

“Women and Health Aspects”

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Within the context of understanding health from its social, psychological, physical and spiritual dimensions, there is a solidarity role for government, civil society organizations and the private sector to understand women health issues as a key and basic component for achieving sustainable development.

In light of social health determinants and in order to achieve the health status by working on both dimensions of the health balance and health potential, there is an integral mission and commitment represented in the MDGs 4, 5 & 6, which are the reduction of maternal and children mortality rates and combating communicable diseases. Such interventions are expected to help in improving the health status by focusing on disadvantaged communities in the provision of primary health care services.

The working paper aims at exploring the mechanisms of activating the role of Arab women in sustainable development through health interventions, the strategic analysis of these interventions, discussion of current challenges, fostering health systems and bridging the gap in social and economic factors by focusing on rural areas in addition to addressing the educational level of women and its impact on health development and ending with developing monitoring and evaluation programs to ensure achieving the MDGs.

This paper consists of three sections, the first focuses on the health systems development and current policies by addressing strategic visions and the importance of women participation in health development by changing the stereotype perception about the role of Arab women, and based on the data/ statistics available that indicates the divergence between men and women, their status in economic and employment aspects. Moreover, its impact on health status and the national development as a whole.

Under this section, the paper discusses the importance of considering health as a right for women that should be provided, the provision of a health system taking into

consideration "equality principle" in service distribution in an institutional manner to support women and children health programs to ensure sustainability of services and to bridge the gap between actual needs and available resources.

Additionally, this section discusses the social and economic health determinants with emphasis on social justice as a critical issue to achieve sustainable development, shrink the differences between rich and poor, rural and urban populations taking into consideration the importance of the community environment to achieve this equality, and including health among the national priorities to secure appropriate preventive and curative services.

This section part also discusses the importance of behavioral change initiatives, the sound planning of health interventions, building effective partnership between governments and civil society organizations, focusing on investment in health as a key development factor, fostering scientific research and studies, enhancing the role of local communities in providing a full package of basic services along with highlighting the importance of providing job opportunities for women.

The section also focuses on discussing health issues by tackling the two main challenges of increasing morbidity and mortality rates among mothers and children in many Arab countries despite the differences in economic, health status and disease patterns which combine infectious and chronic diseases in most Arab countries representing a double burden.

Finally this section concludes by addressing violence against women in its intentional and unintentional forms and its consequences on psychological and physical health of women.

Section two tackles political dimensions of sustainable development of women in Arab countries in the health field under current indicators including health economic indicators showing huge deficits in managing available resources in light of an absent effective role for Arab women.

In addition, it discusses various challenges facing sustainable development and the achievement of an effective role for women under current policies including the lack of stability, widespread poverty, diseases, high population growth in many Arab countries and the lack of women's role in planning, implementation and decision making in addition to internal migration and the modest actions towards decreasing maternal mortality rates especially in communities where education levels of women are low. The decision about reproduction in most cases is dominated by men and thus hinders having the required participatory role between men and women especially in rural communities.

Section three tackles the role of Arab women in rural areas and the associated geographic and demographic difficulties requiring strong policies to support women role based on the diagnosis of the current situation in these countries.

This section also discusses the importance of preventive interventions to reduce the disease burdens for women and children, to achieve a further role for Arab women in rural areas to empower women of taking critical decisions within the household including decisions related to bearing children and allowing education opportunities to improve the health situation of women and reflect than on local development in rural areas.

Moreover, it focuses on community initiatives based on the choices of people within a mechanism to ensure their ownership of small projects to create job opportunities achieving sustainable development where health in addition to education and rural development serve to achieve social equality where women play critical roles.

The working paper concludes with the need to establish a participatory role at community level between women and men recognizing health as a fundamental human right to achieve social and economic conditions to ensure coordination of roles between government agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector. Governments shall bear the responsibility of creating necessary measures and standards to ensure women health in the context of sustainable national development, enhance the exchange of experiences between Arab countries, reduce the existing gap between these countries and to achieve an effective role in pushing development to achieve development goals through a number of recommendations contained in the paper.

The key of these recommendations is the political commitment, the provision of health services to those who deserve them since there is lack of fixed health facilities, activate the role of private sector in providing basic services and eliminating differences between sexes as well as adopting policies supporting rural areas to overcome the challenge of poverty and adoption of community programs meeting basic needs in coordination with development partners.

Furthermore, the paper recommends bridging the gap between the current needs and policies in countries to ensure increase of expenditures on health and achieve social equality. The papers recommend to combat wrong practices of inherited social customs and take necessary actions in this area, enhance women participation as a partner in health development for sustainable development. This represents a moral dimension of individual and community responsibility that should be borne jointly.