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Women Empowerment in Syria: Policies & Related Institutions

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1. Introduction

Women empowerment issues have been stressed recently since women are representing the underpinning of sustainable development structure of society whatever its type is, rural or urban, at general and household levels. Since empowerment process is based mainly on possessing resources, controlling over resources, and enjoyment of equal citizenship rights as men, governments and women's organizations still work to achieve that objective; therefore, those organizations should work to liberate women from constraints that banned and still binding women to participate effectively in all social, economic, and politic aspects. In order to make women practicing their active and comprehensive role in the development process that the country is witnessing, several serious steps and effective measurements should be taken by all governmental and non-governmental bodies and their efforts should be cooperated to improve and support women status since they perform very crucial roles in the society life starting from, children rearing and growing, and setting up a very well prepared generation that is able to build a strong state. Therefore, equity and equality should be applied to provide women equal opportunities with men for motivating women to be more productive, participative and giving which will be reflected positively on their children health and well growth, and that in turn will be inherited by many benefits on present and future generations.

However, development process has been failed in many developing countries, which has led to the necessity of reviewing all the development issues with concentrating on human development, considering it is the main way to achieve comprehensive development. Since gender equity is correlated with improving the development rates, it was very necessary to know the empowerment elements that enable women to play their vital and human role to reach the comprehensive development. Therefore, during the last decade, many governments in the world have adopted policies concerning gender equity especially after The Fourth Conference on Women that was held in Beijing in 1995 that assured the importance of integrating gender prospective in several policies and aspects.

We will discuss in this paper the policies and strategies taken and adopted by the governmental organizations and civil bodies concerned with women issues; in addition to reviewing obstacles hindering women empowerment, and then proposing the required policies and strategies to achieve comprehensive development from one side, and to realize the Millennium Development Goals of United Nations that women empowerment goal is the third priority of their goals.

2. The Institutional Setting of Women Empowerment in Syria

Syrian Government has set national strategic plans to improve women status and functioning their capacities, in general aspects, and to promote their participation in governmental and judicial institutions, labor force, and decision making. Moreover, the national targeted strategies have been varied to: increase political participation of women; eliminating violence

The concept of empowerment refers to an individual's ability to control decisions that impact upon his/her life. Possessing this 'power' the individual becomes an effective participant member in all social life, and when the individual possesses the power and the ability, he can also induce a change on an external 'other', individual, group, or a society. Therefore, empowerment is related closely to self-realization for its presence enhances the individual's ability to participate freely in society, and therefore to be empowered (IFAD, Work plan 2003-2006)

against women; alleviating poverty and eliminating all forms of illiteracy; increasing the number of non-governmental, civil, and volunteer institutions in the light of executing and promoting Beijing declaration; also paying attention to violence and discrimination against women at all levels. All previous goals have been oriented through non-governmental institutional mechanisms represented by their commitments to the international agreements that Syria has ratified, and governmental institutions represented by national governmental institutions which concern women issues.

2.1. International Institutional Settings

Due to the failure of all international declarations and convention's implications aiming at realizing progress that are imposed by logic development of society, and those texts didn't achieve the real equity in general rights and duties, and due to the growing of feminine movements and continuous struggles in this arena, all these failures have led to release number of agreements concerning women and the first one was equal wages convention in 1951, women political rights convention came after in 1952, and others until issuing the Convention of Eliminating all Forms of discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which adopted by the UN General Assembly on 18 December 1979 and entered into force 3 September 1981. Finally, the Fourth International Forum on Women that held in Beijing in 1995.

2.1.1. The Convention on Eliminating² Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Convention of Eliminating All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was launched first by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 7/10/1967 stated that the General Assembly considering all united nations has confirmed again in its convention the "confidence of basic human rights, on human esteem, worth, and on equal rights between men and women...etc". Following that, on 18 December 1979 the general assembly adopted the convention of Eliminating All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which entered into force on 3 September 1981. Therefore and synchronization with global orientations toward women empowerment enjoying citizenship rights and practicing these rights, Syria has ratified many international agreements that aiming at promoting women status, empowering them, elevating inequity, and realizing the Millennium Development Goals of United Nations that comprise in its articles particular components concerning women development and empowerment.

The convention declaration defines violence against women, in its first article, as any violent action driven by gender jumpiness to violent against women solely being women, which resulted in harming or suffering women physically, sexually, or psychology, menacing to do those actions, forcing, or abusive deprivation of freedom whether that actions happened in private or public life. Following that, in 1994 a special determinant of violence against women has been appointed in the human rights committee of the United Nations. In addition, in 1995, Beijing platform adopted all what have been written in the scrip and decisions relating to violence against women and ways of eliminating discrimination issues. Therefore, it is impossible to eliminate discrimination against women without the political willing and commitment at all levels to give it the priority at the local, national, regional, and international levels. The political willing can be expressed in many ways such as legislation, national work plans, sufficient resources assignation, and setting up mechanism to handle the violence against women at higher levels. Some of these efforts are to overcome escapement of punishment on violence committed against women because it deepens the effects of that violence. Therefore, possible

²The Convention defines "discrimination" as follows: "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." (CEDAW)

controlling violence mechanisms should be taken to investigate violence wrongdoers, take-up the impunity, and imposing gruels as a message to the society telling that the violence is unacceptable behavior which deserves punishment. However, there are several types of violence against women such as: juridical violence, which is the most influential violence since it is practiced under the roof of legislations, discriminated laws against women, sexual violence, economic aggression like depreciating women control and access to resources and their income.

Although many years have been passed since CEDAW advertising, Syrian Arab Republic ratified the convention on March 28, 2003, which comprised thirty articles, 16 of them were representing the core of the convention which focused on the following sides:

- The necessity to eliminate discrimination and modify the stereotyped social and cultural patterns of men and women, (article 5).
- States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women (article 6).
- States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the right of women equality with men (article 7).
- Women opportunities to represent their Governments at the national and international levels (article 8).
- Women right of giving nationality to their children (article 9).
- Women right of education (article 10).
- Women right of economic, social, and reproductive entitlements (article 11, 12).
- The importance of integrating rural women in the rural development process (article 14).
- Women equality with men before the public law and family law (article 15 and 16).

In order to implement the previous items, the convention implied mechanism to infliction states and governments for not committing the implementation of convention's articles as the following: first, considering receive and handle individual and sanctions complaints to CEDAW committee. Second, investigation made by the mentioned committee about the disservices and injuries practiced against women, but this protocol considered optional so that all states didn't ratify it including Syria. However, there is no choice to recognizing that the importance of the convention comes from being the best achievement agreed by most countries in the world to protect and preserve human being from one side, and considering it the most suitable instrument to induce changes that always recall to finding the right mechanisms to harmonize human life conditions, on the other side.

