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WOMAN AS A SOCIAL PROTAGONIST IN THE 1980s \*/

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## Introduction

Among the subjects of concern to the United Nations, the question of women has, over the last 15 years, taken on increasing importance and the issues involved are becoming more and more clearly defined. Since the first references to the need to integrate women into development (Second United Nations Development Decade, 1970), progress has been made to the point of defining the conditions for their integration and the relationships between such conditions and underdevelopment. Moreover, the agencies of the United Nations system have modified their perception of and approach to questions related to women, and indeed there is now widespread recognition of the value of the contribution of women, the other half of the population, to the tasks involved in achieving the objectives of equality, development and peace.

However, women, as new protagonists of economic and social development, represent not only a potential: they bring with them a history of relative backwardness, inequality, marginalization, subordination and poverty, on a scale which exceeds that of men in comparable situations.<sup>1/</sup> As a result all the principal documents of the United Nations system (United Nations, 1980 and 1985) stress the need to achieve equality for women. Two hundred years after the publication of the Rights of Man, it would appear that an attempt is now being made to give broader meaning to the concept of equality among human beings.

The final document of the Nairobi Conference (United Nations, 1985), whose theme was "Equality, Development and Peace", contains the broadest and clearest declarations on the different situations of discrimination, subordination and inequality to which women are subjected at both the public and private levels. The final document also contains a summary of the diagnostic studies and recommendations made throughout the United Nations Decade for Women, as well as the results of research especially that which was conducted during the Decade.

Generally speaking, however, it has been recognized that the optimistic thinking of the 1970s, according to which economic growth would automatically lead to improvements in the status of women, was based on assumptions that were too simplistic (United Nations, 1985, paragraph 103), and that in order to achieve this objective specific policies had to be followed within the guidelines of the "Basic Strategies" contained in the nine principal heads of the report. On the other hand, it is argued that, in view of the recession in the world economy and the unlikelihood of a recovery in the short term the prospects for women are worse than had been envisaged a decade ago, since governments are concerned about poverty in general and attach less importance to questions relating to the equality of women. In pursuing their adjustment policies, Latin American governments in general have reduced expenditure in social sectors, and delays are therefore likely to occur in the adoption of

measures to prevent discrimination in employment, wages and salaries, and conditions of hiring, as well as of measures designed to raise educational standards, find solutions for special health needs, and help in child care and in the double and triple workdays of women, inter alia.

In the face of the current bleak outlook for the prospects for women, the gains achieved throughout the process of three decades of economic and social development in the region between 1950 and 1980 should not, however, be forgotten. Despite the shortcomings and inequalities, significant advances have been made in the levels of literacy, education, health and life expectancy of the population as a whole and of women in particular, and in narrowing the gap between the urban and rural sectors, especially in those countries with higher levels of economic development (Rama, 1984; ECLAC, 1987 and 1988). Illiteracy rates fell to less than half the levels at which they stood in 1950; primary and secondary education became available to vastly increased numbers of people while at the higher levels there was an increase in the proportion of women enrolled, which helped to offset the imbalances existing at that level. At the same time, a larger number of women entered the labour force, although they continue to work mainly in low level tertiary sector jobs and in traditionally female occupations.

However, not all levels of the population have benefited from these improvements and the crisis has worsened the negative aspects of the integration of women into the labour force: the wage levels of women are always between 53% and 54% lower than those of men in the same jobs, and unemployment levels are higher, mainly among young women between the ages of 15 and 19.

The above-mentioned circumstances and their negative effects on women are more pronounced in the rural sector, which lags furthest behind in terms of literacy levels, education, health, services and unemployment. Conditions are even worse in the case of indigenous populations.

Since it is impossible to cover all the various situations affecting women, this document seeks to focus on those women who receive less coverage in official publications and in statistics, those who are most vulnerable to marginalization and inequality, and consequently those for whom specific policies need to be urgently designed. Within the broad range of sectors with which women may be identified, a selection has been made of women in rural and urban sectors who are involved in new or unknown activities, usually within the informal sector. In some cases they represent "novelty" as an expression of modernization, as in the case of seasonal or temporary agricultural workers, itinerant vendors and assembly workers in the urban sector; in others, they perform traditional jobs which have either evolved or now absorb women on a large scale, such as women working at home, domestic employees and prostitutes. The common denominator in the situations examined is the uncertainty and instability of their jobs, the lack of job security (different in each case), the closeness to a rural origin and statistical invisibility (except for live-in domestic servants, in the case of the latter). Women of peasant origin, who are part of the processes of internal migration, are to be found in many of the above categories. Upon joining the work force, such women relocate in migratory movements of differing durations until they are definitively uprooted through their integration into the informal sector of

urban employment. The jobs they do are part of their families' survival strategies, in addition to which they perform household chores. These women belong to working class sectors, the rural and urban poor and are drawn from both the "creole" and indigenous populations.

This document, by attempting to focus on the ignored and marginalized, and to identify their needs and grievances, seeks to take a further step towards the objectives of equality and participation of women in development, set by the United Nations. Moreover, it represents a contribution to knowledge about the various types of women and families which comprise the grass-roots sectors and the focus of poverty, as well as about their capacity to organize themselves and to benefit from local training, organization and income-generating projects, since these are important considerations in the elaboration of large-scale social policies.

Chapter I covers the rural sector, which illustrates very clearly the most negative consequences of the changes that have occurred in the region since the 1950s, brought about by the adoption of policies to promote industrial development to the detriment of the agricultural sector. Among other indicators, mention should be made of the sharp declines in the relative population, as well as in the economically active population involved in agriculture. Subjectively speaking, this sector is also affected by the prospective disappearance of an important class of producers --peasants. However, account must be taken of other facts, such as their role in food security policies and in the provision of cheap labour to the cities. Rural women, both creole and indigenous, fall within this category. An attempt is made to focus attention on them mainly through their work, their productive activities and the modern labour markets.

Chapter II returns to the theme of internal migrations from rural areas and treats the subject of young women in the urban labour markets, performing jobs in the tertiary sector (domestic help) and being involved in informal activities.

Chapter III deals with the subject of working class women from the perspective of their recent activities in social participation. Such activities have made them protagonists in certain types of organizations and productive projects, as well as negotiators of various social demands, in their multiple capacities as women, housewives and workers, and also based on their ethnic differences.

## I. WOMEN IN THE RURAL SECTOR

### 1. The rural sector

Under the broad subject of women, the rural sector may justifiably be given separate treatment. It encompasses situations and social types of women that are markedly different from those of the urban sector, with different levels of development, and certain prejudices and stereotypes are encountered which are peculiar to the peasant environment. The situation of the rural women, moreover, is more difficult to assess from the viewpoint of statistical information, since the latter does not usually distinguish between urban and rural populations,<sup>2/</sup> or, where such a distinction is drawn, no differentiation between the sexes is maintained. The cross indexing of variables is thus rendered more difficult, in addition to which the margin of error in estimating the economically active female agricultural population (EAP) is increased.

The region, and particularly the southern cone, displays a certain lack of interest in the question of the rural sector. This is due to the fact that the region has become urbanized as a result of the rural exodus, the marked decline in the economically active population engaged in agriculture, the weight of the prospective disappearance of the peasant class, and the alleged blurring of the frontiers between the rural and urban sectors. There are, however, in the rural sector other new elements worthy of study.

Postwar economic trends gave a strong boost to industrialization and to the development of the necessary infrastructure for it, and allocated to the rural sector the role of increasing productivity and producing cheap food, in some cases for export. Large-scale changes were thus introduced into the region and these have been the subject of study in various publications. For the purpose of this study, of special interest is the behaviour of the population, which on the one hand is increasing and on the other migrating. The region's population multiplied two and a half times between 1950 and 1980, and has now become predominantly urban (68%). The rural populations moved to the cities, particularly to the capitals, increasing them to disproportionate sizes and bringing in train a string of new problems. It is estimated that one fourth of the rural population migrated to the cities between 1950 and 1960 (Crumett, 1987), joining the informal and service sectors. The difference between the urban and rural sectors has narrowed since there have been migratory flows in both directions. Millions of rural dwellers installed themselves on the peripheries of capitals and cities; their values, culture and world view filtered through to the urban working class sectors. The impoverishment of the rural dwellers and their consequent loss of bargaining



power, as a product of structural changes in the rural areas, led to their migration (permanent, seasonal, periodic or daily) to the urban labour markets, which has become another element in the spatial link between the rural and urban areas.<sup>3/</sup> The reverse flow has been motivated by the installation and improvement of such services as electricity, potable water, rural health outposts, different levels of educational establishments, roads, railway networks, bridges, telephones, television, etc. Communications, education and labour markets have filled in the spaces.

In 1950, 16 countries of the region were predominantly rural; in 1985, only seven were. The current rural population is a little over 125 million, of whom approximately 60 million are women. Of this population 20% is indigenous.<sup>4/</sup> Although the rural population is declining in relative terms, it is increasing in absolute terms and the number of peasant units is increasing. If account is also taken of the fact that the destination of its production is the domestic and external market, in particular in respect of food products (Schejtman, 1987 and Ortega, 1982), and its complementary and functional character *vis-à-vis* the commercial sector of agriculture, one can appreciate the legitimate concern for the rural sector, peasants and rural women, and for the specific support policies which they need.

Peasants control 36% of arable land and 44% of the land under cultivation. Peasant families number approximately 35 million and about two thirds of these are poor households. Peasant production covers two fifths of the domestic market and one third of the export sector. Its role in food production is very significant: 51% of maize, 77% of beans, 61% of potatoes and 33% of rice are produced by peasants (Joint ECLAC/FAO Agriculture Division, quoted by Schejtman, 1987). Peasant production of basic foodstuffs is approximately 80% of the total in Brazil, 67% in Colombia and 66% in Peru, and represents 69% of the total of maize produced in Mexico (Ortega, 1982).

On the other hand, 40% of the farms are small holdings of less than two hectares, which explains peasant poverty and the need to seek income away from their land and sometimes away from the rural area, within the framework of family "survival strategies". Of those families living in conditions of critical poverty, the rural poor exceed in absolute numbers the urban poor: the percentage is 54% and in five countries it is above 70%.

The rural sector has specific characteristics which must be taken into consideration. Firstly it has traditionally lagged behind in terms of the various social indicators which were not improved in the process of modernization, such as illiteracy, the low levels of education, the lack of services, and the weakness of the productive infrastructure. The great distances, isolation, and difficulty of access increase the cost and delay the execution of infrastructural works and the provision of services. Moreover, the structural changes that have occurred in agriculture in general have had negative effects on peasants.

