



UNITED
NATIONS

A



**World Conference
of the United Nations
Decade for Women:
Equality, Development and Peace**

**Copenhagen, Denmark
14-30 July 1980**

Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.94/NR/39 *
13 July 1980

ENGLISH AND ARABIC ONLY

NATIONAL REPORT SUBMITTED BY
KUWAIT **

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Paper Presented to World Conference for
the United Nations Decade for Women - 1980

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Introduction

Pursuant to the recommendation adopted by the UN's General Assembly at its 30th Session on the occasion of the declaration of the UN's decade for women under the theme of active participation in development, i.e., from 1976 - 1985; the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) organized a Regional Preparatory Meeting on "the Integration of Women in Development for the Western Asian Countries" in Syria, from 10 to 23 December 1979.

This meeting was held preliminary to the holding of the 2nd World Conference for Women's Decade as declared by the United Nations, which conference is scheduled to be convened in Copenhagen in July 1980.

The object behind convening these two conferences is to evaluate the progress made and the major obstacles encountered in, attaining the objective of women's participation in socio-economic development, especially in the fields of education, employment and health.

We propose to outline in the following report the efforts made by the State of Kuwait toward the integration of Kuwaiti women in the development process in the following areas:

- A. In the Field of Women's Education
- B. In the Field of Women's Employment
- C. In the Field of Health Services, with
Special Reference to Women
- D. In the Field of Legislation, with
Special Reference to Women

We further intend to indicate the major obstacles encountered while these efforts were being exerted in each respective area.

In the field of education, the State has devoted considerable attention toward the provision of educational services free of charge to all males and females of school age, Kuwaiti and Non-Kuwaiti alike, without any distinction.

In 1965, Compulsory Education Act No. 11 was promulgated, making education from the primary school level through the intermediate school level obligatory to all children, with a view to guaranteeing a minimum standard of education for each individual.

The report includes a coverage of educational services rendered to Kuwaiti females during the period 1975 to 1979. It also outlines the development of educational services as well as educational opportunities made available to women during the said period, whether at the level of technical institutes, the university, or post-graduate studies. Subsequently, it deals with the obstacles and impediments that have been encountered in the area of women's education in Kuwait.

In the field of employment, the report shows how educational opportunities made available to women have resulted in the graduation of a considerable number of Kuwait women, who are now actively participating in the labour force in Kuwait. Accordingly, the Kuwaiti woman has become a significant component of the workforce in the country in the various sectors and in almost all fields.

And in the field of health services, the State has devoted considerable attention to the various preventive and pathologic services. In this respect, the State has established clinics, medical complexes, and hospitals in the various residential areas throughout the country, which extend all kinds of medical services, free of charge, to all members of the population, Kuwaiti and Non-Kuwaiti alike, without any distinction.

The report further shows the extent of the attention paid by the State toward furthering the welfare of women, through the establishment of special mother and child care centres and a hospital for the treatment of women and children.

In the Field of Legislation:

The State has been intent on the promulgation of legislation and laws which would safeguard the rights of women. The Constitution of the country incorporates certain provisions which assert these rights, let alone the fact that the State of Kuwait observes international conventions dealing with women.

A detailed description of the legislative acts and laws relating to education, employment, and health care is included in the report.

Finally, the report incorporates a review of the rights of Kuwaiti women under personal status laws, as well as ILO conventions dealing with working women and the extent of application of these Conventions in Kuwait and their suitability to conditions in the country.

First: In the Field of Women's Education

The State has paid considerable attention to the provision of educational services, free of charge, to all those of school age, Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti, males and females, without distinction.

In pursuance of its policy, the State enacted Law No. 11 for the year 1965, which makes education obligatory from the beginning of the primary school level up to the end of the intermediate school level. Thus, the State has made it possible for every citizen to have access to a certain measure of education.

