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COUNTRY REPORT - SUDAN

The National Role of Women in Developing Countries

The Sudan was under foreign rule, hence other than Sudanese were the architects of economic and social policy. Concerning girls' education, no marked attention was given by the authorities, and the people on their part did not recognize the importance of educating women at a time when men's education was at its infancy. The first census, carried out in January 1965, showed that 77 per cent of the male population was illiterate and 96 per cent of the female population was illiterate. That was the situation when the foreign rule left our country.

With the dawn of independence, the situation changed. National authorities took constructive measures to uphold and realize the basic right of the citizen education. Education authorities believe, amongst other things, that economic factors and other ways of life limit women's opportunities for access to education.

Joint government and non-governmental efforts are being exerted to accelerate girls' education to keep pace with boys' education which lies far ahead.

If one takes into consideration the fact that foreign rule lasted for nearly 58 years and the national rule has recently celebrated its eleventh anniversary, one can see the rapid progress achieved in girls' education. The coming years will witness further progress that will gradually narrow the gap between the education of the two sexes.

Further details may be stated hereunder in note form:

- (1) Fully free education to both sexes, in government schools at all levels.
- (2) Women enjoy equality of access to education; the judging factor being their ability and aptitude.

- (3) There are mixed elementary schools. These are originally boys' schools which have been opened to girls. All teachers are men and the curricula are those of boys' elementary schools. The majority of these schools are in rural areas. A large number of mixed schools is found in the southern part of the country.
- (4) General education is equal in value and status to that of boys.
- (5) Women are given the same facilities (scholarship, etc.) aiming to pursue and continue their education at higher levels.
- (6) Education for home and family life is included in curricula at all levels for girls and women.
- (7) Steps are being taken to start Home Economics secondary schools with the idea of giving pupils proper training that will be useful to them in their future life. In addition to this home economics is introduced as a subject in all girls' secondary schools.
- (8) Facilities for vocational training and in-service training as a preparation for jobs are now available for working women in various fields.
- (9) In the field of out-of-school education women centres are also planned as parallel to boys' clubs which have been in existence for some years.
- (10) Various subjects in the curricula are given to a great extent the same importance and duration for girls as for boys.
- (11) Nursery schools and kindergartens are found in cities and in villages. These accommodate infants from both sexes.
- (12) Concerning higher education, university studies permit women to specialize in any field they are suited to or happens to be their choice.
- (13) In educational staff, teaching, headship, administrative, and inspection, appointments at all levels of education are fully open to women.

It is worth mentioning that a body of high-level women administrators for girls' education has already become a feature of the general framework of the Ministry of Education.

Now you find Sudanese women doctors, professors, lawyers, engineers, administrators, teachers, nurses, etc., as well as men.

Hospitals, midwifery schools and clinics were opened and a nursing training college. The Red Crescent and the Girl Guides also contribute to the

advancement of the women's movement in the Sudan. Nearly all daily newspapers publish a women's page and we have women's magazines. The woman has gained experience in different fields. The factories and industries have attached the less educated women, taking them outside the four walls of their houses and giving them cash instead of keep, and with the rising cost of domestic services this work has been appreciated by the community. In the revolution of October 1964, women took part; they were wounded and one was even killed. As a result of this heroism, women were granted the right to vote at the age of 18 and the right to stand for election at the age of 30; and a woman who had already rendered splendid service to the movement was elected to represent the women in Parliament.

The women run evening classes for the village girls and women. In these classes, practical training is given in sewing, knitting, handicraft, cooking and home-craft. Lessons and demonstrations in child care and personal hygiene are also organized. For the illiterate members of the community, literacy classes are held. Some 960 women attend these classes.

Women also participate in handicraft exhibitions and take part in cultural shows, organized by the workers. Through regular bi-weekly home visits, the female workers establish contacts with women who do not come to classes. They are helped with their personal problems wherever possible.

The popularity of the women's programmes has already been noticed. The women have contributed to the programme by learning and adopting the new skills and practices taught them in the classes. They are contributing to the health of the community by keeping their houses cleaner, cooking their food with a view to preserving nutrition, and by careful waste disposal. They have increased food production by growing vegetables and supplemented their own diet and supplied the deficiency of green vegetables in the food, commonly noticed here before. They have also learnt to act in the community interest through frequent meetings and through participation in community projects like exhibitions of handicrafts.

Some 960 women participate in evening classes and this represents over 75 per cent of the female population of the village. It is a measure, not only of their interest but also of their contribution to the growth of the society and its economy. It is safe to say that at least 50 per cent of the women are actively involved in community projects of their interest.

Participation of the women in holding of fairs and exhibitions has been something new for the area. So is the participation of the girls in cultural activities and drama. Adult literacy classes have brought the literacy world closer to the women. The regular meetings of the women in the classes and thereafter leads to exchange of experiences and information.

All this has given the women a great deal of self-confidence and a feeling of self respect. The girls compete with the boys in the nursery and feel equal to them. A new sense of responsibility towards the nation, the youth

and the development of its resources characterize the attitude of the women of the project area. In some areas, they have gained more knowledge than the men in child care, nutrition and these have given them self-confidence just as it has led men to view their women with a new respect. The realization that men have a role to play in the development of their home has been the main factor why men have been so persistent in their demand for female workers. This also assumes a re-appraisal on the part of men of the status of women. Finally, introduction of a young, slightly educated female worker in a rural community and her poise and self confidence tends to infect the village girls and women with yearning for education so that they too could achieve the same status.

These activities have not only enhanced the productive capacity of these women, but also enlarged their visions of the role of the women in the society. The women are now engaging in activities, normally reserved for men, as for example, in raising vegetables and poultry. There is frequent exchange of ideas among the women through exhibitions and seminars.

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