

Final Report

Syria: Country Gender Profile

February, 2006

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

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GENDER PROFILE
OF
THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

FINAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 2006

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ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
FP	Family Planning
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDI	Gender Development Index
HIV/AIDS	Human-Immuno Deficiency Virus/Immuno – Deficiency Syndrome
HDI	Human Development Index
ICPD	International Conference for Population and Development
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
MOI	Ministry of Information
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MOE	Ministry of Education
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
NHD	National Human Development
RI	Ranking Index
SPC	Syrian Planning Commission
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nation Children Fund
UNIFEM	United Nation Development Fund for Women
UNFPA	United Nation Population Fund
WID	Women in Development
WHO	World Health Organization

- 1-1- Socio-Economic Profile**
- 1-2- Health Profile**
- 1-3- Education Profile**
- 1-4- General Situation of Women**

1-1- Socio-Economic Profile:Economic Indicators Year (2004):

Source: (1)

Source: (2)

Per Capita GDP US\$	Growth Rate of Real GDP
1224	1.032 %

Demographic Indicators (2004):

Source: (3)

Total Population Registered	Total Population Actual Present	% of Female	% of Urban Population	Population Growth Rate	Total Fertility	Life Expectancy	
						Male	Female
20,479,000	18,358,000	49.5 %	50 %	2.45 %	3.58	68	72

Public Expenditure as a percentage of budgets:

Source: (4)

Year	Health	Education	Defense	Others
2005	5.6 %	15 %	23 %	56.4 %

Distribution of GDP among different sectors (percentage wise 2002):

Source: (5)

Agriculture	Mining	Industry	Wholesale & Retail	Transport & Communication	Finance & Insurance	Social & Personal Services	Private non profit services	Government Service	Total
23	13	30	10	12	1	3	0	7	100

Sources:

- (1) Official Statistical Abstract 2005.
- (2) Official Statistical Abstract 2005.
- (3) Ministry of Health – Family Health Survey 2001.
- (4) Syrian Budget 2006.
- (5) Official Statistical Abstract 2005.

Labor Indicator:

Male & Female

Source: (6)

Year	Total Number	Unemployment rate	Minimum Urban Wage
2002	6100000	10.46 %	163 US\$

Female

Source: (7)

Year	% of Total	Unemployment Rate	Minimum Urban Wage
2002	21.4	22 %	110 US\$

Proportion of Workers in Different Sectors:

Male

Source: (8)

Year	Agriculture	Manufacture	Services & Others
2002	30 %	26.8 %	43.2 %

Female

Source:(9)

Year	Agriculture	Manufacture	Services & Others
2002	58 %	6.8 %	35.2

Women in Decision making (2005):

Source:(10)

Year	Member of Parliament	Ministers	Judges	Ambassadors	Trade Union
2005	30/244	1/26	170/1264	4/61	20 %

Present Distribution of Women Employees (15 years and above)

as far as Educational Level and Business Sectors:

Source: (11)

Education Background / Work Sector	Elementary & below	Preparatory & Technical School	Secondary	Intermediate Institutes	University	Total
Governmental	11.5	56.1	73.6	91.5	72.8	50.2
Private	81.4	42.1	25.6	8.3	26.1	46.2
Cooperative and Gover - Private Joint - Venture	7.1	1.8	0.8	0.2	1.1	3.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Sources:

- (6) (7) (8) (9) Official Statistical Abstract 2005 & Fifty-Eight Year Syrian Labour Force Survey 2002.
 (10) Syrian Women League 2005.
 (11) Official Statistical Abstract 2005.

Important Laws for Women:

Source: (12)

Law	Instrument	Ratification
Syrian Government	Birth Leave 120 days leave	Ratified 2004
CEDAW 1965	Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women	Syrian Government Ratification 2003
International Convention 1966	Civil and Political rights of women	Ratified
International Convention 1966	Social and Political rights of women	Ratified
International Convention 1984	Prevention of torture and other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment	Under Discussion
International Convention 1965	Prevention of all forms of racial discrimination	Ratified

1-2- Health Profile:

Health Services in Syria (2004):

Source: (13)

No of Physicians per 1000 people	No of Hospital beds per 1000 people
2.25	1.21

Source: (14)

Public Expenditure on Health % of Budget
5.6 %

Child Health:

Source: (15)

	Mortality Rate
Year	Infant per 1000 Life Birth
2004	17

Source: (16)

% of the vaccinated one year old			
TB	DPT	Polio	Measles
99	99	99	98

Sources:

- (12) Syrian Women League (UNIFEM 2004) Report on the status of women in Syria.
 (13) Official Statistical Abstract 2005 & Ministry of Health – Syrian Family Health Survey.
 (14) Syrian Budget 2005.
 (15) Official Statistical Abstract 2005 & Ministry of Health – Syrian Family Health Survey.
 (16) Official Statistical Abstract 2005 & Ministry of Health – Syrian Family Health Survey.

Family Planning (2005):

Source: (17)

Contraceptive Prevalence	Birth Attendance Rate	Maternal Mortality per 100,000 Rate	Lowest Approved Age for Marriage Female	Average Female Age for Marriage	Total Fertility Rate
40 %	76 %	160	18 years	21 years	3.28

HIV / AIDS:

Source: (18)

Total % age 15-49	Women % age 15-49
0.1	0.2

Community Health Service

Source: (19)

Year 2005	Access to safe water	
	Urban	Rural
	94 %	64 %

The Syrian government is concentrating its efforts on providing safe water and sewage treatment plants. The situation now -2005- concerning sewage treatment is as follow:

Source:(20)

Cities	Rural Areas
70 %	46 %

The target by the end of the 10th Five Year Plan 2006-2010 is to reach 98 % in the cities and 65 % in rural areas.

As for safe water, the target of the government is to reach by the end of the 10th Five Year Plan to 99 % in urban areas and 93 % in rural areas.

Sources:

(17) Official Statistical Abstract 2005 & Ministry of Health – Syrian Family Health Survey.

(18) Ministry of Health Latest Information 2005.

(19) Ministry of Health Latest Information 2005.

(20) Ministry of Housing and Construction.