1. Development of Women's Education:

The education system of the State of Kuwait is highly developed, especially in the area of women's education. However, during the last few years, it has gained momentum as evidenced by the figures included in the following schedule:

Comparative Percentages of the Development
of Kuwaiti Women's Educational Standard in the Society
for the Years 1970 and 1975*

Year	Illiterate Women	Can Read & Write	Primary Stage	Inter- mediate Stage	Secondary Stage	University Education
1970	63.8	11.6	15.3	6.7	2.2	1 %
1975	59.1	8.4	17.5	9.7	4.5	1.8

The above comparative figures clearly show that the percentages of illiterate women and those who can read and write have dropped by about 5% and 3% respectively.

2. Types of Education Available to Girls:

After giving serious thought to women's education on equal footing with men, the State took a second step involving diversification of education to cover almost all employment needs. Thus, it diversified education into such areas as vocational/technical secondary education, commercial education (represented by the Commercial Institute), health education (represented by the Health Institute), pedagogy

* Annual Statistical Abstract, 1979

(Teachers' Training Institute) and special education. During the period 1975-1978, Kuwaiti female enrollment amounted to 7.9% at technical/vocational secondary schools; to 34.4% at the Teachers' Training College; to 6.6% at the Health Institute; to 20.7% at the Commercial Institute; and to 30.4% at private schools in relation to those enrolled in vocational schools. These figures indicate girls' preference to enroll in the Teachers' Training Institute.

3. University Education:

The State has availed the Kuwaiti woman of the opportunity to complete her education through the university level; and the Kuwaiti woman has responded fervently by availing herself of college education. In 1975, Kuwaiti women's enrollment at the various departments of the University of Kuwait totalled 144 students; compared with 6,989 students in the 1979 academic year.*

Again, the number of Kuwaiti women who graduated from Kuwait University totalled 286 graduates in 1974/1975, compared with a total of 352 in 1977/1978. During the period in question, enrollment at the primary school level and the intermediate school level increased by 2% and 3% respectively; while enrollment at the secondary level increased by twofold and that at the university level by 1%.

The following schedule shows Kuwaiti women's school enrollment according to the various educational levels during the period 1975-1979.

* Annual Statistical Abstract, 1979

Kuwaiti Women Enrolled in Schools
during the Period 1975-1979, According
to the various Educational Levels

	<u>1975/1976</u>	<u>1976/1977</u>	<u>1977/1978</u>	<u>1978/1979</u>
Kindergartens	6,633	6,858	7,121	7,415
Primary Schools	21,317	22,638	23,828	24,591
Intermediate Schools	17,662	18,599	19,445	20,196
General Secondary Schools	8,817	9,731	10,580	11,489
Totals	54,429	57,826	60,974	63,691

Note: It is to be observed that the number of Kuwait literate women is steadily increasing. This increase is due to the State's policy which aims at helping the Kuwaiti woman pursue her education to the highest academic level, and at wiping out illiteracy. For instance, women's total enrollment in schools of all levels increased from 54,429 in 1975/1976, to 63,691 in 1978/1979, or by 8.4% for the period in question.

The following schedule shows the percentages of Kuwaiti female students enrolled at the various Colleges and Faculties of Kuwait University in 1975 and 1979, respectively, i.e.:

Years	Sciences	Arts	Laws	Commerce & Economics	Engineering & Petroleum	Medicine
1975	15.3	54.1	5.8	24.8	-	-
1979	16.1	55.1	4.7	17.5	4.6	2.0

*Annual Statistical Abstract, 1979

4. Number of Kuwaiti Female Students Studying Abroad:

The State earnestly encourages Kuwaiti females to pursue their academic studies on scholarships abroad, whether at its own cost or at the cost of others. In the academic year 1975, there was a total of 619* female students studying abroad, compared with 535 females in the academic year 1978.

The drop encountered in the number of females studying abroad in 1978 is perhaps attributable to the increased number of colleges established at Kuwait University.

