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15 JUL 1987

**FEMALE HUMAN RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT: GROWTH AND
EQUITY AS PRIORITIES**

Nieves Rico

WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT UNIT



ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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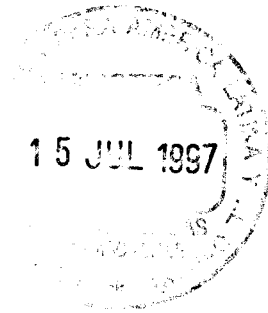
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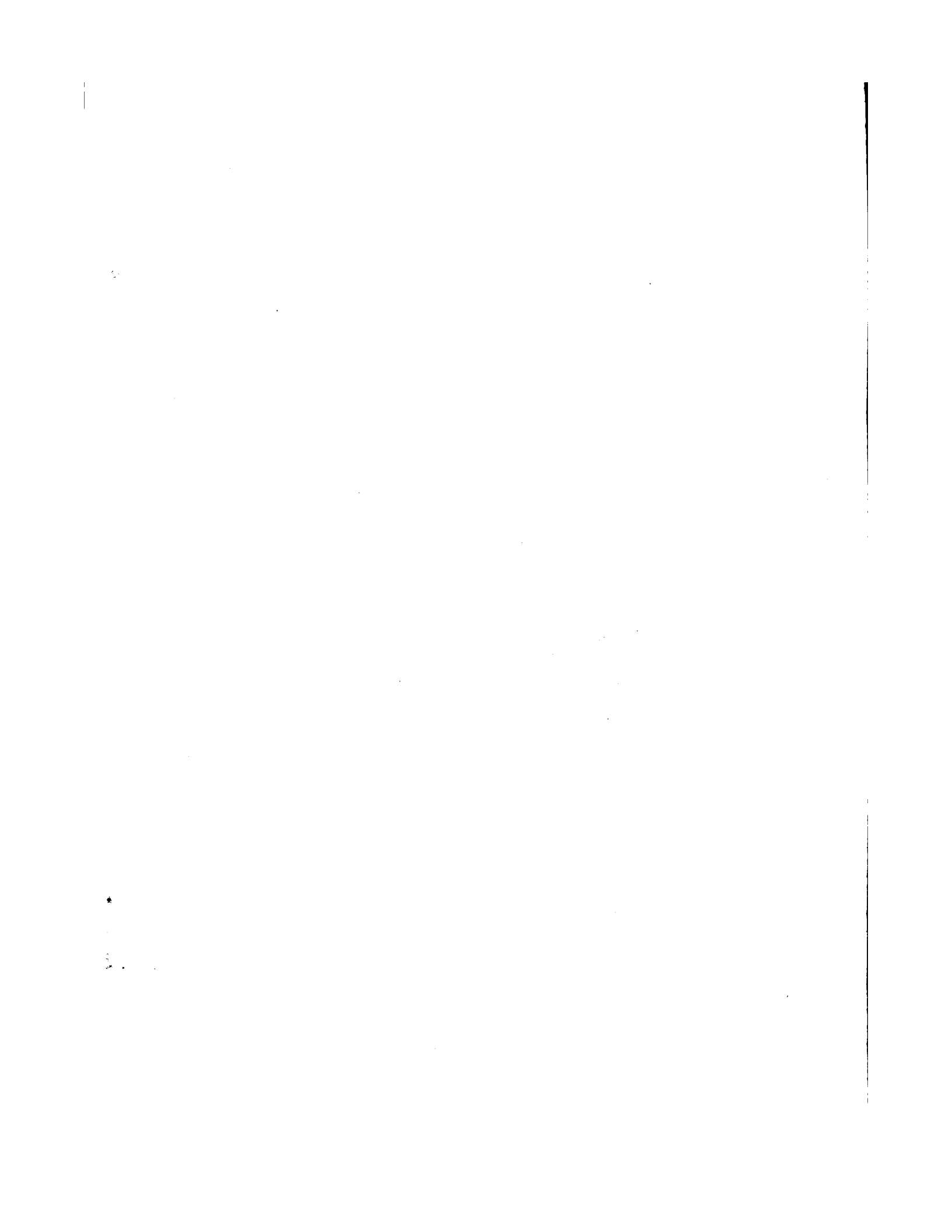
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ABSTRACT

