Women and Education in the Mediterranean Region
An event of the Trans-Mediterranean Civil Society Dialogue Programme

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Conference Report

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- Feride Acar, Middle East Technical University

Trans Mediterranean Perspectives on Gender in National Education Systems
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- Fatma Khafagy, National Council for Women
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Women in the Public Sphere: Gender, Education, and Political Empowerment
- Elizabeth Bishop, American University in Cairo
- Biran Mertan, Eastern Mediterranean University
- Mine Kiliç, KADER
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Religion, Identity, and Modernity
- Fatmagül Berktay, Istanbul University
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Emerging Practices in Gender Sensitive Education
- Ela Anlı, WWHR – New Ways
- Ayla Göksel, Mother Child Education Foundation
- Sevdalina Rukanova, EFC (Panel Chair)

Catalyzing Change
- Batuhan Aydagül, Istanbul Policy Center
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- Trees Zbidat-Kosterman, Al Zahraa/Global Fund for Women
- Filiz Bikmen, TÜSEV (Panel Chair)

Closing Plenary and Discussion
- Facilitated by Fatmagül Berktay and Tamar Rapoport
Executive Summary

The *Women and Education in the Mediterranean Region* conference aimed at exploring the many facets of the link between gender and education and reviewing new research, policy, and program strategies towards advancing women’s education and active participation in all spheres of society. Special attention was given to the development of feminist theory and educational philosophies; contested historical perspectives; and the relationships between feminism, politics and education.

A major objective of the discussions was to identify critical areas, gaps and needs – from research and policy to implementation, including at the level of cross-border and regional cooperation – with a view to informing foundation thinking and programs, and to developing recommendations for future (joint) action in this field.

The key themes on the agenda included:

- Women empowerment and the role of education/myths about gender and education
- National education systems and government programs
- Women and the public sphere
- Gender and policy making
- Religion and gender
- Philanthropy, funding and interventions in the field of women and education in the Mediterranean region

The main conclusions and recommendations are summarized below:

- Education is a very important means to close the gender gap and empower women, but education alone is not sufficient. Although in most countries education and gender equality have been made into constitutional rights, huge challenges remain regarding implementation. A comprehensive-interdisciplinary approach is recommended, which takes into consideration the broader political, socio-economic, cultural and religious context and influences, including issues such as generational differences, urban/rural environment, and exposure to/interaction with other ethnic/cultural groups.
- With respect to formal education, issues of gender stereotyping in curricula and the teaching process, as well as the penetration of fundamentalist thought were highlighted as areas that require special attention. Gender sensitization of teachers represents another important potential action area.
- Non-formal education has a huge potential in raising women’s awareness and consciousness; it can be a powerful vehicle for empowerment. There is a need to better document and disseminate models and lessons learned from the region, as well as to ensure more and continued support to capacity-building/multiplier as well grass-roots organizations working with women.
- There is a need to better understand the role of religion in social change, as well as the role of faith-based philanthropy – both can be drivers of greater equality, but may also be used to reinforce certain views and dogmas. Foundations can play a role in identifying and supporting local resource mobilization efforts and practice, as these hold the promise of ensuring long-term sustainability of the initiatives or services.
- Women are a major force in peace and reconciliation efforts and building bridges across cultures and religions, which is vital for the future prosperity and stability of the Mediterranean region. Several excellent case studies were presented at the conference, with a recommendation to explore how to increase the visibility of existing good models and opportunities to scale these up or replicate them.
• Continued support for research in the field of education and gender, networking among scholars, building linkages between the academic world and practitioners, and ensuring that research findings are fed into policy making and implementation represents another important action area, and may be particularly relevant for comparative and cross-border initiatives.

• Advocacy groups and networks play a critical role in raising the public’s awareness about issues of gender and education, as well as in engaging with governments in policy development, implementation and monitoring. However, they often lack the necessary resources to be able to pursue their mission and to connect with peer organizations.

• International institutions, such as the World Bank and the European Commission, also play an important role in the field of promoting and supporting women’s education. It was recommended that it would be worthwhile to explore how to improve mutual understanding between these institutions on the one hand, and scholars and civil society actors, including foundations, on the other hand with a view to enhancing cooperation and dialogue at all levels (policy, funding and implementation).

• Networking, sharing of experience, research findings and lessons learned among academics and practitioners, both at the level of the Mediterranean region and between specific countries where there is an identified common interest, was considered highly beneficial by the participants. A suggestion was made to explore the possibility to organize a larger follow-up conference in 2004.

The outcomes from the conference will be presented to the EFC International Committee and to leading foundations active in the Mediterranean Region. There is an opportunity to feature challenges and success stories in the field of gender and education at the next EFC Annual General Assembly and Conference, which will take place in Athens, Greece, on 30 May – 1 June 2004, under the theme: “Foundations for Europe: Bridging Civilizations and Cultures”.

Twenty scholars, policy makers, social activists and foundation leaders from the broader Mediterranean region, Europe and the United States participated in the “Women and Education in the Mediterranean Region” conference which took place on 15-17 June 2003 in Istanbul, Turkey. The event was organised by the Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TUSEV) in partnership with the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute (Israel) and the European Foundation Centre (EFC). It was generously supported by the Compagnia di San Paolo (Italy); the Luso-American Development Foundation - FLAD (Portugal); and the Van Leer Group Foundation (Netherlands).

The conference was designed within the framework of the EFC Trans-Mediterranean Civil Society Dialogue (TMCD), led by TUSEV and FLAD. Launched in 1997, TMCD aims to initiate, reinforce, and expand cooperation between foundations, corporate funders and their respective grantees throughout the Greater Mediterranean Region in order to help develop and sustain civil society mechanisms and structures.
Background

Education, as one of our major social institutions, fulfils a major role in the transmission of representations about the desired genderized social order. The relation between gender and education is complex and often contradictory. Education systems simultaneously reinforce traditional gender roles and patterns of subordination, but also create new possibilities for women's liberation. By exploring the link between gender and education we can also examine the dialectic relations between the public and the private spheres. Education systems often represent state interference in family life, and state interest in preparing the future work force. At the same time the linkage between the private and public spheres in the educational systems may help to form - or reform - structured inequalities and gender consciousness.

While it could be argued that much progress had been achieved in terms of fostering greater gender equality in a variety of contexts, the persistent gendered patterns of difference and dominance, cannot be adequately understood -- much less, changed -- without considering how gender is socially and culturally constructed.

Recent research has revealed that women are doing much better than before in terms of access to education and the total of education attained. However, several key problems persist: content of curricular materials, the social and organizational arrangements used in schools, teaching practices, women's literacy rates and the design and scope of formal and non-formal educational programs.