5. Enrollment in Post-graduate Studies:

Kuwaiti women embarked on post-graduate studies of all types, inside the State of Kuwait, including studies toward advanced diplomas and MA and Ph.D degrees, as evidenced by the following statistics. In 1974/1975, female enrollment toward an advanced diploma totalled 80 students, compared with 92 students in 1975/1976. Moreover, female enrollment toward an MA degree in 1974/1975 totalled 79 students, compared with 56 in 1975/1976; while female candidates working toward a Ph.D degree totalled four (3) and (3) students respectively for the corresponding years. In addition, in 1975, there were 52 female students pursuing their studies abroad; compared with 66 students in 1978.

Second: In the Field of Employment.

The State has shown keen interest in the Kuwaiti woman's participation in the labour force, in recognition of the fact that women constitute approximately one half of the population of the Kuwaiti society*. In addition, the State of Kuwait, as

* Woman and Socio-economic Development in Kuwait, 1975

* Annual Statistical Abstract, 1979

a developing nation, is lacking in national manpower and, therefore, it tries to make optimum use of its human resources, without leaving inactive outside the labour force that considerable part of its human resources - represented by women.

1. Participation of Kuwaiti Women in the Labour Force:

In response to the State's efforts, the Kuwaiti woman has become a significant component of the various economic sectors and fields. Kuwaiti Women's employment in 1970, our hypothetical base year, was 1.2% of the total workforce; but in 1975, or only five years thereafter*, Kuwaiti women's participation in the labour force increased by about three-fold, rising to 3.2%. According to the 1975 Census, the highest percentage of employed Kuwaiti women, i.e. 71%, falls within the 20-29 years age bracket, while the remaining percentage is distributed among other age brackets in different small proportions.

2. Female Workforce in the Various Economic Sectors:

The Kuwaiti women has engaged in various occupations, as evidenced by the following schedule:

Comparision between the Percentages of
Kuwaiti Women Employed in Various
Occupations in 1970 and 1975*

Year	Technical & Scientific Personnel	Executive & Clerical Personnel	Service Workers	Other
1970	48.5	22.1	25.1	4.8
1975	55.6	28.0	15.1	1.3

* Annual Statistical Abstract, 1979

The above comparative figures indicate that technical and scientific occupations claimed the highest percentage of all Kuwaiti women employed in 1970, represented by 48.5%, rising up to 55.6% in 1975. Next came executive and clerical jobs which claimed 22.1% and 28% of all Kuwaiti women employed in 1970 and 1975, respectively. This was followed by service occupations which claimed 25.1% of all Kuwaiti women employed in 1970. However, in 1975, the schedule indicates that the percentage of Kuwaiti women employed in the service sector dropped to 15.1%. The remaining 4.8% and 1.3% of Kuwaiti women employed in the labour force in 1970 and 1975 respectively were distributed in various small proportions among such occupations as managers, sales personnel, and workers in agriculture, hunting and production.

3. Kuwaiti Female Workforce in Governmental Departments and Organs:

The Government sector seems to have attracted the Kuwaiti woman, due to the benefits and entitlements that it affords to the Kuwaiti woman as a housewife and a mother, let alone the social security benefits attached to employment with the Government. This phenomenon is noted on the basis of the percentage of female manpower employed with Government departments and organs in 1976. In the said year, teachers accounted for the highest percentage of Kuwaiti employed women, i.e. 41.5%; followed by clerical workers at about 20%; and then by those engaged in janitorial services for buildings at 10.4%. The remaining percentage of employed women during that year was distributed in different, small proportions among other occupations, such as 0.1% for engineers and 0.9% for physicians. The foregoing figures indicate that the teaching profession has claimed the highest percentage of Kuwaiti women. This preference may be due to social and cultural factors related to traditional family values, social relations, and the nature of the work required of women in this profession.

