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Social Development and Human Settlement Division

Survey of Social Development
in the ECWA Region, 1980

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Assessment of progress in social development must take into account the problems inherited from the past, in terms of illiteracy, ill health, and lack of social integration. Steady progress is being made in reducing the magnitude of these problems, through the allocation of economic and human resources to the appropriate institutions and programmes. Full assessment of this progress must await the availability of improved data, which will also permit the forecasting of future trends. At present, the sector with the best current data is education and an example of trend forecasting is provided below.

The countries of the ECWA region view educational expansion as an important condition of social economic development. Educational development in the ECWA region is marked by a rapid expansion of the education systems which is reflected in higher enrolment ratios at the various levels of education, increased numbers of teachers, greater differentiation in the types of education and in the emergence of educational planning. Access to education has been considerably facilitated during the 1970s in all countries of the region.

Further development of human resources in the region depends in the first instance on reduction of literacy and the growth of educational enrolments. It is important to note that the increased enrolments place a heavy burden on the financial and institutional capacities of the individual countries. The forecasts for the next twenty years, to the year 2000, indicate the extent of progress expected, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Development and Projections of
Educational Enrolments in
Countries of Western Asia, 1970 - 2000

<u>COUNTRY & YEAR</u>	Percentage of Age Group Enrolled in Educational Institutions			Adult Illi- teracy Rate (Aged 15+)
	Age 6-11	Age 12-17	Age 18-23	
BAHRAIN				
1970	78.6	76.0	9.8	59.9
1980	82.9	80.2	14.1	45.0
1990	100.0	83.7	16.5	33.8
2000	100.0	87.1	20.5	25.4
DEMOCRATIC YEMEN				
1970	47.9	20.2	2.6	73.8
1980	74.5	46.8	13.5	61.0
1990	83.3	53.8	21.8	40.6
2000	90.1	57.4	25.1	27.2
EGYPT				
1970	66.4	32.2	12.8	56.6
1980	68.9	42.0	24.5	45.7
1990	73.1	48.4	28.1	38.3
2000	78.8	52.1	30.2	28.8
IRAQ				
1970	55.4	35.9	10.5	69.4
1980	81.5	55.0	21.1	56.6
1990	90.3	59.2	23.5	42.2
2000	94.8	63.8	26.2	25.9

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(cont'd...)

COUNTRY & YEAR	Age 6-11	Age 12-17	Age 18-23	Illiteracy Rate (Aged 15+)
JORDAN				
1970	63.1	41.3	6.6	51.8
1980	78.4	62.0	11.9	42.0
1990	81.6	68.1	14.2	32.3
2000	86.2	72.5	16.1	23.3
KUWAIT				
1970	65.1	68.5	17.6	45.0
1980	72.0	71.8	19.5	37.3
1990	79.6	74.9	21.7	32.7
2000	91.6	80.0	24.1	31.2
LEBANON				
1970	79.4	61.2	29.1	31.8
1980	92.2	65.5	32.1	23.5
1990	100.0	69.1	34.2	16.5
2000	100.0	73.4	35.4	11.9
OMAN				
1970	2.9	0.3	-	95.2
1980	70.1	34.8	3.2	83.1
1990	80.9	67.3	6.4	64.9
2000	93.5	73.6	12.8	43.2
QATAR				
1970	52.0	64.2	9.1	93.1
1980	82.5	76.2	17.6	80.5
1990	100.0	81.5	20.5	61.2
2000	100.0	85.4	24.0	33.4

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(cont'd...)

COUNTRY & YEAR	Age 6-11	Age 12-17	Age 18-17	Illiteracy Rate (Aged 15+)
SAUDI ARABIA				
1970	24.2	17.8	4.5	93.1
1980	46.6	37.0	16.8	83.8
1990	72.4	52.3	19.9	63.6
2000	83.4	65.8	23.5	38.6
SYRIA				
1970	79.6	39.7	18.7	59.7
1980	98.8	63.4	23.5	45.0
1990	100.0	68.2	26.2	33.7
2000	100.0	72.1	28.6	23.2
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES				
1970	56.0	27.2	-*	80.1
1980	84.1	66.8	10.0	57.6
1990	100.0	78.3	14.4	41.4
2000	100.0	86.2	19.2	29.8
YEMEN				
1970	7.7	2.8	0.2	93.3
1980	27.6	14.6	3.4	91.7
1990	46.9	21.0	7.2	78.2
2000	51.4	23.6	8.7	70.1

* 100% are external students

Source : Projections of the Future of Education in the Arab Region, 1981-2000, UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab States, 1980.