Today the existence of gender inequalities in education in general, and the subordinate position of women in particular, are often not a result of deliberate policies of exclusion but rather of the persistence of unchallenged social norms regarding the accepted gender roles. Gender roles, stereotypes and assumptions are ingrained in educational materials and in the schools' environment. School textbooks are frequently biased in their portrayal and perpetuation of gender roles and relationships, and science books are often male-oriented. Gender bias is transmitted not only through textbooks but also through teachers' attitudes in classrooms and in the managerial structure of schools.

The World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000) has concluded that Gender equality in education reflects a need for root changes in government policies. The current situation shows that two-thirds of all children who have no access to primary education are girls while global rates for women (74%) still lagging behind global literacy rates for men (85%). Meanwhile, many governments subsidize higher education (which tends to benefit the upper classes and men) at the expense of primary education (which tends to benefit the poor and in particular girls) by imposing user charges. The participants in the conference identified target areas which affect girls' lower completion and achievement rates are: access; unsafe school environments; biases in teacher behavior and training; and biases in teaching and learning processes, curricula and textbooks.

In many countries the gaps between men and women are closing, more girls graduate from high school and outnumber men in B.A and M.A programs. Nevertheless, fields of specialization continue to be genderized; women, for example dominate the social sciences and humanities, while men dominate the natural sciences and the technological sciences.

The discrimination of women in educational systems, on all levels, is more evident in developing countries. Among the factors, which determine this discrimination are the increasing poverty, the rising costs of education, high population growth rates, and decreasing allocation of national budgets towards education.

Gender differences in illiteracy rates are considerable. The Beijing conference identified 640 million adult women who are illiterate, mostly in developing countries. The accepted assumption is that explanations to this gap lie in social causes rather than in individual ability. Access to education is also a culturally defined factor, and is determined by the social values and expectations of different societies and cultures.
Opening Addresses

Dr Ustun Ergüder and Dr Dario Disegni

Üstün Ergüder, Chairman of TÜSEV thanked the partners of the conference, Van Leer Institute Jerusalem and European Foundation Centre and sponsors Compagnia di San Paolo, Van Leer Group Foundation and Luso-American Development Foundation for their support with a special thanks to TUSEV staff for their dedication in bringing this event to its fruition.

Ergüder expressed his thanks to Shimshon Zelniker from the Van Leer Institute who was at last minute unable to attend the Istanbul conference. It was with him that the idea for this conference was developed, and the topic of women and education which is also close to the heart and experience of both Zelniker and Ergüder. As the former Rector of Bosphorus University and now as the Director of the Istanbul Policy Centre at Sabanci University and the Education Reform Initiative project, issues surrounding this topic are of utmost importance and relevance.

The continuing participation of TUSEV as a Governing Council member of the European Foundation Centre is indicative of the importance of these activities, and the role of foundations in Turkey in relation to Europe and particularly the Mediterranean region. As a Co-Chair of the TMCD Programme, Ergüder expressed his sincere intentions, on behalf of TUSEV, to continue to support and participate the initiatives.

Dario Disegni, Chairman of the European Foundation Centre and Head of Cultural Affairs and Institutional Relations of Compagnia di San Paolo - a key sponsor of this conference - opened the conference. During his speech, Dario highlighted the following areas:

Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission in his speech in Bologna on 17 May reiterated the Commissions commitment to move forward with the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures. This proposal was adopted in principle at the ministerial meeting of EU Foreign Ministers and their Mediterranean Partners in April 2002.

Key themes of focus on the independent funders’ agenda are peace-building, democracy, human rights and gender. Outcomes from this conference will be fed into this process. In addition, action oriented meetings between foundations and high-level Commission representatives are being organized to discuss Euro-Med issues. The EFC is closely following these developments and plays a key facilitative role in keeping members and the community at large updated on new developments in EU policies concerning the Mediterranean region.

A special note was made regarding the importance of this region and the Commissions renewed commitment to fostering co-existence and cooperation among different peoples and cultures; enhancing the economic, trade and political relations, and strengthening civil society and democratic institutions.

This conference on Women and Education marks the beginning of the next phase of the TMCD dialogue which aims to initiate, reinforce and expand cooperation between foundations, corporate funders, and their respective grantees in order to foster and sustain civil society mechanisms and structures in the Greater Med Region.

Dr. Disegni closed his welcome speech by congratulating conference organizers TÜSEV and Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and supporters Luso American Development Foundation, Van Leer Group Foundation and the EFC Secretariat.
**Key Note Speech**

**Dr Feride Acar**

Dr Acar presented the key note address for the conference entitled: Women’s Education: Global and National Dynamics.

In her comprehensive review of the global progress and challenges with regards to women and education, as well as specific points regarding Turkey. Dr. Acar planted the seeds of themes which were sown throughout the entire conference.

As the representative in the CEDAW Committee (the monitoring organ of the UN- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Acar provided an overview on the aim of the convention and specific references to Article 10 of CEDAW which refers to education. The committee consistently underlines that “…education is a key variable in explaining women’s human rights and determining women’s well being and status, both as individuals and a social category in all societies around the world”.

Indicators of progress from different regions of the world with regards to enrollment and access were shared, highlighting the areas in which progress is being made. Whereas overall the conditions regarding this issue seem to indicate that globally there has been a significant improvement in the education of women, this does not necessarily translate into improvement in other areas of women’s’ life- and data from CEDAW supports this. The data reveals that the relationship between education for women and increased employment, public participation and overall empowerment is not always direct and that education of women has failed to have the desired impact of improving conditions for women in this sense. In addition, women are still suffering from discriminatory legislation and various forms of abuse and neglect in the societies in which they live.

This point was a common thread of all discussions in the Istanbul conference, in which the actual impact of increased access and enrollment for women was debated and led to the conclusion that education was a ‘necessary but not sufficient’ key variable for the attainment of gender equality.

In turning toward the context of Turkey, Acar highlighted the key factors impeding the promotion of women’s education – regardless of a national proclamation of political will stemming from the formation of the Republic to present day- such as a strong patriarchal culture, the impact of gender segregating religious beliefs, poor socio-economic status of families and high rural-urban migration rates.

What Acar refers to as ‘critical paradoxes and bottlenecks’ for Turkey’s gender-differentiated picture (with regards to literacy, primary, secondary and higher education enrollment, resonated with participants from other Mediterranean countries, indicating that in fact, regardless of contextual variables, the issue has several common denominators. It was these common denominators that provided a foundation for the fruitful discussions that followed the keynote address of Dr. Acar.
Key Discussion Themes and Points
The conference was one with a rich discourse amongst presenters and participants. Many issues within the sphere of women and education were discussed, which are best organized under various thematic areas.

