious norms that are themselves barriers (the "family related reason" mentioned only briefly by the authors)? If there are, how might these be addressed? What could the state do to help reconcile women's need for employment with their simultaneous need for support with childcare?

With regards to the roles of the state and the private sector: How would or could active labour market policies be designed that could influence these norms and enable more women to— those who wish to — "build their own entrepreneurial activities and start their own projects" as recommended by the authors? If these activities are mediated by existing political structures and other forms of patronage, then such atomised and private ventures can encourage and consolidate clientalism and reinforce the subordinate position of women, as suggested by Destremau (2007).

All of WIEGO's work with organisations of women workers, globally, points to the paramount importance of strengthening women's organisations and underpinning this with the improvement of data about women and men in the labour force, to enhance both visibility and voice.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have been allowed to make comments on this paper, which raises an array of important issues. I hope that my comments will be helpful.

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#### **Emma Murphy**

This excellent paper offers us a justifiably rather gloomy picture of the impact of globalisation on women's status in the Arab world. For me, there is enormous significance in a sentence found towards the end of the paper: " ... the analysis also highlights the fact that Arab countries continue to suffer from gender bias and the low status of women." What this paper does so admirably is demonstrate that the prevailing gender bias in Arab countries actively diminishes their collective efforts to engage with the tumultuous processes of change inherent to globalisation, not to mention their achievement of more conventional developmental objectives. Whilst not wishing to replicate capitalism's tendency as an economic system to excessively reduce women to the status of an economic resource, I have to agree that there can be little doubt that women are indeed an under-utilised component of national and regional efforts to generate greater prosperity and personal security for all. The paper further shows that in this era of globalisation the case has never been stronger for realising the potential of women to contribute to the family, to society and to the nation through reconsideration of how they are educated, trained, employed and supported.

There is little doubt that education plays a role in enabling women to find gainful employment, to generate family income, and to contribute to national growth. As an educator myself, it will come as no surprise that I am particularly intrigued by the educational conundrums of the Arab world. A World Bank report published earlier this year entitled, The Road Not Travelled: Educational Reform in the Middle East and Africa, suggests that understanding the problems associated with female education in the Arab world requires addressing the broader failure to establish secure relationships between education and economic growth, education and employment and — perhaps most crucially — the quality of education provided. Over the last 40 years, the Arab world has seen an average of around five percent of a nation's GDP and 20 percent of government budgets directed into education: twice the investment made by China and with only Malaysia surpassing the figure from among the so-called Asian Tigers. Yet the economic benefits associated with an educated workforce have not been similarly forthcoming. The report argues convincingly that it is not from lack of investment that education suffers, but from a failure to deliver quality at the secondary and tertiary sectors, a bias overall towards the arts, humanities and social sciences, uneven and unregulated participation by the private sector, and a basic level of inequity in educational provision. Enabling women to reach the standards of educational attainment, which is theirs by right and which can lead to their making a full economic contribution, requires educational reforms whose scope entails a new vision for public provision and that presents a massive challenge for both public policy and society as a whole.

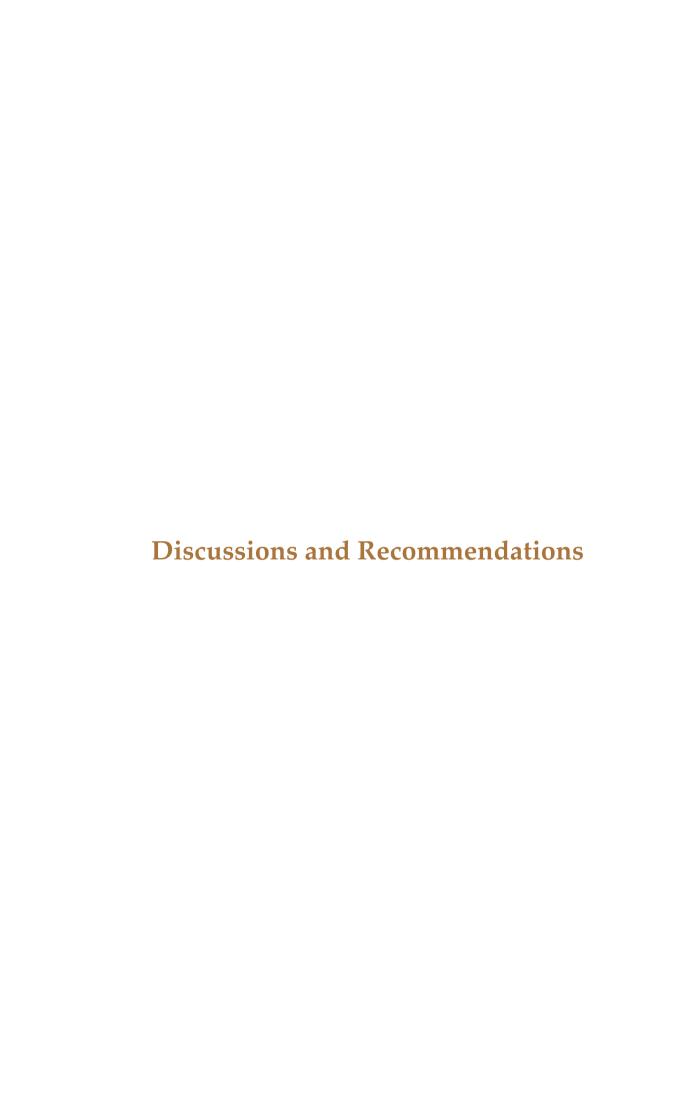
Such a vision brings us to questions regarding the social valorisation of education for women. As previously mentioned, the paper rightly addresses the economic value to be added through educating a female workforce, both for a national economy but for many of us more recognisably as a means of generating family income at a time when costs are rising across the board. The Arab Human Development Reports, to which the authors here have referred, engage us with different conceptions of valorising education: as a means of stimulating (rather than discouraging) innovation, pushing the frontiers of social and political organisation, and empowering individuals as much as societies. Discussing these often controversial aspects of female education can be difficult, but one can argue that only through having such conversations can the equal and adequate education of

women become an embedded feature of the region. I would argue that women's education is necessary not just because it is — as this paper shows — essential for economic growth in the current era, but because it is good for social growth, for civilisational progress — call it what you will. Accommodating the demands made by globalisation, and extracting the benefits offered by it, does not mean wholesale social subordination to the cultures of capitalism, but it does require cultural adaptation and renovation.

Never has this been more important precisely because globalisation has so many and so diverse features and demands. The paper ends with a final statement that raises perhaps the most crucial component of both our educational and employment futures— mine and my children's as much as those of Arab women. The current era of globalisation is driven by the information revolution. The exponential growth in the capacity of semi-conductors generated a compression of time and space, bringing the global into the local (and vice versa) in real-time, and massively increasing the role played by information generation as the core of economic activity. The Arab world was initially slow to embrace this revolution, not least because the technologies themselves, and the companies that produced and reproduced them, were initially located well beyond Arab borders. In recent years, the digital gap has been narrowed at an accelerating rate. However, today the Arab world remains differentially networked (not only in terms of the internet but more generally in terms of the panoply of technologies that support knowledge economies).

Even in those countries in which the state has invested heavily in IT-based development strategies (such as Jordan, Egypt or Kuwait), or in those where private telecom firms have developed global leadership roles (the UAE or Saudi Arabia), there are still fundamental problems with inadequate infrastructure, with the uncertainties of cultural responses, with uneven patterns of access and most crucially with a dependence on technologies generated elsewhere in the world. Potentially, these new technologies offer tremendous opportunities for Arab women to overcome some of the problems they currently face regarding education and employment. Indeed, many have done so in a staggering and inspiring manner. Saudi businesswomen have used the Internet to establish micro-financing companies; Palestinian women have used it to gain educational qualifications. Satellite television has enabled women to find a voice and to debate their difficulties and dilemmas. Mobile telecoms take education, information and business facilities into rural, unconnected areas, reaching women who have no transport or landlines to support their efforts to generate family income. Yet what we know so far about Arab women's engagement is limited. We urgently need to know more about the potential for these new technologies to transform the lives of women specifically, the obstructions to their doing so, and the means for combining public policy, the private sector and individual agency to make it happen.

On a final note, the paper delighted in its viewing women as active agents, not merely passive recipients of government policy or social constraint. Over and over again, Arab women have demonstrated their resilience, their capacity for adaptation, their ambitions for their societies, and their determination to effect positive change. Self-awareness and confidence that the challenges of globalisation not only should but can be met are the greatest assets of Arab women today.



# POINTS RAISED DURING THE CONFERENCE BY ARAB AND FOREIGN PANELISTS AND ATTENDEES ON CHAPTER THREE

One foreign panelist confirmed that the problem of patriarchal society is not a problem restricted to the Arab world only but exists in the West as well. He highlighted that male hegemony is clearly present in institutions, especially military institutions. Another foreign panelist raised the question on how far the experience of Arab women is taken into consideration by governments while drafting social and economic policies.

The panelists underlined a number of other issues, which can be summarised as follows:

- The importance of economic security.
- The significance of changing the image of women in Arab communities from mere blind followers of men to equal human beings participating with men. This can be done through changing cultural and social heritage patterns.
- The importance of formulating an approach that takes into account the rights of women and that should not look upon women as passive recipients of services but as participants in the decision-making process.
- The importance of addressing the issue of domestic violence, which used to be considered an issue not worthy of intervention under the claim that it is a private matter.
- The importance of setting up a mechanism for following up on measures taken to contain or address gender gap between numbers of men and women in the labour market, and to assess outcomes. Panelists indicated that this gender gap in the market is not confined to the Arab world, but is present at regional and international levels, and even in the UN itself and its peacekeeping units.
- The panelists agreed on the importance of giving training to judges and enrich their knowledge and understanding of issues related to women.
- The panelists also agreed that human development is difficult to achieve in the absence of the participation of half of society, namely women, in the processes of decision taking and policymaking.
- To achieve sustainable development, certain procedures should be taken including: giving more attention to health and education; the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; enlightened interpretation of religion; avoiding isolation of women away from social and political life.
- Some participants disagreed with what was mentioned in the paper about the injustice women faced in history, saying that women are in part responsible for this injustice by their acceptance of such a status.
- Calling on amending laws and legislation in order to give women their rights and ensures fair access to available opportunities.
- Some participants were of the view that social security leads to economic empowerment, and finally to political empowerment.
- The necessity to take care of female workers in the informal sector, especially poor female workers.
- Women should be encouraged to take their appropriate positions amongst decision makers at all levels.
- With regard to the achievement of the MDGs in the Arab region, one panelist said that studies indicate that the Gulf area would be able to achieve many MDGs by the year 2015, except those related to gender and environmental affairs, while other countries in the Arab region will not achieve any of the goals by the assigned deadline.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON CHAPTER THREE

- 1. The quality of education should be assessed, and not only in terms of enrolment rates.
- 2. Link social policies to economic ones.
- 3. Work towards ensuring the availability of comprehensive social insurance for women, giving more attention to aged and working women.
- 4. The state should continue to provide health and educational services, and this is one of its key roles.
- 5. A rights-based perspective should be adopted in analysing social policies.
- 6. Amending laws and redrafting them in a way that can assure the rights of women.
- 7. Expanding the participation of the private sector in implementing social policies.
- 8. Open the door for enlightened interpretations by scholars specialised in interpreting religious texts.
- 9. Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and underlining the importance of this.
- 10. Adopting positive discrimination as a policy supportive of women.
- 11. Establishing an Arab Women Committee on International Humanitarian Law (Tunisia).
- 12. Calling for adopting a rights-based approach, gender approach and participatory approach through which social policies can be formulated that take into considerations the interests of women.
- 13. Conducting studies that link between the concept of human security and the perspective of gender.
- 14. The necessity to broaden the scope of political and social dialogue on the role of women.
- 15. Both equality and empowerment should be considered as methods of reform.
- 16. Conducting research that takes gender into account.
- 17. Studying the reasons of violence against women.
- 18. Studying the conditions of women in the family in the Arab world.
- 19. Training and raising the awareness of judges on women-related issues and giving access to women to work in the judicial field.
- 20. Calling on women to be more confident and strong willed.
- 21. Studying social priorities and backing women's efforts to gain access to resources, healthcare and educational services, and in assuming decision taking posts.
- 22. Discussing the conditions of immigrant Arab women and studying the position of working immigrant Arab women.
- 23. Urging countries to adopt a balanced gender-responsive approach.
- 24. Adopting a framework for following up and evaluating social policies and linking them to the international frameworks, such as the MDGs.
- 25. Studying the impact of privatisation on social policies and women.
- 26. Studying the conditions of working women in the informal and agricultural sectors so appropriate social policies can be formulated and established.
- 27. Training women on the use of information technology and modern telecommunications.
- 28. Working to change the image of women in the media in a positive way.
- 29. Adopting social policies aimed at backing the achievement by countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) of the MDGs, especially the goal No. three and the goal related to environment, and assisting medium-income countries to set up a framework for the implementation of the MDGs by the defined deadline.
- 30. Conducting a detailed study that separates between women who do not have their

- basic needs met and women who require further empowerment to put indicators to identify the needs of both categories.
- 31. Working towards establishing a clear strategy with governments and the adoption of a gender responsive approach.
- 32. Underlining the importance of the role of civil society organisations as a key partner in the process of development and women's empowerment.
- 33. Advocating for women in their quest to attain their rights as prescribed in national constitutions, international conventions and numerous laws and regulations of each country, while maintaining the local and regional identity of Arab Islamic countries.

## POINTS RAISED DURING THE CONFERENCE BY ARAB AND FOREIGN PANELISTS AND ATTENDEES ON CHAPTER FOUR

Panelists raised a number of problems facing the concept of gender equality in connection with the educational process. These problems can be summarized as follows:

- The dominance of patriarchal trends in society.
- The imbalance in the system of rights and duties.
- Nonconformity between social role and status.
- Society not responding to modern change.
- Legislation not amended in the way that can enable women to attain their rights.

Some were of the view that the educational system has to be renewed, as education at present is not attractive in Arab communities. More attention should be drawn to scientific research and knowledge, and the policies of admission to schools and universities should be amended making them more favourable to women, giving females access to specialisations confined in the past to males, and all forms of gender discrimination in curricula should be removed in order to restructure social roles.

One of the female panelists emphasised that efforts should focus at the beginning on societal culture, as it is the most serious challenge to women's security and education is just one of the components of this culture. She indicated that it was necessary for the conference to establish the outlines of how to study the impact of societal culture on women's security, and to address education as a part of this culture. She proposed conducting further research on three tracks that could push forward the issue of women's security:

- Study of societal and cultural aspects that negatively affect women's security, and to address these aspects through legal reform and academic research on their impacts.
- Study of gender issues in the entire educational system, including planning, programmes, systems and standards, etc.
- Study the implementation of laws, legislation and conventions. Conducting comparative studies on ruling administrative and legal mechanisms, and how they are run in order to develop their legal tools.

One Western female panelist referred to the rise in literacy among women, but said the gains scored did not result in an increase in women's human security due to the shortcomings in curricula on the one hand and the fact that education is but one component among many others which constitute the problem of human security. She indicated that IT and modern telecommunications have changed people's perception of time and space. Both men and women are now able to work whenever and wherever they want. This development does not only call for a redrafting of the education system and the work environment, but also redefining relations within the family. The flexibility introduced by technology into the work environment has been reflected in social norms and cultural and family practices, opening new horizons for women such as tele-marketing & managing large enterprises via the internet. For instance, women can have access to and benefit from lifelong educational programmes.

One other Western panelist focused in his comments on the importance of the increase of available allocations and resources for education at all levels. He also referred to the privileges of which women working in the informal sector are deprived. And he underscored the necessity of states following new policies that should include establishing new plans, having them implemented and evaluating them to know how far aspired to objectives are achieved. Finally, one panelist further underlined that attention should be given not only to the quantitative aspect of education (number of students enrolled), but also to the quality of education offered and how far it is achieving prescribed objectives.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON CHAPTER FOUR

- 1. Education should be attractive to both male and female students and should be more interactive and less rigid.
- 2. A positive approach in favour of women, that ensures employment of outstanding women and offers training for others, should be adopted.
- 3. Achieving gender equality in the field of education is vital.
- 4. Addressing the negative aspects of societal culture that prevent women from investing their education in the labour market.
- 5. Countering the predominant societal culture that makes women uninterested in education. This can be achieved through changing key concepts in this culture with regards to the education of women.
- 6. Ensuring the availability of elementary education for all.
- 7. Education should be considered a human right without discrimination on the grounds of gender.
- 8. Attention should be paid to education at all times, and especially in times of armed conflict.
- 9. Promoting the content and quality of education through analytical and qualitative indicators.
- 10. Education should play a role in developing the prevailing social mentality, especially in concepts related to women, their general role, position as human resources, and their contributions to development. At the same time, education should develop the role of citizens and look upon human resources equally, and according to efficiency.
- 11. Educated women should bear larger responsibility through the upbringing of their children and their social and professional roles.
- 12. The social sciences should introduce deeper concepts of development into curricula, especially in national education. Relevant topics include the importance of citizenship, equal responsibility among citizens, and social, economic, cultural and developmental responsibilities.
- 13. The necessity of mainstreaming the concept of women's security in the fields of education and training. Moreover, women's right to enjoy a prosperous life has to be asserted.

# POINTS RAISED DURING THE CONFERENCE BY ARAB AND FOREIGN PANELISTS AND ATTENDEES ON CHAPTER FIVE

Participants' comments addressed several issues, including:

#### i. Globalisation and its impact on women

One comment noted that globalisation is a feature of global change; that this change could be ongoing — in the beginning. However, countries, which know well the reasons behind the emergence of the phenomenon of globalisation and so prepare themselves well to deal with it, have benefited a lot from globalisation, as their economic growth rates increased and unemployment rates declined (including among women).

One Western panelist was of the view that globalisation had some negative impacts, which affected the economies of some countries in the region. According to this opinion, economic liberation and opening markets resulted in the closing of several factories, affecting also the employment of women to some extent. However, the same panelist believed that working women, including doctors and engineers, in the region have started to overcome these effects and are moving ahead on the right path.

Another group of panelists held the opposite opinion, believing that globalisation was a curse for Arab women. However, some foreign panelists stressed that the information revolution coupled with Globalisation has helped Arab women overcome many problems and enabled them to run their own businesses through the Internet without leaving their homes.

In the last comment during the session, another group of panelists referred to the fact that everybody should realise and admit that globalisation was neither totally good nor totally detrimental. Accordingly, countries should find an appropriate formula, each according to its conditions, in order to achieve growth and progress under globalisation, which has become a firm reality that others must adapt to.

#### ii The necessity to eliminate discriminatory policies against women

Some panelists said that women in advanced industrial states in the West are still suffering under discriminatory policies. They spoke of the necessity of finding out the roots of the problem and establishing adequate policies to achieve the aspired to goal of gender equality.

Some interventions by female participants and some Western male panelists indicated that there is imprecise information on the percentage of women working in the informal sector. Analysts assume that it is a high percentage, but the rights of these women are not taken into consideration, which might be one of the reasons for them being employed in huge numbers in this sector, which does not take into account the workers, rights. Such women have no common working rights, including insurance rights that make the workers feel a certain degree of security and economic safety.

One additional comment on the employment of women mentioned that the process of economic liberation led women to work in inferior or low-income jobs, thus resulting in further marginalisation of women instead of their empowerment.

A female panelist referred to the importance of states enacting regulations and establishing frameworks that support the work of women, including the principle of "equal pay for equal work" and some specific gender rights, including provisions on childcare in labour laws. The same panelist referred also to the difficulty of legislating childcare in some countries, where women represent a large section of the labour force. She wondered, "How can children and their rights be taken care of without this having a negative impact on women's access to the labour market? And how can men be encouraged to play a greater role in taking care of children, on the condition that none of the steps taken negatively affect the cohesion of the family as a social unit?" The panelist confirmed that it is very difficult to find answers to these questions, and so society as a whole should work on and find appropriate answers to them. Moreover, dialogue should be commenced between society and the state in order to find solutions to these problems, the panelist added.

A team of panelists highlighted the importance of creating a women-friendly atmosphere so women can have access to the labour market and solve the difficult equation facing many women, which is how to take care of the family and work to earn a living and contribute to economic development in a more active way.

Some panelists criticised the paper under consideration for not mentioning the percentage of women's contribution to GDP.

Others asked how salaries and privileges could be standardised between men and women.

#### iii. The necessity of encouraging women to set up their own enterprises

Some panelists promoted the idea of encouraging women to establish their own small enterprises, in order to overcome the problems facing them in gaining access to the labour market and to enhance their self-confidence.

The panelists also highlighted the importance of "business incubators" as a catalyst for promoting women's enterprises, as this is the nucleus of generating a generation of Arab businesswomen.

The importance of conducting studies to assess the performance of small enterprises run by businesswomen was also underlined in order to identify whether they were fruitful, or whether women still needed to enhance their skills in managing enterprizes.

The same team of foreign panelists indicated the importance of the quality of education offered to women, highlighting that some Arab countries are doing well in this regard, while others are not.

Foreign female panelists referred also to the advantages offered by satellite TV, which enabled others to listen to women's opinions. In fact, these channels are acting as the window through which women have access to the world and recount their problems and the deprivation of their rights and freedoms.

Others said it is important to focus more on women living in the countryside and in remote areas, as they are the most vulnerable.

They also indicated that the very fact of the AWO convening the conference meant the situation of Arab women is not that grim.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON CHAPTER FIVE

- 1. Underlining the importance of adopting policy and constitutional reforms with the objective of improving the economic conditions of women.
- 2. Emphasising that the increase of the rates of women's enrolment in education and the increase of rates of their employment and improving the their wages would positively contribute to human development.
- 3. Studying the impact of women's access to the labour market on their abilities to take decisions in the home.
- 4. Proposing alternative policies for the role played by the state in guaranteeing women's employment after the state's withdrawal from the economic sector.
- 5. Setting up links between those gathering statistics and those using them.
- 6. Supporting working women and creating a women-friendly environment in the workplace.
- 7. Studying the reasons behind women's withdrawal from the labour market and proposing solutions and supportive policies for women.
- 8. Linking social policies to economic policies and underlining the relation between the economic security of women and social security.
- 9. Making education relevant to the requirements of the labour market.
- 10. Preparing a balance sheet of the advantages and disadvantages of globalisation and establishing policies supportive of women.
- 11. Conducting researches and studies on women working in the informal sector and the economic role of women in the agricultural field.
- 12. Assessing the economic role of women.
- 13. Adopting studies that underline the value of the unpaid work done by women and its link to GDP, and using such studies in gaining recognition for the economic role of women.
- 14. Conducting studies to assess and evaluate small enterprises and their impact on the economic security of Arab women.
- 15. Studying the role of business incubators and their impact on women's access to the labour market as small investors.
- 16. Adopting special studies on the requirements and needs of Bedouin and rural women.
- 17. Setting up a model and assessing the results of women's education.
- 18. Studying the adverse relation between the rise in the rate of women's education and the low representation of women in the labour market.
- 19. Finding a mechanism for standardising the wages and salaries of men and women (equal pay for equal work).
- 20. Eradicating illiteracy among women at large.

# **Part Three**

# Health and Environmental Dimensions of Security

# Introduction

**Chapter Seven:** Gender and Climate Change in the Arab Region Balqis Osman-Elasha

**Commentary Papers** 

**Discussions and Recommendations** 

#### INTRODUCTION

It has become necessary for Arab countries to look upon the concept of human security as a key pillar in developmental policies, including policies pertaining to health. One measure of progress for any country should be its achievements in the field of health, as this is a principle human right.

It is clear that there are differences among Arab countries in terms of polices and practices of the health sector, which often mirror the level of development in each of these countries. Some Arab countries appear able to achieve most of the health objectives of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015, while others do not.

Studying current conditions, it is evident that many Arab countries do not include a human security perspective in their health policies. However, several Arab governments have tried to apply the principles of justice and equality to social and health policies in a clear and consistent method.

The growing demand on health services represents a key problem that affects the quality of health services negatively, as well as, areas provided with such services. The reasons behind the growing demand include:

- The increase of the population growth rate;
- The increase of most vulnerable sectors;
- The emergence of diseases; and
- The spread of unsound patterns and behaviours that increase threats of infection with chronic disease.

With the rise in the costs of healthcare at the international level (expected to increase more in the future), it has become incumbent on Arab countries to assess their health systems and put forward a national effort to reform and restructure these systems to address the challenges presented. This is in addition to the necessity of putting health on top of development programmes given the priority in Arab countries and to increase expenditures on health and education.

The first paper under consideration in this part underlined the necessity of reforming and restructuring health systems in order to promote health in society via the following:

- The study of the experiences of other countries that achieved advanced levels regarding their health indicators.
- The distribution of the roles currently performed by Arab governmental health

authorities among different institutions and agencies to be established for this purpose, such as the establishment of an independent agency for inspecting the quality of health services offered and regulating them.

• The necessity for ministries of health or concerned governmental agencies to focus on setting up health policies to ensure sustainable health development; guarantee the principle of social justice and equality; and provide health services to the poor, vulnerable, and marginalised sectors (both women and men).

With the increase in the rate of external debt, military expenditure, political conflicts and the aggravation of the repercussions of wars in the region, the thought of increasing expectations in the health field in Arab countries is a worrisome matter. Yet, expenditure on health is modest compared to military expenditure. Health services seem insufficient in view of increasing health demands and Arab countries' commitment to provide "health services for all" as called for by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The fact remains that high quality services need to be increased throughout more areas.

Various studies prove the direct link between the development of the health of individuals in society and economic growth with the rate of expenditure on health services. The paper stressed the importance of gender-sensitive budgets and establishing programmes that take into account the healthcare requirements of women.

The second paper in this part addressed the impact of gender and women's issues vis-a-vis the issue of climate change. The author indicated that floods, droughts and increased temperatures directly affect women as many work in farming and in the countryside. Women are arguably the most affected sector of the population by such changes in nature. On the other hand, climate change also affect living conditions which most of the time fall under the responsibility of women, such as access to water, food and fuel supplies.

The degree of the interaction with and effect of nature varies from one Arab country to another due to geographical, economic, social and political differences among them. Yet it can be said that the Arab region is one of the areas most affected by climate change. Low economic development, poverty and an inability to adapt to environmental change exacerbate this impact.

The paper concludes with the necessity of promoting the region's capabilities to address water, health and environmental issues. Unless it is dealt with effectively, climate change will seriously affect the environment, as well as have an impact on economic and social developments in the region.

It is important to take into account the issue of gender while exerting all efforts towards dealing with climate changes. In view of the fact that women are the most affected by climate change, it is necessary to step up measures that encourage gender equality and mainstream gender issues into development policies and programmes in the region, so that climate change would not result in the increase in the number of poor women.

The important message for Arab governments and institutions is to improve women's opportunities to make use of natural resources through legislative and legal reforms that guarantee the protection of natural resources, women's access to natural resources, and promotion of the skills of poor women and people to endure climate change. In addition, it is necessary to improve opportunities of education and training in areas related to climate change, such as modern technologies.

**Chapter Six** 

Women's Security and Health Issues

Nada Haffadh

#### **WOMEN'S SECURITY AND HEALTH ISSUES**

Security and health are essential for human survival and development. According to the 1994 Human Development Report released by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the definition of human security revolves around freedom from need, freedom from fear, and living in dignity. Because these concepts are based on human rights, they pose an invitation and challenge to nations worldwide and to their public and private institutions, as different countries apply the principles of human rights in varying degrees even though all religions advocate these principles. Most Arab countries have ratified international agreements, conventions and charters related to human rights and the elimination of discrimination. This fact is reflected in their national constitutions and laws. When it comes to Arab nations, the real issue lies in the discrepancy between their constitutions and implementation.

Political stability and national security are two of the main conditions for a country's achievement of economic wellbeing. If they are harnessed for the growth of national developmental programmes such as education, health, housing, employment, and the eradication of abject poverty, the region's human development goals will surely be achieved. This will in turn result in the wellbeing of society and will enable its people to lead dignified lives.

It would be difficult to deny the importance of advancing national security in its traditional sense in light of current security threats and sectarian conflicts and civil wars in the Arab region. Under such threats, and the burdens of war and occupation, national security becomes essential to the sustenance of life. Any degradation in this respect can cause great economic instability that could accelerate the increase in poverty in an unexpected manner, and through all these scenarios Arab women are more heavily impacted than men.

#### THE HEALTH STATUS OF ARAB WOMEN

Women's health rights make up an integral segment of human rights. Accordingly, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) obliges countries to take all necessary actions to eliminate discrimination against women in healthcare.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health concepts as a condition of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, going beyond protection against disease or disability. The realisation that good health is closely associated with social wellbeing has posed a major challenge to nations worldwide, and Arab countries in particular, requiring them to determine public national health strategies and allocate budgets accordingly, as well as to set up monitoring and evaluation systems.

According to the WHO Declaration of Alma-Ata of 1978, several health goals were to be achieved by the year 2000. An agreement was reached to adopt a strategy of primary healthcare and preventive health measures as a main approach to realise these targets. It was also agreed that the goals and commitment levels of participating countries would be revised by the year 2020 in accordance with a comprehensive definition of health, which is based on several standard health and social indicators. These include mortality rates of mothers and children, the average use of contraceptives, safe delivery, the incidence of diseases, easy access to health services, the quality of care provided, the efficiency of health service providers, the optimal use of financial and human resources by providing preventive and curative care, care for the marginalised sections exposed to risk, the early detection of diseases and disabilities, and guaranteed access to health services regardless of socioeconomic status.

In September 2000, the UN organised an international conference that was attended by 147 heads of states and governments. It was at this conference that the International Declaration for the Third Millennium was issued. It included eight different goals that were referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Complementary targets were defined for each of the goals, to be achieved by 2015. For every such target, a number of indicators were set to measure progress towards achievement. Three of the health targets set were: reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Progress reports issued by Arab countries on achievements and challenges made and faced in their efforts to realise such goals indicate that since the 1990s, most of these countries have put great effort into the fields of child mortality and maternal health by adapting specialised policies on the health of mothers and children. Additionally, they have increased and enhanced awareness programmes, vaccination campaigns, and reproductive health services. Through these efforts, many Arab countries are prepared to realise the MDGs.

However, there are a few Arab countries that will not be able to do so due to detrimental political, security, and socioeconomic conditions. It is clear that the differences between countries in the region are centred on their respective levels of development. For instance, the ratio of maternal mortality due to pregnancy and delivery is less than 23 per 100,000 live births in some Arab countries, yet this increases to more than 500 in other countries — for instance 650 in Djibouti. Similarly, the mortality rate for children under five years of age is less than 11 per 1000 live births in some countries, but goes up to more than 100 in some other countries — such as 145 in Somalia.

**Table 1:** Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births in selected Arab countries

Country	Ratio	Year
Kuwait	4	2005
Qatar	12	2005
Saudi Arabia	18	2005
Lebanon	150	2005
Sudan	450	2005
Djibouti	650	2005

Source: World Health Statistics, 2008.

**Table 2:** Under-five mortality rate (U5MR) per 1000 live births in selected Arab countries by gender

Country	Ratio	Female	Male	Year
Bahrain	10	11	10	2006
Libya	18	18	18	2006
Tunisia	23	20	25	2006
Iraq	47	43	50	2006
Yemen	100	97	103	2006
Somalia	145	147	144	2006

Source: World Health Statistics, 2008.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Arab countries is considered to be lower than in countries in general worldwide. However, Arab countries have taken less acute measures to combat HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases in comparison with most other countries worldwide. Women are the weakest link, being more susceptible to some diseases and due to their inability to protect themselves. Among Arab women, most cases are ones in which the disease is transmitted by the husband and the symptoms appear only during advanced stages in which the infection is aggravated. Conversely, many women who are informed on sexually transmitted diseases and preventative measures are not able to enforce the use of contraception.

**Table 3:** The prevalence of HIV among adults above 15 years of age per 100,000 in selected Arab countries

Country	Ratio	Year
Morocco	88	2005
Egypt	100	2005
Lebanon	114	2005
Tunisia	115	2005
Somalia	870	2005
Sudan	1454	2005
Djibouti	3017	2005

Source: World Health Statistics, 2008.

There has been a general decline in malaria cases in Arab countries, the exception being Yemen where it is still the most widespread contagious disease and one of the main causes of death. Tuberculosis remains widespread in comparison to other contagious diseases. However, the low prevalence of AIDS, near elimination of malaria, and progress made in combating tuberculosis are not final achievements, and the recurrence and spread of these diseases is a possibility as a result of ever-changing natural, economic, and social factors in the region.

According to available studies and indicators, the preventive and curative services provided for women's health differ based on the strength of the health systems of various countries in the region. Some countries suffer severe defects in their healthcare infrastructure (Yemen, Sudan, Iraq and Somalia), while other countries have relatively advanced infrastructure with healthcare systems that are conducive to achieving the requirements for women's health.

Throughout the past several decades, Arab countries as a whole have obtained positive results in the field of health by developing health services, eliminating mass death, reducing the death ratio from 16.6 per 1000 people in the 1970s to 12.2 per 1000 people in the 1980s and 9.2 per 1000 people in the 1990s. The number is expected to drop further to 7.1 per 1000 people at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. The average life expectancy at birth in Arab countries has fluctuated between its highest levels of 76.4 years for men and 80.8 years for women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to its lowest levels at 51.6 years for men and 54 for women in Djibouti and 51.1 years for men and 54.3 for women in Mauritania.

Table 4: Healthy life expectancy at birth by gender in selected Arab countries, 2003

Country	General Ratio	Female	Male
Egypt	59	60	58
Jordan	61	62	60
UAE	64	64	64
Somalia	37	38	36
Morocco	60	61	59
Yemen	49	51	48

Source: World Health Statistics, 2008.

Table 5: Healthy life expectancy at birth by gender in selected Arab countries, 2006

Country	General Ratio	Female	Male
Egypt	68	70	66
Jordan	71	74	69
UAE	78	80	77
Somalia	55	56	54
Morocco	72	74	70
Yemen	61	62	59

Source: World Health Statistics, 2008.

The improvement in women's health conditions has lead to an increase in the rate of fertility, which was high to begin with. This in turn has lead to an additional increase in the annual growth of population rate from 2.5 percent in 1950-1975 to 2.7 percent in 1975-2000. Several Arab countries have implemented successful family planning initiatives that have resulted in a minor decrease in the growth of population rate to 2.4 percent. This was achieved by involving husbands and wives — as well as the youth population — in reproductive health programmes.

It is expected that a continued decrease in the average fertility rate in Arab countries will take place at varying speeds with the increase in the rate of literacy and enrolment of women in the labour market as well as the gradual decrease in the number of people below 15 from one third to eventually make up one fourth of the population. The stance of Arab countries on fertility has changed significantly in the past few decades. Most have come to regard the aforementioned rates of population growth as excessive. It is worth mentioning here that a very small number of Arab countries still encourage the increase of natural population growth in order to balance their demographic ratios.

Contraceptive prevalence rates are available in parts of the Arab world and are updated periodically. The available data on 20 countries shows that 14 of them have a rate of 30 percent or more (of all means of contraception), including 10 countries with the use of modern methods at the rate of 30 percent or more, nine countries with the use of any methods at the rate of 50 percent or more, and four countries with the use of modern methods at the rate of 50 percent or more. In order to maintain the fertility rate of the existing population, which is 2.1 children for every woman, contraceptive means need to be utilised at a 60 percent rate. Achievement of this goal will not stop population growth. Due to demographic inflation, the population will continue to grow over the next century until there is balance and stability in the population.

Table 6: Total fertility rate per woman in selected Arab countries, 2006

Country	Ratio
Tunisia	1.9 percent
Lebanon	2.2 percent
UAE	2.3 percent
Egypt	3 percent
Syria	3.2 percent
Sudan	4.4 percent
Yemen	5.6 percent

Source: World Health Statistics, 2008.

Table 7: Population annual growth rate in selected Arab countries, 2006

Country	Ratio
Tunisia	1.1 percent
Morocco	1.2 percent
Oman	1.6 percent
Saudi Arabia	2.4 percent
Syria	2.7 percent
Qatar	3.1 percent
Jordan	3.3 percent

Source: World Health Statistics, 2008.

At a time when the percentage of elderly people in developed countries has increased to more than 20 percent in some, it has reached around five percent in some Arab countries. It is expected that this increase in Arab countries will continue to up to 25 percent by 2050.

An increase in this particular rate reflects a country's progress in the sphere of health and social services. However, it may exacerbate a current problem in Arab countries if they are not sufficiently prepared for it; namely, the cost of care for the elderly is at least three times higher than that of younger population. In general, women live longer than men, so health services should take this into consideration, and women are required to start preparing themselves for this advanced stage of life from an early age and to make sure that they and their families will be provided with supporting services.

A number of Arab countries have started caring for the age group of 60 and above by setting up national committees, enacting local laws for their protection, signing international health agreements and conventions for the elderly, providing preventive health and curative services, as well as providing homecare and periodical check-ups. Unfortunately, however, the standard of their services and coverage is below the required level.

Despite general achievements in the field of mortality and long life expectancy, more feats need to be accomplished in the fields of quality of life and freedom from disabilities and chronic diseases. The issues surrounding women's health at the different stages of life pose a major challenge to a number of Arab countries. This is evident in their health indicators. That said it is possible that these indicators may not always reflect the true picture because data collection systems are very weak in some countries.

Early marriage is still considered a problem in some Arab countries, followed by immediate and un-spaced pregnancy. This in turn increases the rate of demographic growth and the youth population. The result is increased burdens, dependency, and reliance, as well as the spread of illiteracy, particularly among women.

Table 8: Adolescent fertility rate in selected Arab countries

Country	Ratio	Year
Oman	11 percent	2003
Bahrain	14 percent	2000
Saudi Arabia	15 percent	2004
Lebanon	18 percent 2001	
Djibouti	27 percent	2000
Egypt	48 percent 2003	
Yemen	83 percent	2002

Source: World Health Statistics, 2008.

Since 1954, the UN has been concerned with the relationships between population growth, the slowing down of the process of development, and growing poverty on an international scale. Arab countries have started to pay special attention to the youth population in their reproductive health programmes, family planning services, and population policies, regarding

the youth population as a high priority in these matters. Emphasis has been put on their reproductive and sexual rights that include accessibility to information and high quality counselling services regarding sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS. This is especially important because the rate of infection amongst the youth and adult population is soaring, particularly among the age group 20-40 years.

The 1990 study, "The Global Burden of Diseases", has shown that reproductive health diseases constitute 22 percent of the total burden of diseases across the world among women in their reproductive age (15-44 years). Meanwhile, this does not exceed three percent among women in the same age group in some Arab countries, while it has reached 25 percent in others.

With women's enrolment in the labour market and participation in propelling the development in their countries comes the risk of becoming prone to occupational health hazards. In addition to being subject to health hazards, women face the challenge of balancing their roles at work and at home as mothers. This puts social and familial pressures on their shoulders, and mandates Arab countries to enact national laws to protect women's rights as working mothers.

A comparison of WHO/Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office data for 10 major causes of death between Middle Eastern countries and countries of the world, and their relation to gross national income, reveals that the first main cause of death in higher income countries of the region is heart disease, followed by strokes, depression, Alzheimer's disease, lung cancer, respiratory system problems, loss of hearing, diabetes, and death due to weight loss. Premature birth and fracture during birth are the primary causes of death among newborns of middle and low-income countries, reflecting poor healthcare services during pregnancy and birth in these countries.

Taking into account patterns of death and disease among women in a number of countries worldwide, and projections until 2030 internationally, it is apparent that chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, psychiatric and mental illnesses, elderly health problems and disabilities are health challenges of the future. Many countries have started to change their health policies and plans with regards to women, with an aim to achieve a good quality of life and better health standards for women throughout their lifetimes. Special attention is paid to the principles and concepts of health promotion and enhancing healthy lifestyles, along with determining risk factors, working out early detection programmes for diseases and providing early intervention.

**Table 9:** Prevalence of tobacco use among adults of 15 years and above in selected Arab countries, 2005

Country	General Ratio	Female	Male
Oman	13.1 percent	1.3 percent	24.7 percent
Morocco	15 percent	3 percent	29.5 percent
Saudi Arabia	14.7 percent	3.6 percent	25.6 percent
Lebanon	18.1 percent	7 percent	29.1 percent
Tunisia	26.6 percent	1.9 percent	51 percent
Jordan	36.5 percent	9.8 percent	62.7 percent

Source: World Health Statistics, 2008.

One unhealthy lifestyle is that of eating disorders such as obesity, which is considered to be a global challenge and one of the most widespread diseases associated with the behaviours of individuals and societies. Such behaviours are becoming the major causes of chronic diseases. Obesity is a big challenge in Arab countries, especially among women. It is one of the major social determinants of health. Thus, it is imperative to emphasise health promotion programmes and to stress the role of individuals towards their health by empowering them with appropriate information and necessary life skills. To date, only a small number of countries worldwide have been able to decrease the rate of obesity. In order to improve this rate, more organised attention is being given to the younger generation in an effort to combat childhood obesity.

With regards to women's mental health in Arab countries, there is a scarcity of studies and research. There are social obstacles preventing women from receiving proper treatment at the right time. One of these obstacles in some areas, particularly in rural areas, is the fact that a woman is expected to ask her family for permission in order to see a doctor. Furthermore, psychiatric problems are considered stigmas and may dishonour a family, while some women still believe that the cause of their mental illness is related to occult beliefs in evil spirits and envy. Thus they refer to exorcists and frauds, particularly in the absence of sufficiently specialised psychiatric services.

In many Arab societies, women bear the major social responsibility when a couple is infertile, regardless to the specific cause of infertility. This is an added psychological burden on these women.

#### HEALTH AND ARMAMENTS EXPENDITURE IN ARAB COUNTRIES

With the increase in foreign debts, military expenditure, political conflicts and consequences of war in the region, the ability of Arab countries to make new health gains has become a source of concern. For instance, health expenditure appears to be lower than military expenditure in most countries. Also, health expenditure does not satisfy the increasing demands of these countries in their attempt to achieve the WHO's health goals for all, nor does it allow for increasing the coverage and quality of health services. Moreover, various studies have proven a direct link between the development of health in a society and the rates of economic growth and expenditure on health services.

In 1990, the UNDP issued its first annual report on human development. In this report, Mahboob Alhaq wrote, "The primary goal of development is to evolve a suitable environment, in which people may enjoy long lives with good health and the ability to progress and be creative ..." From this perspective, human development reports analyse the socioeconomic position of the world as a whole and in every country specifically, giving each country a rating. Tangible developments in a number of Arab countries are cited in these reports. An analysis of the factors leading to human development in Arab countries that took advanced positions in periodical human development reports reveals that this was influenced by a rise in their respective national incomes, as well as the fact that these countries were achieving political stability and were moving towards better social policies.

The 2006 Human Development Report revealed that countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) give greater importance to expenditure on armaments than on health and education,

despite the fact that all six countries GCC reduced their expenditures on armaments in the period 1990-2004. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which came last among Gulf countries and 76th in the world in this report, reduced its expenditure on arms to GDP from 15.6 percent in 1990 to 8.3 percent in 2004. What the kingdom allocated for health did not exceed three percent; the ratios of its expenditure on education in 2004 are not available. However, the ratio of its expenditure on education in 1991 was 5.8 percent of GDP.

Kuwait reached first position amongst Gulf countries and across the Arab world in this report, and 33rd position internationally. The country's expenditure on armaments reached 7.9 percent of GDP as compared to 48.5 percent in 1990. This high expenditure in 1990 was attributed to the Iraqi invasion. Kuwait also increased expenditure on education from 4.8 percent to 8.2 percent in 2004, but its expenditure on health did not exceed 2.7 percent of GDP.

