

The Basic Living Skills Programme^(*)

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World — Beirut University College, held a conference in Nicosia, December 10-12, 1985 to introduce the «Basic Living Skills Programme» which was exhibited before in BUC on November 9, 1985. Around 18 participants attended the conference from different Arab countries, namely: Iraq, Morocco, Kuwait, Yemen Arab Republic, Republic of Democratic Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia (Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations —AGFUND) and UNICEF.

The «Basic Living Skills Programme» is a unique programme consisting of one-hundred-and-forty lessons divided into eight areas, namely: health, environment, nutrition, childcare, family-planning, home management, civic responsibilities and legal rights. The programme includes a guide manual that has detailed information on how to teach these lessons and how to evaluate the results after teaching these lessons.

The BLSP is a comprehensive programme that has educational material relating to different aspects and needs of the Arab women. The rationale behind this programme is that social illiteracy in the Arab world, especially among women, is one of the major problems that one should study and try to solve. Moreover, the choice of the different subjects was based on the fact that improving women's life and conditions involves more than the elimination of hunger and disease; it involves women's awareness of their rights and potential as well as learning certain skills that will help improve their life and the conditions of their families, and thus women can be integrated in the process of development.

Preparation for this programme started in 1976 in collaboration with experts in different fields. Field-studies were carried out in Lebanon and some Arab countries in 1977 to assess the problems and needs of women in all these countries. At the same time, some of



the educational material was prepared, and a programme was broadcasted on the radio «The Doctor's Mail» in Lebanon in 1981.

Due to the current situation in Lebanon and some financial problems, the programme was implemented in 1983 by testing the educational material on around 70 women of different age-groups and from different environments in several social service centers in Beirut and the suburbs, and then evaluating the lessons and modifying them. Around fifteen experts in different fields have worked on the preparation and implementation of this programme.

It is important to note that introducing the legal aspect in educational programmes is an unprecedented approach which will help the woman to know her legal rights and thus contribute to development and liberation. The legal section has only covered Lebanon because it was not possible to cover all the legal codes of the Arab countries, though this could be included later.

This programme was prepared to complement all the development programmes that are being applied in the Arab countries. It is a new experience that can be developed and modified in order to achieve the rationale behind its preparation and implementation. This unprecedented pioneering experience is a step along the road of improving, qualitatively, the development programmes in the Arab World.

(*) The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut University College, held an exhibition to present the «Basic Living Skills Programme» to the Public on November 9, 1985.