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Statement
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THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES
REPORT
Presented by the Social Affairs Department of the League of Arab States

to

The Regional Workshop of "Extension of Family and Child Welfare Services Within Community Development Programmes" held in Accra, Ghana, from 21 November - 3 December, 1960.

By the Economic Commission for Africa,


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The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States includes among its members five African States. These are the United Arab Republic, the Republic of the Sudan, the United Kingdom of Libya, the Republic of Tunis, and the Kingdom of Morocco. In order to develop the Arab Community socially in all those states the Secretariat provides technical assistance in the field of social welfare; such assistance takes the following forms:

1. Seminars of Social Studies:

The General Secretariat holds regular seminars to which Arab States are invited, for the study and discussion of one or more social question. These seminars are attended by experts and technicians in the subject concerned, as well as representatives of United Nations and its Specialised Agencies and by delegates from national organisations working in social welfare.

The subjects of each seminar are thoroughly examined by Arab social experts before the seminar is actually held. The recommendations of these seminars are submitted to the Arab League Council for approval and communicated to member-states for consideration in drawing up their social policies. Each state implements them as much as its circumstances permit. The recommendations and the papers of each seminar are published in one volume distributed to all states and social organisations in the Arab world. Since these papers and recommendations are the result of profound study and discussion by a great number of experts in the social field, and since such study and discussion are not only local but also regional and comparative, they serve as references for all social workers in Arab countries, whose social circumstances are largely similar.

In collaboration with the United Nations five social seminars so far have been held. The sixth was undertaken both financially and technically by the General Secretariat itself. The United Nations and its Specialised Agencies confining themselves to sending delegates.
The first Seminar was held in Beirut in 1949. Its principal topic was a general review of social problems in Arab countries. The second was held in Cairo in 1950. Its subject was "Rural Welfare". The third was in Damascus in 1952. It discussed "Social Mutual Assistance". The fourth was in Baghdad in 1954. It dealt with "Social Welfare and its relations to Agricultural and Economic Development". The fifth Seminar met in Amman in 1956 and it treated the subject of Community Development. The Sixth was in Libya and had as its principal subject "Maternity and Childhood in the Arab home". The 7th Seminar will be held by the General Secretariat in collaboration with I.L.O. Its principal topic will be the Development of Man-power.

It can be seen from the above that the subject of the Seminar to be organised by the Economic Committee of Africa, namely, "Extension of Family and Child Welfare Services within Community Development Programmes" has been treated by both the fifth and sixth Seminars previously held by the League.

The recommendations of the fifth Seminar were submitted by the General Secretariat to the Seminar held by the Economic Committee of Africa at Addis Ababa from 14 to 25 September 1959 which discussed "Community Development". It gives the General Secretariat pleasure to put before the Seminar the recommendations of the Sixth Seminar which are closely connected with the subject. These recommendations can be divided into two principal categories: one consisting of some general recommendations and the other emphasising the importance of research work and statistics.

The first recommendation deals with the promotion of surveys of phenomena and problems connected with the family by the use of data and vital statistics collected by the statistical departments of governments and social agencies at all levels from the local to the national so that a complete picture may be formed of family life and problems in various sectors of the community.
The second recommendation deals with the preparation of mothers by providing them with an appropriate training which enables them to perform their duties towards their homes, their children and their marital life. Arab countries should celebrate a "Mothers' Day" every year in appreciation of mothers.

The third recommendation provides that Arab countries should unify their weekly holiday so that all family members could meet and participate in recreation activities.

The second category is composed of two groups; the first deals with the foundations and fundamentals of the Arab home and the social services that can be rendered to it. The second group deals legislation for the Arab home. The first group recommendations tackled various aspects of the Arab home.

1. As regards the spiritual aspect, the Seminar has recommended:

   1. That the Arab nation should implant within the young the spirit of religion so that they would respect the sanctity of family bonds and the teachings of religion which call for mutual help and care for relatives, thus saving the family from disruption and disintegration.