Oman obtained the fifth position in the Gulf and the 56th position in the world in the classification of Human Development 2004 — about 12 percent of GDP spent on armaments as compared to two percent and 3.5 percent on education and health respectively. Bahrain obtained the second position in the Gulf and 39th in the world. Its expenditures on armaments exceeded expenditure on health and education with the ratio reaching 4.4 percent in 2004, less than the 5.1 percent in 1990. Meanwhile, its expenditure on health and education reached 2.8 percent and 3.9 percent of GDP respectively.

The UAE obtained fourth position in the Gulf and 49th in the world. It has reduced its military expenditure from 6.2 percent of GDP in 1990 to 2.6 percent in 2004. However, the figures showed that its expenditure on health and education did not exceed 2.5 percent and 1.6 percent respectively. Meanwhile, Qatar came in third in the Gulf and 46th in the world with regards to human development. However, it did not provide figures for its expenditures on armaments and education in 2004 (it spent 3.5 percent on education in 1990). Its expenditure on health in 2004 was two percent of GDP.

As to other Arab countries, the report revealed that expenditures on development and armaments varied amongst them. Tunisia, which obtained 87th position in human development, spent more on education with 8.1 percent of GDP and 2.5 percent on health as compared to 1.5 percent on armaments. Morocco, which held the 123rd position worldwide, spent about 1.7 percent and 6.3 percent of GDP on health and education respectively as compared to 4.5 percent on armaments. Libya, which held the 64th position internationally, did not provide figures of its expenditure on education. However, its expenditure on armaments was two percent of GDP as compared to 2.6 percent on health.

Algeria obtained the 102nd position worldwide and spent 3.3 percent of GDP on health and 3.4 percent on armaments. Meanwhile, Egypt spent on armaments 2.8 percent of GDP against 2.5 percent on health. Yemen did not provide figures of its expenditure on education, but its military expenditure of 6.3 percent of GDP exceeded its expenditure on health, which was 2.2 percent of GDP. It is noteworthy that Yemen obtained the last position among Arab countries in human development. This is the only Arab country that was classified in the group of least developed countries in human development terms.

The figures in this report of 2006 revealed that countries at the top positions of human development are unlike developing and underdeveloped countries in the sense that they

have spent on health and education more than double of what they have spent on armaments. Norway, which topped the list of human development, spent 8.6 percent and 7.7 percent on health and education respectively as opposed to two percent on armaments. Similarly, Iceland, second in the rank of human development, spent 8.8 percent and eight percent of GDP on health and education against zero on armaments. Also, Australia, which was third in the rank of human development, spent 6.4 percent and 4.9 percent of GDP on health and education against 1.9 percent on armaments.

Based on the above, it appears that armaments is a higher priority than health and education in government expenditures in most Arab countries. Arab countries could not reach desirable outcomes in socioeconomic growth rated and the quality of life of the masses, particularly of poor sectors. Conversely, the unemployment rate continued to rise, particularly among women. Moreover, the costs of living have increased, the actual income per individual has decreased, and expenditure on health services has been reduced.

Undoubtedly, it is not possible to reach the goal of increasing rates of economic growth, which will help attaining comprehensive human security, without achieving political stability and establishing democratic and regulatory institutions (executive, legislative and judiciary), as well as empowering civil society institutions. The above is required in order to ensure that there is economic growth in the proper developmental direction and that justice is realised in the distribution of wealth. Furthermore, establishing such systems encourages transparency, the elimination of corruption, and determining rights and liabilities. If this is not achieved, economic growth will not be adjacent to — or accommodating of — developmental schemes.

**Table 10:** Total expenditure on health as percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) compared to military expenditure in selected Arab countries

Country	Rank	Ratio of health expenditure of GDP	Ratio of expenditure on education of GDP		Ratio of expenditure on military of GDP	
		2003-2004	1991	2002- 2004	1990	2004
Kuwait	33	2.7	4.8	8.2	48.5	7.9
Bahrain	39	2.8	3.9	-	5.1	4.4
Qatar	46	2	3.5	-	-	-
UAE	49	2.5	1.9	1.6	6.2	2.4
Oman	56	2.7	3.4	4.6	16.5	12
Saudi Arabia	76	3	5.8	-	15.6	8.3
Libya	64	2.6	-	-	-	2
Lebanon	78	3	-	2.6	7.6	3.8
Tunisia	87	2.5	6	8.1	2	1.5
Algiers	102	3.3	5.1	-	1.5	3.4
Egypt	111	2.5	3.9	-	4.5	2.8
Morocco	123	1.7	5	6.3	4.1	4.5
Yemen	150	2.2	-	-	7.9	6.3

Source: Human Development Report, 2006.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON ARAB WOMEN'S HEALTH

The World Health Organisation Charter (1999b) comprises four sections regarding health and poverty as proposed by the director general of the organisation. In its first section, it includes the development of health indicators through influencing development policies. The second section consists of strategies to decrease health risks through the application of a broader scope of public health that goes beyond the provision of sufficient and safe food and clean water, to include acts against violence, environmental hazards, conflicts and natural disasters. The next two sections are concentrated on health problems of underprivileged groups of society, such as the poor and those who are most highly exposed to risks, as well as ensuring that health systems serve these groups in a more effective manner to realise justice and equality in healthcare services.

It is well known that the rate of chronic, non-communicable diseases in general — and communicable diseases in particular — is higher among the poor because of underprivileged living conditions such as place of residence, because of their work environment, and the

spread of diseases due to malnutrition and lack of education. Moreover, the obstacles in the way of obtaining timely medical assistance among this group during the early stages of affliction with disease are greater for women than men.

The 2005 UNDP Human Development Report illustrates the clear differences between Arab women with regards to economic status. The report reveals the differences in the average incomes of women and men, reflecting their representation in the labour market and their economic empowerment. Per capita income in the UAE is considered the highest in the Arab world at \$22,420 per annum, followed by Qatar (\$19,844) and then Kuwait (\$18,047). As for women's income, Kuwaiti women obtain the highest income in the Arab world (\$8,448 per annum), followed by women in Bahrain (\$7,685), Saudi Arabia (\$4,440), Lebanon (\$2,430), Egypt (\$1,614), Sudan (\$918) and Yemen (\$413). On an international scale, the average income for a woman in Luxemburg is the highest in the world, reaching \$34,890 per annum.

When we compare women's income with their average life expectancy, we find it the highest in the UAE (81 years), followed by Kuwait (80 years), and then Libya (76 years). On an international level, Japan is top with an average life expectancy for a woman at over 85 years.

Regarding the ratio of a woman's income to men's income in Arab countries, women in Mauritania, Comoro's Island and Morocco enjoy the most favourable ratio at 56 percent, 55 percent and 40 percent respectively of men's income share. That said, we must consider the low per capita income of these countries in general when reading these ratios.

An increase in the percentage of education is considered to be an important indicator of the health status of an individual; wherever literacy is high, so average life expectancy tends to increase. Analysis of available data on Arab countries found in the UNDP 2005 Human Development Report reveals that this rule is applicable to most Arab countries, but not all. For instance, there was an increase in the average life expectancy of women in Egypt to up to 72.1 years despite the low rate of literacy among them, which reached up to 43.6 percent. Similarly, there was a rise in the average life expectancy of Moroccan women up to 71.9 years, despite the low rate of literacy of up to 38.3 percent. Also, the average life expectancy of women in Yemen was 61.9 years, while the rate of literacy among them was only 28.5 percent.

Similarly, it is expected that whenever there is an increase in a woman's income and economic empowerment, health indicators will improve. This notion is valid in Arab countries, but again is not applicable to some. For instance, the income of women in Yemen is \$413 per annum but their average life expectancy is 61.9 years. Conversely, women's income in Mauritania is \$1,269 per annum, but their average life expectancy is 54.3 years. This goes to prove that health status outcomes are influenced by many determinants. Social practices and traditions are important determinants that influence many facets of women's health. In a number of Arab countries, particularly among less educated groups, certain customs and traditions place women in social roles that put a gender specific burden on them.

Not only do the different forms of social and familial discrimination against women obstruct them from obtaining health services at the appropriate time, but they also control decisions about the number of children to have and the use of means to maintain spacing between births. Moreover, women assume full responsibility of maintaining their entire family's health and in some cases a sense of guilt develops in a woman's mind if her family is left to take care of their own health.

On the other hand, some harmful practices, such as female circumcision, have had severe impacts on women's sexual and reproductive health. Women in many countries of the region, like Egypt, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen and Mauritania suffer from this practice, as the circumcision rate in some of these countries goes up to 99 percent of the total female population. It is important to note here that some women themselves support the existence of such harmful practices. There are a large number of middle-aged men and more than 85 percent of women in the same category who believe that circumcision of women is necessary. On the other hand, some of these countries — for instance Egypt — are trying to incriminate the circumcision of women through passing laws and handing down severe punishments on practitioners.

Medically, it is a well-established fact that female circumcision has several negative repercussions and may cause death due to bleeding. The excruciating pain it causes may lead to mental trauma. There are also deferred repercussions, like inflammation of the wound due to the absence of sterilised instruments, or septicaemia, tetanus, hepatitis or HIV.

Studies in Egypt have shown that among the many factors that contribute to the spread of female circumcision are: poverty, low levels of education, living in rural areas, and social customs and traditions. Eight of 10 women in villages believe that men prefer circumcised women; a ratio that is not more than four out of 10 in cities. It is practiced among Christians, but in lesser frequency than among Muslims.

Obesity is one of the adverse effects of social and individual habits and behaviours, and is one of the most prevalent health hazards internationally. The average incidence among women in the age group of 20 years and above is more than 60 percent in some Arab countries. It is well known that obesity is linked with diabetes (it reaches 15 percent in some Gulf countries) and cardio and cerebral-vascular diseases, as well as early death. Clearly, obesity is a major health challenge.

Frequent wars in the region during the last decades have prompted migration of people in several Arab countries on a large scale. It has forced them to live in societies with different beliefs and traditions, which particularly affects the youth population. The result has been an increase in sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse, and mental and psychological illnesses among these populations.

Various studies have revealed that violence against women is a common practice in all communities worldwide. Available data does not reflect the real magnitude of the problem. It is estimated that 10-69 percent of women in the world face violence in different forms, and that it is present in both developed and developing countries. In most cases, violence is perpetrated by relatives and acquaintances that are trusted by the abused woman. This is a huge societal concern that is linked with a variety of deeply rooted and branching issues. Many Arab countries have conducted studies and researches to determine the size and causes of family violence with the support of local, regional, and international organisations and institutions.

In 1996, the WHO classified violence under the category of health problems and decided that strategies were required for its reduction and eradication. The organisation conceded in its

report on violence and health in 2002 that violence is an international health issue. Abused women are most likely to experience health problems such as psychiatric illness (depression), physical illnesses and disabilities. Abused children suffer growth failure, urinary incontinence, stunted communication, depression, anxiety and higher probabilities of using drugs and of suicide in teenage years, in addition to a myriad of other health and social problems.

As far as Arab countries are concerned, most have started to attend to this issue in a public manner. Some countries have developed national strategies to combat the problem, which include awareness creation programmes and providing guidance and legal services. Some Arab countries, such as Morocco and Tunisia, have gone beyond the stage of formulating strategies and have passed legislation that incriminates family violence and sexual harassment at work.

It is noteworthy that some Arab countries use different methodologies in carrying out national surveys to determine the extent of violence, and this obstructs carrying out a comparative study. Available data on Arab women who suffer violence is 34 percent in Egypt and 47 percent in Jordan. Women's health in Arab countries that face wars and instability is doubly affected. In a study conducted by Birzeit University in Palestine with findings that were published in 2006, regarding family violence, revealed that 23.3 percent of married women were subject to physical violence, 61.7 percent were subject to psychological violence, and 10.5 percent were subject to sexual violence.

Disability is another health challenge that is influenced by social factors. Despite positive changes in the view of society towards disability, a disabled woman still suffers from many issues relating to social and health services as well as the lack of supportive laws. The allocated budgets for this section of society are considered low. Also, job opportunities for disabled educated women are few.

Women's empowerment is one of the major factors that contribute to raising their health level. Empowering women to reach leadership and decision-making positions in executive, legislative, judicial, and private sector establishments, as well as civil society organisations, has a significant and positive impact on women-related health strategies and legislation.

With reference to the Gender Gap Report of 2007, issued by the World Economic Forum, it appeared that the countries of the Middle East and North Africa had the greatest gender gaps (weakest women's empowerment). Although no country in the world managed to achieve total gender equality, there were significant differences between countries in this regard. Gender inequality is considered a major challenge to human rights, in addition to being an economic challenge. The report discussed the productivity of the individual. It was considered one of the main determinants for the productivity of a country, including human skills and education. It is noteworthy that the productivity of an individual is directly linked to his or her physical, mental and social health, and the productivity of the country as a whole, as well as the empowerment of both genders in society.

Here, the health indicator is considered to be one of the four major indicators (which are participation and economic opportunities, and political, educational and health empowerment). The health indicator encompasses several factors, the most important of which is healthy life expectancy (HALE) at birth for women in comparison to men (that is, the number of

years that a person is expected to live while being healthy). Herein, the calculation is made by taking the average chances of being afflicted with disease, violence, and other important health indicators, as well as the ratio of female to male births; a ratio that Islamic countries expressed reservations on since their laws and regulations prohibit abortion upon knowing the gender of the foetus.

It must be noted here that it is important for Arab countries to determine health indicators relating to gender that are specific to the region. This is in order to unify these indicators and to be able to monitor and compare the progress of health development in the region.

It is imperative to provide necessary gender sensitive resources and budgets, including budgeting for health services. The principle of decentralisation should be adopted in the planning process according to the needs of men and women in different fields, and in accordance with social and economic statuses, in order to focus on groups that are more prone to risk. In the past eight years, the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has supported over 30 countries worldwide to build skills and training, and has issued data and guidelines for planning gender sensitive national budgets. Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and the UAE have started taking practical steps towards preparing such budgets, while many other countries are planning to start formulating the grounds for these budgets.

Finally, referring to the report of the World's Health Organisation's Commission on Social Determinants of Health, launched in September 2008, Sir Michael Marmont pointed out that "if you look at scientific evidence, you should say that there s no biological reason a woman from Botswana should have a life expectancy of 43 years and a woman in Japan should have a life expectancy of 86 years," adding: "the key determinants of health of individuals and populations are the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. And those circumstances are affected by the social environment. They are the cause of premature disease and suffering that are unnecessary. And that is why we say a toxic combination of poor social policies, bad politics, and unfair economics are causing health and disease on a grand scale."

## IMPROVING HEALTH SYSTEMS IN ARAB COUNTRIES

The current health policies of Arab countries do not treat human security in a clear scientific manner that can be monitored and assessed. That said several Arab governments have worked to enforce the principles of justice and equality in society according to Islamic Sharia (jurisprudence) and the constitution of the state. However, most of them have not accomplished all of their goals in the desired manner, and this is apparent when comparing their achievements to date in the field of health with those of countries in the developed world.

## i. The situation of health in Arab countries

Some Arab countries are facing a number of challenges that include occupation, the restriction of liberties, weak governance, poor economic growth, and weak productivity, leaving the following questions unanswered: Can the development of health systems be an incentive to achieving the development of political and social development in Arab countries? And how does it affect women's health and security?

When comparing existing Arab health systems, it is apparent that most — if not all — have not yet updated their systems, which need infrastructural reforms. Very few have started minimal reform. In general, they are characterised by poor management and governance. This problem is magnified by low health expenditure of GDP mentioned earlier.

Despite the availability of resources in many Arab countries, all of them face a number of significant health and social challenges in varying degrees, such as poverty, inequality, communicable and non-communicable diseases, maternal and child health risks, and accidents.

The overload on health services is a major problem that has adverse effects on the quality of healthcare and coverage rates. This is due to the rise in population and prone-to-risk groups, as well as the appearance of diseases related to age and unhealthy lifestyles that increase the risk of developing chronic diseases. Moreover, adverse social customs, such as poor health education, form the main obstructions for health development programmes and cause unhealthy lifestyle habits to spread dangerously. Studies have shown that this happens not only due to lack of knowledge but also to lack of skills, and that despite knowing the health risks involved, Arab men and women do not have the skills to change their unhealthy life patterns accordingly.

With the rise of healthcare costs, which are expected to continue rising in the future with the inflation of medical costs, Arab countries are required to assess their health systems and formulate a national plan to reform and restructure them to face the aforementioned challenges. With most Arab countries presently focusing on liberating the economy to achieve greater economic and social growth, it is expected that a new predicament will arise in the health sector, where underprivileged groups cannot access quality health services. Attention should be paid to this now in order to avoid the accompanying problems that capitalist countries currently suffer from. Accordingly, an effort should be made to assure that social justice in health is maintained and that the groups most prone to risk are not exposed to further risks and depravation of state-sponsored healthcare.

Upon signing world economic and trade agreements, social health must not be neglected. For instance, despite the fact that a number of Arab countries have joined the WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to combat smoking, factories for tobacco products are being set up in some of these countries. Moreover, when health issues are discussed, an emphasis is put on curative services instead of on public health problems. The people's preoccupation with basic living needs, and their demand for more freedom and political stability may divert society's thinkers and politicians from focusing on the appropriate path to best achieving health goals. This includes Arab parliamentarians in general who use health as a trump card to obtain an elector's vote, and present unstudied and unscientific health plans and proposals that may cause more harm than good in the field of health in the long run.

A common factor found in Arab health systems in general is the poor involvement of society in planning and executing health policies, and in approving the necessary health budgets according to social and scientific priorities. Despite the recent rise in freedoms of speech and of the press in a number of Arab countries, the focus of Arab media remains confined to specific issues such as day-to-day health services, and does not elevate to a discussion of health rights or to analyses of public health policies and budgets. Moreover, most health professionals and nongovernmental organisations in Arab countries have not been able to

advocate health in general, and the health of women in particular, to be adopted as a priority in the agendas of decision-makers in a scientific manner based on well-conducted studies.

The 2006 WHO Annual Report emphasised the importance of enhancing and developing health systems in building public health security to international standards in a number of countries in which health infrastructure was poor due to the lack of investment in health systems. This includes a monitoring system and a system of combating contagious diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis and SARS, as well as the implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005). The report states that in no less than 57 countries worldwide there are acute defects in national health systems to the extent that it is very unlikely that they will be able to increase the coverage of essential health services for their citizens in the near future. This includes a shortage of 2.4 million doctors, nurses and midwives in all parts of the world. Given this information, one must ask how will these states be able to utilise the latest technology on which public health security is based at the national and international level? How will they combat diseases that threaten world public health security and that adversely impact the health of the entire society, in particular women and children?

The International Monetary Fund devised a general plan to focus on the poor and underprivileged sectors of the world (1999-2000). In the field of health (they dedicated a special chapter for health, nutrition and population), the general plan underlined three main strategies to influence health outcomes. These concerned families and local societies, health systems, and government policies and measures in health and other related sectors.

## ii. Restructuring and reforming health systems in Arab countries

As health systems face the challenge of rising health costs it has become essential to find substitutions for funding and to apply structural reform to health systems in order to raise efficiency and productivity. This is regarded as critical to strategies for facing current and future health challenges.

Building on the experience of other developed nations, a number of countries such as Singapore, Germany, the United Kingdom and Norway have implemented changes and developments in their health systems and have taken positive steps towards elevating society's health in general and the health of women and at-risk groups in particular. These countries are gradually changing the roles associated with governmental authorities by spreading out their responsibilities to different non-governmental and private establishments that were more specialised and qualified for the task. On the other hand, the majority of current governmental Arab health systems still assume all roles, such as the formulation of health policies, organisation, regulation, paying costs and providing services. This places a huge burden on the process of development.

The suggested reforms are as follows:

• Giving patients the right to select their own healthcare providers, and of providing more choices for patients, whether from the public or private sector, making this a core issue in the programme to improve health systems. A patient's ability to choose is necessary in a health system that is able to meet people's needs. It also increases the level of patient satisfaction and generally raises the quality of healthcare services.

- With regards to spreading out responsibilities and roles to different establishments, health ministries or governmental health authorities should take the role of formulating national health policies. Independent regulatory bodies should be established to monitor the quality of healthcare covering both private and public sectors. These bodies must be independent in order to guarantee their transparency and responsibility and gain the trust of the community with regards to health services.
- With regards to health services, public health institutions need to be independent in their funding systems and should outsource their management to the private sector with the objective of increasing efficiency under clear contractual terms and conditions that ensure the realisation of national health policies and goals. In addition to this, the private health sector should be involved in relieving the pressure on public health services. This can be done by purchasing their services and adopting a different funding system catered to patient choice, not relying solely on governmental establishments but encompassing health services in the private sector. Moreover, in order to increase the coverage of health services, the private sector should be encouraged to invest in health through providing supportive legislation and regulations.
- As far as health funding is concerned, it has become necessary to apply a system of comprehensive compulsory security and health insurance for all, where governments take responsibility to provide coverage to all nationals, and employers in the private sector take responsibility for providing coverage to non-nationals. Individuals should contribute to this funding system based on their income, and the poor sector should be exempt from compulsory contributions.
- Health policies should concentrate on public health, primary healthcare centres, preventive and awareness creating campaigns and health promotion programmes, and should involve local communities in the formulation of these programmes and plans with an aim to change unhealthy lifestyles and habits.
- In order to develop a healthcare plan catered to women's needs, and to achieve their health security, it is essential to involve women in the formulation of health regulations that meet their needs. This includes women's involvement in the planning and formulation of health policies and strategies as well as the implementation process. In addition, it includes increasing the number of female health professionals through training programmes and improving their capabilities in healthcare management.
- Finally, it must be stressed that the main drive behind the above is to achieve social justice in health, and governments should not abandon their responsibility to ensure its realisation.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Human security is a progressive and relatively new concept, and it has become necessary for Arab countries to consider it as a central issue in their developmental policies, which include health policies.
- A country's overall progress should be measured by what it has achieved in the field of human health (both male and female), as health is a basic human right that sustains life. The average life expectancy of an Arab woman is longer than that of an Arab man, making it similar to the female to male ratio worldwide. This is due to human physiology. That said an average Arab woman suffers from various health problems

that decrease the quality of her life. It is not sufficient to achieve a favourable life expectancy ratio if the quality of life is degraded by a multitude of health burdens.

- The average Arab woman bears more of the burdens induced by her nation's social, economic and political circumstances than her male counterpart. Moreover, she faces additional health challenges because of her physiology. These burdens lead to a number of complications that are worsened with ageing.
- Peace is a central prerequisite for social development. Without national security and political stability it is not possible to achieve social stability and wellbeing, which encompass health.
- Health should be a priority in developmental strategies in Arab countries, and the average expenditure on health and education should increase.
- Health systems in Arab countries need reform and restructuring in order to improve the overall health of society. This should be done after studying the experience of countries that have achieved advanced health indicators. The current roles within governmental health authorities should be spread out to a variety of independent organisations to be established to assure better efficiency. This includes establishing an independent regulatory authority that organises and monitors the quality of health services in both public and private sectors.
- Health ministries or related governmental authorities should concentrate on formulating national health policies that ensure the continuous improvement of health systems while preserving social justice and equality, providing coverage for poor, marginalised and at-risk male and female populations.
- The burden on governments should be alleviated by finding substitutes for health funding through partnerships with the private sector and through applying a comprehensive health and social insurance scheme. Moreover, there should be an increased variety of choices available to patients for health providers from the public and private sector. This can be achieved through a system of purchasing services from private and public institutions.
- The private sector's investment in health should be encouraged under clear contractual terms and conditions that ensure the realisation of national health policies and goals.
- The number of health professionals per population should be improved in accordance with WHO recommendations by providing quality training programmes, in addition to improving salaries, work environments and workplace safety.
- Gender health indicators should be developed so that Arab countries can ensure the follow-up and evaluation of regional programmes.
- Arab countries should implement gender sensitive budgets and health policies, with mechanisms laid down for the establishment of gender responsive health systems that target women's needs throughout their life cycle.

- · Concentration should be on preventive and primary healthcare services, along with spreading the concepts of health promotion and maintaining healthy lifestyles. In addition, national policies should be created with the participation of civil society and individuals from local communities.
- · Health service coverage needs to be increased in order to improve accessibility and quality.
- · Health policies, plans and programmes should be prioritised according to available resources, concentrating on marginalised and at-risk women.
- Women should be empowered to maintain their health, and should be involved in the formulation, planning and implementation of health policies.
- Existing legislation in Arab countries should be revised to amend laws that allow for disparity and inequality.
- Educational curricula and the media should put stronger emphasis on advocating women's health rights.
- Medical and social research in the field of Arab women's health should be encouraged, and the funding allocated for such research increased.
- An information network needs to be set up to exchange experiences between Arab countries, so they can learn from each other's methodologies of health system reform, and study each other's successful projects wherein set goals are achieved.
- National capacities and experiences in statistical analysis of the social and demographic determinants of health should be developed, to build a scientific database for use in developing national policies.

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**Chapter Seven** 

Gender and Climate Change in the Arab Region

Balqis Osman-Elasha

## GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ARAB REGION

Climate change is one of the most challenging global environmental problems. Few studies on climate change and gender exist, and even fewer address gender and climate change in the Arab region. This paper is an attempt to shed light on projected climate change impacts with a focus on the relation to gender in the Arab region. It aims at finding answers to important questions such as how and to what extent will climate change impact gender relations and vice versa.

The framework adopted here focuses on identifying relevant theories relating gender and environment in general with a focus on climate change in particular. It categorises relevant sectoral issues that affect and are affected by its impacts. This work is done by conducting a review and assessment of relevant research, analysis and data on gender aspects of climate change in the Arab region as well as at the regional and global levels. Use is also made of available case studies and lessons learned from relevant experiences in some countries of the region, focusing mainly on adaptation practices and policies. The review puts particular emphasis on the impacts of climate change on important livelihood sectors such as water, health, biodiversity, economic development and agriculture, to assess how climate change impacts on these sectors would be differently felt by women and men, and if their different perspectives and needs are taken into consideration. Globally, women represent 70 percent of people living below the poverty line and in communities that are highly dependent on local natural resources — such as in most countries of the Arab region — they are likely to be disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change. This is mainly because climate change impacts the livelihood sectors and systems for which women are primarily responsible, such as water, food and energy supplies.

The paper concludes that there are variations between and among different countries in the Arab region in relation to their vulnerability to climate change and adaptation capacity, resulting from variations in geographical, economical, social and political conditions. However, in general terms the Arab region could be considered among the most vulnerable regions to potential climate change impacts. Unless it is effectively dealt with, climate change will have a dramatic impact on the environment and economic and social development of the region. It also concludes that the high vulnerability of the region stems from a number of factors, including inter alia low economic development, poverty and low adaptive capacity. Improving adaptive capacity in the Arab region requires targeting key sectors such as water, agriculture, heath and biodiversity, and taking the gender dimension into consideration in all efforts aimed at addressing climate change across these sectors. It underlines that greater impacts of climate change will be felt by women in the Arab region, particularly given their role in managing natural resources for household needs. Therefore, measures need to be put in place urgently in

order to achieve equality and integration of gender into develo pment policies and programmes and to ensure that the effects of climate change do not further marginalise women and further plunge them into a poverty and dependency trap.

An important message addressing Arab governments and institutions is that they should work towards enhancing women's access to and control over natural resources, through reforming national legislation and laws to ensure women's access to and control of resources in order to reduce poverty, protect environmental resources, and ensure that women and other vulnerable communities can better cope with climate change. Efforts at the national level should be made to guarantee women's rights, and independent access and entitlements to natural resources in a sustainable manner. It is equally important to enhance opportunities for education and training in climate change related issues, particularly skills development, capacity building and technology transfer

Environmental problems, particularly natural climate variability, desertification and land degradation, pollution of freshwaters, drought and floods can threaten human security and livelihoods. Climate change is one of the cross sectoral environmental problems that is likely to aggravate the impact of all other environmental hazards. It is threatening human livelihoods, introducing and exacerbating many environmental problems and amplifying their potential negative impacts. Improvements in knowledge on climate change are needed to deepen our understanding of this global problem and its potential consequences. Physical impacts of global warming, such as rising sea levels, flooding in low-lying delta areas and increased saltwater intrusion, can jeopardise social structures and economic activities and would heavily impact sustainable livelihood strategies. Climate change is also expected to increase the frequency and intensity of extreme climatic conditions and related disasters, leading to more severe events such as droughts, floods, hurricanes and dust storms and exposing more people to risk situations.

Indeed, climate change is one of the greatest challenges currently facing humanity. People all over the world are already feeling its impacts, where the resource base on which they rely is undermined and their human security threatened. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report of 2007, it is well established that vulnerable people and marginalised groups are going to experience the hardest impacts and would be in urgent need of adaptation strategies. The report further highlighted that the most vulnerable groups are the ones with the least capacity to adapt. Women, particularly in developing countries, constitute a great proportion of the world's vulnerable groups (FAO, 2003); the great role played by them in the production of and processing of food and other key aspects of livelihoods entitles them to an equivalent role in the maintenance of natural resources and ecosystems. At the same time, they are expected to be most affected by projected climate change.

Many factors contribute to their high vulnerability and low coping capacity, including limited skills, social constraints, high level of illiteracy and low technical knowledge. Taking into consideration the major contribution of women to different livelihoods and to social and economic welfare, this vulnerability is expected to expand, engulf their families and the whole community at large. Based on this information, a gender-sensitive approach is needed to assess the various impacts of climate change. This requires not only a set of disaggregated data showing that climate change has differential impacts on women and men, but also an understanding of existing inequalities between women and men and the articulation of appropriate gender-based solutions and responses.

## GENDER AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Gender, which is sometimes mistakenly defined as the promotion of women only, is defined by the FAO as "the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. It is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. It is a central organising principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution" (FAO, 2003, DFID, 2008). Gender could also be defined as the differences between women and men within the same household and within and between cultures that are socially and culturally constructed and change over time. These differences can also be seen in the differential roles played by men and women, their responsibilities, decision making, access to land and natural resources, opportunities, needs, etc. Thus, gender is not a synonym for women but considers both women and men and their interdependent relationships. Gender assessment focuses on the relationship between men and women, their roles, access to and control over resources, division of labour, interests and needs. Gender relations always affect household security and family wellbeing as well as planning, production and many other aspects of life (Bravo-Baumann, 2000). The gender approach corresponds to an understanding of socio-political and systemic development. It directs attention to the different roles allocated to men and women in society, which are reflected, for example, in gender-specific divisions of labour, unequal access to and control over resources, and different opportunities to exert influence at societal and political levels (GTZ, 2004).

## i. Desertification and land degradation

Desertification, as defined in Chapter 12 of "Agenda 21" and in United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, is "the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid dry areas caused by climatic changes and human activities". It is accompanied by the reduction in the natural potential of land, the depletion of surface and groundwater resources, and has negative repercussions on living conditions and the economic development of the people affected by it. On the other hand, "land degradation" means reduction or loss in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of rain-fed croplands, irrigated croplands, or range, pasture, forest and woodlands resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including processes arising from human activities and habitation patterns (UNCCD, 1992).

Many physical factors could be highlighted as contributing to desertification in the Arab region, including drought, exposure to erosion, large-scale deforestation, livestock pressure and nutrient mining. These factors interact within a complex socio-economic context involving growing populations, unclear property and tenure rights, landlessness and an inequitable distribution of assets, poor infrastructure and market access, lack of information and research on desertification and its implications, and the failure of markets to reward the supply of environmental services. Above all these factors, climate change is expected to further complicate the desertification problem and its impacts, as indicated in the IPCC report (2007); that drying has been observed in the Sahel, the Mediterranean, southern Africa and parts of southern Asia, with more intense and longer droughts observed over wider areas since the 1970s, particularly in the tropics and subtropics (see Annex 5 on drought frequency in the Middle East and North Africa). The IPCC analysis links this increase to higher temperatures, decreased precipitation, changes in sea surface temperatures, wind patterns, and decreased snow cover. It is expected that desertification, climate variability

and their resultant poverty would create a scenario of misery and insecurity across the dry lands of Africa and Asia.

According to UNCCD, 250 million people have already been harmed by desertification, and another 750 million are at risk.

Available statistics on desertification in the Arab region paints a very gloomy picture, indicating that most of the land resources of the region are either desert already or vulnerable to desertification — estimated at 9.84 million square kilometres, or about 86.7% of the total area of the Arab region (Abdelgawad, 1997). Rising temperature will increase evaporation rates and more drying will result, a scenario that will lead to severe water stress in many countries of the region\*, and will have important implications on crop production and the overall food security situation.

From a gender perspective, given their differing productive roles, desertification and land degradation affect men and women differently. Recognising the active role of rural women in managing natural resources and maintaining their families' livelihoods, and the large dependence of rural communities on natural resources, scarcity and unavailability of these resources means a growing workload for women, who are responsible for the provision of fuel-wood and water supplies. They would need to walk longer distances to compensate, often under harsh and unsafe conditions. A case study in Darfur indicated that women bear a disproportionately large share of the workload for crop farming, harvesting and vegetable growing, yet it was men who make decisions about land use and farm planning (Osman-Elasha, 2007).

## ii. Natural disasters and risks

A disaster is usually defined as a serious disruption of the functioning of society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses that exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using only its own resources (ISDR, 2001). Disasters as defined here could have immense impacts on human livelihoods in general; however, gender-based inequalities and disadvantages can often be compounded by factors such as race, class, ethnicity or age, which lead to great differences in women's experiences in disasters. The impacts would be greatest on women who are poor or economically insecure. Other factors that contribute to increasing women's vulnerability to disasters include: high levels of malnutrition, illiteracy, low technical skills and training, in addition to cultural limitations on mobility, all of which can limit women's resilience to disasters. Effective management of natural resources and effective policies to reduce risks or respond to natural disasters require a clear understanding of gender-based differences and inequalities, while the lack of such understanding could lead to the perpetuation or reinforcement of such gender-based inequalities and other dimensions of social vulnerability.

## iii. Climate change

Addressing gender inequality in the context of climate change is essential because women and men have different roles, responsibilities, and decision-making powers in relation to household and community livelihoods. Moreover, they have differential access to resources, services and

<sup>\*</sup> A country is water stressed if the available freshwater supply relative to water withdrawals acts as an important constraint on development. Withdrawals exceeding 20 percent of renewable water supply has been used as an indicator of water stress (IPCC Third Assessment Report: Climate Change 2001, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. http://unep.ch/ipcc/pub/syreng.htm).

employment opportunities. In the developing world, including some Arab countries, the social positioning of women ties them to reproductive activities and drags them away from public life or community level decision-making processes. However, and in spite of these ties and the many household responsibilities assigned to women, still they continue to play an active role in various livelihood activities, particularly in rural areas (Osman-Elasha, 2007).

With regard to exposure to impacts and responses to climate change, it is evident that gender differences exist and should not be ignored if balanced solutions are to be adopted. In such a situation, differences should be dealt with using a gender-sensitive approach. These differences should also be highlighted in all efforts aiming at reducing vulnerabilities and improving adaptation capacities.

Many women groups attempt to draw attention to the link between gender and climate and the need to factor gender into climate change policies and strategies (Christian Aid 2007). Such initiatives are important for developing countries in order to avoid disparities and gender inequality in future development plans and policies. When dealing with climate change from a gender perspective it is essential that we first find answers to important questions such as: What gender differences exist in relation to impacts of and responses to climate change? Whose activities are contributing to climate change? Who is going to suffer more from the impacts of climate change? Are there gender differences when considering mitigation measures? What role can women play in adaptation efforts to climate change?

Climate change affects women and men, sometimes in the same way, sometimes differently. For example women are more exposed to impacts related to the deterioration of water quality and quantity resulting from natural disaster, whether floods or drought. This is because of their role in providing household water and related domestic services. The effects of climate change on gender inequality are not limited to these direct impacts but could also lead to consequent changes in gender relations. Outward migration of men during past crisis episodes, and consequent losses of livelihoods, has often lead to women taking over additional responsibilities and added workloads. Occupied by their reproductive role, women may miss the chance of getting involved in various types of activities necessary to building their skills and safeguarding them against climate impacts. Moreover, their heavy involvement in different household activities and caring for children may tie them more to their land, limiting their mobility.

A study in Sudan indicated that women are always left behind during times of disaster to face the aftermath. On the other hand, the same study highlighted examples where women have contributed to buffering their families against climate variability through their involvement in the production process, sale of vegetables and value added crops (Osman-Elasha, 2007).

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ARAB REGION

The Arab region encompasses a total area of about 14.2 million kilometres-square, or 10.2 percent of the world. It is comprised of 21 countries, extending from Iraq in the north to Somalia in the south, and from Mauritania in the west to Oman in the east (See Annex 1, Map of the Arab region). Its vast terrain includes plains, plateaus, dry valleys and relatively limited highlands and mountainous areas. The region has wide variations in climatic conditions with 90 percent of its land classified as arid and dry sub-humid. It is generally characterised by

great variability in both seasonal and annual precipitation, which is typical of dry land ecosystems. Average annual temperatures, as well as maximum and minimum temperatures, are also varying, from freezing to over 50 degrees Celsius, depending on season and location. Among the most influential climatic factors is rainfall. The estimated total amount of rainwater received over the region is 2.282 billion cubic metres per year, with an estimated 205 billion cubic metres per year of surface water and 35 billion cubic metres per year of groundwater.

These figures highlight great dependence on highly variable rainfall, reflecting the vulnerability of the region in relation to climate change impacts on water resources. The distribution of rainfall varies between countries, with around 52 percent of the region's area receiving an average annual rainfall of less than 100 millimetres, while 15 percent receive 100-300 millimetres, and 18 percent more than 300 millimetres (see Figure 1). This amount increases to reach 1500 millimetres of rainfall in parts of the region, e.g., the highlands of Lebanon, Syria and North Africa and along the coastal areas and southern Sudan. However, a large portion of the rainwater is lost to evaporation and surface runoff. The highest losses occur in the desert and semi-desert zones (Ali A et al, 2002).

Aridity is the main climatic feature of the Arab region, and hyper-arid or arid conditions prevail in over 89 percent of the area, while the remaining 11 percent of semi-arid and limited sub-humid areas are confined to elevated lands. The FAO in 1992 estimated the total area affected by wind erosion in the Arab region at 161.3 million hectares. Countries of the region are distinguished by vast coastal areas overlooking segments of the Arabian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Population of the Arab region is estimated at 288 million in 2000 with the largest global rate of growth of three percent during the period 1990-1995. Population is expected to reach over 290 million by 2010. Women constitute 50 percent of the population. Increasing population exerts great pressures on natural resources, particularly on limited water resources. All the abovementioned factors reflect the high variability of climatic features and the subsequent impact on land-use systems, particularly rangelands, rain-fed agriculture, and coastal management.

According to IPCC reports, global warming is unequivocal, "as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures with the full range of projected temperature increase of two to 11.5 degrees Fahrenheit (1.1 to 6.4 degrees Celsius) by the end of the century leading to widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global mean sea levels." The 2007 IPCC report highlighted that between 1900 and 2005, the Sahel (the boundary zone between the Sahara desert and more fertile regions of Africa to the south), the Mediterranean, southern Africa, and parts of southern Asia have become drier, adding stress to water resources in these regions. The report also points out a projected increase in severe weather (storms, precipitation, drought), noting that tropical cyclones (hurricanes and typhoons) are likely to become more intense, with higher peak wind speeds and heavier precipitation associated with warmer tropical seas. Increases in the amount of high latitude precipitation are likely, while decreases are likely in most subtropical land regions, e.g., Egypt. Extreme heat and heat waves are likely to continue becoming more frequent, while droughts have become longer and more intense, and have affected larger areas since the 1970s. Ocean and sea level rises could lead to the inundation of lengthy coastal areas of the Arab region and resultant losses in property, productivity, loss of valuable biodiversity of wetlands, salinisation of groundwater aquifers, and mass migration of the population (see Box 1 on the Middle East and North Africa, and Box 2 on Arab Sub-Sahara Africa).

According to the 2007 UNHD report, the Middle East is considered among the most water-stressed regions of the world. Future scenarios project further decreases in water resources and increasing pressures. Nine out of 14 countries in the region already have average per capita water availability below the water scarcity threshold. Countries expected to experience decreased precipitation include Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. Meanwhile, rising temperatures and changes in runoff patterns will influence the flow of rivers upon which countries in the region depend. The report further pointed out that climate change scenarios for water in the Middle East cannot be viewed in isolation, as rapid population growth, industrial development, urbanisation and increasing demand for irrigation would exert additional pressures on water resources. Such water pressures have been associated in many areas with conflicts and political disputes at the national and regional levels (Osman-Elasha, 2008).

# **Box 1:** Impacts of climate change in the Middle East and North Africa region

**Ecosystems:** The Middle East contains the world's hottest deserts, already inhospitable to most forms of life. Most of the region is expected to remain desert under climate change scenarios. Climate change may put stress on those areas that are more hospitable, such as the Mediterranean basin.

Water supply: Lack of water is one of the greatest problems in the region. With increased heat and increased evaporation, the problem may become even worse under global warming, and cause conflict between nations.

**Security:** The Middle East is already the flashpoint for many of the world's conflicts. Environmental stresses, especially on water supplies, could only exacerbate animosities in the region.

**Coastal erosion:** Sea level rise poses a particular problem, e.g., in Egypt where the extremely low elevation of arable cropland in the fertile Nile delta makes coastal erosion a clear threat for the nation.

**Health:** As extreme temperatures already occurring in the Middle East rise even further, heat-related mortality is also expected to rise.

## Box 2: Impacts of climate change in Arab Sub-Sahara Africa

Sub-Sahara Africa is the most vulnerable region to the risks of environmental changes due to global warming, and it is home to many of the world's poorest nations, countries that will not be able to afford adaptation strategies on their own.

Potential impacts include:

**Desertification:** The grasslands of the Sahel, a band of semiarid land running across the continent south of the Sahara desert, are already shrinking. As climate models predict warmer temperatures and less rainfall for this region under global warming, the desertification and loss of productive land is expected to accelerate.

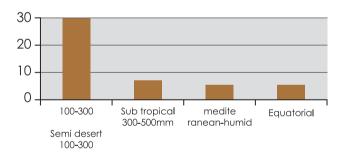
**Food security:** The economies of many countries are still based on subsistence agriculture. Increased numbers of droughts and floods could lead to food shortages and famines.

**Health:** A warmer climate could expand the range of carriers of malaria, yellow fever, dengue fever, and other vector-borne diseases.

Water supply: The lack of adequate fresh water is a problem faced by several countries in these parts Africa. In many parts of this region precipitation is expected to decline, leading to more severe water shortages.

**Refugees:** Environmental pressures such as dwindling food and water supplies may lead to conflict between struggling nations, unleashing migrations of environmental refugees on the African continent.

Figure 1: Rainfall distribution in the Arab region



Source: Adapted from ASCAD (1997).

## GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN THE ARAB REGION

It is well established by the IPCC 2007 report that climate change is real and its effects are already being felt around the world — particularly by those who are most vulnerable — contributing to food insecurity, desertification, water scarcity, and a devastating increase in storms and flooding. Women, particularly in developing countries, are among the most vulnerable groups. The report *Gender and Climate Change* (FAO, 2005) concluded that women are more severely affected by climate change and natural disasters because of their social roles and because of discrimination and poverty. It also pointed to many other factors that contribute to aggravating their vulnerabilities, including their limited participation in decision-making about development related issues, and their lack of skills, particularly in

dealing with modern technologies. Very few global environmental studies address genderrelated issues or provide information on the disaggregated impact of environmental changes on women, particularly in the Arab region.

Arab countries, while very interrelated, are very diverse. Many perceive the region as a distinct entity because its countries are mostly connected by a common Arabic language, Islamic religion and more or less similar cultural heritage. However, many differences exist between and within Arab countries, in terms of economic and government systems and income levels. These disparities can entail large gender variations in women's living environment, employment opportunities and participation in decision-making processes. The Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) for 2002 noted that discrimination against women is a major obstacle to development in the Arab region. On the other hand, the AHDR report for 2005, "Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab Region", underlines that efforts to promote women's rights are still limited and rarely successful.

