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RURAL WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE
DIVISION OF LABOUR */

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I. INTRODUCTION

This study is rooted in one of the development styles, known by those who suggest it as a possibility for the future, as "the other development",^{1/} which is designed to help individuals develop their abilities and potential to the full. If women are to participate in this "other development" of the future under equal conditions, a change is first needed in the role played by women in present styles of development since as things now stand opportunities for participation are very different for men and for women. The central task of this study is thus to show where in the rural sector of Latin America the major hindrances to the participation of women on the same basis as men are to be found. To this end the central part of the report is dedicated to an analysis of the division of labour by sex and the contents of the different kinds of labour known as social labour and domestic labour, showing how they are related, the economic conditions in which they are carried out and the economic values of each.

Generally speaking, this study maintains that the mode of production largely determines the existing division between the content of domestic labour and social labour -a division which in turn is related to the sexual division of labour ^{2/-} which has a bearing on the different positions of the sexes in the overall economic process and, finally, on social participation.

In the most depressed rural area where there is greater inflexibility with regard to the amount of work needed for survival, the approach in which the economic base is taken into consideration seems to be of the utmost relevance. In these circumstances, in the relationship between domestic labour and social labour on the one hand and the dominant mode of production on the other, there is a strong tendency to maximize domestic labour, which in turn allows a large proportion of the population to participate in social labour characterized by low wages and exploitation.

^{1/} In this connexion see Marshall Wolfe, El desarrollo esquivo, CEPAL and Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico City, 1976.

^{2/} The expression "sexual division of labour" will be used since it is generally accepted although we are aware that the expression has strong biological implications and that it might be more appropriate to use the expression "division of labour by gender" inasmuch as the aspects of socially constructed behaviour are involved.

Although it is impossible to disregard the inequality in the terms of trade at world level as a final cause of the unequal and combined development of the peripheral countries and its repercussions on the status of women, attention is paid in the first instance to the internal conditions of the countries of the region in an effort to find criteria governing future action to narrow the gap in the status of the sexes within certain social strata, on the assumption that the style of development is one which will tend to minimize the differences between those social strata.

II. DETERMINATION OF PROBLEMS AFFECTING WOMAN IN THE RURAL CONTEXT OF LATIN AMERICA

When there is a question of social and economic position in agriculture, no distinction is usually drawn between men and women. Probably the fact that the family constitutes such an important production and consumer unit and forms the nucleus of the social structure helps to conceal the different levels at which women's work and men's work is done, the different contributions made by the sexes to the economic process and therefore the very great difference in their opportunities for participating in civic and political activities based on the social position which each sex occupies within given social categories.

At those levels of development in which stress is placed on economic development, the family, frequently as represented by the male head of family, is usually the smallest unit taken into account, and it is felt that when a rise in productivity or production increases the well-being of the family, an egalitarian distributive process within the household will automatically ensure that all members of the family benefit on equal terms. This "trickle-down effects", which has already been refuted at the level of society,^{1/} does not exist at family level either because of the differences which are reflected in the division of labour by sex and the differences between domestic labour and social labour.

There follows a discussion of some situations typical of Latin American agriculture which will be followed by a section on sexual differences in productive and social roles.

1. The economic context

The rural economy of the area is very heterogenous, including socio-economic enclaves of agroindustry which produce for the external market, the sector producing for the domestic market (largely proletarianized), rural peasant economy with a subsistence made of production with little relation to the market and various combinations of these forms of economy.

^{1/} For many years it was argued that priority should be given to the development of the productive apparatus, especially in the modern sector, which would lead to a higher standard of living for the entire population because the benefits would filter down to it. In current economic processes, however, it is seen that there is a great differentiation and concentration between productive sectors and therefore between individuals and their real access to social goods and services.

/Although there

Although there are tendencies for one sector to be usurped by another (a process in which the sectors range from strongest to weakest in the order in which they are mentioned above)1/ leading to a gradual proletarianization and depeasantization of some sectors of the rural area when labour is forced to leave the countryside and go to the city, in other cases, the three sectors show signs of enduring and renewed coexistence as happens in areas characterized by land settlement 2/ or latifundios.3/ Relations peculiar to domination may help to explain the location of persons of one or the other sex in the social structure existing in these various types of economy. Thus, with regard to the relationships between the peasant producer and the market economy it has been argued that the viability of the peasant family enterprise in this dependent economy lies in the nature of what is produced by the family and the manner in which it is introduced into the socio-economic system. It is maintained that the peasant is forced to produce for less gain than a capitalist enterprise since the basis of his operation is the exploitation of his own labour and that of his wife and children.4/

Owing to the penetration of capital into agriculture, the pure forms of peasant economy are rarely found at present. There are some examples of the virtual non-existence of a market (for example, the southern provinces of Bolivia), which affects the maintenance of patterns of peasant exploitation through "ceremonial consumption" of any surplus production,5/ a phenomenon which is also found in the case of markets in settlements which are deeply rooted in religious-social cultures.6/ Often, however, this kind of economy comes into contact with other systems of exploitation. One very direct exploitation relation is reflected in

1/ Waldomiro Pecht, "Estructura agraria y dinámica de la población en Brasil y en México", Demografía y Economía, 102, 1976, pp. 254-283.