Study of Table (1) shows the great range of educational enrolments and illiteracy rates in the region. At present, in 1980, enrolment at the elementary level ranges from a low of 27.6% to a high of 100%. The highest figures are achieved by countries with relatively small populations and large financial resources.

The trends in illiteracy rates show that it will take many years to reduce the burden of illiteracy, even with relatively high enrolment ratios. By the year 2000, it is forecast that illiteracy ratios in the countries of Western Asia will range from 11.9% to 70.1%, with most of the countries falling in the 20-30% range. This reduction in illiteracy is to be achieved through heavy expenditures on education.

Expenditure on education (table 2), as a percentage of total public expenditures increased from 14.7 to 18.6 percent in Democratic Yemen, from 8.2 to 13.5 percent in Saudi Arabia and from 6.3 to 11.4 percent in Yemen, between 1975 and 1977. Using a different measure, the fraction of GNP expended on education, it can be seen that expenditure rose in the majority of the countries.

Table 2. Public expenditure on education in selected ECWA countries (1975 & 1977)

<u>Country</u>	<u>As a Percentage Of Gross National Product</u>		<u>As a Percentage Of Total Public Expenditure</u>	
	<u>1975</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1977</u>
Democratic Yemen	-	4.1	14.7	18.56
Jordan	3.9	3.1	9.4	6.1
Kuwait	2.6	4.16	14.7	6.25
Oman	2.1	1.13	-	5.55
Qatar	4.7	2.1	7.0	6.17
Saudi Arabia	4.6	9.29	8.2	13.5
Syrian Arab Republic	3.7	4.5	8.5	7.4
Yemen	0.6	1.45	6.3	11.4
United Arab Emirates	1.7	2.94	18.6	9.44

Source : United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia, based on data compiled from national and international sources.

The proportion of female students at the primary level has been increasing, with females now constituting about one-third of the enrolment. In Jordan, females comprised 46.3 percent of total enrolment in the first level in 1977, as compared to 41 percent in 1975. In Yemen, the same proportion rose by only one percentage point, from 11 percent to 12 percent, over the same period. In 1977, female enrolment at all levels accounted for approximately 45 percent in Kuwait, 54.6 percent in Bahrain, 40 percent in the Syrian Arab Republic and a little over 50 percent in Qatar.

Secondary education in the ECWA region has traditionally given first priority to general education, followed by vocational education and teacher training. In the past, technical and vocational school enrolment was within 2 percent of total enrolment in the region. In Jordan, however, the rate reached 15 percent by 1975.

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In view of the current and future demand for technicians, present efforts in this regard must be strengthened.

Higher education has been expanding in the region, with the rapid growth of new universities in Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Democratic Yemen and the United Arab Emirates and the increase in enrolment educational facilities in other countries of the region. There still exists, however, an imbalance between the relatively low number of graduates in science, medicine and technological fields and the large numbers in the humanities and law resulting in simultaneous surpluses and shortages in several professional categories. Thus, a major challenge confronting nearly all member countries is to match educational growth with employment opportunities and development requirements.

Another problem is that of illiteracy which, in spite of the expansion in education, is still widespread in the region, particularly among female and older-age groups. The illiteracy rate (based on 1975 figures) for the region as a whole is about 70 percent and reaches in some member countries 90 percent. Furthermore, illiteracy among females is markedly higher than among the male population. In Jordan, for example, the 1975 illiteracy rate was 19 percent for males and 46 percent among females.

Member countries have intensified their efforts to drastically reduce the levels. Iraq, for example, launched in December 1978 a campaign for the eradication of illiteracy among the 15-45 years age group. This ambitious effort, which involves the massive mobilization of some 20,000 literacy centres and 78000 teachers, is expected to reach about 2 million people through two 7-month courses over a 3-year period. The campaign is compulsory and is backed by tough enforcement legislation and severe employment consequences in cases of non-compliance. Early results are encouraging. It has been received with enthusiasm especially by women whose enrolment was significantly above expected levels.

