

The Reality and policies of the development of women in the arab society

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Abstract:

This work deals with the reality of women and their position in the Arab society, their role in the development in its different forms; social, economic and political development under the nature of the Arab society and the nature of the prevailing culture, it also deals with the importance of the woman as a human capital and part of the human resource, furthermore it deals with the development of women policies in the Arab society in the fields of social, political and economic development.

Key Words: Woman ; Development; Role of the woman; Policies of development.

الملخص:

يتناول هذا العمل او المقالة واقع المرأة ومكانتها في المجتمع العربي ودورها في التنمية بمختلف أشكالها من تنمية اجتماعية واقتصادية وسياسية في ظل طبيعة المجتمع العربي وطبيعة الثقافة السائدة، كما يتناول أهمية المرأة كرأس مال بشري وجزء من المورد البشري، ويناقش سياسات تنمية المرأة في المجتمع العربي في مجالات التنمية الاجتماعية والسياسية والاقتصادية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المرأة; التنمية; دور المرأة; سياسات التنمية

Introduction:

The woman constitutes half the society or even much more than the man in many societies. She is an integral part of the human capital which can be relied on in the process of development and the achievement of progress as an actor no less capable and thought of men. It should also be pointed out that women have the same human rights as those cherished by men from the right of a decent life, work, freedom and self-realization, therefore, states that place women in one hand with men in the balance of power and rights have invested in women and employed them as a human element capable of giving and contributing efficiently in the different aspects of life for this sake such countries achieved a great deal of prosperity and progress.

While the states which considered women as being inferior to men in status, efficiency and giving limited its movement and restricted its

activities to inherited socio-cultural considerations paralyzed the role of women and made them non-expendable consumer class, non-dependent dependency, for a cumbersome family budget and the national economy rather than being productive which led these countries to lag behind the ambitions of development and prosperity.

Problematic:

The woman is considered a crucial part in the working power in the society, which can be relied on and invest on it as a human resource capable to achieve a plus in the national income as well as in the fulfillment of prosperity. She has different roles which she could do in the social, economic, and political life, however, this woman is being paralyzed due to some cultural and social reasons in the Arab world, and she possesses an inactive human resource which is not invested in sufficiently, which made her included in the consumptive category and has the greater portion of illiteracy, poverty, joblessness and sicknesses which are considered of the obstacles of development, that's why to achieve prosperity in the different fields of life, there must an investment in women and developing her so that to be a supporting worker in the achievement of social development.

Questions of the study:

- What is the status of women in the Arab world?
- What are the roles of the woman in the social life?
- What are the policies of the development of the woman in different fields, social, cultural, political, and economical ones?

Method of the study:

We adopted the descriptive analytical approach in this research and that after much research on the knowledge and scientific notions which have been written on the topic especially those concerned with the position and the value of the Arab woman and her roles in the social life and the policies of developing women, then analyzing those notions and knowledge to establish a perfect notion on the subject of study and its scientific necessities judging from the study questions.

Significance of the study

The study has a scientific importance symbolized with the importance of its topic which deals with the policies of developing women which are considered half the society and an important part of human resource in social reality governed by a culture hindering the role woman in life in general, and research has also a practical importance illustrated with what will be arrived at from notions and results about the topic of the research.

The Aims of study

- The recognition of the reality of the woman and her position in society.
- Exhibition of the role of the woman in the different prosperity fields.
- The discussion of the importance of woman as a human resource.
- Determination of the most important policies of developing the woman.

Concepts:

Development:

can be defined it a process of economic social and cultural change to build and function in order to satisfy the social needs of individuals and to regulate their behavior.

That stands for studying their different issues so that it deals with all aspects of their social and economic life and so on, in which radical and comprehensive changes are made through the planned, multiple and organized efforts of individuals and groups to achieve a specific goal.¹

Prosperity is also defined as being a process of change in the social economic and cultural structure of the society, seeking basically to raise the level of the population in all sides and this signifies that prosperity is that realization of the citizen by means of an increase in his income accompanied by positive development in his behavior, concepts and actions.²

Prosperity is viewed as well to be a process with many aspects and multiple as it seeks to increase the individual's skills and ability and increase the freedom to creativity and increase the sense of responsibility in addition to providing material things to him.