Empowerment
Does women’s education lead to empowerment? Of all the themes discussed, the topic of empowerment was one that was weaved through each panel and subsequent discussions. In one form or another, most of the presenters touched on the theme of empowerment, indicating centrality within all issues, programs, and efforts focused on women.

In discussing the topic of women and education, Fatma Khafagy from the University of Cairo proposed a compelling argument based on the education of women, and its impact on empowering them. Particularly in male dominated societies, ‘helping’ women by empowering them does not necessarily mean that their environment will enable them in changing their lives. For example, in some Arab countries where women cannot drive cars, the value of education in the lives of women and the impact on society at large is limited.

Ayla Göksel from the Mother Child Education Foundation in Turkey provided a practitioner perspective and shared results of a research study which aimed to expose the effects of education programs on women vis-à-vis internal factors (e.g. self-concept, self-confidence) and external factors (interpersonal and interfamily dynamics). Overall, outcomes of the study showed that despite the different aims of education programs (e.g. literacy vs. parent training), various measurements indicate a positive impact on empowering women.

Within the framework of her discussion on political representation of Egyptian women, Elizabeth Bishop from the American University in Cairo also refers to an “empowerment gap” of Arab women.

Ela Anil from Women for Women’s Human Rights shared outcomes on external evaluations conducted as a post-training assessment, which indicated on several aspects that training for women did translate into increased empowerment (including dimensions such as completing formal education, establishing grassroots initiatives, entering the workforce, etc.). From a funders’ perspective, Lou Anne Jensen from the Chrest Foundation in the US stated that this type of programming and approach in empowering women is most effective as opposed to programs focusing on internal factors.

Trees Kosterman of Al-Zahara in Galilee, Israel, focuses her work on empowering Arab women in Israel, and asserts “empowerment means for us, awareness… to make women aware that they are not alone, that the are not the only one(s) facing violence, or oppression, or unemployment… it is a problem which every Arab woman is facing, it is not an individual problem but a problem from a society, and if they want, they can change their community, it will take time, but it is possible…”. For Kosterman and the women she works with, empowerment is hope.

Given the plethora of different definitions and vehicles of empowerment one can offer women, a natural outcome of this discussion was a debate on the definition of empowerment. From one perspective, it was stated that external factors (societal, familial, economic etc.) do not necessarily create a recipe for empowerment and that internal factors (attitudes, self-efficacy) play an important role. In this sense, practitioners and academicians alike debated different viewpoints on what it meant to ‘empower’ women. In conclusion it was agreed that these conceptual and practical notions be taken into consideration especially with regards to interventions focused on empowerment.

National Education Systems and Government Programs
Many governments and respective Education Ministries have allocated, with the support of major institutional donors such as the UN and World Bank, much time and energy to education reform—especially with regards to the creation of new schools, curriculums and attendance and enrollment.
Within this context, the points below emerged from a discussion centered around governments’ approaches, and in some cases, the strength (or lack thereof) of the real ‘political will’ behind implementation. Also highlighted was the overall importance of balancing government goals with real indicators of impact.

The support of governments for basic education and other educational initiatives is critical. In fact in Egypt, enrollment of females has been a great success as compared to other Arab countries. However, as asserted by Fatma Khafagy, “…in some cases national authorities view female education as the one and main way to empower women [in Egypt] by producing trickling down effects that will enhance the status of women”. This statement resonated with participants and speakers from other countries as well. It was suggested that perhaps the topic of education is a ‘less touchy’ subject compared to other societal factors that impede growth and development of women, thereby making it politically easier for authorities to focus on education as a means for women’s empowerment (this topic is further discussed under the theme ‘Empowerment’). A lack of national plans to address issues such as gender discriminating laws and administrative practices puts in question the real intention and desired outcome of national efforts for education of females.

Whereas governments such as in Egypt have declared national plans on closing the gender gap, other countries such as Turkey have yet to make this a national priority. The lack of ‘political will’ on behalf of national and local government officials was highlighted by Batuhan Aydagül from the Istanbul Policy Center’s Education Reform Initiative as a potential impediment to efforts to close the gender gap. While countries such as Turkey sign on to international treaties and platforms to pursue positive changes, in many cases the gender gap issue is not included as an objective of national education strategies. Thus, Aydagül asserts that without the political will of governments, at the national and local levels, success is doubtful.

Marta Apostolidou from the Frederick Institute of Technology presented comparably more positive developments from the Republic of Cyprus with regards to government and national commitment to the issue of gender parity in education as well in other social and economic spheres. In S. Cyprus “…although girls’ education started with a delay of about 30 years, compared to that of boys, it soon achieved to breech the gap…” This shift, according to Apostolidou, has been enabled by the social and economic developments in Cypriot society which traditionally hindered women’s education and active participation. Institutions such as the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus have committed to programs that focus on closing the gender gap in education and employment and have shown successful outcomes. What remains a challenge is the ratio of male: female educators and high level administrators in educational institutions.

Trees Kosterman highlighted the challenge of Arab women in Israel, given that national programs focusing on gender gaps and education apply mostly to the Jewish majority and the Israeli national government does not provide assistance to this minority population, particularly given that programs are usually in Hebrew, not Arabic. In addition, Arabs living inside Israel are also excluded from the Arab world in general. As a Muslim Arab minority these women face what Kosterman calls “double discrimination”- first as women within a male dominated society and second as minorities in a Jewish majority country.

Myths of Gender and Education: Measuring & Understanding Impact and Progress

In many of the presentations, ‘official’ data was presented as indicators of education (enrollment, literacy, etc.). Much of the focus of the topic of women and education carries with it the general assumption that “if we educate women, things will improve’. But are things improving? Are there another indicators to measure real impact? Is there a link between educating women and their increased social and economic status? Increased participation in public spheres? Influence? These and similar questions were proposed for discussion throughout the conference.

Myth 1: “Official data” was questioned to the extent to which measures provide accurate indications of impact of education. Traditional sources (e.g. Human Development Reports) offer a limited scope based on conventional indicators of enrollment, literacy, years of schooling and
expenditure. The suggestion to consider ‘non-traditional’ data as indicators that can provide a better understanding of the impact of education programs and initiatives targeting women resonated with all participants. In addition, the point was made to take into consideration the population size of respective countries when assessing their ‘success’ in implementing programs.