   2. That Arab society should be firmly convinced that it is the moral and spiritual forces stemming from the religious incentive which cause the rise and development of nations and that it is this incentive which leads to unity. That mingling of both sexes during adolescence and youth should be supervised and directed and should be preceded by a religious training explaining the concept of the relations between the sexes and the evil effects that may result from over stepping the proper bounds between them.

   3. That training and orientation should make the individual realise that the fraternity which binds a family should extend through love, cooperation and brotherly support, to the wider sphere of the community and humanity. The individual Arab should realise that fellow citizens and human beings have the same rights that his brothers, born of the same parents, have.
4. That parents should perform their duties towards their children, the mother by giving her infant the right to feed on her milk, the father by supporting and protecting his children and treating them all justly and equally without preferring one to the other. Children should be imbued with kindness towards their parents and should maintain the close ties that bind the home and its offspring.

II. As regards marital and family relations, the seminar has emphasised:
1. The necessity of training the young — whether boys or girls — for married and family life so that they may grow up to be good fathers and mothers realising the duties and obligations of marital life, the principles on which family life should stand and the ways and means of facing and solving the problems that face them.
2. Providing agencies to direct the family and tender advice on marital life to help the family solve its problems and the Arab home to achieve adjustment and stability.
A. The establishment of social service offices attached to courts of personal jurisdiction for the protection of the family.
B. As regards Housing:
1. Studying the Arab home — as a dwelling as well as its patterns — not only as a sanitary dwelling but also as an expression of the social relations existing within the family itself.
2. Paying attention to the problems of the village and its life and encouraging residence therein by replanning the village, providing adequate sanitary houses and appropriate facilities and organising the emigration of rural people to urban and industrial areas and facilitating their settlement therein and adjusting themselves to their new life.

III. As regards the problems of Childhood.
1. Providing working mothers with care by the establishment of nurseries and training centres to look after their children during work-hours.
2. Establishing social service offices attached to juvenile Courts to deal with the problems of juvenile delinquents and guide them to lead a stable productive life as well as educational institutions for those whose family settings are unfavourable.

3. Since the family is the first social unit in the community and since some families are subject to disintegration, there should be alternatives to take its place such as foster homes or social institutions. These should provide their residents with all the essentials of a natural family: educational, spiritual and psychological so that their development would be natural.

4. Establishing child welfare centres in both rural and urban areas to look after children when their mothers work in distant places. Nurseries should be universalised and should be under effective social, educational psychological and health supervision. The profession of nurses and foster mothers should be organised.

5. The application of the system of social supervision in all educational institutes at all stages so that school may become an effective factor of reform and orientation in Arab society.

D. As regards general problems, the seminar has recommended:

1. That solving the problems arising from employing a married woman should be dealt with in a way that reconciles her work to her responsibilities in looking after her husband and children at home.

2. Tackling the individual and general problems that affect certain groups of the community such as the problems of vagrant children, of orphans, of widows and of the aged by providing welfare and services as well as by the promulgation of laws which protect the social group in need of protection.

3. Dealing with the problems which result from ignorance or bad habits and tradition by providing guidance and advice.

III. As regards the economic aspect of the Arab home, the Seminar has recommended:
1. That Arab governments should try to make the Arab family balance its resources and its needs by providing it with essentials such as food, clothing and dwelling and by making the standard prices proportionate to the income of the family. Arab States should do this by promulgating the necessary laws, by encouraging consumer cooperatives, by providing popular houses and by replanning various districts. Such planning should be based on information regularly obtained from studying family budgets.

2. That Arab Governments should promote and spread domestic industries as a means for increasing the family income and utilizing leisure hours.

3. By guiding the family to the best ways of spending its income, by discouraging the extravagant habits that consume a considerable portion of the Arab home income such as paying big dowries, buying luxurious furniture and making false appearances. Programmes of domestic guidance reply on the experience of social and educational organisations, centres of family services and other bodies diffusing guidance by such methods as the Cinema, the stage, the press, radio lectures, study groups and above all by good example.