2/ O. Ianni, A luta pela terra, CEBRAP, Sao Paulo, 1977.

3/ Mercedes Olivera, "Notas sobre la opresión y la liberación de las mujeres acasilladas en las fincas y ranchos cafetaleros", a study presented at the First Mexican-Central American Symposium on Research on Women, Mexico City, November 1977.

4/ John Durston, "La inserción social del campesinado latinoamericano en el crecimiento económico" (E/CEPAL/R.232), July 1980.

5/ Charles J. Erasmus in Land Reform and Social Revolution in Bolivia, edited by Dwight B. Heath and others, New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1969.

6/ Rina Cornejo, "La socialización de la mujer campesina del Cuzco", study presented at the First Mexican-Central American Symposium on Research on Women, Mexico City, 1977.

Wasserstrom's description of "refuge regions" in Guatemala.^{1/} The author suggests that indigenous groups live in marginal zones in which the structures of colonial Latin America have survived. The population is obliged to produce an agricultural surplus, which is appropriated in almost feudal fashion by the Ladinos which causes these communities to respond by barricading themselves off from national society making themselves open to exploitation.

Another very common form is that in which the peasant economy survives thanks to its ties with a capitalist economy which employs some of the surplus peasant labour. The capitalist economy for its part is benefited by cheap labour which is nurtured in the peasant economy. This relationship is determined by the demand for labour, the access to the land and the price system and is therefore dominated by the capitalist system. This relationship of domination is encountered both in non-capitalist labour relations in the haciendas and latifundios and in market labour relations in situations where the peasantry is semi-proletarianized.

Although in a pure peasant economy there are differences between men and women, the most important factors in understanding the status of women in the rural area today are the relations of domination and the new forms they take as capitalism penetrates agriculture and urbanization spreads. Although the social relations of capitalist production give this domination a special character, social relations of non-capitalist production are still present and generate forms of extra-economic domination and are very important in the division of labour by sex.

2. The division of labour by sex in the rural area

There is much discussion concerning the origin of the division of sexual roles. Although this is very important in developing this topic and in studying ways of overcoming this division of roles, those who hold the different anthropological positions have not succeeded in reaching an agreement or in aducing sufficient empirical evidence. In this study, therefore, attention will be drawn only to the fact that this differentiation in the sexual roles has always been recognized implicitly or explicitly in the various modes of production although in each of them this division of labour by sex acquires its own specificity. Thus, as Capellin

^{1/} Robert Wasserstrom, "Land and Labour in Central Chiapas: A Regional Analysis", Development and Change, Vol. 8, No. 4, October 1977.

points out 1/ capitalism does not create the division of labour by sex but gives it its characteristic content.

In a study carried out in Peru, Deere 2/ found, for example, that the roles assigned to each sex become more flexible as the level of technology and the size of the family holding decrease. If the level of technology is low, all the adults will have to work as much as possible and although their productive tasks may be different, many are interchangeable as in situations where one of the spouses is temporarily absent. Despite this inequality in the productive tasks, the social reproductive labour done in a daily basis (for example, the preparation of meals and the first stage in the children's education) falls more heavily on the woman than on the man, since the biological reproductive role of the woman is tacitly extended to the social reproductive role. In the case of agrarian producers living at very low levels in economies in which they produce for the market, there is a notable flexibility of roles when one of the spouses, either the man or the woman, leaves the land temporarily to earn a salary in the market economy while the other spouse remains on the family holding performing the farm tasks. Although both possibilities exist, the woman usually moves only for the day, remaining at the disposal of the daily reproductive tasks while the man's movements are more seasonable, forcing him to abandon the daily management of productive and reproductive family affairs.

Although these are strategies of life which families in certain social groups put into practice, the result is that the sexes are making different contributions to the overall economic system, with varying consequences, as will be seen below.

To continue with the discussion of small and medium-sized independent agricultural producers, as technology and the size of the holding increase, the woman becomes disassociated from the farm tasks which become the man's responsibility. Probably this is brought about by the increase in the reproductive work carried out in the home, such as preparing meals for workers and caring for animals and a

1/ Paola Capellin, "Estructura productiva capitalista y trabajo femenino: las condiciones de existencia de la fuerza de trabajo femenino en el Brasil", study presented at the First Mexican-Central American Symposium on Research on Women, Mexico City, November 1977.

2/ Carmen D. Deere, "The Agricultural Division of Labour by Sex: Myths and Facts and Contradictions in the Northern Peruvian Sierra", study presented at the Panel on Women in the meeting on "The New Marginals in the Development Process", Houston, Texas, November 1977.

vegetable garden. In addition, the generational and daily reproductive work may increasingly come into conflict with the growing rationality of the farm work so that not much benefit is gained if the wife of a producer works directly on the land. To this is added a marked ideological belief that the feminine role is to remain at home engaged in household activities. At the lowest subsistence levels, conditions are so uncertain that the woman is forced to work in the fields, but once a certain threshold has been reached in the satisfaction of basic needs, this ideological factor becomes more important.

