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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR, INCLUDING THE PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE NEED
FOR ACHIEVING EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN AND TO WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE
ATTAINMENT OF THE GOALS OF THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT DECADE,
TO THE STRUGGLE AGAINST COLONIALISM, RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
AND TO THE STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND OF CO-OPERATION
BETWEEN STATES

Note verbale dated 25 June 1975 from the Permanent Mission of Lebanon
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and has the honour to transmit herewith a message from the President of the Lebanese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Suleiman Frangié, on the occasion of the International Women's Year, which will be observed in Lebanon throughout 1975.

The Permanent Mission of Lebanon requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to distribute this message (annex I) and the attached study concerning the progress achieved in Lebanon in the advancement of women and their integration in the development process (annex II) as an official document of the General Assembly, under items 77 and 78 of the preliminary list of items to be included in the provisional agenda of the thirtieth session.

* A/10150.

ANNEX I

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE LEBANESE REPUBLIC,
HIS EXCELLENCY MR. SULEIMAN FRANGIE, ON THE OCCASION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

Saturday, 22 March 1975

Along with the rest of the world, Lebanon is today observing the International Women's Year, which recognizes the rapid progress made by women towards equality, peace and development.

We have elected to begin the year in Lebanon on 22 March, when the coming of spring coincides with Mother's Day and Children's Day, and when the smiles of children and the radiance of peace cause nature to bloom.

In observing the International Women's Year, Lebanon also pays tribute to the contribution made by women, in good times and bad, to building civilization in various fields. Today, Lebanese women have a privileged position in law and administration, the arts and sciences, and in professional and public activities. Over 30 per cent of the members of liberal professions such as the law, engineering, medicine, pharmacy and teaching are now women. We must therefore enable them to play an increasingly important role in developing society. It is also incumbent upon us to give greater attention to the well-being and protection of women, not only at the level of the State but at the institutional and individual levels, in the interest of Lebanon, as a country of freedom and respect for the individual.

Fellow citizens, men and women,

We have accorded the International Women's Year the special attention it deserves, and we intend to observe it in the coming months, giving our full support to its goals. With God's help, we shall continue to make progress while respecting our ancestral traditions and customs, thus enhancing our contribution to civilization and continuing to serve our cherished homeland, Lebanon, the land of freedom and human values.

ANNEX II

LEBANESE REPUBLIC

Conference of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs,
Khartoum, 25-27 March 1975

THE ROLE OF LEBANESE WOMEN IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

LEBANESE REPUBLIC
Office for Social Development

The role of Lebanese women in social development

It goes without saying that the status of women in general, and Arab women in particular, was not freely chosen by them but imposed on them throughout history. Thus, women have been subjected to all kinds of rules and customs which have made them inferior to men, as far as their rights and obligations were concerned.

In a word, they have been subjected to patriarchal customs, which bestow upon men unlimited authority and unshared power to legislate, to prohibit and to permit ...

However, the impact of currents of opinion condemning the injustice of such a situation is now causing voices to be raised in favour of women receiving equal treatment and of utilizing their abilities.

These ideas must go hand in hand with attempts to establish a new and improved status for women, in keeping with society's need to turn their productive abilities to account by allowing them the opportunity of developing their formerly repressed personalities. It is therefore necessary to lay the material, economic, social, cultural and political foundations for this emancipation, which demands, not just mere legislative reforms but changing a mentality hidebound by tradition.

Accordingly, we shall begin by giving a general picture, by trying to describe in broad outline the position of Lebanese women today with a view to determining what progress has still to be made before they can attain a level at which they can play as important a role as men in the development of the community, as they are already doing in many societies.

The demographic situation

The most recent sample surveys, conducted in 1970, indicate that Lebanon has a population of 2,127,325. The distribution of the population by sex is almost equal, the masculinity proportion being slightly higher (51.9 per cent persons of the male sex).

As the surveys show, the Lebanese people is a youthful people:

43 per cent of the population is under 15 years;

52 per cent of the population is under 20 years;

only 5 per cent of the population is over 65 years;

52.3 per cent of the population is of working age (15-64 years).