1-3- Education Profile:

Commitment to Education:

Education System				Expenditure on Education		Adult Literacy Rate	
Primary	Primary + Intermediate	Secondary	Total	GDP	Public Expenditure	Male	Female
6 years	9 years	3 years	12 years	6.8 %	15 %	88 %	60 %

Enrollment Ratio:

Primary Education Gross Enrollment Ratio		Basic Education Gross Enrollment Ratio		Secondary Education Gross Enrollment Ratio		Higher Education Gross Enrollment Ratio	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
95	91	87	83	21.5	22.5	12.6	10.9

Note: Basic Education Definition in Syria includes Primary + Intermediate 9 years of education.

Ratio of Women Pursuing Higher Education:

	Education	Agriculture	Engineering	Medicine
Female	80.9 %	44.9 %	27.9 %	37.5 %
Male	19.1 %	55.1 %	72.1 %	62.5 %
Total	100	100	100	100

Sources:

(21) (22) Official Statistical Abstract 2005

(23) Official Statistical Abstract 2000.

(24) (25) (26) (27) Calculation based on data from Official Statistical Abstract 2005.
(the number of students present divided by the total age group)

(28) Official Statistical Abstract 2005.

1-4- General Situation of Women: Sources: (29)

Introduction: Previously Syria was a completely centrally planned economy. It is now moving towards a socially market economy.

- Per Capita GDP. Based on market prices is 1226 US\$.
- Per Capita GDP. Based on price parity (PPP) is 3576 US\$.
- Life expectancy at birth female is 72.1 years.
- Female literacy rate (ages 15 and above) is 71.6 %.
- The most important indices pertaining to women:
 - Gender related development index (GDI) rank is 84.
 - Ditto value is 0.702.
 - HDI rank minus GDI rank is -2.

1-4-1- Socio Economic Profile: (comments on main indicators)

- Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is dropping quickly in Syria. It was more than 7.00 ten years ago. It is now 3.28 in the year 2005. Main reason is the spread of education and economic awareness. The Syrian Government is projecting to lower TFR further to 2.7 in the year 2010.
- Female Labour is only 21.4 % of total labour force – most women are household keepers. However, in rural areas women work on daily basis during harvest season or in their own land. The statistics shows that 58 % of women labour force work in agriculture. The truth is that rarely they work permanently on monthly basis salaries.
Women work in sowing seeds, getting rid of weeds, irrigation, harvest, taking care of livestock.
They actually work more than men. The main crops which depend on women labor are cotton, wheat, olive trees, fruits and vegetables.
- Unemployment rate of women is high around 22 %. The situation is especially hard for educated women. The government which is the main employer of educated women cannot absorb much more, the only solution for this problem is the increase of investments of the private enterprise especially in the field of services, agriculture, industries, textile and cloth making. Such industries absorb a large number of women.

Sources:

(29) Main Indicators Data collected from the following sources:

- Official Statistical Abstract 2005.
- Ministry of Social Affairs.
- Ministry of Health.
- Ministry of Education.

1-4-2- Women Health Situation: (comments on main indicators)

- Average Life expectancy of women in Syria is acceptable -72 years -2004. This is due to government health policy in the following fields:
 - Large increase in the number of physicians.
 - Increase in hospital beds and infirmaries.
 - Increase in birth attendance rate especially in urban areas. However, birth attendance rate in rural areas is still low, the average 76 % - can only be raised through the spread of hospitals in small cities to cover the needs of nearby rural areas.

- Women using contraceptive -40 % 2004- is still low, much must be done by the government and the whole society in this respect in order to lower – TFR and thus to lower the yearly increase of population which is now 2.45 %. The role of government in this respect is through its hospitals and infirmaries which are around 500 – 2005 – where contraceptives are provided free of cost. In addition to Ministry of health the International Planned Parenthood Federation has its own branch in Syria. This branch is active in all Syrian governorates, where they have their own clinics – around 20 -, their activities include training of nurses for this purpose and providing contraceptive against nominal cost.

- The official lowest approval age for women to marry is 18 years which is acceptable taking into consideration the social and religious situation. However, the judge has a legal right to conduct marriage at a lower age in case he finds the girl is fit for marriage, the judge often misuse this right.

- Access to safe water and access to adequate sanitation in rural areas are much lower than urban areas. It is a fact that the Syrian government is spending a lot of efforts and money for safe water and adequate sanitation in rural areas. Also people in rural areas are pushing the government strongly for executing such projects. (see 2.1 Policy Targets)

1-4-3- Women Education Situation: (comments on main indicators)

Literacy rate of women in Syria is still low, the latest census of literacy rate was conducted in 2000. The census also compares with the situation of literacy rate in the year 1990. The comparison shows a swift change towards higher literacy rate for women.

Source: (30)

Adult Literacy Rate			
1990		2000	
Male	Female	Male	Female
82	48	88	60

Sources:
(30) Human Development Report 2002 UNDP Report 2003.

No doubt that literacy rate in the year 2005 if counted would give still a better picture. The main reasons for women low literacy rate are:

- I. Paternal attitude against daughters going to school in rural areas. This attitude is changing to the better now.
- II. Too small villages with less than one thousand inhabitation may not have a school. The daughters in this case have to walk long distance to reach a school in near-by village.

The Syrian government issued a decree No. 35 in the year 1981, making school attendance obligatory to male and female with punishment to householder in case the daughter fail to attend the school.

It is clear that this decree cannot be applied if the village does not have a school. Again in the year 2005 the Syrian Government issued a decree making:

- Basic education obligatory to both male and female.
- Public Spending on Education 15 % in the year 2005, is a great improvement compared with previous years.

- 2-1- Policy Targets**
- 2-2- Women and Law**
- 2-3- National Machinery**

The government policy on WID/Gender which is being targeted in The 10th Five-Year National Development Plan of Syria (2006-2010) covers the followings:

2-1- Policy Targets:

2-1-1- Population and Reproductive Health:

The followings represent the major targets of the population policy:

- Reduce population growth rate from 2.45 to 1.7 % in 2025.
- Reduce TFR from 3.28 per woman – 2005 to 2.7 in 2025.
- Reduce Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) from 71 deaths per 100,000 in 2005 to 9 deaths per 100,000 in 2020.
- Reduce Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) from 17 deaths per 1,000 in 2005 to 9 deaths per 1,000 in 2025.
- Reduce under -5- mortality rate from 29 deaths per 1000 in 1999 to around 8 in 2025.
- Increase contraceptive prevalence rate among married women from 40.6 % in 2001 to 60 % in 2015.
- Increase birth attendance by skilled health personnel from 76 % in 2005 to 99 % in 2025.