In the case of wage earners, the division of labour by sex is more rigid - men work in productive jobs and women are more apt to be employed in service jobs and the transformation of goods at home. The low level of wages means that it is more profitable for the family if the woman works in the areas indicated than in wage labour. When the wage level is very low, however, women are also forced to undertake wage labour, often in jobs which are known as woman's work, with much lower wages than those paid to men.^{1/} In this case, there is still as much housework and it is still the responsibility of the women because with the prevailing value systems these tasks are assigned to the woman and because the monetary income of the family makes it possible to purchase only meagre supplies of goods and services.

Other categories of family living in the country, such as miners, traders, civil servants, persons engaged in other kinds of services or in the professions generally show patterns of division of labour by sex in that the man generates the income in money and the woman engages in the work of transformation (for example, preparing meals) which is a component of domestic labour. The lower the income the more basic the transformation is. Women in the higher income stratum purchase more services and goods in the market and do considerably less work. Women in the low income strata perform wage labour in addition to the tasks of transformation to keep the income at a certain level. On the other hand, in the higher income strata, wage labour by women may totally or partially replace the tasks of transformation done at home.

^{1/} Also in some regions less is paid to women than to men for the same type of work, as seems to be the case in the central sierra of Peru, although this does not happen in the case of salaried workers in the farm export sector of Chile, in which equal work earns equal pay.

The differences indicated in the content of the work done primarily by the man or by the woman are intimately related to the differentiation between the so-called domestic labour and social labour and the economic levels at which they are performed. Differences in work according to sex, which of themselves need not necessarily imply inequality, become crucial when seen from a global economic perspective and from the point of view of participation in development as we have defined it, which is why it deserves due attention.

3. Domestic labour and social labour

Domestic labour is usually defined as the work performed within the family, which does not go through the market but directly satisfies the needs of the family members. Social labour is work whose product goes through the market. The difference between social labour and domestic labour is superimposed on the difference between productive work and reproductive work, two kinds of work which may or may not go through the market.^{1/} The recognition of the productive aspects of domestic labour, even outside the primary sector of the economy ^{2/} is a very important factor and helps to get a good perspective on the problems dealt with in studying the status of women. We chose to use the domestic labour-social labour terminology because it sheds more light on the relationship with systems of production and the place of the social agents in them and because the concept of reproductive work is for no good reason too frequently associated with "unproductiveness".

As has been pointed out, domestic labour as defined has a feature which is too often overlooked -that it can refer both to production and to transformation and not only to the latter. It is important not to overlook the productivity of this kind of work, especially in the rural area where part of what is produced,

1/ In Carlos Borsotti, "Situación de la mujer y desarrollo: acotaciones", in Chile: Mujer y Sociedad, edited by Rolando Franco and Paz Covarrubias, UNICEF, 1978, attention is drawn to four types of work in which the two criteria mentioned (productive and reproductive domestic work) are involved. In the author's discussion of domestic productive work, reference is made to direct productivity rather than to the productive aspects of domestic work outside the primary economic sector, as in Barbieri, for example. In the author's view, this indirect productivity does not create surplus value although it helps to maintain the overall rate of surplus value (p. 758).

2/ Teresa de Barbieri, "Notas para el estudio del trabajo de las mujeres: el problema del trabajo doméstico", study presented at the First Mexican-Central American Symposium on Research on Women, Mexico City, November 1977.

hunted or gathered does not go through the market but is directly consumed, transformed for consumption or used as an input for production. The interpretation according to which domestic work is performed with the family group as a unit of production dissociated from society, in which the family is beginning to have certain interests in terms of well-being 1/ seems on the other hand to put the emphasis only on the work of transformation and might contain a germ of that thinking which relegates domestic work to the background as being of little importance socially and having no apparent connexion to social work.

The relationship between domestic labour and social labour is very clear and is reflected specifically in each instance of the process of development of the productive apparatus. Generally speaking, it may be expressed in the following manner: as the market grows and social labour increases, the domestic labour performed by people with greater access to the goods and services on the market decreases. Owing to the prevailing unequal and combined pattern of development, the decrease in domestic labour takes place first in the work of transformation in the urban and agro-exporter sectors where relations with the market are more direct. In that part of the rural sector which produces for the domestic market, both productive domestic work and transformation have maintained a very important role since social labour is directed towards smaller markets. The main reasons for this appears to be the difference between the cost and price of the labour factor, which is greater in that part of the rural sector which produces for the domestic market than in the urban and agro-exporter sectors.

At global level, the mechanisms which generate this inequality between the cost and price of labour and the fact that agriculture operates at a double disadvantage has been dealt with briefly and clearly by de Janvry,2/ who maintains that the continuous transfer of capital and goods from peripheral countries to central countries, which is controlled by a limited number of persons, means that the workers in the industrial sector of the peripheral countries produce only for that limited group. Thus, the labour factor begins to be considered only as a cost

1/ Angel Fucaraccio and Fernando González, "Notas para una discusión acerca de la ley de población en Marx", CELADE, Santiago, Chile, 1975.

