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**RURAL WOMEN  
IN LATIN AMERICA AND  
THE CARIBBEAN: RESULTS OF  
PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES**

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION  
WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT UNIT**



**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

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## INTRODUCTION

This study reviews the main features of the status of women in the agrarian structure of the Latin American and Caribbean region in recent years. The first chapter provides a summary of the situation with regard to the participation of women in agriculture, with special emphasis on the division of rural labour by sex \*/ and on the new approach to the performance of work by women in agro-industry.

The second chapter contains some lessons learned as a result of decades of programmes and projects for women in the rural sector. This approach was taken because of the concern to link programmes and projects on women with those relating to development since so far the design of rural development policies of the Latin American and Caribbean countries have not been integrated with their policies on women neither have they given adequate consideration to women. Nor has it been possible to incorporate programmes directed at women in more comprehensive social and economic policies and, consequently, the status of women has not risen in real terms. Events in recent decades force us to be more cautious about adopting contributions provided by the experience accumulated in the Latin American and Caribbean region and at identifying the problems so as to come up with a more pragmatic and useful approach to one of those groups of women which the crisis has affected most severely.

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\*/ In this text the expression "division of labour by sex" is used to refer to those types of behaviour which society constructs on the basis of sex. It is accepted by the experts in this subject and used to distinguish such behaviour from behaviour due solely to biological factors.

## I. THE AGRARIAN STRUCTURE AND THE DIVISION OF LABOUR BY SEX

### A. Recent trends in the rural sector and in the economic participation of rural women

In recent decades major changes have taken place in landholding structures in the rural sector owing to the transformation of the system governing large and small holdings, the creation of medium-sized and large modern enterprises and the profound penetration of agriculture by transnational capital. As a result of these changes, the organization of the labour force and production have also changed. New approaches to the recruitment of labour in modern enterprises have reduced employment, favouring temporary jobs held by workers who reside off the farm. Those trends are a result of the modernization of agriculture and of the reorientation of production towards the export sector, which has lessened the importance of the production of basic food commodities. These are the main factors behind the tremendous dynamism of the rural sector. The changes have had an unequal effect on the various rural sectors, triggering a process of growing differentiation and polarization among them and modifying the status of women considerably.

Not only has the economic crisis produced tremendous dynamism in the more modern sectors of agriculture, it has increased poverty in peasant households. Agricultural wages dropped considerably in most countries between 1965 and 1980, falling still further in the 1980s as a result of inflation (De Janvry, Sadoulet and Wilcox, 1986). According to calculations made by the Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (PREALC), in 1988, the growth rates of the average wages of agricultural workers fell by as much as 23% between 1980 and 1987. Forty per cent of the land farmed in the region corresponds to small holdings of less than two hectares, and the rural poor outnumber the urban poor in absolute terms. ECLAC estimates for 1980 indicate that in 11 of the 16 countries for which data was available, the number of rural families living in critical poverty was higher in absolute terms than the number of urban families in that situation although the rural population was larger than the urban population in only six of them. More than 54% of the poor families in the region as a whole belonged to the rural sector, and in five of the countries considered over 70% of poor families were rural families (Schejtman, 1988, p. 288).

Fragmentary data recently gathered in the region indicate that rather than continuing to fall, the size of the economically active population in the agricultural sector has tended to remain the same and, in some cases, even to increase. The average annual growth rate of the population employed in agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean was 0.8% between 1950 and 1960, 0.7% between 1960 and 1970 and 0.3% between 1970 and 1980. However, it is estimated that between 1980 and 1987, this rate rose to 1.7% in seven countries (Durston, 1988). The countries for which this type of information is available are Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela. The growth rate of the agricultural gross domestic product, which had remained constant at 3.4% for three decades, fell to 2.3% between 1980 and 1988 and, if only the period 1985-1988 is considered, amounted to barely 1.9%.<sup>1</sup>

The impact of the changes referred to on rural productive structures in countries which have experienced agrarian reform and, in some cases, counter-reform is reflected in a tremendously complex social structure in which highly developed production systems coexist with medium-sized enterprises and peasant economies. In response to these changes, poor women in rural areas have been forced to resort to diverse survival tactics. In this connection they have, inter alia, taken on new productive tasks, gone from subsistence farming to agro-industry and migrated to cities in search of employment, generally in the domestic service sector.

