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ARAB WOMEN ORGANIZATION

# Projects of Arab Women Empowerment Current Status and Future Prospects

Findings and Recommendations

*Ola Abouzeid*

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Ola Abouzeid

Publisher: Arab Women Organization  
25, Ramsis St., El Korba, Heliopolis,  
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt.  
Tel.: (+202) 24183301 / 101  
Fax.: (+202) 24183110  
E-mail: info@arabwomenorg.net

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## Findings and Recommendations

### Introduction

The Arab Women Organization (AWO) has directed over the last four years a survey of the projects of Arab women empowerment at both the state and regional levels. The survey employed a sample of over 6000 projects, drawn from thirteen Arab countries\* and implemented in five sectors: education, health, economics, media and politics. This survey reveals that increasing consciousness of women issues and of the criticality of promoting their advancement does exist in the Arab region. This rising consciousness has been advanced in a wide and diverse spectrum of women projects that are being implemented in almost all Arab states. Generally speaking, those projects succeeded in bringing about significant improvements in the status of Arab women. However, the level of the achieved progress varies from one sector to the other and is still, in general, way below the aspired target.

One cause of low levels of women advancement is the complexity and rigidity of the cultural, social and economic environment that encompasses the work aiming at promoting women advancement. Another explanation for low levels of women progress stems from the nature of the projects of women empowerment themselves. This survey of projects of women empowerment undertaken by AWO

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\* Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Emirates, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen

draws a revealing picture of the real situation of these projects. When revising this picture, it becomes obvious that despite positive aspects which these projects enjoy, structural weaknesses that limit their role do exist and are major forces hindering their performance.

The importance of the survey undertaken by the AWO is not confined to the fact that it sheds bright light on the defects of the projects of Arab women empowerment. The real advantage, it is believed, is that the disclosure of these defects will hopefully guide future endeavors of women empowerment and indicate the way forward for better projects planning and implementation.

Hereby, we attempt a summing up of the main issues which the survey of the projects of women empowerment raises and which pertain to both the projects themselves as well as the context in which they are implemented. We sincerely believe that any strategic planning that takes seriously the future work related to advancing Arab women should take the following issues into consideration.

### **1- Planning of Projects of Women Empowerment.**

This dossier is of great importance because the degree of success which any project can attain depends greatly on the level of scientism, objectivity and integrity available to the process of its planning. Sound planning starts before the launching of the project and does not end with its conclusion. It usually starts with preliminary studies and exploratory surveys to determine the issues that must be addressed, as well as the needs that ought to be fulfilled. Additionally, such studies and surveys will lead to an objective definition of the projects overall goal, its intermediate objectives, the targeted group(s), its key activities, the number and qualifications of the recruited workers, the

project's appointed time frame and place of implementation, the most appropriate entities to execute and finance the project, the suitable indicators to measure the accomplishment of its objectives and, finally, the best evaluation process to be employed.

As pivotal an objective and intact process of planning is for the realization of a successful project, the survey undertaken by AWO at both the state and regional levels reveals that the planning of the projects of Arab women empowerment suffers from very serious ailments. The defects and weaknesses pertaining to the planning process are apparent in almost all aspects and phases of the projects.

Examples of these defects which the AWO multi-national survey reports are: the goals and objectives of the projects are not clearly defined and the mixing up of the overall goals with intermediate objectives usually exists. Most of the time the projects fail to target the groups that are in real need of the projects and they are not implemented in the right areas either, the areas that are in dire need of their outcome. The projects' activities do not properly respond to its objectives and the time appointed for the implementation of the projects' activities exceeds the time frame of the project as a whole. The problems surrounding the financing of the projects are enormous, to the extent that they could bring the project to a halt. The entities involved in the implementation of the projects lack coordination. Those who work in the projects lack the appropriate qualifications. Moreover, objective evaluation of the projects is missing, a fact which hinders the effective correction of existing defects and inhibits projects from benefiting fully from other projects' experience.