The processes of modernization profoundly transformed the structure of agriculture: the latifundia/minifundia complex disappeared and was replaced by large and medium-sized modern enterprises. This type of enterprise, generally speaking, changes the way in which the factors of production are used: it reduces size, invests in technology and changes the nature of the

relationship with labour from permanent employment with residence on the farm to temporary employment with residence away from the farm. Those who previously resided on the farms (lessees, sharecroppers, tenant farmers and others), were excluded from ownership of land and from the haciendas, becoming "free", wage-earning workers. The displaced peasants have given rise to new communities in places with no agricultural potential, creating new villages and small towns, or settling on the peripheries of existing towns, villages and cities. These new urban communities provide the seasonal (or temporary) labour force. Between the 1940s and the 1970s (the current trend is not known), migration significantly reduced the rural population and the economically active agricultural population, and had significant effects at the ideological level on union and political movements in the rural sector. Moreover, the least mobilized third of the population that was least endowed with resources remained in the rural sector, comprising an older and less educated economically active population, and a population that began to believe more in individual betterment, through a change in occupation either for themselves or for their children, rather than in mobilization to assert collective grievances (Durstun, 1983). It is also asserted that in the rural areas, grass-roots protests began to be centered on the cost of living and on public services, rather than on access to land or the conditions of employment (Flora, 1986, p. 248).

What has been said here so far about the current importance of the rural sector is complemented by more recent data. These show a halt to the trend observed in the economically active population, which has begun to increase (Schejtman, 1987), and a tendency towards retaining the population instead of driving it away. Moreover, a fundamental role has been assigned in the region to the rural population and to the peasant sector in food security. Furthermore, the sector has acquired the capacity to press demands for greater well-being and more resources, which would tend to reduce the differences between the urban and rural sectors. The rural sector has thus emerged as a new protagonist, hence the interest in more fully exploring it in this document and in particular in exploring the role of rural women in this protagonism.

## 2. Rural women: creole and indigenous peasants

Rural women in the region present a dichotomy not only in relation to the predominant agricultural economic system but also in relation to their ethnicity. In the first case, a distinction should be drawn between the advanced capitalist sectors of the agricultural economy on the one hand and the peasant economies on the other; and in the second, between the creole peasantry of hispanic and early mestizo origin, in areas where old inherited lands had been subdivided, and the indigenous peasantry, living in their original native communities, and subject to processes of acculturation of varying intensity.

Rural women or women resident in the countryside are housewives, small businesswomen, workers employed in non-agricultural occupations in the cities, temporary workers and peasants. Peasants here refers to those people resident in rural areas and living from the agricultural output of their family group, produced by their own and their family's labour.

a) The creole peasantry

The creole peasantry of Ibero-American origin (hereinafter, "the peasantry") is the syncretic product of the racial intermixture and processes of transculturation of four centuries. Like the male members of their families, they too have inherited both the Spanish and native agricultural tradition, which can be seen from their agricultural systems (techniques of tilling, cattle management, irrigation, and management of non-renewable physical resources) and from their cultural traditions, reflected in food habits, generic and social roles, culture and world view (Aranda and Olavarria, 1988). There are approximately 40 million rural women living in poor households since two thirds of all rural households are poor. Women who are heads of households (with differences according to the region) account for between 20% and up to 25% of all rural women.

The place of rural women within the social hierarchy and in production, particularly in the cases of the "peasant economies", has been inherited or determined by men. This role rarely corresponds to that of a woman who directly manages an agricultural farm, except in the cases of women who are heads of families on account of the absence or migration of the male head of household, or of single women not living in a legal or consensual union with a man.

Since the 1970s, and thanks to the studies which have been carried out mainly by women researchers interested in the subject of women, more light has been shed on the various relevant aspects of the situation of rural women in Latin America. The style of much of the research of this period has been determined by a debate which is even now very heated, on the treatment of the category of economically active persons in censuses, and by the observation that rural women themselves deny their activities in agricultural production and in the generation of income in the urban and rural sectors. This research was aimed primarily at raising the profile of rural women. In addition, and with a view to highlighting the role of women as producers and procreators of the labour force of the different social strata, of the various social classes and of the society itself, it set out to study in detail their domestic roles, the number of hours which they worked and the diversity of their functions. (Thereby challenging at the same time the placing of housewives among the "inactive" population.) In almost all cases an attempt has been made to measure and evaluate the time devoted to household chores each day, the daily and seasonal time devoted to productive work, incomes and wages and salaries earned from activities on and off farms, and the proportion of the income of the couple or family group which such earnings represent.

b) Indigenous rural women

There are approximately 13 million indigenous rural women, living mainly in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico. They have not been the subject of studies which focus particularly on their situation as peasants and their insertion into national life. At least three different groups may be distinguished: a) indigenous peasant women of the valleys and mountains; b) high plateau shepherdesses, and c) indigenous women living in tribal communities. The largest body of information exists on the first group, so

that some knowledge is available of the division of labour and the relationship between the roles within couples. This relationship appears to be quite egalitarian since the Andean way of thinking neither compartmentalizes nor establishes hierarchies and (...) conceives of reality as comprising complementary opposites. This view is also to be found in the culture of the Mapuche indians (Condori, Michaux and Montecinos, 1987; Escalante, 1987; Rostoroswsky, undated; Aparicio, 1987, and Montecino, 1984). While less is known about the second group, it would appear that they too conceive of their duties as being complementary to those of the men.

Indigenous women are participants in the societies to which they belong and are protected by the community as a whole. Most families in peasant communities are complex and of the extended type and in the Peruvian Andes women are usually the de facto heads of households in view of the high absenteeism (daily, weekly and seasonal) of the men, for reasons of work. In such cases, women are well inserted into the national society, through the labour market and through commerce.

The situation of shepherdesses in the high altitude regions appears to be different, but reliable information on them is not available. The relationship among women from tribal organizations is one of great equality, which is destroyed when they become inserted into national societies. Contact with the "outside world" is maintained by the men and the "whites" deal with the men in all economic matters. This isolates and weakens the position of the women, makes them feel inferior to the men and has a very negative impact on their sense of self-worth measured against the external values which contrast so strongly with their ancestral modes of behaviour (Rehnfeldt, 1987). In general indigenous women resent the opening up of community organizations or "closed communities" (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1977) and the tribal organizations (Olazar, 1987, and Rehnfeldt, 1987). They are aware that they are uncultured, ignorant of Spanish and "de-humanized by maternity" (Anderson, 1982).

High illiteracy rates, low educational levels and monolingualism prevent indigenous women from participating in their national societies. The interaction between indigenous men and external agents, the national society and the power centres forces them to learn Spanish, and families accord them priority access to education. Moreover, it is felt that by keeping women ignorant of the external culture they will maintain the traditions of the ethnic group. These circumstances all combine to enhance the male role to the detriment of the female.

It should be noted, finally, that significant differences exist among the indigenous groups themselves. Whether in open or closed communities, they exhibit a great diversity of cultures, roles and degrees of insertion in the wider society. Objective information in this regard is scant and this subject is considered as being open to future research.

### 3. Peasant survival strategies

The peasant family, the economic unit of agricultural production and of biological and social reproduction, mobilizes all its members, organizing the productive resources of the land and the labour force of the group in what has

been referred to as survival or reproduction strategies. These not only refer to the productive aspects but cover all aspects of life: application of patterns of procreation (age of the parties to the union, number and spacing of children); agreements on the management of income; allocation of tasks; decisions on the migration of any member of the group, inter alia (ECLAC, 1984b). Against this background, the activities of creole and indigenous women in different situations will be examined below: those working at home, those engaged in productive agricultural work for subsistence; those producing for the market and those hiring out their labour. The data obtained from qualitative research are used since census information is not adequate for this purpose.

a) Work in the home

As is well known, this subject has been an important one in the feminist debate. A series of aspects has been discussed, ranging from the historical origins of the responsibility of women for work in the home to the classification of housewives as "inactive" in censuses, when in fact they work between 14 and 18 hours each day. Reference has also been made to the lack of social recognition for a function which not only biologically reproduces species, but also permanently maintains and replenishes the labour force thus helping to keep wages and salaries low since if this task were not performed by housewives it would have to be paid for on the labour market. There is also debate on the economic value of the output produced by women for consumption in the home, as opposed to the exchange or market value of goods which can be sold for money and which traditionally have been produced mainly by men.

The concept of work in the home covers tasks that include not only the daily preparation of meals, taking care of children and of family members who are ill, the raising and social education of children, making and upkeeping clothing and cleaning, but also others which since they are performed within the home, are considered "housework" as well. The latter include caring for small animals, fetching drinking water and firewood, preparing and maintaining a kitchen garden, cleaning seeds and grains, plaiting bunches of garlic and onions, plaiting or weaving fibers, and making handicraft. For the rural sector the proposal has thus been made to use the term "extended domestic work" (Aranda, 1982). The number of working hours required depends on the number and ages of the children, as well as on the eating habits and the degree of self-sufficiency of the family.

b) The productive agricultural work of peasant women

1) The creole peasant

The extent of the participation of women in the agricultural activities of the family enterprise depends not only on the family structure and on the social class, but also on the cultural tradition in agriculture and on the pattern of crops. For example, in the cultivation of cereals in the European tradition, using a plow and draft animals, there is little participation by women: originally, the remoteness of the plots cultivated made it more difficult to reconcile their participation in such work with their taking care

of small children, and there was less need for their work. This reduced them to performing mainly household chores with the result being that household work gradually lost its social recognition (Mead, 1981 and Blumberg, 1981). While with these methods of cultivation women do not participate in the management of the agricultural enterprises in general nor, consequently, in the decisions on planting, they do participate in the management of the harvested products (grains and root crops) and in their sale.

The participation of women in farming and other activities is often restricted by cultural attitudes which are unjustifiable in view of the real need for their collaboration. After planting, the tasks in which women participate most frequently are cleaning or the removal of weeds, and harvesting by hand, "breaking" maize, "cutting" beans or green peas, etc. (Aranda, 1982); in other words, in manual tasks which require the use of small implements. Women are excluded from the use of large implements and from knowledge of modern machines. Their participation in agriculture varies between 19% and 35% in Latin America and may be as high as 54% in the Caribbean (FAO, November 1983). Extension services and external public and non-governmental agents conceive of women as occupying roles of secondary importance in agriculture and no provision is therefore made for them in the granting of credits, in training programmes and in access to land.

The great influence of culture can be seen in the management of heavy livestock in which women are excluded from such activities as transhumance, branding, castrating, vaccinating, *inter alia*. In cattle raising women work in dairy barns producing milk and cheese. They are responsible for tending to small animals and poultry.

Women's participation in agricultural production is influenced by internal family considerations: number and ages of children, presence of other adults, type of crop farm (small plot, peasant holding, commercial operation), duration of the migratory periods of the husband, and assumption of responsibility for the home, temporarily or permanently, by the woman. In the case of the temporary migration of the husband, the wife assumes responsibility for the basic subsistence crops. In some countries she takes charge of the kitchen garden, a small plot of land on which she produces vegetables and seasoning herbs for daily consumption. Medium and large-sized farms impose other duties, such as the preparation of meals, which increases by 38% the number of days worked by women (Deere, 1978).

#### ii) Indigenous women peasants

Unlike societies with a hispanic tradition in which, except in situations of extreme poverty, abandonment or widowhood, the participation of women in agriculture is limited to a very few tasks, the agricultural system in the Andean region is conceived as an activity in which men and women complement each other. In some cases it has been observed that 90% of the women participate directly in agricultural tasks (Campeña, undated). Carmen D. Deere and M. León (1982) speak of a "technical division of labour", and Cornejo (1982) states that women participate in the productive process from beginning to end. This is due to the cultural practices in agriculture which follow the American tradition, in that they are based on the use of manual implements that are variants of the "coa" or sharpened stick, which the women use instead

of hoes, resulting in a high level of participation by women in tilling activities on the farms, to which they go with their children.