As a result of the penetration of agriculture by capital, it is becoming possible for women in the rural labour force to participate in the market of the modern export production sector while remaining a part of the traditional labour market, generally associated with production for domestic consumption, in which they have worked as wage earners on a temporary basis. For purposes of analysis, the greatest problem so far has related to the gathering of statistical data on the female labour force. Data existing for the period up to 1980 documents the heterogeneity of the countries of Latin American and the Caribbean in terms of the participation of women in the agricultural sector, which is connected to the level of development as indicated by the behaviour of that sector.<sup>2</sup> In that regard it may be said that more recent changes in the participation of women in the labour market have not been recorded, the latest data being for the year 1980. The share of women in agriculture in the entire population of economically active women ranges from 2.3% in Chile to 58.5% in Haiti, the regional average being 14.8%. This average was higher both in 1960 (23.8%) and in 1970 (18.1%). The percentages corresponding to 1980 are explained not so much by an absolute reduction in the number of women working in agriculture as by the increase in the number of women in branches of non-agricultural activity. The participation of women in the agricultural system is higher in the Andean countries, where there is a large indigenous component and in Central America, while it is much lower in Southern Cone countries. The heterogeneity that is observed among countries is also to be seen within them, the participation of women in

Table 1  
**ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE FEMALE POPULATION ENGAGED  
 IN AGRICULTURE a/ b/  
 1960, 1970, 1980**

(Percentages)

	1960	1970	1980
Argentina	4.9	4.3	3.1
Barbados	26.5	16.0	9.5
Bolivia	26.2	26.8	27.5
Brazil	27.8	20.1	15.3
Colombia	11.3	7.0	5.0
Costa Rica	7.5	4.4	4.0
Cuba	6.8	8.2	10.4
Chile	3.6	2.5	2.3
Ecuador	21.5	14.6	12.8
El Salvador	7.3	5.2	5.0
Guatemala	11.0	10.4	9.4
Guyana	25.8	16.9	11.8
Haiti	72.7	63.0	58.5
Honduras	5.3	6.7	7.3
Jamaica	21.9	18.6	18.2
Mexico	32.8	26.1	19.3
Nicaragua	14.2	8.3	8.0
Panama	9.1	9.2	8.0
Paraguay	21.5	14.2	12.5
Peru	33.7	22.8	24.4
Dominican Republic	13.2	10.5	7.8
Suriname	28.5	24.0	19.7
Trinidad and Tobago	17.7	16.7	5.9
Uruguay	4.1	3.5	2.9
Venezuela	4.6	4.0	2.6
TOTAL	23.8	18.1	14.8

Source: ECLAC, *Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1988* (LC/G.1550), pp. 38-40, Santiago, Chile, 1989.

a/ In accordance with the International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC). Agriculture includes agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing.

b/ Refers to population aged 10 years and over.



agriculture varying widely in form and intensity in the different areas of such countries as Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile and Ecuador.

As for the approaches taken to the hiring of women to work in agriculture, it is quite difficult to distinguish between wage-earning women on the one hand and women who work on their own account or as unpaid family members, on the other, the latter group being that in which the incidence of unrecorded employment is greater. Both groups are showing a tendency to decrease, but the degree of shrinkage in the wage-earning group tends to be smaller, even in cases where the number of women who work independently or as unpaid family members is greater as is true in Brazil, Ecuador and Panama in particular (see table 2). As Arizpe points out, there would seem to be a need to explore at least two different sets of dynamics as regards the participation of women in the primary sector, one consisting in the transition from unpaid work as a family member to paid labour and the other involving movement in the opposite direction towards more intense participation in the work performed by unpaid family members (Arizpe, 1988, pp. 36 and 37). Generally speaking, it has become clear that in agricultural systems the ways in which women participate and the division of labour by sex are related to the type of crop grown and the kind of activity performed, the degree of labour-intensity of the operation and the social characteristics of the households studied (class, family life cycle, kinship and age) (León and Deere, 1986).