2-1-2- Labour Force and Employment:

- Raising the number of women graduates from vocational and technical schools (Secondary Level) and vocational Intermediate institutes two years after secondary from 12 % in 2000 to 20 % in 2020.
- Raising the percentage of females in the labour force from 18.3 in 2000 to 25 % in 2020.
- Raising the female economic activity from 12 % in 2000 to 25 % in 2020.

2-1-3- Women Empowerment:

- Using the media to acquaint women with their rights.
 - Eradicating illiteracy by all means.
 - Empowering women culturally and socially.
 - Expanding the nursery schools and kindergartens services in the economic and administrative establishments to include private establishments.
 - Facilitating access to loans for female helping them to start their own business.
 - Supporting the opening of rural development centers to train female on household economy, food industries, carpet making, tricot, rugs, embroidery and cloth making.
-

2-1-4- Some Important Laws Related to Women in Syria:

- The Syrian Constitution ratified in 1973 delineates the same rights, freedom and responsibilities for women as it does for men – article 45 of the constitution – The true fact is that such an article contradicts with other codes which are applied in courts, for example: article No. 508 of the penal code states that in case of marriage punishment of the husband is stopped in case of rape, kidnapping, sexual harassment .Punishment for adultery is more severe for women than for men.
Such contradictions between the constitution and applied codes are under discussion in various institutions with the intention to protect women and giving them equal rights in all respects.
 - Participation of women in Parliament is increasing also women representation in Judiciary is also increasing – already now there are more than 170 women judges.
 - Though government runs most of the media. However, independent newspapers were allowed in the year 2001. Many taboo articles such as: contraceptives, torture, sexual harassment and adultery are freely discussed. Women associations issue their own newspapers.
Since year 2000, Syria witnessed an accelerating tone development which, no doubt, reflects on women status.
 - In the year 2003 the Syrian government ratified the UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) with certain reservations applied to certain articles found incompatible with Islamic religion, namely freedom of movement of women, residence, and the women to pass her nationality to her children. Certain articles are under discussion in the parliament.
 - Syria is also committed to the recommendations of the International Conference for Population (ICPD) – in this respect a national conference on population was conducted in the year 2001. The conference expressed its commitment to meet the increasing need for making contraceptives available to women in reproductive age.
 - Gender based violence – International Convention 1984 – is under discussion and a national plan for eliminating violence against women and children is under preparation.
 - Labour law issued 2004 gives the women the right to take birth leave as follows:
120 days for the first delivery
90 days for the second delivery
75 days for the third delivery
-

- The panel code of the year 1949 offer women special protections from verbal and physical harassment and violence committed by men. However, that protection is not sufficient.
- The Syrian civil and commercial codes of 1949 ensure women's equality in owning property, managing businesses and initiating legal cases.
- Amendments to some provisions of labour law No. 19 of 1959 which prohibit the employment of children below 15 years of age. The same applies to agriculture.
- Amendments to article No. 19 of the law No. 134, which states that the divorced wife have the right to keep the children with her 13 years for boys and 15 years for girls.
- The laws in Syria guarantee the right of women to ownership of land and real estate without any reservation. This right is also guaranteed in Islamic Religion.

2-2- Women and Law:

2-2-1- Needed Strategies to Implement the Laws and the Ratified Conventions:

A National Committee hold a meeting post Beijing convention for the elaboration of a national strategy for the implementation and follow up of the issued laws, ratified conventions and in general supporting women rights in Syria.

The National Committee classified the laws and conventions as follows:

- First Group: Laws and regulations dealing with women as citizens on the basis of equality and non-discrimination because of sex. These laws were issued mainly as a result of ratified conventions (see page 6).
- Second Group: Laws related to women's civil and personal rights that need to be revised. These laws also were issued mainly as a result of ratified conventions.
- Third Group: The International Conventions on human rights which was partly ratified or still to be ratified by the Syrian Government.
- Fourth Group: Laws and regulations needed for the complete elimination of all forms of violence.

The strategy fixed as follows:

First Group of laws:

The strategy for the first group of laws defines the legal status of women on the basis of citizenship and equality. This group represents the large majority of laws and regulations governing individual and institutional activities in the Syrian Arab Republic. But, because there is a gap between the laws on record and their real implementation, the National Committee emphasizes the need for action to carry out the following strategies:

1. Enacting regulations and creating mechanisms to monitor the implementation of these laws, and ensure that individuals and institutions understand them well and apply them properly.
2. Strengthening the mechanism which coordinates the efforts of the Women's Federation, Workers' Federation and the Bar Association, to monitor and detect violations and improper implementation of such laws.

Second Group of Laws:

The laws and regulations which still include provisions limiting women's human rights. At the top of this group are the Penal Code, the Personal Status Law, the Agricultural Relations Law, the Insurance and Pensions Law and the Social Insurance Law.

Third Group of Laws:

The international conventions on human rights in general and women's human rights in particular:

1. Taking action to publicize and explain the purpose of the conventions ratified by the Syrian government.
2. Enacting a law that allows the Syrian government to sign the 1979 International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination Against Women.

Fourth Group of Laws:

The elimination of all forms of violence against women: Reinforcing all rigorous provisions included in the Penal Code governing violence against women.

2-2-2- Recommendations of the National Committee concerning Women Decision-Making Positions (source 31):

- Monitoring and implementing the principles of the National Constitution with regard to all provisions underscoring full equality and equal opportunities between men and women.
- Fostering women's participation at the decision-making level to reach 30% of all positions.
- Supporting the inclusion of women's needs in national development plans and strategies; and establishing the required mechanisms.
- Encouraging the role of non-governmental organizations in raising the level and scope of women's participation in public life.
- Creating a women's research center within the Women's Federation to define the research and study plans which deal with the various facets of women's status on the economic, social political and cultural fronts.
- Making efforts to incorporate human rights concepts and principles in the national curricula and in cultural and educational media programs.

2-2-3- Recommendation of the National Committee concerning Women and the Economy (source 32):

- Taking action to improve the level of occupational and technical performance of the working woman.
- Supporting and encouraging small and medium productive businesses in rural or urban areas, and adjusting marketing conditions in the interest of the productive woman.
- Making efforts to assess the actual level of women's participation in national production; and developing statistical systems to cover all non-governmental fields in which women work, and incorporate their figures in the national statistics.
- Supporting and encouraging women to be self-employed, and facilitating their access to credit, capital and low-cost services and facilities.

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- Supporting and encouraging small and medium productive businesses in rural or urban areas, and adjusting marketing conditions in the interest of the productive woman.
- Making efforts to assess the actual level of women's participation in national production; and developing statistical systems to cover all non-governmental fields in which women work, and incorporate their figures in the national statistics.

Sources:

(31) Post Beijing National Committee.

(32) Post Beijing National Committee

(33) Post Beijing National Committee

- Supporting and encouraging women to be self-employed, and facilitating their access to credit, capital and low-cost services and facilities.

2-2-4- Recommendation of the National Committee concerning Women and Education (source 34):

- Introducing the concepts of equality between the sexes in the curricula at the various stages of education.
- Opening new kindergartens in the various regions.
- Making efforts to absorb all children at the mandatory education age in primary schools, and eliminating illiteracy, especially among women.
- Increasing the percentage of children completing primary education to at least 90%, and reducing the drop-out rate, while focusing on female education.

2-2-5- Recommendation of the National Committee concerning Women and Health (source 35):

- Widening the scope and improving the quality of health services, while taking measures to remove any disparity between the rural and urban areas.
- Focusing on the groups which are most vulnerable to disease such as mothers, children and workers.
- Training the required staff to provide health services.
- Paying more attention to women's health education and awareness, fighting common, endemic and venereal diseases, maintaining mothers' and children's health, providing vaccination and maintaining occupational health and safety.
- Expanding and developing the institutions needed for basic health care services, and taking measures to establish the Health Region System.
- Participating in programs designed to reduce mortality among children between one and 5 years old by one sixth by the year 2025, as set out in the national plan.
- Reducing maternal mortality by 25%.
- Reducing the fertility rate to below 3 children per woman.

Increasing social awareness campaigns on reproductive health and family planning, and improving the level of services provided in these areas, in cooperation with the governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned.

Sources:

(34) Post Beijing National Committee.

(35) Post Beijing National Committee

2-3- National Machinery: (Source 36)

Syria started its campaign for development since the fifteenth of the past century through comprehensive development programs, which prompted a development of an infrastructure for economy and services in all spheres, Syrian constitution devotes the principle of equality between the two sexes and the fact that the political environment in Syria contribute to enhancing women's human rights, this issue started to be a focal point of interest of decision planners which led to accede to the agreements with other UN agencies such as (UNIFEM – UNICEF – UNFPA- WHO) to establish activities related to gender concept and women empowerment.

National Machinery to WID/Gender:

Organization	Main activities
State Planning Commission: Directorate of women empowerment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of gender balance in development planning. - Promotion of gender balance in access to employment and productive resources. - Support the increased participation of women in decision-making in all spheres of the Syrian society. - Prevention of violence against women and children. - Promotion of Gender balance in education and training. - Undertaking comprehensive review of existing legal and customary discriminatory practices against women. - Provision of support to reproductive health services. - Study the specific projects of NGO, dealing with women, asking for financial assistance and if approved SPC allocates the necessary budget. - Study the projects of ministries dealing with improving the situation of women and allocates necessary budgets.

Sources:

(36) State Planning Commission.

2-3-1- NGO and their Activities:

Organization	Main activities
Women's General Union (1968) (WGU)	It seeks to eliminate illiteracy among women, educate them and raise their awareness, provide them with vocational training, provide suitable nurseries and kindergartens. WGU follow up the implementation of ratified conventions related to women and necessary modifications of laws to insure women rights.
Syrian Commission for Family affairs (2004)	Advocate on the international agreements related to human rights. Review the Syrian Institution and advice to modification if needed, developing the strategies related to family issues
Family Planning Association (1971) A Branch of International Planned Parenthood IPPF	Capacity building workshops on leadership for women in rural areas, raising women awareness on their rights, Advocate about gender equity and equality in civil society and related sectors, Promote family communication in RH and FP issues, improving men awareness on women rights, sensitize the policy makers to review the institution related to women empowerment, survey on violence against women in 13 governorate in Syria. Assist in birth control. Provide contraceptives.
Sister Al Rae Al Saleh (1981)	Take care with displaced women and others having special needs, offer assistance to women subjected to violence,
Damascus Social Initiative (1960)	Deal with general social and women issues by conducting session and seminars on religious and law, women rights.
Supportive Women Matters Committee (2003)	Takes the role of investigating women situation in Syria, conducting studies and surveys to improve women rights in Syria , public seminars.

Organization	Main activities
FIRDOS (2001)	(Economic empowerment, Education-training and capacity building, Community/cultural/rural development) by providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resources to assist with the basic development needs of 60 Syrian villages in 6 governorates. - Granting rural communities more than 180 million SP - in loans that were invested in 3200 income-generating small enterprises in an effort to boost earning in rural areas. - Providing scholarships from rural areas to complete their university studies within FIRDOS' education and training program, and providing IT training for more than 3000 persons in rural areas. Introduction “the Mobile Library” which is the first of its kind in Syria and aims to encourage reading in rural areas.
MAWRED Institution (2003)	Developing and increasing the women participant in the economic and social development by supporting new micro projects for women, and educating on gender concept, eradicate violence against women.
RAINBOW/for Better Childhood (2002)	Improve the status of Syrian children in society on all levels, to raise awareness of children's rights and protect them from negligence and abuse
The Rural Knowledge Network (2004)	Providing internet services and communication services, including training with computer and computer programs as well as training concerning IT and associated occupations and communications technology that could play an important role in the economical and industrial development in Syria.

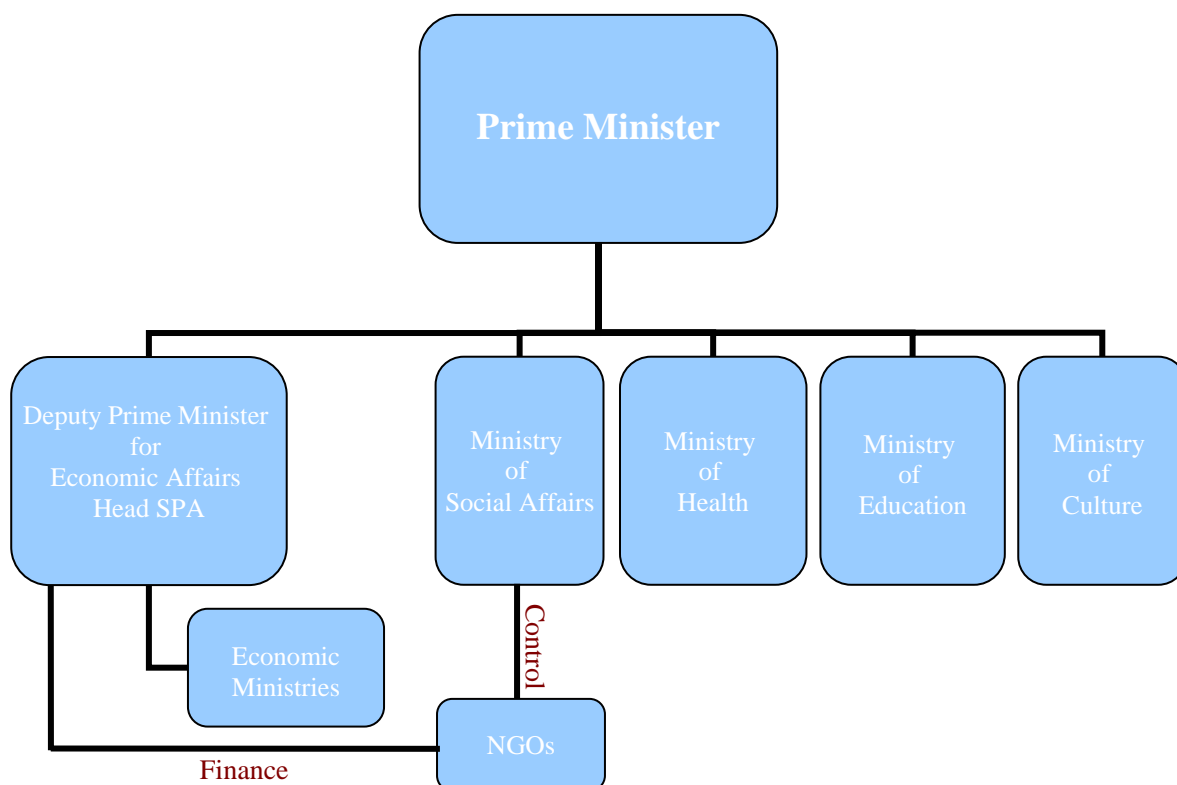
2-3-2- Ministries Activities:

Organization	Main activities
Ministry of Social Affair: Policy Unit	Training and publishing materials to raise awareness of Syrian civil society on population development and gender sensitive, study supporting rural development centers.
Ministry of agriculture:	Illiteracy eradication for women in rural area, capacity building for women to play role to increase their family income, support of women in rural areas to get access to loans. Units for rural women empowerment and development
Ministry of Health: Primary Health Care.	Implementing the policies and national plans on population and family planning training health personnel, research.

2-3-3- Comments on weakness and strength of National Machinery for Gender Equality in Syria:

- The National Machinery is improving in Syria. SPC is taking an important role, starting to finance projects of NGOs and insert clear targets for women equality in its 5 years plan.
- There is a need for a permanent National Committee that meets regularly to support women rights.
- There is a need for better control and evaluation of results of projects executed by NGOs and ministries.
- SPC should seek more grants for NGOs, and related ministries from international sources.

2-3-4- Institutional Skeleton:



Note: NGOs must register in the Ministry of Social Affairs. MOSA controls financial affairs of NGO, and approve projects and evaluate results.

- 3-1- Education Sector**
- 3-2- Health Sector**
- 3-3- Agriculture Sector**
- 3-4- Economic Sector**
- 3-5- Media Sector**
- 3-6- Sports Sector**
- 3-7- Religious Sector**
- 3-8- WID/Gender Projects**
- 3-9- The 10th National Syrian Plan 2006-2010**

3-1- Education Sector:

Syrian Arab Republic has been working on the principle of free democratic education situating it within the reach of all male and female. Compulsory education was applied according to law No. 35 of the year 1981 in primary schools – Law No. 32 of the year 2002 extended compulsory education to primary and intermediate stage that is to basic education which is 9 years.

The NHD report – Education and Human Development for the year 2005 focused on the need to reform the educational system and considered this reform as a key strategic initiative for equipping Syrian Society with needed skills.

3-1-1- The rate of population growth rate is still relatively high, and this increases the needs to construct many schools every year to accommodate the increase of population at this stage.

3-1-2- The drop-out rate in the basic education stage is still relatively high, for the following reasons:

- Economic reasons, due to poverty in society, the spread of child labor phenomenon, unemployment among the literate, and the poor material outcome of learning.
- Social reasons, particularly bias against females, and lack of awareness of the importance of education.
- Educational reasons, including the poor relationships between teachers and public, traditional teaching methodologies, absence of co-operation between schools and parents, and the lack of family follow-up on the status of education of their children.

3-1-3- The considerable spread of illiteracy, especially mothers.

3-1-4- The poor educational capacities of some senior educational officials.

Data indicates, good advances have been achieved in the rate of net enrollment in primary education:

It was 95.4% in 1995, reached 98% in 2004 (the figure for female was 97.9%)

Rate of net enrollment in basic education, rate of students reaching 6 years stage of education, rate of literate population 15-24 age group (male, female) from 1990 to 2004 (%):

Source: (37)

Total	1990			2004 Target			2004 Real		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Net enrollment in basic education	95.6	95.2	95.4	98	97.9	97.9	98.1	97.9	98
Rate of students reaching 6 year stage of education	96	98	93	98.2	95.2	96.9	98	88	88.5
rate of literate population 15-24 age group	90.1	86.6	88	95	94.1	94.7	94.6	90.2	92.5

The Rate of enrollment in schools 6-11 age group, and literacy in 15-24 age group (males and females) 2004 %:

Source: (38)

Rate of enrollment			Percentage of literacy		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
98.2	97.6	97.9	94.6	90.2	92.5

The rate of males and females reaching the 6th year of education, from 1990 to 2004 (%):

Source: (39)

1990			2004 Target			2004 Real		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
96	89	98	98.2	95.2	96.9	98	88	88.5

One of the main goals of the Millennium Development Goals is the elimination of inequality in basic and secondary education.

Sources:

(37) Second National Report on MDGs Syria 2005.

(38) Second National Report on MDGs Syria 2005.

(39) Second National Report on MDGs Syria 2005.

3-1-5- The Number of Students in Secondary and Higher Education (2004) are as follows Source: (40):

▪ **Ministry of Education:**

	Male	Female
Classic secondary schools	139720	139913
Ditto industrial arts for women	---	37309
Ditto commercial	13838	16902
Ditto Agricultural and Veterinary	5985	12316
Intermediate schools (different trades)	17092	20677
Teachers Colleges	1607	1784

▪ **Ministry of Higher Education:**

○ **Higher Institute**

	Male	Female
Administration	70	23
Theater	84	70
Music	121	50

○ **Intermediate Schools:**

	Male	Female
Dentistry	495	425
Engineering (civil)	2741	2025
Agriculture	1027	928
Electric – Mechanic	3021	731
Medical	1249	1175
Secretary	2354	4005
Commercial	5066	5570
Computer Science	1527	644
Veterinary	326	117

○ **Universities:**

	Male	Female
Engineering	17678	6430
Medicine	5991	2516
Pharmacy	1292	2127
Agriculture	4422	3488
Computer Science	1864	2510
Dentistry	2121	1025
Science	8213	5867
Law	18165	6846
Nursery	172	108

Sources:

(40) National Statistics 2005.

▪ **Ministry of Industry:**

	Male	Female
Intermediate level	1677	1194

▪ **Ministry of Petroleum:**

	Male	Female
Intermediate level	652	94

▪ **Ministry of Agriculture:**

	Male	Female
Intermediate level	1971	2447

▪ **Ministry of Information:**

	Male	Female
Intermediate level (printing)	1	147

▪ **Ministry of Health:**

	Male	Female
Intermediate level	838	961

▪ **Ministry of Culture:**

	Male	Female
Intermediate level	71	142

▪ **Ministry of Tourism:**

	Male	Female
Intermediate level	1488	606

▪ **Comments:**

○ **Primary Education:**

- Implementing child labour law.
- Using parents, local community and religious leaders to show interest in schools.
- Providing buildings for schools which are within close proximity of children's homes.
- Increase expenditure on education.
- Improve the teaching methodologies and curricula.
- Include foreign language.
- Encourage private schools.

○ **Intermediate level (three years after primary):**

- Implementing the law which states that completion of basic education is obligatory.

- Encourage private schools.
- Building enough schools to get rid of double shift schools in urban areas.
- **Secondary Schools:**
 - The Same Remarks.
- **Intermediate schools (two years after secondary):**
 - These schools should be better equipped with laboratories.
 - More concentration on training of teachers.
 - Raise the level of foreign language.
- **Universities (4-5 years after secondary):**
 - Same comments mentioned in Intermediate schools.

3-2- Health Sector:

3-2-1- Demography:

The Syrian Development Plan (2006-2010) defines the policy targets mentioned in this report page 11 with respect to health. Actually these targets affect not only health but also economy.

The reduction of population growth rate from 2.46 % to 1.7 % in the year 2025 can be realized by reducing the total fertility rate from 3.2 % in the year 2002 to 2.7 in the year 2005 – Population reduction of growth depends on three factors namely: TFR-TMR-Immigration. The reduction of the population growth rate means greater possibility to increase the per capita income. Other important demographic indicators are mortality and immigration. Together these demographic factors influence the growth of population, its age/sex structure, rural/urban composition, spatial distribution and density.

3-2-2- Prenatal and Post natal care, three factors influence prenatal and post natal care:

- Urban/Rural societies.
- Education level of women.
- The spread of hospitals, clinics, health centers etc.

Family health survey 2004 registered 81.7 % normal, 3.3 % needs automation and 15 % had caesarian, these results may not be correct and may not cover the whole of Syria.

3-2-3- Nutrition:

In Syria, the percentage of infant with low birth weight 1998-2003 is 6%.

Comprehensive analysis of surveys of household spending (1996-1997 and 2003-2004) indicate a regression of poverty in Syria in general, between the year 1997-2004. This regression is a result of increase of the per capita spending share, and at national level an annual increase in average per capita spending share of 1.99%.

The following are important indicators in this respect:

Number of weight deficient children under five years of age (analysis of available data concerning the number of children under five years of age who suffer from weight deficiency, between the years 1995-2000), show an improvement in most regions, the highest drop of this number was registered in Damascus 70%, followed by southern regions 57.5%, then in eastern regions 32%. But cases of severely underweight increased in 2000 in most regions compared with 1995.

The percentage of the population that does not spend the minimum limit of consumption of nutritional energy: the percentage of population who do not achieve the minimum limit of nutritional energy increased in the northern and northeastern governorate.

Source: (41)

Region	Medium and severely underweight %		severely underweight %		Medium underweight %	
	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000
Eastern	7.4	2	11.9	9.1	16.4	11.1
Central	7.4	0.8	1.6	6.3	6.9	7.1
Northern	10.9	1.8	3.4	5.3	8.3	7.1
Coastal	2.9	0.2	NA	3.4	4.9	3.6
Southern	11.5	0.8	1	4.5	12	5.1
Damascus	12.3	0.4	2.7	3.3	12.5	3.7

3-2-4- Family Planning:

The level fertility rate in Syria remains high although it has been declining over the years (7 children per women in 1978 to 3.8 in 2001) (family health survey). And it is estimated that fertility rate will decline to 2.7 by 2025.

Therefore the fertility challenge lies in increasing the use of family planning methods among women, as well as meeting the unmet demand for family services among married women (estimated at 30.6%), particularly in the under-served areas. In addition, the number the women in the reproductive age will increase significantly during the plan period from 4,752,000 in 2005 to 5,534,000 in 2010

Sources:

(41) Multi-indicator survey of year 1995,1996,2000,2001 central Bureau of Statistics in cooperation with UNICEF.

Percentage of contraceptive methods usage among married women in Syria according to method (modern, any other methods) and to the level of education.

Source: (42)

Level of education	Any other methods %	Modern methods %
Illiterate	25.2	33.1
Literate	39.1	47.4
Primary stage	35.9	48.2
Secondary stage	42.9	55.6
Up to Secondary	41.6	58.9

3-2-5- Children and Maternal Health (Source: 43):

There are several measurers of mortality indicating health situation in a population, for programming to meet Syria's national development objectives and MDGs, only most sensitive of such indicators are chosen for planning, namely Infant Mortality Rate, Under five Mortality Rate and Maternal Mortality Rate.

Infant mortality rate defines the probability of dying between birth and the first birthday. It is essentially a component of under-five on childhood mortality and significant component as such particularly in the development countries of the world. The estimated average infant mortality rate of the world (UN 2003) for the period 2000-2005 is 56 per 1000 live birth , with the wide differential between the more development regions and the less-development regions estimated at 8 and 61, respectively .

Infant mortality rate in Syria declined by about 25% between 1986(24 per 1000 live births) and 2000 (18.1 per 1000 live births). Survival of infants like children is directly related to the social and economic characteristics of their mothers and the environment in which they live. Urban living, increasing educational level and access to maternal health care are significant factors associated with reduction of infant mortality rate in Syria.

Measures of early childhood mortality, particularly under-five mortality rate and infant mortality rate, are reliable indicators of the health condition of the population. As the health of a population improves, childhood mortality measures decline and consequently, overall life expectancy at birth increases. Factors contributing to reduction in child mortality include increasing access of pregnant women to antenatal and postnatal care including vaccination coverage, access to health professional during delivery, adequate nutrition and proper sanitation, urban living, increasing level of education and access to maternal health care are significant factors associated with lower child mortality in Syria.

Maternal mortality rate in Syria declined from 280 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1978 to 65.4 death in 2001 The combined effect of declines in infant, child and maternal mortality is an increase in life expectancy at birth from 58.1 years for males and 60.6 years for females in 1970 to about 69.5 years for males and 71 years for females in 2001,

Sources:

(42) Family Planning Association.

(43) Family Planning Association.

Access to prenatal care increased with the increasing education of women. However, also rural residents have less access to prenatal care. In Syria 27% of the deliveries that took place at home were not attended by skilled health professionals. About 23% of women in Syria do not have access to postnatal care in 2001, with better access in urban than rural areas.

According to the Family survey conducted in Syria at 2002 the percentage of women suffering from diseases related to reproductive apparatus are distributed as following: 5.1 % drop of uterus, 2.4% fluent of urine, 8.9% urine infection disease, 7.7% cervix infection disease.

3-2-6- HIV/AIDS:

Until recently, HIV/AIDS was not problem to the health system in Syria. There were only 14 registered AIDS cases in 2001, or 0.08 per 1000 population through the country. The most effected group is the youth aged 15-24, which accounts for 34% of the AIDS cases in Syria. However, the estimate of AIDS cases may not reflect the total picture because not all cases have been discovered or registered (MDG report, 2003).

The challenge is to increase awareness of population in order to curb the spread of HIV and keep the rate from increasing. It is equally important to keep track of other sexually Transmitted diseases such as syphilis and Hepatitis known to be prevalent but for which there is no hard data. In this regard, the need to strengthen and expand Reproductive Health interventions through the country, with a focus on young people, including treatment of those with AIDS and other diseases can hardly be overemphasized.

3-3- Agriculture Sector:

In Syria as well as in many of the countries of Asia-Pacific, agriculture remains a large and important economic sector, particularly for employment. Most of the livelihoods of the poor are tied to it. Thus, agricultural development, and rural development more generally, remain crucial for poverty reduction.

Agriculture has been given highest priority in the successive socio-economic development plans due to its principal contribution to GDP. The arable lands amount to 6 million hectares, namely 32% of total area, of which 4,8 million hectares were cultivated in 2000(1.2 million hectares of irrigated lands (20%) and the rest dependent on rainfalls). The agricultural sector employs 29% of total labor force and contributes 28% to the GDP. The irrigated lands are designated to growing strategic crops such as wheat, cotton and beet and the non-irrigated lands for growing wheat, barely, olive, and fruits.

The expansion in the area of irrigated lands and improvement in agricultural yields in some crops over the past two decades have gone beyond population growth.

However, in the light of shortage in water resources, the increasing demand for food during the period 2000-2025 and within the three population growth variants context (namely: immigration, TFR, TMR), it is projected that the country would face a decrease in number of basic agricultural yield unless appropriate policies and measures are put in place. Such policies include population policy aimed at enhancing the health of people and reducing the rate of reproduction through family planning interventions.

The poverty profile confirms the existence of Urban-Rural gap. 38% of poor work in agriculture, which is an insecure sector due to the risk of drought.

Allocation of Domestic credit by economic sector, 2002

Source: (44)

Agriculture	Wholesale and Retail	Industry and mining	Construction	Services	Misc	Total
25%	51%	4%	12%	0%	8%	100%

3-3-1- Women contribution to agricultural activities and holding of land and animals:

Women in rural areas contribute tremendously in agricultural activity. However, they do not hold more than 5% of the land. The finding of most recent agricultural census in 2002 show that the number of agricultural holders amounted to 614,000 with an increase of 26% over previous census of 1981. The male holders were 94.7% while the female holding percentage was about 5.3%. However, the total average holding area in Syria reached 83,000 sq. M for males and 58,000 sq/ M for females according to the census of 2002.

The percentage distribution of agriculture holders according to sex, contribution rate in 2002;

Source: (45)

Provinces	Agricultural holders %		Contribution rate % of women
	Male	Female	N.A
Damascus	91	9	19
Skirt of Dam	95	5	31
Homs	95	5	41
Hama	95	5	49
Tartous	95	5	33
Lattakia	95	5	35
Idleb	91	9	50
Aleppo	97	3	28
Al-Raqa	96	4	30
Deir Zour	95	5	56
Hasaka	96	4	30
Swaida	89	11	45
Daraa	9	9	38
Qunaitra	94	6	46
Total	95	5	40

Sources:

(44) Macroeconomic policies for poverty reduction, the case of Syria 2005.

(45) The finding of labor force research 2002.

The finding of agricultural census of 2002 demonstrate that the percentage of male agricultural holders owning sheep amounted to 96.4%, while the female percentage was just 3.6%, but the variation in the percentage of males and females owning cows and goats remained the same, unlike the poultry whose female owners percentage slightly increased.

3-3-2- Extension activities and training for women:

The Directorate of agricultural guidance in the Ministry of agriculture holds local short and long ranged training courses, in which the percentage of female participation was 48.4% in 1994, then rose to 51% in 2002 that is an indication of the concentration on qualifying rural women as demands for their contribution to agricultural development.