Syrian Reservation on the CEDAW

Syria has some reservations on the ratification of the CEDAW relaying on article 19 of Vienna convention law that allows to revelation reservation pending agreement ratification. However, Syrian government has depended in revelation the reservation on consideration that some of CEDAW articles are contradicted with Islamic Shari'a although the Islamic philology history has assured that the concept of Shari'a is a historical and temporal concept is mortgaged to time conditions and needs. Clerisy has translated the Islam to rules and cosmos; therefore, legislation and laws enactment should be revised to be suited to every time and period. It is proper to Syrian government to adopt citizenship concept conciliating with international current century measurements. Those measurements correspond and fit to the substance of the ethereal religions and don't absolutely contradict with them. In addition, reservations have been justified that they are contradicted with Shari'a, except the article no. 29, which touch the state sovereignty. Syrian reservations are the followings:

- Reservation on article no 2 of the convention which states that " States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women".
- Second reservation made on item 2 of article 9 related to women grant nationality to their children".
- Third reservation on item 4 of article no 15 related to freedom to move and choose residence and domicile.
- Fourth reservation on items (1-C, 1-D, and 1-G) of article no 16 stated that women and men have the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution.
- Fifth reservation on article no 29 related to arbitration between states.

It is worth mention that Syrian government is working to elevate the previous mentioned reservations through its legislative institutions though it ratified the international covenant that related to civil and political rights in 1989 which implied a principle states that all citizens should enjoying rights and freedom regardless their color, race, and sex. In addition, the Syrian constitution in its article no 25 has assured the equity among citizens in rights and duties, which will be cited in subsequent chapter in this paper.

Procedures and policies adopted to narrowing the gender gap in Syria

Number of laws has been modified in favor of women such as:

- Introducing a new article no 22 of 2001 on law no 92 of 1959 stated that retired women can bequest their pension to their legitimate heirs, and women can retire either at 55 years old with 15 years of serving, or at 50 years old with 20 years of serving;
- Legislative decree no 35 of 2002 which increased the paid maternal leave to 120 days for the first born child, 90 days for the second child, and 75 days for the third born child;
- The legislative decree no 18 of 2003 that modified the article no 19 of law no 134 as the following : raising period for boy lasted when he completes 13 years old, and 15 years old for girl;
- The establishment of the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs by the legislative decree no 42 of 2003 came to expressing the commitment of finding the required governmental mechanism to coordinate with all national governmental and non-governmental bodies for raising the Syrian women status.

Syrian ratification on CEDAW convention by the republic decree issued on 25/9/2002 was an important step toward the implementation of the Syrian commitment of Beijing and the exceptional session of the General Assembly resolutions. Moreover, very important laws have been issued during the last few years aiming at enhancing Syrian women status whose recommendations to implement Beijing platform were: working hardly to modify the customs, traditions and negative social practices that dedicate the stereotype view on women and hindering their development, progress and equal footing with men; removing the chasm between laws and applicative reality to ensure the good appliance of some equitable laws in administrative, and judicial sides, make women aware of their rights, revising laws that ensure to women all opportunities of effective and full participation in political, social, cultural , and economic life; and working to removing all constraints that hinder women development and participation in establishing the society.

2.1.2. Beijing Conference Platform

Beijing declaration and platform on women has comprised twelve axes distributed as the following:

1. women and poverty;
2. women education and training;
3. women and health;
4. women and violence;
5. women and armed conflict;
6. women and economy;
7. women and decision making;
8. institutional mechanisms to raise women status;
9. women and human rights;
10. women and mass media;
11. women and environment;
12. Female child.

2.2. The National Institutional Framework

Among the last three decades, women development issue has been put on the priorities of the development programs of Syrian government, where crystallized in its tangible commitment to Beijing platform articles and since that time, the government has taken all procedures to execute Beijing action plan. The objectives of these committees are summarized below.

2.2.1. National Committee for Women

A national women committee was formed in 1995 with membership of ministries, popular organizations, unions, syndicates and concerned corporations lasting with women committees in number of corporations such as: worker woman committee, woman engineer committee, and woman advocacy committee. In addition to the exerted efforts of establishing women units in: Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, State Planning Commission, and in the Central Bureau of Statistics. However, the national committee has started its work by drawing the national strategy until 2005 in cooperation with the concerned governmental and civil bodies for rising Syrian women status to contribute in handling several put forth issues depending in that on Beijing platform, penetrating legislative and laws, Ba'th Party constitution, and on the Syrian Constitution of 1973, and other inductions. Thus, the government has adopted that strategy and integrated it into the ninth fifth plan. In addition, during 1996-1997, the committee executed the first period of post Beijing project. Following that the execution of second period 1999-2001 by the General Women Union. The following objectives of the strategy are listed in brief:

- Monitoring the implementation of the national women strategies including women strategy of 2005, and drawing the yearly executed programs and plans;

- Coordinating and cooperating with governmental, popular, and civil bodies to support women and activating their role;
- Proposing and implementing programs aim at rising women status through several activities in order to evaluate achievements and obstacles and put solutions;
- examine the connected laws and agreements regarding women affairs, and proposing modifications to be forwarded to the concerned bodies;
- Contribute and participate in holding conferences, seminars, and workshops which concern women issues at national, Arab, and international levels;
- Conducting studies and surveys, collecting data and information, and documentation the information in cooperation with the interested bodies in women issues at national, Arab, and international levels;
- Pursuing performance of gender communication net in the concerned governmental and civil institutions, forming specialized offices consisted with the nine axes of the national strategy for women empowerment. These axes were: woman and law, woman and social axe, woman and education, woman and environmental axe, woman and media, woman and decision making, woman and economy, woman and health, and finally woman and human rights axe.(the national committee's strategy for woman) and;
- Finally, it has been set the 2006-2010 period strategy, where agreed to updating the Syrian woman strategy by the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and the General Union of Women in cooperation and coordination with the United Nation Development Fund for woman (UNIFEM), Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and other bodies.

2.2.2. The General Union of Women

The General Union of Women in Syria is the first feminist mass, popular and voluntary organization, registered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, since it was established in 1967, by virtue of the decree law No.121 dated 26/8/1967, which was amended twice, the first once by the decree law No.33 dated 21/12/1975 and the second once by the decree law No.3 dated 5/2/1985. These amendments were prompted by the development of the Union's activities and circumstances throughout performance of its missions in all fields.

Regarding women general union strategy of the tenth fifth plan, the union has general objectives can be summarized as following (The Objectives of the General Union of Women):

- Organizing women's potentials to realize development objectives;
- Providing social and economic services that secures women reassurance;
- Enlightening, and training women in several domains (political, economic, and social);
- Providing job facilities of nursery and kindergarten;
- Working on integrating gender equity concept into the fifth plans;
- Expanding WGU base to enclose all concerned bodies in several scientific fields and its activities not restricted to house's wives;
- Improving informatics in the GUV offices and administrative offices, and working to establish a database for women;
- Working hardly to eliminate discrimination against women and;
- Attempting to eradicating poverty and unemployment among women, especially rural women;

- Taking care of the Syrian women living abroad, establishing cooperation with them, and strengthening their relations with the homeland;
- Cooperating and participating actively with the national societies , popular and professional trade unions and organizations to deepen the concept of women's liberation;
- Working with women's masses and organizations in the Arab countries for supporting the issues of women's liberation.