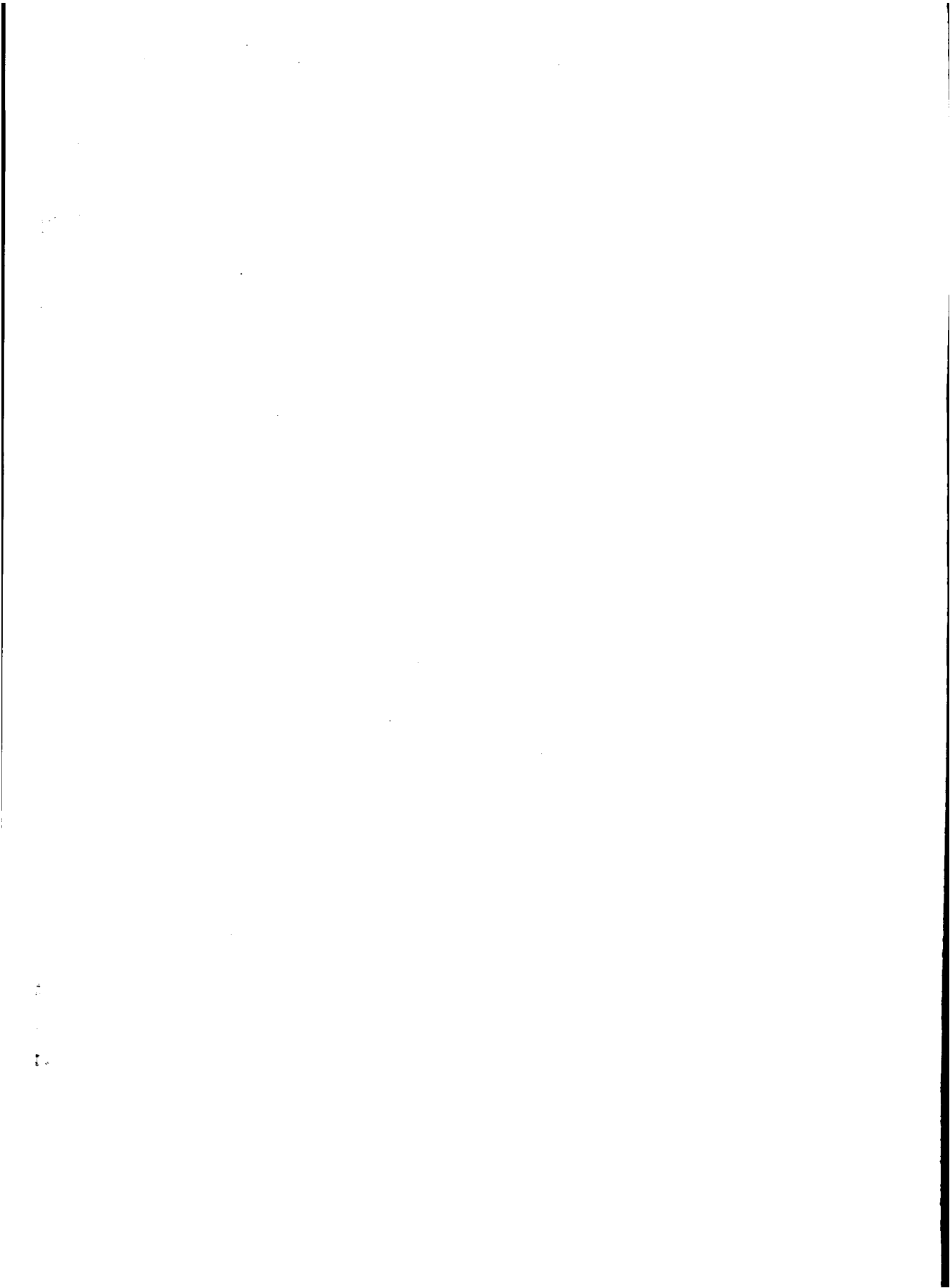
Within the context of the sweeping technological and organizational changes taking place in Latin America and the Caribbean, the future of the economy and labour market will largely be determined by the region's capacity for innovation and the quality of the services or goods it produces. Given this situation, the human factor must be regarded as an essential resource, and qualitative changes have to be made in the role played by education and training, their content and methodologies. Meanwhile, the region's emerging democratic systems demand the establishment of social and political actors that exhibit a capacity for constructive criticism and respect for differences together with a greater capability for systematizing their demands, participating actively in negotiation processes, and pursuing the search for consensus and for a better form of social coexistence based on a full exercise of the rights and duties of citizenship.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean regards human resources development as one of the fundamental components of its proposal for changing production patterns with social equity and as an essential link between the economic growth and social development that contribute to the achievement of both of these objectives.

This study employs a systemic approach as a framework for a theoretical and proposal-oriented analysis of human resources development mechanisms which, on the one hand, lead to discrimination against women but, on the other, open up opportunities for change and avenues for surmounting the lack of gender equity as manifested in the differential socialization of girls and boys, formal and non-formal education, and the occupational sphere.

The analysis reveals significant differences between men and women in each of these subprocesses and stages. These differences are based on the gender inequality which is derived from cultural patterns and norms that assign differing and differently-ranked attitudes, values, skills, responsibilities and powers to individuals on the basis of their sex.

The ultimate objective of the study is to contribute to the design and implementation of public policies which, with the support of a State gender policy and within the framework of the "gender in development" agenda, will enable women to improve the quality of their lives, raise their social status, and bring about a positive change in their position *vis-à-vis* men while at the same time strengthening and reinforcing their autonomy and personal development.



INTRODUCTION

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are engaged in a process of transition towards a model of social and productive organization that is markedly different from the model applied in the post-war period up to the 1970s. According to specialists, a structural transformation has begun which is characterized by a major liberalization effort designed to achieve greater efficiency in the use of resources and to promote greater participation, in terms of both quality and quantity, in international trade. This requires a systematic willingness to change on the part of production sectors, the generation of higher levels of competitiveness and a readiness to take on new challenges. Similarly, the combined effect of new technologies and national and international economic variables is transforming the labour market by affecting the economy's ability to generate employment and changing the profile of the required labour force.