Third: In the Field of Health:

/ The Government of the State of Kuwait strives at providing the best medical care and services to all members of the population - free of charge, including preventive and pathologic medical services and health guidance. It also provides highly specialized medical services to patients who are sent abroad for treatment. Perhaps the rapid development in the various areas of public health services and specialized medicine experienced during the last ten years is reflective of the extent of the attention paid to health care. For instance, during the said period, the overall budget of the health sector increased by more than four-fold, rising from KD.15,276 million in the 1968/1969 fiscal year to KD.67,472 million in the 1977/1978 fiscal year. This attention on the part of the State is also evidenced by the marked increase in the number of physicians employed by the Government. In 1975, Government - employed physicians totalled 1,017 doctors, compared with 1,478 doctors in 1978. Within the framework of all those public health services, the Government extended health services to women as well as established hospitals for child and mother care.

1. Medical Services Available to Women:

Prompted by its attention to extend health care and specialized medical services to women, as previously mentioned, the State established the following facilities:

A. Mother Care Centres:

These centres take care of delivery cases, as well as extend pre-natal and preventive health services to expectant mothers. During the period 1968 to 1977, the number of these centres has considerably increased, rising from only ten* facilities in 1968 to 15 centres in 1977. The centres include clinics which extend medical services and guidance and advice to expectant mothers, as well as diagnose serious conditions and refer them to hospitals. They also perform some activities related to family planning.

* The Kuwaiti Child under the Childhood Convention, November 1979

B. The Maternity Hospital:

With the stupendous technical and human resources available to it, the Hospital plays a significant role in supplementing the functions of the mother care centres with respect to delivery cases, pre-natal care, and the treatment of other gynecological and obstetrical cases. The Hospital also includes a special clinic for gynecology.

C. The Family Planning Division:

The Family Planning Division was established in Kuwait in 1958 as a sub-division of medical clinics and complexes. The Division's role centres primarily upon the treatment of venereal diseases and cases of sterility in both men and women. It also includes a clinic for the examination of individuals wishing to get married, as a measure to ascertain the freedom of the would-be spouses from diseases which might have any adverse effect on their marital life or which might have a bearing on their ability to have healthy children or any children at all.

2. Health Consciousness Among Women:

In response to the attention devoted by the State to the health field, the Kuwaiti woman began to regularly visit clinics and child and mother care centres and avail herself of the medical services provided by maternity hospitals, if and when needed. The results of this response are evidenced by the drop in the rate of infant mortality among Kuwaiti children, as shown in the following schedule:*

Year	Live Births	Infant Mortality		Still Births	
		Number	Rate	Number	Rate
1975	24,341	1,056	43	378	15.5
1976	24,935	950	38	347	13.9
1978	25,128	967	38	285	11.3

* The Kuwaiti Child under the Childhood Convention, November 1979

The schedule indicates that the rate of infant mortality has dropped from 43 deaths for every 1,000 live births in 1975, to 38 deaths for every 1,000 live births in 1978. Likewise, it shows that the rate of still births has dropped from 378 cases or from 15.5 for every one thousand live births, to 285 cases or to 11.3 for every one thousand live births in 1978.

3. Women's Role in Health Services:

A. Training as Physicians and Nurses:

The Kuwaiti woman has enthusiastically embarked upon the medical field in order to perform her role in the rendition of health services. Kuwaiti women study medicine and become physicians. In 1975**, there were 39 female physicians in the country; but by 1978, this number had risen to 67 physicians. They also take up nursing at the Nursing Institute established by the State. In 1975, graduates from the Institute totalled 27 nurses with a General Nursing Diploma and 42 nurses with a Midwifery Diploma; compared with 67 and 32 nurses with the same diplomas, plus 10 nurses with Surgical Nursing Diplomas in 1978.