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According to a number of sources, the dependency ratio in developing countries is 1:4 whereas it is 1:2 in developed countries. This means that every economically active person has to support four dependants, whereas in the developed countries an economically active person has only two dependants. The dependency ratio in the Near East is high, since it is estimated that 60-70 per cent of the population is under 20 years, which means that this group does not take part in production, since it receives neither the training nor the necessary guidance and no programme is planned to meet its needs in that sphere.

Although Lebanon is relatively developed, it still falls into the category of developing countries as far as its dependency ratio is concerned, for two good reasons: 50 per cent of the population is under 20 years and 82.5 per cent of the women are not economically active; in addition to these two categories must be added persons over 65 (who generally receive no old-age pensions), and unemployed or part-time workers. Thus, the economically active population is under 27 per cent and has to provide for the needs of the rest of the population. One may therefore ask the important question whether this small fraction of the population is in a position to satisfy development needs efficiently without resorting to women who are able to work and could, if they were properly directed, form an essential pool of manpower for development.

The social status of women in Lebanon

Lebanese women, like all Arab women, have lived under the yoke of ancestral traditions and customs, which controlled all aspects of their social, cultural and economic lives and deprived them of many of their human rights by subjecting them to ignorance, intolerance and underdevelopment. Their development has thus been inhibited, particularly in essentially tribal and paternalistic societies, in which women are deemed to be second-class citizens and throughout their lives are kept under the authority of men, whether husbands, fathers, brothers or even sons. This authority, whose legitimacy was never questioned, has prevented women from playing a constructive role in developing and exploiting the resources of their countries.

However, Lebanese women have been favoured by historical circumstances and a geographical position which enabled the country to have outside cultural and human contacts, to be influenced by various intellectual, political, social and economic movements which emerged elsewhere, to form, in this way, different standards and values, and consequently to adopt an attitude towards women which varied significantly from one region to another, and even from one social group to another within a region.

This open-mindedness made it possible for women to make a significant contribution to the voluntary social services, but not to play an active role in the community. Their participation has therefore continued to be marginal, and their influence small.

A study entitled "National social services in Lebanon" conducted in 1965 by

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the Ministry of Planning, reports that social services organized on a voluntary basis are largely the responsibility of women. The study also indicates that some 150 associations, including those most active in Lebanon, are presided over by women. There are 405 associations operating in all branches of the social services, and women play an important role in them at the operational level and at the management and decision-making level.

The following table shows the voluntary associations operating in Lebanon, distributed by the nature of the social services they provide (source "National social services in Lebanon").

Table 1

<u>Field of action</u>	<u>Number of associations</u>	<u>Percentage of the whole</u>
Child care	50	12.3
Help for the needy	192	47.4
Aid to the disabled	16	2.9
Regular services for local communities	7	1.8
Educational services	30	7.4
Health services	13	3.2
Miscellaneous social services	15	3.7
Multi-purpose associations	<u>82</u>	<u>20.3</u>
Total	405	100

The social activities undertaken by Lebanese women fall largely into the category of good works and charitable organizations which seek to alleviate certain social and economic problems. The women who work in this field come from a definite social class and have material and cultural resources.

In Table 2 below, the voluntary associations operating in Lebanon are distributed by region and according to whether they are presided over by men or women.

Table 2

Region	Associations presided over by men	Associations presided over by women	Total
Beirut	75	67	142
Mount Lebanon	64	29	93
South Lebanon	32	5	37
Bekaa	37	6	43
North Lebanon	<u>47</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>90</u>
Total	255	150	405

This table shows that the Beirut region, with the largest number of associations, is followed by the Mount Lebanon and North Lebanon regions. Then come the regions of Bekaa and South Lebanon, where there are about half the number of organizations found in North Lebanon.

It is reported that most of these organizations have their headquarters in administrative capitals and that those which are presided over by women are generally situated in Beirut, Tripoli or Mount Lebanon.

If the number of associations presided over by women is compared with the level of education and the degree of open-mindedness and social awareness prevailing in the regions in which they carry out their activities, it emerges that in those areas where schools and recreational and cultural centres are numerous, the number of voluntary associations working solely in the social sphere rises proportionately.