According to the 2007 Arab Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) report, women in the Arab region held only 8.7 percent of the region's parliamentary seats in April 2007, a figure among the lowest in the world. The Arab Women Development Report (AWDR, 2001), noted the existence of a subtle socio-cultural trend forcing Arab women to withdraw from the labour force, including women whose education and skills could contribute significantly to economic and social development (See Annex 3a on women enrolment). It highlighted the need to reinforce gender equality in credit systems, technological labour-intensive activities, and employment training programmes.

## i. Gender, climate change and Millennium Development Goals

While all Arab countries are working towards achieving MDGs, there are sharp regional and intra-country discrepancies regarding progress towards achieving them. Moreover, climate change is expected to constrain all the efforts aimed at achieving the MDGs through its impact on different economic and social sectors. Empowerment of women is an essential component of all eight MDGs, with gender equality taken as an integral part of sustainable development. The Middle East Economic Survey, 2006, highlighted that additional measures are needed across the region in order to meet the goals of poverty reduction, gender equality and environmental sustainability, as well as to formulate effective macroeconomic and social policies.

In terms of achieving Goal 3, of promoting gender equality and empowering women, it is expected that if countries maintain the current rate of progress the overall Arab region will succeed in achieving gender equality at all levels of education by 2015. This projection doesn't take climate change impacts into consideration. It reflects a rather optimistic and unrealistic view, since climate change impacts are expected to constrain the achievement of MDG goals. Achievement of environmental sustainability will require more concerted efforts to address climate change concerns, protect and conserve natural resources, particularly energy, water and soil resources, and to diversify economies.

## ii. Gender, climate change and conflict

Climate change is likely to exacerbate both natural disasters and potentially conflicts over natural resources. Studies by Hemmati (2005) and Rohr (2008) noted that competition over declining natural resources could trigger more conflict between different land users.

The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and the 2005 World Summit recognised the essential role women play in sustainable development. In its follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, the UN General Asembly highlighted the need to involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels, and to integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development. At its 46th session in 2002, the Commission on the Status of Women took up climate change issues when it addressed environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters. The agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission called for action to mainstream a gender perspective into ongoing research by the academic sector on the impact of climate change, including its root causes, and to encourage the application of results into policies and programmes.

Women in the Arab world have an exceptionally great role in maintaining the integrity of the family and social network in a region characterised in most of its parts by a state of continuous fighting and instability. Women are faced by a number of challenges, including war, increasing resource-based conflicts and their implications in terms of loss of life and property, displacement, male migration and setbacks to development. This is particularly evident in Iraq, Palestine, Somalia and Sudan where insecurity and instability brought by war and conflict threatens the livelihoods of a large number of families and adds more burdens on women, especially those heading their households.

## iii. Gender, climate change and human security

Environmental degradation, loss of soil fertility and the resulting decline in productivity is already affecting the sustainable livelihoods of rural communities in many parts of the world. Climate change would be one more stress to interact with a number of pressures and exacerbate the suffering of vulnerable people, particularly women. Women in many parts of the world play a multi-dimensional role as mothers, farm labourers, household managers and family heads. The impact of climate change related hazards could mean a loss of income for women in agriculture, cottage industries, and the informal sector. The IPCC noted that, "climate change impacts will be differently distributed among different regions, generations, age classes, income group, occupations and genders" (IPCC, 2001).

Women make up a large number of the poor in communities that are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood, and are disproportionately vulnerable to and affected by climate variability and extremes. With an increase in possible impacts of global warming, including droughts, floods, desertification and erosion, women will have to work harder to secure essential resources. This could result in reducing the time devoted to care for their families or improving their skills and education levels. Lower levels of education reduce the ability of women and girls to access information, including early warning mechanisms, and resources, or to make their voices heard. Based on FAO reports, two thirds of the one billion illiterate in the world are women and girls. Available figures show women have little access to the benefits of research and innovation (see Annex 3b on research specialisations for Arab women). In addition, women farmers' roles and needs are often ignored when devising technology that may cause labour displacement or increased workloads. This is an extra challenge when women want to make innovative changes in their livelihoods. Nevertheless, women are the main food producers in most developing countries and are also largely responsible for securing water and energy for cooking and heating. Access to modern cooking fuels reduces demand for biomass cooking fuels, thus reducing pressure on marginal lands and forests. Moreover, improved energy services reduce outdoor air pollution (FAO, 2005).

Gender inequality is a major factor contributing to the increased vulnerability of women to extreme climatic conditions, including heat waves, floods and drought, which are increasingly being connected to climate change. According to a recent report from the World Conservation Union/Women's Environment and Development Organisation (IUCN/WEDO), women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men during disasters (IUCN/WEDO 2007). Women's limited access to resources and decision-making processes increases their vulnerability to climate change. Studies show that gender inequalities can be aggravated in the aftermath of disasters. Having lost all their assets, men usually migrate leaving women and children behind. This was evident in the study of Osman-Elasha (2007), which shows that during the 1984 drought in Sudan men migrated first in search of alternative livelihood options. As a result women's workload increases substantially with their vulnerability. It is also expected that the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is going to increase substantially under future climate change. A Christian Aid report projects that one billion people will be displaced by 2050 and that climate change is likely to exacerbate existing challenges around migration, particularly forced migration (Christian Aid, 2007).

## iv. Gender, climate change, migration and displacement

According to the IPCC (2007), climate change may heighten the problem of human migration. Worldwide, 150 million people will become homeless due to coastal flooding, agricultural disruption and shoreline erosion. Because women are key actors in maintaining the social cohesion of the family, these possible climatic and environmental impacts could be very destabilising. Migration and environmental change could also trigger economic and social instability. Desertification is already taking a heavy toll on the activities of women and farming, especially in the Sahel region. More women than men work in the informal sector and in small enterprises, sectors that are often the worst hit and least able to recover from the effects of disasters. It is evident that the negative impacts of climate change would likely impact the poor women in a disproportionate manner, mainly because of their low coping capacity. Currently, women constitute up to 80 percent of refugee and displaced populations worldwide.

Nomadic people, particularly women in some rural areas, are isolated from the sources of climate-related information and possess very few livelihood options (Osman-Elasha, 2008). Based on an FAO study (2005), women in sub-Saharan Africa and the Near East play a major role in household animal production enterprises, where they tend to have primary responsibility for the husbandry of small animals beside taking care of large animal systems, herding, providing water and feed, cleaning stalls and milking animals. In all types of animal production systems, women have a predominant role in processing, particularly milk products, and are commonly responsible for their marketing. This fact necessitates that any development interventions to improve coping capacity of rural communities to changing climates should give special attention to specific needs of women, in order to enhance their contribution to household food security.

Historically, rural women have employed traditional coping mechanisms that enabled them to survive the harsh climatic conditions of their desert environments. But since climate change is happening fast and in a severe manner, these local coping capacities may not work under future conditions. Frequent extreme events may erode women's adaptation. In such cases, and if no supportive measures are put in place, it is expected that women's only option would be to migrate to other places, leaving behind their homelands, security and every means of livelihood.

Climate change will almost certainly increase the number of internally displaced people living in informal settlements, expanding urbanisation with subsequent implications on the urban as well as rural environments. Such informal settlements generally lack basic services such as clean water, energy, health, education, sanitation and care. No reliable database on squatter settlements or the status of their inhabitants is currently available in Arab states. However, field research in a number of areas shows that residents are characterised by low social status, poor levels of education, and weak technical skills. Generally, families in informal areas are characterised by a high proportion of women heads of household, who are burdened with many problems brought about by their difficult economic and environmental conditions. Residents without jobs cannot attain decent lives or housing facilities. Migrants and displaced families may find it especially difficult to raise their children (Abdalla and Assal, 2002).

## v. Gender, climate change and poverty

Defining poverty is not easy, yet indicators such as per capita income, access to credit, ownership of assets, differential access to land rights, life expectancy, education, all put women in an unfavourable position in comparison to their male counterparts (FAO, 2005). Women's vulnerability stems to a large extent from these factors, in addition to their different social and economic roles and status.

Of particular importance are land rights, because they allow women to increase agricultural production and reduce the vulnerability of women-headed households to disaster risk. Climate change is predicted to widen the gaps between the rich and poor, and women in developing countries have always been classified among the poorest and most disadvantaged groups. Women constitute the majority of low-income earners in developing countries. Some 70 percent of the total global population living below the poverty line — who are far more vulnerable to environmental damage — are women, and 85 percent of those who die from climate-induced disasters are women (Denton, 2000 and Röhr, 2006 and 2005).

It is evident, therefore, that assisting women in their fight against poverty is essential to economic development. In many developing countries women lack access to credit, not because they are denied the right to get loans but because of high interest rates and demands for collateral that exclude poor women (Denton, 2000). The FAO established many factors as contributing to low accessibility of credit to women, including national legislation and customary laws that do not allow women to share land property rights along with their husbands, or because female heads of household are excluded from land entitlement schemes and consequently cannot provide the collateral required by lending institutions.

Women's wage income from farm and non-farm employment and from other income-generating opportunities is of particular importance for landless and near-landless rural households. Women produce more than 50 percent of the food grown worldwide, according to FAO estimates (FAO, 1995a). The roles that women play in agriculture vary from region to region and country to country. Men and women often have complementary roles, sharing or dividing tasks in crop production, livestock husbandry, fishing and use of forest products. In other cases, women and men have distinctly different tasks and responsibilities for certain crops and livestock, fish and forests. Where large-scale cash cropping has been introduced, the tendency remains for men to become involved in this sector, especially when it is highly mechanised, with women becoming increasingly responsible for household food production and small-scale cash cropping with low levels of technology. In sub-Saharan Africa, women contribute 60 to 80 percent of labour in both food productions for household consumption and for sale (FAO, 1995).

Recent studies have shown that women's contributions are significant when unpaid and seasonal labour is taken into account. In Morocco women account for 53.2 percent of unpaid agricultural labour; in Egypt, 50.7 percent; in Lebanon 40.7 percent; in Sudan, 34.7 percent; in Iraq, 30.7 percent, and in Mauritania, 28 percent (FAO, 1995). Women are also responsible for the more time consuming and labour-intensive tasks of crop and livestock production: sowing, application of fertiliser, weeding, harvesting, transporting, threshing, cleaning, sorting, grading and bagging. These tasks are carried out manually or with simple tools. According to the FAO, many studies highlight that while women are the mainstay of small-scale agriculture, farm labour force and day-to-day family subsistence, they have more difficulties than men in gaining access to resources such as land and credit, and productivity enhancing inputs and services.

## GENDER PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate variability is already causing unpredictable damage, making vulnerable people, including women, more vulnerable. Current socioeconomic and cultural constraints affect women in a disproportionate manner. Women often develop adaptive strategies, yet the nature and scale of environmental stress is such that it may overwhelm women's ability to contribute effectively to socioeconomic development. The following sections shed light on the relation between gender, climate change and key socioeconomic sectors.

## i. Gender, climate change and agriculture

Women play a major role in natural resource management and food security. They often contribute to growing, processing and marketing food. They are also responsible for raising small livestock, managing vegetable gardens and collecting fuel and water (FAO, 2003). Estimates of women's contribution to the production of food crops range from 30 percent in Sudan to 80 percent in the Congo, while their proportion of the economically active labour force in agriculture ranges from 48 percent in Burkina Faso to 73 percent in the Congo and 80 percent in the traditional sector in Sudan (FAO, 2003).

A growing predominance of women in agriculture and the consequent decrease of men in the same have been observed in many regions and countries, leading to what is sometimes called the "feminisation of agriculture". This situation calls for more action to improve women's capacities to perform agricultural activities in a more efficient way (FAO, 2005). This trend has also been accompanied by an increasing number of female-headed households around the world. Outward migration of men from rural areas to urban ones, and their shifting away from agriculture to other more profitable employment have been identified as the major factor behind these developments. The situation is most evident in Africa, where agriculture is becoming increasingly a female-dominated sector. The feminisation of agriculture is less clear in the Near East, where the percentage of female-headed households is relatively smaller than in other regions (female-headed households account for up to 16 percent in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Syria, while in Sudan the percentage exceeds 20 percent). However, this percentage is growing with more outward migration of males in search of jobs or away from conflicts. The contribution of women in the Near East in agriculture is often overlooked because most of their work is unpaid labour on family lands mostly headed by men (FAO, 2005). Due to their limited financial resources, skills and capacity to deal with technology, women's activities are expected to be constrained by climatic strains, especially in drought-prone areas of such counties as Sudan and Somalia. However, a recent

study conducted in Sudan (Osman-Elasha, 2007) indicated that women are currently developing some locally driven and effective coping strategies in the face of drought, which could assist them in maintaining sustainable livelihoods.

#### ii. Gender, climate change and water resources

Water is essential for all forms of life and crucial for human development. Women generally assume primary responsibility for fetching water for drinking, cooking, washing, irrigating home gardens and raising small livestock, while men generally use water for irrigation or livestock herding and for industries (Fisher 2006). According to the FAO, over 230 million people live in 26 countries classified as water deficient, of which 11 are in Africa — mainly North and South Africa. It is expected that by 2025 almost two thirds of the world's population is likely to experience some type of water shortage, and for one billion of them the shortage will be severe and socially disruptive.

Recent estimates of water resources in the region indicate that the total available natural water resources are 262.9 billion cubic metres per year, made of 226.5 billion cubic metres in surface water and 36.3 billion cubic metres in groundwater, in addition to 11,874 billion cubic metres of non-renewable (fossil) groundwater with great variations among different countries (Abahussain et al, 2002). Several factors are contributing to water scarcity in the region, including rapid population growth and fast urbanisation that have largely reduced the per capita availability of water, which is expected to be further reduced to around 50 percent by the year 2025. Based on projections (Attia et al, 1999), the water deficit is likely to increase from about 28.3 billion cubic metres in the year 2000 to 75.4 billion cubic metres in 2030 due to climatic and non-climatic factors. In arid areas affected by desertification in the Arab region, the time spent in water collection will increase as women and children will have to move over longer distances to find water.

Gender considerations related to water resources conservation and management are lacking. However, awareness is growing of the importance of a gender approach to water supply and management issues (Francis, 2003). Managing water in an integrated and sustainable way can actually improve gender equity by easing access, both to water and to related services (UNDP, 2002). Some experiences suggest that simple coping measures can help in reducing women's workload and save them enough time to cater for other needs. One example of a successful experience is the provision of local water sources as part one World Bank rural water supply and sanitation project in Morocco that succeeded in increasing girls' school attendance by 20 percent over four years, in part by reducing the traditional burden on them to fetch water (Fisher 2006).

## iii. Gender, climate change and biodiversity

Biodiversity plays an important role in ecosystem functions. People rely on biodiversity for food, medicine, raw materials, and ecosystem services such as water supply, nutrient cycling, waste treatment and pollination. Biodiversity is the basic source of livelihood for many women. Their survival may depend to a large extent on the presence of specific type of trees or plant species. Beside the ecological services of biodiversity, it provides the raw material that rural women utilise to produce a number of final marketable products. In dry lands, women are famous for their abilities to preserve foodstuff derived from wild plants and fruits. Their capabilities extend to managerial skills related to conservation of energy — mainly fuel wood — for cooking and lighting (FAO, 2002 and 2005).

In many of the dry agricultural areas of the world, including many parts of Africa, women traditionally grow, process, manage and market food and other natural resources. Local communities in western Sudan, particularly women, have direct links with natural resources, as they usually plant trees, raise small livestock and poultry and practice cottage industries using local natural material, for example, mud and straw. Other women's jobs tied closely to biodiversity include the collection of medicinal and herbal plants, which are also used for cosmetic purposes. A study conducted in Zambia (UNDP, MTEN and UNICEF, 2005) revealed that over-exploitation of tree species for medicinal purposes could present a real threat to biodiversity. Over-exploitation of medicinal plants highlights that in most cases loss of forest biodiversity has been as a result of bad harvesting practices. In such case, climate change will represent an additional stress.

A recent scientific study (McClean, 2005) exploring climate change impacts on sub-Saharan plant species predicts that climate change will trigger species migration and lead to habitat reduction. The study authors examined over 5,000 African plant species in climate models and predict that 81-97 percent of the plant species' suitable habitats will decrease in size or shift due to climate change. The study further concluded that ecosystem services that rely on sub-Saharan plant diversity, including indigenous foods as well as both locally used and potentially global plant based medicines, are likely to be adversely impacted (WRI, 2005). Moreover, it noted that by 2085 between 25-42 percent of the species' habitats are expected to be lost altogether (McClean, 2005). It is therefore evident that the impact of biodiversity loss will be felt by all, because reduced diversity means less medicines, less food and more vulnerability to natural disasters.

## iv. Gender, climate change and health

Many impacts associated with climate change are expected to directly or indirectly impact human health, including extreme heat waves and dust storms that could increase heat-related mortality and respiratory problems. Floods and droughts could lead to an increase in waterborne diseases. Other likely health consequences of climate change include higher rates of malnutrition due to food shortages, and increased vector-borne infectious diseases, including malaria, cholera, meningitis and diarrhoea. According to Bartlett (2008), children under five will be the main victims of sanitation-related illnesses and — along with the elderly — are the most affected by heat stress. Gender discrimination in the allocation of resources, including those relating to food security could aggravate both the situation and the vulnerability of certain groups.

Major climate sensitive women groups include pregnant women, the old and disabled. Women in Arab countries, especially the least developed countries, are already suffering unacceptably high rates of risk of mortality connected with pregnancy and reproductive functions. The average maternal mortality rate in Arab countries is around 270 deaths per 100,000 live births. This rises to over 1,000 deaths in the poorest Arab countries (Mauritania and Somalia) and falls to levels such as seven for every 100,000 births in Qatar (UNDP, 2006). Climate change related impacts could exert additional pressures on vulnerable Arab women causing serious health problems and diseases. Heat waves associated with high humidity in the Gulf region could increase. When climate change affects people's health, it is usually women who look after the sick. Increasing demands on women will make them less able to pursue income-generating activities.

Women and children in sub-Sahara countries may suffer the impact of additional workload and water-related health risks since they are responsible for drawing water and have to deal with unsanitary conditions (Voluntary Services Overseas 2006, CIDA; 2002).

## v. Gender, climate change and economic development

The impacts associated with climate change vary from one country to another, from one region to another, and within the same country and community. This is because vulnerability is a function of the magnitude and frequency of hazards and of existing adaptive capacity, which varies within societies.

Generally, the poorest populations and marginal groups are the most vulnerable. Nevertheless, there can be a differential effect on men and women as a consequence of their social roles, inequalities in the access to and control of resources, and their varying participation in decision-making. Between 1990 and 2003, the Arab region witnessed an increase in women's share in economic activity greater than all other regions of the world. Despite this, Arab women's economic participation remains the lowest in the world: not more than 33.3 percent of women 15 years and older in contrast to the world average of 55.6 percent. The continued military occupations in Palestine and Iraq and some regions of Lebanon and Syria have increased the level of poverty in these zones and undermined the development process, and thus limited the chances for women's economic empowerment.

The UNDP's 2007 report noted that while women composed 40 percent of the world labour force in 1996, the participation of Arab women in the Middle East and North Africa Region did not exceed 26 percent. Further, the UNDP report indicated that the majority the Arab labour force is engaged in the service sector, pointing at the same time to the low productivity and remuneration of the service sector in Arab countries, mainly due to its high proportion of public sector and low paying informal services. It pointed particularly to the higher concentration of women in this sector, thus commonly experiencing low returns on work and other related impacts on their livelihoods. Climate change-related disasters and other shocks always have severe impacts on informal service sectors, particularly in least developed countries where infrastructure is poor, a situation which will further exacerbate women's vulnerability and undermine their capabilities to cope with unexpected events or adapt to future climatic changes.

On average, women in the Arab region accounted for only 18.3 percent of total paid employment in the industrial and related sector in 2004. In economies where agriculture dominates, such as Sudan and Yemen, women are often perceived by men — particularly husbands — as cheap labour, with low or no wages. The report noted, ironically, that Arab countries with lower GDP, income and education levels, such as Yemen, have higher female labour force participation than countries with higher levels, such as Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UNDP, 2007). The report concluded that in general terms Arab women are facing a range of barriers obscuring their chances of employment, such as the difficulty in accessing assets and amenities, technical training, managerial know-how, information, credit, etc, that require special consideration in gender planning. It is evident that improving women's participation in decision-making processes, including by making them aware of disaster risks, preparedness measures, will reinforce traditional coping measures of women and increase disaster resilience of communities.

A report by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on female-headed households in selected conflict areas showed large variations in women's contribution to household income in some of these countries. In Jordan, among the sample of working women surveyed, those with public sector jobs provided 48 percent of their household's income, while the share of women employed in the private sector stood at 34 percent. The survey also revealed that higher numbers of divorced, separated and widowed women are concentrated in technical and elementary occupations; such women are more likely to be either female heads of households or primary providers to their households.

Abdalla and Assal (2002) highlighted cases of displaced women in Sudan who are engaged in the marginal urban economy through the creation of small-scale business. The case studies detailed the struggle of rural displaced women and their ultimate success against a backdrop of social, cultural and economic barriers.

## GENDER IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Gender considerations in relation to decision-making are important in planning climate-related responses, particularly at local levels. Through consultation it is possible to ensure more effective implementation of decisions and plans. Women are most likely to be isolated from decision-making processes, either due to their heavy involvement in many household activities, so they cannot spare the time to participate, or because their contribution is not appreciated. Given the traditionally limited role of women in decision-making processes at the household, village and national levels in most cultures, their needs, interests and constraints are often not reflected in policymaking processes and laws which are important for poverty reduction, food security and environmental sustainability (FAO, 2002). Arab women, however, are still not adequately represented at the decision-making level. This is evident when looking at their contribution to decision-making in areas such as political life, which explains why many policies and decisions are not gender-sensitive (UNDP, 2007). It is important to focus more on encouraging Arab women's contribution to decision-making processes on climate change issues to ensure that policies addressing climate change are tailored according to the needs of the most vulnerable.

Despite the fact that adaptation is currently perceived as important to protect people against the effects of climate variability and change, statistics reveal a disproportionate low adaptive capacity and consequently higher impact in developing countries and on less favoured populations (Burton et al, 2006.). In many developing countries women play an active role in sustaining the household economy through their efforts in agriculture and water conservation, but are often absent from adaptation related decisions. Studies under the AIACC\* Initiative in developing countries, including some in the Arab region (Egypt, Sudan and Tunisia), concluded that in order for adaptation efforts to be successful, policies and measures need to be gender sensitive. Studies conducted in Sudan revealed that at the household level, the ability to adapt to changes in the climate depends on control over livelihood capitals, mainly natural, financial, physical, human and social capital (Osman-Elasha, 2007). It also pointed out that for adaptation measures to be effective and sustainable, it is very important to consider the dimension of equity in the planning and implementation of activities, particularly for women. Equal involvement of men and women in adaptation planning is

<sup>\*</sup> Assessment of Impacts and Adaptation to Climate Change in Multiple Regions and Sectors (2002-2006).

important not only to ensure that the measures developed are actually beneficial for those who are supposed to implement them, but to ensure that all relevant knowledge is integrated into planning.

It was also evident that women play a major role in buffering the family against unexpected climatic shocks: their knowledge of local people and ecosystems, their skills and abilities, social networks and community organisations help communities mitigate hazardous situations and events, and respond effectively to disasters when they do occur. It is well known that historically women have struggled to sustain life during wars, environmental and economic crises, and social disturbance. Their skills and knowledge in the face of hazards and disasters are a major resource in mitigating their impacts. As household service providers, farmers and food producers, women are often able to help make their households and communities less vulnerable to the effects of natural hazards and disasters. Their labour in backyard gardens and small land plots help in providing more nutritious food and increases local self-sufficiency (Osman-Elasha, 2007). Women are also capable of diversifying household income through cottage industry, hence creating buffers against crop losses that improve coping capacities.

During the last drought in Sudan the local coping strategies adopted by women largely assisted their household's adaptations. Specific activities aimed at conserving and economising the use of declining natural resources and restoring the availability of food. Examples include home gardens (Jubraka), poultry production, shifting to other food products that need less cooking time, food processing, and storage. A case study implemented in Sudan as part of the AIACC programme, which was managed by Global System for Analysis, Research and Training (START), Third World Academy of Science (TWAS) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) with financial support from Global Environment Facility (GEF) emphasised the role played by women in reducing household vulnerability in one of the most drought-prone areas of Sudan. It also stressed the need for integrating women in all development initiatives aimed at improving the coping skills of local people and helping them in their struggle to protect their fragile environments in the face of hazards and disasters.

The study area is located in the Red Sea State, in northeastern Sudan, about 50 kilometres north of Port Sudan, the state capital. The region is generally characterised by relative isolation and harsh terrain, a highly variable rainfall system with recurrent spells of drought, and a rural people belonging to the *Beja* tribe practicing agro-pastoral systems in a semi-arid area along a seasonal stream (Khor Arbaat). Frequent occurrences of drought and famine conditions in the Red Sea hills have been the norm during the 20th century. Yet the traditional pattern of natural short-term recovery was shattered after the long drought and famine of the 1980s (Abdel Ati, 2003). Khor Arbaat Rehabilitation Project (KARP) project came in response to the Sahelian drought in the 1980s by SOS Sahel (UK). Khor Arbaat delta was chosen as an area with good potential, that upon rehabilitation of the somewhat degraded agriculture farming system could provide considerable benefits to the local community.

The study indicated that water-harvesting, food crop production and diversification of income had been effective activities in improving livelihood conditions in Khor Arbaat area and its overall resilience in the face of harsh climatic conditions. The involvement of local people, including women, in the production process, sales of vegetables and value added crops buffered many families from climate variability. Most commonly identified actors responsible for the implementation of specific adaptation measures, including water management, crop diversification and home gardens, are community-based organisations,

including women groups, a fact that pinpoints the role playable by these groups in building future adaptation capacities.

Capacities needed to implement and sustain adaptation measures range from basic training and good managerial skills to specialised technical capacities and leadership qualities. The most valued benefits perceived by communities are those related to human and social capital, including the wide awareness created, capacities developed (organisational and technical), education and extension services, and other skills developed. Enhanced women's participation (decision making, public participation, income generation activities, etc) in a region where women are inherently marginalised has been viewed as one of the major successes of the project and a contributing factor to improved coping capacities (AbdelAtti, 2003 and Osman-Elasha, 2007).

## **INCORPORATING GENDER INTO LEGAL OBLIGATIONS**

Gender issues have not been considered in wider climate change discourses and initiatives. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) does not adopt neither a gender perspective nor consider women and men as specific stakeholders in the convention. The international response to the implications of climate change has largely focused on mitigation initiatives (reduction of greenhouse gases), and has directed less attention to adaptation strategies (assistance with adapting to the adverse impact of climate change on food, livelihood and human security). They have also displayed little regard for the social implications of climate change outcomes and the threats these pose for poor men and women, or for the ways in which political and economic environments influence the ability to respond to the challenges of climate change. Without secure access to and control over natural resources (land, water, livestock, trees), women are less likely to be able to cope with permanent climatic change. Equal access to property rights allows women, as primary users, to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner.

The 2007-2008 Human Development Report, Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World, concludes that climate change threatens progress towards development and towards the 2000 UN MDGs and will undermine any improvements related to the human development index in many countries (UNDP, 2007). This analysis emphasises the political and economic dimensions of climate change and brings them to the heart of sustainable development issues. The potential climatic impacts highlighted in the IPCC-AR4, will not only constrain sustainable development, but also pose serious threats to human security and livelihoods. Although climate change impacts all people, it still has differential gender impacts. Moreover, it could magnify current inequalities and deepen the disparity between women and men in their vulnerability to — and capability to cope with — climate change (UNDP, 2007; Mitchell et al, 2007).

Gender issues have also not been given due consideration in related multilateral environmental agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), where the only mention of women (not gender) is in the preamble, which states: "[We recognise] also the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirm the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policymaking and implementation for biological diversity conservation ... "The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is one convention, however, that has mainstreamed the concept of gender by recognising the role of women in ensuring rural livelihoods and by explicitly encouraging the equal participation

of women and men in capacity building (FAO, 2005). It therefore clear that there is no lack of willingness to incorporate a gender perspective, but there is a lack of knowledge about available approaches to do so. For instance, the Adaptation Policy Framework and other tools referred to in the UNFCCC compendium for adaptation do not explicitly take gender issues into account.

Gender-based differences and inequalities are expected to put some women in a more vulnerable situation compared to men. It is essential to understand the roles, contributions and knowledge of women and men in relation to natural resource management, particularly in terms of risk assessment. Decisions on adaptation should target women as well as men, taking into consideration that women's participation in the decision making process is equally important for disaster reduction and recovery. The UN Commission on the Status of Women, in its 47th session in 2002, put forward for the first time a comprehensive set of global policy recommendations, contained in the Annex, to enhance women's empowerment and promote gender equality in situations of natural disasters. Putting these recommendations into action is the most urgent step in order to achieve gender equality.

The 2007 UNDP report argues that the negative situation of Arab women represents not just a problem for that half of the population, but is a barrier to progress and prosperity in Arab societies as a whole. It also stated that despite Arab women's equal status under international law, many women are not encouraged to develop and use their capacities on an equal footing with men. Although the UNDP report highlighted that some achievements have been secured in most Arab countries, it still warns that political reform, at every level, must go beyond the cosmetic and the symbolic, stating that, "In all cases ... real decisions in the Arab world are, at all levels, in the hands of men."

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- For all activities relevant to the environment there is a gender dimension that should be taken into consideration. Taking the differential impacts and responses of women and men to environmental problems into account can yield much improvement in environmental policies and measures. It is therefore important to integrate gender into all regional and national policies and strategies aimed at addressing environmental challenges. Addressing the threat of climate change is the current global priority. The Arab region is among the most vulnerable regions to its potential impacts. Unless it is effectively dealt with, climate change will have a dramatic impact on the environment and on economic and social development in the region. The high vulnerability of the region stems from a number of factors, including low adaptive capacity. Improving adaptation in the Arab region requires targeting key sectors such as water, agriculture, heath and biodiversity. Gender should be taken into consideration in all efforts to address climate change across these sectors.
- Greater impacts of climate change will be felt by women in the Arab region, particularly given their role in managing natural resources for household needs. Measures need to be taken today to ensure that the effects of climate change do not further impoverish women and further plunge them into a poverty and dependency trap. Climate variability and change may sometimes create a state of resource scarcity and lack of reliable jobs. This will eventually lead to increased male outward migration with more women left behind with additional agricultural and household duties, including fetching water and collecting fuel and fodder. To reduce women's vulnerability there is a need to decrease

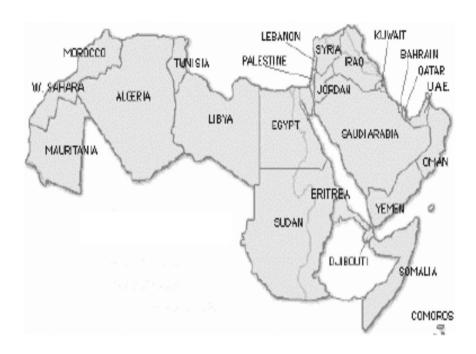
their dependence on fragile environments with meagre natural resources and to encourage their integration into economic activities that diversify their livelihoods.

- Prevailing socioeconomic inequalities in the Arab region could render women more prone to a range of climatic and socioeconomic impacts. It is important that women participate in decision-making processes on an equal footing, and take part in all national and regional efforts aimed at reducing the spread of poverty, supporting economic growth and achieving greater justice and wealth distribution. It is evident that improving women's participation in decision-making processes, including by making them aware of disaster risks, will reinforce traditional coping measures of women and increase the disaster resilience of communities.
- Gaining social justice requires the creation of an enabling environment for women to participate in all policy decisions. This includes promoting women's education, skills, health and social safety nets, and expanding livelihood options for them. Promoting income-generating activities and employment opportunities for women, including through the provision of micro credit and other financial instruments, ensuring equal access to resources, in particular land and property ownership, including housing, and taking measures to empower women as producers and consumers, in order to enhance the capacity of women to respond to disasters, are all important. Climate change is already undermining the achievement of MDGs, particularly in poor countries. Empowerment of women is an essential component of all eight MDGs, with gender equality integral to sustainable development. Additional measures are needed across the Arab region in order to meet the goals of poverty reduction, gender equality and environmental sustainability.
- Since environmental problems disproportionately affect women in the Arab region, governments should analyse and identify gender specific impacts and solutions related to desertification, pollution, floods, droughts, heat waves, diseases, and other environmental changes and disasters. Moreover, strategies should be developed aimed at reducing female mortality rates resulting from environment-induced disasters and livelihood changes. Regional and national studies and research on the gender-differentiated impacts of global climate change, including a focus on gender differences in capabilities to cope with climate change adaptation, are urgently required. Governments at the national and local levels should develop research strategies necessary to generate scientific information that could guide the decision- making process.
- Arab governments and institutions should work towards enhancing women's access to and control over natural resources, through reforming national legislations and laws to ensure women's access to and control of resources in order to reduce poverty, protect environmental resources, and ensure that women and poor communities can better cope with climate change. Efforts at the national level should be made to guarantee women's rights, independent access and entitlements to natural resources in a sustainable manner. It is equally important to enhance opportunities for education and training in climate change-related issues, particularly skills development, capacity building and technology transfer.
- Participation of Arab women in climate change-related debates and planning processes must be strengthened in order to build their capacity and improve their opportunity to sensitise decision-makers to the advantages of equal participation. Improving women's

access to information and early warning systems, and empowering them to take related action in a timely and appropriate manner, is important to ensuring their preparedness and coping capacity in the face of disasters and related climatic events. The knowledge, contributions and potentials of both women and men need to be identified and fully utilised.

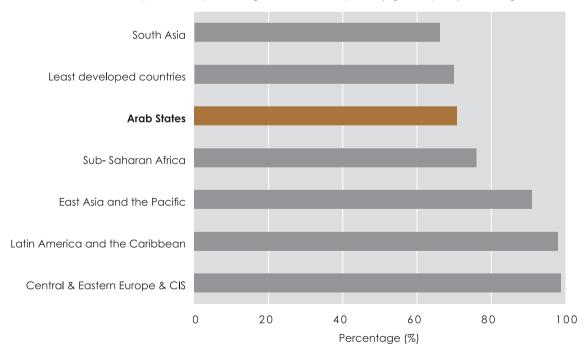
### **Annexes**

**Annex 1:** Map of the Arab region



Annex 2: Female literacy rates as a percentage of male literacy rates, 2003

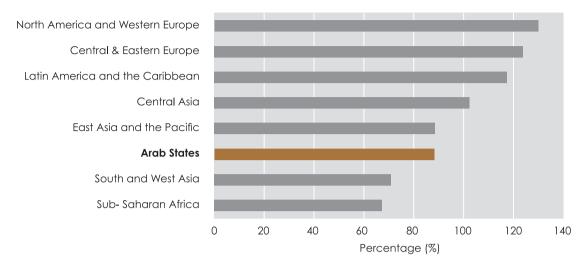
Female literacy rates as a percentage of male literacy rates (age 15+ years), world regions, 2003



Source: UNDP, 2005.

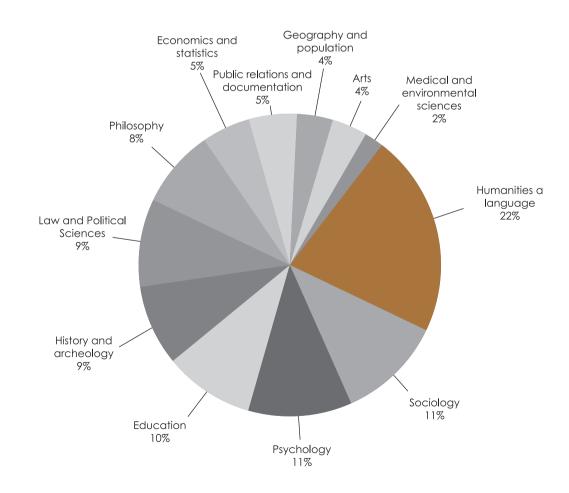
Annex 3a: Gross enrolment rate in tertiary education, 2002-2003

Gross enrolment rate in tertiary education, females as a percentage of male, world regions, 2002-2003



Source: UNESCO website (http://states.uis.unesco.org/ReportFolders/reportfolders.aspx, Table M).

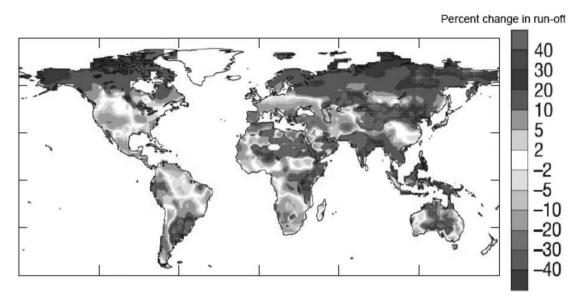
**Annex 3b:** Percentage of Arab women researchers by specialisation



Source: Bayyumi, Hatit and Ghandur, in Arabic, 1999.

Annex 4: Impact of climate change in water availability in MENA in 2050

Water availability will decrease in the MENA region

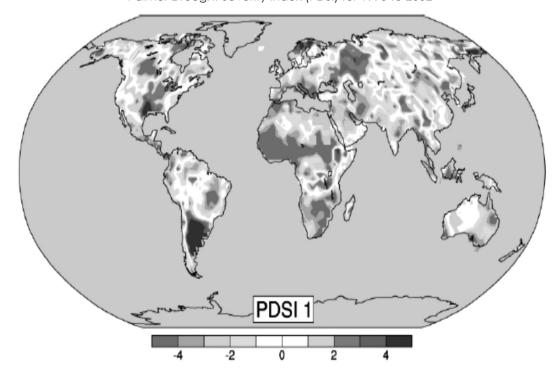


Run-off is projected to drop by 20 to 30% in most of MENA by 2050

Source: Milly et al (2005), published in Nature.

Annex 5: Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDS) for 1990-2002 in MENA

Drought frequency is already increasing in MENA Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI) for 1990 to 2002



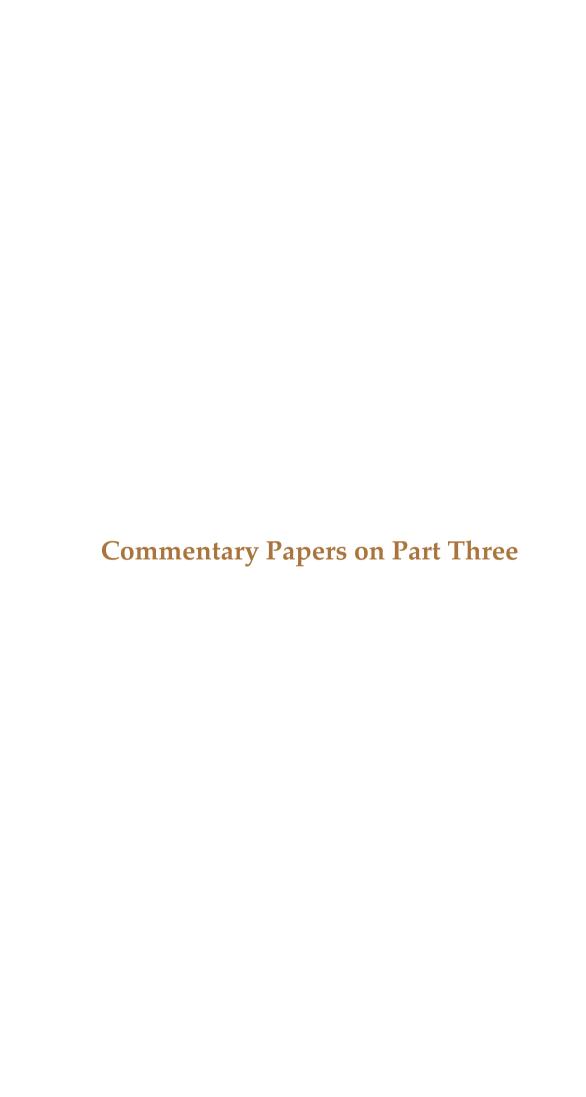
Source: IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, 2007.

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# **Chapter Six**

# **Arab Commentary Papers**

Nassira Keddad

Rita Giacaman

# **Foreign Commentary Papers**

Gita Sen

### Nassira Keddad

Her Excellency, Dr. Nada Haffadh, addresses in her paper the concept of women's security, particularly in connection to health. She has also reviewed in detail other factors that affect the health domain, such as social and political factors. It is a great honour for me to have the opportunity to comment on this invaluable paper, which deftly presents the issue of the promotion of the status of women, especially in Arab countries. Dr. Haffadh has also indicated how closely this problem is linked to other components of human resource development, stressing the necessity of developing the health system and promoting good governance in order to bridge gaps among sectors of society and to combat gender discrimination against a backdrop of inherited negative social behaviours.

The analysis presented by Dr. Haffadh in her paper indicates that ensuring women's security is one of the key elements that contributes to establishing the foundations of sustainable development, underlining the impacts of social and economic conditions, improving the status of women, and providing for equality in the health sector on human development. In fact, this complicated equation represents a challenge for most of the countries in the Arab world.

The indicators covered in the paper — regarding age, fertility, women's contribution to economic activities, etc. — and their comparison to the same indicators in developed countries gives us an analysis of the topography of social conditions in the Arab world, along with approaches adopted to put health in general — and women's health in particular — among key priorities of the state. Dr. Haffadh recommends that governmental efforts be intensified through the involvement of civil society. She also emphasises the necessity of collecting statistical data, enabling an objective and scientific assessment of health conditions, and establishing the measures appropriate for improving them.

In order to contribute to this rich study, I would like to present some proposals to be taken into consideration, as well as add to some of the visions and concepts presented in the paper:

# FIRST THEME: WOMEN'S HEALTH RELATIVE TO POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Since the Cairo Population Conference in 1994, it has become accepted as the right of both men and women, but especially women, to enjoy reproductive health services as one of the components of basic human rights. In fact, required information and services about this particular sector, namely reproductive health, should be made available.

It is worth mentioning that reproductive health is one of the most complicated health issues in all Arab countries today in view of the sensitivities of this domain and in light of its link to individual behaviour, socio-economic conditions and development factors in general.

The agreement approved during the Cairo Conference in 1994 recognized the necessity to link demographic and developmental policies with the economic empowerment of women and their role in reproduction.

The 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development was the third of its kind after Bucharest in 1974 and Mexico in 1984, and it went beyond birth control issues and

other population reduction strategies to taking into consideration human rights, or rather, women's rights to reproductive health.

Reproductive health, according to the standards prescribed by the World Health Organisation (WHO), covers family planning, safe motherhood, child health, violence against women, allergies or infections of the reproductive system, AIDS, infertility, and menopause. Each country decides how to address the measures to be taken according to particular sensitivities, priorities and requirements.

Putting family planning services and women's empowerment among national priorities is much needed in most Arab and African countries, as they represent essential factors in ensuring the right of couples to choose the number of children in their families and birthspacing. They are important as a means to achieve a harmonious demographic balance, improve economies and living conditions, eliminate poverty, and make family life better.

Despite the increase in the percentage of those abiding by family planning methods in some countries in North Africa, as mentioned by Dr. Haffadh, (i.e. 52 percent in Algeria, 53.1 percent in Tunisia and 54.8 per cent in Morocco), the unmet needs for achieving family planning, according to a report issued by the Arab League on family health, is not uniform (e.g. Algeria stood at 10 percent in 2006).

To know these requirements, which are not met, is a very important matter in order to reduce the number of undesirable pregnancies at a certain time or in certain cases when a woman is suffering from poor health or fears of health risks are present at time of delivery or possibility of abortion. The issue is, therefore, not only about controlling unwanted pregnancy. According to published studies, family planning programmes have managed to reduce maternal deaths by 30 percent.