#### B. The division of labour by sex in rural areas

The penetration of technology into the peasant sector has depended on the nature of the division of labour by sex. At present, at least three approaches to production are to be found within the agrarian structure, and their significance in terms of women working in rural areas and their access to the use of technologies is very different. None of these approaches to production are ever found in a pure state and are referred to here only to differentiate among ways of organizing production. They include: a) family units engaged in agricultural production; b) family units engaged in subsistence production or forming part of a peasant economy and c) family units which own no land.

##### a) Family units engaged in agricultural production

This type of unit depends on the market or on an enterprise external to it, such as an hacienda, a plantation or a State enterprise, for its income and for most of its consumption needs. Its relationship with the external sector varies throughout the region. For example, in some cases, the unit's production is subcontracted by an enterprise; in others, land is subcontracted, usually with the inclusion of the labour force on a temporary basis. Here, the participation of women varies in accordance with the fluctuations

Table 2

ACTIVE FEMALE POPULATION ENGAGED IN MANUAL OCCUPATIONS  
IN THE PRIMARY SECTOR a/ 1960, 1970 AND 1980  
(Percentages)

	1960	1970	1980
<b>ARGENTINA</b>			
Total primary activities	<u>4.1</u>	<u>3.2</u>	<u>2.1</u>
Wage-earners	1.9	1.3	1.0
Own-account and unpaid family members	2.2	1.9	1.1
Total non-primary activities	<u>95.9</u>	<u>96.8</u>	<u>97.9</u>
<b>BRASIL</b>			
Total primary activities	<u>29.6</u>	<u>20.3</u>	<u>14.0</u>
Wage-earners	5.3	3.5	4.6
Own-account and unpaid family members	24.3	16.8	9.4
Total non-primary activities	<u>70.4</u>	<u>79.7</u>	<u>86.0</u>
<b>CHILE</b>			
Total primary activities	<u>4.1</u>	<u>2.4</u>	<u>2.5</u>
Wage-earners	2.1	1.2	1.0
Own-account and unpaid family members	2.0	1.2	1.5
Total non-primary activities	<u>95.9</u>	<u>97.6</u>	<u>97.5</u>
<b>ECUADOR</b>			
Total primary activities	<u>24.0</u>	<u>12.9</u>	<u>11.5</u>
Wage-earners	8.7	3.8	0.2
Own-account and unpaid family members	15.3	9.1	11.3
Total non-primary activities	<u>76.0</u>	<u>87.1</u>	<u>88.5</u>
<b>HONDURAS</b>			
Total primary activities	<u>2.9</u>	<u>3.5</u>	
Wage-earners	0.1	1.3	
Own-account and unpaid family members	2.8	2.2	
Total non-primary activities	<u>97.1</u>	<u>96.5</u>	
<b>PANAMA</b>			
Total primary activities	<u>5.7</u>	<u>6.4</u>	<u>5.3</u>
Wage-earners	0.6	0.4	2.2
Own-account and unpaid family members	5.1	6.0	3.1
Total non-primary activities	<u>94.3</u>	<u>93.6</u>	<u>94.7</u>
<b>URUGUAY</b>			
Total primary activities	<u>1.0</u>	<u>2.2</u>	
Wage-earners	0.3	0.5	
Own-account and unpaid family members	0.7	1.7	
Total non-primary activities	<u>99.0</u>	<u>97.8</u>	

Source: Irma Arriagada, "Las mujeres y los cambios socio-ocupacionales en América Latina", in ECLAC, *Transformación ocupacional y crisis social en América Latina* (LC/G.1558-P), Santiago, Chile, 1989.

a/ At the point of intersection of occupation with occupational category.

experienced in the exchange of resources and goods with the market or the external enterprise involved.