Another grave problem that should be taken very seriously is

pertaining to the level of women strategic planning. Women dossier must be treated as one whole entity despite the various issues it includes. It is crucial to perceive women problems as a single, coherent, intact issue rather than a bunch of separated and dispersed issue(s). For instance the issue of women health ensues from the issue of women poverty, and this from the issue of women education, while the issue of women health, poverty and education is closely related to the issue of the lack of appropriate awareness among women themselves, as well as among the whole society, of women human right to fully and actively participate in public life. It is a top priority that that kind of perception prevails among the authorities and key decision makers responsible of planning for Arab women advancement and empowerment.

Absence of a comprehensive vision when undertaking strategic planning for the advancement of women, produce alarming consequences that should never be neglected or underestimated. Few examples of these consequences could be cited here: doubleness of policies endorsed by the various authorities involved in women planning, a fact which inevitably causes incompatibility of efforts instead of their integration; reproducing similar projects time and again, a situation which drains both energy and resources without leading to any effective accumulation of effort that could lead to the advancement of Arab women; continuous and haphazard leaps between minor, scattered and dissociated projects that are not integrated into a well defined women strategic plan, which in turn, is not professionally woven in the fabric of the overall development plan of the country; occasional, as opposite to steadfast, interest in women issues, a fact which results in tailored projects that fail to produce the

effect expected when continuity leads to accumulation and positive built up in the right direction; lack of coordination between projects that belong to the same sector, and, between projects implemented in the different, yet related, sectors.

## **2- Coordination Between Entities Engaged in Projects of Women Empowerment:**

Coordination is pivotal in the work targeting women because of the interconnection between the sectors where work for women empowerment takes place. When coordination is weak between the authorities and agencies involved in the work targeting women empowerment, the exerted efforts to empower women will be vacated of its influence and ability to produce any real quality change in women status.

It is obvious that in women dossier all the societal important aspects intersect: economy, health, education, media and politics. For example, the low level of women education leads to an increase in the unemployment rate among them, and the early female marriage with, all the social problems and health complications that come with it, considerably limits women opportunity to join the working force of their societies. This explains why all the experts participating in the implementation of the survey pointed to the importance of integration between the projects implemented in the various sectors. They stated that media programs and activities, for instance, can perform the tasks of health education, generating support for women political projects, propagating small projects in the sector of economy, as well as programs of skill enhancement in the sector of education. They also pointed to the crucial role the media plays in diffusing the programs to eliminate illiteracy. The survey experts also attract the attention to the



fact that the projects that are supported by media campaigns are more likely to succeed in attracting the targeted groups and in gaining public approval, as media campaigns help in spreading knowledge about the nature of the project, its importance and goals.

In addition, the survey experts emphasized the importance of coordination and integration between the projects of the sector of education, on one hand, and those of the sectors of economics and health, on the other hand. Programs of continuing education, they suggest, can provide training and capacity building that help women refine their skills and strengthen their competitive capabilities. This, in turn, will result in the increase of women productivity and their ability to join income producing labor.

Survey experts also point to the cruciality of adding training for a profession to the programs of female illiteracy elimination. They also emphasize the importance of building up on the training and enabling programs women receive. In this respect, they suggest that the programs of illiteracy elimination must be followed by programs of skill enhancement. These, they propose, must be designed in collaboration with those in charge of projects in the sector of economics and directed to the training of the graduates of illiteracy elimination programs on how to start small income generating projects.

In the sector of health, the survey experts believe, a definite benefit could be gained if health awareness messages could be infused in the units of the programs of illiteracy elimination. They also suggest adding new subjects pertaining to raising women awareness of environmental issues and means to ameliorate the environment to these programs.

The utmost importance of integration between the sectors as a means to better achieve efficiency of their projects of women empowerment means that a more effective coordination between those sectors must be realized. This, in turn, calls for the existence of a certain entity that can promote, advocate and monitor this coordination. The survey experts suggest that such coordinating agency must be created at both the state and regional levels.