4. Granting a family bonus to families with numerous children.

IV. The Seminar recommended providing health welfare to the Arab home:

1. By guaranteeing to every individual a definite minimum standard of medical service irrespective of his financial capacity. Such service can be provided by such means as insurance, cooperation or nationalisation in accordance with the conditions prevailing in every Arab country.

2. By providing preventive and curative services to expectant mothers prior to, during and after the birth of children. The standard of existing services should be raised and they should be provided with trained staff before increasing them.

3. By examining medically all those wishing to marry in order to avoid congenital diseases.

4. By studying nutrition habits in Arab countries as well as local
food stuffs and sources of food in order to provide the best and the cheapest kinds thereof.

Individuals should be taught healthy nutrition habits and trained to use them especially in the case of expectant mothers, or nursing children, as well as in the case of infants and labourers. The individual should be cured of parasitical diseases that cause diarrhoea and prevent the absorption of foods.

5. Drawing up local programmes for sanitary education and carrying them out by the help of social workers and by education and health officers as part of their work.

b. Workers' Health.

1. Young workers should be medically examined to ascertain their physical fitness before they are employed.

2. Youngsters and women should not be employed in dangerous and harmful occupations.

3. Working hours should be fixed in the case of youngsters and women so that they may not be overworked.

4. Expectant mothers should be provided with care before, during and after the birth of children.

5. Women workers should be given an intermission during which they can feed their children. Such an intermission should be included in the hours of work.

6. Taking the necessary precautions for the protection of workers against accidents and against professional illness.

V. The Recommendations of the Seminar in the Cultural field connected with Arab home emphasises the importance of this aspect in building up the Arab home on the foundations of knowledge and understanding.

1. Young people of both sexes should be trained to understand their problems and the requirements of married life. They should be protected against failure in their married life. Educational programmes
dealing with the family and its organisation should be taught in secondary schools, universities and Higher institutes. Such cultural programmes should be diffused among the people by means of the press, broadcasting, social clubs, cultural societies, trade unions etc.

2. The education of Arab girls should be universalised. The programmes should include family affairs and should be taught in boys' and girls' secondary schools.

VI. The recreational aspect of the Arab home whether in bedouin, urban or rural sections has not been omitted by the Seminar. The Recommendations emphasised:

1. The necessity of establishing a government organisation responsible for planning recreational programmes. It should be composed of specialised committees including government officials and representatives of national organisations engaged in the field of services. Such an organisation may be completely independent or it may belong to the Ministry carrying out programmes of services.

2. The Recreational activities should include all kinds of activities that suit the needs, the interests and the wishes of people such as physical activity, music, drama whether individual or collective, social activity (ceremonies, socials, trips, camps, nature study) and cultural activity (lectures, debates, discussions, reading and elocution etc.). It should also include arts and crafts such as drawing, carving, collecting coins, antiquities, stamps and photographs. Religious and civic activity includes social, cultural and educational services. The organisation of committees and voluntary service should be covered. There should be a recreational programme covering one or more of the above mentioned activities.

As regards the bedouin section, efforts should be made to revive and preserve the traditional recreational activities of the bedouins such as chivalry, hunting etc. Government and national organisations should try to prepare mobile recreational units to visit bedouin gatherings. Each unit should consist of a simple library,
cultural and educational cinema films, musical instruments and games equipment. Arts and Crafts which are practised by bedouins in their gatherings and whose raw materials abound in desert areas should be encouraged.

For the Urban sector, the Seminar recommends:

(A) That agencies and institutions working in this field should be established. Those which exist already should be helped, guided and aided financially, so that they may realise their objectives.

(B) Suitable areas should be allotted to be playing fields, and recreational centres for people of all ages and for the general public in particular.

(C) Certain parts of public parks should be allotted to be childrens' corners, and should be provided with games equipment.

(D) Members of every family, whatever its income may be should have equal opportunity to enjoy their leisure time.

(E) Limiting the number of commercial amusement places such as cafes, bars etc, which exploit the public and do not contribute positively to its welfare. Existing places should be under constant watch.