2.2.3. Women Development Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture

Women development directorate was established under the decision no 40 issued on 9/2/2006 in the framework of modernizing the structure of Ministry of Agriculture.

The general objectives of this directorate are: supporting and improving rural women livelihood, promoting their status, enabling women to acquire several political, social, cultural, and economic rights, practicing these rights by transferring and adopting research and scientific advanced studies' results to achieve the strategy of rural development in the Ministry of agriculture. As for direct objectives of the directorate are summarized as following: increase awareness about gender issues and women integrating in the development process path for the decision makers, planners and supervisors of the development programs in all concerned institutions of women issues; gender mainstreaming in policies and programs sketching and implementation, monitoring and evaluating them; establishment of connection and coordination with different directorates that work in rural women development field; developing rural women skills and promoting their livelihood; and finally improving the female agronomists skills in rural women development field (women development directorate).

Regarding the women development directorate strategy of the ministry of agriculture, it comprised social, economic, health, professional, and family aspects through setting the extension program for rural women that investigate in most crucial problems of Syrian countryside such as childhood and maternal care, rural residence, family planning, illiteracy and social affairs; in addition to other economic and demographic aspects. The woman directorate executes its extension activities, field studies, and educational and vocational training courses through it's unites all over the country, at the governorate, district, and village levels. The directorate plan is listed as following:

- Integrating rural women in setting and implementing the policies, plans and programs of the Ministry of Agriculture;
- Rising awareness of decision makers, planners and program supervisors, working in the Ministry of Agriculture and other institutions, about the importance of women issues integration in the development path;
- Training the Ministry cadre on rural women integration methods during the implementation of different programs;
- Establishing a connection channels and coordinating within the Ministry (agricultural extension, training and rehabilitation...etc), and with the concerned institutions out of the Ministry (women general union, central bureau of statistics, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs...etc);
- Improving rural women skills on household's resources management;
- Conducting field studies on rural women status in order to plugging up the current gap of missing data in this field;

- Rising women capabilities through training on new agricultural techniques, and domestic economy;
- Setting rural domestic economy program to meet rural women needs;
- Collecting data on the unit's activities and publishing them in several periodicals;
- Improving the quality of rural household livelihood through increasing its income, diversifying its sources, and orienting the increased income toward improving the social, health, educational, and nutritional status.

2.2.4. Syrian Commission for Family Affairs

The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs was established in 2003 by the decree no 42 as a corporate body located in Damascus, affiliated directly to the Prime Ministry. It aims at speeding up the process of promoting the status of the Syrian family and better empowerment to contribute to the human development efforts; promoting the status of the Syrian family and enhancing its role in the human development process through protecting the family, deepening its solidarity, safekeeping its identity and values, improving family's livelihood on multiple aspects, and enhancing its interaction with the concerned national governmental institutions and NGOs. Finally, propose amendments to family-related regulations. In addition, the commission setup qualified fairs, posters, and fingerpost to enlightening women's rights and their role in the development process.

2.2.5. The fifth Development Plans

The nine and ten fifth development plans have comprised special chapters regarding gender issues, which the previous fifth plans didn't mention. Therefore, the tenth-5 year's development plan (the twenty third chapter-woman sector) has included the following qualitative and quantitative objectives: (ten fifth plan, the twenty third chapter-woman sector):

- Qualitative objectives have concentrated on the importance of realize a significant progress in the Syrian women's life and gender concept mainstreaming as main elements of programs and projects that will be implemented during the following five years; in order to establish a fair society built on the base of realize more women rights, improve the Syrian women status internationally according to the development and empowerment gender-based index, enhancing women participation in achieving the objectives of resources functioning efficiency, achieving social equity and reducing poverty.
- As for the quantitative objectives of the tenth-5 years plan that should be achieved by the year 2015 comparing with 2004; are the following:
 - reducing maternal mortality from 58 death per 100.000 live birth to 26.75 death in 2015;
 - reduce infant mortality from 17.1 deaths per 1000 to 11.53 nearly
 - Increasing female rate in labor force from 17.3% to 21.3% in 2010, to 25% in 2020, and to 30% in 2025;
 - Increasing women participation in the raw economic activity from 9.2% to 25% in 2020 to 30% in 2025;
 - Increasing female to male rate in basic education (6-11) years from 92% to 100%;
 - Increasing female to male rate in basic education (12-14) years from 88% to 100%;
 - Increasing educated females to male in age 15-24 years old from 92% to 100%.

In order to achieve the previous objectives, the plan have sketched a strategy for policies and programs that will be included to women empowerment economically, politically, and socially to be integrated in the development process relaying on transparency, responsibility, and priority standards in governance the targeted groups of women especially in the least developed areas and most needy and households under the poverty line. Whereas, these strategies have adopted many policies for women empowerment economically, socially, and politically; summarized as following:

- **Economic empowerment policies**

- Poverty eradication policies that will handle women problems and needs through improving the actual going-on program's performance, then design and implementing support capacity building programs;

- Micro-credit policies through facilitating women access to loans, improving and expanding the current institution's mechanism;

- policies targeting female farmers through training and educating them technically, and in the industrial sector through increasing their participation in this sector, improving labor laws , social insurance and other support services. Finally, these policies and strategies should targeting women in the services sector by improving the current services of nursery and kindergarten, the legislative support, social tutorship, as well as proposing the required enhancing sectorial programs and procedures.

- **Social and Political Empowerment Policies**

- activating women participation in formulating, implementing, coordinating, and monitoring the sectorial targeted polices;

- increasing women participation in the income generating activities and expanding the individual and households' enterprises to achieve regional balance and reducing poverty;

- updating laws and legislatives related to woman and child;

- setting national plan to protect child;

- setting national plan to protect women from violence;

- establishing center concerning household affairs and;

- eliminating gaps between rural and urban.

2.3. National Non-Governmental Institutional Settings

Beside the previous Syrian governmental institutions, there is a number of non-governmental bodies, some of them have been established long time ago, while the others are newly established, all together working abreast to increase woman awareness about her rights, from one side, and to increase awareness of the decision makers and development planners to the importance of woman integration into the development process, eliminating obstacles that ban targeted development. These institutions and its plans and objectives will be mentioned briefly below (national governmental report, Beijing +10, a call for peace, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs, 2004).