"Ensuring the provision of reproductive health services to all individuals by 2015" is among the strategies developed for the achievement of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

### SECOND THEME: SAFE MOTHERHOOD

The Safe Motherhood initiative launched in Nairobi in 1987 had the objective of reducing maternal deaths by half by the year 2000. Due to the achievement of weak results, the UN agencies and the WHO included the reduction of maternal deaths to three quarters of the percentage registered in 1990 among the UN MDGs to be achieved by the year 2015. These goals were approved by 189 presidents and heads of state in September 2000.

In fact, maternal health in the poorest countries around the world is deteriorating, with one mother dying every minute because of complications related to pregnancy or at the time of delivery. This amounts to 1,600 deaths per day - about 600,000 deaths per year - 99 percent of which occur in developing countries. The risk of maternal death doubles with the increase in the number of pregnancy in a woman's life, which varies depending on social and economic levels, as well as the level of the state's development. For instance, the risk of maternal death is 1:2,800 women in developed countries, while it is 1:16 in sub-Saharan Africa. In Sierra Leone and Afghanistan it is as high as 1:6.

This shows that maternal death is an important indicator of women>s health as well as an evidence of human development, as it reveals how women have access to quality obstetric services (the first and second levels as per the classification set out by the WHO).

We have indeed to consider maternal death as an event that can be avoided in most cases, related to a shortage of services before and during delivery, in connection with grave complications.

In fact, the problem of access to obstetric services, especially in poor countries, is related not only to the shortage of resources or the poor state of any given health system, but also to a shortage in the number of gynaecologists and obstetricians and the involvement of general practitioners in providing alternative services. These reasons can account for the relatively high ratio of maternal death.

It is proven that 88 to 98 percent of cases of maternal death can be avoided, even under present conditions in developing countries.

It is true that the lack of financial resources to cover the expenses of pregnancy and delivery is also one of the key reasons behind maternal death. This is in addition to the common complications of labour, such as hemorrhage (25%), sepsis (15%), eclampsia (8%) and distocy (8%). At the same time, some of the chronic diseases, such as cardiac diseases, hypertension and diabetics, could be the reason behind 10% of maternal deaths, while 13% of maternal death is caused by unsafe abortion, according to the WHO statistics.

In view of the above, we come up with the conclusion that maternal morbidity represents an important factor in the risk of maternal deaths. Though it is difficult to get the data to specify the percentage of maternal deaths caused by maternal morbidity, we should work towards making such data available. This percentage is defined by the number of live births divided by the number of diseases related to direct labour reasons during pregnancy or within 42 days after delivery. This, in fact, is one of the most prominent indicators to determine the risk posed to maternal health. According to an in-depth study conducted in Algeria based on an Algerian survey on maternal health in 2002, it was revealed that maternal morbidity represents 22 percent of live births, while serious maternal morbidity is estimated by 5 percent.

### ASSESSMENT OF MOTHERHOOD PROGRAMMES

It is not easy to assess the development of safe motherhood programmes in view of the difficulty of knowing the exact ratio of maternal mortality itself. Standard definitions only put together deaths for obstetrical reasons and deaths resulting from diseases contracted in pregnancy or delivery.

In only a few countries in the world are causes of death adequately recorded. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate the percentage of maternal diseases due to the absence or shortage of the database recording the quality of the services offered by delivery clinics and institutions. Moreover, not all women attend obstetrical clinics at time of delivery.

# THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD AND ITS REFLECTIONS

Collecting and analyzing demographic data is necessary to draw up policies and programmes appropriate to the needs of various sectors of the population. Most of the Arab countries today register a remarkable demographic development with the decline of the population growth rate due to the reduction of fertility and general deaths. It is noteworthy that general death cases are related to the levels of health of mothers and children.

I want to draw attention to the fact that most Arab countries are undertaking an important step in an advanced stage of demographic transition, resulting in important changes to the population pyramid. Population growth is decreasing while the economically active section of the population is increasing. This is a rare opportunity and should be linked with developmental policies, such as employment and housing policies, environmental preservation, and human resources policies, such as those related to education (quality of and access to schooling) and health (especially reproductive health of youth, teenagers and young women at the age of marriage).

It is also worth mentioning that the factors determining this macro development are different from one country to another, with the countries in North Africa (e.g. Morocco) achieving a relatively average level, and they are distinguished by an advanced demographic transformation. The low growth rate of population in some poorer countries, such as Somalia and Djibouti, is attributed to high rates of mortality. As for the Gulf countries, the reduction of the growth rate of population is attributed to other reasons, such as migration.

The population growth rate in the Arab world in 2003 was estimated at 2.1 percent, with Djibouti registering the lowest percentage and Palestine registering the highest percentage (4.2 percent). Population growth in Algeria in 2006 was recorded at 1.8 percent.

In 2003, birth rates in some countries in the Arab world were as follows: 16 live births per 1000 in Qatar; 42 live births per 1000 in Mauritania; while Algeria (like the other countries of Arab Maghreb, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar) registered less than 25 live births per 1000.

With regard to mortality rates, Djibouti and Somalia registered about 18 deaths per 1000, while the lowest mortality rate was in Qatar. The countries of the Gulf and Morocco registered the lowest, namely, six deaths per 1000. In Algeria, the mortality rate reached 4.43 per 1000 in the year 2006. All these rates were linked to the age structure.

Fertility in the region is higher than the international average rate of 2.7 children for every woman. Fertility in some countries in the region is as follows: 7.3 children per woman in Somalia; 6.2 children per woman in Yemen; 2.3 children per woman in Algeria, 2.9 children per woman in the United Arab Emirates and 2.0 children per woman in Tunisia.

With regard to women's participation, especially in the economic field, the author of the paper, Dr. Haffadh, analysed the developmental status in Arab countries in light of human development indicators identified by the UNDP. In this context, Dr. Haffadh has drawn attention to differences among the Arab countries in terms of life expectancy and female literacy and their impact on human development. Dr. Haffadh also highlighted contradictions between relatively high levels of life expectancy and the low levels of female literacy in some Arab countries (Egypt, Morocco and Yemen).

In this context, it is worth mentioning that the Human Development Indicator (HDI) covers gross domestic product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy rates among adults and the percentage of child enrolment in schools, without taking into consideration gender differences. It would have been better if the analysis were done according to the Human Development Sex Indicator (HDSI) and Female Participation Indicator (FPI) standards, in order to give a more comprehensive view of development and its challenges. In fact, these indicators are not accurate in all countries and it is usually very difficult to get data related to them.

# THIRD THEME: AGING AT THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON ENSURING THE HEALTH OF WOMEN

Female aging has important effects for several reasons,. The paper under consideration highlighted this aspect as it underlined the rise of life expectancy in most Arab countries due to the improvement of living standards, health services and economic conditions.

The difference in terms of life expectancy between women and men in Arab countries is only two years in favor of women, while it is more than eight years difference in the developed world. This serves as an indication of the disadvantaged situation of women in the Arab region and highlights the necessity of studying the reasons for this shortfall in order to bring life expectancy of women in the Arab world in line with international level.

The demographic transition underway in most Arab countries, reflected in the changing demographic pyramid, has resulted in a doubling of the rate of increase of elderly men and women (60 years and above) compared to youth. For instance, in Algeria, the population growth rate of the age group of 60 years and above during the last 10 years is 3.01 versus 1.03 among youth (less than 20 years).

Moreover, elderly women represent a considerable percentage of the total population in all world countries. The number of elderly women will jump from 336 million in 2000 to one billion in 2050, according to US statistics.

Over the same period, the ratio of females to males will increase from 123 females for every 100 males to 189 females to every 100 males, and the percentage will reach its peak in the age group of 80 years and above.

Apart from the vulnerability of old age, these women are subject to gender discrimination even more than the young generation. Information on this topic remains somewhat obscure perhaps because of the lack of insufficient statistics and data on discrimination according to age and sex.

For instance, most of the studies and researches on women's diseases and violence failed to address the social factors related to health and the differences between women and men. The same remark is applied to chronic diseases, such as diabetics and hypertension, which are always infecting aged women more than elderly men.

It is worth mentioning that elderly women have considerable contributions to social and economic life, which include the upbringing of grandchildren and passing culture and heritage onto younger generations. In this respect, we should praise and value their contributions. To ensure the health, safety and activeness of elderly women we should set up policies and programmes that take into consideration the issue of gender, which guarantees the rights and needs of the elderly, especially women with chronic diseases, those living in rural areas and those of low socio-economic status.

According to UN definitions, the concept of "Active Aging" is based on three main criteria: independence, self-reliance and dignity.

Figure 1: Life expectancy of women at time of delivery and at the age of 60 in select countries, 2006

Country	At time of delivery	At the age of 60
Mozambique	46	16
Senegal	57	17
Sera Leon	40	14
Brazil	74	22
Canada	83	25
Haiti	56	17
Bulgaria	76	20
Russian Federation	72	19
Switzerland	83	26
Bahrain	75	20
Egypt	70	18
Pakistan	63	17
India	63	18
Indonesia	69	18
Sri Lanka	77	21
China	74	20
Japan	86	27
New Guinea	61	14

Source: The World Health Organisation, 2006

### DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the valuable recommendations presented by Dr. Haffadh in her paper, I would like to present other suggestions and proposals:

- Establishing information and statistical systems and the exchange of experiences among Arab countries, making use of Arab League databases and projects on health and development.
- Enhancing national capabilities for continuous assessment activities and programmes, especially of motherhood and childhood.
- Developing expertise and experience in data analysis, statistics, and social and demographic indicators, creating a solid scientific base for policy formulation and national development.
- Evaluating the role of women and mainstreaming women in national plans for development, while taking into consideration gender differences.
- Propagating reproductive health programmes (young women's health programme, fighting social evils programmes and programmes on combating violence against women and providing healthcare services to elderly women and those infected with chronic diseases) and supporting and promoting health programmes through the media and improving the quality of services offered.
- Intensifying calls on decision-makers to allocate the required resources for health services and other important programmes, such as schooling, elimination of illiteracy and rural development. The role of media is important in this regard for raising societal awareness, promoting good behaviours, and combating counter-productive perceptions and ideas. In addition, other groups can assist in these efforts, such as civil society organisations, the clergy and intellectuals.

# Rita Giacaman

I would like to thank the author for positioning this paper within UNDP's human security framework; for emphasising women's health in the Arab world as a right, and the duty of government to address this right; and for presenting a body of data demonstrating important disparities in the status of women's health throughout Arab countries. Contrasting figures such a maternal mortality ratio of 4/100,000 for Kuwait, and 450/100,000 and 650/100,000 for Sudan and Djibouti respectively bring out the need to contextualise maternal mortality in terms of its societal determinants (e.g. war, poverty, unemployment, unhealthy environment, inadequate social and health policies, etc.) and raise the question of how to address such significant disparities, which cannot be ignored.

The human security framework has essential implications for health and human development (Chen and Narasimhan, 2004: 183), where health is identified as a vital core and is susceptible to various threats and insecurities such as destruction of infrastructure, food insecurity, job insecurity, the lack of access to health services, and poor quality of healthcare (Caballero, 2004: 240- 242). It expands our understanding of health and explains the incidence of disease in terms of its broader determinants. It allows us to make use of new health measures, going beyond the conventional indicators of mortality and morbidity, including subjective measures such as reported threats of various sorts, distress, quality of life, wellbeing, and self-rated health—all indicators of health that are increasingly being used worldwide.\* And, by including new ways in which health is monitored and evaluated, this framework helps in proposing more appropriate interpretations and policy responses to ill health, including interventions outside the health system. That is, it is an alternative framework for intervention to protect the vulnerable (Leaning etd., 2004: 5-30), especially women.

This approach prompts us to consider the way in which insecurities, threats and social suffering can set in motion progressions leading to very high maternal mortality rates in Sudan and Djibouti. It raises questions such as: why is under five mortality in Somalia 145 deaths/1000 live births, and 10/1000 live births in Bahrain; why is life expectancy at birth in Somalia 37 years in contrast to 64 years for the UAE; why are fertility rates in poorer countries higher than in better off ones? Although answers to some of these questions pertain to health expenditures by governments, with an excessive focus on curative care, there are additional explanations associated with the way in which the health system is organised — for example, facilitating or blocking access to healthcare; the distribution of health facilities; the quality of care offered to women; and culturally embedded notions about women perpetuated within the health system. Explanations also include the socio-economic context of Arab women, as this paper indicates.

<sup>\*</sup> See Torsheim T, Currie C, Boyce W, Kalnins I, Overpeck M, Haughland S (2004), "Material deprivation and self-rated health: a multilevel study of adolescents from 22 European and North American countries," Social Science and Medicine, 59, pp. 1-12; Byrne DG, Davenport SC, Mazanov J (2007), "Profiles of adolescent stress: the development of the adolescent stress questionnaire," Journal of Adolescence, 30 (3), pp. 393-416; Werngren-Elgstrom M, Carlsson, G, Iwarsson S (2008), "A 10-year follow-up study on subjective well-being and relationships to person-environment fit and activity of daily living dependence of older Swedish adults," Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics (in press); Chen DR, Chang LY, Yang ML (2008), "Gender-specific responses to social determinants associated with self-perceived health in Taiwan: a multilevel approach," Social Science and Medicine 67, pp. 1630-1640; Giacaman R, Mataria A, Nguyen-Gilham V, Abu Safieh R, Stefanini A, Chatterji S (2007), "Quality of life in the Palestinian context: an inquiry in war-like conditions," Health Policy 81, pp. 68-84.

More questions come to mind when reading the paper: why are women less educated and poorer than men? Are these problems due to biological predisposition or a consequence of insecurity, vulnerability and exclusion? Do Arab women's health problems relate to their social position — to the distribution of power between men and women? Are these problems linked to a "culture" that is immutable, or can something be done about these problems? And in what ways have governmental social policies addressed or compounded these problems? Has the task of women's health improvement engaged government as a whole or only ministries of health?

As the World Health Organisation (WHO) has pointed out recently, achieving health equity requires no less than the engagement and action of all of government in order to achieve holistic social development and economic growth as preconditions for health equity. This is precisely because the root cause of ill health lies within society at large based on the structures and processes that predispose people to ill health. This means that although health equity for women may not be the aim of all social policies it is a main result of such policies, and must be monitored and assessed by ministries of health (Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2004).

The equity issue is also relevant to health insecurities within Arab countries, not only amongst them. We need to dis-aggregate data to identify intra-country disparities, such as the increasing disparities in women's health status between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Indeed, war and conflict gripping several Arab countries - Iraq, Sudan, Ethiopia and the occupied Palestinian territory - have negative effects on health in terms of high mortality and morbidity levels, but also in terms of constant exposure to life-threatening situations, promoting the progression from stress, through distress, to disease (Watts etd., 2007). Indeed, this progression may well be operational throughout the lives of Arab women, where ill health is the consequence of chronic stress and low life quality including: the stress of large family sizes; lack of education and having to make ends meet in situations of poverty; and the stress of being denied the right to full social, economic and political participation.

On the occasion of the launch of the final report of the WHO's Commission on Social Determinants of Health in September of 2008, Sir Michael Marmot pointed out that: "If you look at scientific evidence, you would say that there is no biological reason a woman from Botswana should have a life expectancy of 43 years and a woman in Japan should have a life expectancy of 86 years." By the same token, it is relevant to state here that there is no biological reason why the maternal mortality rate should be 650/100,000 in Djibouti and four in Kuwait. Sir Michael Marmot further explained that: "The key determinants of health of individuals and populations are the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. And those circumstances are affected by the social and economic environment. They are the cause of premature disease and suffering that are unnecessary. And that is why we say a toxic combination of poor social policies, bad politics, and unfair economics are causing health and disease in a grand scale (Marmot, 2008)."

Finally, I would like to congratulate the author again, and urge her to seriously consider submitting this paper for publication to an international scientific journal, and furthermore to complement the evidence that she has collected with the following suggestions:

 Developing further the human security framework and how various insecurities and threats relate to health.

- More effectively linking the broader determinants of health such as poverty, war, unemployment, educational levels and other influences to an analysis of the way in which society is organised, especially focusing on gender relations.
- Including an analysis of governmental social policy influences on women's health, and not only those of ministries of health.
- Adding to the paper a section with substantive data on non-communicable diseases, which are emerging as major causes of death and disease in several Arab countries among women and men.
- Following standardised instructions for citations with footnotes/endnotes, and adding relevant references to support certain statements that may require further substantiation.

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### Gita Sen

The major contribution of this paper is that it spans a large gamut of issues that are relevant to women's health in the region. These range from macro level issues, such as health expenditures and comparisons of health expenditures, to military expenditures in different countries, as well as the meso level of health services to the micro level of health behaviours that result in obesity and practices such as female genital mutilation. It also documents major disparities in health indicators and status, in addition to the considerable differences among countries, dependent at least in part on considerable economic variations.

At the same time, and especially because the paper has such a broad sweep, it would benefit from a more systematic conceptual framework such as those developed by the World Health Organisation's Independent Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH, 2008) and the work of its Knowledge Network on Women and Gender Equity (WGEKN) (Sen edt., 2007). Such a framework would also draw stronger attention to inequalities, not only among countries but also within them.

On the basis of extensive documentation of inequalities, the CSDH makes three overarching recommendations: to improve the daily living conditions of all people; to tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources; and to measure and understand the problem and assess the impact of action.

The WGEKN report provides a framework that is particularly intended to identify the ways in which gender power relations adversely affect the health of both women and men.

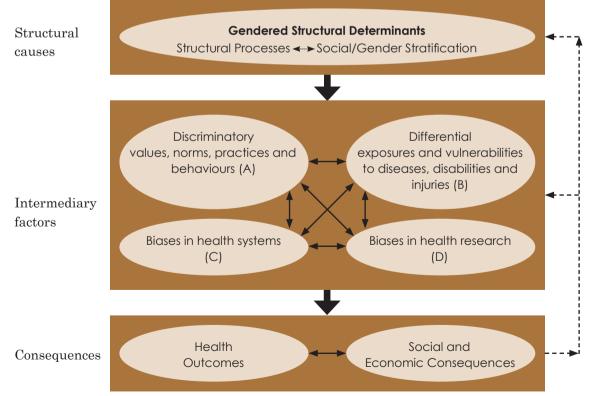


Figure 1: Framework for the role of gender as a social determinant of health

Note: The dashed lines represent feedback effects Source: Sen, Ostlin and George (2007), p. 11.

Viewing the evidence presented in the paper through the lens of this framework allows us both to see how the different issues are linked through a gender perspective, as well as where the gaps lie. For instance, such issues as broad economic factors, military expenditures, health budgets, or changing food habits fall within the broad category of structural determinants. On the other hand, beliefs that limit women's economic opportunities and income earning or ability to seek family planning services, early marriage, not to mention female genital mutilation, fall within the circle of discriminatory values, norms and practices. The framework is also useful because it points to gaps in the data in terms of gendered differentials in exposures and vulnerability to ill health, the functioning of health systems and health research, as well as the health outcomes that result from these inequalities.

The systematic use of such a framework would also tighten the link between the paper's policy recommendations and its evidence base. A major policy recommendation of the paper is to shift towards more private provision of health services. However, the evidence in the paper does not warrant such a recommendation. Indeed, increasingly, the weaknesses of health systems that are dependent on private provision — rather than universal public guarantees of service — are being recognised. In the context of the health of women and girls, as well as other groups whose health needs are less likely to be recognised, private systems can be especially inequitable. Private health systems have proven exceptionally hard to regulate well, and lead to wide disparities along multiple dimensions, not least of all being the gender dimension.

There are five areas in which the work done in this paper can be taken forward, and this would help in providing more evidence-based policy recommendations:

- The first is to strengthen the evidence base by supporting systematic research on the ways in which gender differentials in control over economic assets, incomes, and decision-making, as well as changes in economic and demographic processes, affect health-seeking behaviour, access to health services or the way in which households distribute health resources among their members.
- Second, more analysis and policy development is needed to identify how gender biased and discriminatory norms and practices damage health. These biases are known elsewhere to not only increase women's risks of ill health, but also men's, through rash or violent behaviour as a consequence of aggressive, masculine-based norms.
- Third, more research is needed on the differential exposures and vulnerabilities of women and men to ill health based on conditions of daily life (going beyond sexuality and reproduction to such areas as occupational, environmental and mental health, for example).
- A fourth important area is to track more systematically how health research limitations hamper effective policy and programme development. In many contexts, including in this region, even gender-disaggregated data is not systematically available, making it practically impossible to track or monitor the differential effects of policies and programmes.
- A fifth area is to identify where and how health systems are themselves biased against recognising, identifying and acknowledging women's and girls' health needs. For instance, the paper points to a rising incidence of HIV among younger age groups. How are health systems in the region responding to this in terms of strengthening prevention and services offered?

Moving forward systematically along these lines may help in developing a strong and comparative set of data that can be of value for policy and programme development in the region.

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# **Chapter Seven**

# **Arab Commentary Papers**

 $\label{eq:mohammad_Ahmad_AlBowardi} Mohammad\,Ahmad\,Al\,Bowardi\\ Bowba\,El\,Khaless$ 

Foreign Commentary Papers

Jane L. Parpart

### Mohammad Ahmad Al Bowardi

This paper dealt with a very important topic related to the preservation of the environment, the balance of the ecological system and the role of humans, especially women, in addressing the phenomenon of climate change and their participation in decision-making aimed at curbing this phenomenon and adapting to its repercussions.

The analysis was comprehensive in connection with the relationship between climate change and water resources, agriculture, desertification, biological diversity and hygiene. The paper also covered the role of women in rural communities in understanding the issue of climate change and its impact on daily life, as well as the living patterns of agro-based societies. In spite of the daily burdens and tough living conditions under which Arab women in rural communities are living – especially in connection to education and healthcare – it should not diminish their role in conserving the environment if given the chance.

The following are points to take into consideration while reviewing the impact of climate change on women:

- 1. Climate change is one of the most pressing and toughest challenges that humanity is facing and its negative impacts affect everyone, regardless of gender. In fact, the phenomenon is worsening and will continue to affect future generations. Moreover, it will seriously affect the way of life in all countries.
- Climate change causes damage to the biosphere and this disaster does not differentiate in its effects between countries from which these emissions are coming.
- 3. Climate change represents a challenge for all sectors of society (irrespective of gender). For instance, when severe climate conditions are aggravated by such calamities as sweeping floods or drought. people meet their death. At the same time, when droughts hit any given country, they can trigger civil wars in rural areas, as shepherds and farmers fight over remaining irrigated areas. In view of these facts, climate change can endanger the entire human civilisation, and women in rural areas in some Arab countries could be more seriously affected than men. However, we should consider these threats from a human and not gender perspective.
- 4. As far as women in the Gulf countries are concerned, we can say that they live under the same social conditions as their sisters in other Arab rural communities. The only difference is that they belong to urban society, which is characterised by high consumption patterns. They also face the challenges and social burdens of urban societies, which is marked by lack of time for the family and for the raising of children.

# THE MAIN POINTS COVERING THE ROLE OF WOMEN

There are a high percentage of women who reached a high level of education and have their own career, exactly like men. The role of this category of women with regards to curbing the reasons for and reflections of climate change is different from their counterparts in agricultural communities. Accordingly, we can summarise women's role in this respect in the following main themes:

- 1. Realising the importance of preserving ecological balance and natural resources;
- Bearing the direct social responsibility with regards to taking care of children and

- changing patterns of natural resource consumption;
- 3. Sharing with men in setting up and monitoring general policy for addressing universal issues; and working with men towards the achievement of sustainable development.

Following are some remarks related to the role of women in dealing with these main themes:

### FIRST: REALISING THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING ECOLOGICAL BALANCE

Women, in their capacity as mothers and the first teachers of children have to acquire the necessary information from the surrounding environment, its components and the delicate balance created by Allah. They have to develop a deeper understanding of the concept that humans are vicegerents of the Almighty Allah on earth, and they are entrusted with guardianship of the entire earth. At the same time, humans have to respect and maintain the ecological balance created by Allah. So, having adequate information about universal issues that threaten the environment, such as climate change, is the duty of all sectors of society.

Women living in urban areas have to realise the relation between the climate change, warm gas emissions and the possible negative effects on water resources (rain), coastal environment, food resources and human health. These points are identified in the valuable paper under consideration.

### SECOND: BEARING DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY OF TAKING CARE OF CHILDREN

The change of the social structure in the Gulf countries and the education of women and women's access to the labour market left no option for a high percentage of women there but to depend on childcare workers and servants to take care of the daily requirements of the family. Given the fact that most of those who are engaged in this type of service come from different social backgrounds, this has affected the rates of natural resources consumption in homes (especially water and energy). This resulted in extravagancy and an increase in house waste.

Moreover, childcare workers stay for long periods with children, sometimes even more than their actual mothers, and so working mothers do not have the chance to follow up on the educational development of their children and their upbringing concerning the principles of Islam with regards to handling natural resources. Though mothers in some cases realise the importance of addressing the problem of climate change, it could be difficult for them to communicate this knowledge to their children.

# THIRD: EQUALITY IN TERMS OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES

Women in the Gulf communities are more fortunate because they are able to enjoy a large portion of their social rights. They are equal to men in education and work and they take part also in setting up, implementing and monitoring the general policies of the state. This means that Gulf women are no longer dependent on men and they share responsibility over the management of society. In this sense, their role in handling the climate change could be more than that of men, to the extent they are able, through the adoption of more appropriate and wiser plans, curb extravagancy and minimise the consumption of resources at home. At the same time, they can change the patterns of consumption of their children through teaching them environmentally friendly behaviours, especially with regards to healthy nutrition habits in terms of quantity and quality. By so doing, women will not only contribute to handling the issue of climate change, but also raising a knowledgeable generation that fully realises the importance of preserving the environment and enjoying a healthy life.

All these aspects are part of the concept of sustainable development, which is based on three pillars: balanced economic development, sound social development and bearing responsibility for preserving the environment. In fact, mothers are the best teachers to raise awareness of the importance of sound social development, and to effectively contribute to making available the necessary economic and environmental factors for realising sustainable development.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the fact that climate change is one of the most pressing challenges facing humanity nowadays our recommendations on how to handle this issue have to be comprehensive and inclusive. Thus I would like, in addition to what is mentioned in the presented paper, to propose the following recommendations:

- 1. There is a pressing need to collect environmental data linked to climate change. In fact, such information is not available in the Arab world because of the absence of an appropriate infrastructure, the diversity of the agencies in charge of collecting data, and the absence of a unified approach and frameworks of cooperation among these agencies. In addition, the approach adopted to monitoring environmental conditions and any change in environmental conditions is generally weak. In a bid to provide documented data, there is a need for:
  - 1.1. Financial, technical and human investment in the field of environmental data collecting;
  - 1.2. Setting up an environmental monitoring systems to collect data (the United Arab Emirates took the lead in this domain when it launched Abu Dhabi International Initiative for Environmental Data); and
  - 1.3. Adopting international standards in data collection.
- 2. Drawing up predictive and preventive policies rather than policies that deal with disasters after they take place.
- 3. Ensuring the participation of the whole society, especially women, in all stages of decision-making and the implementation of development plans.
- 4. Getting NGOs and civil society involved in the preservation of the environment, allowing both to take part in setting up environmental plans and programmes.
- 5. Raising the effectiveness of Media coverage of environmental issues through special courses and programmes in different media channels and electronic websites to raise the awareness of people especially women in the countryside regarding different environmental affairs.
- 6. Competent governmental agencies and civil society organisations concerned with women's and environmental issues can play a role in raising the awareness of girls in the early stages of education until the university level to raise their awareness as citizens and as mothers able to play a leading role in their families and to raise their children well aware of social and environmental issues.

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Several initiatives undertaken in the Arab countryside and cities should be adopted on a wider scale. For instance, one of the civil society organisations in Morocco made use of mosques to implement illiteracy eradication programmes among women in Moroccan villages, give training courses on sewing and provide healthcare services, and contributed to raising environmental awareness among women in those areas. Elsewhere, women's organisations concerned with environmental issues have been established in several country members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)) and in big cities like Cairo and Amman. These are good steps that need to be supported. The partnership between governmental institutions and civil society is crucial in setting up and implementing policies to protect the environment, as well as changing the pattern of consumption generating refuse.

7. The present generation does not have the right to put the interests of future generations at stake through excessive exploitation of the resources of our planet. Thus, environmental sustainability should be ensured through drawing up developmental plans that meet the needs of all, and at all levels.

# **Bowba El Khaless**

This paper enriches our understanding of women's security and environmental issues. The issues raised can be grouped into two main categories: climate change and environmental pollution. With regards to the first, the paper deals with disasters, desertification, global warming, drought, greenhouse gases and the extinction of species. The paper discusses these issues relative to their impact on the security and health of human beings and on nature in general. Women are the ones most dependent on the natural world, especially in developing counties. I will focus on the second topic, environmental pollution, as the paper did not deal with this topic as extensively.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION**

Pollution is a major challenge that humans are presently facing. Environmental pollution is defined as the intentional or unintentional disposal of any materials as a result of human activities that cause an imbalance in the ecological environment or the loss of some environmental features.

Types of Pollutants - There are several sources of pollution, the most important of which are chemical and organic compounds and radiological elements.

- 1. Chemical Pollutants Chemical materials are among the most dangerous environmental pollutants and the most widely spread in our world today. By 1986 there were already more than 5,000,000 various types of chemical products on the market. Indeed, thousands of chemical compounds are manufactured on an annual basis and many are offered for sale without their toxic properties being properly tested. In the US, the results of a survey on chemical compounds found that out of 65,252 products existing in the market, the relevant authorities had detailed information for only 30 percent of them regarding their impact on the environment. In addition to these compounds, there is also the waste of the factories producing them, which is often more dangerous and which exists in large quantities. In France, the waste of chemical factories is estimated at 30 million tons per year.
- 2. Organic Pollutants In addition to chemical pollutants, there are other organic pollutants, such as fats, ammoniac, bacteria, viruses and fungi. These pollutants, which contaminate the environment, come from the waste of hospitals, particular animals, over-cropping and drainage water, as well as the water of food-processing factories.
- 3. Radiological Pollutants Radiological pollutants, however, are among the most dangerous, coming from different sources:
  - Natural, such as radon;
  - · Industrial, such as nuclear energy plants; and
  - Military, such as nuclear tests. It is worth mentioning that some industrial states exploit the lands of developing countries to conduct tests, as happened in the deserts of Algeria between 1960 and 1966.
  - Medical treatment using radiological material, such as scans, can pollute water through the urine of patients.
  - · Accidental, such as any accidental nuclear leakage.

Pollution of the environment by chemical and organic materials and radiological elements have a negative impact on human health as these pollutants gravely affect the elements of the environment on which humans depend, such as air, water and soil. This is in addition to the possibility of direct contact with some materials, such as pesticides, fertilisers, detergents and cosmetics. There is also the possibility of contracting diseases due to leakages from nuclear and chemical plants.

## TYPES OF POLLUTION

The pollution of air, water and soil is the most harmful for humanity.

Air Pollution is a negative change in the natural features of air, which we are breathing. Sources of air pollution are divided into two types: natural sources, which include dust produced by lava flows and volcanoes; and industrial sources, which are widespread and the most dangerous. Among the most polluting elements of the air are dust, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, dioxins, nitrogen oxide, nitrogen dioxide, volatile composites, ozone, and cigarette smoke.

Air pollution is classified into two main categories:

- 1. Internal Pollution This refers to the pollution of air inside the home, office and other institutions. These places could technically be more polluted than surrounding areas. For instance, many chemical materials are found at home (detergents, pesticides, etc). Pollutants also include carbon monoxide from heating devices, emissions from gas used in cooking, carpets kept in closed spaces that allow bacteria and fungi to thrive, emissions from burning coal and wood, and cigarette smoke (containing 4000 chemical materials, such as oxide nitrogen, carbon monoxide and heavy metals). In fact, cigarette smoke is considered the most dangerous pollutants inside closed spaces.
- 2. External Pollution The second category is external pollution, including fumes, especially from transportation, emissions of industrial plants, volatile organic elements and radiological elements. The area affected by these pollutants can be extensive and reach places that are located far from the source of pollution.

Air in major industrial cities all over the world is considered polluted. Polluted air causes the death of three million persons per annum, 90 percent of which are in developing countries. Air pollution inside homes comes on top of these deaths (about two million per annum). When air is polluted with carbon monoxide this gas replaces oxygen in the blood, causing a reduction of oxygen in the nervous system and heart. Air pollution can also cause allergies in the respiratory system, such as chronic chest disease, skin allergies, dizziness and some types of cancer. Pollution caused by radiological elements, even in relatively low quantities, has a negative impact on the genetic features of humans, which can be extended over several generations.

Water Pollution means contamination of water and a change in its natural character through chemical, organic or radiological pollutants, which could be intentionally or unintentionally added to water by human activity.

River water and underground water are oftentimes contaminated by organic, chemical and radiological elements, which may reach these sources of water from plants and their wastes, water drainage, extraction industries, nuclear accidents and all forms of agricultural activity.

Oil tanker accidents, oil exploration projects in oceans, fishing activities and oil refining plants onshore cause the most contamination of maritime environments.

Organic materials affect the transparency of water and sharply reduce the percentage of oxygen in water. The imbalance caused negatively affects the health of those drinking such polluted water.

**Soil Pollution**, according to the definition stated in the glossary of the French Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development, is considered a pollution if it represents a real and constant — or even expected — threat to the health of humans or the environment due to present or old contamination.

Soil is exposed to several sources of pollution, most important of which are nitrates, phosphates, heavy metals, hydrocarbons, tar, acids and micro-organisms. Radiological materials are the most dangerous pollutants of soil, as their impact can last for millions of years. Nuclear and chemical plants, over-cropping, extraction industries (especially oil and gold) and storage of hydrocarbons and ammunitions cause the greatest pollution of soils.

The pollution of soil results in the loss of its natural characteristics, thus negatively affecting its productivity and the plants growing on it. Some pollutants, such as radiological elements and heavy metals, penetrate soil layers and reach underground water sources. These pollutants are transferred directly through potable water and bathing water or indirectly through plants or animals.

**Audio Pollution** is also commonly known as noise pollution and is defined as the production of undesirable sounds in a continuous manner.

Audio pollution has several sources, such as noise produced from transportation (vehicles, buses, trains and airplanes, etc), noise from domestic activities (caused by home activities and domestic animals), and the noise of factories. The last is the most dangerous due to its durability and sharpness compared to other sources.

This type of pollution disturbs people residing nearby railway stations, airports, main roads and industrial areas. Among the harms of this type of pollution are nervous tension, headache, pressure and insomnia.

#### NON-TRADITIONAL FORMS OF POLLUTION

At the end of the 20th century, other types of pollution emerged, such as light pollution, which is caused by sources of artificial light at night. Researchers believe that artificial light can affect the health of humans.

Researchers also believe that among the negative results of progress in the media and information field is that humans started receiving data more than their brains can absorb, especially that related to wars, disputes and natural disasters, which is known as news pollution.

There is also magnetic pollution caused by satellites, mobile phones and radio frequencies.

# WOMEN'S SECURITY AND ISSUES OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

It has been said that women are the most affected by environmental pollution. Studies conducted have confirmed strong links between environmental pollution and female specific diseases, such as infertility, miscarriages and deformity, placenta malformation, cancerous diseases affecting the womb, ovary and breast cancers, and the symptoms of either early maturity or late development among girls.

Chemical pollutants are classified as the most dangerous types of pollution for humans in general and women in particular, because women are subjected to these materials either directly through pesticides, detergents and cosmetics, or indirectly through the air, water and soil.

In 2001, a study conducted by the American University, Caroline du Nord confirmed that pregnant women living near agricultural areas where pesticides are used suffer miscarriages at a higher rate than is normal, especially if they are subjected to such pollution during the first three months of pregnancy.

In 1996, a study conducted in Canada on women who ate fish brought from the Great Lakes where there are huge quantities of PCBs and other organic compounds revealed that babies born of those women suffered from late growth and lower intelligence compared to other normal children. It is worth mentioning that this type of pollution is widely spread in the developing countries.

At age of menopause, the percentage of lead in women's blood increases by 25-30 percent due to the increase of the accumulation of pollutants of this metal in the body.

Acute respiratory infections are said to be a key reason behind the death of women before and at the time of delivery. Some studies conducted on pregnant women have shown there is clear link between low birth weight and air pollution.

Other studies on women living in the areas surrounding the Chernobyl nuclear plant in Ukraine have shown disastrous infections caused by the nuclear accident there on women's health. Studies further recorded the high percentage of reproductive system problems and infertility cases. Moreover, studies revealed that the percentage of infant deformity in this area reached 83 percent after the accident.

Even the placenta and mothers' milk are no longer safe against pollutants that can penetrate these natural safety walls, as proven by a study of the World Health Organisation (WHO) that called on states to take decisive measures to monitor the level of environmental pollution and reduce it.

### CONCLUSION

We can deduce from the above that pollution is the most serious threat to women's security and is linked to their economic, social and health conditions. With regards to the economic field, air and soil pollution threatens agriculture and sheep rearing, which are key sources of income for women, especially in the countryside. As for the social field, the greatest impact of pollution on women is in giving birth to children with deformities. At the health level, the spread of chemical and organic materials in agriculture, in the home and in cosmetics, in addition to the absence of health awareness in developing countries about the risks of using and storing these materials, gravely threaten women's health.

The increase of female specific health problems, such as acute respiratory infections in pregnancy and childbirth, infertility, miscarriage, cancerous diseases infecting the womb, the ovaries and breasts, and early maturity among girls, are clear examples of the risk posed by pollution on the health of women.

In view of these realities, women's security will be endangered, especially in the developing countries, until strict measures are taken to protect women from the impacts of environmental pollution and development programmes are adopted that promote the living standards of women and fight pollution.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations can help in identifying the type of the measures, which should be taken in this regard.

- 1. Establishing international and national policies to combat and contain pollution. These policies should be comprehensive and take into account all aspects of the environment.
- 2. Enacting laws to protect the environment, especially in the Arab world, which has been late in realising that women and children are the most affected by pollution.
- Raising the awareness of women on the negative impact of the wrong use of chemical and organic materials and the necessity to follow approved instructions on safety sheets attached with them.
- 4. Facilitating and taking part in studies and statistical research conducted by universities and research centres on the impacts of environmental pollution on the health and security of women in light of the fact that environmental pollution is a universal problem that requires joint efforts.
- 5. Banning all chemical and organic compounds that threaten the environment and humans. Some are already banned in some countries, such as types of pesticides and materials used in extraction industries.
- 6. Urging or even forcing people to stay clear of polluted areas and to protect children and prevent them from playing near swamps and garbage collection areas.
- 7. Involving women in policymaking and decision-taking with regards to combating pollution and addressing the repercussions of pollution, considering women comprise half of society and are often the most affected by the problems caused by pollution.
- 8. Raising the awareness of Bedouin women on the risks of the extensive use of pollutants, enabling them to use modern technologies in agriculture and supplying them with environmentally-friendly equipment for cultivation.
- 9. Allocating financial funds from Arab countries to encourage further research on women's security from an environmental perspective, and organising awareness raising programmes that mainly target women and that show them how to protect themselves against internal and external pollution.

### Jane L. Parpart

Dr. Osman-Elasha has written a timely and thoughtful analysis on an important subject. She points out that very little has been written on gender and climate change around the world, and even less in the Arab region. Thus, this is an original and important contribution to crucial questions facing the region and indeed the world. The author lays out the key issues facing the Arab region with regard to climate change, particularly desertification, water shortages, temperature increases, flooding, land degradation, failing agriculture, biodiversity and general issues of economic development and health. She raises the important questions: How are these challenges experienced differently by women and men, and how do these differences affect the livelihoods of women and men as well as boys and girls? She provides well-documented evidence for the gendered nature of the dangers facing the delicate ecosystem extant in the Arab region.

Situating the analysis within a gender perspective, the author adopts a comprehensive definition of gender, clarifying that it does not mean women, but rather the relationships between women and men, embodied in the concept gender. Thus, a gender perspective on climate change does not simply ask where the women are and what are they doing, but rather questions how socially constructed notions of femininity and masculinity and the roles assigned to men and women affect the way climate change is and will be experienced by females and males. The emphasis on the relationship between women and men is very important, as too many articles on the environment and climate change focus on women, ignoring the relational aspect of gender relations. However, I would have liked to see more use of recent feminist literature on gender and gender relations, as well as attention to the fluidity of socially constructed notions of masculinity and femininity. Moreover, we get a sense of the topographical/geographical differences in the region, but would have benefited from a more general mapping of gender practices and cultural gendered differences in order to understand the different ways gender may intersect with climate change and other forces in the region.

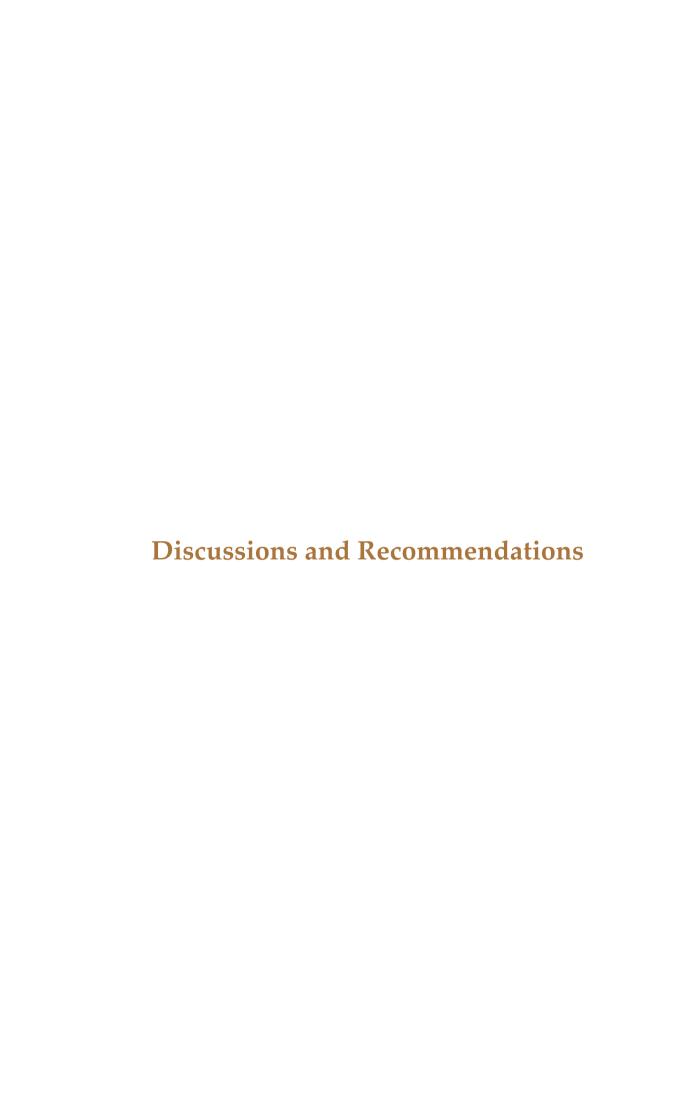
Bringing a gender perspective to the analysis of desertification and land degradation, the author notes that women's key role in managing natural resources and maintaining family livelihoods — and the dependence of rural women on local community resources — means that these issues will have greater impact on women's lives and livelihoods. The author cites evidence from Darfur, which is a striking case, but examples from other parts of the Arab region would have been helpful to provide a broader picture. The article also discusses the gendered impact of climate change with regard to women's roles in agriculture, water resources, biodiversity, health and economic development. The data for this section is largely taken from the poorest, most agriculturally based countries in the Arab region. The emphasis is on women's roles and responsibilities in these activities and the challenges they face. The author mentions men and their roles, but this could have been more developed, particularly the possibilities (or not) for renegotiating gender relations under duress.