**At the state level,** it is important to realize coordination between the projects of different sectors, particularly those targeting the same groups or addressing the same issues. Different national women platforms involved in the implementation of these projects must collaborate effectively to prevent doubleness of policies and generate definite benefits through systemized exchange of experiences. Also, stronger linkages and capacities for coordination between the financing agencies of these projects must be created to see that funds will not be released time and again to some particular implementing agencies and to the exclusion of other sufficiently efficient agencies. Advancing better coordination between the financing agencies can also act as a tool to combat destructive competition between implementing entities for funds.

**At the regional level,** the survey experts highlighted the importance of promoting inter- country coordination of the efforts exerted to empower women both within the same sector and between the diverse sectors. They report that better coordination at this level can help in lowering the expenses of the preliminary stages of projects through exchange of experiences and learning from other countries. In this regard, they suggest the creation of permanent regional working groups that bring together the best experts in the region in a certain

field with the survey experts who surveyed the projects of this field and studied its problems. The ultimate aim is to attempt a better design of all stages of future women projects: planning, implementation, financing, follow up and evaluation. In this regard, the survey experts point to the role which the Arab Women Organization can play in strengthening institutional linkages at the regional level, through the creation of these working groups. They state that one important asset of AWO is that it endorses a policy of women empowerment that applies the conviction that women empowerment in any one sector can never bear its fruits unless their empowerment in other sectors is affected. The AWO employs a comprehensive approach to the issue of women empowerment. This is reflected in the parallel work it undertakes in seven basic sectors: education, health, economics, politics, media, law and social work. Successful coherent outcome that ensue from work in all these sectors relies heavily upon successful coordination between its projects and activities. Hence, coordination, for AWO is a means and an end at the time.

In short, joint Arab work must be conceived as a great opportunity that ought to be seized in order to strengthen human and institutional capacities in a way that can benefit women empowerment at both the state and regional levels.

### **3- Issues Neglected in the Projects of Arab Women Empowerment:**

The negative impact of this negligence on the overall accomplished advancement of Arab women must not be disesteemed.

There are certain issues within every field that are being treated as

amalgamated areas. They are either not approached altogether, or, if so, this is done with great caution and superficiality.

In this regard, it should be mentioned that the whole sector of politics is apparently treated as an amalgamated field. It is true that as the Arab region undergoes reform, the national authorities and key decision makers have committed to advancing women political empowerment. But a number of interconnected factors that are common to most of the Arab countries make common people, and frequently women themselves, resist the endeavor to advance women participation in political and public life.

International attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of the region under the banner of reform, happen to consider women issue in general, and their political participation in particular, a top priority on its reform agenda. These international attempts are widely rejected by the commoners, and with this rejection comes the public abhorrence of women political empowerment. Added to this, is the conservative religious interpretation of the sources of the shari'ah which coincidentally flooded the region claiming that religious teachings reject women participation in political and public life. These two factors combined to hinder the rise of influential work in this sector. Thus we find most of its projects are short termed activities, rather than full fledged projects or programs, whose implementation does not exceed the period of one week and which focus mainly on raising awareness and informing the society without any serious attempt at achieving effective accumulation in the direction of women empowerment.

If we now consider all the sectors that were surveyed, we can notice the following:

- **Young and elderly women** are usually not targeted by women projects. Ignoring the elderly will soon cost the states dearly to compensate for decades of negligence. Ignoring young women is by no means less dangerous. Building for the future starts with well planned investment in this age category. The youth constitute one third of the population of the Arab world and females constitute half of this percentage. The latent importance of this women category does not derive from figures alone, but from the impact it can generate as this is the stage of personality formulation. Hence, the projects targeting this age category, if well designed, can realize its goals much more easier.