During planting, the men break the ground while the women break up the clumps of earth into little pieces, plant the seed and cover it. Both men and women water, remove weeds, harvest the crop and take it to the "marka" or storeroom (Cornejo, 1982). In tribal communities in Paraguay (Prieto, 1987; Olazar, 1987 and Rehnfeldt, 1987) there is a marked division of labour in the itinerant cultivation of tropical forests based on the systems of "slashing, burning and clearing" the land. The men are responsible for cutting the trees, burning and working the land, as well as for the planting of corn, rice, tobacco and other similar crops. Women have responsibility for growing potatoes, peanuts, cotton and "yruku" (a plant used for painting the body). The cultural reasons for such specialization by sex are not known but it may be assumed to be based on the greater risk and effort involved in the tasks which the men have selected for themselves. Men and women together collect honey, sew clothes, plant beans, manioc and sugar cane, collect wild fruits, carry loads, cook and take care of domestic animals (pigs, hens and ducks); they also participate together and on an equal footing in raising and educating children, in religious activities, in medical practices and in the institutionalized social life (Prieto, 1987).

c) Production for marketing and handicraft

Creole rural women have responsibility for the day-to-day maintenance of their family, and, rather than resorting to the hiring out of their labour on the formal or informal labour market, prefer to perform various tasks at home to bring in income. These include activities related to the raising of small animals (poultry, pigs, goats); the production of handicraft, needlework and fabrics, and the occasional sale of services such as clotheswashing, domestic help and caring for the sick. These activities are in addition to their daily household chores and to their participation in growing crops for the use of the family.

The income generated from these activities are considered by the women to be theirs, and they use it to meet the daily expenses of the home and the cost of schooling the children. Such income is usually regular, unlike the income of the peasant (except he is a wage-earner), which is received in a lump sum, from the proceeds of his crop or from the sale of some animal. It is said that such income, as well as the income of female agricultural workers, provides the food for rural households and that infant nutrition is much more closely related to the increase in the earnings of the mother than to the increase in overall income (FAO, November 1983). It has also been claimed that one third of the cost of infant nutrition is met from the income of the women (United Nations, 1985).

Among indigenous women in open communities, daily income is obtained from their principal activity as itinerant vendors of eggs, poultry, meals which they themselves prepare, or handicraft which they themselves make.

The making of handicraft has been an activity in which women have traditionally been engaged, particularly in the indigenous communities. Until

recently it was associated with a certain autarky and conceived of as an extension of the output from work done at home; today, it is made for the market place and generates a significant portion of the family income. While it is not strictly an activity for women, there is a generic specialization depending on the type of articles produced in the region and on tradition. Ceramics and embroidery, weaving, needlework (needles, crochet hooks, bobbins, following the European tradition; looms, following the indigenous tradition) are generally the work of the women. In 75% of rural Mexican localities of less than 10 000 inhabitants, handicraft is a significant activity (Warman, 1983); when it is associated with tourist destinations, it becomes a principal activity.

Changes in the rural sectors affect artisanal activities in various ways. In some cases, the introduction of intensive crops has reduced the time devoted to handicraft making; in other cases, the technologies applied to some domestic processes, such as the preparation of tortillas (Yucatán, Mexico), facilitate the development of artisanal production.

There is much controversy over whether handicraft should be considered as a source of "alternative income", and over the proliferation of projects of this type generally financed by non-governmental bodies. The difficulties are compounded when projects are not based on an artisanal tradition, in which the quality and originality of the product has been confirmed over time. The markets at which they are aimed, the organization of work, the provision of regular income and the time devoted to this activity are some of the many aspects which should be taken into account when considering modern handicraft promoted by external agents.

#### 4. The breakup of the peasant class and the proletarianization of women

Prior to the modernization of agriculture, women were employed as wage-earners and on peasant farms. They worked as day labourers, or as milkers, cooks or domestic servants in the main dwelling of the farm. Implicit provisions were always made for women and their children in sharecropping contracts. The new feature today is the need to make these relationships explicit in direct contracts.

Changes in agriculture —which brought with them the expulsion of the resident workers, and the impoverishment of peasants on account of the scarcity of land and the low commercial value of their production— have produced two types of reactions in peasant families: the hiring out of their labour and emigration. As regards the former, women have at least two possibilities for joining the agricultural labour market: in the traditional sector, which generally produces for the domestic market, and in the modern sector, which produces for export.

##### a) The traditional labour market

Information available on this topic is limited since creole women only began to participate in agriculture after the introduction of export crops. In



areas with small holdings, there has always been a demand for labour from outside the family at times when the workload was greatest, and women resident in rural areas who worked outside their homes part of the time were contracted. Currently such women are still hired for harvesting traditional commercial crops such as lentils, beans and potatoes (in Chile, in the Central Valley). The demand is for workers for short periods of time (a few days or weeks) and contracts are verbal agreements which include no provisions for compliance with labour laws; generally they are agreements between persons known to each other. The most common form of agreement is by the unit (sacks of an agreed number of kilos, or boxes); it is therefore piecework performed manually. The part-time women employees go to the fields in groups and with their children, who help to increase the number of units harvested. Generally speaking, such work is performed by women who are mothers (single women have other preferences) and it is considered very burdensome. Women have to be in a situation of extreme poverty in order to accept such jobs which, in addition to being performed under hard conditions, deprives them of social recognition.

There have also been rural working-class women known as "peonas" at harvest time, and itinerant labour that migrates from place to place and from one crop to the other. These are women who have lost their status as peasants, rural working-class women, and very little is known about them. Fragmentary information is available on a type of woman who accompanies the "torrante" or itinerant worker. These are single women, referred to variously as "la compañera" or "el cuervo" or "el perro" (Falabella, 1970). Similar forms of recruitment and employment are encountered in the transplanting of seedbeds, harvesting of coffee, cereals and garden produce in other countries of Latin America.

The clearest example of female wage-earners employed in the agricultural sector is to be found in the "volantes", located near to São Paulo, in Brazil. These are women resident in urban areas, on the periphery of small cities, with experience of rural life and agricultural work as unremunerated family help. Seventy-five per cent of such women are employed in the coffee growing industry. More than half of them (60%) began their working lives at the age of 12. They are itinerant and migrate according to the demand for their labour. When there is no agricultural work, they hire themselves out as domestic help in the cities, and combine agricultural and urban work in order to ensure a steady income throughout the year. Another type of agricultural wage-earner is the "moradora": though a peasant, she resides in the main farm dwelling. More than half of them joined the labour force at age 11, as unpaid family help, or in the coffee growing industry (ECLAC, 1984b).

These characteristics are used here to define a type of female agricultural worker, a "rural working-class woman" in the agricultural sector, who is part of the labour force of the sector and who is needed there either because she can be paid lower wages or because during given periods no male workers are available. This type includes women from the poorest sectors of the rural areas (and also from the urban peripheries). They receive lower wages and their productivity is high in view of the prevailing system of work and the fact that the conditions sometimes permit the non-compliance with labour laws. In many cases the women in question are heads of households; when they are not, they belong to the new type of peasant households in which a

wage is not adequate to maintain the family, as is the case in the urban sector.

b) The labour market in areas of settlement

One sector that is still relatively unknown is that of the agricultural farms in those areas which have been newly settled and where the agricultural frontier is being expanded. This represents a vast area which has not been the subject of qualitative studies, probably on account of the difficulties of access. An FAO document (November 1983) termed it a third type of economy, in view of the large expanse of land involved. It is estimated that between 1950 and 1980 more than 200 million hectares were brought into production, which for some countries meant a virtual doubling of agricultural land (Costa Rica and Panama, quoted by Ortega, 1986). It is not known what this means in terms of types of labour markets, women's jobs or family organization. Little or no progress has been made since the research carried out in 1984 (ECLAC, 1984b). That study had distinguished two principal types of settlement, the first of which takes the form of processes of expanding the national or transnational capitalist agriculture, with the other being the encroachment of landless peasants on the forest, or "spontaneous settlements".

The hiring of labour takes various forms. Information is available about systems of the tenant farming or sharecropping type, based on the granting of rights to farm lands, as a means of retaining family labour on agricultural farms. Another form of hiring is through contractors, which includes the entire family group, with a high percentage of children. In Brazil, in 1970, 30% of children between the ages of 10 and 14 years were employed (Miró and Rodríguez, 1982, quoting F.H. Cardoso and G. Miller).

In the spontaneous settlements extremely unstable economies are established. Most settlers are young couples who work without machinery and with a large input of female work.

c) The labour market in the export sector

Current conditions of transport and the technical advances in cooling and refrigeration systems have opened up new markets for Latin America's export agriculture based on the commercial production of fresh products: flowers, vegetables and fruits. These are high profit, labour intensive products which have generated a specific demand for female labour; they have produced in fact a division of labour based on gender. This is due to certain characteristics which are considered peculiar to women: the first of these aspects is their highly developed motor faculties for manual activities, which is an attribute of women; the second aspect are the very characteristics of a position of subordination: submissiveness, inability to organize oneself, non-conflictual temperament and willingness to accept low wages.

In some cases, such as in the production of table grapes, it is said that the preference for contracting exclusively women is related to their manual motor faculties. Tasks such as cleaning, preparing and packing table grapes are strictly for women. The situation is the same for other tasks in fruit

farms and in the packing of other fruits of Mediterranean origin, as well as of some other types of fruits and vegetables (Aranda, 1982, Campaña and Lago, 1982, and Roldán, 1982).

In other productions, the demand for female labour is linked to the possibility of contracting them at lower wages and without complying with labour laws. This is so in the case of the cultivation of strawberries for export (Arizpe and J. Aranda, 1981); of tomatoes in Sinaloa, Mexico (Roldán, 1982); of flowers in Colombia (Medrano, 1982, and Silva, 1982), among others. This is also true of other sectors of the preserved foods industry, such as shellfish and the preparation of frozen salmon in the South of Chile, for which 70% of the labour force employed is female, according to information supplied by the Employment Economy Programme, 1988.

In addition, other activities, such as the expansion of forestry operations based on the forestation of crop land, have an indirect influence on the employment prospects of women: they abandon the land, lose their peasant status and become heads of household. In forestry developments the jobs are strictly for men and require living for long periods in camps.

All of the above indicates that it is necessary, in each case, to be aware of the specific conditions under which the capitalist expansion of agriculture takes place, since such expansion does not necessarily involve the incorporation or expulsion of female labour. Rather, depending on the specific characteristics and dynamics of production in each productive sector, the use of modern technology can result in the marginalization or incorporation of women (Lago and Olavarría, 1981). Naturally, wages and salaries, in compliance with labour laws and conditions of employment will depend on the type of enterprise in question and the suitability of female labour to such enterprises.

The first type of enterprise are those that are found in the fruit production sector of Chile. Wage-earning women employed in agriculture are from both rural and urban areas, but in the latter case, from small and medium-sized towns or from rural villages. The women recruited are young, between the ages of 15 and 24, mostly single, or married women whose children are old enough to take care of themselves or who are entrusted to the care of an older sister.