The section on disasters, risks and conflicts inspired by climate change acknowledges their gendered nature. Natural disasters often spur migration, but it seems that in the Arab region this migration is largely a movement of men, with dire consequences for the women left behind. Yet in many parts of the world, women migrate more often than men. Some comparative material here would have helped point out the way gender practices in the Arab region define who can and cannot move and who is responsible for staying home and caring for

the family. Climate change is spurring conflicts and challenges to human security as well, often with gendered consequences. These conflicts often strengthen male authority and patriarchal power, as well as increase gender-based violence. Women carry a heavy burden in these conflict arenas, including facing the challenges of producing food in degraded environments as well as experiencing increased threats to their personhood in the form of rape, torture and domestic violence. The author explores women's experiences, but more attention to masculinity and gender relations would have been useful, particularly on a regional basis. Is this a uniformly discouraging story, or do gender relations sometimes improve under duress?

While urban areas are mentioned as places of refuge for male migrants escaping climate change, the impact of climate change in cities and its gendered characteristic could have been more thoroughly examined. For example, land degradation could affect food supplies to cities, with destructive consequences for women given their responsibility for feeding the family. One interesting question could be whether gender relations have changed in the city under pressure of urbanisation and climate change. The author largely focuses on vulnerable women in rural areas. It would have been useful to know more about poor urban women and their responses to climate change. Moreover, not all women are poor or vulnerable; some are educated and well to do, but they still live in a gendered world. Their positioning in the Arab region, their responses to climate change, and their possibilities for action need to be explored. Indeed, it is this very group who would be most apt to benefit from the author's recommendations for greater participation in decision-making and control over natural resources.

In conclusion, "Gender and climate change in the Arab region" raises crucially important questions that are often ignored. As the author amply demonstrates, climate change is a gendered process. Solutions to the challenges posed by climate change thus have to take gender into account. The paper is an important first step in that process. While more could be said about masculinity, as well as regional and intra-regional gendered practices, the author raises crucial questions and offers constructive recommendations that should be of interest to policymakers, intellectuals and activists in the region.



# POINTS RAISED DURING THE CONFERENCE BY ARAB AND FOREIGN PANELISTS AND ATTENDEES ON CHAPTER SIX

The comments underscored the importance of ensuring women's health and linking it to population and developmental issues. Some female panelists referred to the necessity of paying more attention to issues of family planning, reproductive health and maternal health, which have positive direct impacts on women's health and on the development of society in general.

One female panelist pointed to the significance of taking care of reproductive health in view of its sensitivity and relation to social behaviour, economic factors and developmental parameters in general. The same panelist underlined the necessity of linking population and developmental policies on the one hand and women's empowerment in economic life on the other. She further indicated that family planning contributes to the reduction of maternal deaths, which represent a major problem in all Arab countries.

The second theme, which the same panelist spoke of, was related to safe motherhood, as maternal health is believed to be deteriorating in poor countries. The panelist referred to the fact that qualitative data that can benefit health institutions in assessing the situation remains unavailable.

One female Western panelist said that improvement of the health conditions of the population is not the sole responsibility of the health sector, as there are other matters that should be taken into consideration, such as the supply of potable water and taking the required measures to prevent traffic accidents, etc. It is important to look outside the health sector in the same way we are looking inside the health sector in order to improve the daily life conditions of citizens.

Participant comments also stressed the necessity of handling discrimination in the distribution of power, money and resources, in particular lowered economic opportunities as a result of their inability to earn money — this in addition to women's inability to access family planning services. Early marriage and female circumcision were also identified as problems.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON CHAPTER SIX**

- The necessity of creating statistics on health and environmental issues from which solid policies concerned with the health of citizens (both men and women) and their environmental security can be formulated.
- 2. The importance of comprehensive reform of health systems in Arab countries in a way that ensures transparency and accountability and distributes tasks between the private and public sectors through effective partnerships.
- 3. The necessity of improving the professionalism of heath service providers and establishing standards and qualitative indicators on the quality of health services.
- 4. In general, countries should take into consideration women's health issues, which are essential for the wellbeing of society. Moreover, the social, cultural, economic and political dimensions that affect the health status of Arab women must be taken into consideration.

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5. The necessity of paying special attention to the conditions of women living under occupation and the adverse impact of this situation on the health of women. Indeed, the poor health services provided to women under occupation cannot be separately addressed from the overall goal - namely, achieving peace, justice, security and

stability in the region.

# POINTS RAISED DURING THE CONFERENCE BY ARAB AND FOREIGN PANELISTS AND ATTENDEES ON CHAPTER SEVEN

### COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

- Women are one of the most adversely affected groups by climate change. They suffer from the contraction of several diseases such as sterility, miscarriage, birth deformity, cancer of the womb and other serious diseases. The pollution of soil and water threaten women directly, especially in developing countries that depend on these resources for basic living.
- States offer health services but do not understand well the concept of disease prevention.
- The health sector is suffering from a lack of attention to improvements that need to be made
- The importance of establishing strategies in the environmental domain that take issues of gender into account.
- Some panelists argued that the state should focus its support on the poor sections of society. It was highlighted that the state cannot do everything alone, and that nongovernmental Organisations should join efforts to address existing problems. These efforts should take into account the prevention and early detection of diseases and not be confined to combating diseases in full emergence.

### COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM DR. NADA HAFFADH

- The necessity to set up policies, monitor their application, follow up on the funding process and provide services.
- Governments should cover the cost of health services, including prevention and early detection of diseases, for low-income sectors of the population.
- The necessity of establishing strategies in cooperation with society to enhance health services.
- The necessity of giving more attention to heath awareness and establishing mechanisms for addressing domestic violence.

#### COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM DR. BALQIS OSMAN-ELASHA

- Support for the proposal that calls for the necessity of providing data and studies on the relation between climate and gender, which should be part of the sustainable development programme.
- Conducting more extensive and detailed research on this issue and study the impacts of climate change and their link to gender and other different environmental issues.

### OTHER GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

• The necessity of giving more attention to the issue of climate change. The gravity of the issue needs to be outlined. For example, it was said that the people of the Maldives have started purchasing land elsewhere after they realised, according to environmental

predictions, that the Maldives would be totally submerged within 20 years. Therefore, climate change could cause competition over natural resources amongst countries, and hence was highly relevant for the Arab region.

- The importance of reconsidering the allocation of resources.
- The importance of the role of the state in putting an end to discriminatory practices against women.
- Change should start from the bottom up.

### RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON CHAPTER SEVEN

- 1. Conducting more research on the relation between gender, climate change and environmental pollution.
- 2. Promoting the capacities of women to adapt to environmental changes through education and training so women can have more economic choices and diversify their sources of income.
- 3. The necessity of developing legislative and legal frameworks to improve women's opportunities with regards to benefiting from natural resources. The necessity of enacting strict laws to protect the environment, and that these laws should take into consideration the situation of children and women.
- 4. The necessity of raising the awareness of women on various environmental risks, especially risks related to daily behaviours and prevailing cultural norms.
- 5. The necessity of paying more attention to environmental refugees and establishing policies and mechanisms to address their conditions.
- 6. The importance of drawing attention to poverty and its link to the health and environmental security of women.
- 7. The necessity of ceasing to classify domestic violence as a personal affair and to establish effective mechanisms to address it.
- 8. Encouraging scientific research on the health problems Arab countries face.
- 9. The necessity of replacing the existing health awareness approach, which moves from the top to the bottom, with another approach that gets citizens involved in spreading sound health behaviours.
- 10. Standardising concepts and indicators related to the collection and monitoring of environmental data in Arab countries.
- 11. Enacting strict laws on the preservation of the environment, especially laws that take the needs of women and children, who are the sectors of the population most affected by environmental conditions, into account.
- 12. Warning women against misusing chemical and organic materials.
- 13. Banning chemical and organic materials prohibited in the West but that continue to be exported to Arab countries.
- 14. Encouraging women to take part in establishing policies and preparing programmes for combating pollution and addressing the negative impacts of pollution.
- 15. Arab countries should allocate funds to finance (wholly or partially) research and study on the human security of women from an environmental perspective.

# **Part Four**

# **Cultural Dimension of Security**

# Introduction

**Chapter Eight:** Women's Security: A Cultural Perspective *Mohamed El- Baki Hermassi* 

**Commentary Papers** 

**Discussions and Recommendations** 

### INTRODUCTION

Dr. Mohamed El- Baki Hermassi presented a paper on "Women's security: a cultural perspective". It is a bold paper, written with sincerity which presents points some might classify as sensitive. It is based on solid information and a background in the history of international cultures. The writer's analytical framework is one of anthropology, which deals with different cultures. The changes which the paper expresses are well-presented.

Dr. Hermassi links the reality of women to their status in the family, namely as subordinates and followers of men. He also highlights the issue of conflict amongst cultures, which results in a difference in the patterns of family life. For instance, the nuclear family is sometimes glorified because it is a Western model of the family. On the other hand, another analysis glorify the extended family that was predominant in the East. The writer believes that the status of women is determined by history and cultural orientation. Conflicts among cultures might have led, in some cases according to the writer, to military confrontations under the pretext of the protection of women's rights.

Dr. Hermassi said that the issue of the veil or hijab is not restricted to Arab and Islamic communities only, but that it also had a presence in several old European communities. He indicated that there are some powers that try to exploit such issues in order to impose their hegemony on Arab communities. However, he said: "This, of course, does not mean that the Arab family in its present shape does not suffer from negative aspects that need to be rectified. Some of these negative aspects are attributed to obsolete traditions, of which some violate the law, such as honour killing."

Dr. Hermassi believes that these obsolete traditions might be the reason behind the emergence of the new gender approach, as an effort of Orientalists abroad and conservatives at home. According to this new approach, cultural heritage, which is related to the status of both men and women and the powers given to each of them, is not final but needs to be redrafted in different forms.

If we consider fundamentalism and Orientalism threats to the cultural position of Arab women, we should also recall other factors leave Arab women subject to the worst forms of physical abuse and moral servitude, such as:

- Economic conditions;
- · Lack of education, media and other means of enlightenment; and
- The oppression of the extreme religious currents

Dr. Hermassi argued that it is possible to achieve a qualitative shift in the feminist struggle in the Arab world through creating an appropriate atmosphere within which women can realise equality with men and eliminate all forms of discrimination.

He indicated that his paper briefly addressed the role of reformist movements in which, the state and other parties could play a pioneering role, in particular through supporting change in the opinions of the elite. However, he referred to the presence of conflict among different parties over the appropriate culture and identity of women.

Dr. Hermassi also indicated that there is a big gap between the degree of awareness in society and that of the political regime. So the political regime has to take practical steps to promote social awareness and facilitate the acceptance of reforms. He confirmed that it is important that the regime continues to enact legislation that assists women in reaching equality with men.

In conclusion, the status of women in the Arab communities is different from their status in Western countries as the cultural systems that mostly shape the status of women and their position in Arab communities do not only reflect the pre-modern era but also reject modernity. These obsolete cultural systems look upon women as inherently deficient in good reasoning and incapable of rational thinking and thus, their dignity is humiliated through considering them no more than the means for reproduction, enjoyment and services.

# **Chapter Eight**

Women's Security: A Cultural Perspective

Mohamed El- Baki Hermassi

## **WOMEN'S SECURITY: A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

As the world becomes increasingly Islamophobic, detractors of the faith are using various Islam-related stereotypes to make the religion appear more and more terrifying. Thus are rediscovered "the exceptions" that are supposedly exclusive to Islam. Perhaps the most mobilising and concerning of these is the notion that "the precepts and stipulations proper to Islam, which have impeded women's participation in social life, [have] placed women under the authority of men — be they fathers or husbands — and [consolidated] their imprisonment at home as mere tools for enjoyment, procreation and service." (Al-Chorfi, 1991: 232-233) The force and power of this stereotype is not derived from Islamophobia alone, but also from the dramatic and inciting concurrence of two factors. The first is the return of feminist movements, whose voices had faded in recent years within Arab societies, with a sharp new discourse that breaks with the feminist heritage accumulated over more than a century. The second is the escalation of extremist Islamist trends that go as far as accusing of apostasy all differing opinions. These movements have developed such a quasi-delirious sentiment that they imagine Islam to be the object of a great global conspiracy hatched with the complicity of "children of Islam" who have sold their souls and colluded with "the enemies of Islam". High up on their list of conspirators are most feminist movements and advocates of women's liberation.

Between the hammer of fundamentalism and the anvil of superficial Orientalist theses, Arab women stand threatened. Their security — as will be shown later —therefore needs further strengthening its cultural foundations. Indeed, the firm establishment and integration of values of emancipation are likely to constitute a safety valve for all movements advocating the advancement of women.

For that reason, and so that we do not break with the accumulated pioneering experiences of the Arab world regarding women's emancipation, I will begin this paper with an analysis of the reformist-progressive discourse in general concerning its stance on the issue of women's liberation. This beginning is not meant to be an expression of gratitude to the symbols of women's emancipation, but rather a way of appreciating their achievements, many of which have not been followed through and are still apt to constitute a cumulative basis for liberation, especially as subsequent theories have totally obliterated the reformist heritage. I will then proceed to explain the specifics of Orientalist discourse on women in the Arab-Islamic world, a discourse that has been adopted by many Arab women's movements. This discourse, however, has appeared to drift more than ever from supposed scientific sobriety, sometimes into a decadent and strained ideological debate mobilised by a totally unscientific strategy that is based on interests — strategic and circumstantial political interests, and hostile civilisational and religious interests.

The writings of Edward Said to that effect are both profound and useful. I have tried to break up this discourse and to disprove its assertions, or at least put them into perspective, first on the basis of the theoretical field of the discourse and second on the basis of the social realities of Arab women.

In conclusion, the paper proposes that the state should be the principal guarantor of women's security. Indeed, the state is more prepared than any other social actor to protect women's security and to raise Arab women into modernity. Indeed, current experiences have shown that failed states lead women to a condition in which they are the first to foot the bill of terrible downfalls. The political and social cost of such failure is always borne by women.

### WOMEN IN REFORMIST ARAB-ISLAMIC THOUGHT

An initial study of the status of present-day women will immediately reveal two facts of extreme gravity: first, widespread nihilistic discourse that disapproves of any gains made by Arab women, rejecting even those unanimously accepted (education, health, employment); second, a total disregard for the heritage accumulated by the Arab renaissance in terms of women's emancipation, ultimately bypassing more than a century of theorisation and struggle for the emancipation and advancement of women. Both discourses enjoy exceptional support in the media.

For reasons mentioned earlier, I will limit my consideration to thinkers and pioneers of the Arab renaissance who proceeded from the fundamentals of Islam, or at least what they believed to be so, and relied on that belief to keep pace with their time. Such thinkers include Rifaa Tahtawi, Muhammad Abduh, Qasim Amin and Tahir Haddad, among others. Several common denominators characterised the pioneers in this context, particularly with regards to women's status:

- 1. Accurate knowledge of Islamic heritage in general and vast learning in the field of Sharia sciences, unlike subsequent "Islamist" theorisers whose grasp of Sharia appears insignificant and superficial. On the whole, such theorisers content themselves with highly mobilising ideological assertions. We could go as far as saying that many of them are ignorant of fundamental books on heritage, let alone their ideological utilisation, their selectivity of texts, and the incoherence of their references.
- 2. Positive outlook regarding modern science and literature as most pioneers held the view that these were at the root of all progress and public morality, and had reservations only about minor details. On this matter, too, they differed with "Islamist" theorisers who put the blame on science and literature and consider them to be the cause of the devastation and degradation of the Muslim world. This view may not be antagonistic to science and literature per se, but some theorisers go as far as outlawing them.
- 3. The first generation of pioneers focused their campaign on a fundamental issue, namely women's education. This was no arbitrary choice, but one based on a vision they had. They believed science and education were an essential condition for entry into modernity, and the only way to make up for the huge lag of the Arab-Islamic world. Catching up with advanced nations required society to include its women (the other half) in the legitimate process of learning literature and modern science. Accordingly, the subject of women's education was generally considered within a comprehensive

- framework; that is, society as a whole. Progress could not be achieved without a corresponding advancement of women. Any exception to that rule would inevitably result in perpetuating the lag.
- 4. The focus on education as an essential condition to catch up with modern nations required ipso facto that attention was paid to the education of women. Hence the demand for education, which almost exclusively concerned women. It was no coincidence that the writings of Tahtawi conveyed such an insistence in their titles. The emphasis on the need for women's education, as supported by various traditional or rational arguments, was not dictated by emotional or subjective considerations. It was a requirement of the new circumstances generated by contacts with the modern West. Girls' education was likely to soften the traditional societal fabric and gradually lead to a change in the inherited scale of values, thereby enabling Muslims to keep pace with the West in its material civilisation. Perhaps Tahtawi and Abduh were not fully aware of the long-term results of women's education as we can determine them today. Indeed, it is almost certain they were unable to assess such results (Al-Chorfi, 1991: 232-233).

The second generation of renaissance pioneers went a step further in emphasising women's liberation. It was no longer a matter of educating women as part of the general advancement of society, but of liberating women from society itself. A condemnation of society started to emerge owing to the fact that its fabric comprises culture, visions, and practices preventing women's progress. Women's instruction and education continued to be called for, but not as such, but rather insofar as they contributed to liberating women from a society that had paralysed them and prevented their progress. This paralysis was generally imposed in the name of Sharia, "convention" and other slogans behind which the advocates of women's "inferiority" entrenched themselves. To that effect, they constantly surrounded themselves with an aura of reverence and caution, especially as they monopolised the discourse on religion. In justifying such inferiority, jurisprudents cloaked their readings in religion in the belief that they were exempt from criticism.

The purpose of the second generation of renaissance thinkers with regards to the women issue was "to break into" the strongholds of jurisprudents and traditional social structures opposing women's progress and destroy them from within. This approach was — and still is — more effective. It contrasts with an approach that I will develop later and that calls for women's liberation within Islam itself. This ideology stipulates a condition of estrangement from Islam, or even hostility to it, when it is regarded as a misogynist religion on account of its excessive "masculinity" which is further consolidated by repressive sanctity. This is one of the dimensions of the so-called "Islamic characteristic" as developed by later feminist literature (third generation), particularly among some of the extremist theorisers of "gender" with "radical" tendencies, according to Todd (Todd, 2002: 75).

The abovementioned second generation added to the principle of women's education another demand that societies are still endeavouring to put into practice, though with varying degrees of persistence: the principle of equality, since emancipation logically presupposes it. While the demand for education is meant to promote women's development, or in other words women's empowerment, the demand for equality places women on an equal footing with men. The distance covered by the second generation of renaissance thinkers, as compared to those of the first generation, is the very distance between women's development and women's equal status, and that is the true meaning of emancipation. Although the value of equality is recent,

as it reflects all the socio-political struggles waged by modern societies to free themselves from the hegemony of the feudal system and the Church, and also reflects conceptions that various categories and groups of people formulated on the basis of faith or wealth or other criteria, no one denies the authenticity of this principle in Islamic history. That is perhaps the reason why the said generation used such terms in an effort to avoid any reservations on the part of the recipients. And perhaps for reasons that pertain to pedagogy, those intellectual and militant luminaries enjoyed — and are still enjoying — a great deal of appreciation and influence, even among the staunchest believers in the primacy of the "Islamic" source.

Certainly, this value is modern if we consider its spread in public awareness and its connection with movements for the elimination of feudalism and slavery and, therefore, with the requirements of modern industrial civilisation, but that does not disprove its deeprootedness in the history of mankind and particularly in the history of Islam. For that reason, indeed, Arab thinkers did not encounter any difficulty in finding proof from Islamic heritage that their realities and the realities of the periods of decline had strayed from the ideals that consider "Muslims to be equal like the teeth of a comb caring for the weaker among them and raising them to the general level. Yet they tried to take that principle through to its logical conclusion and called for bridging the huge gap between theory and practice." (Al-Chorfi, 1991: 81).

### **WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION IN ARAB RENAISSANCE THOUGHT**

The emancipation of women, based on the legacy left by the two generations, requires a two-pronged yet coherent approach. The first track is concerned with filling the wide gap between the ideals of Islam and real life as regards the status of women. This aim cannot be achieved unless we manage to bring out the true purposes of Islam, which are implicit in general assertions. This task requires a break with superficial "explanatory" approaches that merely reiterate old assertions of jurisprudence claiming that they are more consistent with the true Islamic faith. Similarly, the second track involves bridging the chasm between advanced and Muslim societies, an aim that can only be achieved through science and knowledge.

With regard to the issue of women, Muslim societies cannot possibly make up for the lag while at the same time excluding women from the process. Women are indeed worthy of participation, and this is no favour but a right stipulated by religious laws and contemporary thought. What we have to do is adopt an interpretation that focuses on the purposes of Islam and deliberately abstain from corroborating what is imagined to be deeply ingrained dogmas, even though their causes have ceased to exist. Perhaps the solid argument for women's inferiority remained for tens of centuries linked to the "inequality" of inheritance as stated in Islam. From the liberal perspective of the purposes of Islam, Haddad, in refuting traditional readings more than two-thirds of a century ago, wrote the following: "Islam has not decided a lesser inheritance for women than for men as a basic principle that it disregards since it has made women equal to men in other matters ... It is my view that Islam, in essence, does not object to establishing such equality in all its aspects when the causes of superiority have ceased to exist and the requirements are met." (Haddad, 1998: 151).

In invoking the fundamentals of Islam to justify our demands, we introduce a gradual approach that requires us to be patient and avoid being counter-productive by going too far, too fast.

We should also avoid inciting religious sentiments that strengthen pockets of dissent. "The supporters of women's emancipation did not propagate their ideas from a Western perspective, but the West motivated them to reconsider the inherited religious system in order to define it from inside while adhering to its essence." (Al-Chorfi, 1991: 246) "Understanding the spirit and goals of Sharia," in the words of Haddad, makes our call for women's equality with men "a call for the same divine justice to be applied between the noblest two beings in creation". It is inconceivable that between them should be established subjugation, coercion and inequality.

Today's development in intellectual life — particularly with regard to the status of women — is, in certain respects, almost an echo of the controversy that broke out more than a century and a half ago. That controversy sometimes flared up and sometimes calmed down, but in many contexts it had to adopt fluctuating linguistic forms and new mechanisms of defence and justification based on such resources as might become available from time to time: schools of thought, treaties, modern science, and knowledge. Yet the issues have remained almost unchanged: Is there anything in Islam that disagrees with the freedom of women and supports their equality with men, and to what extent is going towards these values a way of going towards or away from the spirit of Islam?

It may be relevant to note that the two generations of thought we have dealt with briefly are still in existence today, though with less vigour. Their success and influence depends on specific outlooks on Arab societies, and particularly on the degree of their modernity. Whereas the influence of Haddad, for instance, or Amin is far-reaching in such societies as Tunisia, Morocco and to some extent Turkey, the ideas of Tahtawi are still meeting reservations in other societies where the education and employment of women continue to be vehemently opposed. Even if they are accepted, they soon become surrounded with countless forms of discrimination, usually on the pretext of "preventing the evil mixing of sexes and staving off immorality" and other distorted images of women's employment, motherhood, and so on.

The ideology of the third generation — present male and female thinkers concerned with the feminist issue — is based on a break not only with traditional cultural sources, but also with Arab heritage on women's emancipation. This generation consists of two wings. The first comprises male and female thinkers who consider that posing the problem on the basis of the duality "modernity and Islam" (as was the case for the renaissance thinkers of the previous two generations) was a wrong approach. Wrong because the subject is a modern one and can only be dealt with on the basis of epistemic and secular premises. Any attempt to draw it to Islam is bound to thwart its promises and expected results. Accordingly, this generation of thinkers call for an early end to this false controversy. They believe the heritage accumulated by the renaissance movements did nothing but obstruct the real demands and aspirations of women. These demands and aspirations can only be fulfilled if we free ourselves from the traditional heritage, which constitutes the tough kernel of masculinity, men's domination and women's inferiority. The first advocate of the trend was perhaps Hisham Sharabi, who wrote: "Both the reformists and the conservatives, in their writings, expressed the view of the modern patriarchal society which was naturally rigid and biased to men, and tended to confine privileges and power in them, which caused women to be overwhelmed with crippling legal and social restrictions." (Sharabi, 1987: 43-49).

The second wing of activists includes the militants of women's movements working in associations, clubs, and other structures of civil society. These activists, though less capable of theorising and producing intellectual propositions, have influence particularly over popular and middle-class circles. However, in spite of their predilection for fieldwork and direct contact with groups of working women and even housewives, the effectiveness of their discourse is negligible as compared with that of second-generation activists who had a great mobilising capacity. The new activists, because of their ideological tensions and adoption of direct contentious discourse have exposed themselves on numerous occasions to rejection and reservations. Indeed, their opponents, too, have a great capacity not only for mobilising supporters from the same groups of women but also for moving them with traditional expressions. They have developed a growing power of incitement and polarisation in a tense environment, thus turning the whole issue into a conflict not within the elite circles of Arab society, but between them and "external" elites that have complex and conflicting interests.

The Islamophobia mentioned earlier has provoked, within the elite circles of Muslim societies themselves, a sharp polarisation fed with ideas, material resources, and interests. While some people believe that conservative and traditionalist Arab countries, thanks to their immense resources, have supported anti-feminist theses for many years, it is no secret to anyone that international and non-governmental organisations are the current sponsors of many women's movements in the Arab world. Regardless of the resulting impact and the stakes involved, we have to make the following observations:

- 1. Present feminist discourse has penetrated areas that were considered, until recently, taboo. While the renaissance pioneers kept silent over sexual freedom or equality in inheritance and so on, these new topics are now appearing not only on the list of demands of a number of feminist movements, but also on the intellectual agendas of the current generation.\*
- 2. Present feminist discourse is using completely new methods and catchphrases derived from current human sciences and their topics and terminology: psychology, anthropology, linguistics, semiotics, and so on.
- 3. Women's movements are increasingly intertwined on a global level. The globalisation of women's status has become an indisputable reality, which makes it difficult to find a settlement based essentially on resources and materials of a local nature. The globalised intertwining has brought back the amalgamation of propositions and semantic structures, sometimes to the point of ambiguity and confusion.
- 4. Trends opposed to the emancipation of women which emanate principally from Islamic fundamentalist movements — have developed in an intellectual climate marked by the regression of modernist-emancipatory propositions. Those trends have intensified in a dangerous simultaneity with material and moral attacks that cannot be overlooked, launched by conservative currents such as the neoconservatives and the Western political right in general. The situation looked at times almost like a war of religions, which lent support to the thesis of a Crusadist conspiracy. Consequently, fundamentalist discourse found itself involved in preparing for what it considers to be its decisive battle. Regarding the status of women, it hastened to foreground two factors that we must address: authenticity and identity.

<sup>\*</sup> See for instance Haddad and Esposito (2003); and Ilkankar (2004).

#### i. Authenticity

In this discourse, authenticity is the denial of change. What is authentic is eternal and change is but provocative and perverted innovation. The denial of innovation, therefore, is likely to reveal what is authentic in us, or in other words, the essence of our identity. Such an identity is equal to itself, withdrawn into itself, and uninterested in others, as it considers them to be both unnecessary and perverting.

Authenticity assumes a biological meaning with regards to women: the body of authenticity is a man's world. Any statement to the contrary is nothing but a distortion of identity; an identity that is masculine, dominating, and sweeping into space and history. The world is thus masculinised to the point of having no women at all or rather having women that are but the shadows of men. It is the men who have the prerogative of distributing women to the places, positions, and roles they deserve.

### ii. Identity

While some hold the view that identity is synonymous with ethnicity, others reduce it to a solid nucleus enclosing three elements whose order and primacy are still highly controversial. These elements are: language, religion and history. The women's question will be considered from these angles. It is one of the key resources that may be mobilised for or against identity, especially at this time when assertions of the clash of civilisations are intensifying along with other theories calling for the settlement of old battles with Islam. Perhaps the most significant theory is that of Islamic specificity, which is branded as negative. These anthropological theories, sometimes isolated from their epistemic and historical contexts, have enjoyed unparalleled popularity, even in certain academic circles. The image of woman as depicted in that theory is grim and painful: a woman bullied and oppressed, a female full of desire and sensuality, locked up to give pleasure to man. This caricature has succeeded in capturing and exaggerating imagined characteristics, perpetuating an image and causing it to transcend time and space into eternity.

#### ORIENTALISM: ANTHROPOLOGY AND WOMEN IN ISLAM

Neither the nihilist discourse on women nor the discourse disproving the accumulated emancipatory Arab heritage on women would have achieved the notoriety they enjoy if they had not fed on the specific context of the Arab-Islamic world today. This context is marked by the prevalence of simplified Orientalist theories confronted with the equally superficial theories of retrograde fundamentalist movements. It is our duty, therefore, to go back to the assertions upon which these discourses are founded to understand the logic of their working and the rationales underlying them.

Though little interested in Islam, Claude Lévi-Strauss\* penned in his book Tristes Tropiques a few pages that call for pause. In an anthropological sense, these pages are tantamount to a rule supporting the theory of specificity that is currently propagated with considerable force and aggressiveness. Lévi-Strauss writes: "With the exception of forts, the Muslims built only places of worship and mausoleums in India. Whereas the forts were inhabited palaces,

<sup>\*</sup> Behind such manifestations, structuralism strives to discover the unconscious (hidden) structure, to extract it from material reality and to express it in the form of verifiable patterns. This approach has been strikingly applied to several fields and phenomena, particularly legends, language, and "exchange of women" in "primitive" societies.

the mausoleums and places of worship were uninhabited. It is difficult in Islam to think of solitude. For this religion, life is first of all community, and death is always established within the framework of a community devoid of participants." In another passage, the author maintains, "If a body of guardsmen were to be religious, Islam would be their ideal religion: strict observance of regulations such as prayers, reviews of detail and care for cleanliness, masculine proximity in spiritual life as well as in the performance of religious functions; and absence of women ... By shutting women in, Islam has closed the paths to the world of women. Man has in fact created a closed world. In this way and without agreement, he hopes for success but when success he does achieve it will necessarily be on the basis of exclusion: the exclusion of women from social life and the exclusion of non-Muslims from the community."

In light of such quotations, and through these very lines, the Orientalist anthropology outlines, from its own perspective, the main characteristics of Islamic civilisation. These are cultural peculiarities created by Islam in contrast with other religions and civilisations. They provide a distinctive identity for the peoples who embrace that religion, and permeate them at all times. Whether it is a matter of the primacy given to the community at the expense of the individual, the difficulty of conceiving of solitude and privacy, the sharp escalation of differences between the sexes, or the apprehension — if not the scare — of facing other civilisations or ways of life, Lévi-Strauss imagines that he has put his finger on some crucial features of the Islamic system. Yet regardless of the coherence or scientific relevance of the diagnosis, we do not know whether the assertions of Lévi-Strauss apply to the archetype of Islam or are simply the portrayal of Muslim societies he had studied.

I tend to favour the former hypothesis; that the scholar most probably considered his observations to be criteria of Islam. What he craved primarily were cultural goals; the study of contemporary Islam was only a matter of secondary concern to him. I opt for that hypothesis because Lévi-Strauss always preferred to study societies described as historical. Despite the numerous similarities between Islam (west of the East) and the European world, the conclusion is serious: "I had to come upon Islam to gauge the danger threatening French presence. First of all I will not indulge in visualising our image, and this has compelled me to conclude that France is so keen on becoming a Muslim country."

On all levels, the ideas and stances put forth stem from the same Orientalist position. It is a utopian principle based on a duality: rationalism and formalism. In most cases, it seems superficial and contrived when compared to real life.

Max Weber is not much different from Lévi-Strauss, whom he preceded. Dealing incidentally with Islam, the former pushed the theory through to its extreme conclusion as he considered "Islam to be contrary to Puritanism which is based on virtue. Islam is a religion that respects enjoyment of the delights and pleasures of life. It has even established them as a goal in worldly existence, particularly women and private property. This means that there are no mystical ethics in Islam."

This image sums up Islam as a hedonist school that considers the body of a woman an area for the fulfilment of man's phantasms. In the final analysis, the history of Islam appears to be full of eroticism.

History, with its contradictions, conflicts, expansion, achievements and failures, is summed up as a female society composed of odalisques and songstresses who move the world according

to their "charm" at times and their cunning at others. *The Thousand and One Nights*, a literary milestone, projects and perpetuates the image of that fictitious existence onto real Arab-Islamic society. This image has not escaped some dangerous distortions that have sometimes been adopted by academic scholars. Current caricatures do not express an artistic imagination that, we believe, is entitled to go far. On the contrary, they reflect a ready-made stereotyped image of an entire civilisation summed up in a fixed image that refuses to change its features and its colours.

The Arabs' patriarchalism — Islam appears, from those writings, to be unrestrained "hedonistic patriarchalism" since the Oriental man does not content himself with enjoying woman, but usually delights in oppressing her almost sadistically (Ghasoub, 1991: 11-15).

### i. The patriarchal system

The patriarchal system, when adopted in the approach to the issue of women, allows us to perceive society as a sum of structures characterised "by relationships of authority, domination, and subordination ... As for the father, the basic model of the patriarchal structure, he is the main tool of repression. His force and influence are essentially based on punishment. The familial patriarchal system is the foundation of a dual domination: domination of the father over the children and domination of man over woman." (Sharabi, 1987: 35) In the words of Al-Haydari: "Those in control of social, economic, political, and even cultural life are men not women ... Woman is the victim of the male patriarchal society which has codified values, customs and concepts that underestimate woman and place her in a rank lower than that of man, and until now, no adequate opportunity has been provided for woman to play her role on an equal footing with man." (Al-Haydari, 2003: 12).

The patriarchal system does not content itself with dominating the articulations and architecture of social life in accordance with measures based on a social/gender division of work, but is compelled, to that effect, to use violence in order to consolidate the oppression of women, which generally takes three forms:

- 1. A qualitative oppression that means the spread of the concept of man's superiority and sovereign authority over woman.
- 2. A paternalistic-masculine (patriarchal) oppression that manifests itself in the male's domination over the female in the family, in society, and in government. The domination is expressed in the father's irrational supremacy over the family, which imposes submission and blind obedience to him by mother and children alike. It also appears in the son's authority over the daughter, even if she is older and more sensible.
- 3. A legal oppression that stems from paternal despotism and is reflected in the positive and customary laws which, in turn, oppress women in their social, economic, and political rights.

The oppression of women, according to the theory under consideration, originates essentially from the spread of the concept of supremacy of a system of masculine values which are themselves based principally on man's "interests" in domination. Seizing power, investing it, and submitting it to his will are the real source of this oppression. Other factors as religion, biology and convention are but secondary sources that feed the springheads of patriarchalism and colour them systematically or, so to speak, lend them legality and legitimacy (Beidun, 2007).

"Operating" the theory of the domineering patriarchal family without restraint or relativisation turns it into a copy of Orientalist assertions that are currently propagated but within the framework of a specific battle previously alluded to.

### ii. Exception or particularity

Two intransigent currents are cutting through Arab culture in regard to the issue of woman: the first current considers woman the protégée of authenticity and the embodiment of identity. She is the eternal and loyal guard of everything authentic, essential and everlasting; namely, chastity, honour and purity. It is therefore imperative to immunise her against the unexpected and the variable. And that can only be achieved through isolation from the world of change. The second current is no less vehement, claiming that woman is the unique symbol of modernity. She must therefore be incited to rebellion against tradition and heritage. This cannot be achieved unless she considers "man" her enemy along with the world of masculinity hailing from the deep past. Between these two violent currents there are many stumbling voices and jumbled-up visions. Rational and realistic discourse about women is effaced.

The first discourse considers that the backwardness afflicting the Arab-Islamic world is due essentially to what it calls "the dilution of woman" caused by the fact that women have moved away from so-called authentic values. Woman thus becomes an embodiment of the backwardness of the Arab-Islamic world. According to this viewpoint, the Arab-Islamic decline started when woman threw off her modesty and abandoned her authenticity. This discourse reads history in a selective way, chosing events, facts and interpretation to prove that the backwardness of societies came about when woman departed from authentic Arab-Islamic values. This imagined authenticity could only be regained if woman recovers her identity as determined by the discourse — in other words the identity of a wife or mother who brings up her children under the protection of the male head of household. She has to renounce everything else. Public space in this conception represents the world of depravity and deviation. If woman needs to be in it, in cases of absolute necessity, man has to ensure the highest degree of her safety.

This discourse mobilises a great diversity of resources ranging from the mythological to the biological.

The second discourse, as mentioned earlier, considers woman as the prophet of modernity and its workshop. Any deviance is a form of support for woman's enemies: feudalism or tyrannical and fundamentalist regimes that accuse others of apostasy.

In both discourses, woman oversimplifies a reality that is already simplistic. In this milieu, several Orientalist theories (including internal Orientalisms) have emerged to explain what they call Islamic particularism where "the status of women in Muslim societies in general, and in Arab societies in particular, is characterised essentially by inferiority." But the notion of women's inferiority, assuming we take it for granted, is not peculiar to Islam. It has accompanied most human societies, including matriarchal ones. It is unusual to find societies in which women have monopolised power and wealth at the expense of men. Divisions of labour have existed, and these divisions sometimes withdrew activities from men and transferred them to women, and vice versa, but seldom were men placed in a state of inferiority. Second, there is no difference between Islam and other revealed religions, including ones positive in their attitude towards women. On the contrary, Islam has

been more liberal than a number of other religions (on inheritance, divorce, and so on). Yet its positions cannot come to light unless we put aside the fiqh (jurisprudence) heritage accumulated over a period of nearly 15th centuries to justify, in general, the inferiority of women who are rarely treated with justice.

The fiqh heritage, especially that relating to women, does not necessarily express the true spirit of Islam. It expressed — and still expresses — social, political and cultural interests. The disjunction between "misogynous fiqh" and Islam is likely to withdraw from that fiqh the right to speak in the name of Islam. The writings of Amin, Ali Abdul Razzaq, Haddad and others are explicit in this regard. Theirs were profound and genuine ijtihad (interpretative) efforts that reserve the right to emanate from the spirit, precepts and aims of Islam without claiming to speak on its behalf. For this reason, they differ from subsequent attempts that set as a condition for women's emancipation a break with Islam, considering that it constitutes an obstacle to women's liberation.

Societal history cannot be confined to text, whatever its sanctity and authority. Societies, in their historical transformations, are affected by other factors: economy, politics, and so on. The alleged conformity between Islamic civilisation and the text of the Quran is exaggerated, whatever the deep-rootedness of this book in the articulations and arteries of daily life. The status of women in Muslim societies was generally determined by the social heritage preceding Islam. We can therefore say that this status took on the colours of societies in pre-Islamic eras. Anthropological Islam is full of particularities often stemming from that history and not from the sublime essence of Islam. The status of women in African Islam, for example, is different from the status of women in Asian or Arab Islam. For many centuries, deserts and islands were isolated from the "social Islam" experienced by the Arabs.

We cannot deny that fiqh scholars may have considered the women inferior to men. Yet from a scientific and objective angle, first we must relativise this point, and second, not consider it necessarily and exclusively emanating from Islam.

### THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF WOMEN'S ISSUES

The war against Afghanistan sparked debate over "cultural war" marketed in the name of support for the status of women in the Afghan nation. Much discourse emphasised the need to change the country's standards of behaviour and customs. In the words of Todd, B-52 bombers were depicted as though they were bombarding Islamic anti-feminism. Justifying the war in this way, according to this thinker, is both sickening and mindless, especially as war is waged in the name of cultural values. Indeed, when war is conducted in a blind manner it can only result in restraining and crippling the internal and authentic dynamics of development in the very domain it seeks to enhance and address.

Subsequently, the Arab world did not escape the campaign and the justifications remained virtually unchanged. The conflict between the Anglo-Saxon world and the Arab-Muslim world is deep. The positions adopted by Mrs Bush or Mrs Blair with regard to women in the Arab-Muslim world may be one of those justifications. Yet the results were negative: increasing hostility between the two worlds and a distorted image of a civilisation — Islam — whose greatness is undeniable. The prevailing Anglo-Saxon socio-cultural anthropology is showing

signs of degeneration. In the wake of the efforts made by Evans-Pritchard or Meyer Fortes to understand different communities, a succession of condemnations of men's domination followed. The condemnations emanated from suffragettes who defended British women's right to vote and felt admiration for the matriarchal systems on the coasts of Tanzania or Mozambique, which were predominantly Muslim countries. If science is manipulated to assign good or bad marks to peoples and civilisations, how could we expect impartiality from governments and armies? Universality no longer symbolises anything as it has forgotten the meaning of tolerance (Todd, 2002: 13-23).

The French, for instance, who are now more xenophobic than before, particularly towards people of Maghrab origin, comport themselves in this way because the status of women clashes with their private ethical system. Reactions of this nature, however, are quasi-instinctive, and devoid of any intellectual depth. They amount to little more than ideological formalism that is incapable of understanding even the category of general provisions relating to the general Arab anthropological system. A universality that fails to notice differences can only be considered blind, ultimately resulting in condemnations of one system or another.

The war on terrorism was unfortunately a rare opportunity for issuing final and unjustified judgments on the Arab and Islamic anthropological system in general. In this case, a number of unexpected events and unprecedented phenomena are singled out and generalised in clear violation of objective and scientific principles. Condemning a system because it is considered opposed to the principle of equality between women and men is a dangerous stance.

The observations we are making here are not mere anecdotes, but indications of an alarming regression of universality in Anglo-Saxon anthropology. This regression is likely to deprive the Anglo-Saxon world, and many of its intellectuals, of the opportunity to build an objective vision of the Arab world and to establish fair relations with that world. And that is the main obstacle to a lucid treatment of its strategic issues.

### ANGLO-SAXON FEMINISM AND ARAB FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

The United States tends to be intolerant towards the Arab world, particularly on the cultural level. Prompted by bigotry, it draws ambiguous and highly conflicting images of that world. The most provocative and uncanny stereotype is to consider the Arab world the adversary and ferocious enemy of women. This conflict is deep-rooted, utterly reductionist, and anthropologically primitive, as Todd describes. It replaces the religious antagonism that Samuel Huntington has used as a basis to throw the Muslim world out of Western civilisation altogether with an anthropological antagonism that considers the Anglo-Saxon system morally opposed — and superior — to the ethics of the Arab system, regarded as immoral, particularly towards women.

According to this antagonism, the American family appears to be nuclear, individualistic and guaranteeing a lofty status for women, while the Arab family is the opposite: extended, patriarchal and that places women in a status of subjection. Marriage between cousins, in particular, is almost taboo in the Anglo-Saxon world, in sharp contrast to the Arab world where it continues to be favoured. Considering that feminism in the Anglo-Saxon world has become dogmatic and more aggressive over the past few years, and that the values of tolerance

and diversity are constantly declining worldwide, it looks as though this feminism had been pre-arranged to add fuel to the fire of the conflict with the Arab and Muslim world in general. This world includes Pakistan, Iran and — to a lesser degree — Turkey, excluding Indonesia, Malaysia and peoples in the part of Africa overlooking the Indian Ocean, as the status of women there is higher.

The clash between America and the Arab-Muslim world is presently taking the form of a conflict between values that are unverifiable. "We believe that there is something disturbing. It is the dimension that subsequently became a structuring factor in international relations. Since 11 September, cultural conflict has taken a sardonic and again theatrical turn, of a type of globalised slapstick comedy. On the one hand, you have America, where its former president appeared before a committee because of a female administrative trainee, and on the other, Bin Laden, a polygamous terrorist — some of his wives are his own half-sisters." (Todd, 2002: 29).

Focusing on the constantly strained proximity between Islam and the West has had no other effect than distorting identity and thrusting people into the maze of disagreements and differences, many of which are false.

In contrast with that trend, Germaine Tillon, one of the intellectuals and anthropologists who believe in cultural diversity, maintains there is "a Mediterranean family structure" that prefers endogamy and tends to veil women. As for the deep historical causes, they go back to the Neolithic revolution witnessed by the region. It was there that man discovered agriculture, set out to domesticate animals and rear them, built cities, and organise himself politically. That was the origin of a culture that will limit the exchange of women and develop the concepts of "taboo", polygamy, racialism, slavery and infatuation with virginity.