Approaches to development In discussions of development issues two general approaches can be distinguished:

1. The fight against poverty This approach focuses on the problems of widespread poverty, hunger and misery in developing countries and on the question of what can be done in order to realise improvements of the situation in the short term.

2. The analysis of long-term economic and social development This approach concentrates on comparing developments in different countries,

regions and historical periods in order to gain a better understanding of the factors that have long-term effects on the dynamics of socio-economic development.³

Empowerment:

can be defined as a “multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important”.⁴

Development of women:

The woman is a tool and a mean that contributes in the economic and social construction plan and her work is one of the elements for the liberation and the formation and proof of her personality”.

The woman is a machine working inside and outside the house as she plays the mother, the wife and the housewife, as well as doing economic and political work for a paid wage.⁵

The woman is also known to be one of the most important tools to achieve prosperity throughout her contribution in the process of development whether inside the house or outside of it.

The Status of Women in Arab Society:

The situation of women and their status within the Arab society presents itself as a humanitarian problem due to the difference in status and status throughout history, where the society before Islam knew the difference in its dealings with women, there is appreciation for some and recognition of

their role and recognition of their status in their society. Some of them practiced trade and some others possessed convoys. The society did not object their practicing of different professions and they considered that something normal, and there were other examples of the persecution of women and their enslavement. The status of women in Arab societies continued to vary even after the advent of Islam until the beginning of the twentieth century, where trends emerged advocating reform of the status of women.

And those who called for the emancipation of women focused on teaching them, in which Rifah el Tahtaoui established the first school in Egypt in order to prepare women for their sacred mission of raising generations as well as playing their role in a better society and their contribution to economic life and raising the standard of living. Therefore most of the Arab countries witnessed women who go to work after their original role was that of just of mother wife. This idea, which served the social and cultural systems inherited to consolidate them in the collective mind of individuals.

As a result women possessed a role the process of development which led to the raise women's labor trusting in the necessity in their contribution in the social activity, and some governments enacted legislation and regulations for working women guarantee their rights and protect them, and this reflects the extent of interest in women as an active component and a participant in the production process and in the development of society in the Conference on the protection of women workers to continue to work.⁶ As far as is concerned with the Arab Labor Conference, they established a

committee specialized in women labor and founded its head quarter in Tunisia and it deals with following topics:

- Research and study the social conditions of Arab working women.
- The conditions of women in the labor legislation.
- The conditions of women in the world and the contribution of the organization in the universal year of the woman.

Since the Arab woman is considered to be half the society, there is no other ways to achieve sustainable development, but to actively involve them as a key factor in building the future. Hence, the position of Arab women should be seen through their role and economic position in the development process.

At the economic level, Arab women play a role in the production process, especially in the household and rural economy. However, this role is greatly reduced at the general economic level, despite its involvement in the economy and business which represents around 26 percent. It also represents the greatest percentage of joblessness in the Arab world.

At the social level, the Arab woman remains the least lucky, which the percentage of women reading and writing does not exceed 49.5 percent according to the development report of 2005. There is also a percentage of around 50 percent of women who get married before the age of 18.

The UN World Food Program's report on combating hunger lists several facts about the status of women in the Arab world and globally from which we can mention

1. Women constitute more than half the world population, however in many parts of the world especially in Asia and Latin America, where they are much more liable to hunger than men.
2. Women and girls are those who suffer most from starvation particularly following natural disaster and crises.
3. Women in Africa work 50 percent average more than men daily.
4. There is a huge gap in education in which for every one hundred boy not enrolled in school in Benin there is about 257 girl not enrolled, in Yamen 270 girls, in Iraq 316 and in India around 426.
5. Around half pregnant women in the third world suffer from Anemia, furthermore iron deficiency causes around 110000 death during childbirth each year, as do the mothers who suffer from starvation underweight babies from which approximately 20 percent of them die before reaching the age of five, and there are around 17 million babies underweight babies each year.
6. Research confirms that more entry into the hands of women leads to better results in the fields of health education as well as feeding the children.⁷

And here we ask the following questions

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- 1.Are conferences, associations, data releases and sign agreements considered sufficient to fix the situation of women and give them their rights so that they might practice their compulsory role in the process of prosperity?
 - 2.Has the mentality of Arab society reached a point where women's rights are equal to men's rights?
 3. What is the status that women should be in the context of Arab culture?