These women are from semi-working class homes in rural areas or from working-class homes. Even students from lower middle class homes in the urban areas work as packers during school vacations. Apart from the need for an income, other factors such as marital status, number of children, their ages, distance, place and type of work, also influence the decision of women to enter the labour market. Women may be employed in the actual growing of the crops or in the agro-industrial installations (packers).

#### 1) Growing crops

The tasks in which women participate are generally of short duration (a little over 20 days per year). The same persons work at each of the various tasks, which are staggered over time. The annual average work in the vineyards is three months five days, which may be compared to the average of from one to

two months in the coffee plantations in Brazil and Colombia, working in different degrees of shade. The main tasks are pruning, trimming, and tending the roots, all of which tasks require great care. The work is done in the field, plant by plant, root by root (as in the case of kiwis). They also tie vines in the vineyards, although this is not the exclusive task of women.

In the cultivation of flowers for export in Colombia, over 70% of the labour employed is female. These women are from impoverished rural areas, or from nearby cities, where they worked before as waitresses in bars and restaurants. Half of them are married and 20% are heads of households. Some of them lease a plot of land to grow vegetables. They are paid the legal wages but complain mainly about the double and triple workdays.

#### ii) Working as packers

As regards the task of selecting and packing products for export, the example has been selected of the women packers in Chile, whose numbers have increased dramatically during the present decade. This is by far the most highly paid job to which women have access in the agricultural sector or outside of it. In the preparation of table grapes, they work in the packing plants which are huge sheds in which they clean, select and pack the fruit. The main female jobs are cleaning, which refers to the removal of substandard produce; the selection of the bunch according to the destination (domestic or external market); and packaging. The latter involves wrapping each bunch in paper without touching it and fitting the bunches into the boxes. These are tasks that require great manual dexterity. Cleaning and packaging have different norms of payment. They are based on the "box" of approximately seven kilos; the minimum norm is between 40 and 50 boxes per day of cleaned and selected bunches. Meeting this requirement earns for the worker approximately US\$3 per day (in 1980 dollars), which is comparable to the payment for a day's work in the agricultural sector in the area. During the harvest, packaging proceeds more rapidly; fulfilling the requirement earns the worker twice what she would earn for cleaning, since 160 boxes per day are packed. The possibility of earning more depends on whether the woman herself chooses to work during special hours, which enables the fastest of them to earn approximately US\$150 per month. They work an average of three months. These are generally the same women who work for three further months in the vineyards. They try to work throughout the year in different activities (sewing, needlework, selling services), but only 27.3% of the women surveyed managed to do so. None of them has permanent employment, which is very scarce and is found mainly in the administrative sector (see table 2 of the annex). In addition, they all perform the household chores, without help from their husbands since, in spite of the significant contribution of women to the family income, tradition also imposes on them "their natural functions". In consequence, during the evening they cook and do the washing, and at weekends they sew; the other household chores are performed by the eldest daughter.

None of the activities listed is identified in national censuses, and the information made available from case studies is very limited. It is estimated that 40% of coffee harvesters in Colombia are women; 70% of the labour force employed in the growing of fruit for export in Chile is female; between 80 000 and 90 000 women in Mexico are employed in the cultivation of garden produce for export (Roldán, 1982); 100 000 women are employed in the growing of strawberries (Arizpe and Aranda, 1981).

## II. DOMESTIC MIGRATION, FEMALE RURAL MIGRANTS AND THEIR INSERTION WITHIN THE URBAN LABOUR MARKET

Domestic migration from the countryside to cities has been one of the most striking processes in Latin America in recent decades. It began in the 1940s: the face of cities changed, they grew disproportionately and makeshift settlements, lacking basic services sprang up on their outskirts as a result of land seizures or spontaneous urbanizations. It is now realized that this growth was attributable to immigration rather than to natural population growth. In countries such as Venezuela (71%), Colombia (68%), the Dominican Republic (65%), Nicaragua (65%) and El Salvador (54%) more than 50% of urban growth is the result of migration from the countryside to cities (Elton, 1978).

The countryside has been virtually emptied by the play of the so-called expulsion factors. These may be factors of change, arising from the introduction of capitalist production relations in the countryside, which lead to expropriations of peasants, the expulsion of dependents who were not family members, of sharecroppers and of other tenant farmers; they may also be factors of stagnation, such as the growing population pressure on areas limited by physical restrictions (Singer, 1975). These have been at the root of the disintegration of peasant subsistence economies and of indigenous communities, and also account for the pressure on the land in areas of minifundio agriculture. They basically correspond to the phenomenon of rural poverty, the impossibility of maintaining the whole of the family group and the need for resources from outside the countryside, which combine to make emigration a necessity.

### 1. Female rural migrants

Between 1940 and 1970 a predominance of women and above all young single women between the ages of 10 and 24 was observed among migrants. According to the available data, 3.8 million women migrated to Mexico City between 1950 and 1970 (Arizpe, 1981). This accounts for the higher sex ratios in rural than in urban areas. Within the family group, the order of birth is decisive in the migratory trend. One of every two migrants is the oldest daughter. Daughters born into large families of over six children also migrate earlier, between the ages of 13 and 17.

Migration reflects decisions taken in connection with family survival strategies, and, depending on the economic status and size of the family group, acquires a certain logic and organization over time. Young maintains

that there is a correlation between the degree of poverty and the patterns of selectivity in rural emigration in Oaxaca. The first to emigrate is a young male in order to send sums of money back to his family; if the family continues its decline into poverty, the households send their children and particularly their daughters off at an early age in order to avoid having to maintain them (quoted by Arizpe, 1981). In Arizpe's study on migrants to Mexico City, it was determined that in the early decades migration had been determined by other factors: education and social mobility. Those who migrated were middle and high-income families. In recent decades, the migrants have been impoverished peasants. A system of "relay migration" was set up, whereby the migrant father was gradually replaced by his sons and daughters who took his place strictly by order of age; the eldest daughters of families migrated between the ages of nine and 15. The younger and youngest daughters migrated at a higher age and for other reasons, generally in order to pursue their education, as the remittances sent by their elder brothers and sisters were used in order to allow the younger children to receive an education (Arizpe, 1981).

A number of studies have indicated that fertility patterns undergo a change in migrants. Generally speaking, lower fertility rates have been recorded, a factor which has probably helped to account for the lower birth rates (Elizaga, 1970; Castro and others, 1978, quoted by Crumett, 1987; Noordam, 1978; Lee, 1986, and others). However, the results of data gathered in Peru are quite the opposite (Crumett, 1987). In respect of levels of education, it has been observed that female migrants have lower levels of education than women born in cities, and also than male migrants.

Although no recent data are available regarding domestic migration, it is recognized that the flow towards cities continues, albeit at a slower rate. It is assumed that on account of the crisis and of the high rates of urban unemployment, the populations of working age remain in rural areas, which thus become areas of refuge. Census data in confirmation of this only exists for Peru and Argentina. In Chile, partial data points to the same trend, although no net census balances have been drawn up as the last census was taken in 1982, and the new census required to make a comparison will be held in 1992.

It is also assumed that the destinations of migratory flows have gradually changed; in the early decades migration was to capital cities, while more recently, it has been to medium-sized cities and to areas of colonization.

A third assumption in respect of migration concerns the increase in seasonal, mainly female mobility, which would tend to confirm the above remarks regarding the increase in seasonal female workers.

The foregoing allows us to assert, together with Warman (1987, p. 10), that "we have much to learn in respect of migration ... only recently have we begun to realize the complexity of the flows of people, money and goods, ideas and professions in all directions". At the very least, it is necessary to update data on domestic migrations within countries, to determine the direction of migratory flows and to identify the trends. In addition to its huge implications in respect of the population, the economy and culture, domestic migration may be viewed as a continuum in space, time and in

occupations. As women move from a rural to an urban environment, they leave the countryside for medium-sized cities and move from there to capital cities. As far as time and occupations are concerned, daily migrations seem to concern travelling traders; weekly or monthly ones, female seasonal workers while domestic employees or servants migrate on a semi-permanent basis. The most permanent form of migration is found among prostitutes of rural origin, who tend to be swallowed up by the city and to cut all ties with their area of origin, although initially they maintain links by sending sums of money to their family.

Emigration is to be found both among creole peasants and among indigenous ones, although it has been more pronounced among the former. In Peru and Paraguay the process was delayed by at least two decades (Elton, 1978), a fact which is apparently attributable to personal and community strategies, which delayed the departure of women by allowing them to earn complementary income from activities such as craftwork and itinerant trading.

The forms taken by migration differ from one ethnic group to another. Apparently in the case of the Mazahuas and Otomies, the whole family group migrates and it is the man who decides what activity the woman is to pursue, in contrast with female migrants who travel alone to cities to take up domestic work and a specific job (Arizpe, 1975). The latter maintain their ties with the rural sector and place of origin by various means; trips, once or several times a year, for harvests and festivals; remittances of money, and the maintenance of links and strategies based on family ties, thanks to which relatives take in children who are studying in the city but who live in the countryside, who travel to the city to examine the work prospects for their family or simply to visit.

International emigration is a significant means of seeking labour markets in Mexico, Colombia and Paraguay. The respective destinations are the United States, Venezuela and Argentina. The women who migrate are aged between 15 and 49 and are either married or living in a consensual union, with low educational levels (CELADE, 1987). Such migration clearly concerns family groups, and the women take their place in the tertiary sector, in domestic service (CELADE, 1987). However, international migration has a smaller impact than domestic migration. Another form of international migration is attributable to situations of internal violence or armed struggle, or to States governed by authoritarian régimes.

## 2. Descriptions of some urban women in the informal sector

Women in low-income groups actively participate in maintaining their home, by means of domestic work and the production of clothes, textiles and meals, either for their own account or in the countless minor occupations in the visible or invisible informal sector. They are predominantly engaged in itinerant work or in non-resident domestic service, which falls within the informal sector.

Four of these occupations are of interest for the purposes of this paper. They are either the most recent, or those in which inequality and discrimination are most flagrant: itinerant women traders, domestic employees

or workers providing personal services, child and juvenile prostitutes and workers in subcontracting assembly plants.

a) Street traders

This is a characteristic occupation in the informal sector and is carried out by indigenous women who travel from rural to urban areas, in towns, cities or capital cities. Its presence is so apparent that as far back as 1977 it was proposed as an occupational category by Arriagada, on the basis of several anthropological studies. Arizpe (1975) adopts the terms "Las Marias" or "Las Juanas", when referring to the Mazahuas and Otomies in Mexico City. He also studied them among the peasants of Toxi and of Dotejiare (Arizpe, 1978). Recently, Bunster and Chaney studied them in Peru (1985).

Andean peasant women seem to typify rural traders. They sell their own production on short daily trips, or act as intermediaries, travelling for longer periods, in fairs or selling from door to door. They sell their own surplus agricultural production, meals prepared at home, poultry, eggs or craft items.

The Mazahuas and Otomies emerged in Mexico City towards the end of the 1960s as a result of the breakdown of the communal lands in their places of origin. They settled there apart from the remainder of the urban population, in tight-knit groups where they maintain their communal way of life; these groups clearly stand apart from the surrounding urban population. Their isolation makes it difficult to improve their economic status. The only possible economic activity for wives is that of traders, as they have received neither an education nor professional training, and some of them do not even speak Spanish. Furthermore, if they have children it is difficult for them to find domestic employment, whereas they are able to set themselves up on the streets, with their children, as traders.