2/ Alain de Janvry, "The Political Economy of Rural Development in Latin America: An Interpretation", in the American Journal of Agricultural Economics, Vol. 57, No. 3, August 1975.

to be borne by the entrepreneurs, instead of also as constituting a benefit because of the increase in the purchasing power of the masses resulting in the expansion of the domestic market. That part of the rural area which produces for internal consumption must sell its products at low prices so that the urban population with low incomes may purchase them, which puts it in a doubly disadvantaged position. The only way to survive in these conditions is to produce for one's own subsistence or to perform even the basic transformations of goods within the family. Thus, the family becomes very necessary because these products and services are not produced at the social level due to the lack of a market.

It is not going too far to suggest that in agricultural enterprises which produce for the domestic market -from the minifundio to the latifundio- those who work and own the land can maintain their position in the market thanks to the fact that a large proportion of the labour refurbishment cost is absorbed by the family when the work is done at home. The only way in which this arrangement can operate is through a high labour input and a very low investment in technology and capital goods. Thus, domestic labour is still not touched by technological innovations, and it is in this kind of economy that women are still working much harder than men.

Some of the ways in which there may be a different allocation of resources to the activities of men and women will be made more explicit here although they have already been touched upon. When men embark upon temporary, seasonal or permanent agricultural wage-labour (especially temporary and seasonal labour), they are entering a system in which wages are so low that they only earn enough money to buy a few consumer goods for their family on the market. The work they do in an enterprise which produces for the market and is based on another way of organizing labour and frequently on a higher level of technology and/or applied knowledge, does not result in the organization of the work on their own holdings because it is impossible to make investments. A woman who works during her husband's absence (and the remainder of the year) on the family holding continues producing using the same rudimentary tools and knowledge with the result that the holding is not able to yield a surplus for the market.

When external aid in the form of better know-how and technology was introduced on the same subsistence holdings or holdings whose output is lower than the subsistence level, there has been a tendency to give credit for the productive work

done by the men in whose name the land is registered. In view of the high degree of mobility of these men as they seek an income, the fact that the women are overlooked is prejudicial to the results of productive modernization. At the same time, in view of the price structure, the income earned through the sale of surplus commodities is still so low that thought can only be given to a few small investments in the holdings, leaving primary and secondary transformations and the purchase of equipment in the same pre-capitalist state. As a result the woman goes on working in the same conditions as before even when she no longer needs to play such an active role in the productive work while the man applies know-how and technology which can lighten his tasks and bring him into closer contact with new structures and knowledge.^{1/}

In larger holdings which produce for the market and employ hired labour, the woman usually performs the household tasks and no longer works in the fields. In Deere's excellent study on the sierra of Peru,^{2/} light is shed on the reasons for this division of labour between paid labourers who are men and domestic labourers who are women, and the findings are consistent with the central theme presented here. The author finds that women no longer work in the field because they have to prepare the workers' meal, which constitutes part of their pay. In other words, for an enterprise to be able to produce at prices which are competitive on the market, labour costs must be lowered. One way of achieving this is through the domestic labour involved in transformation (often primary transformation), on which women must spend more time than they previously did.

On the basis of what is said above, it seems appropriate to suggest that in the case of family and multi-family holdings up to medium-sized holdings, the enterprise goes on operating and obtaining the accumulation needed for it to keep itself going or expand by means of the domestic labour which some members of the family group (a larger proportion of them being women) are forced to perform at a much lower technological level than that at which the productive work is performed.

^{1/} It has been shown in Gambia that when better methods are put into operation in agriculture, the work of the male falls from 11 to 9 hours while the work of the female increases from 19 to 20 hours. United Nations, "Review and appraisal of the progress made in the implementation of the World Plan of Action: employment" (A/CONF.94/8), New York, 1980.

^{2/} Carmen D. Deere, op. cit.

The proletarianized class, especially the landless rural proletariat, is totally dependent on the cash income which is brought home primarily by men. The women are involved in the work of transformation and no longer participate in the productive work, which in view of the prevailing value systems, causes them to lose status and accentuates the division between social and domestic labour. In the lowest income strata, however, the domestic labour performed by the women is an indispensable part of the total family income so that the economic maintenance of the familial and productive units themselves, and therefore of the economy as a whole, depends on their activity. The fact that more people in the family, including the women themselves, must seek employment, thereby doubling their work load, is also one reason why wages stay so low.

When wages rise, especially in agroindustry, domestic labour decreases considerably because access to the services market is obtained. Generally, social labour is also very scarce because of the high degree of mechanization which means that women are not to be found in many activities considered to be significant and involving participation and thus lose much of their social status as "productive" individuals.

4. The sexual and social division of labour

Few authors attempt to account for the link between the division of labour by sex and the differentiation between social labour and domestic labour, how these links are established and why women perform the domestic labour and men primarily perform social work. Young ^{1/} gives an interpretation for the case of Mexico in the last century, showing that the emergence of merchant capital caused domestic labour to be associated with women. The author says that merchant capital does not intervene in the relations of production but circulates only surplus production, relying on unequal exchange. This process stimulates production because it brings about an increase in crop lands. The labour shortage, which is chronic in this period of expansion, strengthens the role of the women as a procreator and sets up a subordination-domination relationship between the sexes. The reason for this subordination is still not known. Implicitly it would seem to relate to the greater

^{1/} Kate Young, "Modes of Appropriation of the Sexual Division of Labour. A case study from Oaxaca, Mexico", a study submitted to the First Mexican-Central American Symposium on Research on Women, Mexico City, 1977.

importance attached to social work and to the lack of recognition of reproductive work in spite of the express desire to increase procreation so that the level of earnings will rise. Olivera 1/ gives a similar explanation of the servile relations of production existing in the coffee growing region of Mexico. She says the families living in the haciendas exchange their labour force against minimum living conditions ("acasilladas") and produce children to satisfy the demand of capital, as personified by the hacienda owners, for a labour force.

