This book has been several years in the making, but concerted work on it began in 1994, when I was a senior researcher at the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER), a research and training center of the United Nations University (UNU) in Helsinki, Finland. In 1994 and 1995 I traveled in Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan, among other developing countries, to research women’s employment issues. Primary data were obtained through extensive interviews with officials of government agencies, donor agencies, and NGOs; with business owners and enterprise managers; with women workers and professionals; and with economists, sociologists, and legal experts, from whom I also obtained articles and documents. I conducted interviews and observations during visits to factories, businesses, and other workplaces. In addition to gathering secondary sources published in the countries I visited, I obtained official publications to supplement the international statistical sources I used. I had employed a similar research methodology during visits to Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia in the fall of 1990.

I first presented my contrasting scenarios about how economic liberalization might affect women in the Middle East and North Africa in an issue of the Wider Angle, the UNU/WIDER newsletter. At a preparatory conference of the Arab region in the year prior to the Beijing Conference of September 1995, I suggested to my collaborator, Nabil Khoury of the International Labour Office—with whom I had just edited a book on women, education, and development in the Arab region—that we organize a workshop on structural adjustment and women’s employment in the Middle East and North Africa. The workshop was held in Nicosia in November 1995 with the support of the government of Cyprus.

Some of the chapters of this book were written for conferences, and two have been published in somewhat different forms. A version of the chapter on Egypt was written for Coopers & Lybrand, for whom I had gone on a mission to Egypt as part of a USAID-funded project in January–February 1995. I prepared another version for a UNU/WIDER publication intended for the Beijing Conference. I first wrote the chapter on Morocco and Tunisia for the Nicosia workshop. The chapter on Iran was first prepared
for the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) in 1994, and a different version was published in *Iranian Studies* in 1995. A version of the chapter on structural change and women’s mobilization was first prepared for a conference on “Women Organized in Groups in the Middle East,” held at Oxford University’s Center for Cross-Cultural Research on Women in June 1995. The chapter on Turkey was first prepared for the MESA conference of 1995 and subsequently expanded and updated during additional research travel in September–October 1996. The chapters on the political economy of women’s employment, on educating women for a globalizing economy, on Jordan and Syria, and on Algeria were written during 1996–1997, as was the concluding chapter.

In fall 1996 I spent two months in Turkey and Jordan on a fellowship awarded by the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, and I was affiliated with the American Research Institute in Turkey (in both Istanbul and Ankara) and the American Center for Oriental Research in Amman, Jordan. During that time I gathered more data and finalized the book manuscript. I am especially grateful to Dr. Ahmed Hussein and Mr. Emad Omar of the Social Statistics Unit of ESCWA for their cooperation and assistance.

There are many people I thank for their cooperation during the various stages of the preparation of this book, and the chapters are peppered with their names, making a listing here redundant. I owe much of my understanding of Algeria to Doria Cherifati-Merabtine and Cherifa Bouatta, and of Egypt to Nadia Ramsis Farah, Nader Fergany, and Sawsan El-Messiri. My site visits in Tehran in May 1994 were facilitated by the Office of Women’s Affairs, headed by Ms. Shahla Habibi. In June 1994 in Turkey I received much cooperation from Ms. Selma Acuner, then general director on the status and problems of women, and her assistant, Ms. Birgül Cakirer. At the State Institute of Statistics, Ms. Guldane Kabadayi and Ms. Ayse Karaduman Tas kindly provided me with documents and statistics and responded to my queries about patterns of women’s employment in Turkey. At the Ministry of Labor, Ms. Perihan Sari, then deputy director general of labor and a member of the SHP, graciously met with me on very short notice and arranged for visits to two factories and meetings with trade unionists. Ms. Emel Danisoglu, general director of Social Security Institutions, generously explained Turkey’s system of social security to me and the problems faced by women. Trade unionists from DISK and Turk-Is accompanied me on factory visits, and my conversations with them and with the women workers were kindly translated by Ms. Dilek Hattatoglu of DISK’s International Affairs Department.

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Throughout, I have benefited from many conversations with Massoud Karshenas, in what I think has been a mutually rewarding exchange of economic and sociological perspectives on gender and political economy.

—V. M. M.