**Myth 2:** Over-emphasis on attendance and enrollment rates may be leading us to miss the point. The idea is not to enroll as many girls as possible, but to provide an education and environment which will enable them to advance socially and economically. As mentioned within the topic of empowerment, which is a related issue, focusing on enrollment and attendance will only create a rise in numbers. Without focus on the actual societal and economic obstacles (e.g. limitation on mobility, early/forced marriages, supporting family by having to work usually without pay), closing gender gaps only in terms of ‘number’ may have little impact on the overall development of the status of women.

**Myth 3:** Another ‘myth’ of women and education is that the priority of surrounding contextual factors of education are often misplaced. Gender sensitization for teachers, learning materials and media together with the overall quality of education are factors that have a significant impact on the process of education. So long as these elements are not taken into serious consideration and made a priority for change, the education system will continue to sustain a disparate approach to education of women. Review of text books was highlighted specifically as one of the key areas that needed increased attention and support.

**Women and the Public Sphere**

The topic of women in the public sphere generated a significant amount of discussion which put forth questions such as: ‘Are women increasing their participation in public spheres, and if so, what are the measurements?’ and ‘Are they able to reap the rewards of their education?’. Discussion points centered around the importance of using participation and representation of women as a measure for education’s impact on empowerment.

Elizabeth Bishop from The American University in Cairo initiated the discussion with her paper on the relationship between women’s education, women’s public participation and visibility, and the State’s allocated budget to respective ministries. Bishop asserts that more women encounter the government through education than any other public services, and secondary education as the key step in preparing women for employment in the state administration: “Secondary school is the educational institution that produces modern states’ political subjects, citizens and state employees. In this sense, secondary education contributes to women’s empowerment.” If in fact Bishop’s assertion remains true, Arab women in Israel have no chance: According to Kostermann, access to secondary education is delivered only in Hebrew.

The topic of official statistics with regards to women, empowerment and political participation was discussed with a suggestion to consider additional non-traditional indicators. In her presentation, Bishop suggested that using different approaches and assumptions (to supplement existing indicators used in UNDP’s Gender Empowerment in indexing women’s empowerment. - different approaches, assumptions Suggests an alternative indicator to supplement UNDPs Gender Empowerment Measure (in the context of public employment and the advancement of women). “Such a composite indicator would compare rations of women employed in government ministries with ministries percentage share in the national budget. In Egypt, this indicator might reveal that women are employed in the modern state’s least funded ministries such as Education and Health, just as they are underrepresented in the highly funded ministries of Defense and the Interior.” Other suggestions on non-traditional data to reflect participation were indicators such as percentages of women participating in protests and other political activities.

Developing women’s potential to occupy decision making positions was identified as one of the key objectives of educating women. Balancing this with an NGO-practitioner perspective was Mine Kiliç from Turkey representing the Association for Support and Training of Women Candidates (KADER) which aims to empower and encourage women and develop strategies for effective and equal participation of women at local and national parliaments and at all decision making bodies. Turkey faces a very low representation in both local (2.2%) and national government (4.4%), and asserts that education for women is a critical factor in being able to increase their representation and
public participation. KADER’s informal training programs aim to increase knowledge on topics such as civil code law, election processes, nomination techniques and tactics. The organization has trained thousands of women in several regions throughout Turkey.

Biran Mertan from Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) added to this discussion the importance of how women who do enter the sphere share political space with men, asserting that women should not enter for the sake of entering, they should enter with, and stick to, their political ideologies and approach. In her presentation, Mertan indicated that the percentage of participation of women in the parliament in N. Cyprus was 8%, versus the current European average of 28%, but in contrast noting that 41% of women occupy academic positions at EMU, N. Cyprus’s largest university. Bi-communal groups such as the George Washington University’s Cypriot Women’s Group was highlighted as playing a critical role in developing women’s decision making role in public and private spheres alike. An interesting approach was that of case studies of successful Turkish and Greek Cypriot women, aiming to empower young women through the promotion of role models. A key element of this project was the debate and discussion (using the interactive management method) on the definition of ‘success’ in this context.

The topic of employment was also touched upon by both Bishop and Apostolidou with references (respectively) to increasing levels of employment (30% in 1992) in Egyptian administration, and the encouraging display of dedication to gender sensitivity on behalf of the Employment Ministry in the Republic of Cyprus. Kostermann adds a bleak outlook to this somewhat optimistic picture by highlighting that compared to 53% of Jewish women, only 16% of Arab women in Israel participate in the workforce.

Gender and Policy Making

Policy making and implementation was a key theme which was highlighted to that brings to light the importance of advocacy, lobbying and influencing policy. Ela Anil from Women for Women’s Human Rights- New Ways (WWHR) in Istanbul Turkey shared outcomes of various research studies which exposed a serious lack of awareness of rights and lack of women’s participation in platforms which influence change in policy and practice. The WWHR case provided interesting insight into how to take women’s issues and frame them within the context of human rights policy making overall. Kostermann also underlines this approach, asserting that women’s rights is about human rights.

As quoted by Ferda Sahmali from the World Bank, ‘a good policy can make a difference’. The Bank’s approach to gender is from a socio-economic development perspective, asserting that gender gaps in education are often largest in low-income/developing countries, providing visual representation of how gender equity and economic growth are positively correlated. However, Sahmali highlighted that inequality in legal, social and economic rights and policies exist in all regions, regardless of economic development and status. The World Bank approach asserts that by achieving gender equity, countries can increase their economic growth, quality of life, and possibly, improved governance, though this final point was still in question by the presenter. The Bank’s strategy focuses on being country-led, country-specific, with gender responsive policies and interventions determined by the outcomes of gender diagnosis (via the Country Gender Assessment process).

Batuhan Aydagül, in his presentation of the Education Reform Project (Istanbul Policy Center), presented a model which aligned research, policy development and project development to catalyze change, highlighting the importance of bringing policy makers, policy reformers and policy implementers together in the same sphere to achieve systemic change.

Religion and Gender

The Med region is one full of traditions, cultures and religiosity. As stated by Tamar Rapoport, “…especially in this part of the world, we need to learn how to work with it, not against it”. This was a rich and dense discourse with contributions from 2 or the three main religions: Judaism and Islam. In their
presentations, both Berktay and Rapoport refer to concepts of identity in the context of modernization and the impact of religious ideology on women.

Fatmagül Berktay from Istanbul University presented the argument of some Islamist authors (of both genders) in Turkey which argue that there is complete gender equity in Islam, only to avoid reaction to examples which prove the opposite by claiming the influence of ‘tradition, implementation or Judaic influences’. Berktay asserts that this is a ‘romantic conservative’ position, which “combines an idealized picture of religion with a biologistic view of women’s role” and adds to this the concept of ‘otherism’ and the practice of identity politics which “prevents the building of a truly democratic public space where difference is genuinely represented and respected”. What Berktay calls a ‘difference creating’ political approach is being demonstrated in modern day Turkey displayed by the push and pull between the religious and secular women, and manifested in the highly politized ‘headscarf’ issue.