At bottom, such an interpretation seems to fit in with the overall view that social labour, or productive work in the absence of markets, is in the hands of men, who carry it out and own the tools, land, etc.; this happens because women have other tasks related to generational reproduction, to which are added, without much discussion, most of the tasks involved in the transformation of goods for daily and social reproduction.2/

The importance attached to the economic relations of exchange means that they are becoming the basis of relevant social and political relations. Since the majority of women have access to the economic system of exchange only through consumption and not through production, they remain relegated to the background. Sexual dominance is said to be based on economic dominance which, under the capitalist system, falls to the men.

At this point in the analysis, some authors suggest direct solutions in that if women enter the labour market, they would become independent of this domination within the family, and at the same time the possibility of greater political and civic participation would be open to them.3/ This suggestion seems very valid to the extent that domestic labour is losing ground owing to the advance of the social production of goods and services in fields formerly reserved to it. There is, however, reason to wonder to what point the entry of women en masse into the productive process is a short-term solution which benefits the productive apparatus only and does not result in greater social and political participation because the sexual division of roles remains the same in the prevailing value system. In the

1/ Mercedes Olivera, op. cit.

2/ Claude Meillasoux, Mujeres, graneros y capitales, Editorial Siglo XXI, Mexico City, 1977.

3/ See for example, "European Social Development Programme: The changing roles of men and women in modern society: functions, rights and responsibilities", Vol. II, United Nations, 1977.

socialist societies, despite the fact that the women participate in social labour to a greater extent, they still work a double day because domestic labour is still "woman's work". On the other hand, their productive work is viewed only as a way of helping to maintain the home.^{1/}

In Latin America, on the other hand, more activities are carried out in the sphere of domestic labour because the development of the productive apparatus is not so advanced; by means of this kind of work, a large proportion of the products and services are created and transformed without any contact with the market. It is therefore necessary to carry over the analysis further and reconsider the nature of domestic labour as Barbieri,^{2/} Arizpe,^{3/} Deere,^{4/} and Jelin ^{5/} have done.

Domestic labour is seen by all these authors as a necessary activity which has a direct repercussion on the standards of living of the population and on the accumulation of surplus value and its transfer from workers' sectors to entrepreneurial sectors. It is especially important to emphasize this last point, which emerged in a recent study, because of its implications in reconsidering the role played in the economy by domestic labour, which is traditionally equated with unproductive work and is not recorded in census findings as an "activity", because it is not incorporated in the gross national product and from a social point of view is not even considered to be work.

5. The family unit and the concept of reproduction

Although in the analysis in the foregoing paragraphs special attention was paid to the status of women, the family unit has consistently served as the frame of reference.

^{1/} Lourdes Arizpe, Campesinas, capitalismo y cultura, FEM I,3: pp. 25-31, Mexico City, 1977.

^{2/} Teresa de Barbieri, op. cit.

^{3/} Lourdes Arizpe, "Economía doméstica, unidad doméstica: la migración de mujeres campesinas", study presented at the First Mexican-Central American Symposium on Research on Women, Mexico City, 1977.

^{4/} Carmen D. Deere, "Rural Women's Subsistence Production in the Capitalist Periphery", Review of Radical Political Economics, Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring 1976, pp. 9-17; "The Agricultural Division of Labour by Sex. Myths and Facts and Contradictions in the Northern Peruvian Sierra", op. cit.

^{5/} Elizabeth Jelin, "La Bahiana en la fuerza de trabajo: actividad doméstica, producción simple y trabajo asalariado en Salvador, Brasil", Demografía y Economía, 24, 8, 13, 1976.

The emphasis on the family as a productive and reproductive unit in the peripheral economies of the developing countries is fully justified in view of the lack of socialized production of goods and services for household use and the difference between the price and the cost of labour.

To cope with this situation and as a survival tactic, the family retains a certain cohesiveness which is more telling than the unity associated with living together on a day-to-day basis. In the rural area in some countries, members of the family not only migrate temporarily to perform seasonal and farm work but they also go to the city for years on end during which they provide their family back in the country with a monetary income. In this connexion, in a study of Mexico ^{1/} it is hypothesized that young people between 9 and 14 years of age who migrate to the city alone do so to obtain an additional income as a result of a decision taken within the family as part of a global strategy. This is particularly frequent in the case of older, unmarried daughters from large families whose fathers have unstable jobs. Family ties also do much to sustain commerce and territorial mobility.