2.3.1. Syrian Women Association

This association has been established in 1948, it works on increasing awareness of the society in general, and women (rights and duties) in particular, based on human rights law, the Syrian Constitution, indiscriminating civil laws, and the Syrian women status in labor and education domains. It also participated in the preparations for Beijing conference with the Syrian preparation committee, contribution in many studies and workshops, conducting research and studies to observe all discriminating articles in the Syrian laws; as well as, participation in many conferences, seminars, and workshops held in several areas about the mentioned topics.

This association has adopted gender concept with the cooperation of research and training center on discrimination in Beirut supported by United Nation Population Fund. In addition, it published several articles about gender concept and its relation with development, and the classic social view on woman and man in "NOON AL_NESWAH" magazine, and in the Syrian newspapers as well. The association has held workshops for journalists and reporters on "the gender concept, the national strategy for woman till 2005, and the fifth plan for woman from the year 2001 to 2005 in the Syrian Arab republic". Also, it carried out study on "the woman image in the media" which has been presented in the first meeting of the national committee in 2004; in addition to many studies and contributions in the workshops related to gender issues, violence against women, and the women global demonstration against poverty.

2.3.2. Rural Knowledge Net

In 2004, the "rural knowledge net" has been established in three villages in cooperation with the Ministry of Communication and Technology and the United Nation Development Program (UNDP). The UNDP and the Net are considered as part of knowledge society initiative that has been defined by the Syrian strategy for information technologies and communication, which is a group of access centers that spread in all Syrian governorates to provide services in the information literacy domain.

The net is aiming at:

- information literacy in the Syrian countryside, enabling its population access to the internet and new communication means to these techniques in all life domains;
- extending and enhancing information for large scale of population;
- building a qualified context to benefit from these techniques for economic and social development purposes;
- creating additional job opportunities in the communication and information fields;
- increasing information availability in the rural areas by expanding popular access to the internet;
- specialized qualification and training for the internet services providers;
- providing web for local society (www.reefnet.org.sy);
- expanding the vista of the information users and motivating them to use internet in social, economic and cultural life;
- eliminating information illiteracy;
- providing internet as a window to the world;
- providing all services related to communication and information including laser and color printers, scanners, fax, photocopiers, and public telephones;
- Providing basic training courses about computer use (MS OFFICE) and learning English language.

2.3.3. MAWRED Institution

MAWRED is non-governmental institution established in 2003 with the support of the first lady; aiming at:

- Activating and improving Syrian woman participation in the economic and social development process through presenting all possible support means for the current and future women enterprises. Also, it represents all Syrian business women who work and reside inside and outside Syria, and they are interested in developing the Syrian economy;
- Assisting women who have practical and applicable ideas to establish and manage their own enterprises;
- Training and qualifying women to establish new business starting from planning and crystallizing ideas into specific work plan, ending with running the enterprise and entering the operational productive cycle passing to organizing, financing, and lawful and administrative matters;
- using all the required tools and abilities(technical consultations, checking, and others) to have successful women business ;
- Providing women entrepreneurs, who have already establishing enterprises, with all required assistance to develop their businesses through encouraging them to adopt new technologies, modern administrative means, , training on handling the emerging problems and overcome the gaps,.
- The necessity of linkage between economic development and realizing gender equity and equality concept which implies the right distribution of economic and social roles.
- Eliminating all form of discrimination that based on biological differences between man and woman.

The first practical project launched by MAWRED in order to incorporating the mentioned objectives was Business Incubator which is considered as the first step in building a net of businesses incubations covering all Syrian cities aiming at motivating potentials at Syrian business ladies and then translating these potentials to successful economic activities able to compete, and enhance Syrian women integration in businesses. This net will be linked with other international nets to get benefits from other's experiences and information.

2.3.4. Fund for Integrated Rural Development Of Syria - FIRDOS

FIRDOS is a non-governmental organization established in 2001. It aims at

- Supporting comprehensive social and economic development and enhancing agglomerations in rural Syria with special focus on women empowerment and promoting their awareness.
- FIRDOS is based on "self reliance" principle and adopts interactive strategy based on "helping people to help themselves" concept.
- Strengthening and enhancing the capacities of individuals and small groups with special attention to the importance of protecting social, cultural and legacy identity of these communities.

FIRDOS is working to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of United Nations of poverty and hunger reduction and establishing an international partnership for development through its educational and training programs. In addition, FIRDOS works to financing individual enterprises for the purpose of enhancing gender equity and liberating Syrian women, increasing the number of health centers as well, to realize the remaining three of MDGs.

Moreover, FIRDOS works tightly with other governmental and non-governmental organizations to achieve their main objectives of improving life standards of rural communities, and implementing infrastructure projects in cooperation with local population in order to improve services. Besides, it supports preeminent students in the secondary schools in rural Syria, and encourages establishment of small businesses to provide job opportunities for local people.

3. Women Status in Syria

Arab society, in general, and Syrian society, in particular, are witnessing crucial debates and discusses about women status and the ways of empowerment and liberating them. So that, laws, legislatives, customs, and stereotyped tradition constitute the focal point of these debates. In fact, women issues are old and renewed in our Arab and Islamic societies, where the Arab modern renaissance masters and many of the mid-nineteenth century thinkers have proclaimed women liberty. On the other side, women integrating in the political and social life considered as progress and development indicators that a country has achieved, where as much women enjoyed their rights and public freedom, as that country is being advanced and progressed. Therefore, the possibility of developing the country will be larger and broader because when half society is deprived from practicing all or some rights and duties, the society will not be upstanding and healthy.

Although Syria is ranking at 79 among 123 world countries, according to discrimination against women index in four fields which are property rights, family rights, physical safety, and civil freedom, Arab women image still in western minds as isolated, retired at home, illiterate and need to be taken toward openness and freedom. certainly, this type of women is still existed in most Arab countries, but on the other side, there is a significant number of literate and advanced educated women; besides, there are professional ,lucid and open minded women who still struggling against constrained social customs that ban women to be involved and benefit from opportunities and enjoying equal citizenship rights. In addition, Arab women didn't acquire equal rights and opportunities as men although the situation is varied significantly between one country to another. Talking about discrimination, mainly in political and civil rights; family law, education and labor opportunities, constraints imposed on women, social traditions and customs, and contribution of social classes in creating additional differences between women in some countries; therefore, these differences were not admitted and unknown quite enough out of Arab countries.

Talking about the Syrian women path, at the beginning of twentieth century, Syrian women have involved in many liberation movements, where they joined political and civil women associations through holding mental and cultural forums, and publishing newspapers concerning women issues. This involvement was due to the increased awareness to the importance of women linearization from constraints that ban women to participate effectively in all economic, social, cultural, and social aspects. However, the first union for women was established at mid -thirtieth, which played an effective and basic role in preparation for the Arab women conference held in Cairo, 1943. After that, women associations' number has increased which lead to plurality and diversity of women activities; activate women role in political and economical fields, and practicing women right in voting and election benefiting from increscent democratic improvement that the country is witnessing. Moreover, women issue and the importance of women development have enhanced by issuing the Syrian abiding constitution in 1973, which assured the equity and equality principle between all citizens regardless sex, religion, and race.