The Role of Women in Development:

Actually, the role of the woman in the contemporary world occupies a high position in the subjects which are being discussed and contemporary research did not confirm the existence of any kind of difference between the potential of men and women apart from their sex, the women can, if well trained, if a woman is trained, she can do all the activities that enable her to achieve her vital roles, and the radical change in manufacturing required the contribution of women in numerous fields, since the economic and social development entailed the deployment of all human and natural resources. And despite the importance of the traditional roles of women, such matter is not sufficient, and it requires the performance of a positive role in process of production, in the political field as well as social work.

The role of women in the development process stands for, those efforts and contributions made by women whether they are social and economic which might lead to social change and contributes in the achievement of a certain level of social development and the woman as a human energy

affects and gets affected by the development strategy whether on the level laying the plan or its execution, so if the woman belonged to a backward culture of material and moral aspects, this will be reflected on her in general, however the more her development role will be focused basically on her skills and potential on one side, and from what the society provides from awareness to rationalize such a role on the other side, to the extent of all this, the progress achieved by women in the development of their society and her contribution in the development is considered to be a human investment and a necessity which has to be taken into account by the both the developed countries and underdeveloped ones.

The role of women in development is influenced by the dynamics of social change locally and globally. Their role can be effective in this comprehensive movement by the clarity of their personality within the framework of the social structure that lives and interacts with its structural structure through the institutions and the relationships it connects their impact on trends in public life.

The process of development is considered to be a process of whole voluntary transformation based in its essence on the citizen apart from his sex as long as he is capable of giving he is considered prosperity maker, which included among the concept of the contribution of the woman in the prosperity appear many issues from which we might mention her contribution labor power, her contribution in the political laws as well as the laws organized for the social life, her role in the social awareness and in the family and its issues.

The Economic Role of Women:

The woman enjoys her economic independent personality and full freedom to act with her money, furthermore she has full right to sell and to trade as well as to seal contracts, she also has the right to choose any job she wishes to practice.

The shape of the contribution of economic women is considered throughout the activities and the works they perform whether inside the house or outside of it, takes different pictures, from which direct contribution in material shape such as wages and salaries they get or prices of goods and products they sell or profits they reap from some manufactured products. As far as the indirect contributions they represent the value of the different products women produce and consume inside the house, and that represent cash value women participate in the budget of the family and takes part in improving the level of life of the family.

Women contribution rates vary in economic activity between regulated and non-regulated sectors and it differs as well between the urban life and that of the countryside and such difference can be traced back to some social and cultural factors specific to each society social environment.

International Labor Organization (ILO) studies show that third the working women in the world, and that the highest percentage of the contribution of women under the age of fifteen and more, and concerning her contribution in economic activity the studies proved that it reaches its climax in Russia and reaches its bottom in some African countries to the extent it reaches less than 10 percent.⁸

The Social and Cultural Role of the Woman:

The situation of the working woman in the social sector represents the main axis and the general background upon which the situation of the woman in the other fields and sectors is established, in which without such general background there is no way to understand the interaction patterns of relationships and the situation of woman in economy, education, health, and work and so on. Since the social field indicates in general to the situation of women in the context of social organization and prevailing culture in the society, which is represented in the family, kinship, good, as well as relationships inside the local society.

The woman plays an essential role in the development of small human resources, so the family is the first educational institution concerned with educating and raising the child, in which the foundation stone of the personality and educational reality of the kid is established.