In the first case, in which the technology used and the size of the farm in question determine the extent to which the commodities produced can be sold on the market, women are excluded from the farm work involved which remains in the hands of the men. This may well be due to the fact that more work must be done in the home (preparation of meals for the workers, cultivating a vegetable garden and caring for animals --activities which take up all of a woman's time). Moreover, it is an article of faith that domestic chores are "women's work". While it may be true that when people live at bare subsistence levels women must work in the fields, once a certain threshold has been passed and the basic needs have been met, greater importance is attached to women's traditional role.

b) Family units engaged in subsistence farming or found in a peasant economy

Most such units are found in geographically remote areas. They function as production and reproduction units, but the work carried out by men and women is different. The assignment of roles by sex becomes more flexible as the level of the technology used and the amount of land held decreases (Deere, 1977). If the level of the technology incorporated is low, all the adults in the unit must work, and although their productive tasks may differ, many of them may be performed by someone else as, for instance, when one of the partners in a marriage must be away temporarily. Thus, women carry out tasks related to the production of crops, livestock and handicrafts, products whose value lies mainly in their use. Daily reproductive work and social work are more the responsibility of women than of men because it is tacitly agreed that women's role in the biological aspect of reproduction extends to its social aspect (Noordam and Arriagada, 1982). It has been noted that whereas the division of labour by sex is very heterogeneous in the case of production, it is fairly homogeneous where reproductive activities are concerned (León and Deere, 1986; Arizpe, 1988). Regardless of the economic contribution made by rural women in Latin America and the Caribbean, through the work they perform, they assume responsibility for the reproductive tasks such as housework, child-rearing, caring for the aged and sick and maintaining family relations (León and Deere, 1986; p. 14).

c) Family units which own no land

Units in this category depend entirely on the labour market for their survival and reproduction. They are made up of the inhabitants of rural towns and of former small landholders who have lost their farms but have remained in the countryside. In the case of these temporary or permanent wage-earners, who live basically by selling their labour, the division of labour is more rigid. The men perform

productive tasks and the women are engaged in reproductive tasks at home. Because peasant wages are so low, the housework they perform is more important for their family than paid employment would be. Women work outside their home only when paid work on a temporary basis becomes available and their family is at an appropriate stage in its life cycle, i.e., provided they have someone to care for their children, or in cases where their children are older and may also enter the job market. This is the situation in the farm exports sector in particular, that is, the fruit sector in Chile, the flower sector in Colombia, the peanut sector in Brazil and the strawberry sector in Mexico.

Since empirical studies on the division of labour by sex in activities related to rural production are few and far between in the region and provide information only on certain parts of any given country, the data they contain cannot be compared and their findings cannot be generalized. All of them are alike in pointing out that women are performing a larger quantity and a greater variety of jobs in production than the censuses and household surveys record (Ximena Aranda, 1986; Ashby, 1985; Buvinic, 1982; Campana, 1985; Deere and León, 1982; Lago and Olavarria, 1982).

With regard to the type of production activities in which they are engaged, it should be noted that a study covering Colombia and Peru establishes the following four categories of work performed by women in agriculture: a) farm work; b) the processing of such crops as tobacco, cotton, maize and wheat and barley, depending on the area in which they are working; c) caring for livestock and d) marketing (Deere and León, 1982). The authors contend that the fact that consideration has not been given to all this work reflects the failure to appreciate the real contribution of women to rural activities. In the study consideration is given to four areas where capitalism is found at different stages of development. It was found that women in the areas where the capitalistic approach is less well developed (Colombia) help to care for animals, participate in services related to crop production (mainly by preparing meals for workers) and help in the processing of produce and, to a lesser extent, work out in the fields. The situation is completely different in a region where the capitalistic approach is more highly developed (Peru) in that there women participate in all aspects of agricultural production. The conclusion drawn from these observations is that the greatest difference made by the extent to which a capitalistic approach is taken in so far as the activities carried out by men and by women are concerned is in the degree of work done in the fields.

It is usually maintained that in Latin America and the Caribbean work in the fields is man's work; however, Deere and León (1982) found that women participate in many tasks related to such work, including hoeing, seeding, weeding, harvesting and threshing. Nevertheless, if they perform these activities as unpaid work, the women involved as well as their families tend to regard the work they do

as no more than help; they also tend to think of the tasks performed by women as being much less important than those accomplished by men.

The results of a survey carried out recently in the Dominican Republic confirm that what has just been said about Colombia and Peru applies equally to agricultural activities in the Dominican Republic where women carry out 36% of the work performed in the fields, 19% of farm-related transport and storage and 3% of the stock-raising activities (Dottin, 1987).