Furthermore, this open-mindedness encourages a growing number of girls to take part in cultural, recreational and social activities and to join the clubs which have been set up in towns and villages.

Lebanese women and education

It is generally agreed that education has a considerable influence on the moulding of human beings and develops their intellectual faculties and capacity for work. The education provided for Lebanese women enables them to develop their personality, assume their share of responsibility in the evolution of society and enhance the importance of the role they play in it. Lebanon has recorded considerable progress in this field during recent years, but, as indicated by the table below, there are still more boys than girls receiving schooling at all levels of education.

Comparative table of the distribution of pupils by
 sex and level of education for the two school years
 1966-1967 and 1972-1973 (Ministry of National
 Education and Fine Arts)

School year and sex	1966-1967			1972-1973		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<u>Level of education</u>						
Kindergarten	41,805	36,650	78,455	60,197	52,338	112,535
Primary	202,858	162,545	365,403	206,893	178,295	385,188
Secondary modern	43,221	29,438	72,659	73,086	59,065	132,151
Secondary	17,217	6,605	23,822	21,658	13,769	35,427
Total	305,101	235,238	540,339	361,834	313,467	565,301

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This table shows that the primary level of education has the largest number of pupils and that there are more boys than girls. It also shows that the numbers decrease as the level of education rises and that the number of girls decreases significantly faster than that of boys.

However, if the number of female pupils in the two years under consideration is compared, it can be seen that it has increased at all levels of education and doubled at the secondary modern and secondary levels. This is an indicator of progress in thinking on the education of women, who in the past had to be content with learning to read and write because they were destined to marry and devote themselves to household tasks. It was thought preferable for them to perfect themselves in that field rather than spending time on academic studies which would be of no use to them at home. Obviously this blunder has prevented women from participating in development because their poor intellectual background barred them from joining with men in building the society.

For a clearer picture of progress which has occurred in thinking on the education of girls, the illiteracy rates for various age groups given in the statistical surveys of Lebanese manpower drawn up by the Ministry of Planning in 1970 should be considered.

Table 3

Illiteracy rate for both sexes by age group

Sex	Age group								Average for persons over 10 years
	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-30	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and over	
Men	6.1	8.5	11	15.2	25	31.2	35.4	53.9	21.5
Women	15.3	20.7	28.6	37.8	51.3	59.8	66.8	79.04	42.1

If illiteracy among women in all groups is considered, it can be seen that the rate is five times higher among women of 60 and over than among girls from 10 to 14 years of age. This gap narrows as the age decreases; for example, the illiteracy rate is 300 per cent higher for women of 50 to 59 than for women of 10 to 14, and falls to 1.35 per cent for women of 15 to 19 years of age, a far lower figure than that prevailing 10 or 15 years ago.

It can also be seen that the illiteracy rate is much higher among women than among men in all age groups; for example, in the 10-14 age group it is 6.1 per cent for men and 15.3, i.e. more than double, for women.

This serves to confirm that, although attitudes towards the education of women have evolved considerably, priority is still given to the male sex when families have to make a choice, without taking into account the personal ability and talents of the individuals of either sex.

Vocational and technical training

The training received by women in this field is generally not related to the opportunities and needs of the labour market, since it is generally restricted to the teaching of dressmaking, household skills and secretarial skills and, to a certain extent, hotel training.

It should be noted that girls tend to choose secretarial skills because they are in great demand in the services sector.

Higher and university education

The American University was the first to admit girls in 1921 and was followed by the Saint Joseph University, which in 1922 established the first school for midwives. The Women's University Institute in Beirut was established in 1924.

For the 1970-1971 school year 4,850 female students 1/ enrolled in universities in Lebanon out of a total of 20,394 students, i.e. 23.6 per cent of the total number of students.

Although the number of male students is still much higher, the number of female students who enrol in the universities is growing from year to year, which indicates that attitudes are fast changing within families, who are finally bowing to the necessity of educating their daughters as well as their sons.

The statistics show a marked difference in the choice of studies. Forty-eight per cent of female students choose to study arts, whereas in the case of male students the proportion is 29 per cent.