(F) Measures should be taken to protect family members from those kinds of recreational activity that harm their persons, their attitudes and their community such as immoral films and those games and amusements which are practised in Moulids.

(G) Providing facilities for using public educational institutions such as libraries and museums.

As regards the rural section, the Seminar recommends:

1. The revival of original rural recreational activities such as chivalry, hunting, collective games and singing etc.

2. Utilisation of all the facilities provided by schools, hospitals for recreation purposes.

C. Encouraging the establishment of rural clubs for people of all ages and retaining at the same time their cultural rural character as much as possible.
D. For distant villages, mobile recreational units should be used.

Chapter II of Section II of the Recommendations has dealt with Legislation for the Arab home:

The Seminar paid great attention to the legislation connected with the Arab home. It made 55 recommendations in this respect. These may be divided into the following categories:

I. Laws pertaining to marriage and divorce.
II. Laws for the protection of family members (Children).
III. Laws for the welfare of the family in general.
IV. Laws for the protection of juveniles against delinquency.

LABOUR LAWS: These can be divided into:
(A) Laws for the employment of women and for maternity welfare.
(B) Laws for young workers.

Following is a summary of the principal recommendations:

1. Legislation on marriage and divorce.
   1. Fixing a minimum age for marriage in order to guarantee physical and mental fitness for married life.
   2. Medical examination of those intending marriage in order to protect the offspring from congenital diseases.
   3. Preventing excessive dowries in order to relieve those who are not well-to-do. (This is a result of the spread of sound national consciousness among all classes rather than of legislation).
   5. Abstention from forcing a wife to live with her husband if married life does harm to her.

Abstention from forcing a wife to give up her rights if she refuses to live with her husband. It is enough to make her forgo her right to alimony.
6. Promulgating laws preventing a husband from having a second wife without the permission of the judicial authorities and provided this permission indicates the causes.

7. Regulating the pronouncements of marriage and divorce in order to tighten control on what constitutes the foundation of the Arab home and the rights entailed whether to the marriage parties or to their children.

8. Checking the abuse of the right of a husband to divorce his wife and the proper application of that right according to the correct teachings of Moslem Law which permits the authorities to restrict what is valid if abused.

9. That divorce should be retroactive and that a divorce pronounced under compulsion or under the influence of drink is not valid. (These regulations are based on fundamental principles prescribed by Moslem Law).

II. Laws for the protection family members (children). The recommendations made by the Seminar on this question tend to protect children in case the Arab home is broken or threatened with disintegration and in case the supporter is unable to bring up his children. They deal with some of the common phenomena in the Arab community. They serve as the beginning of legislation giving such phenomena the proper care they deserve.

They provide that:

1. A rich mother should support the children in case the father is unable to do so.

2. Withdrawing or restricting parental guardianship from parents who are unfit or those who need supervision and guidance.

3. That custody of children should be given to the parent is most suitable, and then to other relatives in accordance with the degree of their relationship. If the two parents are equal preference should be given to those on the mothers' side. The child's opinion should be taken into consideration by the judge. The judge should be empowered to extend the period of custody if he finds that it is in the interest of the child.
4. Provision should be made for the child's right to education, food and clothing as well as health care.

5. Provision of welfare for children deprived of their family by placing them in foster families or governmental, national or social institutions, in which the atmosphere of the family exists.

6. Regulating the profession of foster-mothers and nurses protecting it from unprofessional elements as well as establishing crèches for the children of the mothers who are compelled to work.

7. Prohibiting the attachment of children whose parents are unknown to other persons unless such attachment is officially recognised. The person to whom the child is attached should be capable of bringing him up and directing him.

8. Punishing those who expose the children in their charge to such moral dangers as vagrancy, mingling with suspicious characters or with persons of bad conduct who leave such children to wander in the streets.

9. Promulgating laws for the protection and upbringing of the children of prison inmates whilst these are in prison and in case there is nobody to support those children.

IV. Laws of providing welfare to juvenile delinquents:

The Seminar made the two following recommendations regarding the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquents.

1. Protecting juveniles from the evil influence of cinemas, theatres and night clubs as well as protecting them against those publications that corrupt them and affect their beliefs.