B. The Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society:

The Kuwaiti woman contributes to the honourable role performed by the Society - which was established by the Government on 10 January 1966, by furthering the realization of the Society's humanitarian, social, cultural and health objectives. Activities undertaken by women in this field are:

A. Social Aspects:

Women render social welfare services to the needy among the population such as the sick, the old, and children, in addition to providing relief assistance to the victims of wars and major disasters and catastrophies.

** Annual Statistical Abstract, 1979

B. Cultural Aspects:

Women contribute toward the preparations and arrangements for forums and lectures aimed at enlightening volunteers and citizens, as well as attend conferences.

C. Health Aspects:

Women participate in rendering first-aid services, as well as hold courses for training citizens in first-aid administration. In addition, they offer their services at all times as an auxiliary medical service, as well as participate in campaigns for the eradication of epidemics and health education.

Fourth: In the Field of Legislation

The State has enacted such laws and legislation governing citizens' affairs as would organize all aspects of their lives, without any distinction as to sex. In doing so, the State has paid special attention to laws dealing with women and family welfare. We propose to sum up herein the laws and regulations enacted for women in the following fields:

A. In the Field of Education:

As previously stated the State devotes to women's education the same degree of attention it devotes to men's education, without any distinction. Accordingly, it has made education compulsory and free of charge during the early stages, by virtue of Law No. 11 for the year 1965. The Law outlines the provisions relating to compulsory education, as well as spells out the State's undertaking to provide school buildings, textbooks, teachers, and all human resources which would help ensure the success of the compulsory education system. In providing this form of education, the State abides by the provisions of Article 9 of the Pan-Arab Cultural Convention under which the Member States have agreed to promote girls' education in line with religious doctrines and Arab values.

B. In the Field of Employment:

The State has seen to it that legislative acts and Laws pertaining to employment be drawn up with general application, in order to promote equality between workers, without any distinction between males and females. In addition, it has promulgated some laws and legislative acts specifically designed to protect women. For instance, Article 93* of the Civil Service Law provides as follows: "A female employee shall be granted a two-month special leave, with full pay, for delivery, which shall not be withheld from her other accrued vacations. Likewise, a female employee whose husband dies shall be granted a special leave of four months and ten days, with full pay, effective as of the date of her husband's death, which shall not be withheld from her other accrued vacations". The same Article also provides: "A female employee may be granted a special leave, without pay, for a maximum period of four years, if her husband is transferred outside the country".** or if she has a family problem, with a view to promoting child & mother wel

Furthermore, Article 60 of the Civil Service Law provides that: "A female employee or worker who is married to other than a civil servant shall be granted a social allowance computed at the rate prescribed for a bachelor employee; so shall a female employee whose husband dies be granted the same allowance in respect of her children ...".***

The State has also seen to it to promulgate the Law which would regulate the relationship of a female worker with her employer in the private sector. For instance, a female worker in the private sector may on the occasion of her marriage demand payment of her termination benefits, in full, for the period of her services, if she quits her job within six months from the date of her marriage.

* Woman and Socio-economic Development in Kuwait, 1975

** This is asserted in Ordinance No. 13/79, in the interest of the family and mother and child welfare.

*** The allowance is payable to the female worker if both she & her husband are eligible to the same.

With respect to the termination of services by way of resignation, the Law on Employees' Annuities provides for reducing an employee's monthly annuity by 5% if he resigns at the age of 45; and by 2% if he resigns at an older age but at less than 52 years of age. However, such reduction does not apply to a female employee who resigns by reason of marriage within one year from the date of marriage. The same law gives due consideration to the mother and provides for granting her a share of her deceased son's annuity, if she was a widow or a divorced woman prior to the death of her son and had not married other than her son's father.

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Article 15 of the same Law provides that the award payable in lieu of the monthly annuity payments of a deceased employee passes to the deceased's eligible dependents, without any distinction between males and females. Article 16 of the Law further provides that the share of the wife of an annuitant who dies after her husband shall be divided equally among her eligible children; while Article 17 provides if the widow of annuitant re-marries or dies after her husband's death, her share in her husband's award shall pass to her male and female eligible children in equal proportion among them.