The number of holders of higher studies diplomas has increased by 252 per cent, i.e. 2 1/2 times, in the 1969-1970 school year as compared with 1964-1965. This development gives ground for optimism regarding the situation of Lebanese women in present-day society.

The legal status of Lebanese women

Lebanon is unique in that personal rights differ according to religious denomination, which leads to some inequality between men and women, and between women themselves, in the matter of marriage, divorce, inheritance and capacity to testify in court.

Whatever the legal régime to which they are subject, married Lebanese women have the right to engage in trade freely only with their husbands' express or tacit consent.

1/ Source: Survey by the Ministry of Planning: Higher Education in Lebanon.

Political and trade union status

Special circumstances are required before citizens can engage in political activity at the parliamentary and municipal levels or within political parties and trade unions.

The entry of Lebanese women into political life comes at a time when the progress made in the cultural, economic (particularly industrial) and social fields have reached an appropriate level.

The Lebanese Constitution does not prohibit women from engaging in political activity; indeed, it states, in article 21, that: "any Lebanese over the age of 21 who fulfils the condition laid down by the electoral law ...". However, the right to vote was accorded to women only in 1953 under the decree of 6 February of that year, which granted women the right not only to vote, but also to be candidates for elections to the legislature.

The way in which women exercise their right to vote, particularly in the most backward regions of the country, proves that their economic or cultural level has no influence whatsoever on their participation in balloting, which, for example, reached a rate of 57 per cent in a town which was generally very backward at the cultural or economic level, whereas only 41 per cent was recorded in a town whose inhabitants, particularly the women, generally have a high cultural and economic level. However, most of the surveys carried out on this subject have shown that women are generally influenced by their husbands or families in the exercise of their political rights.

The proportion of women who join a political party is considered to be an indicator of the extent of their participation in this field, and in Lebanon it is about 7.3 per cent of the total membership of the various parties. The majority of these women have received an education, and female students have shown a marked tendency in recent years to join political parties, though still to a large extent following the example set for them in this respect in their family environment.

Lebanese women and professional associations

Of the 1,516 members of the executive boards of professional associations in Lebanon, 20, or 1.3 per cent, are women.

That proportion is very small and does not allow women to play their proper role at the decision-making level.

As far as student associations in Lebanon are concerned, every student is automatically a member of a union in the university to which he belongs. The participation of women students is no longer merely nominal, but has tended in recent years to become effective and active. Women students are demonstrating as much dynamism as their male counterparts, and are standing for office on faculty boards and voting for student representatives.

Lebanese women and work

The change in the social status of Lebanese women is unquestionably the result of the profound modification of the structure of society and of the labour force caused by their entry into the labour market. Whatever the cause of the latter phenomenon, it has radically altered the established social order.

As a result, women have won economic independence, which may be viewed as the beginning of social emancipation.

There are an estimated 538,000 workers in Lebanon, approximately 37 per cent of the entire population. This percentage, quite low in comparison with that of many countries, is explained by a youthful population, half of which is under 20 years old, and by the small number of women workers, who represent only 17.25 per cent of the economically active population in Lebanon. It should be noted that it is in the 20-25 age group that the percentage of economically active women - barely 25 per cent - is highest, and the percentage falls rapidly with age to reach 15 per cent for women aged 35. Thirteen per cent of women aged 50 are still working, but the proportion falls to 8 per cent for women aged 60 and over.

The variations in the rate of economic activity are explained by social traditions and customs, which require women to remain at home. Nevertheless, the number of women wishing to work is increasingly large in the rising generation. Many of them, however, give up work to marry and have children, and again seek employment when their children reach school age and they no longer need to be at home all the time.

The work position of rural women is different, in that in rural areas far more women work than is the case elsewhere in the country (with the exception of Beirut, the capital) because they participate in agricultural work.

It is therefore assumed that the number of women working in the agricultural sector is higher than the figure recorded, since many of them report that they are not economically active because they include agricultural work in their household tasks.