Religious fortification was the concept which framed Tamar Rapoport’s work at Hebrew University. Rapoport’s paper presented an insightful and contextual perspective on the experience of young ‘national-religious’ women in Israel. Within this framework, Rapoport aims to discuss ‘the production of a new model of female adolescence and women’s socialization in a modern Israel…”.

Discussion followed on the religious and secular debate and the impact that these structures have on education and societal norms for women. Participants shared viewpoints which indicated that both religious and secular societies influence women and their identity– internal and external- albeit in different forms.

Philanthropy, Funding and Interventions on Women and Education in Mediterranean Societies

The topic of local support and indigenous funding and challenges of local resource mobilization (with a particular focus on Arab societies but applicable to all) was discussed. The point made specifically was addressed to Arab societies and the landscape of philanthropy for social justice.

Trees Kosterman from Al-Zahara highlighted her unique challenge in making the case for support from external organizations for a population (Arab women in the borders of Israel) which is a minority without a minority status. Initiatives such as the Arab Women Fund and the Global Fund for Women were identified as instrumental mechanisms in helping to mobilize funding and support, whereas some multilateral institutions (e.g. UNIFEM) have been less supportive due to mandates that do not facilitate support to Arabs within the borders of Israel because they are not considered ‘Palestinian’. For Kostermann, the support of organizations like the Global Fund for Women and the New Israel Fund gave her NGO the confidence to move forward. Initial or seed funding for NGOs was underlined as a critical point of support for organizations with potential to make a great impact.

With regards to foreign donors, the challenge was identified as rigid guidelines and application practices and ‘imported interventions’ which in some cases, do not align with community needs. Discussion of this was centered around the example of how Global Fund for Women accepts applications in the applicant’s local language (which was identified as a best practice per consensus of the participants.) In addition, challenges in seeking support of institutional funders are faced when the answer is that the ‘country is not poor enough’ or ‘your area of work is not within our mandate’. A point was made that it is important to focus on getting donors and fund seekers to understand one another better. With regards to interventions, in some cases donors identify programs that are not always applicable to or align with actual needs of the targeted beneficiaries. It was suggested that donors be more sensitive to the capability of the target population/communities in identifying their own needs and interventions. In some cases, they may require less guidance, and in some cases more.

Donor openness and sensitivity in this process was regarded as a critical success factor in creating win-win outcomes. One final point about foreign funding was made from the perspective of the donor community: It is important to keep in mind that funding from such sources are usually to support future work or new programs. Ongoing support for operations and existing programs are less likely to be funded from these sources. Once again, this highlights the point local support for local civic initiatives.
Alternatively, participants from donor organizations shared their respective responses to some of the issues and challenges highlighted above. According to Lou Anne Jensen from the Chrest Foundation donors often face challenges which grantseeking organizations may not always be in tune to, and encouraged both parties to understand relative issues impacting funding practices, such as:

- Legal requirements of grantmaking in other countries;
- Recently defined guidelines by the US Department of Treasury regarding overseas grantmaking;
- Internal procedures and reporting requirements of the foundation, and adhering to defined mission and programmatic focus areas;
- Mutual respect between donor and NGO in defining funding and program needs;
- Encouraging NGOs to understand that limited support for operational needs is a strategy employed by foundations to help NGOs diversify their funding base for future sustainability.

Inclusion of CSOs/NGOs in the process of conducting detailed country or issue specific assessments was identified as a critical success factor in developing customized country-specific programming. Ferda Sahmali from the World Bank Turkey Office shared with the participants their approach and principle in gathering this input. For example, in the Bank’s Turkey Country Office, the Bank develops, with the input of reputable local gender experts/academicians, ‘Turkey Country Gender Assessment (CGA)’ Report. CGA Report dissemination workshop is planned to take place in September 2003 in order to develop policy recommendations and priorities, jointly by the CSOs/NGOs and government officials which would serve to be a basis for development of a National Gender Agenda. Due to the fact that the mandate to include CSOs/NGOs in the process is determined at the country level, not all country offices share the same practice.

There was consensus among participants that this should be a mandate for all country offices- for both the assessments and strategic development processes which impact social development policy and practice. This applies for other institutional assessments such as the Country Assistance Strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. In a related point, it was suggested that in some local country cases, the resources used to conduct these assessments (which in some cases are deemed unnecessary since they gather and analyze data that already exists) could be better spent on more pressing needs of society.

Conclusions and Recommendations
The key conclusions and recommendations are summarized below:

- Education is a very important means towards closing the gender gap and women’s empowerment but education alone is not sufficient. Although in most countries education and gender equality have been made into constitutional rights, huge challenges remain as regards the implementation. A comprehensive-interdisciplinary approach is recommended, which takes into consideration the broader political, socio-economic, cultural and religious context and influences, including issues such as generational differences, urban/rural environment, and exposure to/interaction with other ethnic/cultural groups

- With respect to formal education, issues of gender stereotyping in curricula and the teaching process, as well as the penetration of fundamentalist thought were highlighted as areas that require special attention. Gender sensitization of teachers represents another important potential action area.

- Non-formal education has a huge potential in raising women’s awareness and consciousness; it can be a powerful vehicle for empowerment. There is a need to better document and disseminate models and lessons learnt from the region, as well as to ensure more and continued support to capacity building/multiplier as well grass-roots organizations working with women.
• There is a need to better understand the role of religion in social change, as well as the role of faith-based philanthropy – both can be drivers of greater equality, but may also be used to reinforce certain views and dogmas. Foundations can play a role in identifying and supporting local resource mobilization efforts and practice, as these hold the promise of ensuring long-term sustainability of the initiatives or services.

• Women are a major force in peace and reconciliation efforts and building bridges across cultures and religions, which is vital for the future prosperity and stability of the Mediterranean region. Several excellent case studies were presented at the conference, with a recommendation to explore how to increase the visibility of existing good models and opportunities to scale these up or replicate them.

• Continued support for research in the field of education and gender, networking among scholars, building linkages between the academic world and practitioners, and ensuring that research findings are fed into policy making and implementation represents another important action area, and may be particularly relevant for comparative and cross border initiatives.

• Advocacy groups and networks play a critical role in raising the public awareness about issues of gender and education, as well as in engaging with governments in the policy development, implementation and monitoring. However, they often lack the necessary resources to be able to pursue their mission and to connect with peer organizations.