3.1 Economic Status and Economical Opportunities

In Syria, the raw economic activity rate (the percentage of labor force to total population) is low in comparison with the developed countries. It doesn't exceed 27.7% according to the labor force census for all population (statistical abstract 2006), while it reaches 50% in the developed countries. There are two reasons for that, firstly, Syrian society still young due to the increasing infant rate; therefore, the rate of people in work age is low. Second reason is the diminishing of women participation traditionally in the Syrian labor force due to the high number of women stay at home and bringing up their children. The declining economic rate in Syria led to increasing sustenance rate which affected negatively the per capita from one side, and the livelihood standards from the other side. Recently, the raw economic rate has regularly increased, for both males and females, it is considered as positive evolution in labor values, and an evidence of more women linearization and increasing their contribution in the economic and social development process.

Regarding female economic rate, it is noticed that it reached the highest rate 20.9% among 25-29 age group, while it was 97.3% for males at age group of 35-39, and that variance is due to males' absorption in continuing their education and then their involvement in work. But, in average for all age categories, the raw economic rate has reached 44.9% for males versus 10.1% for females (statistical abstract 2006).

As for workers distribution, aged 15 years old and above, it is noticed that females workers rate has reached the highest level in service sector 27% of total workers, agricultural sector comes next 21%, finance, real estates and insurance sector 13% while the lowest rate was in building and construction sector 1%.

Feminine labor force has increased during the last two decades, where the number of female's workers grew gradually as following: 174925 in 1981, 327000 in 1984, 628000 in 1991, 1038000 in 2001, and 5438000 in 2006(Statistical abstract of 2006). Although female number is nearly half to male number, their share in labor force is varied. This variance due to difference in economic opportunities; social framework which dominated and contributed in discouragement of women willingness to entering labor market because of numerous traditional beliefs, pretending that women is created to bringing up children as housekeepers; in addition to the inherited customs and traditions about women job. Governments have failed in sketching policies and targeted programs aim at narrowing gender gaps in the place, and type of work by both men and women.

Relative distribution of workers (table.1) shows that the percentage of women workers who acquired intermediate education diploma, concentrated in the governmental sector (33%), women acquired university degree (19%), while it declined in the private sector where the highest rate of elementary education reached (8%), but they are almost absent in the common sector.

Table.1. Relative distribution of workers (15 years old and above) by education, sex, and work sector, 2005

Work Sector	Sex	Elementary & above	Preparatory and occupational schools%	Secondary %	Intermediate %	University & %	Total %
Public Sector	Males	11	24	39	45	42	20
	Females	1	5	12	33	19	7
	Total	12	29	51	78	61	27
Private Sector	Males	79	65	44	18	32	65
	Females	8	4	4	4	6	7
	Total	87	70	48	22	38	72
Common and cooperative sector	Males	1	1	1	0	0	1
	Females	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	Males	91	90	84	63	75	87
	Females	9	10	16	37	25	13
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: labor force survey 2005, statistical abstract, 2006, calculation made by report writer

Concerning the available economic opportunities related to the quality of women economic participation out of being workers, women can easily obtain job, but it is either low paid or unskilled one. Generally, vulgarization phenomena of women job is prevailing in all cultures which affect negatively and strongly on women all over the world; this can found mostly in feminine occupations such as nursery, librarian works, teaching, elderly and disabled care. It's well known that this type of occupations offers low wage versus the other type of occupation which requires high educational and occupational level. Besides, this type of job doesn't offer any opportunity to women enabling them to realize tangible improvement and progress even when these opportunities are provided they are very limited.

Regarding the relative distribution of workers as sex and work sectors, table.2 shows the highest rate of female workers (7%) in the paid governmental sector versus (21%) for males, while female workers in the private sector and family is equally as paid and unpaid works (2%). Whereas, the highest rate of male workers in the private sector is equally as paid work as self employment. Consequently, feminine labor is concentrating either in paid public sector, or in paid private sector; therefore, women are unable to have self employment or being entrepreneurs due to either lack access to the capital resources, or they don't possess those assets to establish their own enterprises.

Table.2. Relative distribution of workers (16 years and above) as work type, sector, and sex, in 2006

Work type by sex	Public sector		Private sector		Others		Total	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Entrepreneur	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	9
Self employment	0	0	1	25	0	0	1	25
Paid worker	7	21	2	25	0	0	9	46
Unpaid family worker	0	0	2	6	0	0	2	6
Unpaid worker at others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	7	21	6	66	0	0	13	87

Source: statistical abstract, 2007. Percentages are calculated by report writer

Regarding unemployment based on statistical abstract of 2006, unemployment rate among women who didn't work before 41% of total unemployed within this category, while unemployed women rate who have worked before 24% of total unemployed in this group.

As for income distribution, it can be said that laws and legislatives don't distinguish between men and women in wages and salaries. But due to the difficult nature of certain jobs which are sometimes performed by men comparing with those of women, their average wages are higher in most economic activities such as transportation, storage, and construction, while women working in services sector (hotel, commerce, restaurants and others) earn wages more than men because most of them are highly qualified compared with men. (Report on the Status of Women in the Syrian Arab Republic, Demographic Situation, Political and Economic Contribution, Violence Against Women, UNDP, 2004).

Despite of significant achievements that have realized in the field of women participation in labor market, women still discriminated in appointment, promotion, and occupational training. In addition, the effective implementation of labor laws in this concern still weak and women still perform most of unpaid works especially in agriculture.

3.2. Political and Decision Making Status

Syria has recognized at the beginning of 1949, the political rights of women and their rights in voting and election, so that Syria considered as first country among all Arab countries who admitted these rights. Although there is a few numbers of women who accept to occupy leadership positions even when law is allowing them to have that right. Therefore, there is a few numbers of women at ministerial positions and the presence of women in parliament don't exceed 12%, governance and authority controlling still confined right to men.

In this context, Syrian women have achieved many successes and have reached high position at decision making, where a lady has occupied for the first time in Syria vice president position for cultural affairs since 2006, this step considered as an initiative step at Arab level. Parliament seats occupied by women 19% (statistical abstract, 2006); in addition, a lady was occupying a secretary of People Council Bureau in the last legislative period, women at ministerial positions 10%, at local administration 3.1%, and at diplomatic corps 11%, judgeship corps 13.38% where women attorney rate 16% of total attorneys in the country, and there is a lady occupying state attorney since 1998. The following table illustrates women presence rate in the governmental departments.