The same situation was observed in Lima (Bunster and Chaney, 1985). Rural migrant women who arrive alone and enter domestic service change their job after having a first or second child, and become street traders in the city.

The existence of indigenous or mestizo pockets within cities, as well as their influence on the neighbouring urban sectors have been described both by Aníbal Quijano, who gave an account of the "cholización" (indianization) of Lima, and by José Mattos Mar, who used the term "serranización". Some of these features were also described by Andrew Pearse in Brazil, in his study of favelas.

As already observed, towards the 1970s Mazahua and Otomí traders of rural origin emerged in Mexico City, although they had only recently arrived there. The former specialized in the sale of fresh fruit, and are known as "Marias". The Otomies --known as "Juanas"-- sell seeds and pips. Two other groups are made up of peasants from Querétaro and Nahuas; the first sell chewing gum and beg, the second sell either fruit or seeds. They are generally monolingual (Arizpe, 1975). State-sponsored attempts were made to organize the "Marias", and one of the first tasks undertaken was to teach them Spanish, as monolingualism is the main hurdle to their integration into national society.



Another type of rural trade is to be found, carried out through middlemen, and covering the products of local people and small producers in general. It involves distinct strategies, as the women are absent for long periods at a time and leave their home, children and domestic livestock, generally under the responsibility of their eldest daughter. Trade occupies as many as 58.3% of women in the Sierra (Campaña, 1981) while according to Villalobos (1977), the figure fluctuates between 44% and 84% in other sectors of the Sierra. In both cases trade constitutes the main activity of women and domestic tasks are considered to be of secondary importance. In the households concerned the husbands are also absent on account of seasonal migrations.

In the Caribbean, examples of female intermediaries are to be found in the "Madame Saras" known as "revendeuses", in Haiti and mentioned by Arizpe (1981).

Traders engaged in a more firmly established type of trade and who possess stalls on markets or in fairs and who carry out transactions of greater scale involving more capital also ought to be included in this category. These include the Aymará traders, the "chola" in Bolivia and "Tehuana" in Mexico. The latter is to be found both in street trading and in formal trade. In addition, the "cholas" are involved in what has come to be known as "el tráfico de las hormigas" (the ant trade): they move around in frontier zones, selling food or other articles. Nowadays their trade even includes complex electronic items.

#### b) Private domestic employees or servants

There are three factors whose combination is of particular interest and which account for the decision to devote attention to this occupation: i) the rural origin of those involved; ii) the fact that it is the occupational group employing the largest number of women and iii) the difficulty of classifying them within either the formal or informal sectors, on account of the nature of the work.

Several qualitative studies bear out the assertion as to the rural origin of domestic employees (Arizpe in Mexico, 1981; Castro, 1982; León in Bogotá, 1984; Gálvez and Todaro in Santiago, 1984, to quote but a few). A study carried out in Bogotá indicates that 85% of "resident" domestic employees in 1977 were rural migrants. They were also extremely young migrants, 47% of whom were between the ages of 12 and 19. Szretter (quoted by Castro, 1982) asserts that between 1969 and 1970 52% of domestic employees in Lima were minors. The combination of recent rural emigration, youth and resident domestic employment is understandable: for a single peasant girl, who has nowhere to live, it seems extremely advantageous to be able to live at her place of work. Occasionally this situation makes it possible to avoid paying them any wages. In such cases, the situation is not recorded by the census, as they are classified as "unpaid family workers".

The situation of domestic employees once again confirms the existence of links between the rural and the urban environments. These workers contribute a labour force from rural areas to the city and also communicate and transfer a set of values. They have been responsible for a considerable proportion of the

primary socialization of generations of middle and upper-class children in towns. The flows from the urban to the rural sector are composed of money in the form of remittances or postal transfers, as well as of goods and clothing. According to León (1984), when immigrants live in their employer's house they at one and the same time suffer processes of transculturation and acquire the class values of their employers.

A second reason for devoting attention to this type of occupation lies in the fact that workers providing personal services are the majority group in the economically active female population, and are principally composed of domestic employees. Their proportion thereof fell markedly between 1960 and 1980 and declined from over 37% of the economically active population in some countries in 1960 to a maximum of 22.9% in 1980.

A number of difficulties arise in censuses, and also among researchers, as to where to place "resident" domestic employees. To grasp this, it is necessary to recall the characteristics of this occupation, which is based on what is assumed to be a "natural" disposition of women towards domestic tasks; it is also noted that the work is carried out within another home, and involves sharing the life of an alien family. It is also perceived as a semi-feudal occupation, as it involves the employee's time and person being available without restriction, as this forms part of the service. It is also pointed out that the services produced are not bought and sold on the market, and that living with another family involves the coexistence within the same space of the employers (who are within their own home), and of the employee, for whom the home in question is a place of work (Gálvez and Todaro, 1984). Furthermore, domestic employees are distinct from other wage-earners in that their wage is partly paid in cash and partly in kind (the value of food and lodging is calculated). In actual fact they are subject to special distinct provisions in the labour codes of different countries.

The modernization of domestic service and the changeover from "resident" to "non-resident" employees has become generalized in the most developed countries in the region. In 1980, in Greater Buenos Aires, 77% of employees were "non-resident"; the figure for the same year in Santiago was 46%. This form of non-resident domestic work, and the fact that it is contracted for on a weekly, daily or hourly basis, means that this group lacks a clearly defined employer, and that many of its members are not covered by social security; consequently, they are included within the informal sector. This leads to a paradox: the more advanced the evolution in the type of work and the degree of modernization of the country, the lesser the attention devoted by statistics to the occupation, which gradually falls into the informal sector, traditionally the most backward sector of the labour market. On the contrary, the most traditional sector, resident domestic employees, is included in the formal sector.

Two remarks are necessary in respect of non-resident work. The first concerns the fluctuations apparent in its growth, which declines during economic crises. Secondly, the "non-resident" system provides greater autonomy and the possibility for the employee to have her own family, although it increases her excessive workload and entails a reduction in her actual net salary, as she is obliged to pay for the upkeep of a house and to provide food everyday. Objectively, the differences between the two situations recall those

between the tied agricultural labourer or tenant farmer and the "free" wage-earning agricultural labourer.

c) Child or juvenile prostitutes

Little data is available on this occupation. It naturally falls within the informal sector and is one of those occupations which are undeclared in surveys and which have been classified as "visible informal" (ECLAC, 1987). Traditionally, the activity belongs to the lowest social sectors and is carried out by rural migrants. On account of the economic crisis the number of women involved in prostitution has risen, although researchers have not yet directed their attention to the subject. A project exists in Chile to investigate the topic. At the beginning of the 1980s and on account of the crisis, the problem came to the forefront as a result of revelations by members of the Church regarding the number and age of child prostitutes.

The research data were obtained from a sample of girls between the ages of 11 and 17, and revealed the involvement of huge numbers of girls and adolescents in prostitution as a means of survival. "Historically associated with vagrancy, child prostitution has nowadays extended beyond this sphere and spread to sectors of the settled population" (Vidal, 1987). The girls involved are from homes affected by extreme poverty, i.e., incapable of meeting their basic needs, and are thereby thrust onto the informal labour market, as they lack any education or skill. "A high proportion of these adolescents abandon school, a fact which is attributable to their inability to pay for studies, with the need to repeat a school year, with the need to take on domestic responsibilities (caring for small brothers and sisters)" (Vidal, 1987, p. 4).

Previously, those who went into prostitution were generally young peasant girls, who entered a brothel or hotel. Their families were unaware of their activities, and the source of their earnings was kept hidden. Nowadays, circumstances have changed: prostitution is just one more activity carried out by a family in order to survive. The young girl takes on the role of provider for her family's economic needs with the full knowledge of her parents, a fact which further aggravates the deterioration of the family structure in terms of authority, ethical principles and models (Vidal, 1987, quotes Sandoval, 1987, Skewes, undated, Terrazas, 1982, Vicaría Pastoral Juvenil, 1985, and Vives, undated).

As far as the rest of Latin America is concerned, data on the topic are provided by the data centre of Isis International. They confirm that young girls involved in prostitution still come from rural areas and small provincial towns, and have a low level of education. In Mexico, 44% of them have received less than three years basic education; in Quito, they have received a few years schooling and even occasionally full basic education (Vidales, 1977). A considerable number of them are minors. In Quito approximately 80% have gone into prostitution as a result of economic circumstances, compulsion or having been abandoned (Cuadernos de la Mujer No. 2).

It is believed that one of the five international flows of prostitution leaves Latin America through Puerto Rico to the Mediterranean part of Europe

and the Middle-East (Barry, 1983). Others exist between the Caribbean and Curaçao, where a camp exists close to military installations. Another current exists in the north of Mexico, connected with a number of transnational tourist firms.

d) From the "subcontracting assembly plant" to home workers

i) The subcontracting plant

The convergence of two types of policies, one of which originated in the central countries and the other in the periphery, has helped to promote a new type of occupation, various forms, within either the sector of informal or formal work. This is the subcontracting assembly plant and its workers. From the angle of transnational corporations, such plants correspond to the "decentralization of production" which involves transferring part of their production to countries offering better terms for their installation, and in particular, lower labour costs. As far as the countries of the region are concerned, the introduction of subcontracting assembly work corresponds to policies for industrial production for export, or to the search for foreign investment, apparent as from the 1960s. Foreign investment in industrial plants is encouraged by an unrestricted supply of cheap unskilled or semi-skilled labour, by high levels of productivity and by a docile labour force, as well as by the reduction or elimination of tariffs and other facilities. "The trend seems to involve an effort to promote foreign investment by minimizing national frontiers and allowing the market mechanisms to operate unhampered" (Safa, 1982, p. 107). Generally speaking, the industries involved are those which make intensive use of labour, such as clothing, textiles, food processing and more recently electronics. In the past, female labour has been preferred by these industries, as it is cheaper and considered to be more obedient.

An excellent illustration of this situation is to be found in Mexico. In the 1960s the "industrial border programme" was initiated, with the objective of discouraging the migration of workers to the United States and of creating employment in a region where unemployment was high. Preference was given to the installation of electronic assembly plants, depending on transnational corporations, in the form of subsidiaries or subcontractors. In 1985 700 factories were set up and 200 thousand jobs created, 80% of the labour force being women. In Juárez 180 factories were established in 1982. The average level of education of the female workers entering these factories was five years. Seventy five per cent of them are from other regions; 50% are the sole breadwinner of their family, and 43% are single mothers. They begin to work between the ages of 16 and 25, and one out of three is a head of household. As far as their work is concerned, they are under temporary contract and are periodically sacked in order to avoid granting them the social rights due to a permanent worker. The form of work adopted is piecework (Arizpe, 1978; Fernández, 1982; Safa, 1982 and Yudelman, 1987). This situation has also been studied in Jamaica, and Safa quotes several authors in this respect.

ii) The home worker

The various types of home worker represent the counterpart to the maquilador firms described above. The essential aim of these industries is also to avoid paying the benefits which permanent workers in the formal sector have won for themselves. The trend towards the decentralization of production is repeated in manufacturing and in national trade, and may concern independent industries or ones connected to transnational corporations.