Family ties are strengthened by strong ideological dogmas in which the family is considered to be the basic unit of the patriarchal-type society. It should, however, be mentioned that within this unit there are big differences in the kind of work and the skills required and that this has a direct effect on the opportunities for participation in development, according to the definition of the word "development" employed here. The role of the women is confined to the reproductive tasks which are socially necessary, to use the term employed by Chinchilla,^{2/} which in our terminology would cover both reproductive and productive tasks within the context of domestic labour. There are two factors which should be taken into account with regard to the degree of flexibility with which a woman can accede to social labour: the period of the familial cycle in which she is located and the kind of family she has constituted. Thus, the extended family, in which there is more than one woman (child or adult), provides more opportunities for an adult woman in the family to be involved in paid social activities as well.

^{1/} Lourdes Arizpe, "Economía campesina, unidad doméstica: la migración de mujeres campesinas", *op. cit.*

^{2/} Norma Chinchilla, "Familia, economía y trabajo de la mujer en Guatemala", a study presented at the First Mexican-Central American Symposium on Research on Women, Mexico City, 1977.

Although the internal organization of the family unit is changing to the extent that the mode of production provides greater access to the goods and services on the market, this change is not accompanied by democratization within the family; for this reason, the point of departure for activities which may benefit women seems to be the family and the woman's position in it.

Attention has been drawn to the economic base on which the sexual division of work is predicated within both the family and in the wider confines of society. It should, however, be borne in mind that the legitimacy of this kind of structuring lies in patriarchal values which are deep seated in family members, men as well as women. In the rural area not only is the dominant position held by the male head of family, who makes the important decisions in the household, not questioned, the women themselves socialize their male and female children from the time they are very small along distinctly differentiated lines.^{1/} When the social and economic foundation on which the division of labour by sex is based is changed, special emphasis must be placed on the values which justify that division. History has shown that these ideological values are very resistant to change and may persist for a long time, even when the economic and social base on which they were built no longer exists. In so far as this is true, an attempt to increase the degree of equality within the family will encounter strong resistance, not only from the men but also from the women.

What are here considered to be ideological values are part and parcel of what is broadly termed reproduction, where at various levels of abstraction a distinction is made between social reproduction, the reproduction of the labour force and human or biological reproduction. Social reproduction refers to the reproduction of the conditions on which the social system is based. Social reproduction is therefore related to the perpetuation of some modes of production and the survival of certain kinds of social relationship, such as right of ownership, systems of inheritance, control over resources, the perpetuation of ideological systems and all means by which certain social relationships are maintained. A sizeable portion of this task is carried out within the family in the rural area (i.e., transmission of values, attitudes, etc.). The reproduction of the labour force, for its part, refers not

^{1/} Rina Cornejo, "La socialización de la mujer campesina del Cuzco", op. cit.

only to the physical development of new generations of workers but also to the process by which these beings become workers and are absorbed by the productive process. In the rural family, the transmission of agricultural techniques and know-how from one generation to another is a fundamental aspect of the process by which the rural labour force is reproduced. Finally, what is known as biological reproduction refers strictly to the physical development of human beings. Thus it is maintained that the essence of male domination lies in male control over these three areas of reproduction.^{1/} This domination takes a peculiar form within the patriarchal family which makes it important to distinguish between the three areas of reproduction referred to.^{2/} Domination is sustained in a very powerful ideological apparatus which is set in motion at birth. Despite the fact that the real control over these three areas of reproduction is not in the hands of women, it is, in the last analysis, women who perform the majority of the work involved in these tasks.

1/ See Lourdes Benería, "Reproduction, Production and the Sexual Division of Labour", Cambridge Journal of Economics, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1979.

2/ This part will not be discussed in greater detail since it has no connexion with the main topic we are trying to develop. There is, however, a considerable amount of bibliographical material which relates to this argument. See for example Lourdes Benería, op. cit., CSE Pamphlet No. 2; On the political economy of women, Stage 1, 1976; Maureen Mackintosh, "The sexual division of labour in social production", Olivia Harris and Maila Stevens, "Women and Social Reproduction", Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, "Subsistence reproduction and extended reproduction, some theoretical reflections", papers presented at the conference entitled "Women and Development", Sussex, 1977, and Susan Himmelweit and Simon Mohun, "Domestic Labour and Capital", Cambridge Journal of Economics, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1977, pp. 15-31.

III. ACTION FOR RAISING THE STATUS OF RURAL WOMEN

On the basis of what was said in the preceding chapter, it may be concluded, that the emphasis on economic growth, on increased productivity and on production results in an investment gap with regard to the male and female spheres which is the same as the investment gap between country and city. The family, which seems to be the minimum unit of analysis used in stratifications, in the distribution of production goods and in the processes of redistribution, is actually divided along lines of sex and is represented in the social categories and processes referred to in the person of the male head of family. It is he who takes part in social labour, owns most of the property (the land being the most notable item), enters into labour and trade contracts, is trained in new techniques, has access to credit, etc. Apparently in the prevailing value systems, social labour constitutes the most direct link to power distribution systems, and those who are not engaged in social labour derive their social position from the family unit of which they are part. Domestic labour in which the woman is employed does not benefit from improvements and the introduction of knowledge and technology and has no social recognition in spite of the important role it plays in the country's economy and other areas of social life.