The Mediterranean structure has absolutely nothing to do with custom, language, or religion. It is not an Arab specificity since Islam did not call explicitly for some of the characteristics mentioned above.

The Mediterranean structure is not above history but is variable and dynamic. Demographic analysis in particular brings out many deep differences and disagreements on the status of women in the Muslim world. All population indicators show that the Arab-Muslim world has already entered the "demographic, cultural and intellectual revolution," which has enabled many parts of the world to be among the most developed and advanced in our time. The Muslim world is moving on its own to join universal history. Linear concepts of history do not tolerate other histories that may fail to proceed in the same manner and along the same pattern as Western history but do proceed in the same direction. The history that cannot accommodate diversity will stifle other histories in its own name.

In a recently published book on the study of socio-cultural structures in Algerian society, Germaine Tillon wrote: "There is no Arab world that is different, but there is a Mediterranean culture, a common ancient Greek culture, which has structured those societies here and there for thousands of years, and which unites rather than separates us." This is supported by anthropology, and to prove it the scientist conducted a comparative study of the Eskimoan, Papuan and Incan societies along with other distant peoples. The study of legal structures, marriage rules, inheritance — in short all that is known as social life — proves that between

Europeans and the Maghrabi Arabs there are close relationships. In the anthropological sense, we are more cousins than we are different.

Domination over women is not an Arab or eastern specificity. It was the case in Western societies until the middle of the last century, though in different forms and to different degrees. Confining the problem to the Muslim faith in particular only increases the fears it inspires as a religion threatening Western civilisation. This, I believe, is extremely dangerous as it can only result in strengthening pockets of opposition to all cultural or social changes, however slight they may be. It can even cause the enlightened elites to slacken their support of the achievements made, which may thus be abandoned. Examples of that happening are many.

We have to renounce the unilateral and linear perspectives of history. This conception wants Third World societies to be exclusively concerned with catching up with Western history while they are not supposed to participate in it in the first place.

Islamic societies have changed a great deal in regard to mental or material structure, particularly with regards to the functions and structure of the family let alone the status and standing of women. The family institution in the Muslim world is well on its way to becoming nuclear. It is focusing on the child, considered — by Philippe Aries for example — as a basic characteristic of the modern family. Those changes are not necessarily taking place at the expense of traditional family ties, as is the case in Western societies, as spouses continue to be connected through a network of distant or close consanguine relationships.

The cultural repercussions of Arab customs relating to the preference for endogamous and other forms of marriage have contributed to the security of women. This "closed" system is full of human warmth and is still in existence, contrary to what some have expected. The monograph mentioned by Youssef Courbage and Emmanuel Todd carefully describes life and deep-rooted feelings in towns, villages, and localities that prove that endogamous marriage is not viewed as coercion (Courbage and Todd, 2007: 31-55). In contrast, Russian and Chinese families, which are also extended communities of patriarchal lineage, prefer exogamy. For that reason, father-child and husband-wife relationships appear to evolve in a climate of permanent psychological tension. The quick explosion of such systems in the phase of modernisation is undoubtedly due to the conceptions the families themselves have of their own ways of life.

In the Arab family, there is no such feeling. Endogamy alleviates complex personal relationships and extends them in a wide family system. The daughter-in-law will never be a stranger or a victim of her mother-in-law (as in all exogamous systems). Nor will she be raped by her father-in-law, as in the Russian system. On the contrary, she will start her married life as their daughter, "the daughter" of her husband's family (who are usually her uncles).

Contrary to what some may think, endogamy plays a protective role for women. The most frequent flaw in exogamous and male-selective systems is the phenomenon of female infanticide. This pattern is based on getting rid of girls on account of their being a burden. For that reason, the fate of many of them is termination, even through murder, as has been the case in China and India.

In the Arab world, women are always cared for by close communities, since they often marry cousins or relatives. They enjoy a high degree of protection via uncles or other relations. This

situation has limited — if not eliminated — infanticide in the Arab world. Male preference, however, still results in occasional and unusual phenomena, particularly the difference in registered mortality rates and other indicators between the two sexes. Yet the results of that preference are entirely different from China or India for reasons mentioned earlier.

In the above two societies, demographic modernisation has had very bad consequences that no doubt aggravate the phenomenon of deaths among girls. In the Muslim world, however, traditional endogamy has had, in general, adjusting effects, not only on those counts, but also on the issue of female suicide. The rate of this phenomenon, in China for instance, is extremely high. China is the only country in the world where women commit suicide more than men. In Muslim societies of paternal lineage where endogamy is widespread, rates of women's suicide are much lowered. Family structures, in the anthropological sense, are responsible for integrating and protecting individuals, particularly women.

To understand the distinctive feelings inhabitants of the Arab world harbour towards their own family systems, and which differ from the feelings shown by the Chinese or the Russians, for example, we have to understand the correct meaning of paternal authority away from prejudices and stereotypes. The father in the endogamous system is, in the final analysis, little more than an honest manager who makes sure that the rules of endogamy are well applied. Custom, however, turns him at times into a mere observer and supervisor. Marriage in fact is entrusted to women who take up most of the process of formulating marital strategies. Sometimes, indeed, it looks as though paternal authority is "pure imagination" (Beaudelo and Establet, 2006: 40-48).

This authority, however — assuming we recognise its existence — is entirely different from its equivalent in Russian or Chinese society. This is due to the fact that solidarity and mutual assistance, which are vertically prevalent among brothers and cousins, are supported by significant traditions, maxims, and proverbs that prevent that authority from being overwhelming, as is the case in the other two societies. The traditional culture and practices of Arab society, even in their patriarchal form, are different from those in other patriarchal societies. Their values and criteria constituted a system of anthropological protection for women, as compared with other societies not necessarily European. Modernity and modernisation have had a deep impact on the issue of protection of the individual as determined by previous traditional structures.

We note that schooling and consequent social — and even geographical — mobility have markedly reduced rates of endogamy. In Jordan, for example, the percentage of marriages between direct cousins decreased from 26 per cent in 1990 to 13 per cent in 2002, whereas in Egypt it fell from 25 per cent to 17.5 per cent over the same period. In Algeria, the proportion dropped from 29 per cent to 22 per cent. Nevertheless several characteristics will continue to operate on the level of mental structures and cultural values in real life.

Demographers confirm that fertility in the Muslim world has been declining over the past 30 years or so. From 6.8 children per woman, the rate fell to 3.7 children in 2005. The fertility rate in Tunisia is the same as in France. The decline is due to several deep socio-cultural factors and is indicative of the collapse of traditional balances that previously dominated society. The transformation has undoubtedly undermined the old relationships of domination, as well as old family structures, ideological references, and political systems. Population decline, which characterises the majority of Muslim countries, presumes ipso facto an improvement in the status of women, which involves, at the same time, a higher level of women's education.

In a country like Iran, where the fertility rate is 2.1 children per woman, this translates inevitably to an increasing number of families breaking with the patriarchal tradition. Birth control and the decline of endogamy are not mere statistical indicators but represent proof of deep and dynamic anthropological transformations that are occurring in the Muslim world and elsewhere and that impose themselves as one of the foundations of a universal history.

# **EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER**

Social typology proceeds from the presumption that relations between women and men are socio-cultural; nothing more than the products of a culture, which may be reformulated in a thousand possible combinations.\* Gender identity is the personal conviction — or more precisely, the inner inclination — of the individual. As for prevalent societal classifications based on biological or even cultural criteria, they are stereotyped images and recollections. Empowerment in general is the distribution of economic, cultural and social power in addition to guaranteed rights of choice. When we speak of empowerment, we have to place it in a broad framework involving all vulnerable social groups and those threatened with marginalisation and exclusion.

This concept has been used in close connection with feminist studies and with the concept of "social type" as crystallised in Anglo-Saxon feminist literature. The gender approach started gradually to replace the patriarchal approach.

This ideology became widespread, especially among the organisations of civil society and women's organisations in particular, as a result of changes that took place in the concept of development and its epistemic contents at the end of the last century. The approach to women in development (WID) and women and development (WAD) marked the beginning of reflection on ways to integrate women into the development process, "in their capacity as a means to achieve the aim of economic growth." (Sharafuddin, 2007: 263-276).

The approach was welcomed in Arab societies with militant feminist heritage (Lebanon, Tunisia) but soon spread to most other Arab countries, especially as international organisations had adopted it as an "official" approach and as a condition for support and financing within the framework of growing networking action between Arab civil society and international organisations. Perhaps its adoption in Arab reporting on human development pushed it to the forefront of prevailing approaches. In 2002, the first report on human development noted the "lack" of woman's independence as one of the three major obstacles to Arab societies achieving first rank worldwide in the fields of exchange, education and culture. The Arab human development report stated that the advancement of Arab woman requires first and foremost: respect for the rights of citizenship for all Arab women; protection of women's rights in private life and family relationships; guaranteed full protection of women's rights and personal freedoms. Some have gone as far as to adopt the theory of an "Arab personality" that includes a solid core of stagnation, a lack of analysis, an instinctive propensity for concupiscence, a preference for rest over work, and so on.

<sup>\*</sup> See in this connection the excellent work of Al-Qarami (2007) in which gender becomes an approach to the history of civilisation.

The gender approach aspires to be a major step forward for feminist struggle in the Arab world. Yet despite substantial moral and material support, this approach has met with limited success so far. This may be ascribed to three factors:

- The elitism of the approach. Unlike previous feminist movements, this approach is still confined to women of higher intellectual circles, which translates into a limited impact
- The opposition of fundamentalist currents that consider it an "epidemic" attacking the Arab-Islamic world.
- 3. The lack of internal intellectual and cultural luminaries this being the most important factor. Contrary to the feminist movements that prevailed throughout the last century, and enjoyed the support of Arab intellectual reformists (Tahtawi, Amin, Haddad, and so on), the gender approach has remained, on the intellectual level, dependent on "rootless" assertions and references.

This may be due to the globalisation of the theories themselves, which has caused gender, notwithstanding its ambitious demands, to suffer in terms of cultural legitimacy. It is an approach without symbols or names that refer to the internal dynamic of Arab reformist thought, accentuated as other social movements have reduced their support for feminist movements under pressure of reverting to their own sectoral concerns. Consequently, the approach appeared at times to be isolated, sharing no common denominators with other components of civil society.

The new gender approach appeared in the late 1970s in the United States but Arab societies knew of it only in the early 1990s when most UN institutions adopted it. Many elites view it as the means to fulfil a foreign agenda unconnected —organically — with real society.

### THE STATE AS GUARANTOR OF WOMEN'S FREEDOM

The reformist movements dealt with the status and role of women as indicated earlier, and to that effect engaged in bitter fighting against their opponents (intellectual and social forces). Similarly, gender advocates have pursued the same goal but on the basis of different rules. The most striking development is the lead maintained by fundamentalist movements for over two decades. These movements have shown an almost morbid stubbornness about woman's inferior status, clothing, and separation from society, and from the general development process. Faced with this polarisation, which virtually paralyses every initiative for change, there appears no solution other than giving the state a leading role with the support of elites that believe in enlightenment and deep-rooted change.

Between the forces of progress and forces of hindrance, the state remains the only institution capable of settling disputes. It is the arbiter par excellence, especially as a new concept of the state was one of the key demands of the reformist movements that subsequently sought to put it into practice. This state is not a passive sentry who observes society living by its own values: tribal values, customs or traditions. It is the rule of law. Reforming society through the state was the slogan and catchword reform advocates kept on repeating. The strongest impact of the state on society as a whole can only be achieved through a base of emancipatory legislation in favour of both the family and women.

This fact was strikingly revealed just after independence when leaders, who enjoyed a formidable degree of legitimacy, set about building their nations and followed the example of founding fathers. The adoption of the Personal Status Code on 13 August 1956 in Tunisia appeared to be so much of a radical innovation that it remained unmatched in the Arab world. The code abolished polygamy and forced marriage, and permitted divorce on the basis of civil law. These are some of the gains that have caused the status of women in Tunisia to be a rare exception in the Arab world. A decade after the adoption of the code, in 1966, the law in Tunisia emphasised the need to take care of children's interests amid divorce. In 1973, the prohibition of abortion was abolished. All these achievements were consolidated in subsequent legislative amendments. In 1993, the gains brought by the code became an integral part of Tunisia's constitution.

In Turkey, it is well known that Ataturk's reforms concerning women and the family in general were inspired by Swiss law and aimed to break with the system of values prevailing in Muslim states. In contrast, the emancipation of women in Tunisia, though carried out in the name of modernisation, did not move away from fundamental Islamic texts. These texts may be so interpreted as to make them adaptable to the logic of modernity. Ahmed Mestiri, then-minister of justice, was prompt to justify the abolition of polygamy by citing a holy verse of the Quran: "... but if you fear you will not be equitable, then (marry) only one."\*

The national elite was most anxious to demonstrate that none of the reforms made constituted a break with heritage, and to found all reforms on a new and enlightened interpretation of that heritage. The aim was to preserve the legitimacy of the reform process. "You will not be able to be equitable between your wives, be you ever so eager."\*\*

That is why the reformist current in Tunisia did not meet with any significant reactions from public categories. As to the traditional religious authorities (the Zeitouna scholars), they remained silent apparently as an expression of reservation in some cases and of opposition in others, but their impact was undoubtedly limited.

During the 1980s, reactions from the Islamists were forthcoming within the framework of their effort to mobilise a number of figures and traditional cultural resources against what they called the excesses of the Bourguibian campaigns of modernisation. The controversy that erupted in that decade pitted Islamists who were striving for power, and all the forces supporting the old collectivist system, including figures from the old Zeitouna faculty and others who held the view that "the Personal Status Code is not part of the revealed books", against the leaders of political parties and women's associations.

Against a background of controversy and rumours, President Ben Ali set out to resolve the issue with clarity and determination. In a speech delivered in March 1988, he declared that the Personal Status Code and the status of women form an integral part of the gains made by Tunisian society and may in no way be called into question.

This was indeed a double victory for modernity: first because every law can only be the result of a positive juridical effort on the part of the state, and second because the content of reform was no longer to be subject to haggling.

<sup>\*</sup> The Holy Quran, Sura IV: Women, "Anessa", Verse 3.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Ibid, Verse 129.

On the Arab level, however, it is unfortunate that liberal modernisation following the example of Al-Sanhuri stopped in the 1950s. The so-called revolutionary regimes made no diligent effort to improve family conditions and women's status. The Iraqi Baath Party, for instance, whose secularism was hailed by the Western media, retreated and resorted even to legitimising crimes of honour in full compliance with ancient tribal practices.

In Algeria, the family-related legislations laboriously achieved by the Algerian Liberation Front in 1984 added to the Franco-Arab Code of 1959 the permission of traditional repudiation besides juridical estrangement. All the provisions, however, remained conservative in many other places, and unfair to woman. It may be significant, in this context, to recall that President Houari Boumediène, from the outset, was opposed to any social change, preferring to focus instead on economic policy. He believed that other areas, including the family, would follow automatically but events went a different way.

Nearly the same thing happened with Gamal Abdel Nasser, who did nothing more than unify legislation as he abolished the Sharia tribunals in 1955. Those who succeeded him in power did not do much either. They maintained practically unchanged the Legal Code of 1929, the laws of 1946 and the Civil Code of 1949, making only few amendments. Perhaps the only exception was a number of guarantees provided in 1979 and 1984 for divorced women along with other gains such as the acquisition by children of an Egyptian woman married to a non-Egyptian of their mother's nationality.

As for the Arabian Peninsula, which wishes to be at once the Vatican of Islam and a pole of modernisation, it has indeed been able to attract modernisation, thanks to its oil revenue, but has continued to disseminate a double discourse: a conservative discourse that aspires to be modernist on the pattern of the West. Yet the effects on women's autonomy have been very limited. Reformists in the Arabian Peninsula have found themselves squeezed between the well-fortified areas of traditional society and new "contemporaries" desirous of a strange and literal application of Sharia. Referring indirectly to this quandary, Ghazi Al-Gosaibi, Saudi minister of justice, said: "I am not prepared to engage in intellectual or fiqh battles with them. My aim is not women's emancipation but women's employment ...148,000 Saudi women are looking for jobs, but social habits and customary tribal culture have constituted an obstacle to the process as a woman needs the consent of her 'guardian' to get a job."

When we are in a social structure marked by tradition we are in fact confronted with a tribal and fanatic trend. In other words, we are dealing with behavioural systems that are governed primarily by clannish practices in which Islam or groundbreaking law has little influence. Tribal custom has never been equitable to women but has deprived them of inheritance and subjected them to cruel treatment.

Kuwait is another indication that governments and official authorities are more advanced on the subject of women's political participation than the organised effort and active forces of society itself. It was the Kuwaiti government that took the initiative, many years ago, to act in favour of women's regaining their political rights. Yet in the latest elections, and notwithstanding the fact that women accounted for more than half the electorate according to figures announced, that proportion "allowed not a single woman to enter the new parliament in which the conservative tendency prevailed" (Ibrahim, 2008: 1).

Ali Ibrahim notes that the Arab world has achieved considerable progress over the last few decades in terms of woman participation and share in the labour market, education, and even social activities. Many female figures have emerged in public positions — either social or intellectual or even political — in several Arab countries, in addition to a significant number as businesswomen. The paradox is women's active presence within Islamic political currents, some of which disapprove of their presence in posts of responsibility or in public employment. According to some, "the ballot boxes continue to betray women."

In the face of this situation, it is imperative to speed up the stages of development and accustom society to seeing as vital female activity and representation in its elected councils. This can only be achieved through assignment of a mandatory quota for women in these councils. Once again, the state alone has the will and power to face up to traditions and interests and to impose the representation of women in such a way as to reflect their equitable representation in society.

Finally, we may not proceed without talking about the future of Muslim Arabs in Europe, particularly as it was the West that raised the gender controversy. Take, for example, the question of girls and the veil, which has been widely publicised in recent years. First, in this connection, is that the veil does not have a unified meaning for all girls. While some have been forced by their parents to wear it, others have worn it through conviction. Similarly, the veil may be a religious expression that cannot be summed up in mere compliance with religious teachings. The reaction to the veil has appeared clearly in the rejection shown by vast communities that had thought their residence to be temporary but realised later that their faith constituted the second religion in a country like France.

When veiled girls are portrayed as victims, the only alternative left for them to be emancipated is to break with their families, which only a few of them hope for. The controversy raised about the marriage of Muslim community daughters is based on the same misunderstanding. Western media is talking about the number of "forced" marriages while, in fact, most of them are "arranged" marriages. The girl generally consents to it in order to enter other worlds she aspires to.

Persistence in reducing complex marriage relationships to the notion of subjugation does not indicate any desire enhance freedom. Protagonists ignore real and significant facts and pander to abstractions relating to Islam, the Arabs, and Arab women in particular.

As concluded by two eminent sociologists, Gaspard and Khorokhavar (1995: 29): "our conceptions lead us to defend the freedom of wearing the veil in France when women wish to do so, and we also have to defend the freedom of those who do not wear the veil in a predominantly Muslim society if that is their wish. What many women are suffering from in Algeria, for instance, or in Iran, or in a number of other Muslim societies, is not the veil as such but intolerance. When women are able to decide the type of clothes they prefer within the framework of complete equality between the sexes, the veil will then become undoubtedly a matter of private concern only."

#### **CONCLUSION: RELATIVISM AND REALISM**

When some people in the West attack the status of women in the Muslim world they feign ignorance of the fact that a café on a Paris boulevard was no place for a respectable woman at the beginning of last century; that the taboo of virginity in those societies was not eliminated until the 1960s when youth uprisings had the audacity to demolish it with the support of women's movements; and that the contraceptive pill was not permitted by law until 1973. Those same people also tend to forget that girls who became pregnant out of wedlock were subject to stigma and condemnation until the last few decades. The European woman could not expose her legs until the middle of last century. The first photos of swimsuits were met with denunciation.

From all this we are duty-bound to draw a major lesson: the lesson of relativism. Social and cultural change takes place in stages and cannot be sudden.

The above text questions at once both critical Orientalist assertions and fundamentalist reactions. Both schools adopt a stance vis-à-vis Arab-Islamic culture that alienates it from human rights and particularly woman's rights. We have to overcome this superficiality and delve deeper into the ambiguity and complexity of real life to understand that secularism has affected many Muslim societies, and that the status of women has markedly improved. Yet this field, unlike economic liberalisation, will continue to require state intervention.

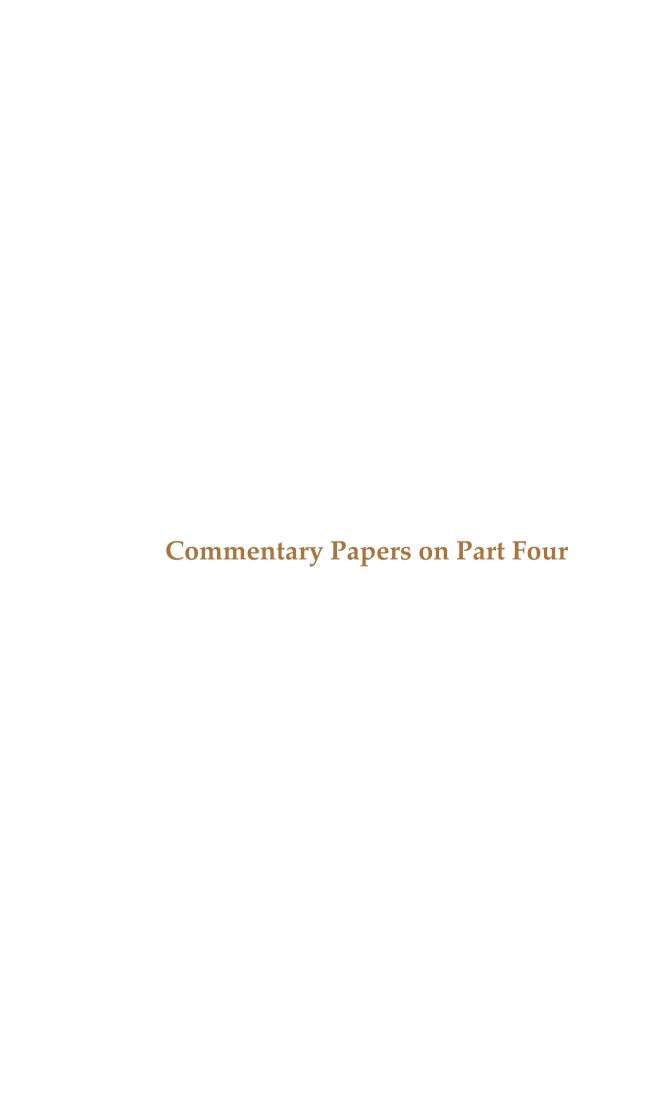
Although the rational trend within Islamic thought is still fragile, there is nothing in the tenets of Islam that precludes this choice.

Developing methods of interpretation and promoting depth over superficial justifications or pragmatic contrivance have become urgent and essential issues. The development of an enlightened Arab thought that is innovative, competent and capable of rendering woman an entity possessing all due rights and potentialities, self-governing and self-determining on the basis of equality, will be the proof of success in the internal evolution that Arab culture must embark upon. This process will not be undertaken by intellectual elites, and nor will it be fostered by various feminist circles, unless the state guarantees the principle of freedom and facilitates its implementation (freedom of faith, freedom of dress, freedom of expression, and enlarging the scope of public freedoms).

Such freedoms are bound to deprive the forces of both Islamic and secular extremisms of a major pretext. Prohibition — whatever its subject — can only create a list of demands for which people may be prepared to die and to commit the most horrible atrocities in their name. Women's security will not be firmly established unless it is formulated on the basis of a cultural system that considers women as free human beings. Only then will women be empowered and able to choose whatever they see fit for themselves.

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## **Chapter Eight**

## **Arab Commentary Papers**

 ${\it Inssaf~Hamad}$ 

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## **Foreign Commentary Papers**

 $Pinar\ Bilgin$ 

Gerd Nonneman

#### **Inssaf Hamad**

I found it difficult, at the beginning, to add to the paper under discussion, given the diverse and rich concepts and ideas addressed therein and the scientific approach adopted by it in tackling all aspects related to the topic at hand. However, these ideas made it possible to discuss extensively some of the views presented in the paper or to differ with them. The human sciences have established a wide diversity of models and frameworks from which to base arguments from, making it difficult to reach a consensus on a single paradigm. At the same time, I would like to indicate that the paper and the comments I am presenting both share the same essence, while differences remain over secondary points.

While the economic, political, technical and scientific systems in Arab countries have adopted the latest in modern technologies, the situation of women continues to lag far behind. Modernity (Ibn Salama, 2005:142-143) means changing past paradigms and acknowledging the true worth of human beings regardless of sex, religion, colour or creed. In other words, modernity looks upon humans as beings whose dignity necessitates dealing with them as ends and not means. Modernity also means accepting differences in opinions and applying one's mind in criticising matters taken for granted, in order to reach a logical and objective perception of the world.

The cultural traditions and concepts that mostly determine the status of women in Arab communities not only belong to the pre-modern period, but also reject modernity and deal with women as a whole rather than valuable individuals and considers them as immature human beings who can be humiliated, and as a means for reproduction, physical satisfaction, and service. Since all the above-mentioned conditions are deep-rooted beliefs, they constitute a tradition shaping the status of women, and they are considered as facts that cannot be disputed. Any attempt to criticize them is considered sacrilegious.

Under such conditions the security of women is threatened by a dominant cultural paradigm that practices discrimination against them. It may be said that there is a new form of an old tradition whereby the old tradition of burying female infants alive, has been replaced by a "burying of minds" (Hamad), which means that the old tradition still exists but in a new form.

Burying women's minds and their mental capabilities through subordination and submission continues to exist, which results in women as one-dimensioned human beings, with a focus on their physical form, which serves as a pretext to continue discriminatory practices. This, in part, accounts for the failure to change qualitatively women's conditions despite their access to education and work. Instead of women being present, body and soul, in the public sphere, their brains remain prisoners in their private realm preventing them from opening completely to the outside word, which makes it very difficult for them to interact and integrate into their new world. Thus, they remain hostages to the traditional roles, with marriage being their first priority, while education and work represent are short-term distractions on the path towards fulfilling traditional roles.

Women's perception about themselves and the world is shaped by a set of values, concepts, traditions and, at times, conservative juridical interpretations. This value system has not changed in the same way society has changed. This is what is called as "the cultural crisis" (Ziyada: 187) in which societies accept certain changes and reject others due to internal

powers that seek, under the threat of losing their influence, to either control the pace of change or to divert changes to serve their own interests.

The cultural paradigm that determines or shapes women's status has various interlinking dimensions, some of which date back to the pre-Islamic Arab cultural heritage influenced by the patriarchal paradigm and its social and economic components. Some dimensions go back to the inter dimensions between Arab Culture and other neighbouring cultures having the same patriarchal background, while others go back to the Islamic heritage — namely, religious texts and jurisprudence (El-Gabri: 7-8). These components do not have the same effect, contrary to what it shows, the social element with its background is still stronger than the other elements.

The confounded status of women in this cultural system represents the first obstacle in the quest to reach a clear and accurate scientific definition of their status which oscillates between two poles (Hegazi, 1980: 209). On the one hand, they are underestimated in terms of mental capabilities, capacities, sex and body, as well as being symbols of weakness and inefficiency. On the other hand, they are revered and put on a pedestal for their maternal role, and motherhood which brings with it kindness, love, sacrifice and self-denial. These contradicting views allow for an elevation in status from a sex object to a human being of value and a symbol of honour. Elevating the status of women and demeaning them at the same time allows for a wide range of opposing views.

In this context, the high status of women is based on their prescribed roles as wives and mothers, through reproducing, physical satisfaction and service. This perspective represents an attempt to perpetuate the status quo, under the pretext that it is compatible with women's intrinsic nature.

Holding the cultural paradigm entirely responsible for this perception is but a part of the story as it is only an intermediate link supported by social specified structures and work patterns and distribution of responsibilities (Barakat: 52-55). It is the outcome of these factors which gives it the justification and necessary legitimacy.

The above-mentioned perception is not attributed to the cultural factors only which relate to habits, traditions, juridical interpretations, but goes beyond that to involve the individuals' psychological traits as a logical and natural outcome of their positions in the social structure, as well as their roles, their relations with others and social upbringing, in shaping their personalities.

Under different patterns of living, women are given definite roles related to reproduction, raising children, and performing services for the household. These roles are considered as their only role. And because they occupied a marginal position in the continuous cycle of reproduction, it was not taken into account, having no material value because they are unpaid. Consequently, the status of women deteriorated, and they were regarded as having few responsibilities. Thus we can say that women were not deprived from bearing responsibilities, but rather from shouldering larger responsibilities evaluated in a tangible, material way.

In fact, the predominant system in the family is marked by a distribution of roles in society by which the strong controls the weak, the young controls the old, and men control women. In other words, it is a patriarchal pyramid-like set up governed by authoritarian relations, with its own traditions and perceptions. It has no economic basis and employs varied forms of control to ensure its stability and durability. Relations under this patriarchal set up form an integrated ideology that justifies the concept of controlling others in general and women in particular for actual or ideological reasons. Under such a pattern of relations, women turn into beings whose identities are determined by others, not by themselves (El-Sayegh: 102). This is why they are identified as the mother of A, the wife of B, the sister of C and the daughter of D.

These conditions still exist despite changes introduced to patterns of work and opportunities that encourage women to go beyond the boundaries of the home after being educated and to enter arenas previously restricted to men. However, no change is introduced to the status of women, because this requires a comprehensive change in prevailing cultural traditions. This is not as easy as introducing changes in other fields, especially when there are powers resisting this particular type of change, to serve their own ends as is always the case (men with all the privileges of the social structure and the clergymen with their sacred pronouncements) which helped in creating this seemingly modern patriarchal society, but traditional in thought. Indeed, it is clear that the patriarchal set up, is a concept that transcends religious beliefs and communities. This accounts for the present status of women.

Describing the patriarchal paradigm as an Oriental concept, creates a diversion away from scientific objectivity as it is reflected of an actual social reality, which existed in the past and extends to the present and future.

Examining the status of women in Islam is a further proof of what was stated earlier. Islam granted women their basic human rights, such as the right to give their consent in marriage. As time passed, the traditional patriarchal paradigm prevented women from enjoying this right, which was given to the father as the sole authority taking the decision of giving his daughter in marriage. Islam also granted women their economic rights and recognized their rights in fulfilling their physical needs. It also recognized other forms of pre-Islamic marriages to ensure the dignity of women by giving these marriages a sort of acknowledgment. Islam also tried to elevate the status of the female and stressed that the road to heaven lies at the feet of mothers. Islam also tried to renegotiate the thinking of pre-Islamic society, which used to despise and humiliate women to the extent of burying female babies alive out of fear that they might be enslaved or bring shame and disgrace to the family. This was the case in all patriarchal societies such as Greece and Rome: people of the East at this time (El-Elway: 10-13).

The Islamic recognition of women's rights regarding inheritance was a radical change in male-dominated societies, which totally deprived women of this right. However, the situation did not continue for long, and these changes did not lead to their supposed logical outcomes. In fact, some of the rights ensured by Islam for women were suspended and other rights that were put into effect were restricted by conservative interpretations that maintained male privileges, and made these rights devoid of their actual content. With the gradual diminishing of women's rights, Islamic communities reverted to the old traditions of finding the appearance of women in public disgraceful (El-Marnisi, 1990:10-13), heralding a new symbolic form of female infant burial.

With the full evolution of Arab society towards male-domination and the emergence of the political state, whose economy is based on private property, several restrictions were imposed

on women's movements after they had experienced wide margins of freedom to limit their mobility isolating them from the public sphere. In the early years of Islam, women strongly participated in public life which was legitimately condoned. The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: "Do not deny the female slaves of God access to the mosques of God." In fact, mosques used to be venues for various activities. However, some imams, like Al-Ghazali, prohibited what this Hadith (saying) allowed. This audacious act of circumventing such revealed texts and giving them hard line interpretation, left women subject to their husbands' approval, which showed male inclination against mixing between males and females due to an exaggerated fear and concern that women would not be capable of self-control. «El-quama» (guardianship of males over females) was the reason given for this ban on male-female mixing. This "Quama" was based on the claim that men are superior to women using a methodology that combines natural traits with religious responsibilities of men towards women under the pretext that women were unqualified for many types of work supported in that by doubtful sayings attributed to Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) (UNDP, 2005: 136)

The concepts of justice and equality in legislation, which are pivotal in interpreting religious texts, collided with the male hegemony and its related socio-economic relations when hardliners denied women the equality evident in the Quranic texts, claiming that the equality therein was related to religious/spiritual matters and not to worldly or social aspects. The method adopted to underline this interpretation was a mixture between the constant and the variable (Abu-Zaid, 1991: 241), that is the holy texts (the Quran) and its human interpretation by Muslim scholars over the years, with all the possibilities of errors and change across time and place. These inequitable interpretations against women became, over time, part of the Sharia that are applied.

While theological scholars kept silent in some Arab countries about suspending some rules of Sharia (e.g. punishments) and approved laws, which were not derived from the Sharia, we find that they themselves conceded to the most rigid interpretations of the personal status law concerning women, which deprived them of their rights. This clearly shows the influence of the social patriarchal traditions over the essence of religious texts. The accepted and prevailing norms concerning women were those which were in support of the patriarchal authority. Any other interpretations or explanations, which might run contradictory to or violate this objective, are hushed up or overlooked.

Common religious interpretations, which are spread through satellite TV channels and backed by books and other publications, adopt the same position towards women, and a particular social authority that brings with it a dark and blurred picture of Islam. It obscures its enlightened theology, stereotyping Islam, by taking out a certain situation from its historic context and generalizing the timely interpretation in order to conceal the rights and privileges given to women in the early years of Islam. This is an added explanation to the differences between urban and rural areas with regard to the issue of mixing between males and females and the issue of inheritance. This is another proof of the prevalence of the patriarchal social paradigm over the rules of Islam. For instance, women in the countryside, are deprived of their right to inheritance, with property kept as a right exclusively for males as a prevailing social norm. On the other hand, women's mingling with men in public places is not restricted in the countryside as in cities, due to the nature of the agricultural activities that necessitate cooperation between men and women in the field.

Crimes of honour embody a flagrant violation of religious provisions, which punish for men and women convicted of adultery. However, man-made laws and social traditions and norms, give males an exclusive right to commit a crime of honour, under the nose of the judiciary and with the silence or approval of religious scholars. This is no more than a social tradition meant to maintain the stability of the patriarchal paradigm.

The problem gets more complicated given the fact that the popular culture does not resort to religioun as its direct frame of reference; rather, it derives its interpretations of religious rules concerning women from the prevailing customs and traditions. Yet, this practice can be addressed by referring to the principles of the common good of the nation and the group. Furthermore, the problem can get more complicated as any inappropriate social behaviour on the part of women is judged as religiously forbidden, thus confusing and intertwining popular beliefs with religious connotations.

Under the false banner of protection, women are deprived of their rights and freedom of movement. Moreover, certain psychological traits are instilled in their minds to ensure their submission and acceptance of the isolation imposed on them. This matter goes far beyond protection, to a strict control that involves fear of what might threaten the patriarchal authority justifying it by describing women as being overly emotional and inadequately versed in religious matters. It is true that the application of such conditions on women vary from one community (class and age groups) to another according to differences between them. However, all communities share the common feature of trying to mould women according to their needs.

What is propagated about the nature of women is merely baseless, and it has emerged from consistent restrictions (Hegazi: 2003) imposed on them since birth, through the continuous suppression of their physical expression and mobility, forcing their energies inward and introverting their agitated state of emotions. The alleged characteristics are an outcome of the mental abortion that prevented them from developing their mental capabilities to follow reason and logic. They were robbed of their right of choice and free will under the pretext of male guardianship, which put them in a position that led to their loss of control over their destinies. The psychological insecurity that some women feel is the direct outcome of the mental suppression they are exposed to under several conditions.

The idea that women are the weaker sex is implanted into their minds and is contrasted to the boldness and power of men who are supposed to play the role of the protectors and breadwinners, reflecting what should be, not what is happening in reality. Even when women started playing new roles, while continuing their traditional ones, their status remained unchanged and they remained prisoners tied closely from within to the patterns that pulled them back to the traditional roles defined for them due to the fears ingrained in them to keep them subordinate and contented with the pretext of protection and security. The reason behind their refusal to bear responsibility for their future is due to the tremendous fears instilled in them to remain subordinate and content with the protection and security with which they are surrounded. This is why they pull back to their traditional roles once they face any challenges in getting away from their traditional roles. This incomplete social change is, to a great deal, what is happening in Arab society (Nagar: 48)

The submission of women reduced to just a body in the traditional paradigms becomes more evident when they become part of the modern value systems, after getting their education

and joining the labour force. They are still immersed in their feminine nature, lured by fashion, exposing their bodies, and trying to keep it looking fit and young with all possible means. They are females in the real sense of the word, men are their whole world and pleasing them is their objective and ultimate end.

According to the position taken in the paper under consideration, inter-family marriage is a factor guaranteeing women's security, yet there are several epistemological obstacles that make it difficult to understand. The paper contends that this type of marriage, in which they can lead a happy marital life, is not forced on women. This claim, however, is not scientifically supported on account of the medical dangers involved. It only reflects the author's siding with the traditional patterns of inter-family marriages.

If we hypothetically agree with the presupposition that marriage among relatives contributes to women's security, it would mean that the security of 75 percent of women, who are married to men other than their relatives, is in jeopardy.

Furthermore, the claim that women who are married to their relatives will not be victimised by their husband's family (the oppressive mother-in law and the aggressive father in-law) is also unsupported. Many facts about these marriages are not spoken of as it is known in our society that what is declared is far less than what is actually happening. Inter-family marriage is declining with the spread of education, and cannot be considered a factor contributing to the security of women.

As for the claim that women are not forced to marry relatives, a reference can be made here to Bourdieu's (Ibn Salama: 104) use of the term «symbolic violence» explaining that the victim and the executioner have a common perception about the world. Both consider hegemony as given facts. Cultural violence is the worst form of violence, because it is not perceptible and not classified as an act of violence. It is a quiet and institutional violence that causes women to adopt and believe in a distorted image of their nature and destiny leading them to resist any form of change. They accept its concepts and resist any attempt to change their situation.

To link the phenomenon of female infanticide and marriage outside the family needs verification, because this is most probably linked to another value system derived from the patriarchal paradigm that prefers males to females regardless of the type of marriage.

With regards to criticism directed against the current generation of feminist movements, and the discourse on women's status in general, I find myself in agreement with the points made in the paper. We may add that sanctioning the globalised approach advocating the liberation of women, especially when dealing with the two terms "gender' and "women's empowerment, caused people to be alienated from it. These terms were associated for a long time with foreign intervention, colonialism, and domination, which were brought to memory with the events following 9/11. This reminds us of the rejection by the Arab world of demands for reform and democratization when they were presented by the dominating forces of the world.

It is possible to attribute the principles of women's liberation, like equality and justice, to the enlightened cultural heritages of the people which have been long eclipsed as well as the constitutions of states that stipulate these principles. This requires the feminist movements to make their terms of reference indigenous and perpetual and reconsider the approaches they adopt to change women's status.

Finally, the state's intervention is crucial in introducing real change in the status of women to achieve their security away from need and fear. Past success stories have occurred at decisive historical moments and may be hard to repeat, especially in view of the decline of the patriarchal role of the state as a guardian and provider of services, thus, diminishing the state's capability and influence to introduce the aspired changes.

Talking about the role of the state means the role of state institutions. Therefore, it is wise to draw attention to the role of decision-makers in these institutions, in view of the increased influence of individuals and the weakness of institutional performance in general. In this regard, we would like to recall that the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as one of the international agreements, over which the Arab countries voiced their reservations.

The question remains as to how women's security can be achieved through cultural norms without evoking a comprehensive change that ensures justice lacking in our societies with its three aspects: equality in distributing knowledge, authority and wealth.

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#### **Gaber Asfour**

I enjoyed reading this well written paper by my friend, Dr. Mohamed El- Baki Hermassi, who I know well as a prominent Tunisian professor of sociology before he assumed the post of Minister of Culture and then foreign minister in the Tunisian government. I was not surprised at the accuracy of the analysis and deep visions present in handling the paper's core topics. Dr. Hermassi reveals what he believes are the key threats to women's security from a cultural perspective. He gives an anthropological analysis throughout the paper based on a scientific method on the one hand and the accumulation of practical experience he acquired during his time in high office on the other.

At the outset, I would like to stress two remarks we usually do not give due attention to, perhaps because we take them for granted. The first is that women's security is both multifaceted and relative. There is social security, economic security and political security, among other forms. The specifics of security are also different from one Arab country to another. We might find the economic security of women is met in one country while other forms of women's security are not met. Similarly, we might find some forms of security achieved in some Arab countries and in others maybe none. The conditions of Arab women within this context depend on complex historical backgrounds in addition to various other factors, such as the level of existing wealth within the country, and the social, political, ethnic and cultural structures of, a given society.

My second remark relates to the concept of security itself and its various forms. Our approach should cover both material and moral — or non-material — violations committed against women. Material violations include direct physical assault that might result in physical harm, while moral violations cover verbal insults and other humiliations. Therefore, to understand women's insecurity in practice we must take into account its material and non-material dimensions.

I would like now to begin my comments on the paper of Dr. Hermassi. First of all, I would like to record my concurrence with many of the observations made in Dr. Hermassi's paper. However, I also disagree with him on certain points, whereby such diverging opinions can add to the point of view that the paper seeks to present.

The paper highlights a number of issues, three of which are the most important, which are listed according to significance:

- Arab women's security is lodged between fundamentalism and superficial Orientalist ideas.
- 2. Orientalist discourse regarding women in the Arab and Islamic worlds is adopted by several Arab feminist activists, especially the new generation of feminist researchers.
- 3. The intervention of the state has become necessary in order to speed up progress for Arab women and to ensure their security.

In my opinion, these are sufficient if we are discussing women's liberation—not women's security from a cultural perspective. The analysis of cultural discourse, especially that which is related to women's security and the achievement of the minimum level of basic human rights for women, cannot be deemed complete without revealing the factors threatening this security and creating a cultural discourse oppressive of women and rendering them victims of violence. This cultural and ideological discourse works towards the establishment, justification

and continuation of violence against women. Moreover, among the negative and disastrous impacts of this discourse is that it has created a large group of women who advocate and promote oppression and violence against other women. For instance, some women play a key role in ousting other women during elections, in instigating men to enact honour killings, and in taking revenge. This is why I prefer the socio-cultural approach to factors that threaten women's security.

In view of these points, I have a series of remarks to make. Regarding the first issue, I would like that we could have a certain definition of what is called "the hammer of fundamentalism", and to analyse this concept, especially in light of the fact that the term "fundamentalism" usually refers nowadays to religious extremism that leads to oppression. In fact, fundamentalism as a concept is a way of thinking whose impressions, based on principles and beliefs, cannot be questioned, doubted, developed or subjected to logical criticism. In this sense, fundamentalism can be found in different fields, such as political fundamentalism, social fundamentalism and intellectual fundamentalism. So, fundamentalism is not only confined to religion, which is always highlighted when fundamentalism is discussed, it is also an indication of the existence of a patriarchal society, a totalitarian political regime, a traditional literature and a conservative way of thinking.

I believe it is necessary, while speaking about Islamo-phobia or religious fundamentalism to recall the fact that Islamic heritage itself is diverse. It implies two contradictory images for women. The first is a positive one, on which feminist discourse depends and builds. The second is negative, which is being promoted by current religious fundamentalist discourse combined with fanaticism, extremism, violence and terrorism. Anti-Arab and anti-Muslim currents in the West exploit this image to mar the image of Islam and to link it to terrorism.