Table-3: Female Participation in the Governmental Departments, till 2005

Department	% of Females to Total Department Staff	% of Males to Total Department Staff
Vice President	50%	50%
Female Ministers	10	90
People Assembly	19	81
Ministry of Economy and Trade	21	79
Ministry of Finance	32	68
Ministry of Industry	21	79
Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources	9	91
Ministry of Electricity	10	90
Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform	24	76
Ministry of Communication and Technology	24	76
Ministry of Transport	12	88
Ministry of Interior	36	64
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	26	74
Ministry of Higher Education	47	53
Ministry of Education	55	45
Ministry of Culture and National Guidance	38	62
Ministry of Information	27	73
Ministry of Health	58	42
Ministry of Tourism	53	47
Ministry of Irrigation	9	91
Ministry of Housing and Building	14	86
High Council of General Companies	8	92
Ministry of Local Administration & Environment	14	86
Ministry of Justice	28	72
Ministry of Social Affairs & Labor	49	51
Ministry of Al-Awkaf	9	91
Ministry of Expatriates	39	61
Others	44	56
Total	33	67

* Except presidency office of the prime Ministry and the Military sector constructions companies
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006

Women also joined some positions at Ba'ath Party's leadership and in the last party conference one lady became for the first time a member in the country Leadership of Ba'ath Party since 2005, and two other ladies were holding high political position, one of them was holding the position of the Syrian Communist Party's General Secretary and she was a member at the Central Leadership of the Progressivism National Front, while the second was the head of the

Syrian Commission for Family Affairs since 2003 which is equal to minister position (Syrian Women Empowerment Path in Syrian Arab Republic).

Regardless of the significant achievements, women still far from economic decision making position due to the concentration at service sector and being far from production process, i.e. they are far from development process. Consequently, the role of non-governmental organizations and civil societies is very important to change the negative cultural inherited which constrains woman's role inside family and contradicts her participation in the public life, raising awareness and interests about women participation in the public field, encouraging women to be interested in the public affairs and not being immersed in self concerns, and providing useful conditions to get benefits from women competences to hold high positions within suitable plans, strategies and mechanism.

3.3. Social Status

generally Syria holds rank 106 of 177 world countries, and 84 of 140 world countries according to gender index indicators (Human Development Report, UN, 2005), where all governmental policies, during last ten years, have encouraged women education and have stressed on the importance of women contribution in the labor force. Social component factors are listed below in details: laws and legislations, education, health, media, and suitable livelihood.

3.3.1. Laws and Legislatives

Syrian laws and legislatives system is derived from French and Turkish civil law and from Islamic Shari'a although the permanent Syrian Constitution issued on 12/03/1973 guarantees complete and indiscriminate rights and opportunities of all citizens. Also, it addressed to women by the article 45 that stipulates the necessity of woman liberation, providing her all opportunities, and eliminating all obstacles that ban her participation in the economic, social and cultural development process. Furthermore, the civil law and the trade law in Syria have awarded woman complete law eligibility to conclude contracts, possessing assets, exercising businesses and trade, business management, and pleading in the judicatories equally with man. Also labor laws have equaled woman and man at public and private sector and have consecrated equal wage rule for similar work. In addition, it has guaranteed woman particular rights related to her physical and reproductive health which consisted with the world labor standards concluded in the World Labor Organization agreements about protecting female workers and considering their family and health conditions. Besides, these laws have implicated to not dismiss mother worker during maternity leave or illness because of parturition, or pregnancy; also female workers have given compensation for her children.

Despite all these lawful guarantees, some exceptions are still existed in citizenship law, personal affairs law, and penal law that don't give women equal treatment and equal status with men. So that personal affairs law is a group of laws which organize family and household relationships and heritage in this context woman is considered legal dependent to her father or husband; in addition, it denies the right of adult woman in marriage, divorce, and children raising matters. Moreover, citizenship law of 1969 prevents woman to pass her nationality to her non-Syrian husband or her children; therefore, only man who enjoys this right.

Woman is treated as absolute person in the civil and penal court system, but in the legal court, woman evidence is considered as half of man's one. Although there are no additional lawful obstacles that hinder woman to get equity, social barriers are hindering woman to benefit from legislative and juridical system as equal as man. Regarding penal law issued in 1949, it protects woman from oral and physical persecution and violance perpetrated by man. As for laws related to marriage and divorce, divorce still more easier for man than woman and in most cases woman is left unable to support herself, due to the article no 91 of personal law gives men the

right to divorce, which is mono-side, to end the marriage without any excuses; in addition, man simply can record the divorce at the court and in this case, woman might receive alimony for three years if she has proved that she is beggarly; however, woman worker isn't included in this category and she doesn't receive any alimony in most cases.

As for the right of woman in bringing up her children, laws allow woman to be legal sponsor only in case of husband death or when husband is legally disable so that woman in this case has the right to get her children up to 13 years for boys and 15 years for girls. Moreover, divorced woman doesn't have equal rights with legal male sponsor concerning registering her children in schools and moving to another house or nursery right of her children in case she get married again, while that matter doesn't applied on man who get married again.

It is worth mentioning that the government has issued many laws in favor of woman, supporting her to some extent and lessen discrimination against her. Some of these laws and decrees after Beijing conference are listed as following:

- Decree no 330 of 25/9/2002 in which has approved on the Convention on Eliminating All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- Decree no 78 of 2001 which guarantees the right to bequest her pension to her husband and children.
- Decree no 530 of 2002, increase paid maternity leave.

3.3.2. Education

education is the basic element for improving individual prosperity and developing communities economically and socially; it is one of the most important means of woman empowerment, lifting her awareness in practicing her duties and rights, improving health, education, and nutritious status of households through gaining her information and knowledge that enabling her to enter labor market, and participate in the development process.

Syrian Arab Republic has paid significant attention to education in all stages since all suitable tools and policies are provided, where the educational structure has been improved significantly due to the social and economical evolution, large expansion in spreading educational services in both rural and urban areas, and propagation the important of education especially for females. In addition, Syria has worked to bound drop-out from elementary stage among females and males together, where article no 37 of the constitution has stipulated that "education is the right that the country guarantees and it is free in all stages, it is compulsive in the elementary stage, and the country is working to extend the compulsive education to the other stages". Law no 35 about compulsive elementary school has been implemented since 1981, so, the numbers of unrolled children have been decreased significantly. Pure enrollment rate at elementary schools has reached 96.5% in 2003-2004 for both males and females. According to the verdicts of the basic education law no /32/ dated 7/4/2002, compulsive education has been extended and the elementary and preparatory schools have been considered as one stage its duration 9 years called the basic education stage, which is free.