Inadequate facilities, coupled with teaching and instruction weaknesses, have resulted in many students graduating with inadequate standards of skills which made it difficult for them to find the type of employment which they believe their education and training qualify them for. This is particularly apparent in higher education, which has expanded in a number of countries to the point of graduating more students than their economics could absorb. One result of this, is the migration of talents abroad. The "brain-drain" out of the ECWA region originates mainly from Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic and the Palestinians. It is estimated that an average of four thousand professionals leave the region every year. 1/

A third major educational problem in the region relates to the quality of education. It is no secret that many teachers are under-trained and unqualified. The curricula in many countries are often not adapted to local requirements, although some countries including Egypt, the Gulf States and the Syrian Arab Republic have been keenly interested in curriculum standardization and development. In general, the formal system of education and training is neither adequate nor geared to meeting, within a reasonable span of time, the region's needs for skills and specialized education. Few specialized institutions exist in the region which are adequately equipped to meet the special training requirements in developing administrative capabilities. Furthermore, salary levels and career development opportunities in the public sector are often unsatisfactory.

Health

The ECWA region is experiencing a steady trend of health improvement in terms of falling mortality rates and rising life expectancy. Also a more effective communicable disease control is evolving further. However, the control of major infectious diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and cholera remains a high priority in many member countries.

1/ See the "Brain-Drain" Problem in the ECWA Countries (E/ECWA/57/Add.2), July 1978, p.18.

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Public expenditure on health as a percentage of total government spending in 1977 ranged between 0.52 percent in the Syrian Arab Republic and 6.9 percent in the United Arab Emirates (Table 3).

Table 3. Public expenditure on health in selected countries of the ECWA Region for the year 1977

<u>Country</u>	<u>As a percentage of gross national product</u>	<u>As a percentage of total public expenditure</u>
Democratic Yemen	1.2	5.5
Jordan <u>1/</u>	1.2	2.3
Kuwait <u>1/</u>	1.7	2.6
Oman	0.3	1.6
Qatar	1.0	2.9
Saudi Arabia	2.1	3.1
Syrian Arab Republic	0.3	0.5
Yemen	0.6	4.9
United Arab Emirates	2.1	6.9

Source : United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia, based on data compiled from national and international sources.

1/ Estimates.

Systematic planning of health programmes, is being practiced in most ECWA countries. Formal health plans consisting of curative and preventive components have been formulated in Bahrain, Democratic Yemen, Egypt, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Throughout the region, the health sector is characterized by the predominance of curative and related services like hospitals, out-patient units and laboratories. For example, in Saudi Arabia the major portion of the health budget goes to hospital buildings. Some ECWA countries have strengthened their public health insitutes and introduced public health training courses (Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait and

Saudi Arabia). This is a positive step in the direction of consolidating the preventive aspects of health such as immunization, environmental sanitation and maternal and child health care.

Whether it is in the field of curative or preventive medicine, existing health plans aim at relieving the critical shortages of trained personnel at various levels, improving the administrative structure and machinery of health services, and achieving a more equitable distribution of health services. These plans also aim at increasing the populations' public health knowledge inculcating health consciousness and practices, providing adequate and safe water supplies, the sanitary disposal of waste, the provision of a full range of basic health services and the control and eradication of communicable diseases.

In spite of the population growth experienced in all of the ECWA countries, the doctor/population ratio has improved considerably in many countries. However, throughout the region, this ratio remains low, varying in 1977 from one doctor per 721 persons in Kuwait and to one doctor per 2,515 persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Moreover, the distribution of doctors favours urban areas to the neglect of rural ones. The availability of medical manpower resources also countries to improve. However, some ECWA countries still rely heavily on expatriate personnel.

The ECWA region suffers from an inequitable distribution of health facilities at the country level. In Democratic Yemen, Oman and Yem, access to medical facilities by the rural population is extremely difficult. However, Iraq, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic have been attempting to adequately cover both the rural and urban population. In the United Arab Emirates, all major population centres now have hospitals while small towns and rural areas have clinics. In Saudi Arabia, mobile clinics operate in desert areas.

The training of physicians and other professional categories, has greatly improved in the region. Medical, pharmacy and dental schools have been established in a number of ECWA countries. Despite a wide variation in the availability of trained health manpower, most ECWA countries are making progress towards the provision of a more comprehensive, co-ordinated and more technically capable health services. There continues, however, to be an urgent need for middle-level manpower to support the high level manpower to support the high level medical expertise. But recruitment into middle-level occupations has been slow and a number of ECWA countries have relied heavily on expatriates.

The problem of attracting physicians to work in rural areas is particularly difficult. Though many governments in the region are aware of this problem and are making efforts to develop a cadre of medical personnel trained to meet the demands of rural areas, more needs to be done in this regard. The training courses and curricula are very often not oriented towards the actual needs and realities of rural communities.

