

The situation in the West Bank, in regard to prevailing attitudes towards manual professions has changed slowly following occupation. Again, the change has been the result of considerable restructuring in the jobs market in favour of manual professions. This trend may be healthy and desirable, but it should go at a much faster pace if economic development in the West Bank is to proceed at the rates envisaged in this study. The ramifications of this transformation in the system of education were discussed under the section on Education.

Labour

Transformations in the labour market following occupation are so profound and comprehensive that they require a number of studies dealing with their economic, social and political ramifications. This, of course, is much beyond the scope of this study. In this section, however, we will describe the basic features of the labour market and provide an assessment of their impact on the process of agricultural development.

Size of labour force

The West Bank population in 1979 averaged at 689.6 thousands, of which 384.4 were of working age (55%). The size of the labour force, on the other hand, was estimated at 134.1 thousands,¹ which points to a markedly low participation rate of 19.2 percent, as compared with 33.3% in Israel,² 25% in Syria, 29% in Iraq,³ 47% in Britain and 51% in Japan.⁴

1. Statistical Abstract of Israel 1980, op cit, p 690.
2. Ibid, pp 3-5, note that this percentage includes only civilian manpower.
3. Available Demographic Socio-Economic Data for Countries of ECWA Region, (Beirut: Economic Commission for Western Asia, 1976).
4. Kamel Abu Jaber, et al, Conditions of Working Women in Jordan, a paper submitted to the Seminar on Population, Employment, and Development - Amman, 1971.

The relatively low participation of West Bank population in active labour reflects several inherent constraints, most important of which are the following:

1. Preponderance of children in the non-working age group (14 years and below) who make up around 45% of all the population, as compared with 30% for Israel's Jews.
2. High enrolment rate in schools, estimated at around 37%. The situation is particularly dramatic in the case of higher education which, as we shall see later, absorbs a substantial portion of the population in the age group of 18-30 years.
3. Female labour is grossly under-estimated, mainly due to inadequate coverage of their participation in farming operations.
4. Massive and sustained emigration of a large number of workers, largely men, estimated at about 15-22 thousand a year.¹

Sectoral distribution of labour

Table (II-19) shows pre and post occupation trends in regard to the size of labour force, employment ratios and sectoral distribution of employed workers.

1. Estimates of the Executive Office for the Affairs of the Occupied Territories, quoted in "Resources of the West Bank - Their Significance to Israel", op cit, p 35.