Despite the difficulties in getting accurate statistical data about education rate in each stage, the quality of education and schools available for females and males, and by comparing between both kinds, the available data at central bureau of statistics show the following:

- Female rate at the basic education (elementary and preparatory stage) constitutes 47.6% (2047357) of total (4297580).in 2006 (statistical abstract 2007), while female's number who completed basic education 114135 of total 221570 (51.5%) and who completed their secondary education 76346 of total 145993 (52.3%).

- female rate at secondary schools stands for 51.3% (1705630) of total (332659) in 2006, while the number of females who graduated from the medium institutions has reached 76346 (their

percentage 52.3%), and the number of female students at universities reached 14008 of total 34714 (40.3%), (Statistical Abstract 2007).

- female rate who continue the university education 6.4% of who entered elementary school and they constitute 88001 students of 190750 university students, 46.1%.

- Female teachers rate (67% at elementary, 49% at the preparatory and secondary, 47% at vocational and secondary schools, 47% at medium institution, and 22.9% at university education).

in addition to the formal education, there is a correlation between illiteracy and training and qualification to yield woman vocational skills to generating income by enroll training courses, distributing loans to establish small business, or providing assistance to get loans from the concerned institutions. Also, there is a correlation between illiteracy and healthy legal education; subsequently, the main objective adopted by Arab and international conferences and promoted by UNISCO since sixtieth of the last century, can be achieved through applying the concept of civilized and functional illiteracy.

On the other side, it has been started with a five years project to educate drop-out of females 10-17 years old in the eastern and northern governorates in Syria who were enforced by agricultural conditions to quitting schools or cessation of education. In fact, it has been adopted the slip-on education year to proportionate agricultural seasons with the existence of Al-Badia moving schools. It worth mentioning that although there is an increasing and tangible improvement in educational level achieved in Syria, but this doesn't necessary reflect the same improvement in getting job opportunities equally between men and women; thus, the importance of other social sides prefers to provide more job opportunities for males compared with females at similar educational and vocational qualifications except teaching, where it is noticed that females are prepotency males in these professions that are dedicated by values and social traditions which view teaching, , and nursery as female professions suitable for woman nature and structure as mother, governess, and housewife.

3.3.3. Health

Syria's concern about woman health and its commitment to international conference for population in 1994 and Beijing conference; has led to take serious steps such as accomplishment of "The National Strategy For Reproductive Health" which has set objectives consist with the international conventions' objectives, the National Strategy for population, and with the strategy of Ministry of Health for 2001-2020 period. It is unavoidable to indicate the improvement of health indicators and other indicators related to women development. The World Organization for Health identify health as "it is a status of psychological, mental and physical complete healing and not only being vacancy of diseases". Since good health is existed almost in good environment, the role of concerned organizations has launched for educating and health nurture. Health indicators related to women are listed as following:

- Maternity mortality decreased to 64.40 per 100.000 in 2004;
- Female expected age increased to 75.1 years old;
- The percentage of females to males (100 females to 104.7 males) with population growth rate (24.5 per 1000);
- The rate of the female family planning means users increased to (46.6%).

the United Nations statistics shows that three out of 10000 Syrian women are infected of impotence or deformity due to parturition complexity which means that there is a proportion of danger still threaten women in each parturition, and that danger increases by parturitions increase.

3.3.4. Woman And Media

Although the development of Syrian Media and drama, since it handles women issues, there is a lot of work should to done to promote woman image, giving her several roles other than her stereotyped roles that have been handled for long time as a teacher, nurse, housewife, secretary, and other occupations that related to woman and called female occupations. Also, mass media should work seriously to handle woman issues apart of masculine prospective to make the public culture accepting woman in good role, neither positive nor stereotyped.

Regarding woman participation in the media, women constitute 38% of journalists alliance members, while their rate at preparation and evaluation programs and reporting investigations exceeded 50%;,some ladies are occupying high position in Media commission in addition, many awareness campaigns about woman issues have been organized associated with some activities such as: woman and nurturing forum, International Day for Woman (2005-2006), modifying citizenship law campaign, modifying the article related to honor crime campaign; in addition, drama has played a significant role in presenting new images of woman.

3.3.5. Girl Child

Syrian Arab Republic has ratified the child rights convention since 1993, where a high committee for infancy has been formed since 1999, and a national conference for infancy has been held in 2004; beside that, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs has been established and has set in its first year the national plan to protect child from violence and Syrian government by turn has adopted this plan and it setting to affirm a an early infant strategy and child law.

In addition to ratifying the child convention, Syrian Arab Republic has ratified labor agreements related to child labor, their items included in the labor laws, where penal law emphasizes punishments in case the he / she attacked infant. As for education, it became compulsive until ninth grade, Syrian Commission for Family Affairs has released awareness campaigns and circulating child rights agreement and now it is working on eliminating its reservations.

4. Obstacles and Constraints of Achieving Gender Equity and Equality in Syria

4.1. Legislative constraints

Some inherited and traditional laws and legislatives hinder woman empowerment, as have been mentioned previously, the personal law regarding marriage and divorce, which contravenes the complete equity between man and woman. Here it should be clarified the intersection points and discords between CEDAW and traditional philological concept of marriage which is represented by personal law applied in Syria:

1. Cultural and traditional information and its impacts on the system of mainstreaming values in specific time and place.
2. the nature of paternity household structure and its solidity in building equivalent family relationships between man and woman.

4.2. Social Constrains

- Mainstreaming culture, traditions, and paternity culture represent with its referential differences the main constraint of achieving woman empowerment and trying to mix religion with group of defunct social traditions and customs.
- Violence against woman, which is a global phenomenon, differentiated from society to other in its hardship, forms, and types; so there are physical, material, and moral violence. Also, there are family; social, economic, and lawful violence forms as its sources.
- The extorted heritage out of law framework is one of confusing issues contradicted with religious beliefs that belong to social standards (especially in rural Syria) extort woman her right in heritage, so traditions and customs have more strong impact on religious beliefs to become the social ruler governing inheritance distribution, especially in rural areas, depending on family cementation argument , sister submission to her brother and mother to her son, hiding the substantial reason of that overt ignominious negation which represents the masculine dominance and its prepotency on the inheritance.
- The large decline in enrollment rate after elementary school due to the students entering labor force, for males, or to the early marriage for females, especially in remote rural areas because of family pressures. In addition, women in rural areas don't get in most cases on equal vocational opportunities as urban women, where women suffer from their families pressures to perform unpaid domestic chores instead of continuing their education or looking for work out of house.

4.3. Political Constraints

Theoretically, there are no constitutional or lawful constraints on political participation of woman in parties, parliament, local administrations, and government. so, the Syrian constitutional and lawful systems up build citizenship and equity, but there is a gap between constitution articles that related to legal participation of woman without discrimination and the actual practicing of these laws in the society; in addition to customs and traditions that deactivate women role. Such customs and traditions affect not only women participation opportunities in the political field, but also the validity of law sovereignty itself. These elements constitute heavy constraints for women participation and their political role, so that illiteracy

with its known types "reading, writing", political, vocational, and cultural illiteracy, all together, contributed in supporting and resulting the biased masculine attitudes against women politically. The traditional culture restricts women's role in social and family function, the traditional extension in the Syrian society continues to make heavy pressure on the society.

