

## Voluntary Social Organizations in Jordan

There are 222 Voluntary social organizations in Jordan. 211 are local and the rest are foreign; 40% of the local societies work in the Capital district, 60% in the other districts.

78% of the societies perform varied activities: vocational training, struggle against illiteracy, child care, directing nutrition centers, and orientation and guidance. The more specialized ones, 22% of the whole, serve well-defined aims like care of the handicapped and orphans, execution of hygiene programs, educational programs and so on.

The study was prepared by Dr. Salah Yacoub, from the Social Development and Human Implantations Section of the U.N. Economic Commission for Western Asia (Ecwa), in cooperation with the Department of Social Affairs and the General Union of Benevolent Organizations in Jordan. Its aim was to secure information about the aims and activities of the local and foreign associations during 1976, the difficulties they meet in performing their tasks, the nature of the social institutions which they control, the support they receive from unions and from the Dep. of Social Affairs, the attitudes of those benefitting from services offered by the associations, and their opinions concerning their geographic distribution.

The sample used for the study consisted of 32 of the 211 local societies, founded before 1965 or between 1965 & 1975, in East Jordan.

Their aims are distributed as follows, (each one may combine several aims):

	No. of Societies	Percentage
Vocational training	28	88 %
Aid to the mentally retarded	1	3
Aid to the mentally handicapped	4	12
Health service	9	28
Child Care	17	53
Helping the aged	1	3
Counseling & Guidance	14	44
Nutrition centers	25	78
Teaching	16	60
Pecuniary help to the poor	15	47
Other forms of help to the poor	6	19

Number of registered members in the societies: 2692, 70% of whom are men and the rest, women.

Concerning the services and activities of local societies in 1976, the study showed:

1) That most of the services were limited to the main towns and cities while the rural districts received a relatively small share.

2) That the main activities were concentrated on the creation of vocational centers for the teaching of sewing, embroidery and the like. This activity covered 22% of the entire expenses while the actual beneficiaries did not exceed 5% of the whole. The nutrition centers covered 23% of the beneficiaries and their expenses attained 24% of the whole sum of expenses, while the health services though relatively few in number covered 38% of the beneficiaries and their expenses were limited to 2% of the general expenditure.

3) The total sum of money spent in 1976 by the local societies on their various activities and services attained: 66,958 Jordanian dinars (a Jord. dinar = 3 dollars). The number of persons permanently benefiting from those activities: 13925. No. of non-permanent beneficiaries: 2138.

The foreign voluntary societies, of which 8 out of 12 were studied, though fewer in number than the local societies, spent about 386,000 J. dinars, mainly on the creation of nutrition centers or helping existing ones, subsidizing projects of school buildings, providing rural districts with drinking water & irrigation, building social centers, helping the handicapped and the mentally retarded and providing local societies with material aid.

### Comments and recommendations:

The main difficulties faced by both local and foreign societies are

1) Financial needs and shortage of income 2) Lack of interest and consciousness among the population 3) Shortage of experts and specialists in social work 4) Inability of voluntary leaders to give their work a sufficient amount of time and effort.

While the above obstacles should be handled and eliminated as far as possible, the following recommendations are given by the author of the study:

1) Voluntary societies should prepare for their activities a well studied plan taking into consideration the local needs of the various districts, in order to avoid the duplication of their work by other organisations. The fact that they spend the larger part of their income on vocational centers, kindergartens and nutrition centers, which cover a relatively small number of beneficiaries, shows that there is duplication in the work.

2) Instead of distributing monetary aid to all societies, the Dept. of Social Affairs had better limit its aid to those societies which are socially active and succeed in covering certain local needs.

3) Some societies neglect the use of special records for their financial affairs; others have deficient records, kept by people with inadequate experience in these matters. Training sessions should be held for record keepers and leaders of societies should be convinced of the necessity of keeping accurate records of their finances.

4) A partial solution of the societies' financial problems consists in limiting the expenses on building and creation of centers and increasing those allotted to the development of actual voluntary work.

5) The Department of Social Affairs is expected to work for the provision of a sufficient number of trained workers and qualified specialists in the social-work field.

6) It is advisable that societies recognize the importance of public relations and direct contact with the population for mutual help and understanding.

7) The Department of Social Affairs should increase the number of social service counselors distributed in the various districts. Their general standard could be raised and easier communication be made available to them.