- **Rural and bedwin women** constitute another sector that is not targeted by women projects in general. This is despite the fact that the countryside and the desert are the dominating geographical environment in most of the Arab states, and more important, the most under developed, hence, the most in need of women empowerment projects.

- **Women university graduates** do not get enough attention from women projects planners. To the contrary, projects of women empowerment target illiterate women or, at best, those whose education stopped at the pre university level. This is despite the fact that investing in university graduates, through applying skills enhancing and capacity building activities is a much easier endeavor that prove to be very rewarding.

- **Men** are not targeted by women projects despite the utmost importance of approaching women issues from a gender perspective. Ensuring that men are involved in the process of women empowerment is a must, or else the shifting of the traditional system

of power relation between men and women could lead to grave tensions that can endanger the achievement of equitable development.

- **Remote areas**, in general, fail to obtain the recognition of women project planners. The implementation of projects of women empowerment is concentrated in the capital and big cities. This fact hinders the realization of balanced and sustainable development.

- **Men of religion and media personnel** who can be quite influential in modifying, altering and improving the cultural environment that discriminate against women, are not polarized to participate in the planning of women advancement programs. Additionally, no serious attempt is being undertaken by planners of women empowerment projects to generate their support and alter their discourse to be in favor of women.

#### **4-Implementation of projects of Women Empowerment**

This is a thorny dossier. Women issue in the Arab region is complex and deeply rooted. Confrontation of this problem calls for the polarization of all agencies and authorities that have a vested interest and enjoy recognized ability in order to contribute to the implementation of projects. Private sector, civil society and universities emerge as leading examples in this regard. Pleas to activate their roles and bear their responsibility as full partners in the process of women advancement and empowerment are constant and increasing. However, each of these three actors has its own problems that prevent it from playing its expected role.

As for the **Private Sector**, its awareness of its social role is still lamentably immature. The survey shows that the percentage of its contribution to the process of women development is the lowest

compared to the other national entities. This is so despite all the incentives and guarantees that the private sector receives, in almost all Arab states, to encourage it to invest in the sectors and geographical areas that are in dire need for projects of women empowerment. In short, the private sector in the Arab region is still hesitant to bear its fair share of social responsibility, when it comes to the issue of women empowerment.

As for **Civil Society**, we find its organizations hampered by weak institutional capacities a fact which is reflected in a series of grave ailments, the gravest being a centralized organizational structure that suffers dangerous absence of transparency and of democratic values and practices. In addition, civil society organizations lack capable human resources both with regard numbers, as a result of the unpopularity of the culture of voluntariness in the Arab region, and with regard efficiency and qualification. This reality severely limits the ability of civil society in the region to be successfully involved as an influential partner in the process of implementing projects of Arab women empowerment.

**Universities** are overloaded with the problems that plague scientific research in the Arab region. In order to undertake an active and influential role as houses of experience that prepare solid research studies, develop gender sensitive indicators and provide appropriate training and awareness services, universities have to wait for the reformation of the status of scientific research in the region. This can never be achieved unless significant increase in the amount of expenditure directed to this field and openness on the scientific methodology applied in the developed world could be attained.

It becomes obvious that the most important candidates to join the vehicle of partnership in implementing women empowerment projects at the state level suffer enough problems to be capable of acting as active influential partners.

At the regional level, regional organizations do not take seriously the role expected from them, neither in implementing women projects nor in financing them. The survey reports that their ranking fell into the bottom of the list of those agencies that implement and those that finance Arab women projects. It is hoped that the establishment of the AWO and the commencement of its work in 2004 with an ambitious plan to implement and finance projects of women empowerment in various sectors will positively contribute to the alteration of this situation.

### **5- Financing Projects of Arab Women Empowerment:**

This is another thorny dossier. With the exception of Arab countries that are wealthy and, at the same time, does not suffer either from a problem of over population or area over expansion, and these are limited in number, most Arab states need to attract international fund for its projects of women empowerment. This is particularly true if we remember the previously mentioned reluctance of the indigenous private sector to participate, the limited financial and human recourses available to local civil society institutions and the triviality of the role of Arab regional organizations.