4.4. Economic Constraints

Lacking of qualified workers in the women issues and in women associations that work effectively for women empowerment, considered as main economical obstacles against women empowerment and their advanced participation in the economical and social development process; in addition to difficult economic situations, scarcity of financial resources, violence against women which was for long time unrevealed, and the large gap in education between man and woman. Moreover, theoretically and legally woman is the owner of her money and she is free in controlling her money, while in fact, she is not free and she is subjected to several pressures applied by her family or husband.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Positives

Syrian government has taken number of positive steps to improve women situation summarized as following:

- dedication of equity principal by the Syrian constitution for rights, duties, and freedom among all citizens without any discrimination that based on race, sanction, or sex, where its article (45) specified woman liberation, giving her all opportunities, and eliminating all obstacles that hinder her participation in the economic, social, and cultural development process.
- establishing (15) centers for girls harborage under (18) years old. Some of these centers are governmental, while the others are non-governmental which are financed by Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, and donation cash and in kind by some local and international organizations such as: sisters of righteous patron association which provides residence, health and psychological assistance, and rehabilitation for expostulated girls and women especially after Syria confirmation on CEDAW by the legislative decree no (330) of 2002 which considered as a good step although of reservations.
- Admission the national woman strategy (1996-2005) and (2006-2010) periods.
- establishing the Syrian Commission for family Affairs (2003)
- establishing a unite for gender statistics at the Central Bureau of Statistics.
- the existence of number of women associations despite they are few such as: Syrian association for blind females , MAWRED association, business ladies committee, and web site concerns Syrian women issues “ Syria's women web site “.
- establishing nursery houses for governmental female workers.
- adopting compulsive education to promote the education level of Syrian women although of some obstacles.
- the serious governmental procedures toward political participation of women.
- Increasing mother nursery for daughter to 15 years, and for boy to 13 years.
- the legislative decree no 53 of 2002 which stipulated increasing paid maternity leave.
- dedication part of the public budget (2005) for activities related to counteraction violence against woman.
- acting some governmental and non-governmental awareness activities in the International Day for counteraction violence against woman (2004-2005).
- Non-governmental association established to provide lawful and psychological consultations for the violence victims in addition to almshouse for expostulated women.
- issuing a decree by the minister of interior which exempted women from getting visa to travel out of Syria.

5.2. Negatives

- Weak communication between the women bodies and the popular base represented by associations whose role is confined on suggesting recommendations for the concerned ministry.
- Dis-limiting the transgression and violation of human rights by the world community's members. In addition, it is noticed that there is still discrimination in many areas such as access to resources and economic opportunities, acquiring the fundamental human rights, and the political domain although of more than one decade has passed since Beijing conference in 1995
- There is a gap between laws and its implementation; this contradiction is clear when these laws and legislatives give women the same rights as men in the practical life as a Syrian citizen, while family law which based on personal law gives the husband an absolute power on wife, at inferior status.

6. Recommendations

In order to achieve the objectives and goals of comprehensive integration of woman in the development process and going on with balanced steps with other development and promotion components, three main sides concerned development process are responsible to realize these objectives which are:

- The government and its representative organizations and bodies.
- The civil society with its representatives of clergy, indigenous associations, and valid masters.
- Syrian woman herself and her believe and awareness towards lifting restrictions; subsequently, all of these are responsible and have important role to achieve the required objectives.

6.1. Recommendations for Legislative and Decision Makers

- modifying convention, traditions, and negative social practices that dedicate the stereotyped view about woman and restrict her development to be equal with man, and eliminating gap between laws and reality for good implementation of some fair laws concerning administrative and juridical sides; woman awareness of her rights and reviewing laws that include discriminated articles against woman and are contradicted with the Syrian Constitution and with many rights that Syrian woman has gained in several domains, and modifying these laws where the state ensures woman all opportunities of effective and comprehensive participation in political, social, cultural, and economical life; and eliminating all barriers which hinder woman development and participation in building society;

- implementing the general policies and enhancing women participation in the economic development through increasing women participation in labor force, executive judiciary and legislative authorities;

- eliminating cultural illiteracy among women, focusing on the basic rights of household, including women and men, realizing gender equity, and control females drop-out from basic education especially in poor and remote rural areas;

- reviewing and modifying laws, or removing discriminated articles according to the international laws for human rights, developing laws and regulations related to reproductive health;

- activating mass media in all means to rise women awareness in social, cultural, and lawful domains related to women rights and duties, providing governmental support to improve woman image, showing the civilized image of woman through clearing curriculums and media programs from the stereotyped images about women;

- modifying laws, and legislatives to be consistent with CEDAW articles;

- increasing the harborage centers for the expostulated women and supporting associations that foster violated females, and providing lawful and psychological tutorship centers for expostulated females and women;

- increasing public expenditure on education, training and qualification and all what can increase opportunities of women for labor and decision making position;

- providing women with economic support, encouraging them to increase their participation in the sustainable development process, and increasing expenditure to solve the economic and social problems of the poorest and marginalized groups in the society;
- directing to all political parties to integrate gender equity in their programs unless do not contradicted with CEDAW, collect all statistical data about violence against women, and its types, reasons, and results;
- recognition of complete women rights and valuating their economic work and their ability to perform all tasks and roles that man perform, and needed for development and progress;
- circulating CEDAW items widely in which public bodies be aware and recognize the necessity to implement and promote those articles;
- monitoring and following of the civil organizations which promote counteractive ideas about violence against women, and finding the suitable and effective mechanisms to outbrave violence, and protect injured women;
- statistics about violence should be documented and notifying about violence committed on women, and not hiding violence accidents which considered mostly as casual accidents.

6.2. Recommendations for Syrian women

- Women should be aware and notified about human rights in order to know their rights and to defend for these rights.
- working with independent women organizations to play the role of awareness and advocacy for women rights.
- Cooperation and coordination with women organizations to activating the implementation of equity between men and women, and involving women in all activities which promote women development and status;
- Cooperation and coordination with international women organizations to benefit from their experiences.

6.3. recommendations for Civil Associations and Influential Bodies

- Encouraging women membership to the associations and political parties to have self confidence that they are partners in the country;
- publishing all legislatives that coordinate between woman and man, and limit all violations which applied on these legislatives;
- recognizing the social imperfection and paying special attention to its effects on the whole society through research, studies, and specialized articles about gender equity at all research, social, economic, lawful, religious, and political levels;
- cooperating with all influencing people of Islamic and non-Islamic groups in holding cultural seminars to clarify that there is no contradiction between religion core and equity principle.

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