Labour force distribution by sex and occupation

(Source: Lebanese statistics for 1970)

Main occupation	Sex		Both sexes together	Percentage of women in each occupation
	Male	Female		
1. Members of the technical and liberal professions	7.3	21.6	9.8	37.8
2. Directors and senior managerial staff	2.3	0.2	2	2.1
3. Civil servants	7.9	10.3	8.3	21.6
4. Persons employed in business	14.2	3.2	12.3	4.6
5. Persons employed in the services sector	9.4	22.5	18.7	33.7
6. Persons employed in agriculture, stock-breeding and fisheries	18.1	22.6	18.9	20.9
7. Non-agricultural workers	37.2	19.6	34.1	10
8. Armed forces and others	3.5	0.3	2.9	1.9
9. Total	100%	100%	100%	17.5%

Many women belong to the technical and liberal professions, and account for 37.8 per cent of their membership. The women in this category are chiefly nurses and those working in the medical field, and teachers and women working in education. In Lebanon 21.6 per cent of economically active women belong to these professions.

Domestic servants come in second place. Women represent 33.7 per cent of all domestic servants and all staff of hotels, restaurants and recreational establishments.

Women account for 21.6 per cent of all civil servants. Although this proportion is not insignificant, it is only 10.3 per cent of all salaried employees.

The highest percentage of economically active women, 22.6 per cent of the female labour force, work in the agricultural sector, forming 20.9 per cent of its labour force.

19.6 per cent of economically active women are in manual occupations, and they form 10 per cent of all workers in that sector. Most of them are clothing or textile workers or shop assistants. Only 2.1 per cent of senior managerial staff are women, which indicates the extent to which they participate in decision-making.

It is true that these developments, mainly caused by the rise in the number of educated girls and of women working in various sectors, are no guarantee of women's emancipation, which calls for a change in economic and social structures so that better use may be made of their abilities and resources.

That is why there is now a tendency to give women a greater role in development. The efforts of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs may be given as an example: it has set up, inter alia, the National Council for in-service literacy training, which in the course of this year produced successful results with 5,000 women in its affiliated literacy centres.

The Office for Social Development also continues to provide services for women under its annual programme, either directly or by catering to the needs of some or all members of their families.

These services are provided through:

- (a) Medical and social centres
- (b) Social services centres
- (c) Creches.

A. The medical and social centres are responsible for:

Preventive and curative medical care

Advice on hygiene questions

Providing medicaments

Social services such as instruction in dressmaking and household skills, combating illiteracy, setting up libraries and recreation clubs, and training in manual work.

There are 112 centres, situated in all parts of the country.

B. Social services centres:

Most of their activities are directed towards women; they provide the following services:

Instruction in new teaching methods

Instruction in dressmaking, manual work and various handicrafts

Combating illiteracy

Various kinds of advice

Instruction in culinary and dietary principles

Setting up libraries.

The following table shows the distribution of the social services centres by region:

Region:	Beirut	Mount Lebanon	Bekaa	South Lebanon	North Lebanon	Total
Number of social centres	3	22	7	16	15	69

C. Creches

The creches provide the following services:

Day care for children aged between four months and six years

Feeding children and providing them with some extra clothing

Medical care and welfare of children

Visiting families in the region and studying their situation.

Distribution of creches by region in 1973:

Region:	Beirut	Mount Lebanon	Bekaa	South Lebanon	North Lebanon	Total
Number of creches	5	5	1	6	8	25

The Office for Social Development is currently preparing a three-year plan whose objectives in the initial phase are:

To solve a number of problems which prevent women from undertaking their responsibilities;

To ensure their participation in the development effort.

This will be done by:

(a) Improving the skills and raising the family income of women who take part in agricultural or handicrafts production, by:

Organizing training courses in those sectors either through the existing social centres or in specially created training programmes;

Organizing training programmes in first aid, hygiene and disease prevention through existing health centres or specialized bodies such as the Lebanese Red Cross and the medical faculties;

(b) Increasing the participation of women in spheres likely to improve their family and social situation and preparing them to contribute to the national effort and to rural development projects, chiefly by:

Having them join existing associations or creating special associations for them;

Organizing seminars and training courses designed to make them aware of their responsibilities in the rural sector (at the level of the municipality, local committee, association and co-operative);

(c) Seeking membership for them in local organizations and associations (within the scope of the Office for Social Development).