In the case of national industries, the women's own home is their work place, a circumstance which is justified by an excess supply of labour in homes. This form of work has been observed in the footwear industry in Colombia and in Uruguay (Prates, 1984). In Uruguay, it is also to be found in the clothing, textile and other industries (Arizpe, from Taglioretti), and is also found in Brazil and Chile. It is probably extremely widespread throughout the remainder of the region, although there is a lack of studies thereupon. This type of employment takes on a variety of forms. Generally speaking, the relationship between the firm and the home workers is managed by intermediaries, without the workers themselves, in most cases, being aware of the final destination of their work. The middlemen are themselves subcontracted and also operate using home work, including putting out jobs. They set up small, possibly clandestine, workshops where the workers may work on a part-time basis, working overtime and weekends at home, or alternatively full time. As mentioned above, various forms may be found: Prates (1984) distinguished at least five types of possible combination between the firm, the workshops and the home workers.

There are sharp contrasts between the Uruguayan home workers and female workers in Mexican maquilador firms. They are married women (75% of interviewees) and over 40 in 62% of cases. Sixty nine per cent of them have received full secondary education. More than half (56%) are from Montevideo while 19% are from the country's interior although they have lived for over 10 years in the capital. As far as the significance of putting out jobs is concerned, it has been estimated on the basis of declarations by entrepreneurs at between 25 and 50% of the total volume of bottoming (i.e., stitching shoe uppers to the soles). The advantages for the entrepreneurs are that they pay no social contributions, they pay women less and operate on a piecework basis: whereas a worker in a factory makes 20 pairs, an outworker makes from 32 to 50 pairs per day. It has been argued that this form of work does not necessarily represent a transitional form destined to disappear, but rather "seems to establish organized spheres of work where industrial reserve labour, mainly made up of women, is concentrated" (Prates, 1984).

The loneliness characteristic of this activity and its total lack of links with other workers accentuate the isolation of home workers and limits their possibilities of organizing themselves, not to mention the heavy workload involved in running a home, being a wife and mother in addition to working on piecework. The existence of regulations concerning home work in Uruguay is no guarantee that they will be complied with. A high percentage of women work under clandestine conditions. Prates does not suggest that there is any need for the women to work in a workshop or factory, but rather proposes that areas of communal work be established on the basis of the reality of domestic work and its most immediate context, the neighbourhood and the community (Prates, 1984).

### III. THE NEW ROLES AND SOCIAL SCENARIOS

Beyond any possible disputes over the nature and origin of the subordination and inequality of women, a new set of circumstances has revealed that women are more vulnerable than men to circumstances of equal poverty.

These have arisen from the huge incorporation of women from the low-income strata, both in rural and urban areas, into the labour market under the conditions and in the occupations described in previous chapters. Under these new circumstances, the roles of women —the traditionally female role, domestic work, and that which is inseparable from their sex, pregnancy and childbearing— come into conflict with the performance of paid work outside the home, which comes to represent a second working day. Furthermore, at the present time one out of every five women in Latin America and one out of every four in the Caribbean is the head of a household. Paid work is performed under conditions of discrimination with regard to responsibilities, workload and pay, and in addition labour legislation governing hours of work, working conditions and protection for working mothers is either not complied with or simply inexistent. All of this leads to women carrying a disproportionate burden of work and responsibility, together with a burden of domestic and social inequality, with the consequent exhaustion and psychic and physical frailty.

In response to this situation, measures have been taken on behalf of women by the State and within society at large, the latter being represented by women's organizations. The growing concern of governments with the situation of women was reflected as from the end of the 1970s in the creation of ministries, divisions or units specifically concerned with women's problems, or through legal reforms from which they benefitted. Simultaneously, a vast women's movement came into being, generally made up of middle-class, professional and intellectual women, whose influence made itself felt not only on opinion, but also in the field of knowledge and action. Women from low-income sectors have also allied themselves to the efforts of this movement. Women are not only to be found in the public sphere: for over a decade intellectual and professional women have devoted themselves to studying and advancing theories in respect of their sex, its history and determinants, and have dedicated themselves to establishing new types of women's organizations. This experience has given rise to an unprecedented body of knowledge, demands, claims and action, all of which has led to the emergence of new roles for the women of the region.

As far as research is concerned, the document has already emphasized the contribution of female researchers to knowledge of the social and economic

roles of women, a contribution which has led to greater transparency in respect of the topic and to an emphasis on woman as a specific actor. In the course of the decade figures were provided regarding the contribution of women in terms of work and income; attention was drawn to deficiencies in censuses and statistics and measures were proposed to set these right; the social roles of women were highlighted and, in general, attention was drawn to a range of different circumstances affecting women, leading to the development in recent years of a body of knowledge (ECLAC, 1984a; León and Deere, 1986; Wilson, 1986), which has already been incorporated into specialized information systems in four countries.<sup>5/</sup>

Of the new forms adopted by women's organizations, this chapter will deal with one of the most striking and frequent, that of the so-called workshops or production projects for women, primarily found within the rural sector.

### 1. Organizations financed by non-governmental organizations and income-generation projects for women

In an environment such as the rural one, where participation by women has been markedly lower than in urban areas both in trade-union organizations and in production,<sup>6/</sup> and where the paradigm of femininity has been invisibility—woman as a voiceless homemaker, observant of conventional decency—any means of legitimating forms of participation which involve women outside the home imply far-reaching changes in peasant mentalities. Their presence was first of all required by the Church, in school, and in health services; subsequently, they began to play a role in the State through clubs and mothers' centres. In this manner, rural women began to break out from their domestic mould.

A new type of action specially aimed at poor rural women and which further reinforces the changes in their social roles has been added to the calls to action described above. Its origin lies in a combination of the repercussions of various policies and measures aimed at women. The first of these is the Percy Amendment, 1983, relating to legal provisions in the United States on foreign aid. This amendment stipulates that bilateral assistance programmes should pay special attention to programmes, projects and activities designed to integrate women into the national economies of the developing countries (Flora, 1986; Stewart Carloni, 1987). A second factor is the policy adopted by the United States at the beginning of the 1980s of giving priority to approaches to development involving extensive participation by the private sector. Finally, mention should be made of the existence of a supply of "alternative" professionals, most of whom are women, which generally opens up considerable scope for action by non-governmental organizations and for the emergence of intermediate organizations.

Within this overall context, projects which aim to provide income for low-income sectors and in particular for rural women are particularly worthy of note. Generally speaking, it has been women of urban origin, belonging to alternative organizations, who have helped to set up groups of rural women in connection with agricultural projects or projects to raise poultry or rabbits, to set up organic vegetable gardens, to cultivate flowers or produce craft work, to manufacture cheese, bread and other products, in order to earn

additional income to that from the farm. These projects are characterized by their limited scope as well as by the modest funding provided by external donors, through non-governmental organizations. Their implementation involves the establishment of a structure for meetings (when no grass-roots organizations exist), or alternatively the use of already existing organizations, generally linked to the Church. Not only do they provide specific training in connection with the project, but also more general training in management, accountancy and organization. One of the major challenges faced has been that of incorporating women into spheres of secondary socialization when the sole opportunities for external contact--particularly for creole peasant women-- have been school and the Church. A project involves leaving the home, meeting with others, interacting, acquiring skills, facing criticism, organizing the family in order to be able to go out, negotiating with husbands in order to obtain the necessary free time, and other similar activities.

Only recently have these projects begun to be evaluated, and from various angles. An initial evaluation bearing on 12 years of work with women in the development of the International Development Agency (USAID) has been produced. This covers the period between 1973 and 1985, and stresses the need to focus on economic participation by women as part of a balanced development strategy. The assessment suggests that, while initially the roles and functions performed by women in the developing countries were tackled on the basis of a concern with equality, it has subsequently been possible to observe that gender differences affected all projects in terms of their long-term achievements and targets: if gender differences were not taken into account at the design stage, the projects proved to be unsuitable and failed to achieve the desired results.

The assessment emphasizes that it is not only necessary to set each project within its general context, but also, in respect of sex, essential to determine the part played by men and women in terms of roles and responsibilities. In order to grasp the factors connected with sex or gender, it is essential to identify the division of labour; access to and control over productive resources; the interests and incentives involved in the project's activities; the contribution towards the income of the domestic unit; the degree of integration of income and the responsibility born in respect of expenditure.

Another assessment which was based on a review of six experiments involving income-generation projects for women and carried out from three different angles (assistance, co-operation and development), and in three Latin American countries, makes it possible to put forward a number of recommendations for improving the results thereof: if women are to successfully exercise control over their projects, it is necessary for the projects to be designed along entrepreneurial criteria and to produce a surplus, as well as maintaining craft forms of production. They must also insert themselves within the existing division of labour in each place on the basis of sex, age and class, and take into account the other activities in which the members of each household are involved, in order to avoid upsetting distinct cultural patterns. If these projects are to effectively lead to autonomy for women and well-being for their family, control over the income produced must be in the hands of women; furthermore, the projects need to be



many sided, and not only to aim at enhancing the status of women and generating income, but also to tackle considerations of well-being. Finally, the study recommends that the characteristics of the informal sector be maintained (as regards the provision of income in the form of advance payment of wages to the members of projects), payments on work completed or other forms of payment, rather than in order to avoid decapitalizing the project and to ensure that the women do not lose interest in actively participating in the management of their firms (Flora, 1986).

Experience drawn from another income-generation project allows the following recommendations to be added to those made above: the need for a strong organizational structure; for follow-up of the projects once the external agent has left; for the provision of training for women on specific aspects, such as administration, marketing and entrepreneurial management and finally, for democratic forms of administration and management (Aranda and Olavarria, 1988).

As far as the social and economic impact of these projects is concerned, it is worth noting that although their coverage is generally limited (from 50 to 1 000 individuals), they are extremely numerous. (In Chile, in 1984, 700 economic organizations were registered for both sexes, and in Santiago and San Antonio alone approximately 100 000 women were involved in what are known as the grass-roots economic organizations.) Furthermore, they bring into being projects specifically designed for women, they apply innovative techniques, achieve a high degree of grass-roots participation and have a significant impact on families and the community, in view of which they are worthy of note. Although it is not completely clear where the future of these projects lies, they have undoubtedly helped to generate additional income, and consequently to mitigate overall poverty. It should be pointed out that this type of organization may not be measured merely in terms of its economic success, as it has other major repercussions in terms of training and secondary socialization (interacting in groups, participating in organizations), in terms of personal development and of an understanding of society. This assertion is born out by the resolutions adopted by the Training Workshop on the evaluation of income-generation projects with peasant women, organized by FAO, and by the FAO manual on the assessment of income from projects involving women, published in April 1988, which recommends that "evaluation of these projects be not merely restricted to their fulfilment of economic objectives, but should also include considerations which exemplify their social role".

On a broader plane, a debate has begun in recent years over the action of grass-roots firms and income-generation projects, as well as over their future prospects. The fundamental questions posed concern the ways of transforming them into self-sustaining organizations, independent from external agencies; how to reinforce them and provide them with permanent training; how to link them to society at large; how to present their demands to the State, and other issues. The essential question is how and why this experience is to be preserved.