The degree of the contributions of social and cultural woman depends on the extent of provided services from the society which help perform such roles, and it represented in the facilities of social services like the social units, and the role of custody and training and vocational centers, in the guidance and consulting offices of the family, in the health services centers as well as the cultural services units which is incarnated in the media, bookstores, sportive and social clubs, and as opposed to that women received a special concern and was provided more care for her activation and participation in the development efforts at the level of the family and the society from organizing the plans, the drawing of the policies and software that take care of the training of women and establishing centers and associations which serve the purposes of women and make her able to

contribute in the development in general and the local development particularly.⁹

The Political Role of the Woman:

Actually, the contribution of women in the political life is a necessity and an aim at the same time, since it essential to find out the true position of the woman as a citizen in the society who possess rights and has duties, and the extent of her participation in the important decisions and key issues specifically, and she gets affected by those decisions which its results are reflected directly upon her.

The political contribution of women is fulfilled in emptiness but instead in a certain historical and social context and she practices such role at different levels

The first: the political formation level, hence the mother in the house is the one who shapes the political perception of the child and his political behavior afterwards.

The second: the political institutions level and decision-making positions.

The third: the cultural and intellectual level and that what reflects the growing political role of the woman in the society in the form of raising public issues and mobilizing public opinion behind them.¹⁰

The Woman and the Human Capital:

The human capital is defined to be total energies or manpower which the society possess regardless the sex, color, belonging and the culture of such energies whether such potential is exploited or participating in the

production and development or not. This stands for the potential capable of giving, producing as well as contributing in the national income.

As a consequence such human potential is measured by the categories capable of working and defined within the age group between 15-60 years old approximately, which called feeder category, which feed others from children, the elders and the disabled.

It is one of the most important elements of production, without which the process of development would cease, on the size of this group comparing with the other age groups being fed the human social power cease when we compare it to others from feeders and those being fed.

The Arab world and countries of the third world have troubles in the quality and the quantity of the human capital, on the one hand such capital suffers from low quality due to poor preparation and formation which is obviously reflected upon the appropriateness of such human capital with the requirement of the achievement process, on the other hand it suffering from the lack of quantity and disregarding the extent of these energies and marginalizing them for socio-cultural reasons, and currently we are speaking about the woman specifically.

The culture and society in the Arab world determine the roles special for women fit with the nature of the religious position they occupy when we compare it with the position and roles of the man.

The position and roles of the woman are most often linked to the house and the marginal business that's why she doesn't really need a special

education or a high education at least, and she is allowed to have access to domains of work practiced by man.

This matter made her socially and economically restricted due to the inferior view that is attached to it and what is associated with this view of the rape of rights and disruption of roles and waste of energies.

In fact, development involves the investment in any available energy in the society regardless their sex for the sake of expansion of the base of the productive category and to decrease the dependent category and that what is happening at the level of the investment of human potential in the developed countries and there many special instances like Netherlands and Denmark which reached the zero percentage in their disruption of women as human energy.

However, in the Arab world there is another perspective in which we can witness the disruption of a part of such potential –woman- making out of her a consumptive unproductive category adding a further burden on the roles of men particularly and on the society in general for cultural and social reasons known as gender, in which men are given a superior position than women who are described to be rather religious and inferior, and in this sense work is divided and providing chances in life, and that is through roles of the social type that determined by the culture of the society for men and women on the basis of their imagination for his role and their position in life, and that is one of the most obstructions to achieve prosperity in the third world as well as the Arab societies.

First of all the emancipation of women and liberation at the economic level considering it an entry allowing her the freedom of choice

that has to be ensured by the laws and legislation allowing her to live a different kind of life and to self-actualize herself.

Furthermore, the work of women is rather national necessity since the deprivation of half the society from work means national economic paralysis and a disruption of growing however the recognition of the right of women to work and demand them is not enough, but must provide them with facilities by the state and the actors in the first place.

Factors influencing the investment of Human Capital:

A-The Geographical Factors:

These factors include the location, climate, natural environment and sources of resources of the State. The summary of this factor is displayed is concerned with the source of the resources such as agricultural ones based on the fertility of soil and the expansion of the agricultural space, or the mineral resources based on the abundance of raw materials like gold, silver, iron, coal and petrol and son on, therefore the abundance of such resources and reaping profits from it facilitate for countries financial resources allowing them to spend on the development of human resources.