2. Authorising the juvenile court judge to order the measures he considers essential for the correction and treatment of juvenile delinquents.

LABOUR LAWS:

(A) Laws on the employment of women and women's welfare.

The recommendations under this heading cover the following:
1. Prohibition of the employment of women in jobs injurious to health.

2. Fixing the working hours of women so that women would not be overworked.

3. Prohibition of night work for women except in the cases prescribed by national legislation.

4. Granting adequate leave to working women before and after the birth of children and paying them during this period, or a part thereof.

5. Providing medical care to women expecting children and during and after the birth of their children.

6. Granting working women a longer intermission during working hours for feeding their children.

7. Establishing nurseries attached to places where women are employed.

(B) Labour Laws on the employment of young boys and girls:

These provide:

1. That a minimum age should be fixed for the employment of young boys and girls so that they remain in good health and be able to complete their education.

2. Young boys and girls should be medically examined before they are employed.

3. Prohibition of the employment of young boys and girls in dangerous jobs or in jobs that affect their health.

4. Fixing the working hours of young boys and girls so that they may not be overworked.

5. Prohibition of night work for young boys and girls except in the cases prescribed by national legislation.

II: The Permanent Health Committee of the General Secretariat has also made further recommendations regarding the health aspect of the Arab home.
These recommendations are technical and have been approved by the Arab League Council. They provide:

1) That rehabilitation centres for children suffering from Poliomyelitis should be provided with specialists in natural medicine, in bone surgery, in disfigurements, in psychotherapy, and in the use of artificial limbs so that such centres may cope with the increasing number of Poliomyelitis cases.

2) That vaccination should be universalised and extended to older children.

3) That school children should be medically examined so that the disease may be found out at an early age.

A. Since malnutrition is still the cause of the spread of diseases and of high percentage of infant mortality it is recommended:

1. That health consciousness should be diffused among mothers. They should be taught the most suitable methods for the nutrition of children.

2. That enough supplies of good milk should be provided and made available to children of limited income.

B. Since a high percentage of children suffer from rickets at an early age, the committee recommends:

1. That adequate quantities of vitamin D should be given to children, and especially to those who come to hospitals and to child welfare centres.

III. Model Social Centres:

The General Secretariat of the League establishes a model social centre in every Arab country. It contributes half the expenses and supplies the centre with technical experts. Such centres diffuse social and health consciousness among citizens, provide them with cultural and agricultural services and enable them to benefit by the social, health and recreational welfare provided. A social centre usually has a maternity section for mothers and children. Centres have been established in Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and the Northern Region of the United Arab Republic, the Jordan centre
is at present being built. Arab States have proceeded to establish similar centres in their territory.

V. The Organisation of training courses for those working in the Social Field.

The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States attaches great importance to the organisation of training courses for those working in the social field in the Arab world owing to the great effects such courses have in the administration and operation of social work. The General Secretariat began by organising in Cairo a training course for the staffs of the Ministries of Social Affairs in Arab countries during the period from 22.9.1956 to 15.11.1960. The programme was theoretical as well as practical. Every Arab country was represented by two delegates. For two months these delegates received theoretical and practical education which they practised in government departments and national social agencies. They have gained enough experience to enable them to increase their productivity and raise the standard of social services in their countries on their return.

The main purpose for organising this course was the constant need expressed in Arab social affairs seminars for training and preparation of leaders, apart from the fact which became clear to the Social Affairs Department that training did not receive the attention it deserved.

The course consisted of lectures on general social sciences on rural social service, social psychology, cooperation in rural and urban areas, social health administration, organisation, stores, the technical and administrative organisation of the Ministry of Social Affairs and its services, juvenile welfare, the labour movement and its legislation etc. etc. This is besides the many visits which the delegates paid to Government and National Social Institutions in the Southern Region of the United Arab Republic.
V. Carrying Out a Social Survey in Arab Countries.