## 2. Organizations: centres and networks

It is generally pointed out that women are barely present in traditional organizations, such as trade unions and political parties. However, it is not in this sphere that women's participation is best appreciated, but rather within those closest to them, and in particular to "housewives": in the parent's and guardian's associations of schools, and on committees set up to improve services such as health, water supply, lighting, markets and schools. Action by women is usually at the local level and limited to immediate concerns; they are not involved in society's political projects nor in utopian pursuits, and their concerns are generally practical, concrete and immediate. These observations hold true for women in low-income sectors, whose concern is always with subsistence.

Women in the middle- and high-income sectors have developed other forms of organization: educational, cultural, charitable. During the first half of the century, they mobilized to win the right to vote, to gain access to education and paid work, and to amend discriminatory provisions against married women in civil codes. In addition, these women have been involved in political parties, trade unions and professional organizations in urban areas.

At the present time, various forms of organization have emerged with different aims, and generally at the initiative of women themselves. During this decade middle- and high-income women, generally professionals, began to create various organizations run by and for women. Some of these consider themselves to be merely women's organizations, while others describe themselves as feminist (as defined in Bangkok in 1979).<sup>7/</sup>

A broad and diverse range of motives underlies these groups. Women in the southern cone came together in the 1970s, motivated by political circumstances, in committees or associations of relatives of people who had disappeared, committees to develop solidarity and defend human rights. Other organizations also emerged to provide training and to examine problems arising out of "gender" or sex, together with organizations which formulated demands and proposals for change on the basis of women's issues.

Feminist groups have given preference to two types of organization: the centres and networks. The main activities of the centres are the provision of services and the organization of programmes to provide help and assistance in legal matters, health, family planning, the organization of women in low-income sectors, training in various spheres or specialities, and support for the victims of domestic violence and rape as well as in other kindred areas. Data have been collected on 120 such centres (Carrillo and Mejía, 1986). They are perceived as spaces for women which have made it possible to identify needs and to put forward responses and strategies to meet them. Within them, the study and reflection groups have taken on a role for developing political awareness. In pursuit of their own action as well as in order to provide help to women in low-income sectors, these centres adopt distinct educational and psychological techniques, such as study groups, the use of graphic and audiovisual supports, videos, dramatizations and others. This form is developing rapidly.

Another more informal type of organization which provides more extensive coverage are the "networks". This is a flexible form, which simultaneously preserves the autonomy of groups, allows them to establish links by sharing information, ideas and services. They are devoted to specific activities and constitute themselves around an issue or groups of issues: health, means of communication, work, sexual slavery or prostitution and others (Karl, 1986). They work in conjunction with networks of non-governmental organizations concerned with women's organizations. The most important are: i) the Latin American and Caribbean Women's and Health Network, formed in 1984, which connects more than 300 groups working with poor women; networks in co-ordination with other international health networks such as the Global Network of Women for Reproductive Rights; ii) the Women's Alternative Communications Unit, set up to provide information and to reinforce the alternative media (González and Norero, 1985); and iii) the Grass-roots Education Network among Women of the Council for Popular Adult Education in Latin America. The latter possesses 66 centres and programmes in the region (Isis International, No. 8, 1987b).

Generally speaking, women in low-income sectors have little capacity for self-organization. They have been called upon to constitute part of State inspired grass-roots organizations, such as mothers' centres and clubs, and neighbourhood councils (made up of both sexes). Their action and involvement in the former has been limited. Notwithstanding criticism over the fact that the organizations repeated the domestic activities and orientations of women, for some of them it represented their first experience of organization and of a sphere in which they could work alongside other women. Women were also invited to join professional associations and unions run and led by men, within which they set up women's sections. The Church has tirelessly worked with women in order to ensure well-being (food, clothing), although the forms it adopts in order to group both women and young people in "youth groups" has evolved. It has developed housing projects using appropriate technologies and production projects intended for women.

### 3. Grass-roots organizations and the demands of rural women

The urban sector has generally been responsible for helping low-income rural women to train themselves, organize and put forward demands. As they were considered to be "unpaid family helpers" or, occasionally, day labourers for short periods, they had no opportunity to struggle in defence of their demands. They experienced the agrarian reform processes from their position as their husband's companion (as spouse, mother, daughter) but did not participate therein, nor was any place made for them. This situation has gradually changed as peasants have become proletarianized or emigrated and women have entered the wage-earning labour market in huge numbers. They have begun to put forward a set of demands arising out of their status as workers and housewives, the wage discrimination they face, their working conditions and other considerations. This has led to the development, during the present decade, of local, regional and national organizations. The National Federation of Women Peasants of Bolivia was set up in 1980; the National Association of Peasants and Indigenous Women in Colombia in 1984; the Puno Women's Peasant Association in 1985; the First Congress of Rural Women in Brazil in 1985 and the First National Congress of Rural Women in Chile in 1986. The Federations

of Peasant Women in Honduras, Cuba and Nicaragua were also established together with the Women's Confederation of the National Peasant Confederation of Mexico. These organizations represent milestones in peasant organization.

Under these new circumstances, the demands put forward increasingly resemble those of urban wage-earners: wage increases, hours worked, regulations on overtime, the need for nurseries and other demands. Furthermore, these developments set rural women before a different set of issues, on account of their concept of the female condition, subordination, the double working day. They experience sexual harassment at work, the impossibility of obtaining permanent employment and of earning promotion at work, together with other difficulties, thereby compelling the younger women in particular to reexamine many features of life.

As far as indigenous women are concerned, they organize themselves on the basis of their ethnic group and their main demands are connected with the loss of land by their communities or tribes as well as the disappearance of ethnic values (Paraguay, Brazil, Chile and the Andean countries). From their status as subordinates within the dominant national society, women change their gender-based demands for the demands of their ethnic group. It is observed in respect of the Mapuche people that women "have not questioned their subordinate or isolated, marginal or undervalued roles, such as that of provider of food, abducted bride, one of several wives in a polygamous union, passive in courtship, limited to the domestic environment, which she accepts and considers to be her unavoidable lot" (Zambrano, 1987, p. 87). Her personal demands have been ignored and sublimated by the demand for land and for the expulsion of the invaders from their property. From the personal angle, the Mapuche women request education and training: to learn Spanish, to read and write, as well as basic training in health.

When interviewed, Andean women's leaders stated that they had no specific demands as women and recognized themselves in none of the western alternatives, as in that culture (western culture) women had always been oppressed and isolated, which was not their case (Condori, Michaux and Montecinos, 1987).

#### 4. The demands of organized urban women

Women's participation in organizations has led to their formulating claims and demands, many of which have already been reflected in a number of United Nations documents, particularly on the occasion of the World Conference in Nairobi in 1985. Three documents, the fruit of meetings or open letters, sum up the main claims put forward by urban women.<sup>8/</sup> They cover a broad range of concerns, which may be summed up in legal measures to ensure equality and in the claim for rights in respect of reproduction and the family, work, health and education. In respect of reproduction, among other things, demands focus on the right of all women (and men, add Mexican women) to receive full information on family planning, as part of an overall sexual education, which will allow couples to subsequently decide as to the number and timing of their children; for family planning to be a basic medical service within the reach of all women regardless of their civil status, as part of mother and child-care and gynecological programmes, and for the various contraceptive

methods to be incorporated into the Social Security System with the status of basic medicines (Platform of Women's Rights, Peru).

The family rights mentioned by the Mexican specialists include protection against violence and rape, in respect of which they requested the appointment of an attorney for the Defence of Women. Other women's groups have requested hostels for maltreated women, and punishment for those who use women as sexual objects. The main labour right demanded concerns the principle of equal pay for equal work, and social security is requested for domestic employees and rural workers, together with the elimination of piecework and its replacement by a wage or salary. In Mexico the maquilador industries are rejected on the grounds that they decapitalize the country, overexploit women, lead to the breakdown of the family, cause health problems among their workers and distort the productive apparatus.

Demands are put forward for an improvement and increase in the number of nurseries in firms and in municipalities (with laundry, canteen services, etc.); for the effective right to 90 days rest prior to and following childbirth; for the establishment of institutions to assist single mothers and their children. Other preoccupations expressed concern hygiene and work safety, the adjustment of labour standards to the needs of working women and mothers. As far as health rights are concerned, a request is made for natal, post-natal and gynecological services, mobile health teams, specialized health centres, food subsidies for pregnant and nursing mothers, and others. With regard to education, demands are put forward for coeducation, the eradication of illiteracy, the elimination of images which undermine the dignity of women or contribute towards maintaining inequality, and others. Furthermore, Peruvian women add economic rights (to credit, mortgages and other forms of financial loan), rights in respect of participation, as expressed in Nairobi and in the Regional Plan of Action, together with special rights for rural women (credit, land, health, training) and other women suggest that they should be included in Agrarian Reform Plans (Brazil).

The above declarations clearly define certain central themes to the specific concerns of working women: equality before the law, respect for their image and identity, the need for job safety and stability, recognition of the situation of working and single mothers, legal protection in case of desertion, the need to view rape not as an "offence against good conduct" but as a criminal act, the need for education and training as well as solidarity with the rural sector and its specific demands, such as access to credit and land.

#### IV. FINAL REMARKS

As part of these final remarks it would seem worthwhile emphasizing first of all some points in respect of the rural sector. An attempt has been made to portray it as a dynamic sector, and to underscore the major transformations it has undergone in recent decades in respect of land ownership structures, the organization of the labour force and in production on account of modernization, agrarian reforms and changes in the orientation of production, together with the expansion of the export sector and decline in the significance of the production of staple foods.

As far as rural women are concerned, they have in turn felt the onslaught of change. For most of them, change has entailed the impoverishment of peasant economies and a breakdown in the protective patriarchal family structure. Huge numbers of women have been compelled to migrate to cities. Most of them have been single, young and unmarried women. On reaching the cities they have entered sectors of low-paid jobs, with no prospects of mobility and promotion. In particular, in the case of indigenous women, they encounter alien cultures and lack the bonds of affection necessary to find their bearings.

Those women who have remained in the countryside have been frequently obliged to take on the responsibilities of the head of household on account of the absences of their husbands, who migrate between agriculture and wage labour in towns in the course of the year. Women raise subsistence crops, and in some cases also enter the wage-earning sector. One of the most profound changes in the situation of these women has been emergence of female agricultural workers, particularly in export agriculture. These are creole peasants, as indigenous women do not sell their labour in agriculture. Female agricultural workers are comparable to urban workers, in as far as they take up wage labour outside the home, restrict the amount of domestic work they undertake and furthermore clearly bear the burden of a double or even triple working day.