As for the Oriental proposals, they lack accuracy. Orientalism lost ground after the strong criticism of intellectuals like Edward Said and others. Academic circles in many Western countries have stopped using the term "Oriental". I know many Western researchers who insist on describing themselves as Arabists. A positive development occurred in this regard; many of those studying or writing in Western academic circles on Arab issues speak of the virtues of Arabs, in order to spread a positive image of Arab women. In this context, I recall Mrs. Laila Ahmed, professor of gender at Harvard Divinity School who wrote the book Gender in Islam, Mrs. Mona Michael at New York University, Margo Badran, Liala Abul Fida and many others, who are interested in Arab women's affairs. There are also non-Arab feminist figures concerned with Arab women's affairs, some of whom were introduced in conferences held by the Supreme Council of Culture in Egypt.

My second remark is related to the oriental discourse on women adopted by some Arab female groups. I think the effect of these groups is minimal and not comparable to that of the fundamentalist thinking in its threat to the security of Arab women. In fact, more than 90 percent of their activities are unknown to Arab women, and thus ineffective. It is, therefore, unfair to describe many of the Arab female activities as adopting the Orientalist discourse on women.

The last remark on the third proposal is that I completely agree with Dr. Hermassi on the necessity of the intervention of the state to speed up progress for women in order to ensure their security, legislatively, educationally and intellectually. In this context, it is important to mention that social awareness lags behind, in many cases, the political awareness of the state, and so political intervention becomes more pressing, even if it clashes with traditional values in a conservative society. In such a situation, no development or progress will be achieved without the ruling authorities imposing decisions on society in some cases. We should give time for these decisions to take effect, so we can see their positive impact. We should also go ahead on the path of changing social mindsets, using education, media and other methods. Among examples reported in Dr. Hermassi's paper is the Kuwaiti government initiative of helping women to gain political rights. However, the latest elections in Kuwait failed to secure for women access to parliament, though released figures confirm women constituted half of the total number of voters. This illustrates the challenges of deeply ingrained conservatism, where women oppose the nomination of other women that can represent them and defend their rights.

On the other hand, we can find a contradictory situation to the previous example. For instance, the paper mentioned that President Hawari Bu Madyan was against any social change at the very beginning and initially preferred a change in the economic regulations, which spontaneously contributed to a change in social awareness. This reflected not only a mistake in the trend of the political system, but also lack of awareness pertaining to other matters, which further advocates the religious fundamentalist discourse. It resulted in reading and hearing about massacres of those who lead the campaigns of enlightenment and logic and the spread of religious verdicts (fatwas), having nothing to do with Islam and running contrary to the tolerance of Islam and its respect for humanity. Among these fatwas is one which allows the killing of children who violate the teachings of Islam, according to religious extremist groups. They also claim that those children, who violate the teachings of Islam, are exactly like their fathers.

In view of the above, I would like to propose a parallel perspective complementary to that presented by Dr. Hermassi. This perspective claims that Arab women's security will remain under threat as long as three factors exist:

- 1. Poverty and economic hardship, which can lead to desperation among women and their exposure to the worst forms of physical and moral abuse.
- 2. The predominant patriarchal social structure with all its features, such as the preference of males to females, forced marriage, honour killing, trafficking in women, and deprivation of women's rights in violation of the Sharia like what is going on in some areas in Upper Egypt.
- 3. The oppressive state, which denies its people the rights of citizenship. Such a state fails to secure or develop modern life based on religious and civic enlightenment via education, media and the dialogue among civilisations. In the presence of these factors a cultural discourse that deepens and justifies backwardness in direct and indirect ways spreads throughout society, leading to insecurity and feeding fundamentalist religious discourse. Such conditions deprive women of their fundamental rights and can lead to physical and moral violence against them, starting with discrimination and ending with killing.

In this context, we can recall the most egregious misinterpretations of religious texts, such as the hadith saying, "Women are deficient in intellect and religion," or the fabricated hadith saying, "Do not let your women live in rooms, do not teach them how to write." This in addition to the description of women as devils who try to deceive and entrap men. There are other customary sayings that convey the same meaning, such as "Whoever obeys his bride will lose

himself," and "Humiliated is one who counts on women." Even in great Arab literature such illusions to women exist. At the beginning of The One Thousand and One Nights we find the following warning to male readers:

Do not tell secrets to women and never trust their promises They show false amity and they are full of maliciousness and betrayal Recall Youssef's incident and take care of their deception See how Satan managed to expel Adam from Heaven for their sake.

In view of all these false claims, it is not strange to find some people giving a wrong interpretation of the verse No.49, Shura (Consultation) Chapter: «...He bestows (children) females or the males according to His Will». The wrong interpretation of this verse claims that Allah, the Almighty, made the word females indefinite, while males definite (preceded by definite article the) and this is a confirmation of superiority of males (men) to females (women) in every aspect.

Unfortunately, these patriarchal sayings, predominant in ages of backwardness, remain as echoes in Arab culture. The setback of 1967 paved the way for the emergence of the present fundamentalist current that revived old perceptions about women and added to them ways that harmed Arab women and made their conditions worthy of concern.

#### **Pinar Bilgin**

Dr. Hermassi's paper, entitled "Women's security: a cultural perspective," presents an analysis of the state of women's security in the Muslim world with a specific focus on the Arab world. Following a detailed analysis of multiple ideational currents and struggles in the Arab world regarding the issue of women's status in society, the author concludes that the state is the best-placed and most promising (regarding its potential to provide for women's security) agent of security in the Arab world.

There is much to admire in Dr. Hermassi's paper. The author presents a map of past and present ideational currents and struggles in the Arab world. He also places them within the broader contexts of struggles for women's security in the Muslim world and struggles for women's security in the world at large. This, in turn, allows the author to avoid Arab/Muslim exceptionalism. Perhaps more importantly, contextualising the status of Arab women in the broader historical, social and international political context allows the author to present in rational terms what is essentially a sombre picture, as the Arab Human Development Report 2005 reminded us. What Arab women currently seek to achieve has only been recently achieved in other parts of the world. Therefore there is every reason to call for, in the age-old spirit of critical theory, coupling the pessimism of the intellect with the optimism of the will.

That said I would like to take issue with Dr. Hermassi's placing of the burden of women's emancipation on the shoulders of the Arab state. This is not because I think this is too heavy a burden for states to bear. Clearly, some have shown the capacity and willingness to further women's emancipation, as the author's discussion of the gains of women in Tunisia evinces. One may add to this the gains of women in Turkey during the Republican period. Rather, my concern with identifying the state as the agent for change regarding issues to do with women's security has to do with my concern that states prioritise their own insecurities, which often results in the marginalisation of women's concerns. The author seems to present a rather benevolent picture of the state, whereas the struggles of the women in many parts of the world — East and West, North and South — have taken place not only against ideological and/or religious and patriarchal backgrounds, but where also states that benefited from such ideational and/or material structures proved unwilling to change them.

Let me restate this point by going through the very valuable map of Arab ideational currents and struggles for women's emancipation that Dr. Hermassi's paper identifies. There is the first generation that pursued women's advancement as an aspect of society's progress. The second generation prioritised women vis-à-vis society and sought to liberate the former from the grip of the latter. The third generation identified the problem as not one of modernisation, or conservative customs of society justified with reference to Islam, but of patriarchy that warrants specific codes of masculine and feminine behaviour. Dr. Hermassi critically analyses each of these three generations of thought and struggle. It is the polarisation each and every one of these sets of thought and struggle have caused in society that leads the author to call on the state to act as an agent for change to better women's security.

Be that as it may, it is not obvious that the state would advance women's security. It is true, as the author underscores, that the first and second generations have contributed immensely to women's emancipation — notwithstanding their shortcomings — whereas the third generation has put the struggle in a universal context, which ended up further

polarising society and pitted the state against society (as well as fundamentalist Islamists against progressives). However, this should not be the reason to give undue credit to the first two generations and underplay the potential of the third. For the first generation while contributing to women's security have done so while prioritising the concerns of other referents. Arguably, this is why women's status has not advanced beyond a certain stage in most of the Muslim world. When the first generation called for women's education, women's concerns were secondary to society's concerns. To put it differently, women's concerns were allowed to be raised only as far as they could be used to flag society's concerns. Others were not allowed to be raised. One can reference plenty examples, but women's experience of emancipation in Republican Turkey would bear witness to the state's advancement of women's security as an aspect of state security.

A similar critique could be raised regarding the second generation that sought to liberate women from the grip of customs justified in the name of Islam. Through invoking the fundamentals of Islam to justify women's demands, this generation seems to have missed an opportunity: to question power/knowledge relationships within Islam and justify the need to reform women's status with reference to Islamic heritage. This is not to contest that there is a need to counter the Orientalist simplifications regarding women's status in Islam. Rather, my point is that the Orientalist literature needs to be countered even as it praises the status of women in Islam. This is because such praise often invokes the "Western rationality/Eastern spirituality" duality (a duality that finds resonance in both Orientalism and fundamentalist Islamism). As a result, what are essentially political struggles get depoliticised and simplified (a concern that the author shares in his discussion on the headscarf issue).

Hence my plea for giving somewhat more credit to the third generation for privileging women's security for the sake of women, however destabilising such claims may come across. In a globalising world, the state is still the most significant agent for change. But its agenda should be checked by non-state actors who are themselves emerging as alternative agents of change. As all pursue their interests, those who pursue women's security as an end in itself — as the third generation stresses through the use of universal notions — have a crucial role to play.

#### **Gerd Nonneman**

Professor Hermassi has admirably summed up the three broad stages, or "generations", in thinking and writing about the position and role of Arab Muslim women: 1) educating women as part of the general advancement of society; 2) liberating women from societal structures (not "religion") that hold them back; and 3) liberating women from "Islam". He shows that these were not just chronological phases (although their respective beginnings followed each other chronologically), but also three strands, all of which persist today. He also highlights that much of what is often attributed to putative "unchanging" Islamic principles, in commentaries on women in Arab and Muslim societies, is in fact a matter of interpretation by particular people and groups in particular social and political circumstances. In this, therefore, he clearly takes the side of the first two trends of interpretation and advocacy that he has identified.

Most strikingly, perhaps, he advocates the "putting aside of Fiqh", arguing that this can as often as not be a time-bound translation of general principles into a set of manmade rules that may or may not have local or temporal validity but that become a dangerous distraction or worse when they get turned into supposedly timeless "truths".

At the same time, he appears to be arguing that there is much not only in the broader underlying principles of Islam that is valuable in terms of women's rights and roles, but in aspects of Arab culture — indeed in "endogamous culture" — as this is said to provide women not with oppression but with a measure of protection from stress, alienation, suicide, etc.

There are aspects of his argument that I would like to see clarified and others that we may want to question. But I certainly find myself at one with him over the need to avoid stereotyping cultures, religions, and indeed practices regarding women in the Arab world.

Indeed, it is not just Islam but all religions that are, in their legal frameworks and their resulting social rules, human adaptations of original and enduring principles to particular times and circumstances, even if such more particular rules usually take on the appearance and respect of permanent "fundamentals" — and the interpreting as well as the subsequent transmission and legal or cultural fixation of these interpretations is done in the main by those in power, whether that power be social, economic or political. Men, of course, have usually, and in most societies, been those doing the interpreting, notwithstanding some exceptionally gifted and charismatic female figures, both in Islam and other religions and cultures.

It is that last observation — self-evident as it is — that gives prima facie substance to the claims of the role of patriarchy outlined by Professor Hermassi.

When Professor Hermassi points to the way in which the circumstances and environment of both East and West influence both the substance of and respective discourses on the role of women in the Arab world, I am completely at one with him. Indeed, just as religious precepts and principles are given particular interpretations by particular groups in particular circumstances, and just as some of those precepts and principles tend to be given priority over others in some environments, so the ways in which history and politics has evolved in both the Arab world and the West — not least in the mutual impact they have had on each other — have had a major effect on the discourse about each other, and each other's cultural practices. The so-called "Orientalism" comes in there; but so, of course,

does "Occidentalism". In turn, such perceptions and discourses have affected behaviour, not only towards each other but also towards perceived dissenters in one's own societies. Arguably, in the Arab world it is a form of "Occidentalism" that has brought such opprobrium on the heads of anyone who was seen by a variety of so-called "fundamentalists" as having bought into the West's views. Discourse and thought on women, in that way, has indeed often become hostage simultaneously to intra- and inter-cultural debates, misconceptions, mistranslations, and politically-inspired bitterness.

I would, though, like Professor Hermassi to clarify his argument about the role of patriarchy and the patriarchal system. I am not sure if he agrees with this "theory" or doesn't. He outlines the basic idea lucidly but some of the tone of his written remarks, at least, would seem to indicate he would want to question it. I admit to not being able to think of very much, myself, that contradicts it. After all, many social mores have been and remain dominated by men, but especially when it comes to the interpretation of socially and culturally significant religious rules, men — I would argue — have ruled the roost, whether in the Islamic world, the Aran world, or elsewhere. So I have to subscribe to the view that the patriarchal system that predominated for so long in so much of the world does carry considerable explanatory power, as long as one does not subtract other factors from the explanatory puzzle altogether. It is perfectly possible, in other words, to accept the role of other factors while still recognising the powerful effect of patriarchy.

I absolutely agree, once more, that it is crucial to avoid essentialising and to avoid reductionism in analysing the situation of women in the Arab world or elsewhere. But while it may be true that women's inferior position is not peculiar to Islam, and indeed is not at all inherent in Islam, and while it is true that it is not even peculiar to Arab society but is found in a variety of ways in much of the world, it is nevertheless also true that in a number of Muslim-majority societies — and in particular a number of Arab societies, among others — women are in an inferior position, at least when viewed across the board. Of course, one must not ignore striking exceptions and significant qualifications. We all know some of the high-achieving women in different parts of the Arab world; among some of the elite sectors of society, female assertiveness and active participation in commercial and cultural life has been marked, as have the roles of a number of female officials and diplomats. Yet one may be forgiven for wondering whether such achievements may in fact provide cover for wider persistent inequality, and whether one need not be careful to put them in context, for fear of papering over the serious problems that remain — problems that perhaps continue to define the situation for the majority.

One area where I would want to question Professor Hermassi's remarks concerns his argument, at least as I understood it, about the role of endogamous versus exogamous cultures, with the stated implication that the former have much to recommend them over the latter, as far as women are concerned. He suggests that the endogamous society that he sees as predominant in the Arab world offers the sorts of protection against violence, alienation and infanticide that exogamous cultures do not. The implication here seems to be that the situation of Arab women in what has often been viewed as a male-dominated world characterised by endogamy is in fact far better than usually allowed for.

This is something of a problematic picture in two ways. First, I think it is problematic to talk of "endogamous cultures" or societies: the practice of endogamy, surely, never defines a whole society or culture, even if it may be practiced to a greater or lesser extent in parts of it. Second, the picture is, I fear, too rosy, and the contrast drawn with exogamous "cultures" too stark. It

is true that in some circumstances aspects of the phenomenon have the effects Professor Hermassi outlines. It is also true that it has been shown that in some circumstances women themselves choose to shift back towards more rather than less endogamous practices (such as, arguably, in urban areas of the occupied territories, under situations of conflict and limited mobility). But that does not mean that the whole of Arab society can be characterised in that way. Nor does it counter the crucial point that the "protection" that endogamy is said to afford women is only afforded to the extent to which women conform.

The picture of the more protective, caring, enveloping environment that is said to distinguish Arab society from Russian or Chinese society also fails to recognise the other ways in which the problem of enforced conformity affects women's lives — not least in the area of honour crime.

The way in which the paper paints the supposedly contrasting societies of Russia and China as ones where fathers rape daughters-in-law, and daughters-in-law are either strangers to or victims of the mother-in-law ("as in all exogamous systems"), seems to me to stray close to the very sort of essentialising and reductionism we have just agreed should be avoided.

I would want to end with three final remarks. The first is that I cannot imagine discussing the situation and roles of women in the Arab world, whether from a cultural perspective or otherwise, without acknowledging the huge variations that exist with that world — and indeed within countries — in terms of "culture", wealth, education, economic roles, rates of change, and particular states' established track records.

The second is to invite discussion and further research and policy thinking on issues that are being addressed in other sessions within this conference — in particular education and economic participation. These are not only critical issues in their own right; they also have very significant cultural components and implications. In both education and economic participation it is not only quantity and intensity that matter, but also the nature of what is being taught, how and by whom, and the type of economic activity women can engage in, along with the kind of cultural and legal environment they can or cannot do so within.

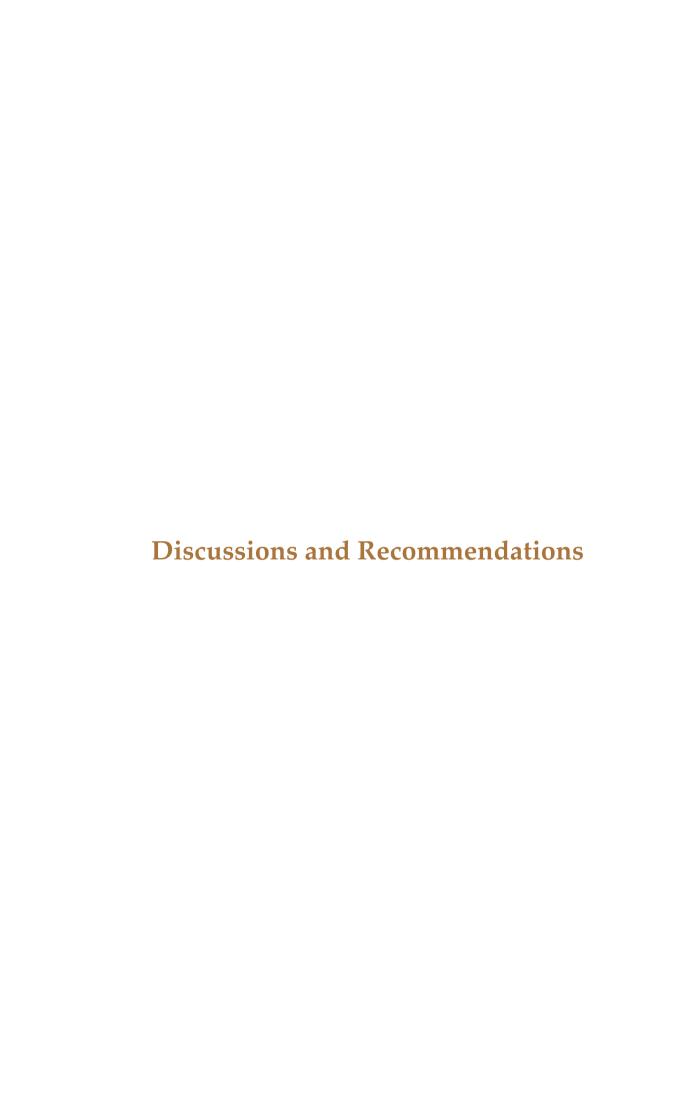
The need for the increased participation of women in the economy and education, and the need for increasing the quality of both, seems unchallengeable, and in this sense the "first generation" of thinkers on women's emancipation listed by Professor Hermassi had exactly the right idea: progress can only remain limited without the corresponding advancement of women. But the ways in which this happens are anything but simple. If we consider the Gulf monarchies, for instance, the dizzying rates of development there have combined the creation of generous welfare states with massive infrastructural development and an expanding service sector, as well as a huge expansion of education — including for women — and at the same time, perhaps, the most extreme examples worldwide of reliance on foreign labour. These are all interrelated. Take, again, education and economic participation.

Female literacy has shot up, women now are the majority of students at most Gulf universities, and they invariably perform better than their male colleagues. But throughout the education sector there remain questions over quality, in part due to the gap in local teachers that is often filled with poor teachers from elsewhere in the Arab world who bring their own cultural orientations and limitations with them. The second obvious observation is the extent to which cultural (and sometimes legal) constraints continue to limit the extent to which the highly

educated women emerging from universities then find the application of their newly learned skills, and their ambition and enthusiasm, curtailed and left to wither.

The extensive use of foreign labour, which underpins so much of the Gulf economies, has other cultural implications as well. To lift out just one: the virtual outsourcing of housework and childcare to foreign nannies, servants, cooks and drivers brings with it the phenomenon of a young generation that often is exposed as much — if not more — to a cultural and linguistic environment in home and family life that is foreign more than local, raising questions of identity that one now finds increasingly discussed among citizens of these states.

My third and final remark stretches beyond consideration of women only: even if the current session focuses on culture, it is as well to remind ourselves that in any strategy for women's empowerment (however defined) regarding any tactical moves cannot but remain ultimately constrained in their effect without more general empowerment of citizens. But then that, too, raises hugely complex questions of principle and practice, and of prioritising among competing interpretations of overlapping types of rights: women's rights, human rights, and political rights.



## POINTS RAISED DURING THE CONFERENCE BY ARAB AND FOREIGN PANELISTS AND ATTENDEES ON CHAPTER EIGHT

#### COMMENTS MADE BY ARAB PANELISTS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING

- Panelists agreed that social awareness may be backward compared to the political regime. They indicated that the solution to this problem could be legislation that gives women equal roles and enacting reform to raise the level of social awareness.
- Panelists mentioned that the factors that put Arab women's security at stake include: deteriorating economic conditions, hegemony of patriarchal concepts, poor education; and suppression of freedoms.
- Among the most important points addressed in this session was the issue of drawing a line between the main sources of legislation the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) of which there is no question, and what can be known as "religious discourse," subject to rational interpretation. Such human views might vary across eras and scenarios. In this context, panelists pondered what the mechanisms might be established to address fundamentalist forms of religious discourse.
- Panelists pointed to the role of women in the early years of Islam and the leading roles
  played by a number of Muslim feminist figures, like the mothers of believers and other
  Muslim women figures. Islam since its inception promoted the status of women and the
  improvement of their conditions not to the contrary, as is depicted by some.
- Some of the panelists disagreed with Dr. Hermassi in his opinions about marriage among relatives, as they believe that it does not as Dr. Hermassi claims provide protection for women. They also disagreed with him on the role of the state, indicating that the state does not perform the role he portrayed it as playing. They said that clear evidence for this are the reservations voiced by Arab governments on international agreements on women's rights, one of the most well-known being CEDAW.
- Some interventions called on the AWO to continue its support for women living in countries suffering from wars, crises and occupation, such as Palestine, Iraq and Somalia. The remarks by panelists underlined the importance of moving beyond rhetoric on women's security and gender equality and working to establish mechanisms for the implementation of change on the ground.
- Some panelists referred to the importance of women feeling personally secure and self-confident. There are four important factors that can contribute to enhancing women's confidence in themselves: 1) improving women's image in the media; 2) improving women's image in educational curricula (in addition to supporting the education of women at large); 3) amending some personal status laws in order to give women more rights; and 4) modernizing the social, cultural and political systems of the state in order to get rid of all supposed heritage and traditions that impede the progress of women, undermine their freedoms and reduce the number of opportunities available to them.
- Some attendees said that the problem is not in enacting legislation or introducing amendments, but rather in convincing communities to accept them. Another group of participants stated that the real problem was the absence of interaction between state and society, in conjuction with the theories of an enlightened elite. Appropriate mechanisms should be established to bridge the gap between the elite and the masses and to enhance direct interaction between them.

### COMMENTS MADE BY FOREIGN PANELISTS HIGHLIGHTED THE FOLLOWING POINTS

- The importance of the role of the state and the role of women, which should be the responsibility of women's organisations.
- The deteriorating conditions of women in the Arab region is not attributed to Islam; there are extreme groups that adopt fanatic and hard-line religious discourse. These fundamentalist currents are given the opportunity to impose their misguided beliefs on society, as is the case in Afghanistan.
- They also highlighted the achievements that Arab women have started to realise in different fields.
- Panelists referred to differences among Arab countries with regards to the status of women. These differences are attributed to several reasons, the most important of which are economic conditions, education and culture. They also stressed the importance of the issues of women's education and the economic participation of women, calling on researchers to conduct policy studies related to these two issues in view of their significance for women's empowerment.
- Panelists said they disagreed with Dr. Hermassi on the claim that in societies where marriages are confined to relatives or to members of the tribe are better than other societies in terms of women's protection.
- Some panelists highlighted the contradiction between the number of females enrolled in different stages of education and their number in the labour market. It is confirmed that the number of young women in higher education is more than the number of their male counterparts. However, this fact is not reflected in the labour market. Panelists referred to the obstacles facing female cadres on graduation, such as social norms. They also said that women could be empowered under a general framework that aims at the empowerment of all citizens. They asserted that the state should work towards this general objective and not hold back the population for one reason or another.

At the end of this session, Dr Hermassi made some concluding remarks in which he said that the elite move towards the state while the powers of extremism and fundamentalism affect society and the masses, and this leads to the emergence of serious problems. This is the gap between the elite and the masses, to which some panelists referred.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON CHAPTER EIGHT

- 1. Religious discourse is diversified and religion or culture cannot be confined to a single narrow-minded interpretation.
- 2. All religions agree on the concept of the promotion of women. What must be found is a discourse of empowerment appropriate to a given situation. Women should not be alienated as a result of an imposed alternative culture unrelated to their immediate reality.
- 3. The contradiction between the Western mentality and Eastern spirituality is a superficial and false contradiction that is propagated by fundamentalists and Orientalist thought. The path to overcoming such false contradictions is Arab rational thought.
- 4. Governments must take practical steps to raise social awareness and push people to accept reforms.

- 5. The core of security is achieved by the sound behaviour of society.
- 6. The participation of women in legislative decision-making should be encouraged.
- 7. The security of women depends on them being able to achieve personal and psychological security in the first instance.
- 8. Enhancing women's confidence in themselves and rectifying the visions of society on women can occur via the improvement of women's image in the media and in educational curricula; reforming personal status laws; and enhancing the protection of women against violence.
- 9. All major cultural and social changes are the outcome of social alliances.
- 10. For the state to succeed in enhancing the conditions of women it has to gather both the elite and the masses around the interests of women. How will the state guarantee the freedom and security of women? Can the state handle the issue of women without engaging in contentious political ideologies? Does the state have the capacity to achieve enlightenment?

# Conclusion Committing to Arab Women Human Security

#### CONCLUSION\*

#### COMMITTING TO ARAB WOMEN HUMAN SECURITY

The papers presented in the conference converged on several points:

- A sincere and realistic analysis was given regarding the conditions of Arab women, their progress and the obstacles and difficulties impeding women's march towards justice and development.
- Different topics were addressed related to the concept of human security and its significance, conscious of the necessity of introducing changes into the real lives of women.
- They agreed on three points about the sensitivity of the status of women in Arab communities: 1) the clear difference between women and men in terms of rights and resources; 2) the importance of the role of the state in ending the suffering caused by discrimination against women; and 3) the importance of health and education as two key fields for meeting the requirements of women and ensuring their human security.
- The importance of the political participation of women in lieu of merely calling for their rights to services was underlined as a means to ensure their equality and security. Women should take part in decision-making and drawing up policies at all levels.
- The necessity to remove all impediments that obstruct women's interaction with society outside the household. To this end, women have to enjoy physical and psychological security in the streets. All aspects of sexual harassment must be combated.
- The achievement of security both nationally and beyond requires setting up practical mechanisms to build relations on the basis of social justice, equality and good governance. This requires the participation of women, who represent half of the society, in reform and restructuring processes in order to empower women and to allow them to acquire the required skills to live with dignity and security.

#### SUPPORTING FACTORS FOR ACHIEVING HUMAN SECURITY FOR WOMEN

#### **DEMOCRACY**

Undoubtedly, there is a link between the positions women have reached and the space afforded for democracy and the culture of human rights available in any given country, both in theory and practice. Women's issues should be addressed via a comprehensive vision that is a part of a societal scheme in which everybody should participate, spreading a culture of rights, duties and good governance. This can be facilitated by promoting positive concepts that help women to move forward. Indeed, change and modernisation depends on a receptive

<sup>\*</sup> This conclusion is based on the findings of the papers and the contributions of the members of the round table.

conceptual environment, along with presence of strong political will and an effective civil society movement that shapes the process of change and calls for reform.

Legislation plays a key role in enlightening stubborn minds, as it is an effective mechanism for changing social behaviour and achieving justice and equality. Laws can also be used as a mechanism to advocate for fairness and to provide legal protection for women within society and the family. In this regard, it is important to note the challenges women face in their attempts to participate in legislative decisions and in political parties. Even if the state secured a certain percentage quota for women's representation in state institutions, political parties may not take the matter into serious consideration and fail to pay attention to the real needs of women. However, mention should be made of the great victory achieved by women in Kuwait in the latest legislative elections, as women won seats in parliament.

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE

Personal or individual security is about allowing the citizen to enjoy good health, educational opportunity, and social, economic, legal and psychological support networks, which allow the individual to feel self-assured in her or his own country. National security, which has several components, covers the concept of the security of the modern state. International security is provided by regulations on state behaviour. As yet, bona fide international security remains a somewhat theoretical as regional and international conflicts remain unresolved and there is disagreement on the basis of the rules and regulations governing international relations.

In the absence of agreed upon international norms, a number of challenges present themselves, such as:

- How can we deal with waves of immigrations, disease, natural disasters and other similar circumstances?
- How can we face the phenomenon of the failing state, which represents a new source of threat and risk to its people and surrounding areas? There is a pressing need to take preventative measures against state failure. This necessitates establishing mechanisms and highlighting the cases of good governance.

Thus, the effectiveness, nature and legitimacy of the state represent important factors in achieving human security for both men and women. At the same time, we cannot overlook the concept of human rights and the rights of citizens as a key component of the comprehensive concept of human security. If the state discriminates among its citizens, overlooks its role as a fair arbitrator or provider of services, or protector of security and stability, or guardian of heritage and resources, it will never be a safe state. The concept of human security also refers to the priority that should be given to the weak and their rights, as well as the concept of securing the basic rights of all.

The empowerment process should be achieved from the bottom to up and through the promotion of the capacities and skills of the whole of society at all levels and social classes, so all can take part in taking decisions that affect their lives. This concept presupposes the importance of the idea of social contract between the individual and the state. This social contract imposes on the state a positive role in the life of individuals and pushes individuals to respect the state and

society, and actively take part in their protection and development. The thinkers that drafted the concept of the social contract put standards and regulations on the participation of the individual in society. They indicated that the relation between a man and a woman in the family is a microcosm of the relation between the individual and the state.

#### MAINSTREAMING GENDER AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

The concept of human security requires gender equality in terms of access to economic, health, educational and political opportunities. This requires action that will not only eliminate differences between men and women, but also implies a recognition that the position of women is more vulnerable than men in many cases, whether in situations of conflict, poverty or via inequality in the formulation or application of laws. Therefore, the state has to work towards ensuring gender equality. Women play an important role in both the private and public sectors, and so if the state wants to achieve stability at the political, economic and civil levels it should take their needs into consideration while creating a conducive atmosphere within which everyone will feel free from fear and need.

In cases where the internal stability of the state is jeopardised by domestic crisis or conflict, the importance of addressing the problem of gender surfaces, especially the role of women in the settlement of such conflicts at the national and local levels, as well as the protection of women in times of conflict, as women are among the one of the most vulnerable sectors in society.

It is important and appropriate to refer to the importance of the participation of women in peace building and preparations for interim and transitional periods, as women's involvement in such situations can play a pioneering role in bridging gaps of understanding and in resolving residual disputes.

#### TOWARDS AN AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

No country can flourish without it's the flourishing of its citizens. Moreover, one cannot imagine how a country can move forwards while half of society is absent from the civil, political and rights scene. By establishing human security as a priority and objective, policies and programmes can be designed and advocated that promote the place of women and empower society as a whole. One of the first tasks is to understand how the concept of national security is raised as a pretext to take advantage of citizens' rights. In particular, we have to advocate securing the state at the domestic level through building the capacities of citizens and reject the idea of siding with one group at the cost of another. In fact, discrimination provides fertile soil for sedition and backwardness.

The paper presented by Dr. Bahgat Korany pointed out how far all Arab countries are in need of this — building the capacities of all citizens on an equal footing and without discrimination.

Differences in conditions of women across the Arab world are very obvious, but these differences can be well used through the transfer of experiences and learning from each other. Indeed, there is a move now at the international level that calls for achieving the principle of security in politics and development. We have to be active players in this move.

Nonetheless, the concept of human security should not be an alternative to the concept of national security. In fact, the concepts of state security and the security of society are not contradictory; both are necessary and much needed. It is worth mentioning that some countries misuse the concept of security presented by international organisations in order to achieve their own interests and purposes, such as launching wars under the banner of humanitarian intervention or the protection of minorities, etc. This situation must be addressed, in particular to the diplomatic corps of states.

This concept proposes introducing several changes to the discourse on women in the Arab world and among these changes are the following:

#### 1. THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN SECURITY...AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

The concept of human security is part of human rights, and it is irrespective of ethnic or nationalist thought. In other words, everyone should enjoy all rights without any kind of discrimination. This could be an alternative to the limited concept of citizenship, which is based on the idea of preferring certain norms, religions or races over others.

Regardless of a deep pride in Arab identity, we should draw the attention to the concept of comprehensive nationalism, which accepts diversity and pluralism. At the same time, we should rule out the narrow-minded concept of nationalism, which is used as a pretext to suppress and oppress others.

#### 2. THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN SECURITY ACCEPTS NO COMPROMISE

Unlike the MDGs, the concept of human security is not concerned about growth rates, progress and development. In fact, human security is more concerned with the increase in the ratio of women's enrollment in various stages of education, as well as an equitable distribution of education and health services among all without discrimination.

Human security helps in improving various sectors, which many policies and plans of development have failed to deal with. For example, abject poverty can be found among certain groups and within certain areas. Yet there also may be a rich country with marginalised groups and poor areas that suffer from the scarcity of services and resources. The concept of human security rejects injustice regarding the distribution of rights, as this is a form of oppression and deprivation, which threatens the safety of humans. So, we should not satisfied with giving selective rights or taking care of the interests of the majority.

#### 3. THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN SECURITY...THE LANGUAGE OF PARTICIPATION

The concept of human security supposes participation within society and advocates the concept of sharing responsibilities. It is worth mentioning that participation and expression of opinion are two key pillars of the concept of security. Counting on the efforts of others does not lead to safety, but rather active and wise participation guarantees the sustainability of security. This concept necessitates participation within society, and it also calls for reviving the concept of the social pact between the state and people in order to guarantee the stability of security and the balance of security.

### THE MECHANISM OF ACHIEVING HUMAN SECURITY FOR ARAB WOMEN

### FIRST: POLITICAL SECURITY

The political security of women is an important pillar of human security and this necessitates that Arab governments speed up the political and democratic reform processes to ensure the free exercise of the political rights of women without fear of being detained, tortured or discriminated against. Women should be enabled to exercise their right in voting and running for elections in the legislative councils, as well as raising their awareness and their understanding of the political process. Mechanisms should be set up in order to ensure the principles of freedom of faith, freedom of dress, as well as free thinking and expression.

### SECOND: ECONOMIC SECURITY

Policies encouraging women to initiate productive small-scale enterprises should be adopted, which require that they be administratively and technically qualified and trained on project management. They should be allowed to work outside their homes and get the necessary aid and assistance to promote their performance. At the same time, businesswomen should be encouraged to take part in chambers of commerce, and have access to internal and external investments. They should also be offered consultations to addresses the challenges caused by the monetary policies, the risks of inflation and exchange rates.

### THIRD: CULTURAL SECURITY

Interpretations of laws and religious texts should be justly and accurately examined to underscore the status of women, and should avoid incorrect justifications which result in injustice to women. A developed and enlightened approach to thinking should be followed, one which looks upon women as individuals capable of making their own choices and decisions on equal footing with men. Women's security should be taken into consideration within cultural and the media in a way which enables them to maintain their cultural identities and exercise their rights. Like men, women should have access to all levels of education, as education has become one of the most realistic ways to achieve human security. The importance of education is of the essence and it is crucial to develop sound educational policies to reinforce women's security.

### **FOURTH: SOCIAL SECURITY**

To ensure the social security of women and achieve better growth rates, the problem of illiteracy needs to be eradicated. Arab governments, therefore, should launch well-planned programmes and policies that serve the public interest. At the same time, Arab governments should adopt a system of incentives aiming at eliminating illiteracy among women.

Gender-based inequalities need to continuously be addressed, especially in private sector companies through establishing equitable norms including: giving men and women equal pay for equal work, offering more flexible working hours, creating opportunities for career promotion and providing training for young women.

There is a pressing need to create a comprehensive database on women so that decision-makers can reach the appropriate recommendations for promoting the status of women. Well educated women should be given fair opportunities to contribute to the developmental process.

In all Arab countries, there is a large gap in media coverage between social systems and women's rights. In view of this fact, non-governmental agencies should organize awareness campaigns, national conferences and workshops to raise women>s awareness of their rights and guide them on how to obtain them.

### FIFTH: FOOD SECURITY

States should not forget the social policies, which ensure a prosperous life for women to protect them from fear and need, especially divorced women, widows and orphans.

### SIXTH: HEALTH SECURITY

The development of any state should be measured by the progress it achieves in the field of human health in general and the health of women in particular. Although the life expectancy of Arab women at birth is more than that of men for physiological reasons, women suffer from several health problems that reduce the quality of their lives. The reality of the health conditions of Arab women necessitates that health should be given priority along with developmental programmes. At the same time, expenditures on health and education should be increased and the health system should be enhanced and restructured. Other alternatives for health funding should be found through making partnerships with the private sector and the implementation of the health insurance system. Among the urgent tasks on the regional and national levels is to conduct research and studies on global climate changes and their impacts. We should also take an interest in the differences between the two sexes in terms of their ability to adapt to changes in climate. Governments should devise the necessary strategies at the local and regional levels to provide the scientific and academic data, to guide the decision-making with regard to women's health conditions.

### SEVENTH: PERSONAL SECURITY AND SAFETY

Legislators should exert efforts in order to remedy penal codes, as there are discriminatory provisions, such as those related to honour crimes and domestic violence.

Investigators should be trained on how to deal with such cases. The effectiveness of laws in preventing such crimes should be followed up. Awareness campaigns should be launched in order to change the predominant beliefs towards women's rights to safety at the personal level, as Arab women tend to be reluctant to make recourse to the legal authorities to settle their problems. Under the predominant culture, family problems, such as divorce, inheritance and custodianship are settled within the family. This stresses the pressing need for programmes and mechanisms that can provide women with legal consultations, encourage them to request legal protection and represent them in legal actions.

Efforts should continue at the international level to address the issue of domestic violence against women. Regional forums should be used to reinforce and modify the relevant international laws. Apart from the abstract legal framework, demands should be raised for the activation of mechanisms for the actual implementation of these laws, especially through making recourse to the International Criminal Court, which has to play a future pivotal role in putting an end to violence against women in general.

We are in a pressing need for improving and activating the internal structures within the state to end violence against women and to find out a radical solution for the deterioration of the predominant societal culture and change the negative stereotype of women. Violence against women should not be justified. A radical shift world wide should be introduced into the political culture of the targeted states especially those, which suffer from domestic disputes and those, whose political system is based on the monopoly of power and totalitarianism. The regimes in these states do not look upon the people as citizens, who have the right to participation and accountability. They invariably believe that their national security depends on the achievement of state security and not the human security of their citizens.

Dr. Jamal Al-Suwaidi stressed that women's security can only be achieved in a safe society, which cannot exist in the absence of a democratic political system, and cannot exist without ensuring equal rights for all citizens, men and women.

We should not forget the partners in implementation, because when we draw up plans, we usually forget the real partners in the implementation process, which impedes the achievement of the aspired for objectives.

We should not also forget the issue of the financial resources. We will not be able to achieve the prescribed objectives without financial resources. We should advocate women's role in the Arab world and allocate financial resources in order to help achieve the aspired for goals. Governments will not be able to secure all the required funds for achieving these objectives. So, specialized committees or teams of businessmen, who are interested in this issue, should be formed with the objective to collect the required financial resources. The mechanisms might be different according to the list of priorities in the Arab countries.

In addition, there is an important factor that should be taken into consideration, namely, timeframes, as our plans never have deadlines for achieving the required objectives. We will not be able to assess the achievements we make without setting up a specified and defined time-bound schedule. Success is the achievement of the required work within the timeframe set for it. Undoubtedly, research is important, but more importantly is to implement the outcomes of the research with the utmost capacity to reduce the required time for implementation, that is, in record time or before the set deadline. Arab countries should also share their experiences and transfer the successful ones, as some Arab countries already have more experience than others.



### I- SCIENTIFIC TEAM AND EDITORS

### Bahgat Korany, head of the scientific team

Dr. Korany is professor of international relations and political economy at the American University in Cairo (AUC) and director of the AUC Forum. He is also honorary professor at the University of Montreal, Canada, an elected Fellow of the Canadian Royal Society and cofounder and first director of the Inter- University Consortium of Arab and Middle East Studies, Canada

Dr. Korany previously worked in the European Office at the UN (1970-1974). He has held visiting professor positions in Algeria, Dakar, Carlton, Harvard, McGill, Oxford, Aix-Marseille and Paris.

Dr. Korany assumed the post of chairman of the Board of Directors of the Canadian-Arab Relations Council in Ottawa (1994-1996). He was also vice chairman of the Board of Directors of the Egyptian Scientists Union, Montreal (1990-1999). He is cofounder of the International Organisation of South-South Cooperation in Beijing and a member of the editorial boards of several renowned international periodicals.

Dr. Korany has written numerous articles for the press and has been interviewed many times on television and radio. He has contributed more than 125 working papers to various conferences and has published four studies and eight books. He has also written chapters in 23 books and 53 articles in specialized international periodicals, some of which have been translated into Italian, Spanish and Chinese. His first book, entitled Social Change, Charisma and International Behaviour won the Hauchman Prize in 1976.

### Maya Morsy

Dr. Morsy is the coordinator of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in Egypt (UNIFEM).

She received her PhD in public policy from the Regional Institute for Arab Studies and Research after focusing on the field of human security for women. She also holds a Masters degree in public administration and a Masters degree in business administration from City University in Washington, DC. Dr. Morsy holds a bachelors degree in political science from the American University in Cairo.

Dr. Morsy is an expert in several areas, including international agreements, treaties and conventions on human rights, women's empowerment and gender equality, gender

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mainstreaming in planning and public budgeting, and the human rights of women through relevant conventions. Dr. Morsy took part in many workshops and training courses on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the human rights of women, the human rights of children, advocacy, lobbying and building alliances.

In light of her research experience, Dr. Morsy participated in authoring a paper entitled, "Women and International Conferences." She was also the coordinator of the report, "Progress of Arab Women in 2004", issued by UNIFEM. She also participated in writing the book, Gender Equality Creates Democracy.

### **Hania Sholkamy**

Dr. Sholkamy is associate professor at the Centre for Social Research at the American University in Cairo. She is specialised in anthropology. She has conducted field research in the domains of health and population, and women in the Sudan, Iraq and Egypt. She is currently working as regional coordinator for the "Tracks" project, seeking justice for the family and women while studying the status of women in relation to the issues of poverty, employment and empowerment. She has contributed in both English and Arabic to several publications.

### **II- AUTHORS**

### HASSAN Y. ALY

Ph.D. in Economics - Southern Illinois University, December 1986, and Master of Science in Economics - Southern Illinois University, August 1982

Positions and Academic Experience:

- Professor of Economics at Ohio State University, effective August 2008.
- Associate Professor of Economics at Ohio State University (on leave of absence, August 2002-August 2005).
- Associated Faculty of The Middle East Studies Center and The John Glenn Institute for Public Policy, The Ohio State University.
- Professor of Economics, College of Business, Zayed University, 2002-2005.
- Visiting Professor (Senior Fulbright Scholar)-United Arab Emirates University, Spring 2000.
- Visiting Professor Ain Shams University Egypt, April 1999.
- Visiting Associate Professor-Kuwait University Kuwait, September 1993 September 1994
- Assistant Professor The Ohio State University, September 1989 September 1996 (on leave September 1993 - September 1994).
- Visiting Assistant Professor Southern Illinois University, August 1988 May 1989.
- Research Associate Southern Illinois University, February 1988 August 1988.
- Lecturer of Economics Alexandria University, January 1987 May 1989 (on leave January 1988 - May 1989).
- Assistant Lecturer of Economics Alexandria University, August 1982 1986 (on leave).
- Economics Instructor Alexandria University, October 1977 August 1982 (on leave 1980-82).