• International institutions, such as the World Bank and the European Commission, also play an important role in the field of promoting and supporting women’s education. It was recommended that it would be worthwhile to explore how to improve the mutual understanding between these institutions on the one hand, and scholars and civil society actors, including foundations, on the other hand with a view to enhancing cooperation and dialogue at all levels (policy, funding and implementation).

• Networking, sharing of experience, research findings and lessons learnt among academics and practitioners, both at the level of the Mediterranean region and between specific countries where there is an identified common interest, was considered highly beneficial by the participants. A suggestion was made to explore the possibility to organize a larger follow up conference in 2004.

The outcomes from the conference will be presented to the EFC International Committee and leading foundations active in the Mediterranean Region. There is an opportunity to feature challenges and success stories in the field of gender and education at the next EFC Annual General Assembly and Conference, which will take place in Athens, Greece, on 30 May – 1 June 2004, under the theme: Foundations for Europe: Bridging Cultures and Civilizations.”
Abstracts

Martha Apostolidou - Women’s Education in Cyprus
The history of education in Cyprus was, until recently, like in most countries, the history of boys’ education. It referred to new developments in education, creation of new schools, curriculum programmes, methods of teaching and assessment, rates of success etc., without any special mention to facts or figures related to education of girls. As a result the picture given basically represented the education of boys. Reference was often made to the low numbers of girls in all levels of education, it was not, however, considered necessary to explain the reasons behind the numbers, since it was thought to be natural for women to follow men, like in all sectors. Furthermore, women’s education was a luxury that would help them to become better perspective brides, better wives and mothers.

Today, women’s participation in education, in the schools of Cyprus is generally high for both men and women and there are no significant differences between the two sexes. Girls, however, influenced by stereotypes, continue to select subjects which lead to occupations that are traditionally considered to be suitable for women (e.g. teachers, secretaries, nurses), resulting in a lower representation of girls in technical/vocational education compared with that of boys.

Fatma Khafagy (National Council for Women) - Will closing the gender gap in education in Egypt lead to women’s empowerment?
The Egyptian government has launched a national plan aiming at closing the gender gap in Education. Female education is looked at by the national authorities as the one and main way to empower women in Egypt by producing trickling down effects that will enhance the status of women. This paper will examine to what extent can the focus on closing the gender gap in education empower women. Education in itself and as is in terms of low quality, gender neutral policies in enrolment in mainstream education, gender insensitive curricula, its detachment of employment policies can not lead to much empowerment. In addition, the absence of other national plans/strategies aiming at redressing gender discriminatory laws and administrative practices, increasing women’s political participation, opening up closed positions for women such as judges, governors, heads of universities, governor of the central bank…ec. will also not lead to women’s empowerment.

Elizabeth Bishop (AUC EGYPT) - Women, Governing Egypt, and Other Feminist Aber-nations
In practice, states define secondary education as the knowledge necessary for women and men to enter the civil service. Recent discussions concern women's appointment to the Egyptian judiciary; what may not be so visible is that, during the past ten years, female secondary-school certificate holders have become a third of the government's clerical employees.

This presentation represents a contribution toward the political ethnography of statecraft in Egypt, which interrogates the practical locations of power that govern the Nile Valley's modern citizen-subjects. The 2002 Arab Human Development Report identified a deficit in women's empowerment. This identification drew on (among other indices) women's percentage share in parliamentary seats and women's share of professional and technical positions. I call into question such a hierarchy of forms of political visibility (which are themselves linked to economic and social status).

Inclusion of women in Egypt's civil service, and their increasing numbers in state employment, poses a series of contradictions for feminist theories of the state that identify 'agents of governance' with 'the politically visible.' In addressing this, the presentation also calls into question the Euro-American concepts of public and private that serve as civil society's regulating principles, since they pose similar problems for discussions of modern Egypt's quasi-entitlement state.

Biran Mertan (Eastern Mediterranean University) – Women’s Education and Peace Building in Cyprus
Despite the fact that Turkish Cypriot women have passed through multiple traumatic situations such as wars, being refugees, etc., they had strongly struggled for human rights and peace building process in Northern Cyprus. On one hand, the long, sad history of Cyprus, on the other hand, traditional patriarchal value system, have placed the Turkish Cypriot women in subordinate position.
In this current paper, the stages which Turkish Cypriot women have gone through in education, in politics and in their careers will be summarized. One of the most important historical events for Turkish Cypriot Women in their fight for Women Rights, is the acceptance of girls to the primary schools in the 1900’s. Since then, Turkish Cypriot women not only have equal right to be educated as men but also, they act as principle actors and activists in the educational system, namely in the higher education. Nowadays, more and more women graduate from universities. However, there are only 4 Turkish Cypriot women MPs (4/50) in the Parliament and it is very rare to see women in decision making positions in the society.

Because of the instability both in interior and exterior policies in Northern Cyprus, Turkish Cypriots had been subjected to many conflictual situations. Women within this chaotic environment continued to struggle both in monocommunal and bicommmunal groups, most of which are about building peace and empowering women. Women's achievements in non-governmental organizations will be discussed and examples will be presented.

Mine Kılıç (KA.DER)
What is KA.DER? The education of women in Turkey (short overview). Training programmes of KA.DER: objectives, contents, how many women have participated in training programmes, and how? Discussion of results and plans for new training projects.

Fatmagül Berktay (Istanbul University) - Islamic Concept of Gender Equality and the Limits of Identity Politics
Islamist authors of both genders in Turkey argue there is complete gender equality in Islam and when confronted with the reality of women’s subordination in Islamic societies they tend to explain it away by referring to the “implementation” or “tradition” due to “Judaic influences”. In the arguments made in favour of Islam, the notion of gender equality remains entirely abstract while the principle of patriarchal power and family relations is upheld. This is a “romantic conservative” position which combines an idealized picture of religion with a biologistic view of women’s role. Indeed this position is internalized by the Islamist women in Turkey who construct their “identity” from a biological essentialist viewpoint and avoid challenging the dominant patriarchal notions of gender (whether religious or non-religious) and confine themselves to demanding “complementarity” to men. Although in this way they may be increasing their “negotiating power” vis-à-vis men, they never question the “patriarchal bargain” itself. Moreover, this position ends up in “otherizing” all the women who are reluctant to accept an Islamist lifestyle. Uncovered women are seen to be accomplices –if not culprits- of the so-called lowly secular moral order.

Identity politics is a “difference creating” politics and, within a framework of power relations, ends up in “otherizing” every other difference. Thus it does not lead to the building of a truly democratic public space where difference is genuinely represented and respected. So far in Turkey, politics based on “Islamic woman’s identity” seems to have led not to the emancipation of Islamist women, neither has it brought about an enlarged democratic mentality or climate, but only to an increase in the number of “others” standing in the public space in enmity with each other.