There is agreement that, in the context of profound technological and organizational change, the future of the economy and the labour market will depend above all on their capacity for innovation, flexibility and creativity and on the quality of the products or services that firms generate. This implies considering the human factor as a key resource and, consequently, entails a qualitative change in the role, content and methodology of education and training. However, human resources development also involves teaching people to be good citizens. Democracy depends on the existence of social and political actors and on their greater involvement in society; such actors need greater abilities and skills in order to be able to present their demands systematically and participate in negotiations and the search for consensus.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) attributes special importance to human resources development and considers it to be one of the three key components of its proposal for changing production patterns with social equity. "A third cornerstone of the integrated approach concerns action to facilitate the accumulation of human capital (training, education, nutrition of children and expectant mothers, and health, including drinking water and sanitation infrastructure). This type of action, and especially investment in education, clearly illustrates the complementarity between measures aimed at achieving growth, on the one hand, and social equity, on the other" (ECLAC, 1992b, p. 19). The importance of human resources education and training as vital, empowering links between economic growth and social development becomes evident when it is noted that the need to make progress towards both objectives simultaneously rather than sequentially is a historic challenge which requires that the growing social and economic heterogeneity within each country of the region be taken into account, together with the transnationalization of the economy (ECLAC, 1989a).

An overview of the region reveals great contrasts owing to the fact that, in addition to the economic adjustments and the restructuring of production that have been triggered by its technological modernization and external liberalization, the region also exhibits a marked inability to meet basic needs as well as a growing number of poor people (among whom women are over-represented), whose access to markets, services and full

citizenship is clearly limited. The World Bank has noted (1990) that the countries that have been most successful in combating poverty are precisely those which have advocated a growth model providing for an efficient use of labour resources and have invested in the human capital represented by the poor.

Against this backdrop, it is appropriate to ask how women stand in terms of human resources development, how they are regarded in the light of their specific characteristics within the framework of the prevailing gender system,¹ and what political and social measures are required to enable them to surmount the limitations and obstacles they face. Some experts contend that investment in education for girls, as a means of counteracting the discrimination affecting them, yields the highest return of any investment in the developed world and is an effective means of breaking the vicious circle of poverty owing to its strong impact on the family and society (Summers, 1992). However, not enough effort has yet been made to offer a full education to all women so that they may take part, on an equal footing, in the running of our societies.

A recognition of the fact that genuine social equity cannot exist without gender equity involves facing up to the challenge of female human resources development. Equality of opportunity for women means giving women the same access as men enjoy to education and training, as well as opportunities to make the most of this access so that gender equity becomes a reality. It also means that the special skills acquired by women through the socialization process should be respected and taken into consideration and should be accorded the same value by society in terms of prestige, money and power.

There are a number of mechanisms that lead to discrimination against women in our societies but that, at the same time, constitute potential arenas for promoting change and the elimination of inequity; these mechanisms include the following: a) the differential socialization of boys and girls in the home; b) formal and non-formal education; and c) the working world. This study will analyse each of these processes in relation to the development of female human resources, bearing in mind that the countries of the region are undergoing economic change and present marked contrasts with regard to the status of women. As a result, the study presents glimpses of a situation which is actually far more complex and contradictory. The aim is to contribute to the design and implementation of public policies which, on the basis of a gender perspective, will enable women to improve their social status (by overcoming poverty and gaining access to employment and power) and, within the gender system, to alter their position *vis-à-vis* men and society as a whole, in addition to strengthening and ensuring their autonomy.

The conceptual basis for current training initiatives for women, especially those carried out by non-governmental organizations, gives priority to a comprehensive process which has three primary objectives: greater integration of women into the workforce, personal growth and development, and active participation in society and politics (Yáñez, 1990). For this reason, consideration will also be given to the importance of a systemic approach to human resources development, since, in the specific case of women, such

¹ The concept of gender refers to the cultural, social and historical construct which, on the biological basis of sex, sets standards for what is considered female and what is considered male in society, as well as subjective and group identities, as a result of which men and women are valued differently and relationships are created in which men dominate women. The gender system is a complex power system that relates to extensive, diffuse and unstable processes which find expression in the existing network of institutions, symbols, values, cognitive representations and identities, as well as in the economic and political structure of each society. For a discussion of the application of the gender perspective in development plans and policies, see Rico (1994).

an approach not only provides a theoretical and propositional framework but also a viable, evolving and productive basis for action.

A. HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND THE ISSUE OF GENDER

The importance of defining what characteristics will be desirable for the women of the twenty-first century, with a view to their transition towards evolving societies in which gender equity is possible, raises the following question: What do we mean by human resources development for women? We still do not have sufficient answers to this question.

The concept of human resources has no precise definition despite the fact that the term is becoming more and more widely recognized and used. There is no clear idea of what the term refers to, nor is there any agreement as to its meaning or content. A study of the literature on human resources development shows that both its academic and its practical usage vary and that there is no one universally accepted definition (Steward, 1992). In some instances, the concept is closely linked to training and is directly associated with the acquisition of qualifications, knowledge and skills for employment purposes. In others, it is viewed from the standpoint of business administration and management —as part of a firm's personnel development policy— and is regarded as a means of increasing productivity.

The Jakarta Declaration (ESCAP, 1987) and the integrated approaches adopted over the last few years by a number of institutions in the United Nations system (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations Industrial Development Organization) introduce a broad, systemic concept of development, in which its human and cultural dimension play an important role in attaining equity and overcoming poverty. In this context, human resources development is linked to global processes, is related to both the means and the ends of development, and is essential for economic and social progress. For this reason, it calls for special consideration in development strategies and priorities so that the attendant benefits will be equitable and enjoyed equally by all.

ESCAP (1987) has suggested that attention should focus on three major areas that are necessary to a comprehensive human resources development strategy; these three areas, taken together, are seen as key to a conceptual understanding of the issue: a) the development of employment and skilled manpower; b) science and technology; and c) quality of life. The United Nations Committee for Development Planning (1988), for its part, has recommended that human resources development should embrace three broad categories: a) education and training; b) health, water and sanitation services; and c) food security and nutrition. These interdisciplinary, multifaceted approaches are derived from the strong links and considerable interdependence which exist among the various elements mentioned and place education and training in a wider context.