### **Balqis Osman Elasha**

Dr. El-Asha is senior researcher at the Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources and is recipient of the "the Champions of the Earth" award in 2008, which is offered by the United Nations Environment Programme to seven people who have made significant contributions in the field of environment.

Dr. El-Asha holds a PhD in forest sciences, a masters in environmental sciences and a bachelors in forest sciences all from the University of Khartoum. She has participated in the preparation of a number of technical studies and has written several academic papers published in international and local publications.

In addition, Dr. El-Asha has participated in more than 65 scientific conferences in more than 45 countries around the world, and has been a lead writer in numerous governmental reports on climate change, carbon dioxide capture and storage, the role of agricultural sciences and technology in development, and the assessment of greenhouse gases and the energy sector.

Dr. El-Asha is a member of numerous advisory panel on the environment, both academic and governmental. She is professor in the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of Al Za'im Al Azhari.

### Nada Abbas Haffadh

Dr. Haffadh is a consultant doctor in family medicine. She is a member of the Shura Council of the Kingdom of Bahrain since 2007 and a member of the Supreme Council for Women since 2002. She holds a bachelor's degree in medicine and surgery from Cairo University, a diploma in family medicine from the American University of Beirut, a diploma on preventive paediatrics from the University of Edinburgh, and a healthcare management diploma from the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland.

During 2004-2007, Dr. Haffadh was minister of health in Bahrain, establishing a vision for the development of the Bahraini health system, including health promotion strategies, the development of medical services in primary and secondary care, human resources development and training, and establishing an independent national body to regulate health services and professions. As coordinator of maternal and child services during the period 1986-2002, Dr. Haffadh developed a strategic plan to improve maternal and child health. She launched a number of preventive and curative services for mothers and children, including the regular inspection of children, the project of child-friendly hospitals, and periodic examination of women for early detection of breast and cervical cancer.

Dr. Haffadh has offered technical advisory services for countries of the region in maternal and child health and primary healthcare through international organisations such as the World Health Organisation and UNICEF. She has also presented scientific papers in regional and global medical conferences and forums and contributes in volunteering activities through her membership of NGOs such as the Association of Reproductive Health, the Childhood Development Association, and the Information Centre of Women and Children.

### Kamal Hamdan

Dr. Hamdan is chairman of the Economic Section at the Foundation for Research and Consultation, a private institution operating in Beirut since 1977.

A former adviser to a number of successive ministers of economy on several issues, including competitiveness among institutions, prices, wages, consumer protection, antitrust and the development of small and micro institutions, Dr. Hamdan has been a member of several "panels of experts" formed by Lebanese cabinets on specific economic issues, including the size of public sector and its functions, privatisation programmes, the reform of the national fund for social security, the master plan for the use of Lebanese lands, and strategies for urban development.

Dr. Hamdan also worked for long periods in advisory positions with many international organisations, such as the UNDP, the World Bank, UNICEF, ESCWA, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNRISD and the European Union (EU).

Dr. Hamdan has written many books and papers, published in Arabic, French and English, including War of Lebanon: Sects, Social Classes and National Identity (Paris). He is a member of the Lebanese Association for Economists and a founding member of the Economic Research Forum in Cairo (ERF). He is also a member of the Arab Society for Economic Researches (Egypt) and holds a professional diploma from the French Petroleum Institute in Paris (1973) and a postgraduate diploma from the Faculty of Economics, University of Saint Joseph in Beirut (1971).

### Mohamed El-Baki Hermassi

Professor Hermassi is an academician and former Tunisian minister. He received his bachelor's degree in philosophy from the Sorbonne in 1962, studied sociology in Paris in 1966, and gained his PhD degree in sociology from the University of California in 1971. From 1971 to 1992, Dr. Hermassi taught sociology in various universities in Tunisia and California. In 1992, he was appointed ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to UNESCO.

Dr. Hermassi was Tunisia's minister of culture from 1996 to 2004 and then minister of foreign affairs. In 2006, Dr. Hermassi traveled to the United Arab Emirates where he worked as an advisor at Centre for Strategic Studies in Abu Dhabi. In 2008, he returned to Tunisia as president of the Supreme Council for Communication.

Dr. Hermassi has conducted studies on political and cultural sociology and is author of several books, including Employment Movement Tunisia, The State and Society in the Arab Maghreb, A New Look at the Third World, The Arab Maghreb in Face of International Changes, and The Third World Again.

Dr. Hermassi is known for his valuable contributions to the civil society movement. He is founder of the Tunisian Association of Political Sciences and he is a member of several international associations concerned with the fields of sociology and political science. He is a member of the Advisory Committee of the World Intellectual Property Organisation, and of the Arab Intellectual Forum. He organised, under the auspices of UNESCO, the 1995 Mediterranean symposium on pedagogical tolerance.

Dr. Hermassi was awarded the decoration of the Republic of Tunisia (first class) in addition to other decorations of merit from the Kingdom of Morocco, Italy and Malta.

### Ali Jarbawi

Dr. Jarbawi is professor of political science and public administration at Birzeit University since 1981. He is a specialist in Palestinian affairs and development. During the period 1998-2000, Dr. Jarbawi worked as director general of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizen's Rights and an expert in human rights at the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), 2000-2001. He also worked as secretary general and executive director of the Palestinian Central Elections Commission, 2002-2004. He was appointed dean of the Faculty of Law and Public Administration at Birzeit University, 2005-2008. He has served as chairman of the national team assigned to prepare the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (2008-2011).

### Contributors

### **Asem Khalil**

Ph.D. in Public Law

University of Fribourg (Switzerland)

Thesis title: The Enactment of Constituent power in the Arab World: The Palestinian Case.

First Reporter: Prof. Thomas Fleiner, Director of the Institute of Federalism. 2006

### Activities and Positions

Assistant Professor

Faculty of Law and Public Administration

Birzeit University. Feb. 2007

Visiting Professor

Master Program in Democracy and Human Rights

Birzeit University .Feb. 2007

Visiting Professor

Master Program in International Cooperation and Development

Bethlehem University, 2006 - 2007

Course title: «Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Strategies».

http://www.freewebs.com/pscrs

Supervisor

Research Project in Law and Society Department - IoL, 2006-2008

«Legal Reform and State-Building and Decolonization in Palestine»

Financed by IDRC - Canada

Legal Correspondent

CARIM - Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration, European University Institute, Florence Financed by European Commission

- MEDA program, March 2006

http://www.carim.org/

### **Bahgat Korany**

(Biography previously cited under scientific team and editors)

### **Munther Wassef Masri**

Dr. Masri was born in Nablus in Palestine in 1935. He completed his postgraduate studies in British universities, where he got degrees in electrical engineering, mathematics and technical education. He started his career as a teacher and vocational trainer. Afterwards, he was appointed as director of the Department of Electricity in the municipality of Nablus. He then moved to Amman where he served as director of vocational education at the Ministry of Education of Jordan. Later he was appointed Secretary General of the Ministry of Education.

From 1996 to 1998, Dr. Masri was minister of education and minister of higher Education. Later he served as an adviser to His Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal, secretary general of the Supreme Council for Science and Technology and chairman of the National Centre for Human Resources Development.

Dr. Masri has worked as a consultant for several regional and international organisations, including the Arab Labour Organisation, the Arab Organisation for Education, Culture and Science, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, the European Training Organisation, the German Development Organisation, and the University of Bonn.

He holds a number of local and foreign decorations, including Al-Kawakib Decoration, the Independence Decoration, the Teacher of Jordan Decoration, and the Jean Amos Comenius Medal from UNESCO.

Dr. Masri currently holds the positions of secretary general of the Arab Network for Open Learning and Tele Education, secretary general of the Jordanian Association of Scouts and Guides, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Amman Arab University for Post-graduate Studies, president of the Board of Trustees of the National Council for Family's Affairs, member of the Board of Education, and member of the Council of Employment, Training, Vocational and Technical Education.

Dr. Masri has published more than 80 research papers and studies in various areas, and has authored and co-authored more than 50 books in the areas of technology, electricity, development, education and vocational training, including Informatics, Knowledge Revolution and Youth, Globalisation and Human Resource Development, Economics of Education and Vocational Training and Vocational Education: The Way Ahead. He has also published a collection of poems entitled, Jerusalem: City of Bloody Peace.

### Fatima Al-Shamsi

Dr. Al-Shamsi is secretary general of the United Arab Emirates University and a stuff member of its Department of Economics. She has held several academic and administrative posts, such as head of the Economics Department, assistant dean for student affairs, head of the Training and Qualifying Unit, acting dean of the Faculty of Management and Economics and vice dean of the faculty.

Dr. Al-Shamsi holds a PhD in economics from the University of Exeter, an MA in economics from the University of Baltimore, and a BA in economics from the Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences at Cairo University.

Dr. Al-Shamsi has contributed many papers to renowned scientific publications and participated in conferences concerned with such issues as development and economic growth, economic cooperation and coordination, the private sector and its role in development in Gulf countries, foreign investment policies in Gulf countries, the diversity of sources of national income in Gulf countries, and women and their economic role.

Dr. Al-Shamsi has been a member of several scientific and social committees at the state level, such as the World Trade Organisation Committee. She represented the UAE at the WTO Conference in Doha.

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Dr. Al-Shamsi is a founding member of the Gulf Research Centre Foundation in Switzerland and a founding member of the Human Rights Association in the UAE. She is a member of the team charged with preparing higher education policy in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. She was also a member of the committee that prepared the report, "Millennium Development Goals in the UAE", prepared by the UAE Ministry of Economy in 2007.

### **III- ARAB COMMENTATORS**

### **Gaber Asfour**

Dr. Asfour is professor of literary criticism at the Arabic Language Department at Cairo University, director of the National Centre for Translation, member of the National Council for Women, rapporteur of the Committee for Culture and Media, and a member of the Executive Board of the National Council for Women since its inception.

Dr. Asfour has taught at Harvard and in Wisconsin, and at the University of Stockholm in Sweden. He is the recipient of many awards, including the Arab Creativity Award in the field of literature from the Arab Thought Foundation and the Award of Excellence from Cairo University. Dr. Asfour has written 31 books and authored 87 academic papers for local and international seminars and conferences.

### Mohammad Ahmad Al Bowardi

His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Ahmad Al Bowardi holds a number of significant positions in the public and private sectors of Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates. He is Secretary-General of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, Managing Director of the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi and the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, and on the Board of a number of major private sector institutions in the Emirates. A committed conservationist, he has also established a number of important environmental Organisations and overseen the implementation of a range of innovative, international sustainability initiatives.

### Rita Giacaman

Dr. Giacaman is professor and research and programme coordinator at the Institute of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University. She is also assistant professor in the Biology Department.

Dr. Giacaman has published 28 books in the period from 1979 to 2000, along with 28 articles in international scientific journals from 2001 to 2008.

### **Inssaf Hamad**

Dr. Hamad is professor of epistemology and logic at Damascus University, a member of the Board of Directors of the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and consultant at the Syrian Peoples' Asembly.

An expert at the United Nations Fund for Population on the issue of gender, Dr. Hamad previously worked as chief editor of Knowledge (Ma'rifa) magazine and is director of children's culture at the Syrian Ministry of Culture.

A lecturer at the universities of Aleppo and October, the National Institute of Public Administration and the University of Erlangen in Germany, Dr. Hamad has conducted numerous studies in the field in the field of women. She contributed academic papers to Arab, international and local conferences on women and children.

### **Nassif Hitti**

Dr. Hitti works as the director of the League of Arab states mission in Paris since 2000 and a permanent observer at UNESCO. He served in many organisations during his career.

Dr. Hitti has been a professor of international and Middle Eastern relations at several academic institutions, such as the American University in Cairo, the University of Algeria, the University of Southern California and the American University of Beirut.

Dr. Hitti has published five books and has given numerous lectures in the Arab world and abroad.

Arab League - Ambassador to France, and Permanent Observer to Unesco.

### **Zhour Horr**

Dr. Horr has worked as a judge in Morocco since 1977 and currently holds the post of head of the Family Matters Chamber at the Supreme Council of the Judiciary and professor at the Higher Institute for the Judiciary.

Dr. Horr is an expert on family law and was a member of the Royal Consultative Committee in charge of drafting family law. She held the position of legal advisor to the former minister of human rights and has chaired the Moroccan Association for Family Advocacy.

Dr. Horr has participated in numerous conferences and symposiums both at the national and international levels. She was decorated twice by the king of Morocco, King Muhamad VI, and was honoured among other distinguished Arab women during the first conference of the Arab Women Organisation in Bahrain in November 2006.

### **Mohammad Akram Al-Kech**

Dr. Al-Kech currently serves as secretary of the Supreme Council of Arts, Literature and Social Sciences at the Ministry of Higher Education in Syria. He is associate professor in the Department of Sociology and head of the Economic and Social Studies Unit at the Centre for Strategic Studies and Research at Damascus University. Previously he taught in the Department of Social Sciences, University of Bahrain, and for four years at the University of Western Mountain in Libya.

Dr. Al-Kech is member of the Board of Directors of the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs. He has conducted, in cooperation with international and Arab organisations and Arab and Syrian research centres, numerous studies and field researches on childhood, youth, women, the aged and other social issues.

### Nassira Keddad

Dr. Keddad is a physician and is director of population affairs at the Algerian Ministry of Health. She is a member of the National Commission for Women and Family. Since the 1980s she has specialised in public health, especially maternal health, and during the last few years has been in charge of mass programmes related to population, development, reproductive health and gender.

Dr. Keddad's achievements include expanding the scope of family planning services; developing a national strategy for early detection of cervical cancer; coordination of national medical research; and promoting health information systems and programme evaluation.

Dr. Keddad is currently supervising the National Population Commission that won the United Nations Award in 2007.

### **Bowba El Khaless**

A Mauritanian citizen, Dr. El Khaless gained an MA in the management of the marine environment from the University of Quebec-Bermxi, Canada. She served as a researcher at the National Institute for Ocean Research and Fishing and held the position of head of the Laboratory of Environment and Aquaculture. She was appointed in March 2007 as chairperson of the Authority of Marine Sciences at the Mauritanian Ministry of Fishing and Maritime Economy.

### Mariam bint Hassan Al-Khalifa

H.E. Sheikha Mariam Al-Khalifa is the vice president of the Supreme Council for Women in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Dr. Al-Khalifa holds a PhD in public international law and is associate professor in the Faculty of Law and president of the Centre for Constitutional and Legal Studies at the University of Bahrain.

Dr. Al-Khalifa is a participating member in the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators in the United Kingdom and is arbitrator at the Commercial Arbitration Centre of the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf Countries, Bahrain.

Dr. Al-Khalifa is also a member of the Egyptian Society of International Law, of the International Alliance of Women (United Kingdom) and of the Advisory Board of the Supreme Council for the Gulf Cooperation Council.

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### Khaldoun Al-Nageeb

Dr. Al-Naqeeb is associate professor of sociology and social psychology at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Kuwait University, is an active member of the New York Academy for Sciences, a member of the Kuwait Committee for Education, Sciences and Culture, and a member of the Executive Board of the International Association of Sociology.

Dr. Al-Nageeb has authored more than 20 studies in various publications. These papers address various social problems, public services, the reality and future of social conditions in the Arab Gulf countries, and globalisation.

### Saida Rahmouni

A Tunisian national, Dr. Rahmouni holds a PhD in sociology and teaches in the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences in Safagis. She has authored several studies on women and how they contribute to development and modernisation. She is currently general director of the Tunisian Centre for Information, Documentation, Studies and Research on Women.

### Ebtesam Abdul-Rahman Rashed

Dr. Rashed is assistant professor at the Faculty of Commerce and Economics, Sanaa University, Yemen.

### Raed Safadi

Dr. Safadi is a senior economist and head of the Economic Development Department at Anto Yareb University. Previously he worked as economist at the World Bank and was an economic advisor to several Arab governments and international organisations during the period 1988-1993.

Dr. Safadi served as the head of the Development Department at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) during the period 1998-2008. He has authored 50 articles and a number of books on regional commercial arrangements, custom barriers, trade and development, trade and environment and the international trade system.

### Thuraya Al-Turki

Dr. Al-Turki worked as professor of anthropology at the American University in Cairo 1989-1991. She held the position of the head of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the same university.

Dr. Al-Turki served in many Arab and international universities, such as the University of King Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Harvard University, Pennsylvania University and Georgetown University. She has written five books in the fields of family, gender studies and comparative religion, in addition to numerous academic papers.

### **IV- FOREIGN COMMENTATORS**

### Lisa Anderson

Dr. Anderson is professor of international relations and provost of the American University in Cairo, and dean emeritus at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University in New York.

Dr. Anderson has been academic director of the American University in Cairo since 2008. She is an expert in Middle East and North Africa policy. Before 2008, she was professor and head of department, and then dean, of the International Relations College at Columbia University. She also served as director of the Columbia Institute for Middle Eastern Studies.

Dr. Anderson has authored four books and written more than 54 articles published in international journals. She has also presented numerous papers at international conferences.

### Lloyd Axeworthy

The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, P.C., O.C., O.M.,

President and Vice-Chancellor of The University of Winnipeg, graduated in 1961 with a BA from United College (now The University of Winnipeg), and received an MA and PhD from Princeton in 1963 and 1972 respectively.

Dr. Axworthy's political career spanned 27 years, during six of which he served in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and twenty-one in the Federal Parliament. He held several Cabinet positions, notably Minister of Employment and Immigration, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Minister of Transport, Minister of Human Resources Development, Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1996-2000.

In the Foreign Affairs portfolio, Dr. Axworthy became internationally known for his advancement of the human security concept, in particular, the Ottawa Treaty - a landmark global treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. For his leadership on landmines, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. For his efforts in establishing the International Criminal Court and the Protocol on child soldiers, he received the North-South Prize of the Council of Europe.

Dr. Axworthy is the recipient of the Senator Patrick J. Leahy Award in recognition of his leadership in the global effort to outlaw landmines, to ban the use of children as soldiers, and to bring war criminals to justice.

He also served as a member of the UNDP Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor which released its report, Making the Law Work for Everyone, in 2008.

Dr. Axworthy currently serves as a commissioner on the Aspen Institute's Dialogue and Commission on Arctic Climate Change. He is a board member of the MacArthur Foundation, Human Rights Watch, the Educational Policy Institute, and the University of the Arctic, among others.

### **Pinar Bilgin**

Dr. Bilgin is associate professor of international relations at Bilkent University in Turkey. She is a member of the British International Studies Association, the International Studies Association, the American Association of Political Science and the British Association for Middle East Studies. Dr. Bilgin published a book in 2005 on regional security in the Middle East. In addition, she has written several chapters in co-authored books as well as articles in international journals.

### Anne Helen Cubilié

Dr. Cubilie works since 2007 as manager of Development of Research and Studies Department at the United Nations in the United States of America.

Before joining the UN, Dr. Cubilie worked in many international and academic institutions, as an Assistant Lecturer at the Universities of Georgetown and Pennsylvania.

Dr. Cubilie has written many articles that were published in several foreign publications and they contributed with many researches to international conferences.

### Cilja Harders

Dr. Harders is professor of political science at Freie University, Berlin. She is also director of the Centre for Middle Eastern and North African Policy. Previously, worked as a researcher and lecturer at several universities, including the universities of Pusham, Muenster and Hamburg, from 1995 to 2007. Dr. Harders has made several tours and field trips in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Morocco.

### **Robin Luckham**

Dr. Luckman is formerly a research associate at the Institute of Development Studies of the University of Sussex, with more than 40 years of scientific experience in the field of development. Dr. Luckman worked in several institutions in Nigeria, Ghana and Australia, as well as Harvard University in the US.

Dr. Luckham chaired several research programmes of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex during the period 1999 to 2003 and is an expert on democratic governance in societies ravaged by conflict. Dr. Luckman has authored more than nine books along with numerous articles in international publications.

### **Robin Ludwig**

Dr. Ludwig has been working since 1976 as chief of the Political Affairs Department and chief of the Research and Policy Unit at the secretariat of the United Nations in New York.

Dr. Ludwig has developed projects of the UN on electoral assistance and their application in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Dr. Ludwig has delivered many academic lectures at the United Nations University, Michigan University and Hunter College during the period 1981 to 2005, and authored numerous articles, many of which were published in international journals.

### Francie Lund

Dr. Lund is associate professor in the Faculty of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu in South Africa. She is president of the Social Protection Research Programme of the Organisation of Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WEIGO).

Dr. Lund is associate researcher in the Social Policy and Social Work Department at the University of Oxford. She has published five books and written more than 10 articles for international journals.

### **Emma Murphy**

Dr. Murphy is professor of political economy at Durham University in the United Kingdom. She is the chairwoman of the Institute of Islamic And Middle East Studies since 2005. Dr. Murphy has written more than 40 articles in various international academic publications. She is author of a book on economic and political change in Tunisia, and co-authored several books on political economy.

### **Gerd Nonneman**

Dr. Nonneman is director of Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at Exeter University. Dr. Nonneman is also an associate fellow in the Middle East Programme at the Royal Institute of International Studies in London. Dr. Nonneman served as executive director of the British Association for Middle East Studies from 1998 to 2002 and has written numerous articles and books on international relations and Middle East policy.

### Jane L. Parpart

Dr. Parpart is visiting professor at Centre for Development and Gender, the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago. She is also a professor at the University of Walberg in Denmark. She participated in several workshops on the development of women in several countries, including the United Kingdom, Singapore, Mozambique and Nigeria.

Dr. Parpart is author of more than 16 books and has published more than 60 articles in areas including the relationship between women and labour, social change, and urbanisation. The most recent publication of Dr. Parpart is a book published in 2008 about the relationship between gender, sex and violence and international relations.

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### **Philip Robbins**

Dr. Robbins is a professor of political sciences and an expert in Middle East politics at Oxford University. Previously, Dr. Robbins worked for eight years as head of the Middle East Programme at the Royal Institute of International Relations at Chatham House. His latest books are on the history of Jordan and another on Turkey's foreign relations since the Cold War. He is author of several articles for international academic journals in the fields of politics and international relations in the Middle East region.

### Joanne Sandler

Joanne Sandler is the Deputy Executive Director for Programmes of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).) She has worked with international Organisations and women's groups worldwide for the past 26 years, with a focus on Organisational development, strategic planning and economic justice. She has also served on the Board of Directors of a number of international and domestic Organisations, including the Breakthrough, Association for Women's Rights in Development, Gender at Work, and Women Make Movies.

Joanne guides UNIFEM's efforts to implement rights-based, results-based programmes in support of women's empowerment and rights in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Prior to her work with UNIFEM, Joanne worked as a consultant to international and U.S.-focused women's rights Organisations, including many UN Organisations, the Ms. Foundation for Women, the Global Fund for Women, the National Council for Research on Women, the International Planned Parenthood Federation-Western Hemisphere, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. She also worked, for 11 years, for the International Women's Tribune Centre, concentrating on special projects and producing training manuals and workshops related to marketing, economic development and economic justice, and fundraising for women's Organisations.

### Gita Sen

Dr. Sen is professor of public policy at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore, and assistant professor of public and international health at Harvard University.

Dr. Sen's research focuses on the gender dimensions of population policies and health equity for women. Dr. Sen was awarded an honorary doctorate in medicine from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden in 2003.

Dr. Sen has authored several articles and books, the latest of which focuses on inequality in the health sector, the reasons of this phenomenon, and how to address it.

### Earl L. Sullivan

Dr. Sullivan is the honorary academic director and honorary professor of political science at the American University in Cairo. Dr. Sullivan worked in many international universities from 1973 to 1998, including universities in Utah, California and Portland. He is the author of six books, the most recent of which is one on the practice of multilateral diplomacy at the United Nations. Dr. Sullivan has written numerous articles in international publications and contributed many papers to international conferences.

### V -MEMBERS OF THE ROUND TABLE

### Lakhdar Brahimi

Lakhdar Brahimi is a former Under Secretary General of the United Nations, and a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria. He also served as Ambassador of Algeria to the United Kingdom, Egypt, the Sudan, and the Arab League. In July, Mr. Brahimi left the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. He continues to serve the United Nations on special missions.

From January 2004 to the end of 2005, h served as Special Adviser of The Secretary General of t United Nations. During that period (February-June 2004) he was sent to Baghdad as a Special Envoy to help form an Iraqi Government to take over from the US Administrator Paul Bremer III. After he Bonn Conference on Afghanistan (November /December 2001) he went to Kabul as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. Prior to that, he was the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan from July 1997 to October 1999. He also chaired, in 2000, an independent panel established by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to review UN peace operations. Brahimi served as Special Representative for Haiti from 1994 to 1996, and from 1993 to 1994 as Special Representative for South Africa where he led the UN Observer Mission until the 1994 democratic elections. He has also undertaken special missions on behalf of the Secretary-General to a number of countries in Africa and the Middle East.

He served as Rapporteur to the 1992 U.N. Conference on Environment and Development, commonly known as the «Earth Summit.» From 1984 to 1991, he was Under-Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and from 1989 to 1991, served as Special Envoy of the Arab League Tripartite Committee to Lebanon, mediating the end of the civil war in that country. He also serves on the International Advisory Council of the American University of Beirut.

Mr Brahimi is a member of «The Elders» a group of elder statesmen and personalities created in 2007 at the Initiative of Nelson Mandela and chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

### Nouara Saadia Djaffer

Minister of the Family and the Feminine Condition,

Diploma in journalism from the University of Algiers. Editor-presenter on Algerian National Radio (RNA), also Editorial Secretary-General. Head of News at RNA. Correspondent. Specialised Senior Editor. Producer and presenter of socio-political broadcasts. Elected to Parliament for the National Democratic Grouping Party (RND). Deputy-President of the Culture, Communication and Tourism Commission. Member of the Parliamentary Union Coordination Commission. President of the Commission of Arab Women Parliamentarians. Member of the RND National Executive. President of the Women and Solidarity Commission in the RND. Delegate-Minister of the Family and the Feminine Condition.

### **Anwar Mohammed Gargash**

### Education:

1990: PhD from King's College, Cambridge, United Kingdom

1984: MA in Political Science, George Washington University, USA

1981: BA in Political Science, George Washington University, USA

### **Employment History:**

2008: Member of the National Curriculum Development Committee

2006 to date: Minister of State for the Federal National Council

2006 to date: Member of the Ministerial Legislative Committee

2007 to date: Chairman of the Permanent Committee for Monitoring UAE's Image Abroad

2007 to date: Chairman of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking

2007 to date: Deputy Chairman of the Permanent National Committee for Demographic Structure

08/2006-02/2007: Chairman of the National Election Committee

2000 - 2006: Chairman of DCCI's Economic Affairs and Commercial Activities Committee and Member of the DCCI's Executive Bureau (2006) 2008: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

2005 to date: Member of the Board of Trustees, Emirates Nationals Development Programme

2003 to date: Member of Dubai Economic Council

1999-2007: Member of Emirates Media Board of Directors

1997–2006: Member of the Board of Directors, Dubai Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI)

1997 – 1999: Member of the Board of Directors, Al Ittihad newspaper

1995 to date: Member of the Board of Trustees, Sultan bin Ali Al Owais Cultural Foundation

1995 – 2006: Chief Executive Officer, Gargash Enterprises

1995 – 1999: Managing Editor of Strategic Studies published by the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR), Abu Dhabi

1994 – 1997: Member of Culture and Science Symposium

1990 – 1995: Professor of Political Science, UAE University, teaching Comparative Politics, Gulf Policies, the UAE Government, International Affairs, Foreign Policy of the UAE and the Gulf.

1985 – 1989: Assistant Professor, Political Science College, UAE University

### **Bahgat Korany**

(Biography previously cited under scientific team and editors).

### Gita Sen

(Biography previously cited under foreign commentators).

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### Maitha Al Shamsi

Dr. Maitha Al Shamsi is the Minister of State in the UAE Federal Cabinet and in this capacity heads the Marriage Fund of Abu Dhabi. She has also retained the position of Research Advisor of the UAE University (UAEU). She has served the UAEU as the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Assistant Provost for Research for many years. She is an international expert on issues regarding scientific research and higher education and represents the UAE at regional and international forums.

She has been associated with the UNICEF as the member of the Regional Scientific Committee and contributes regularly to UN ESCWA on issues related to population and immigration in the Arab World. She sits on many national and international boards, councils and committees in the UAE and in GCC countries on Science and Technology.

Dr. Maitha has special interests in women and population and manpower issues in the GCC countries and has written many books on women, family and society. She is also the Advisor to H. H. Sheikha Fatima, President of Family Development Foundation and the wife of the founding father of the UAE, late Sheikh Zayed Al Nahayan.

She is the Member of the Research Advisory Committee of Harvard Medical School Dubai Center (HMSDC), Member of the Advisory committee of the Swedish Institute Alexandria and Member of the Management Council of Sorbonne University.

She has also won the Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Award for Arab Administration in 2003.

### Jamal Sanad Al-Suwaidi

Jamal Sanad Al-Suwaidi received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, USA. He is the Director General of the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi and a Professor of Political Science at the United Arab Emirates University in Al-Ain, and taught courses in Political Science Methodology, Political Culture, Comparative Governments, and International Relations at the UAE University and the University of Wisconsin, USA.

Dr. Al-Suwaidi has been the Head of the Distinguished Student Scholarship Board in Abu Dhabi since 1999, and he became a member of the Administrative Board of the Emirates Diplomatic Institute in 2001. He has also been a member of Zayed University Council for several years. In July in 2006, Dr. Al-Suwaidi became member of the National Media Council of the UAE. Dr. Al-Suwaidi is also a member of the Board of Advisors at the School of Policy and International Affairs, University of Maine, USA, 2007. Dr. Jamal Al-Suwaidi was appointed Chairman of the Higher Committee for the preparation of the National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood in the United Arab Emirates.

In 2002, the French government bestowed the French Order of Merit-First Class on Dr. Jamal Sanad Al-Suwaidi, In 2006, Dr. Al-Suwaidi was awarded the title of Honorable Professor from the International University, Vienna, in 2008. In addition, UAE President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, presented the Emirates Appreciation

Award for Science, Arts, and Literature in its Third Round for 2008 to Dr. Al-Suwaidi in the field of Studies and Research in Political Studies.

In January 2010, Dr. Jamal Al-Suwaidi was conferred the Membership of the Advisory Board of Bahrain Electronic City. He was accorded this honor during the visit of a high-ranking delegation from Electronic City Project of H.M. King Hamad Bin Issa Al Khalifa of Bahrain to the ECSSR.

Dr. Al-Suwaidi is the author of numerous articles on a variety of topics His articles appeared in several international journals such as: The Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, 1994; Security Dialogue, 1996; Whitehall Series by Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies (RUSI), 2000; and Indian Journal of Politics, 2000.

He is also the author of the book entitled Iran and the Gulf: A Search for Stability (1997), which won the prizes for Best Publisher, Best Arabic Book in Humanities and Social Sciences, and Best Writing at the Sixteenth Annual Sharjah World Book Fair, held on November 4, 1997.

### VI - RAPPORTEURS

### Ola A. AbouZeid

MA, Political Science, Cairo University, Egypt. Ph.D, University of Toronto, Canada. Winner, the Malcom H. Kerr Best Dissertation Award in Humanities, Middle East Studies Association (MESA) 1987. Professor of Political Thought and Theory, Cairo University. Member, Advisory Board: Program for the Dialogue of Civilizations, Cairo University. Deputy Director, Center for Political Research and Studies, Cairo University (2002-2004).

Coordinator of research projects and conferences on citizenship and democracy, civil society and civic education. Fellow, research missions to Northombria University and Manchester University, U.K. and to Colombia University, USA in gender issues and human rights. Coordinator and trainer, workshops on gender awareness and human rights. Presented research papers on women issues and related subjects in national and international conferences. Publications and research interests include issues of gender justice, women political participation, thought of Islamic movements with particular reference to women.

Member, National Council for Women (Egypt), International Relations Committee (2000-2002). Since 2006, Director of Planning Department, Arab Women Organisation.

### Maya Morsy

(Biography previously cited under scientific team and editors)

### **Hania Sholkamy**

(Biography previously cited under scientific team and editors)



### Day One Tuesday, 11 November 2008 GCC Hall

11:00	Start of Inaugural session
11:00	A recitation of the Holy Quran
11:05	Speech by H.H Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Conference Chairperson and President of Arab Women Organisation (AWO) Speech by H.R.H. Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa First Lady of the Kingdom of Bahrain and former President of the AWO Speeches by their Majesties, Highnesses and Excellencies the First Ladies Speech by Dr. Wadouda Badran Director-General of the AWO
01:00 pm	Launch of the "Arab Women's Media Strategy"
01:100 pm	Launch of the "Network of Arab Women in the Diaspora"
01:20 pm	Presentation of awards to the winners of AWO research scholarships and of the "Arab Women Prize" in Science and Technology for Development
01:30 pm	End of Session
1:30 - 3:00 pm	Lunch Break
3:00 - 4:00 pm	Side Event: "Strategy and Projects of the Dubai Women's Development Society"
Etihad Hall (1)	Session Chair: Dr. Sheikha Seif Al Shamsi Former Assistant Undersecretary of Education, President of the Arab Citizenship and Development Center
Speakers	Mrs. Aisha Khalifa Al Suwaidi Director of the Department for the Development of Women's Leadership Skills Mrs. Shamsa Mohammad Saleh Director of the Department of Strategy and Institutional Planning

Mrs. Majda Mohammad Al Naqi

Director of the Department of Policy and Excellence

### **Day Two** Wednesday, 12 November 2008

First Working Session: 10:00 - 12:00 pm

"World visions of security: How far have women been taken

into consideration?"

Session Chair: H.E. Dr. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh Etihad Hall (1)

Secretary-General of the National Council for Family Affairs

Member of the Executive Council (AWO), Jordan

Dr. Bahgat Korany Speaker

Head of the Conference Scientific Team

Professor of International Relations at the American University in Cairo

Professor at the University of Montreal, Canada

Director of the AUC Forum, Egypt

Desiccants / commentators

Dr. Zhour Horr

Head of the Family Matters Chamber at the Supreme Council of the

Judiciary

Professor at the Higher Institute for the Judiciary, Morocco

Dr. Nassif Hitti

Director, Mission of the League of Arab states, Paris

Dr. Lloyd Axeworthy

President, University of Winnipeg, former Foreign Minister, Canada

Dr. Robin Ludwig

Senior Political Affairs Officer and Chief, Research and Policy Unit, United

Nations (UN)

Dr. Anne Helen Cubilié

Policy Officer, Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United

Nations

Session

Dr. Ola A. AbouZeid

Rapporteur

Director of Planning and Programmes at the AWO, Professor of Political Thought, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University

12:00 - 12:30 pm Break

### **Parallel Workshops**

12:30 - 2:30 pm Second Working Session

"Women's Security: A Cultural Perspective"

Etihad Hall (1) Session Chair: H.E. Dr. Bushra Kanafani

Director of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Member of the

Executive Council (AWO), Syria

Speaker Dr. Mohamed El- Baki Hermassi

President of the High Council of Communication, Former Professor of Sociology at Tunisian universities and the University of California, Former

Minister of Culture, Tunisia

Desiccants / Dr. Inssaf Hamad

commentators Professor of Epistemolgy and Logic, Faculty of Literature, Damascus

University, Syria **Dr. Gaber Asfour** 

Professor of Arabic Literature and Criticism Director of the National Translation Centre, Egypt

Dr. Pinar Bilgin

Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Bilkent

University, Turkey **Dr. Gerd Nonneman** 

Director, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, Exeter University United

Kingdom

Session Dr. Hania Sholkamy

Rapporteur Associate Professor, Social Research Center, the American University in

Cairo

12:30 - 2:30 pm Third Working Session:

"Globalisation and women's status in the Arab world: Blessing or curse?

Etihad Hall (2) Session Chair: H.E. Professor Fadia Kiwan

Member of the National Commission for Lebanese Women

Member of the Executive Council (AWO), Lebanon

Speaker Dr. Fatima Al-Shamsi

Secretary-General of the United Arab Emirates University -UAE

Desiccants Dr. Ebtesam Abdul-Rahman Rashed

Sana'a University, Yemen

Dr. Raed Safadi

Chief Economist, Department of Economic Development, Government of

Dubai

Dr. Francie Lund

Associate Professor, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Dr. Emma Murphy

Professor of Political Economy, School of Government and International

Affairs Durham University, UK

Session Dr. Maya Morsy

Rapporteur Specialized Researcher on Women's Security

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12:30 - 3:00 pm Fourth Working Session

"Women's Security and Health/Environmental Issues"

Etihad Hall (3) Session Chair: H.E. Mrs. Sarra Kanoun Jarraya

Minister of Women, Family, Childhood and Elderly Affairs

Member of the Executive Council (AWO), Tunisia

Speakers Dr. Nada Haffadh

Lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine, Arabian Gulf University

Former Minister of Health, Bahrain "Women's security and health issues"

Dr. Balqis Osman-Elasha

Senior Researcher at the Higher Council for Environment and Natural

Resources, Sudan

"Gender and climate change in the Arab region"

Desiccants / commentators H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ahmad Al Bowardi

Secretary General of the Executive Council, Abu Dhabi- UAE

Dr. Nassira Keddad

Director at the Ministry of Health, Population and Hospital Reform-Algeria

Dr. Bowba El Khaless

Head of the Marine Science Authority, Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime

Economy- Mauritania

Dr. Gita Sen

Professor, Indian Institute of Management - India

Dr. Jane L. Parpart

Professor, University of the West Indies, Centre for Gender & Development

Studies, Trinidad and Tobago

Dr. Rita Giacaman

Professor and Research and Program Coordinator, Institute of Community

and Public Health, Birzeit University, Palestine

Session

Dr. Ola A. AbouZeid

Rapporteur

Director of Planning and Programmes at the AWO, Professor of Political Thought, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University

3:00 - 4:00 pm

Lunch break

4:00 - 5:30 pm

**Side Event:** 

"Surveying Young Arab University Students' Opinion on Women's

Issues and Human Security"

Etihad Hall (1)

Session Chair: H. E. Dr. Salma Abdel Gabar,

Professor of Philosophy at Al-Fatah University Member of the Executive Council (AWO), Libya

Speaker

Dr. Moataz Billah Abd Al-Fattah

Associate Professor, Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, Cairo University and Central Michigan University, USA

Young Arab Panelists

1. Ms. Ahlam Abdul-Raheem Al-Silwi, Yemen

Ms. Eva Jamal-Eddin Afghani, Palestine

3. Ms. Shamsah bint Ahmed bin Sultan Al-Hossani, Oman

4. Mr. Philip Abou Zeid, Lebanon

### Day Three Thursday, 13 November 2008

09:30 –11:30 Fifth Working Session:

"Education: The effective route for women's security"

Etihad Hall (1) Session Chair: H.E. Professor Farkhonda Hassan

Secretary-General of the National Council for Women, Member of the Executive Council (AWO), Egypt

Speaker Dr. Munther Wassef Masri

Chairman of the National Center for Human Resources Development

- Jordan

Desiccants / Dr. Mohammad Akram Al-Kech

commentators Secretary General, Supreme Council for Arts, Literature and Social

Sciences at the Ministry of Higher Education, Syria

Dr. Sheikha Mariam bint Hassan Al-Khalifa

Vice president of the Supreme Council for Women (SCW)

President of the Center of Constitutional and Legal Studies, University of

Bahrain

Dr. Lisa Anderson

Professor of International Relations, Provost, American University in Cairo and Dean Emeritus, School of International and Public Affairs,

Columbia University, NY, USA

Dr. Philip Robins

Faculty fellow and University Lecturer in Middle East Politics

St. Antony's College, Oxford University, UK

Session Dr. Hania Sholkamy

Rapporteur Associate Professor, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo

9:30 - 11:30 Sixth Working Session:

"Women's security and the impact of social policies"

Etihad Hall (2) Session Chair: H.E. Dr. Nouzha Skalli

Minister of Social Development, Family and Solidarity Member of the Executive Council (AWO), Morocco

Speaker Dr. Kamal Hamdan

Chairman of the Economic Section, Research and Consultation Foundation,

Beirut-Lebanon

Desiccants / Dr. Saida Rahmouni

commentators General Director of the Center for Information, Documentation, Studies

and Research on Women, Tunisia

Dr. Thuraya Al-Turki

Professor of Anthropology, Head of the Department of Sociology and

Anthropology

American University in Cairo (AUC)

Dr. Robin Luckham

Post-retirement Research Associate, The Institute of Development Studies

University of Sussex, UK

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Ms. Joanne Sandler

UNIFEM Deputy Executive Director -UN

Session Dr. Maya Morsy

Specialized Researcher on Women's Security Rapporteur

9:30 - 11:30 **Seventh Working Session:** 

"Armed Conflicts and the Security of Women"

Etihad Hall (3) Session Chair: H.E. Dr. Anwar Gargash

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, UAE

Speaker Dr. Ali Jarbawi

Professor of Political Sciences at Birzeit University, Palestine

Desiccants / Dr. Nassif Hitti

Director, Mission of the League of Arab states, Paris commentators

Dr. Khaldoun Al-Nageeb

Associate Professor of Sociology, Kuwait University

Dr. Earl L. Sullivan

Professor of Political Science, Provost Emeritus, American University in

Cairo

Dr. Cilja Harders

Professor of Political Science, Director of the Center for Middle Eastern

and North African Politics, Freie Universit.t Berlin, Germany

Session Dr. Ola A. AbouZeid

Director of Planning and Programmes at the AWO, Professor of Political Rapporteur

Thought, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University

11:30 - 12:00 pm Break

Roundtable 12:00 - 2:00 pm

Session Chair: Dr. Bahgat Korany Etihad Hall (1)

Head of the Conference Scientific Team

Professor of International Relations at the American University in Cairo

(AUC)

Professor at the University of Montreal, Canada,

Director of the AUC Forum, Egypt

Panelists H.E. Lakhdar Brahimi

Former Foreign Minister, Algeria

Former Advisor to the UN Secretary-General

H.E. Dr. Jamal Al-Suwaidi

Director-General, Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research

(ECSSR)

H.E. Dr. Maitha Al Shamsi

Adviser to Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, and State

Minister, UAE

H.E. Minister Nouara Sadia Djaffer

Minister of National Solidarity, Family and National Community Abroad

charged with Family Affairs and the Condition of Women, Algeria

Dr. Gita Sen

Professor, Indian Institute of Management, India

Session Dr. Ola A. AbouZeid

Rapporteurs Director of Planning and Programmes at the AWO, Professor of Political

Thought, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University.

Dr. Hania Sholkamy

Associate Professor, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo

Dr. Maya Morsy

Specialized Researcher on Women's Security

2:00 - 3:00 pm Side event

"The Rural Women's Employment Project: Arab Labor Organisation

/ Arab Women Organisation"

Etihad Hall (2) Session Chair: H.E. Samia Ahmed Mohamed

Minister of Social Welfare, President of the Executive Council, AWO,

Sudan

Speakers H.E. Dr. Ahmed M. Luqman

Director-General of the Arab Labor Organisation

Dr. Osama Abdul-Khaleq

Presenter of the Project Document, Arab Labor Organisation

3:00 - 4:00 pm Lunch break

### **Concluding Session**

4:00 pm	All participants and guests to gather in the GCC Hall
4:00 pm	Their Majesties, Highnesses and First Ladies, and their Excellencies the heads of the Delegations to congregate in the Majlis of the GCC Hall
4:10 pm	Their Majesties, Highnesses and First Ladies, and their Excellencies the heads of the delegations enter the GCC Hall
4:20 pm	Photographers enter the Hall
4:25 pm	Concluding Statement of the Conference



25 Ramsis St. - Korba - Heliopolis - Cairo - Egypt
Tel.: (+202) 2418 3301 - 2418 3101
Fax: (+202) 2418 3110
Email: info@arabwomenorg.net

Website: www.arabwomenorg.org