B-The Population Factors:

The investment in human capital can be affected directly with the population factors especially the demographics and population growth rate where the age distribution of the population in the parallel groups of the educational stages the required amount of facilities and educational resources and the increase in the rate of population growth need to provide more of these facilities.

In case of the inability of economic potential to provide such facilities and resources in a state the problems of illiteracy, overcrowded classrooms and pressure on universities are increasing in large numbers, and there will be an interest in the quantity at the expense of quality which might lead to lose the opportunity to get benefits from the human resources and poor compatibility between education outputs and labor market needs and the spread of unemployment and so on.

C-The Social Factors:

It includes the related effects of the religion, the language, the social formation and the prevailing culture. The effect of such factor appear throughout the effect of the culture on the direction lead by the society especially what has to do with the educating its members and opportunities for education and to determine the size of education and its opportunities for all the society members in the age of education or other categories or the preference of one sex over the other.

D-The Economic Factors:

There is a close relationship between the economy, the education and the training where the economic situation affects the educational and training system through determining the syllabus, the training, the methods and duration and providing the expenses to spend and support them, also the educational and training institutions to bring about economic projects with qualified and trained staff in their fields of activities.¹¹

The Policies of Women Development:

The comprehensive development desired by any society requires human potential aware with the work and production assets, and possess knowledge as well as skills and ethics required, and from human potential which symbolizes a necessity in any society, the woman who is relied on as a positive and active member for the prosperity process. So the woman is one of the important sectors in any human society where its improvement is measured by the rate of her contribution , in which the united nations of the human development focalized on the point the development of the woman is one of the crucial matters in the development projects.

And despite this fact, there too many obstructions affecting the role of the woman in the process of development, and we can exhibit the obstructions which hinder the role of women in the development:

- Poverty and low household income.
- The lack of knowledge and a high illiteracy rate in women.
- Worn customs and traditions in the local societies.
- Lack of commitment to specific strategies for women's participation in development work.
- More interest in spending on the contribution of women without any purpose.
- A weakness at the health, social and educational level for huge number of women

That's why we have to follow multiple policies to fight these obstructions which prevent women from achieving their role in development.¹²

FIRST : The Policies of Developing Women Socially

Development policy formulation requires the need to identify the actual reality and the available resources and the possibility to benefit from them, that's why the situation of the social policies to promote women is marked with difficulty within developing societies which undergo a tough transition period as well as different economic crisis, and a significant increase in population compared to a lack of available resources which lead to numerous interrelated issues.

The difficulty of formulating social policies is that it takes place within the framework of an accumulated cultural heritage with a special ideology that lowers the status of the woman and teaches men, and sets a series of forms of distinction between them, and such thoughts are inherited and deep rooted hard to change and there must be so much work to establish the basics of full equality between the two sexes. Therefore developing women socially wouldn't be achieved only via beating what faces it from obstructions and providing the suitable social and cultural climate which enable her to perform her role considering her a complete partner in the development, and the establishment of the following policies under execution might have efficient consequence towards fulfilling the requested target:

- Adjusting the prevailing picture of the woman in the society.
- Gender mainstreaming on the basis of equality and non-discrimination.
- Work to erase the illiteracy of women.

- Providing employment opportunities for women and working to get them out of poverty.
- Enabling women to participate in family decision-making.
- Raising women's awareness of their social and legal rights.¹³

SECOND: The Policies of Developing Women Economically

The economic sector in any society faces a number of challenges, which are represented in the achievement of an economic balance and raise the rate of growth of GDP through increasing the rate of investment and provide the necessary savings to finance and ensure distributive justice and protect the poor groups in society. There is no doubt that it a substantial mission, which requires expenses and efforts all members of society, men and women to ensure the achievement and continuity of development.