But international funding has its problems also. In most cases it chooses to finance short or medium term projects that focus largely on training and awareness activities. Usually it does not contribute to



financing long term projects that address widespread and deeply rooted problems and which can eventually promote the realization of sustainable and comprehensive development.

Additionally, international fund showers certain countries in the region sometimes to the complete exclusion of other countries, a fact which hampers the realization of a regionally balanced development. These facts call for a neutral and objective evaluation of the return value from international expenditure directed to women projects in the Arab region. For this evaluation to be objective it must not depend on a sample of women projects that receive international fund but must rather include all such projects.

Another problem that ought to be highlighted here emerges from the partnership relation that is evolving between the international funding agencies, on one hand, and the indigenous civil society organizations, on the other hand. It is worth mentioning that it becomes a common practice for international funding agencies to stipulate that the projects they fund must be implemented by civil society organizations in particular. It is undeniable that these organizations are often connected to the grassroots and can hence reach out easily to the targeted groups and gain their confidence. This remarkable feature helps destroy the psychological barriers of fear and distrust which prevent the targeted from engaging in the projects activities. But unfortunately, civil society organizations suffer from some very serious problems that are previously mentioned, and the channeling of international funds towards them, considering them a main actor in the implementation of women projects, put a huge responsibility on their shoulders, without being adequately equipped to carry it. Undoubtedly, this situation negatively influence the realization of development in the region.

The negative impact of this partnership relation on the process of women empowerment, in particular, and development, in general, is further aggravated by the fact that the international funding agencies when offering fund to the civil society they also define the key issues that the projects must address. In other words, the indigenous civil society, when receiving fund from international funding agencies, must conform to these agencies agenda. Examples of the issues that are defined by the international fund agencies are those of violence against women, environment and its relation to women health and safety and strengthening the capacity of business women who are already running successful medium scale projects rather than building the capacity of poor women who want to start up a small project. Most of the projects which the international funding agencies choose to fund are short termed, address a narrow scoped issue for which limited activities are tailored that are usually confined to training, awareness, skill enhancement and capacity strengthening. In addition to the fact that such projects/activities will not eventually contribute to the realization of development, the international funding agencies imposition of its own agenda on the indigenous civil society organizations force them to leap between fragmented, uninfluential projects. It also prevents these organizations from developing their own national agenda that reflect priority issues from the national level, a fact which impedes their effective engagement as a partner for development. Moreover, the fact that indigenous civil society implement the projects chosen and imposed by the international funding agencies crushes the bridges of trust between these organizations and the national government agencies, and sometimes even between them and the grassroots.

More serious still is the fact that competing among each other to win the international funds usually leads to inter-organization conflict. This undermines any opportunity at successful consensus building process which explains why civil society organizations usually work individually rather than collectively and fail to agree upon a national agenda.

In short, international fund, inspite of its exuberance fails considerably to be a fund for development. This call for an earnest attempt to widen the circle of Arab fund, that can guarantee constant outflow of money for women projects, on one hand, and freedom in the formulation of women agenda on the other hand. The key issues on this agenda should not be dictated by wills that emanate from outside the region, but ought to be defined in conformity with an overall Arab strategic plan that aims at comprehensive, sustainable and equitable development.

## **6- Documentation of projects of women empowerment**

This is a sensitive dossier. Almost every survey study that was conducted at either the state or regional levels bluntly states that the national agencies that are in charge of projects of women empowerment suffer from serious problems pertaining to the documentation of these projects. This is despite the fact that documentation is basic in the work aiming at women advancement. Absence of documentation does not only limit the ability to perform scientific evaluation of projects that can put them on the right track and benefit future projects, but it also negatively affect the development of strategic thinking whose formulation needs continuity

and accumulation of experience. This, in turn, can only evolve if a precise and accurate database of the projects is available. This is one reason why the issue of building and conserving the projects memory, through accurate documentation and constant updating of the projects data, is a pivotal endeavor.