In some studies carried out in the English-speaking Caribbean, specifically in Trinidad and Tobago (Reddock and Huggins, 1988a), it is pointed out that historically the peasant economy of the Caribbean differs from the plantation economy in that a stricter division of labour by sex is maintained. Actually, women tend to work in the field as unpaid workers, while men assume the tasks involving decision-making, administration and the sale of the food produced. The information provided on the production of cocoa, sugar cane, rice and fresh vegetables reveals that women participate in such tasks as planting and seeding, fertilizing, cutting and weeding while men carry out the tasks which require the use of heavy or technically complex tools or equipment, such as fumigators. Responsibility for all these crops other than fresh vegetables usually lies with the men.

The case studies made so far contain a wealth of information which must continue to be explored and require that points of comparison be established between different countries and areas in Latin America and the Caribbean. If appropriate consideration is to be given to the division of labour by sex in rural areas, more information must be collected on the access of women to land, the size of farms, the ways in which production is organized, the kind of crops grown and the use of technologies and access to them.

### C. Work performed by women in agro-industry

A development recently observed in some countries of the region is the emergence of a new agricultural exports sector which has been incorporated into the world market as a result of the penetration of modern technology into production and especially into transport, communications and cold-storage systems. Since the amount of investment required to exploit export crops on a large scale is usually within the reach only of large producers, agro-industry is becoming one of the main channels through which national and transnational finance penetrates agriculture. One calculation relating to capital investments by the United States in the food industry shows that such investments yield a 16.7% profit abroad as compared with gains of 11.5% at home (Arizpe and Aranda, 1988). It has been estimated that the investment in Chile is quite high and that in respect of the first harvest, planting and operating costs per hectare average between US\$3 000 and US\$7 000 for all fruit species (García, 1986, p. 259).

The export of fresh produce is a highly profitable, labourintensive activity which generates a specific demand in the region for a contribution by women. In a study published in 1988, Ximena Aranda explained that this is due to two attributes ascribed to women: a) precision in manual tasks (a sex-related characteristic) and b) the traits acquired from being in a subordinate position (submissiveness, difficulties with organization, a non-conflictive temperament and readiness to accept low wages). It should be added that the basis for the payment of lower wages to women than to men is the view that women's wages supplement those of men.

With regard to the productive process in agro-industry, it may be said that most of the work performed by women consists in tasks requiring a high level of skill and not much capital. In and of itself the process calls for much technology in that the industry is organized from within in such a way that the individual workers are assigned clearly differentiated and rigidly ordered tasks and are required to maintain certain levels of outputs; the division of work by sex is clearly defined and women are kept in subordinate positions while men act as foremen and supervisors (Medrano, 1982).

It is customary for agro-industries to be located outside of small towns or near large cities, where it is easy to attract the seasonal labour they need. This raises the question of the origin of the women employed in agro-industry. The women working in fruit production in Chile are from the semi-urban sector (Valdés, 1988) while practically all of those employed in the flower industry on the Colombian savanna come from the capital (OAS/CIM, 1982; Silva, 1982). On the other hand, activities relating to the export of the traditional crops of Central America, including coffee, tobacco and cotton are performed by women of rural origin (Instituto Nicaragüense de la Mujer, 1987; Madden, 1986; Buvinic, 1982). The activities carried out by women in agro-industry consist in temporary work of between three and six months' duration per year (Arizpe and Aranda, 1988; Valdés, 1988; Medrano, 1982; Silva, 1982). Valdés draws a distinction between temporary wage-earners and occasional wage-earners the former being those who work between three and six months a year and the latter holding jobs of less than three months' duration. However in exceptional circumstances, such as those caused by the war in Nicaragua, in which male farm labourers were sent to war, the majority of women workers tend to hold stable jobs of a permanent nature (Instituto Nicaragüense de la Mujer, 1987).