The need for confrontation is growing in light of the recent changes in the global system, and there is a continuous direction towards the globalization of markets and there is a revolution in the organization of the economic administration at the level of state and the project, moreover a fast progress in communication as well as the technological industry and agriculture, and a revolution in the quality and uses of knowledge, in addition to that an increasing interest with the human development and the equality between the sexes.¹⁴

The economic policies meant to maximize the contribution of the woman can be summarized in the process of development considering her a full partner whether in the involved effort to achieve prosperity or to cherish the fruits of the development, which means the interest in women included in

the process of human development as being an effective element in the change.

The human development is concerned with two things, the first being the consolidation of the human potential throughout investment in the human being themselves (education, health, awareness, potential, as well as empowerment...) to improve their productivity and their ethical creative potential, and the second is the insurance of the full and skillful use of such potential in a broad frame of opportunities and investments in the all the economic domains.¹⁵

Something else such process focuses on four basic elements which are, paying the productivity, the achievement of the equality in the opportunities, enhancing sustainability, enabling participation in the decision, that's why the economic development of women is considered to be a prerequisite for human progress, thus, the human development approach addresses the issue of justice in the choices and opportunities and from here we can follow different policies in this field:

- Policies to confirm the role of women in development
- Health policy and women productivity
- The policies of employment, training and funding and the role of woman in the process of productivity and prosperity.¹⁶

THIRD: The Policies of Developing Women Politically

The political life of the woman in any society is a part from a whole and not an independent side, which can be raised without interfering with other factors which has a strong relationship and affecting, so the political

work of women is linked with the cultural environment and the social circumstances as well as beliefs and insights about the role of the woman in politics alone, but via a comprehensive view that accommodates all the surrounding influences.

The political contribution of women became a request whether through nomination or election in order to develop the sound democracy and development and to achieve that we have to consider the following:

- To support the contribution of women in the political life and to raise the awareness of women with the importance of political participation.

- To revisit the curriculum, which contribute in developing the feeling of belonging, and to deepen the understanding, democratic practices and human rights.

- The interest to prepare women for the political life without focusing on the quantity at the expense of quality, so the type of women who have to perform such a mission are no doubt of a special kind and they should possess a high political awareness as well as an understanding of the women issues and an accommodation to their role in society and an ability to express their rights.¹⁷

- The work to eradicate the traditional cultures which adheres to the notion that the political work is an activity limited to men, and the mass media and the civic society should play an effective role to alter that stereotype.

No doubt, to erase women illiteracy and to improve her political awareness will have a strong effect to improve her participation politically.¹⁸

The Results of Study

- The low status of women in the Arab world, although there are some positive signals in social, economic and political fields.
- The role of the woman in the development get affected with the movement of the social change local and globally, and there can be efficiency of her role in whole movement by the clarity of her character in the context of the social structure to which she belongs.
- The average of the contribution of woman in the economic activity vary from organized sectors and non-organized ones and the between the urban and rural, and such differences can be traced back to the social as well as the cultural factors specific to each society.
- The role of women in the social and cultural life depends on the extent of services provided from the society which help her perform these roles.
- The political role of the woman depends on her position in the society as well as her political establishment and upon the outlook of the society on her role in life.
- The difficulty of the situation of the social policies of the woman in the Arab world owing to the cultural heritage which undermines the position of the woman.
- Women suffer from the weakness of the human investment and frailty of justice to more economic opportunities.
- Women suffer as well from weakness of her political participation due to some cultural and social reasons hindering her role in life.

CONCLUSION:

The woman constitutes half the society according to the prosperity concept and human capital consideration, so she constitutes half the human potential in any society, and since development necessity asserts the compulsory investment in all the available human potential in order to expand the percentage of the categories participating in the production and the development and to decrease the percentage of the dependent category, and that is for the purpose of refining the reality of the national production, also to provide one of the most important elements of production which is the human element, and that's why it is required that this element ought to be trained and qualified in the relevant manner to fit the requirements of development, with the confirmation on the necessity to invest in women as being developing target, in which development works according to priorities and needs, and included in these priorities the most deprived categories from elders, children, disabled and women are arranged, for this sake they are developing target and a tool to achieve prosperity after preparation and investment, therefore the success in the development process in the Arab world requires the participation of the woman and enhancing her social and economic situation to become effective power possible to investment.

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