Tamar Rapoport (Hebrew University) - The Pedagogy and Experience of Religious Fortification: The Case of National-Religious Young Women in Israel
The paper will explore the pedagogical discourse and practices that aimed at "religious fortification" of national religious, young women and shape their experiences of becoming a woman. It will discuss the production of a new model of female adolescence and women socialization in "modern" Israel, and the manner in which it co-constructs religious fortification and the process of "coming of age". The paper will explicates the constant "identity work" that religious fortification requires and the modern rationale and meanings of identity it entails.

Ela Anil (WWHR) - "The Human Rights Education Program for Women in Turkey: An Example of a Successful Partnership between NGOs and the State Institutions for Women's Human Rights"
The Human Rights Training Program for Women was developed by WWHR-NEW WAYS in 1995 and since 1998, the program is being carried out in collaboration with the Community centers all over Turkey. The four-months training program employs completely participatory methods of training and
continues to be the most widespread and in-depth human rights training program in the country. Recently, it has been elected as one of the best tactics in human rights in the world.

The aims of the program include to raise women's critical consciousness about political and social systems in Turkey; facilitate their reflection on the structures leading to the violations of their human rights; to enable women to gain the necessary knowledge and skills for the realization of their rights; and to enable women to become active agents of social change and democratization process in Turkey through grassroots mobilization and community-based action.

Ayla Goksel (ACEV-Mother Child Education Foundation) - Effects of Education Programs on Women: Cases from Turkey
ACEV is an NGO in Turkey that works in the fields of early childhood and adult education. The presentation will focus on the effects that two of ACEV's programs targeting women (Mother Child Education Program and Functional Literacy Program) have had on their self-concept, self-confidence, social awareness, social integration, interpersonal & intra-family dynamics, value of child and media exposure.

The data is provided from a study carried out by Kağıtçıbaşı, Gülgöz and Goksen and results reveal that these empowerment/support programs for women have had a significant effect on improving women's lives.

Batuhan Aydagul
Today, there exists and international consensus to achieve gender parity in both primary and secondary education. To accomplish this goal, international governmental and no profit organizations provide countries and national NGOs with assistance on policy adoption and implementation and with access to necessary funds. Turkey is among the countries committed to achieve gender parity in K-12 by 2015, however, Education for All 2000 Assessments report that Turkey will most likely miss this goal. The presentation will focus on barriers before girls’ equal access to schooling in Turkey along with Education Reform Initiative’s efforts to remove these barriers by catalyzing an innovative collective thought process for education reform policy and brief look at policy recommendations.

Ferda Şahmali (World Bank Turkey Office)
The World Bank’s perspective regarding the questions like: “What is gender?” , “How gender is organized at the Bank?” and “Why the World Bank should be concerned about gender equity?” . Main principles of the World Bank’s Gender Mainstreaming Strategy will be explained to the participants and actions to support the strategy will be discussed. Features, models, approaches and processes to prepare Country-level Gender Analysis and Assessments and identification of possible gender-responsive policy and operational interventions that are important for poverty reduction will be discussed. Short information on Turkey Country Gender Assessment Report which was prepared by Turkish academics will be provided.

Trees Zbidat-Kosterman (Al Zahraa/Global Fund for Women)
Regarding the situation of Arab women inside Israel: I think that their situation is not different from women in the rest of the Arab world, as everywhere they are victims of honor crimes, we deal a lot with marriages on a young age, forced marriages, violence against women, low education etc. But what makes the situation of these women special is that they are living in a developed country, under third world circumstances. We always say that we are oppressed twice, first as women from a patriarchal society, were men are the rulers and women have no voice, and second as members of an unrecognized ‘minority” living in a Jewish country.

The conference is about women and education. No access to education for Arab women inside Israel has internal and external reasons. To name some internal; marriage at a young age, family honor, economical, cultural. External reasons are due to factors such as language differences, budgetary allocation decisions, and scholarship opportunities.

Then I would like to say something about the position of Arab (women)organizations inside Israel and foundations. We cannot expect anything from the Israeli government. 94 % of their annual budget for social projects goes to Jewish institutions. The rest (6%) goes to Islamic and Christian religious institutions. How often do we hear that we cannot have support from foreign organizations, because
we are living in a developed country. They know that a big part of the Arabs inside are living in third world conditions, but that are the rules. (UNIFEM is one of them)

Then lately we get messages of foundations that they want to work more on the issue of peace and human rights and women issues are not important anymore. When I try to explain that for us women issues are human right issues, no answer.

We, as Al Zahraa, are trying to work on “women and leadership”. Our vision is that in this country you can gain equality, only if you deal with groups who are on all levels, educational, economical etc, equal. This means that also women must know their responsibilities and participate in this process of working towards equality. Women too have to take their role in this process.

The Global Fund for women is one of the few women funds, which understands this concept. From the beginning of our relationship they were listening to us, and they took us seriously and understood that the fact that you live in a so-called developed country don’t mean automatically that everybody has profited from this.
Biographies

Salam Al-Mahadin is assistant-professor of English at Amman University in Jordan. She is currently head of the English Department and Director of Translation Studies. Her research interests and publications have focused on critical discourse analysis, post-colonial theory and cross-cultural interaction. Most of her research has been carried out with a particular emphasis on Jordan in the fields of media, gender, law, tourism, and children's literature. Dr. Al-Mahadin has also taught translation theory and translated extensively from English into Arabic and vice versa.


Ela Anil holds a BA in Education & Cultural Studies from the New School for Social Research, New York/U.S.A. Her main areas of interest include women's human rights and alternative/popular education movements. She is currently a co-coordinator of an autonomous women’s organisation, Women for Women’s Human Rights – NEW WAYS, based in Istanbul – Turkey.

Batuhan Aydagul works as a Project Specialist in Education Reform Initiative in Turkey. Recently, he co-authored a position paper on gender parity in education with Prof. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı and Şems Akboğa. Mr.Aydagül holds an M.A. in International Education Administration and Policy Analysis from Stanford University. One of his research areas is how local and international conditions and actors interact to shape education policy, his master’s thesis builds up on this interest by tracing the role of the Education for All movement and religious fundamentalism in the development of the 1997 Compulsory Education Law in Turkey. Prior to this studies at Stanford, Mr.Aydagul accumulated knowledge and experience in education administration and finance through his work with both financial and K-12 educational institutions in Turkey.