Social welfare

Social welfare in the region is increasing being interpreted as a body of activities and an organized function designed to enable individuals, families and groups of people to cope with changing conditions. At present, the social welfare sector is characterized by a dichotomy between non-developmental and developmental programmes. However, social welfare planning is being increasingly integrated in the national development effort in such countries as Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia where current development plans contain specific targets and related policy measures.

Particular segments of the population (children, youth, widows, the aged or the unemployed) are increasingly becoming the subject of specific social policies in almost every country of the region. Social welfare services to vulnerable groups have received most of the attention from both the public and the private sectors. Thus, institutional care for orphans, the physically handicapped, the mentally retarded and delinquents forms the bulk of social welfare programmes. Other social welfare programmes which have been initiated in several member countries include vocational preparation centres in Jordan, school social work in Kuwait, community education centres in Saudi Arabia and guidance units for women and girls in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Participation of Women in Development

Progress has been made in the integration of women into the region's development process. There is evidence of a long-term trend towards providing more education and a bigger role for women in economic, social and political life.

There exists among the countries of the ECWA region great differences in the extent of women's participation in economic activity. In some countries, large numbers of educated women are active in many sectors. In others, the number of educated women is small, their literacy rate is low, and their activity is confined mainly to the family, teaching and certain traditional occupations. Government policies also vary among member countries. In some, the participation of women in many activities, including politics and the army, is encouraged, other countries restrict it to a narrow range of activities.

Education is the field where the opportunities for women in the ECWA region have expanded the most. There has been a steady increase in the overall female enrolment and in the number of girls reaching post elementary levels. Furthermore, the enrolment of more girls in scientific and technical specializations at the secondary and higher levels of education is also expanding. This new trend is already having a noticeable effect on women's employment. Nevertheless, more than one-half of the region's girls of elementary school age are still out of school.

Female education in the region suffers from several weaknesses including a high drop-out rate, especially in rural areas, and limited access to technical, scientific and vocational education. While female enrolment rates in the ECWA region are slightly higher than the average for developing countries, illiteracy rates are the highest in the world and activity rates are the world's lowest.

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The rate of the economically active female population in the ECWA region varies between 3.5 percent and 18.5 percent of total population. Excluding work in the agricultural sector, the average activity rate of women over the age of 15 does not exceed 6 percent. The agricultural sector employs 60 to 80 percent of all economically active women in member countries where agriculture constitutes the principal economic activity.

It can be reasonably assumed that most female workers in the modern economic sectors are concentrated in the service, commercial and financial sectors, with only a small proportion working in the industrial and other commodity-producing sectors.

The increasing interest in the advancement of women in the region can be seen in the establishment of special institutions for women's affairs in several countries. Both Egypt and Lebanon have semi-autonomous national commissions on women, composed of representatives of voluntary associations. Kuwait has set up a Task Force for Women's Affairs in its Ministry of Planning. Jordan has established a Department of Women's Affairs in its Ministry of Labour. Furthermore, Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic have each a bureau of Women's Affairs within their respective Ministry of Social Affairs. Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Social Affairs has a Women's Bureau in each Governorate. In Iraq, a Rural Women's Development Centre is part of the State Organization of Peasant Culture. Democratic Yemen has made similar initiatives.

The interest of the governments has also been evident in attempts to give special emphasis to the needs of women, as participants and beneficiaries from development, in the new development plans which are to be issued in 1981.

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Integrated Rural and Community Development

Most of the countries of the ECWA region are stressing in their current national development plans the development of both the rural and agricultural sectors. However, such emphasis has not been sufficient, especially as a sizable portion of the population in these countries is considered rural and the share allocated to the development of their agricultural sector is relatively low as compared to total allocations for all sectors. In Syria, for example, 23.9% of total allocations for all sectors during the plan period 1976-80 was devoted to the development of agriculture compared to 12.2% and 5.2% for Saudi Arabia and Jordan respectively during the same plan period. For Iraq and Democratic Yemen, 19.3% (in 1975) and 36.8% (during the plan period 1974-78) of the total planned allocations respectively were earmarked to the development of agriculture compared to 4.4% and 14.7% for Oman and Yemen respectively during the plan period 1976-80.

Despite the relatively low allocations in most ECWA countries, for the development of their agricultural sector, most of these countries have recently realized the importance of applying the integrated approach to rural and community development in which both the development of human resources and that of agriculture are considered to be equally important.

At present there are 30 integrated rural and community development projects in eight countries of the region: 8 in Iraq, 7 in Yemen, 5 in Jordan, 4 in Democratic Yemen, 3 in Syria and 1 in each of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Oman. It is expected that more integrated rural and community development projects are to be implemented in the future in spite of the limited success which they had in narrowing the gap between urban and rural populations of the areas in which these projects are located. This is basically a reflection of the countries recent experience with the integrated approach to rural development and their unfamiliarity with its requirements.