Owing to the importance attached to the collection of data on the Arab community, its characteristics and its original traits, for the preparation of projects of social development based on research, science, and experience, and since it is necessary for Arab states to cooperate among themselves so that their social development may be equal, the fifth seminar of social affairs, held at Amman in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in May 1956 recommended that the General Secretariat of the League should form a committee of experts to draw up a programme for carrying out a social survey of the Arab world.

This programme would be carried out on three stages. The Department of Social Affairs actually convened this committee and laid down the broad outlines of such social survey, its objectives, its general plan and its projects. The projects were graded in the order of their priority, whether carried out by government organisations (institutes etc) or by the General Secretariat of the Arab League (Fellowships or scholarships) or by individuals, so that social reform plans in the Arab world might be made on common scientific principles.

It was decided that the Department of Social Affairs in the General Secretariat would continue to send missions to study social welfare projects in those Arab States where such studies were not made.

VI. Sending Experts and Tendering Technical Advice to Arab Countries.

The Department of Social Affairs in the General Secretariat sends when necessary specialised experts to tender technical advice to Arab countries on social problems. It does this in order to promote projects of social development in these countries in implementation of its policy of developing local communities and providing technical assistance in this field to those countries which ask for such assistance. Technical Missions were sent to the Republic of Iraq, to
the Republic of Lebanon, to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, to the
Syrian Region of the United Arab Republic and to the United Kingdom
of Libya. These Missions succeeded in giving technical assistance to
these countries and in developing their social projects.

VII. The translation of the publications of the United Nations
and its Specialised Agencies on such questions as the family, the
Child, Community development as well as the translation of the
Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Conference.

The technical assistance provided by the General Secretariat
taken the form of translating and publishing books dealing with
social affairs.

Following is a list of the publications and papers related to
the subject of this Seminar:

1. International review of social development programmes.
2. Family Welfare.
3. Youth and Fundamental Education.
4. In-Service training for social service.
5. United Nations Social Studies kit dealing with the
organisation of human society and the development of its resources.
Two volumes: One dealing with social progress through local work and
the other dealing with experiments in community development.
6. Family Allowances in social security.
7. Symptoms of psychological illness in juvenile crimes.

The Department has, moreover, asked specialists to write
on the social subjects of interest to the Arab world.

8. The General Secretariat has also published the papers and
discussions of the Middle East Seminar for the Prevention of Crime
and the Treatment of Prisoners which was organised by the United Nations
in collaboration with the General Secretariat in Cairo in December
1953.

It has also translated and published the Conventions adopted
by the International Labour Conference in its sessions up to June 1960.
There are 115 Conventions, six of which deal with women's affairs and fourteen deal with juvenile affairs. The General Secretariat has also translated and published the recommendations of the International Labour Conference in collaboration with I.L.O. In June 1958 the I.L.O. and the General Secretariat concluded an agreement of cooperation between the two organisations in social and labour affairs in general and in the Arab world in particular.

VIII. YOUTH WELFARE

The General Secretariat pays great attention to the development of the Arab community. It has not omitted providing Arab youth with proper welfare. It organises an Arab Olympiad every four years. It has contributed £30,000 for running scout camps in the two regions of the United Arab Republic and in Tunis. These camps promote the exchange of visits between the youth of Arab countries. Attached to the camps, are training centres for further training of scout leaders so that they may obtain higher scout grades.

The General Secretariat moreover, supplies some Arab countries with physical training and scout equipment. These have so far cost the General Secretariat about £10,000.

The General Secretariat organises, at its expense, an Arab Olympiad in one of the Arab country. One was held in Alexandria in 1953 costing £50,000 of which the General Secretariat contributed half. The Second was in Beirut costing £85,000, of which the General Secretariat contributed half.

Besides these, the General Secretariat runs every year in an Arab country a training camp costing £3000. So far five have been run. The aim of such camps is to train sports leaders, trainers, and instructors of physical training in Arab countries.
The General Secretary also takes a great interest in scouting in Arab countries. It has arranged several Jamborees for Arab scouts to enable to mix and meet together. It also supplies some member-states with scout equipment. These have so far cost the General Secretariat £10,000.