The temporary nature of rural work in general is due to the seasonal nature of crops, but the seasonality of womens' work in particular stems from the notion that it is of secondary importance and constitutes no more than a support for their family's economy. This view also has a significant impact on the size of the wages paid to women working in the agro-industrial sector. In the case of strawberries in Mexico, for example, low labour costs are largely responsible for the "comparative advantages" the crop enjoys in the international market, which are in turn due to the disadvantages" experienced by women in the labour market (Arizpe and Aranda, 1988,

p. 229). The same may be said of the other agroindustrial crops produced by the region.

In analysing agro-industry in Chile, Campana (1985) observes that women undergo a process of change when they begin to work outside the home and start to feel they can support their families by themselves. When women receive higher wages for the skilled work they perform, they demand more authority within their household, and this opens up discussion and more democratic decision-making although it may not change the distribution of work by sex in the home. The differences between Chile, as presented in this case study, and Mexico, where women's subordinate role remains virtually unchanged, may be due to different degrees and types of subordination. On the other hand, the women studied in Mexico were very young and lacked skills while those considered in the study in Chile were older and had families and skills. Nevertheless, only slight progress has been achieved in the direction of independence, and the work by the Chilean women studied is still regarded as being secondary and supplementary to that performed by men.

Thus, it is clear that the step taken by a woman in taking on a job outside the home constitutes a major change which has greater significance than the type of work to which she has access or the technology used in it. When the transition to paid employment raises a woman's self-esteem and makes her aware of her own worth, her role within her household can be expected to change. This change is not free from difficulties and conflicts; sometimes the greatest progress a woman can achieve lies in getting her husband to let her work.

The main problems that women from the rural sector currently face can be summed up as follows:

a) The fact that the patriarchal model is more pronounced in rural areas and stands in the way of women's access to land, property and credit and also limits their possibilities for study and independent work and hides what productive work they do perform. The patriarchal model becomes more evident in productive activities, where the division of labour by sex is more flexible than it is in reproductive activities, the whole burden of which is assumed by women.

b) Lack of jobs and of the infrastructure required for education, health and the promotion of culture, and especially of the minimal infrastructure needed for housework, which is reflected in a rural-urban exodus of young women and in an increase in the informal activities in a country's economy and in the performance of domestic services in its cities.

c) The emergence of a female proletariat in agriculture as a result of the growth of agro-industry and of the importance of crops giving rise to temporary, labour-intensive jobs. The new type of employment found in rural areas is in general of a temporary and unstable nature and women constitute an important part of its work force. It should also be noted that the recent growth of such employment has caused the rate of migration to the cities to drop.

d) An increase in the process of polarization caused in part by the fact that men and women have unequal access to technology. This gap in the access of women to technology is reflected in the increasing dominance of men in agriculture as a result of the process of mechanization begun in the modern agricultural sector in the 1960s and of the fact that the manual labour performed on family subsistence farms and certain manual work in agro-industry are increasingly performed by women.

This analysis demonstrates the need to define the various forms of division of labour by sex to be found in the rural sector and also to determine what productive and reproductive tasks are performed by women. This means that reliable statistical information on the productive activities of women must be gathered in the countries of the region so as to be able to establish clear objectives for programmes and projects directed at women. Consideration will be given to some of these problems in the second chapter.



## II. LESSONS FROM THE EXPERIENCE ACCUMULATED IN TWO DECADES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Over the past two decades, the Latin American and Caribbean region has acquired varied experience in the realms of rural development, agrarian policies and programmes and projects relating to rural women. Evaluations made by several researchers in the region (Flora, 1986; Buvinic, 1986; Chaney, 1986; León and Deere, 1986; Deere, 1986; Raczynski, 1989) reveal that there are a number of lessons to be learned.

During the 1960s emphasis was placed on agrarian reform programmes which excluded women, not only from production, but also from directly benefiting from the reforms mounted. In 1986 Deere showed that this exclusion was based on legal, structural and ideological mechanisms. In spite of this, from the standpoint of rural development, the agrarian reforms constituted the state initiative mainly responsible for effecting a basic change in the rural structure and the distribution of land and wealth and hence in the power structures. Those reforms which came in response to social revolutions had a much greater impact than the others (Deere, 1986). The 1970s constituted the age of the integrated rural development programme for increasing agricultural productivity (aided by the technological revolution) and improving access to basic welfare services. The attempt to combine productivity and increased well-being with growth and equality within a single project gave rise to the integrated rural development concept (Chaney, 1986, p. 234). However, due to the emphasis on productivity and the failure to recognize the contribution of Latin American women to agriculture, these programmes were not initially designed to include women specifically. "Women's components" designed to promote the participation of women met with little success as they tended to reinforce the reproductive role of women; furthermore, the activities into which women were incorporated --the cottage industries, dressmaking, jam-making and the like-- were mainly an extension of that role.