Training should be considered from the standpoint not only of trainees' future economic output, but also of greater social cohesion, increased participation in politics by the citizenry and wider access to cultural assets (Yáñez, 1990). Any analysis of the development of female human resources must use a broad concept of this process as a referent so as to provide for activities not only in the area of productive training, but also in the spheres of education, living conditions and women's participation in public life.

It is necessary to view the development of human resources as the dissemination and incorporation of cultural codes which act as a catalyst for the positive effects of education and training. ECLAC/UNESCO (1992a) assign priority to the dissemination of "codes of modernism", by which they mean the knowledge and skills needed to participate in public life and to be a productive member of modern society. Mention is also made of the need to ensure that the entire population has access to the basic skills associated with reading and writing, oral and written expression, basic arithmetic, a basic knowledge of computer languages, analytical and logical ability, the flexibility required for teamwork, a grasp of modern concepts of management and administration, and an ability to select information and take decisions. These tools, together with a solid grounding in civics based on such social values as a sense of responsibility, personal autonomy, a respect for differences and a capacity for critical thinking, are seen as a means of producing creative individuals capable of devising imaginative solutions and proposing innovative, participatory courses of action that are conducive to development with social equity.

According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB, 1993), human resources development is, first and foremost, the responsibility of the education system. Consequently, what is needed is a far-reaching educational reform effort which, over the long term, will generate the kind and quantity of resources required by the region.² Nevertheless, those now responsible for implementing changes in production patterns need urgent priority to be accorded, in the short term, to the training and retraining of the labour force.

The application of the gender perspective to the development of human resources makes it possible to link the "social equity with changing production patterns" approach to the quest for self-realization, personal autonomy and the development of women's potentials, as well as to a change in social relationships. Improved training of female human resources would meet the requirement, currently posed in the case of initiatives and policies targeting women, of satisfying both practical and strategic gender needs (Moser, 1989). This is because the training of female human resources is both a tool for improving women's quality of life, facilitating their access to the labour market and raising their incomes and a means of allowing them to take control of their own lives and participate more fully, more equitably and more forcefully in the social, political and economic spheres. It also contributes to women's personal development, increases their self-confidence and self-esteem, and promotes an awareness of their own abilities and contributions to society.

Generally speaking, Latin American systems of social, labour and gender relations are marked by both confrontational and cooperative traits and tendencies, although relationships of conflict and dominance tend to predominate. The content, techniques and quality of training for men and women must be based on a strategy that provides ways of overcoming traditions, stereotypes, beliefs and experiences which, rather than contributing to gender equity, reinforce paternalistic, authoritarian and patriarchal attitudes and promote excessively hierarchical relationships. The gender approach calls for a careful, specific analysis of the social, economic, cultural and political conditions confronting the female population of our countries, of the actual options available to them and of how they are reflected in the areas of education and training and, ultimately, labour. The gender-based division of labour, which restricts women to the reproductive

² ECLAC/UNESCO (1992) presents an outline for a possible educational reform programme in the region.

sphere, and the asymmetry that exists in terms of their access to training and the type of training they receive have enormous implications for gender equity.

It is difficult to integrate women into jobs which require skilled labour or specific skills which do not fall within traditionally "female" categories. In capital-intensive industries which are highly specialized or work with state-of-the-art technologies, the percentage of women in the workforce is lower, as is their occupational mobility within the firm; this leads to a sharp gender imbalance at the higher-skill and more senior management levels (UNIDO, 1993). Consequently, in order to understand the relationship between the gender-based division of labour and female employment, it is necessary to analyse not only the training of human resources but also the issue of skill levels.

According to Maruani (1992), a given job's wage level, its socio-occupational ranking and the social status accorded to the work it involves are all linked to the qualities attributed to it. Analysing how gender-based differences arise in the workplace involves looking particularly closely at the social process of skills acquisition as a process of differentiation and of the creation of distinctions among different types of jobs and, by extension, among the workers who perform them (Rangel de Paiva, 1993). As with the concept of human resources development, there are different interpretations with regard to the conceptualization of skills levels and their scope.

The significance attributed to workers' skill levels has varied according to the specific situation and the different stages of technological development, with different values and meanings being assigned to them on the basis of different analytical and ideological points of view. The relative nature of the term "skill level" is attributable to the fact that its scope varies according to which stage of the process of acquiring know-how and skills is seen as important. The term also takes on a different meaning depending on whether one is dealing with male or female workers, since a "qualified woman" and a "qualified man" are not on an equal footing when it comes to supply and demand in the labour market, and depending on the specific level of productivity resulting from the application of skills and specializations (Riquelme, 1992).

Thus, the concept of skill levels changes and takes on new meanings in line with technological, organizational and socio-economic changes and, at the same time, differs for men and for women. Furthermore, an analysis of the different kinds of skills – technical, functional or social³ – which women acquire reveals the existence of imbalances caused by the fact that their socialization and education stimulate and encourage some skills more than others. By the same token, a gender-based analysis gives the concept a more conflictive and contradictory connotation by bringing to light the fact that the rank and value, as well as the wages and status, accorded to women's skills are less than those ascribed to men's.