Closely related to the issue of documentation is the other important issue of gender classification and gender documentation of data. Without this gender sensitive method of data documentation, appropriate utilization of data for successful future planning of women projects can never be realized. It has been noticed that the vital data available in Arab states is, in general, not gender sensitive. In this respect, exerting systematic effort to diffuse the culture of gender-sensitive documentation in all levels and stages of projects of women empowerment cannot be overemphasized.

It is also quite vital to attempt the development of a unified system of collection of data pertaining to women issues and to produce manuals including procedural definitions of the indicators used in the field so as to unify the way in which data about women are collected, calculated and employed.

## **7- Cultural and Societal Environments**

Last but not least we arrive at the critical dossier of cultural and societal environments which encompass all the endeavor and work pertaining to Arab women empowerment.

The cultural dossier is a weighty one, particularly when speaking about the process of Arab women advancement and empowerment. There is no exaggeration when reporting that the realization of any

real advancement in the status of Arab women is pending on the promotion of quality change in the cultural stereotyping of women. We can fairly say that even if tremendous bounce in the process of planning, implementing, financing, documenting and evaluating projects of women empowerment takes place, a similar bounce in the status of Arab women will not automatically ensue if the prevailing culture continues to discriminate against women when determining their roles and spheres of influence in the Arab societies.

But changing the cultural schemes is one of the most complicated and tedious ventures. It needs a well planned and well focused move on two tracks: a long term track and a short term one. This two fold endeavor to reform the cultural schemes must tackle, with utmost sincerity and seriousness, three pivotal issues.

The first issue is that of **the religious discourse** prevailing in the Arab region. This discourse conveys a distorted perception of women status and their role in the society that derives from conservative interpretation of the sources of Islamic Shari'ah (law). The seriousness of this issue is aggravated by the fact that men of religion enjoy noticeable influence and status in the Arab societies. Hence, their ability, which should not be underestimated, to formulate convictions and norms and to direct attitudes and behavior.

As long as the conservative religious discourse dominates and overshadows the enlightened religious discourse, all efforts to empower Arab women will be aborted. In order to alter this situation creative thinking and serious work must commence aiming at digging out enlightened men of religion, putting them in the forefront, giving them all the possible arenas to practice and engage in processes of dialogue and debate and including them in the planning of projects of

women empowerment. This is particularly so with regard these projects that address issues which touch on deeply rooted social beliefs and practises (female genital mutilation, family planning, female political participation..)

This is important because in the light of the mixing up of traditions with religion in the Arab region, such above mentioned deeply rooted social convictions and practises claim their legitimacy in religious teachings. Thus, it is very important to encourage moderate and reformative interpretation of the sources of Islamic Shari'ah. In this respect, there is nothing more crucial than supporting the rise of a new moderate, enlightened religious league that can bring about an authentic, culturally based transformation in the status of Arab women.

The second issue is by no means less important than the issue of religious discourse with regard its impact on the formulation of positive social awareness of women issues, problems and status. This is **the media discourse**. The importance of the media emerges from the pivotal role it plays in formulating the beliefs and convictions of the people. Its dominating role in shaping the societal culture is overwhelming in the light of the unprecedented improvement in its tools, methods and ability to reach every human being any where, all the time. If the media can play a pivotal role in formulating the culture, it can play as strong and influential a role in reforming and refining it.

It has been noticed that serious defects plague the messages which the media transmit about women. The media usually conveys an image of Arab women that does not reflect the real role they play in the life of the society. The media fails to detect and portray women efforts, achievements and contributions to public life.