Their entry into wage labour, their willingness to participate in subsistence projects which help them to mitigate their poverty, and in communal action, in particular by women of middle-income urban strata, make it possible for women to break out of their domestic mould, and thereby to shatter the authoritarian and subordinate models characteristic of the patriarchal family. A change takes place in their role as providers of goods and services within the home, and they become providers of monetary income, frequently equivalent to that provided by the man, or, in the case of women who are heads of households, the family's sole income. This change is compounded by their higher levels of education, and their involvement in

training and production workshops as well as in a variety of organizational bodies. This all confirms the magnitude of the change and reveals peasant women as potential counterparts of external agents, and as active participants in more global development strategies, both capable of and under the obligation to express personal demands, preferences and aspirations. While peasant women have indeed felt the harmful repercussions of changes in agriculture, these changes have now in turn compelled them to take on their responsibilities as members of nuclear households, as workers, on the same terms as other women, and as individuals who raise queries of a more general nature. However, it remains to be determined what this signifies in terms of caring for children, of the burden of work, of greater or lesser happiness. However, there is no doubt that it is nowadays appropriate to consider peasant women as social actors with greater and distinct needs, and with an increased capacity to present their demands.

As far as low-income urban women are concerned, it is necessary to devote particular attention to the new categories of workers in the informal sector, who work in circumstances of extreme vulnerability. As is the case of rural women, they take on a double working day; they generally lack social assistance for the care of their children, and are discriminated against at their places of work. In terms of policies, the circumstances of resident domestic employees, of workers in maquilador firms and of home workers seem easier to tackle than those of street traders and of child and adolescent prostitutes. As far as the former are concerned, the problem is to ensure that labour legislation is complied with, or to pass such legislation if it does not exist, and to socialize a number of domestic tasks. As far as the latter group is concerned, the situation is more complex. Indigenous traders mainly need to feel that they are participants in national society, a fundamental requirement for which is that they learn Spanish, to read and write and be free from harassment when carrying out their activity. Child and adolescent prostitutes are the most telling social indicator of extreme poverty, and care must be taken to provide these young people with the possibility of leading a life in keeping with their age, with the possibility of receiving an education, of learning a new trade and earning wages therefrom.

In all of these cases, women's organizations in support of women from low-income sectors, together with non-governmental organizations are playing a key role in providing support and disseminating information on situations of which public opinion is unaware and which are frequently ignored by government spheres. The progress made may undergo a significant change in terms of quantity and quality if satisfactory channels are established for transferring information from women's centres to the public sector, if it proves possible to co-ordinate and insert income-generation projects within overall policies, and if the needs and requirements of grass-roots organizations are taken up by public bodies. Both production workshops and the new grass-roots women's organizations represent innovative forms of participation, which may lay the foundations for more democratic types of State management.

Notes

1/ In Copenhagen (United Nations, 1980) it was stated that women represented one-third of the official labour force, but that they received one-tenth of income and possessed less than 1% of the world's property.

2/ In household surveys (for example, in 1980), four out of nine countries made the distinction between rural and urban areas while the other five only made surveys in urban areas (ECLAC, 1987).

3/ Greater precision and clarity remains to be achieved in respect of the contents of the terms urban and rural, where the dividing line falls and on the basis of what criteria. There appears to be broader acceptance for the notion of a continuum rather than a sharp contrast. There is considerable discrepancy as to what the term urban means from one country to another, a fact which leads to the inclusion within this sector of settlements of over 300 inhabitants which are at the very most "urbanized rural areas" (Gómez and Echeñique, 1988) but whose livelihood is focused on agriculture and rural activities. In Mexico, localities of over 2 500 inhabitants are considered to be urban although when compared to cities of over one million inhabitants, or of 18 million, as is the case of Mexico City, there is little possibility for any comparison. This situation requires different treatment from intermediate ones, as the urban/rural dichotomies would have little significance in the absence of a better definition of what the terms urban and rural actually mean in each country. The overlapping of both spheres mentioned above is probably to be found in certain circumstances, connected with cities of specific size and with a continuum within the regions of each country.

4/ The indigenous population of Latin America is slightly more than 26 million, 6.7% of the total population and 20.7% of the region's rural population. It is estimated that 1.5 million of these live in tribal settlements, tropical zones and autarkic economies or "closed communities"; 21.2 million are peasant farmers or temporary rural workers closely linked to the national economies, and 5.1 million eke out a marginal existence through informal employment (street traders) and in domestic service within metropolitan cities (figures provided by Mayer and Masferrer, 1979). In five countries the indigenous population is significant: Mexico, with an indigenous population of over 10%; Ecuador and Peru with over 30%, and Guatemala and Bolivia with over 60% (see table 1 of the annex).

Specialists have polemicized over these data (Maletta, 1980, Mayer and Masferrer, 1981). However, they seem to be correct in view of the partial figures obtained from population censuses, from which they may be inferred, on the basis of language, as being those who "do not speak Spanish" (Durston, 1980; Aranda and Olavarria, 1988). According to Durston (1980), it is possible to posit a trend towards a growth of the indigenous population from an analysis of the census figures for four countries (Mexico, Guatemala, Peru and Bolivia) between 1950 and 1970.

For the moment we shall set aside the problem of the extinction of native tribes in the region over the past 50 years. The extinction of the last surviving southern-most group, the Onas, the Yaganes and the Alacalufes has recently been confirmed (Exhibition and sample from the Museum of Pre-Columbian Art: Men of the South", Santiago, Chile, 1988; a programme of the same name for West German radio by Ana Melnik, 1988).



The indigenous question is a thorny one, and may be tackled from various angles: from the angle of the supposed hurdles it represents for development, the denunciation of the herding of communities into remote corners of territory, the loss of tribal land, colonial undertakings which have in most cases led to the extinction and death of natives.

No mention is made here of the coloured population, which, on account of a lack of information, remains to be tackled.

5/ Furthermore, women have preferably adopted other methods of research, a considerable proportion of which fall within the field of qualitative research and which, for the time being, are both its strength and its weakness. While on the one hand they produce extremely revealing results in respect of cases, life histories and testimonies, these are not always set in their contexts, and consequently do not provide a basis for generalizations. However, they are a rich source of information. As the number of cases increases, and as they are properly set in their contexts and enhanced by other methodologies, it will be possible to use the results thereof without reservation. The document produced by Yañez (1988) shows the huge volume of research produced on women.

An inventory of studies taken from two bibliographic systems of ECLAC and from the information system of Isis International in respect of just two topics, The Work of Women and Feminine Identity, contain a list of 4 265 documents.

It is worth underscoring two features which illustrate the scope which the topic has acquired. The first of these concerns the inauguration, in 1987, of the first Latin American Research and Training Programme for Women, by the Latin American Social Sciences Council (CLACSO). This provides a fellowship to allow graduates to carry out research projects into women and the establishment of specialized departments on the topic in university and research centres. No information is available as to how many academic centres possess units or departments specialized in women, with the exceptions of CLACSO, FLACSO and the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Buenos Aires, the Colegio de México, the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Rio de Janeiro, the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, and the University of the West Indies, nor are there any data on the number of universities which possess chairs specialized in women. However, the means of incorporating women's problems into teaching programmes has already been the subject of discussion at the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Seminar on Curricula Development and the Preparation of Teaching Material for Women's Studies in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, sponsored by UNESCO and held in 1984.

Furthermore, women have established eight documentation centres specifically concerned with the topic, 13 centres for studies and research-action (Isis International, 1987a), and three regional centres: the Multinational Centre for Women in Research and Training of the Inter-American Commission of Women, whose headquarters are in Argentina; Isis International for Latin America, whose headquarters are in Chile, and the Women's Alternative Communications Unit, ILET, whose headquarters are also in Chile.

6/ In 1983 only 12% of organized women were members of trade-unions (Campaña and Lago, 1987, from Díaz, 1984).

7/ International Workshop "Ideology and Feminist Structures During the First Half of the Decade for Women". At this meeting feminism was defined as a perspective or world view with two long-term objectives: 1) the achievement of

equality, dignity and freedom of choice for women through the possibility for them to control their lives both within and outside the home (where power does not have the traditional meaning of domination over others, but of internal force and the right to make one's own choice; as well as the ability to influence both social trends and the direction taken by social change); 2) the elimination of all forms of inequality, domination and oppression through the creation of a fairer national and international economic and social order (Carrillo, 1986).

8/ National Forum of Professional Colleges, Mexico, 1987; letter from the women of the National Council for Women's Rights to the National Constitutive Assembly of the Brazilian Congress, 1985; and the Platform in Defence of the Rights of the Women of Peru, 1987 (Mujer, fempress, 1987).

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**A N N E X**



Table 1

INDIGENOUS POPULATION IN TERMS OF SOCIAL STATUS  
IN SELECTED LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES  
(Thousands of inhabitants)

Country	Total indigenous population	Percentage of the national population a/	Autarkic population and population living in tribal organizations	Population linked to national society and of peasant origin	Percentage of the rural population b/	Integrated urban population	Percentage of the urban population
<u>Countries with an indigenous peasant majority</u>							
Mexico	8 042	12.4	(inc.in col.3)	7 212	36.0	829	2.9
Guatemala	3 739	59.7	(inc.in col.3)	2 832	81.8	907	51.7
Ecuador	2 564	33.9	97	2 235	58.4	230	8.5
Peru	6 025	36.8	206	4 010	73.1	1 807	22.4
Bolivia	3 526	59.2	187	2 544	95.0	793	40.0
Sub-totals	23 897		491	18 836		4 569	
<u>Countries with an indigenous tribal majority</u>							
Brazil	243	0.2	186	56	0.1	...	...
Colombia	547	2.2	421	126	1.3	...	...
Venezuela	202	1.5	150	52	2.1	...	...
Panama	121	6.8	93	27	3.7	...	...
Paraguay	67	2.3	51	15	1.0	...	...
Sub-totals	1 181		902	278			

Table 1 (concl.)

Country	Total indigenous population	Percentage of the national population a/	Autarkic population and population living in tribal organizations	Population linked to national society and of peasant origin	Percentage of the rural population b/	Integrated urban population	Percentage of the urban population
<u>Countries with indigenous minorities</u>							
Honduras*	107	3.2	...	-	-	-	-
Costa Rica	10	0.6	...	10	0.9	3	0.4
Nicaragua*	43	1.8	...	-	-	-	-
El Salvador*	100	2.3	...	-	-	-	-
Chile	616	5.7	...	516	23.3	100	1.4
Argentina	398	1.5	54	261	5.3	83	0.4
Sub-totals	2 849		54	1 995		547	
<u>Totals</u>	<u>26 359</u>		<u>1 447</u>	<u>19 903</u>		<u>4 755</u>	

Source: *América Indígena*, vol. XXXIX, No. 2, Mexico City, 1979, pp. 220-221. (Changes made by the author.)

a/ Based on projections to 1977.

b/ Based on 1970 censuses.

... Information inexistent or inapplicable.

\* Unreliable information.

Table 2

## PUTAENDO, CHILE: PARTICIPATION OF WAGE-EARNING FEMALE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN THE VARIOUS ACTIVITIES

(Average months worked and wages)

Working in packing stations			Working in fields			Working in "other activities"		
Percentage of total women	Number of months worked (average)	Average wages in US dollars	Percentage of total women	Number of months worked (average)	Average wages in US dollars	Percentage of total women	Number of months worked (average)	Average wages in US dollars
88.9	3.5	114.4	66.7	3.2	83.0	37.0	4.6	42.8

Source: Data obtained from the surveys carried out in Putaendo, Chile, for the study "The participation of women in agriculture and rural society in areas of small farms", Ximena Aranda, Santiago, Chile, Latin American Social Sciences Faculty (FLACSO), 1982.