Hence, the way in which skills are defined and described is not based on a purely technical, objective and sexually neutral process; it is also a social phenomenon that is historically associated with the construct of the gender system. Accordingly, the culturally based distinction between what is "male" or "masculine" and what is "female" or "feminine" is fundamental to any understanding of human resources development. This

³ According to Riquelme (1992), technical skills should be understood as the scientific and technological know-how and abilities associated with the demands of technical progress. Functional skills are those which enable the worker to adapt continuously to the complex conditions resulting from the influence exerted by technical progress on the organization of work, while social skills are those enabling people to form part of a productive organization, understand the socio-economic context of their activity and participate in an informed, conscious manner.

distinction is also significant when it comes to assessing the influence this exerts over certain areas of knowledge and training; for example, the social concept of women as being technically incompetent has an impact on women's identities and on their integration into production and development processes (Cockburn, 1986).

The gender system, which discriminates against and subordinates women, is manifested in the structure of jobs, wages and hierarchies; it causes the qualifications and skills required and those actually possessed to be perceived differently depending on whether the job applicant is a man or a woman; these differing perceptions mirror the specific types of knowledge that are reinforced during the training and skills acquisition process, and thus have an impact that is felt throughout people's lives.

As a consequence, an analysis of human resources in Latin American societies reveals significant differences between men and women in each stage and subprocess. These differences are based on the gender inequality perpetuated by cultural patterns which assign distinct and hierarchized attitudes, values, skills, tasks and responsibilities to individuals according to their gender.

B. THE PROCESS OF FEMALE HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

1. Socialization

The socialization process, understood as the mechanism whereby people internalize the dominant socio-cultural values and patterns, affects each and every member of society. However, it affects girls and boys differently, since the behaviours and attitudes it promotes or inhibits vary according to gender, giving rise to gender-based differences and conditioning the relationships established between men and women.

The family is the first and main agent of socialization; it is the place where the basic, most deeply-rooted characteristics of male and female roles are learned and where the values are acquired which, with great symbolic and practical effectiveness, will determine what is correct and expected for each individual. Qualitative research and day-to-day experience both show that in Latin America and the Caribbean, the family reinforces traditional patterns and stereotypes about gender roles and about what are considered to be appropriate attitudes and behaviours; these norms then influence women's subsequent academic choices, vocational trends, training demands and employment decisions, which will also be affected by family and domestic responsibilities. The asymmetry of roles and values within the home provides the foundation for the gender-based division of labour, of recreation and of the typified attributes or characteristics which will eventually become the "abilities" and "skills" that will play a decisive role when those human resources come to be evaluated.

The cultural changes that are taking place in the perception of women and of what is "female" or "feminine" in our societies are beginning to be reflected in the socialization of new generations. These changes are being brought about by the new trends associated with the massive incorporation of women into the labour market, their active participation in social and political movements, the reworking of maternal and paternal roles and the advent of birth control, together with a more permissive attitude towards sexuality. However, these new elements are being superimposed upon the traditional ones, with the result that women are working a double or triple working day. This is generating internal contradictions and external conflicts which are affecting women's identities at the same time as new and more subtle forms of subordination are emerging. Meanwhile, the

construct and symbolic reproduction of what is "male" is changing more slowly and less clearly, thereby adding to existing tensions and heightening the contradictions found within the gender system.

The ideas and values transmitted by the family are reinforced by the formal educational system, influenced by social relations and disseminated by the mass media. The media reproduce and re-create—in ways that have a strong impact on children and young people—stereotypes about the roles of each gender, thereby reinforcing inequalities, discrimination and the association of certain skills, jobs and responsibilities with women. A study of low-income groups in Chile found that women take a critical view of the programming, orientation, restrictions and advertising excesses of television, an agent of socialization whose importance grows with each passing day. It also showed that what women want most from television is that it should serve as an educational resource; they want information that is useful for their daily lives, that opens up new approaches to life, new horizons and new identities, and that places them within the national context by highlighting their participation at all levels (Fuenzalida and Hermosilla, 1989).

The mass media have a key role to play in education and socialization; they should therefore present the variety and diversity that exist among women, since women are obviously not all alike and have different living conditions, hopes and expectations. The contribution of the media is also essential for overcoming traditional stereotypes and for presenting women's skills and values as a positive heritage and a real possibility for men.

Differential socialization prepares women to be primarily mothers and housewives, and although women today also have the opportunity to think of themselves as workers, the possibility of finding fulfilment through a career or job is generally presented to them as something additional or extra, and they are not brought up to play a permanent, continuous role in the labour market. Even women see themselves as working only under certain conditions: in case of economic need, if they are single, if they have no children, if their children are grown up, if their husband cannot fulfil his role as provider, if they can work at home or if their working hours are flexible.

If what boys and girls learn in the home is to become more diversified and less exclusionary, so that the assignment of different roles and behaviours to men and women is not perpetuated, it is important to understand the complex mechanisms that determine the future behaviour patterns and aspirations of girls and young women. But this effort needs to be coupled with the "re-socialization" of mothers and fathers and with real opportunities for women to expand their options.

The informal nature of the socialization process makes it difficult to apply concrete measures that will have a directly effect upon it. However, there is a consensus that such measures should concentrate on deconstructing the practice of assigning the task of biological and social reproduction exclusively to women (ECLAC, 1989b; Rico, 1993) and on involving men more decisively and giving them more responsibilities in this sphere. The State should also adopt public policies to facilitate reproductive tasks (day-care centres, laundry and meals services, parental leave), which would involve recognizing their societal character.

The adoption of new forms of socialization and new values relating to women requires the participation of all social actors and a genuine willingness on the part of all individuals so that this process can become a central aspect of the training of the kinds of human resources needed to go beyond mere words and give substance to democracy and social equity. Therefore, a policy for the development of human capital must, in a coordinated manner designed to avoid sending out contradictory signals, encompass

dimensions that include the family, the social environment, the mass media and formal and informal education.

2. Education

As a basic element in the training and development of human resources, education in the broad sense of the term, involves the action of a wide range of educational agents and of teaching and learning systems. These agents and systems can be classified into two main groups: i) formal education, understood as an educational system that is divided into chronologically structured stages, beginning with preschool and ending with higher education, whose purpose is to lead to the award of academic degrees or diplomas; and ii) non-formal education, which covers a variety of organized educational activities that are offered by different institutions and conducted outside the regular structure of the formal system; these activities are designed to meet the very diverse learning needs and interests of different groups and are primarily intended for adults.

a) *The formal educational system*

In Latin America and the Caribbean it is generally agreed that formal education, along with legislation, is one of the main fields in which substantive changes have taken place in terms of the elimination of existing inequalities between women and men. Estimates of the gaps between men and women at various educational levels since the 1950s up to the present show that the differences have been reduced considerably in most of the countries. Today, enrolment at the primary and secondary levels is virtually the same for boys and girls, and this trend is now spreading to universities and technical institutions.

This is the result of a major effort by the Governments concerned. Nevertheless, during the 1970s and 1980s per capita spending on education declined in almost all the countries,⁴ thereby detracting somewhat from the progress made. A 1989 United Nations study based on a 17-country sample that included Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Jamaica, Mexico and Peru has demonstrated that structural adjustment policies have had a fairly strong negative impact on female/male ratios at all grade levels, and particularly at the secondary level. This reduction in the percentage of women and girls has been especially notable in the case of girls from rural households and marginal households in urban areas. Moreover, although the female population has increased its educational capital, women have yet to reach, in anything approaching significant numbers, the educational levels required for better paying and high-productivity occupations.

The recognition of the importance of education for women is based on the fact that, in addition to being a right and having a social and cultural impact, it also has

⁴ According to UNESCO data (1990), total per capita spending on education in Latin America fell from US\$ 88 to US\$ 60 between 1980 and 1986, and the percentage of gross domestic product allocated to education dropped from 3.9% in 1980 to 3.6% in 1986. The profound economic and social changes that have taken place were not accompanied by an educational policy designed to respond to new challenges. To the contrary, the impression is that, beyond the figures, the general quality of education has deteriorated in recent years.

significant economic effects on the countries concerned. Numerous studies have demonstrated and confirmed its multiplier effects and the positive correlations between the education of women and the health of children and families, birth control, the number of children,⁵ and the decline of maternal and child mortality. Education also changes economic and social relations and participation in public life, and at the individual level, it enhances women's autonomy and self-esteem.

At the primary level, which is where children's learning is stimulated, national values are inculcated and a basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic are transmitted, textbooks and teaching methods are enormously important. The text and illustrations in these books contain stereotypes that have a negative influence on the self-perception and identity of girls and perpetuate various forms of gender-related discrimination. Teaching materials make almost exclusive use of male models in technical fields and in discussions of the exercise of power, and automatically use the word "man", the masculine grammatical gender and male images to represent humanity. In general, they fail to impart to girls a sense of value and self-confidence, they do not foster the belief that they can do the same things as boys and just as well, and they transmit to boys images of themselves and of girls that will affect a future relationships between them.

The stereotypes most often found in educational materials depict women as being primarily devoted to serving others and confined to the closed world of the family circle. They present a deformed image of women that revalues around their roles as mother, spouse and housewife and conceals women's role as producers. They barely touch on women's rights, much less their contribution to community development and society.⁶ History, for example, is taught in a way that gives students the idea that only men have done important things in the past; this tends to create a collective inferiority complex in women and a superiority complex in men.

Therefore, it is important not only to identify existing discriminatory stereotypes and offer new models to girls and boys, but also to determine if the social reality depicted by the textbooks corresponds to the roles actually played by women⁷ and if they prepare students for the social demands that will be made of them. But this problem is not limited

⁵ In developing countries, the education of women contributes much more than that of men to the reduction of the birth rate (Hallak, 1991). According to studies in Latin America, thanks to education, especially of women, the birth rate declined from 60% to 40% during the 1980s. In Brazil, it is estimated that illiterate women have an average of 6.5 children, whereas women with secondary-level studies average 2.5 (Chlebowska, 1990).

⁶ Andrée Michel (1987) studied 29 primary school textbooks in Peru and made the following observations: overall, men were referred to 78% of the time and women 22%; illustrations had similar percentages (75% and 25%, respectively). Of 100 passages describing homes, 70 referred to women and 30 to men; when a school was described, however, 80% of the references were to males and 20% to females. Of 104 occupations mentioned, 79 were attributed exclusively to men, eight to women (cooking, sewing, ironing) and only 17 were considered to be open to both sexes. Professions requiring higher education were presented as being reserved exclusively for men.

⁷ A study in Chile showed that, according to the 1990 National Employment Survey, women represent 31.8% of the labour force; however, pictures of and references to occupations appearing in textbooks, portray women only 16.5% of the time. Likewise, even though 10.2% of manual workers are women, this group is not represented in the textbooks, and even though women comprise 52.9% of the country's university-trained and technical professionals, they are mentioned in only 16.8% of the cases and even these references are confined to women who work as teachers and nurses (National Women's Service (SERNAM), 1992).

to textbooks. It is also reflected in teaching practices, and special attention should therefore be paid to teacher training. A study in Ecuador on male and female teachers shows that 72% of those surveyed were unaware of any women working in the field of electronics and considered men to be better technicians than women; moreover, three out of every 10 teachers felt obligated to orient students towards "careers suitable to their gender" (Robalino, Villanueva and Isch, 1992).

Although no data are available on the impact of this disinformation (performance indicators show that girls are better students than boys),⁸ as a transmitter of sexist norms, values and ideologies, it undoubtedly has a significant influence on activities, behaviour patterns and forms of conduct, factors that affect the women's human resources profiles.

A positive development in this regard is that many countries of the region have begun revising their textbooks to correct these flaws and have been encouraging the production of books and teaching materials in line with new attitudes towards women. At present, however, women's education is somewhat ambiguous, since they are no longer prepared only to be housewives, but neither are they truly prepared to be workers or to participate in decision-making processes, with all its attendant implications. Models for women, behaviour and attitudes are superimposed upon each other which do not necessarily expand women's options or open up new horizons, since it seems that giving priority to their reproductive roles as part of a family "agenda" is still inevitable. Meanwhile, models for men are changing more slowly; thus engendering an imbalance in terms of innovations in gender images which accompanies the overlapping of contradictory models.

At the secondary level, when childrens' orientation towards professional life and employment is begun with a view to their future technical training or entrance into university, vocational guidance is insufficient and course content is not geared to the demands of productive activity. The countries' educational agendas are limited, *inter alia*, by new economic and socio-political conditions, which lay bare the system's shortcomings relation to new realities.

Secondary education is clearly influenced by traditional stereotypes of women and of the kind of work that is considered appropriate for them, which contributes to the sexist inertia of the educational system. Thus, in technical schools, preference is given to hairdressing, garment-making and handicrafts, or to what are considered to be more modern disciplines, such as administration, secretarial skills and public relations; in general secondary education, women are encouraged to study social sciences and education, as opposed to engineering or the exact sciences in general.

Upon completing their secondary education, some members of the female population whose socio-economic position allows them to delay their entrance into the labour market and/or marriage, continue their studies in the hope of obtaining a better job in the future. Many of these women enrol in university, since higher technical training seems to be considered as a lower educational level and has less social prestige, especially among the middle- and upper-income strata.

The fact that these young women leave the domestic sphere that has traditionally been reserved for them gives rise to new challenges, expectations and needs. However, in the framework of the negotiations taking place within the gender system as a system

⁸ In Chile, 91.71% of female students passed all their primary education courses, compared to 87.79% of the boys; at the secondary level, the respective percentages are 81.43% and 78.06%. Female students were above the national average in every case (Moreno, 1993).

of power (Rico, 1993), they choose studies and professions in the non-domestic sphere which are an extension of their traditional roles and, as such, fail to change the gender-based division of labour from the symbolic viewpoint or to influence the hierarchy established between the sexes effectively. A greater female presence in the university does not necessarily mean that the social status assigned to each sex at that level is changing, although it may, to some extent, lead to a redefinition of occupational roles and to a qualitative change that is as yet difficult to analyse.

The "feminization of the universities" from a quantitative viewpoint is due not so much to a redistribution of occupational possibilities as to the fact that women give great importance to certain careers traditionally linked with "feminine activities", which are therefore given less value. Studies in different countries show that women opt mainly for social, educational and communications sciences, psychology, nursing and dentistry. The enrolment of women is also rising in chemistry, law, medicine and architecture, careers that used to be prestigious and hence had a masculine image, but at present tend to be perceived as "options for women", which appears to be leading to a steady decline in their status in terms of how they are perceived in the labour market (Varela, 1991). Meanwhile, engineering and the hard sciences remain predominantly "male" professions. However, although it is an extremely slow process and despite differences from one country to the next in the region owing to the heterogeneity of their economic and modernization processes, women are advancing in professional areas which were previously reserved almost exclusively for males. This trend is present throughout the world and is especially strong in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO, 1990).

Males, for their part still appear to be opting for careers with a masculine profile and are hesitant to choose professions that might be considered to be a "continuation of the home", such as teaching or nursing, or those that are normally more readily open to women, such as secretarial positions; this all seems quite logical, since they are more poorly paid and have a lower social status.

The decision to study for a traditional or unambitious career is not always due to a lack of motivation; such a choice may also be based on a belief that, realistically, employment possibilities for women are limited. At times, self-discrimination is a factor, arising from a perception of inability to perform technical work satisfactorily. Such difficulties are compounded by the demands of domestic and family-related tasks, which in fact prevent women from pursuing their own life agenda unencumbered by the problems associated with such responsibilities. The contradiction between productive and reproductive work has been internalized by women and is reflected in the attitudes and decisions they take in professional and employment-related fields.

The types of subjects preferred by women reduce the impact of their extensive participation in the educational system. It is thus not enough to ensure women access to education; it is also necessary to redirect their participation towards areas of specialization that offer better prospects, since otherwise they will tend to form a pool of inexpensive yet skilled labour for saturated and poorly paid sectors.