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Many of the problems and constraints faced by ECWA countries in their integrated rural development (IRD) efforts tend to be common. The current development plans in most countries of the region lack a clear national policy and perspective on IRD. The aim of such a policy should be to achieve balanced rural development through increasing agricultural productivity, creating employment opportunities building-up the necessary institutions and/or strengthening existing ones, reducing income inequalities, and ensuring local involvement in rural development activities. The elaboration of a national IRD policy and plan is essential for effective local rural development. In addition, most of the countries ought to consider establishing appropriate machineries to help plan, implement and coordinate IRD projects and programmes. At present, different ministries and/or departments are in charge of different projects, and various components of such projects are carried out independently. It is important, therefore, that the limited resources available for IRD projects to be coordinated to ensure their efficient utilization. Such co-ordination can be pursued through the establishment of a national body in which all ministries and departments concerned with rural development can be represented.

Another barrier confronting the implementation of IRD projects and programmes in countries of the region is the inavailability of multi-purpose IRD centres, on the district or project area level, into which other available services and resources can be integrated. The team serving at such centres should represent the various, ministries and departments concerned with rural development and should be able to extend the various services and programmes needed for agricultural and social development.

At the project level, most of the IRD projects in the region suffer from improper planning, lack of qualified personnel, lack of participation and involvement of beneficiaries in them, lack of

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co-ordination between various departments and ministries concerned, lack of effective communication for reaching farmers and insufficient institutional support. Unless such obstacles are being tackled seriously by governments of the region no real progress on achieving the objectives of IRD can be made.

Human Settlements

The ECWA countries have recently experienced a dramatic urban growth. The movement of people from rural to urban areas proceeds at a time when modernization and diversification of agricultural activities is taking place. The pressure of the rural population and the expectation of more stable and remunerative employment, better education and health care in the cities have led to a steadily growing flow of people to urban and industrial centres. Rural people and those living in smaller towns tend either to move to large metropolitan areas,^{1/} or to shift from one metropolitan area to another. The absence of middle size towns and the lack of deliberate national urbanization policies hinder the formation of a sound hierarchy of urban settlements.

Prevailing laws and administrative systems considerably hamper the execution of the planned development of human settlements. The paucity of specialized personnel and the continuous "brain-drain" out of the region are exacerbating the problem of establishing and staffing proper institutions. At present, fragmented decision-making with regard to the physical development of human settlements is the rule. Legislation is often inadequate and difficult to implement. Because of poor zoning regulations, solutions for land-use problems have often been inappropriate resulting, inter alia in high speculation in land, explosive growth of housing estates and heavy traffic congestion.

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^{1/} Urban growth rates over the past few years in capital cities have ranged between 5 and 15 percent annually.

The housing situation in the ECWA region is still characterized by considerable backlogs, insufficient replacement, overcrowding and lack of careful and comprehensive planning. Current trends indicate that for most member countries, housing construction will remain below housing needs for a long time to come.

The successful accomplishment of any housing programme is dependent on the availability of materials, manpower, financial resources and proper management. Comprehensive policies and construction programmes and an in-depth analysis of the various factors involved is needed.

The production of building components including fittings, fixtures, wood, and sheet glass is in its early stages. In spite of the fact that large investments have been allocated to cement and structural steel industries, the available supplies of these materials have not yet met the demand in the region.

The scarcity of fresh water supply in Bahrain, Democratic Yemen, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Yemen Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Qatar has created increasing problems. At the present times the scarcity of aggregates and manpower has led to a rapid increase in the use of prefabricated building components, which is not suitable for local requirements.

A comprehensive approach to the question of human settlements seems to be under consideration in a number of member countries. Such an approach is aimed at ensuring the growth of a balanced and stable market for the building industry; fostering co-ordinated research; and building knowledge on the adaptation, innovation and diffusion of appropriate technologies. A favourable development has been the establishment by some ECWA countries of specialized institutions capable of conducting relevant research in human settlement technology.



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With regard to housing financing institutions, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic have created national housing banks during the sixties and seventies. In 1977, Lebanon and Yemen created their own housing financing institutions.

Rural settlements' development programmes and policies in the region, when they exist, are given low priority. They are predominantly isolated measures planned as a part of agricultural development plans. Moreover, most governments, in coping with the growing housing crisis in their capital cities, emphasise urban requirements at the expense of housing needs in rural areas.