C. In the Field of Health:

In an endeavor to protect child and mother health, the State has promulgated the necessary laws and legislative acts. For instance Article 93 of Civil Service Law No. 7 for the year 1960 grants a female employee a two-month special leave with full pay for delivery, which shall not be deducted from her other accrued vacations. This provision is also asserted in Article 47 of the Civil Service Regulations.

** Ibid, 1975

In addition Article 25 provides: "A pregnant woman shall be entitled to a leave of a maximum of 30 days prior to delivery and forty days after delivery. However, such worker may after the expiry of the said period absent herself from work for a maximum of one hundred consecutive or interrupted days, without pay, for a reason due to illness arising from pregnancy or delivery, substantiated by medical certificate. The Kuwaiti legislator has further adopted Convention No. 89* for the year 1948, which revises Convention 4 for the year 1919 and Convention 41 for the year 1924 concerning the Employment of Women during the Night for safeguarding the health of working women and protecting them from immoral factors, thereby giving women the opportunity to shoulder their family responsibilities as mothers.

2. Rights of the Kuwaiti Woman under Personal Status Laws:**

These rights are:

- The right to marry the person of her choice
- The right to be responsible for herself
- The right to break her engagement with a man
- The rights due to a wife from her husband, such as:

- * Financial rights (dower, alimony, the right to have a home).
- * Non-financial rights (the right to equal treatment, the right to good courtship, the right not to be injured, the right of enjoyment).
- * A wife's right to refuse to abide by a judgment for obedience, in lieu of forfeiting her right to alimony.
- * A wife's right to terminate her marriage by securing a court's judgment.
- * The Convention is one adopted by the ILO as a result of the studies made by experts, the recommendations of various states, researches, and deliberations at various ILO organs. 115 States have acceded to the Convention and adopted its provisions in their labour laws.

** Woman and Socio-economic Development in Kuwait, 1975

- * A woman's right to serve as guardian of her children.

3. ILO Conventions related to Women:

The Kuwaiti legislator has adopted the standards and conventions issued by the ILO. In fact, ILO Conventions dealing with women were the first ones to be adopted. They are as follows:

A. Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers:

This principle is provided for in Convention No. 100 for the year 1951, and is applicable to work of equal value.

B. Convention Concerning Night Work for Women:

Convention No. 89 (Revised 1948), which is purported at protecting the health of working mothers and safeguarding them from immoral deterioration, thereby enabling them to shoulder their family responsibilities and look after their children.

C. Conventions Prohibiting the Employment of Women in Health Hazardous Undertakings:

These are represented by Convention No. 13 for the year 1921, and Convention No. 45 for the year 1935 which prohibit the employment of women in industries which use specific poisonous materials, with a view to protecting women.

D. Convention Concerning the Employment of Women before and After Childbirth:

This is represented by Convention No. 3 for the year 1919, as revised by Convention 103 for the year 1952, which provides: "A woman shall not be permitted to work during the six weeks following her confinement ... and shall be paid benefits ... the exact amount of which shall be determined by the competent authority in each state

Fifth: Obstacles Hampering the Full Integration
of the Kuwaiti Women in the Development
Process:

- There are no obstacles in the way of the educational advancement of females. Opportunities are available to females pari passu with males. However, there is a small percentage of female dropout from schools. In addition, some parents or guardians are reluctant to abide by the Law for compulsory education.
- With respect to obstacles in the way of women's employment:
- There is a lack of access to vocational training opportunities which is, in turn, due to the lack of specialised technical and vocational schools, such as institutes for home economics and sewing where girls can receive training. Consequently, women could not avail themselves of this type of vital training.
- Some people believe that the legal provisions relating to maternity leave and confinement discourage employers from venturing into employing women.
- Lack of full awareness of women's role by some women, which prevents them from contributing to the service of their society.

IH: