

Inaugural Conference: Bibliotheca Alexandrina Arab Women Facing the Challenges of Globalization in the 21st Century

The Middle East has become an important global player. A model Regional Center developed in the Middle East for research on women, politics, economics, culture and religion will serve as a prototype for centers in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. The Inaugural Conference for the Global Women's Research Institute will be held in January 2009 at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and will launch its Regional Center for the Middle East. The Library of Alexandria is the precise venue for launching a conference whose goal is to establish a multi-cultural, multi-religious collaborative research. Similar to the Ancient Library, the New Library has become a place for dialogue and understanding between cultures and peoples, and a center of excellence in the production and dissemination of knowledge.

The Conference will bring together national leaders, heads of NGOs, and scholars affiliated with universities in the region with expertise on women's issues in the Middle East. The aims of the Conference are to identify the most critical problems facing women in the region, and discuss the kinds of research that would help move these agendas forward, and propose a set of NGOs to participate in the first phase of the research.

Topics

Women and Violence

Women are increasingly subjected to violence not only during conflicts, but following these conflicts and during peace time – disproportionately – in relation to men. Their vulnerability impacts their families, communities and societies. At the same time, women face violence with resilience, develop an understanding of its dynamics and contribute to peace-making.

The panel on Women and Violence will address the economic impact of violence against women, the role of globalization, the consequences for women's health and education and the role of culture and religion.

- Economic impact of violence against women
- Effect of poverty and war on children and women
- Violence against women as a global health concern
- The role of education in fighting violence against women

Women's economic empowerment or Women, Work and Economic Challenges

Empowering women became a significant factor in freeing the millions of women who are trapped in the cycle of poverty and hunger. Education and providing women with access to economic and educational opportunities, especially micro-credit, have become the targeted tools of any successful strategy for poverty eradication. The panel will target cross-national comparisons to explain means of reducing the disparities between men's

and women's poverty rates – known as feminization of poverty – in order to attempt at designing public policies to eliminate factors leading to this phenomena. One important factor that needs to be addressed is the negative impact of globalization of the world economy on gender issues and challenges facing women in terms of opportunities and limitations.

- Investigating emerging opportunities and threats towards women, rise of home-based businesses, efforts towards sustainable livelihoods from the home, in particular with reference to women
- Impact of changing world economics on family structures
- Rise of home-based businesses
- Successful case studies of women's empowerment

Closing Male/Female Gap in Literacy, in the Context of Educational Reform

In the light of the World Bank report “The Road Not Travelled: Education Reform in the Middle East and North Africa” which indicates that the Arab States have made significant progress towards universal primary education since 2000; however, there is a need for more progressive policies to empower girls and young women, within the educational system, in order to reduce the gender gap.

- Education and literacy gap and its effect on opportunities for employment of women
- Arab case studies in education
- Women educating women, case studies
- Gender education as appositive force for creating gender equality

Women Trafficking

"During the launch of the Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Movement Institute for Peace Studies, in Alexandria, Egypt, on 16 February 2006, reference was made to the importance of the role of business community in assisting in the campaign against human trafficking. In 2007, at the Hong Kong Conference that aimed at creating public-private partnerships to end human trafficking and forced labor, the world was alerted to the urgent need for the elimination of what has been referred to as "modern day slavery". The Library Conference, in November 2008, will follow-up on the panel that was held in the Library of Alexandria in 2006, and in Hong Kong in 2007, about the need to raise the awareness of this illicit trade and role of corporations in curbing this hazardous phenomenon and emphasize the new vignette of End Human Trafficking Now. The Global Women Institute Conference in 2008, will address how corporate and private sectors and NGOs can help in the economic empowerment of women and focus on the root causes of trafficking, acknowledging that poverty is the primary cause of this illicit growing industry.

- Effect of poverty and globalization on the increase of trafficking in women, case study MENA region
- Government role in stopping trafficking of women and children
- Private sector/NGO role in stopping trafficking of women and children

- Alexandria 2006, Hong Kong 2007, and beyond

A plenary session will be devoted to each topic lead by a panel of scholars and practitioners, followed by discussion among the panelists.