Housework is a forgotten area and is rarely considered in terms of action designed to improve living conditions in the rural area. Isolated courses, such as industrial dressmaking courses, and the whole field of home economics, are of course aimed at women. They are, however, designed so that women will enter the market with the goods they produce; i.e., a new task and a poorly paid one at that, is created for her rather than lightening her work load or changing her present routine. New knowledge or a new technology is rarely applied to domestic work. To divide the base of economic activity between social labour and domestic labour, which largely correspond to "men's work" and "women's work", respectively, would easily give rise to proposals of action in which women were emphasized once attention had been focused on the lag in women's work. In the developed countries sectoral solutions, such as the incorporation of more women in productive labour 1/ and payment for domestic labour, 2/ have been suggested. Both these solutions look

1/ United Nations, European Social Development Programme, *op.cit.*

2/ Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, "El poder de la mujer y la subversión de la comunidad", Editorial Siglo XXI, Mexico City, 1975.

forward to a time when women will compete more effectively at the economic, social and political levels, a new value having been explicitly set on their labour. The criticism which the proponents of both outlooks level at each other in that in the first the woman is left with a double day since domestic labour is not eliminated, and in the second domestic labour will not be competitive enough to attract men, demonstrates the weakness of this unilateral and sectoral approach. The effort must include men and women, bringing about a change in the values attached to today's family life and to the global economic and social system.

In the countries of the region there are numberless sectoral programmes designed exclusively for women, including the industrial dressmaking courses referred to above. On the other hand, some intersectoral programmes on organization and production of base groups in which women are considered to be a focal group are being organized and are worth mentioning because of their social goals. Thus, in Mexico a training, research and management programme is being conducted whose objective is to breathe new life into indigenous communities through the participation of the base groups. The programmes only train women because "the woman is basically oriented towards the community in historical and social circumstances in which men are increasingly forced to absent themselves from the community in search of wage-labour because there is not enough land to allow them to survive without selling their labour-power. To this extent, the influence of women on the community, their integration into it and, consequently, their value to it are strengthened".^{1/} Although bigger opportunities are available to women for earning a livelihood and for managing social and cultural matters, the other side of the coin is the existence of towns with no economic base and the failure to create jobs so that men can remain in them. Does the solution lie in a form of development in which women are given their independence and at the same time left in their old role of reproducer of cheap manpower?

The study by Ahooja-Patel ^{2/} offers alarming examples of the backwardness of women in many aspects. This situation is especially serious where the satisfaction

^{1/} Laura Silvan, "Capacitación, investigación y gestión para mujeres campesinas", study presented at the First Mexican-Central American Symposium on Research on Women, Mexico City, 1977, pp. 10 and 11.

^{2/} Krishna Ahooja-Patel, "Another Development for Women", a study presented at the First Mexican-Central American Symposium on Research on Women, Mexico City, 1977.

of basic needs is concerned. Recognition of this fact should not lead to isolated action in which the status of women is considered out of the context with the structural economic and social situation in which they find themselves. It seems important to point out that as the status of women changed, there would be concomitant changes in the status of men since the distinction which can be drawn analytically does not actually exist. Thus, the improvement in the social norms for women is by no means the only objective satisfied; it should also help the whole of the population to participate as equals in the common effort to enhance these development norms.

It must be borne in mind that a structural change in the status of women and the family which profoundly alters the present sexual division of labour also involves a global change in the prevailing style of development in that it changes the foundations on which the style of development rests and causes substantial changes in the economy as a whole and in the structuring of the social and "private" orbits of the family.

To give greater consideration now to the woman in development projects may have an added impact of a powerful nature which extends further than her own status in view of her particular role within the family. Much of the work of social reproduction usually falls on her, especially when socialized systems of education and social services are rare. The transition of norms, attitudes and values to meet the vicissitudes of daily life is mainly in her hands.

Also, as the centre of the household, the woman defends the traditional values to which the male members of the family are also subject up to a certain point. Cornejo,^{1/} in a study on the socialization of the rural women of Cuzco, draws attention to all the points mentioned above, indicating how the difference in the socialization of boys and girls (to be a producer with a social role and to be a housewife with a family role, respectively) inveighs on girls from early age, preparing them for the task of housekeeping with the facilities available. It is the woman who defends the traditional cultural and economic norms, such as the rites of religion and bartering, against the advance of capitalism, in the first case by channelling incomes and in the second through the development of an enlarged market. Not only does the woman transmit these norms to the children,

^{1/} Rina Cornejo, "La socialización de la mujer campesina del Cuzco", op.cit.

she also induces her husband to adopt this mode of life, doing away with new ideas he tries to introduce. It might be posited that since women do not participate fully in the various aspects of development, their children begin life by learning values which apply to situations which are not modern (in the peasant mode of production) and are not made aware in their early years of the real opportunities offered by the social, economic and political process of which their society is a part.

We now see how development may affect the status of women. Owing to the sexual division of labour, a woman's time and energy are largely devoted to the satisfaction of basic needs and to providing the family with the means for an existence, freeing it from constant concern for its survival. In view of the rudimentary level of the technology and know-how to perform these tasks, they can eat up much of a woman's time and physical energy, making it impossible for her to seek fulfilment outside her own home.^{1/} Here, therefore, is the point of departure for any action aimed at incorporating women more effectively into the development processes.