Consequently, the media, not only contributes to the development of undesirable image of Arab women, but it also diminishes the ability of the women projects to produce positive impact and outcomes. This is because the media conveys to the public a wrong message about women, in general, and about the goals and the expected gains from women projects in particular, hence contributing to their failure. In this respect, we should remember that one main reason that contributes to the projects ability to succeed in fulfilling their goals is to enjoy a supporting environment during implementation.

It is of utmost necessity that a full-fledged strategy that concentrate on the media message, as well as, on those who implement and transmit this message to the public, must develop for both the audio and visual media means and also for the press. The ultimate aim is to reinforce the media sector to induce it to produce an accurate, balanced and objective presentation of women issues, problems, roles and contributions. It is hoped that through this, a balanced image of women will be conveyed to the society. This can eventually lead to the aspired change in the now prevailing concepts and traditions that marginalize women, discriminate against them and violate their rights.

**The legal framework** is a third key issue that is as important as the two previous ones. It is well known that the constitutions and laws of any state are but a reflection of the cultural schemes dominating the society. Despite the fact that the legal framework can never be detached from the prevailing culture of the society, it is also indisputable that this legal framework contributes to the formulation, reformation and refining of this culture, if it is allowed an appropriate enduring period of time to settle and dig its roots in the fabric of the society.

The cultural environment within which the legal system is applied can act as an insurmountable obstacle that hinders any legal development toward the realization of justice and equity for women. This is so, if this environment continues to foster discriminating religious discourse reinforced by deeply rooted traditions that embrace similar inclinations. While waiting for the cultural reformation to take place, the engagement of the political will seems inevitable. It is of utmost importance that governments commit to altering iniquitous legislations and promoting legal reformation to amend the legislations that reflect the rigidly prescribed gender roles and voice the discriminating cultural and religious discourses. However, a parallel action must go hand in hand with this political commitment. This action must target those involved in the legislative process. A reformation of convictions must take place and should not be confined to those involved in the stage of drafting legislations, but must also include those who are involved in the stages of applying the law and executing it. Persistence in this direction will ultimately lead to bridging the gap between law and practice.

### **In conclusion:**

The one thousand mile journey starts with a step. It is of utmost importance that this step is well planned and in the right direction. If so, other stable and confident steps will follow. One steady step after the other and the journey will be promptly brought to its conclusion.



## **Professor Dr. Ola A. Abouzeid**

MA, Political Science, Cairo University, Egypt. Ph.D, Political Theory, University of Toronto, Canada. Winner, the Malcom H. Kerr Best Dissertation Award in Humanities, Middle East Studies Association (MESA). Professor of Political Thought and Theory, Cairo University. Member, Advisory Board: Programme for the Dialogue of Civilizations, Cairo University. Deputy Director, Center for Political Research and Studies, Cairo University (2002-2004).

Coordinator of many research projects and conferences on modern political thought, citizenship and democracy, civil society and civic education. Fellow, research missions to Northombria University and Manchester University, U.K. and to Columbia University, USA in gender issues and human rights. Coordinator and trainer, many workshops on gender awareness and human rights. Presented numerous research papers on women issues and related subjects in national and international conferences. Publications and research interests address issues of gender justice, women political participation, politics of religion (thought and movements) with reference to women.

Member, National Council for Women (Egypt), Foreign Relations Committee (2001-2002).

Since 2004, Expert, Arab Women Organization.

Since 2007, Director, Planning and Programs, Arab Women Organization.

Since the early 1970's, the Arab region has been witnessing an increasing consciousness of gender issues at the governmental and non governmental levels. The ever growing number of projects of women empowerment implemented in various vital sectors in almost all Arab states stands as ample evidence of this rising interest. The Arab Women Organization has directed over the last four years a survey of projects of women empowerment at both the state and regional levels. A sample of more than 6000 projects in five sectors: education, health, media, economics and politics, drawn from thirteen Arab countries, was surveyed.

This summery report sums up the findings and recommendations of these surveys to determine how far women projects succeeded in empowering Arab women over the past decades and to indicate the way forward for greater women empowerment.