During the 1970s, in response to the downgrading of the productive role of rural women, income-generating production projects were brought into being. Most but not all of them had their origin in the private sector and benefited from external financing. Flora notes that these programmes met three requirements: 1) they met the political need for government approval; 2) they did not raise costs

and 3) they entailed no change in the distribution of resources (Flora, 1986, p. 249). In the 1980s, in addition to meeting the requirements just noted, there was an urgent need to find alternative ways of increasing the incomes of rural families which had been severely struck by the economic crisis. These income-generating production projects proved to be quite inefficient economically, but showed promising potential as a means of contributing to the organization of rural women and to greater awareness of the role they play.

At this point the question arises as to why it is necessary to design policies, programmes and projects aimed specifically at rural women.

A first reply relates to an ethical concern. The information gathered so far indicates that rural women are in a worse situation than other women since poverty is more concentrated in rural areas. It may be added in this connection that the impoverishment of women has already been abundantly documented. Incorporating new technologies into the activities of most poor people in rural areas along with other measures to better the distribution of agricultural resources may be of direct help in effectively improving rural living conditions. Viewed in that perspective, designing policies aimed specifically at rural women is not only justified but must be tackled immediately, especially if consideration is also given to the fact that rural women are subject to a centuries-old cultural tradition in which the view that they are subordinates is much more strongly held than in urban areas.

From the perspective of development planning, raising the status of rural women means shortening the distance between urban and rural concerns, thereby reducing the heterogeneity which exists in every country in the region and paving the way to more effective integration and greater equality at national level.

Where standards of efficiency are concerned, the role of women as agents of development and the contribution they make to the agricultural and especially to the food production of the region is significant (López and Campillo, 1985; León and Deere, 1986). The need to guarantee food security poses the challenge of improving production and raising productivity. To do that it is necessary and urgent to add new technologies to those already accessible to women. In this connection, it should be borne in mind that projects in which women participate actively meet with success and help to effect a substantial improvement in family living conditions since women use their increased earnings to raise the level of well-being of their families.

In order to design policies, programmes and projects appropriately, macrosocial and macroeconomic concerns must be explicitly linked to the microeconomic and microsocial concern in the context of which most rural projects for women are carried out. The incorporation of such a linkage has proved to be a highly complicated and difficult task, and in some countries of the region political, institutional and other problems have prevented its establishment.

Experience shows the urgency of seeking such links in both a backward and a forward direction however difficult such a quest may be. An effort in this direction will heighten the effectiveness of development projects and programmes and improve the dissemination of their results and contributions. This process may start at the grassroots level through the horizontal integration of projects and programmes in an approach which on the whole would permit improved negotiations with local, regional and central governments. With this in mind, it has been proposed to create institutions to act between the citizens and the State; to mobilize local resources for the design and application of social policies; to decentralize the implementation of public policies; to promote community participation; to urge non-governmental bodies to provide technical inputs for social programmes and to broaden the scale of operation of the programmes and projects concerned (Vergara, 1986, p. 17).

Some degree of transparency regarding the goals and financing of these projects and programmes is also required. In other words, their objectives must be well defined and the provisions made for implementing them must be consistent with those objectives. If the primary goal stated is to generate income, project activities must be income-oriented, and they must not be diverted towards other goals for which no provision has been made (Buvinic, 1986). As regards financing, more resources are needed for projects and programmes aimed at women from the rural sector, and development projects must be reformulated and the methodology used in analysing sexually determined roles must be incorporated in them from the start (Overholt, Catherine, and others, 1988) so that the subject of women does not constitute a surprise item in programmes and projects. It is also of vital importance to conduct a review and appraisal of a project while it is in implementation so as to assure that the resources provided are actually reaching women.