At the same time, the division between social labour and domestic labour works against the self-sufficiency of women. To paraphrase Arizpe,^{2/} it may be said that family work is organized on the basis more of domination than of equality, and that the woman, because of her female condition, is always subject to relations of institutionalized submission. Although the woman is and feels herself to be capable of working on the land and producing food for herself and her family, as indicated by the high percentages of rural households headed by women ^{3/} and by studies of attitudes ^{4/} on the other hand, she does not have access to the fruit

1/ In rural Latin America, the woman is the water bearer and the one chiefly responsible for keeping the household clean, turning products into food, caring for the sick and socializing the children.

2/ Lourdes Arizpe, "Campesinos, capitalismo y cultura", *op.cit.*

3/ Census data for 6 Latin American countries shows that the percentage of female heads of family was as follows: Argentina (1970) 16.5%, Bolivia (1976) 26.0%, Brazil (1970) 13.0%, Costa Rica (1973) 16.4%, Mexico (1970) 15.3% and Peru (1972) 22.3% and Panama (1970) 20.6%. Source: OAS, Interamerican Institute of Statistics: America in figures, 1974. We assume that in view of the strong process of rural-urban migration, these percentages are higher in the rural area.

4/ See, for example, CODEX, "La situación del rol social de la mujer rural en Bolivia", Final Report, La Paz, Bolivia, 1975.

of her work, especially in monetary terms, and cannot decide where to invest it or how to spend it. The relations of domination also make it difficult for the woman to make a creative contribution to the common effort to satisfy the needs felt at communal level.

When we come to social participation, we are entering territory in which there is need for greater change in the prevailing organizational and value systems. In the rural area it is common for women to be represented by men at the political and civic levels even when they head a family.^{1/} Moreover, their civic activities, if any, are confined to a few fields considered to be women's domain and of scant social value, and as a result they have little access to political and institutional power.

The way to greater participation may not necessarily lie in wage-labour, which in addition to being difficult to find, lowers the per capita income and is not always accompanied by greater social participation. It may be better for a woman to take on a more active role by carrying out important tasks for the community under community self-help programmes aimed at raising the quality of life; in this way she might serve as a source of social betterment and make a civic and political contribution.

The thrust should also be towards flexibility in the female and male roles so that both men and women perform productive and reproductive tasks (in the broad sense of these terms as defined above). The separation of the levels at which men and women move may result in continued differentiation of the activities carried out by women and in their failure to achieve the social development needed if their status is to be equal with that of men.

^{1/} See Acción Cultural Loyola (ACLO), Estudio socioeconómico de la provincia de Hernando Siles, Sucre, Bolivia, 1974.

IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study we have tried to approach the sexual and social division of labour in rural Latin America, and this has shown us the importance attached to the domestic labour carried out by women -a crucial subject on which it will be necessary to focus the struggle to change the status of rural women and their families. In view of the political and economic conditions which prevail in national societies, it is not very feasible to support the rapid incorporation into social labour of the tasks now carried out in the domestic sphere. This would be accompanied by changes in the structure of the demand which, for the time being, are not considered to be of first necessity for the countries. On the other hand, conditions governing income at present are such that, from the point of view of the family and for the majority of rural women, domestic labour is economically more profitable than wage labour. Perhaps the most significant improvement which can be made is to lighten domestic labour by introducing technology and greater knowledge so that the productivity of women in satisfying basic needs will be higher, while the time, and hence the physical energy spent on these tasks will be reduced. It seems necessary to work to bring about a sort of distribution of labour between men and women, at least in terms of the time needed to carry it out. This problem, which is much more widespread than the problem of the nature of domestic labour, might be tackled through consciousness-raising concerning the need for domestic labour in upholding the economic structure.

Of course, while the lightening of domestic tasks is a notable objective it is not an end in itself and should be seen within the broader framework of the satisfaction of basic needs, but it is felt as a point of departure for a larger development effort for women. The idea of using more technology and knowledge can be of help in this connexion in that it promotes the management of daily affairs in a way which is more similar to social labour. The mastery of some basic notions concerning interrelationships and techniques would facilitate the interchangeability of tasks considered to be men's work and women's work.

As for the overall economy, it is becoming necessary to reconsider the contribution of domestic labour and to redistribute funds and efforts, and this too may lead to a change in the values given to domestic labour performed by women.

If women in addition to having more knowledge also had more time, their participation on the same level as men in other activities with social value would be more feasible. It is not necessary to speak about the way in which these activities should be organized because that is a matter to be dealt with by those involved and is basic to participation.

Domestic and social labour as well as other activities of value to the community may provide a foundation for participation in decision-taking at various levels. For the time being it seems of prime importance for the activities in which persons are engaged not to be referred to as "men's work" or "women's work".

The proposed change in the nature of domestic labour so as to enable women to participate and carry out activities which are socially more meaningful will not substantially affect the exploitation of the peasantry -both men and women. It will reduce it only a little, but it establishes a more solid foundation for tackling the problems themselves.

Although this approach does not include direct intervention in the family structure in terms of productive organization and consumption, it may open the way to social participation by women in that the social value of domestic labour in the social division of labour will be recognized so that there will be a tendency towards greater equality. To achieve this equality it is, in any event, necessary to change things in such a way that the position and social status of women can be reassessed and they can be made aware of their own problems.