Fatmagül Berkay, Professor of Political Science, received her B.A (International Relations/1978), M.A (Political Science/1983) and Ph.D (Political Science/1994) from the University of Ankara, Faculty of Political Science. She also has a degree in Women’s Studies (University of York, UK/1991). She has been active in the Turkish women’s movement and acted as “Adviser” to the State Minister in charge of Women’s Affairs in 1994-95 and represented Turkey in various international fora including the European Council and the United Nations. She is a founding member of the Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey as well as the Foundation for Social Research, and is a member of the General Board of Women’s Library and Information Center Foundation. Fatmagül Berkay teaches “History of Political Thought” and “Modern Political Ideologies” in the Faculty of Political Science, İstanbul University, and “Feminist Theories” in the Women’s Research Center of the same university. Her published books include Women and Religion, A Comparative Study (Black Rose Books, Montreal, 1998) and The Gender of History (Metis Publications, Istanbul, 2003 –in Turkish).

Elizabeth Bishop is a Scholar Affiliate of the American University in Cairo's Institute for Gender and Women's Studies. She team-teaches history-writing in Cairo University's History Department. She is affiliated with the H-Gender-MidEast list serve as review editor.

Tamar El-Or is a Senior Lecturer at the department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem Israel. Her field of research engages topics of gender religion and knowledge.

**Ayla Goksel** is Executive Director of Mother Child Education Foundation and Finans Foundation. Her postgraduate study includes Development Studies (MSc), London School of Economics and International Philantropy Fellowship at Johns Hopkins University where her research focused on NGO accountability and intersectoral partnerships.

**Biran Mertan** completed her primary and secondary education in Lefkoşa, Cyprus. She was awarded an undergraduate degree in the field of psychology by François Rabelais University in France and later, a graduate degree in the field of Genetic and Clinical Psychology by the same university. She completed her DEA (Diplome D’Etudes Approfondies) and Ph.D in the field of Development Acquisition and Educational Psychology in the University of Rene Descartes-Sorbonne in Paris V. She was awarded the title of Associate Professor in the field of Developmental Psychology by the Higher Education Council (YÖK) in Turkey.

**Professional Achievements**

- Lecturer (Chargée des Cours) in the field of Clinical Psychology in François Rabelais University between 1987 and 1990 academic years.
- Given the courses “Introduction to Psychology” and “Educational Psychology” in Eastern Mediterranean University during 1990-1991 academic year.
- Founder Director of the Department of Psychology in Near East University in Cyprus in 1991.
- Founder Director of the Psychological Counseling Guidance and Research Center in Eastern Mediterranean University in 1997 for the first time in Higher Education and in Northern Cyprus. Apart from being the current director of this center, she is also an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.
- Director of Center for Women Studies in Eastern Mediterranean University in 2001-2002 academic year and the editor of the Journal for Women Studies for a while.

Because of her contributions to the promotion of the French Language and Culture in Northern Cyprus and the scientific studies she made on this language, in 2002, she was awarded the medal “Chevalier de l’Orde National du Merite” by France.

Emete Biran Mertan is the President of Turkish Cypriot-French Cultural Association. She has worked in various administrative positions and published scientific works, especially on mother-child interaction and communication. She is a member of many national and international psychology and women organizations and moreover, she is the representative of Turkish Psychological Association in Northern Cyprus and academic advisor of Turkish Journal of Psychology.

**Fatma Aly Khafagy** is head of the Ombudsman Office at the National Council for Women in Egypt. Previously she was the head of Gender and Development for Unicef Egypt from 1984-2001. She received her Ph.D. in development planning from London University, M.A. in Management from the American University and B.Sc. from the Faculty of Economic and Political Science at Cairo University.

**Tamar Rapoport** is a Professor of Sociology of Education at the School of Education, Hebrew University, Jerusalem. She teaches classes in sociology of education, qualitative sociology, gender and education, and childhood. She has extensive experience in conducting research both in education and sociology. In her current research projects she studies "migration and belonging", as well as the interrelation between knowledge, gender and education, from a comparative perspective. She has published over 50 articles in leading social science and educational journals, based on both qualitative and quantitative research. Prof. Rapoport has directed for several years the "Feminist Program" at the HU ("Program in the Differences Between the Sexes"), and have been intensely involved in promoting issues and programs connected to gender equality in the university and Israel.
Ferda Şahmalı has been working at World Bank’s Turkey Country Office since 1994. She is Senior Operations Officer at the Human Development Sector, and is dealing with education and social protection projects. She received her B.S. Industrial Engineering from Faculty of Engineering at Middle East Technical University and completed her MBA study in Ankara University, Faculty of Political Science.

Prior to joining the Bank, she has worked at SUMERBANK between 1979 – 1983 and TUBITAK (Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey) between 1983 – 1985. She has become an advisor to the State Ministers, Mr. Tinaz Titiz and Adnan Kahveci between 1985 – 1989 and worked on unemployment issues. She has taken place in establishment of the Employment Foundation and has worked as the General Secretary of the Foundation between 1989 – 1191. She has worked as a Project Coordinator of the Bulgarian Ethnic Turks Project under UNDP contact between 1991 – 1993. She has also managed the World Bank financed Employment and Training Project between 1993 – 1994. She has taken place actively in the design of an employment and training project for Palestine refugees on behalf of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to the Human Development sector work at the Bank, she has recently been assigned as the Country Gender Focal Point for Turkey.

Ferda Şahmalı is married and has one son going to university.

Trees Zbidat-Kosterman:  In Holland I studied as a social worker and worked for 6 years with women (immigrants) from Turkey and Morocco. Since 1993 I am living in Sakhnin, an Arab town in the North of Israel, in the Galilee. The first time I visited Israel was in 1982. The reason for this visit was to do research about Palestinian women. I have to admit that at that time I didn’t know anything about the situation of Palestinians and even didn’t know (or didn’t realize) that there was a Palestinian Arab population of almost 1 million people inside the borders of Israel. This first visit was a real eye opener. Since then I am involved in the Palestinian Arab community. And now I am living here for almost ten years with my (Palestinian) husband and two daughters. Since 1999 I am working for Al Zahraa Arab women organization. Al Zahraa started as a group of women who were very unsatisfied about their lives, and they wanted to change something. They followed courses (empowerment) and in 1997 Al Zahraa became a registered organization. It started as a local organization (Sakhnin) but nowadays we are working in the whole Arab (Bedouin, Druze) community. We built up a network of about 450 women from the whole country. Together with the network, we are trying to create social changes, and to influence policy makers. But a lot of work need to be done. We do this by courses empowerment and economic empowerment, and leadership, an annual conference, lectures etc. I am member of the advisory council of the Global Fund for Women USA.
## List of Participants

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