In 1986 Flora stressed the importance of viewing programmes and projects for rural women in terms of the existing division of labour by sex, age and social class. This author emphasized the need to determine what tasks women are actually doing with a view to being able to offer them more appropriate inputs, technical training, marketing channels, etc. This approach is fundamental since if it is adopted women are more apt to become actively incorporated into a programme or project of this type and more likely to maintain control over the activities conducted under it. Once a project is in motion, some of the tasks performed by women under it can be redefined with a view to changing the division of labour by sex. In addition, it is essential that a programme or project generate a surplus large enough to make the women participating in it willing to redistribute the time they allocate to their tasks. As Chaney observed in 1986, in the end it is much more burdensome for a woman to work for insufficient pay than it is for her to grow the food that makes up the basic diet of her family.

Another lesson taught in particular through the application of programmes and projects relating to productivity is that it is

important when designing projects to establish and give priority to multi-faceted objectives. It should, however, be stressed that two kinds of trade-off are associated with programmes and projects of this type: that between efficiency and participation (Raczynski, 1989) and that between welfare projects and production projects (Buvinic, 1986). One of the first steps in dealing with the tension between efficiency and participation is to recognize and give consideration to the fact that in so far as economics and production are concerned the reasons for promoting participation in the labour market may come into conflict with the social aims of participation which lie outside the sphere of production and are related to the promotion of self-awareness and self-esteem and similar goals. Recognition of this fact is a step in the right direction provided it is taken into account when a project is planned.

An institutional framework which dictates the way in which governments and non-governmental and international bodies concerned with women and rural development relate is crucial to the functioning of programmes and projects dealing with rural women. This relationship may take different forms since conditions in the countries of the region are very dissimilar. One possibility is that this institutional framework may be proposed by the United Nations and function as an information and communications network which can be used to build up more intricately structured relationships among these various types of body. The framework must be based on a true understanding of the status of peasant women in each country or area, must take their productive and reproductive roles into consideration and must admit of variation in accordance with each type of country and the amount of weight attached to the rural sector in them.

The past few decades have been characterized by very fruitful initiatives in the area of programmes and projects for women from the Latin American and Caribbean region, and knowledge has built up concerning the achievements and failures of certain types of project. The need now is for the political will to conduct programmes and projects for the rural women of the region and for the knowledge accumulated to be taken into consideration when such programmes and projects are designed.

In brief, the following suggestions may be made on the basis of points raised above:

1. Development programmes and projects for rural women require real political will to modify the living and working conditions of women from the rural sector.

2. Projects and programmes must be horizontally linked, and when public policies are planned that link should be extended to the macrosocial domain.

3. Projects must be self-sustaining so that when their external financing is completed, they can continue under their own steam.

4. If a programme or project is to be successful, women must be regarded in it as agents, rather than beneficiaries, of development.

5. If a programme for rural women is to remain effective in the

long term, it must be designed and executed on the basis of participatory methodologies.

6. A programme or project must be efficient in the short and the long run. This means that it must be implemented in accordance with the short-term production objectives designed for it and that in the long term it must help to change the subordinate position of rural women.

7. A programme or project for rural women must consider the need of women for access to land, credit and training, especially training in the new technologies.

8. Programmes and projects must be adapted to the needs of rural women and to the existing division of labour by sex and must, in particular, take account on the time available to the women at whom they are aimed.

9. A programme must take account of the demands imposed on rural women by their reproductive tasks by providing for alternatives which allow women to fulfil their child-care responsibilities.

10. A programme must from the outset give consideration to the fact that rural women have no experience in organization and must contemplate ways of providing them with the time and training they need to acquire such experience.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Information supplied by the ECLAC Statistics and Quantitative Analysis Division and updated to 2 January, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> It is necessary to repeat that the statistical information provided suffers from the fact that much of the work done by women in agriculture is not recorded, but this situation varies from country to country. Although an attempt was made in the population censuses and household surveys carried out in the 1980s to improve the data collected on work performed by women in rural areas, the gap still persists (see, among others, Wainerman and Recchini, 1981, and Buvinic, 1982).

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