Number of training courses and the trainees according to sex and percentage of female participation in the year 2002:

Source: (46)

Year	Training courses for male peasants		Training courses for Female peasants		Total trainees	Rate of female trainees
	No of courses	No of trainees	No of courses	No of trainees		
2002	513	9041	501	9466	18507	51.1

3-4- Economic Sector:

3-4-1- Employment:

The economic situation of women in Syria is characterized with high rate of unemployed women. Total women labour force is around three million, only /1,050,000/ are employed. The rest theoretically are housekeepers which are much more than needed. At least 58 % of these work in agriculture in rural areas. The rest work in urban areas in different fields mainly services.

3-4-2- Some solutions to unemployment in rural areas:

- Increase of loans to women in rural areas in order to acquire livestock, start rural industries such as rugs, carpets, trico etc.
- Prevention of child labour.
- Encouraging investors to start food industries in agricultural areas.

3-4-3- Some solutions to unemployment of women in urban areas:

- Encouraging investments in industries which need intensive women labour force such as food industries, spinning, textile, and cloth making.
- Expansion in vocational training in different fields which suit women especially services and health.

Sources:

(46) Finding of labor force research 2002.

3-5- Media Sector:

Media Supporting Women Rights:

It is of paramount importance that media support women rights. It would be much more effective in case women take the lead. The situation in Syria is not discouraging. However, still there are real obstacles, namely old customs, exaggerations in comprehension of religion, the strong influence of religious leaders, uneducated women and the authority of men.

The solution to these grave problems which hinder the progress of women is education and media.

3-6- Sports Sector:

Once more sports for women meet many obstacles from religious leaders, lack of play grounds in public schools and lack of sport clubs for women.

3-7- Religious Sector:

3-7-1- Women mixing with men:

The reactionary religious leaders insist that Islam does not approve mixing of women with men except for important reasons.

However, nowadays enlightened Islamic leaders, Imams, approved that women mixing with men can be approved, because of the increasing need of working women in the society.

3-7-2- Marriage more than one:

Islam allows the man to marry more than one – maximum four. Actually there was a need during the early days of Islam for this script due to wars and the need to support the widows. However, the Koran also states that the man must be equally fair and just among his wives which the Koran states that it is impossible.

Accordingly, it is within the Jurisprudence of the government to limit second wife to very special cases.

3-7-3- Divorce:

According to Islam the husband has the full right to divorce his wife, the same right is not given to the wife except for very special reason. However, practically the courts now give the same right to the wife if she strongly insists on divorce.

Divorce in Syria is not frequent, it is around 10 % of marriage contracts for the year 2004.

3-7-4- Alimony:

The judge decides the alimony given to the wife in case of divorce according to Islamic law. Here again it is within the Jurisprudence of the government to increase the alimony because when we increase the alimony, we will limit divorce and protect the society.

3-7-5- Inheritance:

Islam code specifies the share of sons and daughters of the inheritance giving the sons twice the daughters. Not all Muslims sects apply the code strictly. The Shiite sect divides the inheritance equally, but the majority of the Syrians is Sunnites and applies the code as it is fixed in Islamic law.

In addition, daughters suffer from their brothers who in many cases prefer not to divide the inheritance thus preventing the daughters from dealing with their legal share. The daughters avoid going to court in order to keep good relations with their brothers. May be the government must interfere to specify time limit for the distribution of the inheritance.

3-7-6- Adultery:

If the husband commits a crime against his wife by killing her due to adultery the Syrian courts do not sentence him the most sever sentence considering this crime as a crime defending his honour. The same is not applied in case the woman kills her husband due to adultery.

3-7-7- Domination of the husband:

According to the Islamic religion the husband dominates within his home due to the fact that he is the sole provider. This is now not always the case, as the wife may be working together with the husband and spending in the house equally or may be she is the sole provider.

It is supposed that the relation in this case be based on equal stand. The civil courts should take that into consideration.

3-8- WID/Gender Projects:

It is unfortunate that the Syrian government authorities do not specify detailed plans related to advancing the cause of women from a political, human rights, human development, family and childhood development and health care.

Some projects which add to the income of women in rural areas are available especially in the field of carpets and rugs. These projects are supervised and the production marketed by MOSA, but still much must be done to train and assist financially women in rural and urban areas to produce Syrian artifacts, toys for children, manual ceramics, cloth making, tricot embroidery, silk breeding, or to provide specific courses for taking care of domestic livestock.

The private enterprise is outsourcing to women in poor areas such as table cloth or cloth making on a piece meal bases but that cannot be increased except through complete detailed projects in many fields for training, financial assistance after training to enable trained women to produce and market their products.

Going back to what is included in the 10th plan (2006-2010) which is about to be formally issued, we find general targets and strategies to improve the situation of women. It is of paramount importance that concerned ministries turn these targets and strategies to specific projects with detailed plans.

The private enterprise especially charities and non profit social societies should concentrate their efforts to train women and assist in finance for production rather than direct financial aid to the poor women.

MOSA which control all private charities and non profit societies should encourage these societies to concentrate on specific projects for training and production.

3-9- The 10th National Syrian Plan (chapter 23 Women Sector) (Main Indications):

3-9-1- Background:

Integration of women in the economic, social and political life in Syria shall not be easy due to traditional look to women in Syria.

Integration needs a complete revision of legislation which hinder the progress and development of women.

3-9-2- Future Vision:

Real change in Syrian society depends mainly on the development of women in order to have their complete human rights and to insure the integration of Gender problems in the development of the whole society. This can be realized through women societies and through the modifications of laws and legislation and increasing the share of women in the labour market and raising the education levels and women skills and environment of women in the political decision making her as equal and basic partner.

3-9-3- Long Range Strategies:

During the 10th and 11th National Plans that is 2015 Syria should attain the following in regards to Gender:

- Development measure in regard to sex from 0.700 to 0.800.
- Gender indicator concerning women reinforcement from 0.429 to 0.510.

3-9-4- Strategies:

- To activate women contribution in the protection, execution, coordination and follow up of Gender policies.
- The increase of women participation in income increasing projects.
- Increase of programs which support women rights and integration of women and considering these programs as a first priority.
- Making necessary modifications to legislation having to do with Gender in order to realize women human rights and enforcing decisions taken in international conventions related to women.

3-9-5- The Contribution of the Gender Plan:

- Raising the income of the poor women.
- Increasing women share in decision making.
- Lowering the rate of population growth.
- Increasing the share of women in production.

----- The End of the Report -----

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