The lack of coordination between women's educations and specialized fields of study and the labour market, and the different speeds at which changes take place in education and in the working world and the economy, make it difficult for women graduates to establish a position within the new occupational profiles that predominate today. If projects to increase female participation in non-traditional areas of higher education are to be more successful and effective, they must also be closely linked to a strong demand on the part of young women and their parents for higher education in new areas, together with a strong demand for educated women in the labour market (Dundar

and Haworth, 1993). Public campaigns must be promoted to encourage both women and employers to work towards these objectives.

Education is considered, to some extent, as a vehicle for upward social mobility, despite the fact that it has been shown to be losing its effectiveness as such. This is not, however, equally true for men and women. Together with the general perplexity felt by young people as they prepare for their adult lives, women students are also aware that their education will not necessarily lead to a better position or higher income. According to a study in Uruguay on how university students see their future employment in relation to their present investment in education, 38% of the women expected to progress substantially, whereas 43% of the men had that expectation. Women also have more doubts about their future employment, whereas men are more secure about the outcome of their wages that education will lead to a better job. Experience shows that, thanks to their studies, women are participating more in cultural life and are acquiring a certain prestige, but their education does not necessarily give them access to economic, social or political power.

This rise in formal education for women is marked by serious gaps with regard to vulnerable groups, such as girls and young women from low-income urban sectors, peasant women and indigenous women. Structural limitations associated with poverty, geographical isolation, family educational background and cultural patterns limit the access of many women to education in some countries. Moreover, the perception that education for women is not very profitable leads poor families to refrain from sending their daughters to school, not only because they consider the investment of little worth, since women are paid less for their work than men, but also because they are required to perform reproductive and productive tasks to contribute to their household's subsistence, and these functions are seen as being highly useful. Their role in the household and community economies is very important, and they normally go directly from puberty to maternity, with no chance to attend to their own development or future life.

When women from these sectors do attend school, they discover that their daily lives, life experiences, and linguistic and cultural reality are far removed from the type of education they receive. The fact that what they learn has very little practical utility also saps girls' motivation to study.

An analysis of the movement of people in the region, especially as regards rural to urban migration, shows that women predominate in such migratory flows, especially young women between 15 and 30 years of age, and this has considerably increased the size of the migratory female economically active population over the last few decades. Most of these women are looking for work, but not all of them are successful because of their low educational levels (as a result of the shortcomings of the formal educational system in rural areas), and their lack of skills and experience, which make them unable to meet the demands of the urban labour market. Moreover, the labour market is segmented and restricted, which leads to high rates of unemployment among women or limits women to low productivity, poorly paid jobs, mostly as domestic servants.

In conclusion, it can be said that even though educational systems at present do not explicitly place women at a disadvantage, the fact that these systems are part of a broader society that does so means that men and women make different uses of the opportunities education offers based on the mainstream valuations, stereotypes and beliefs in their society. Therefore, positive actions must be taken to place girls and young women on an equal footing with their male counterparts.

In some countries, the Ministry of Education has officially begun to incorporate women's issues. Chile, for example, has launched an education and gender programme

which includes activities at the central, regional and provincial levels, with the following objectives: to provide female students with the same type of orientation with respect to careers and professions as men receive; to ensure women access to all forms of education; to eliminate stereotypes about male and female roles at all levels and in all forms of education; and to provide genuinely equal opportunities for scholarships and subsidies, so that women can participate in supplementary educational programmes, including functional literacy courses, adult education, and the dissemination of specific informative material aimed at ensuring the health and well-being of the family (Moreno, 1993).

b) *Non-formal education*

The non-formal education system, run by various community organizations and institutions, churches and government or development entities, offers another means of acquiring knowledge and training. For those sectors of the population that have had access to more and better formal education, this system completes the training they have already acquired and teaches them the skills they need to carry out new activities, whether recreational or work-related. However, for needier sectors, in which women are over-represented, non-formal education provides them with a way of compensating for the deficiencies and disadvantages of their training resulting from their more limited access to formal education.

In recent decades, a wide variety of educational and training activities aimed at low-income sectors have been designed and implemented in the countries of the region, primarily by non-governmental organizations and development agencies. These initiatives are mainly geared towards adults, are usually carried out in the context of so-called "popular education", focus on raising people's standard of living by enabling them to meet their basic needs, and involve deliberate efforts to change and improve upon the conditions existing in each community. Generally, these actions fall into three strategic categories: i) social and family advocacy; ii) promotion of culture, participation and grass-roots organization, and iii) training in the use of appropriate technologies and the execution of production projects. The wide-ranging experience gained in the course of activities directed towards women encompasses elements related to local development, group organization and action, the formation of social and political actors, satisfaction of basic needs, income generation, literacy training and personal development.

Despite the importance of non-formal education activities they are often insufficiently documented and systematized, fragmentary and marginal for most of society, and therefore have limited social visibility. However, they have had a strong qualitative impact on the lives of many working-class women (urban, rural, indigenous and black women) in terms of their adoption of new attitudes towards family, labour and social relations and about themselves.

The expanding coverage of primary education has significantly raised the literacy rate, especially among young people. However, one of the special challenges that has yet to be met by non-formal adult education is to eliminate illiteracy,⁹ given the evident disadvantage it represents in terms of human resources, both for individuals and for the economic and development processes under way. This problem affects more women than

⁹ In Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 20% of women over age 25 are illiterate (United Nations, 1992).

men; in Latin America and the Caribbean, the illiteracy rate for women is 17.0%, compared to 13.6% for men (UNESCO, 1992a). Most of the women in the region who have not attended school reside in rural areas, work on small farms or belong to indigenous groups (or both) and have levels of education that differ sharply from those of women in urban areas.¹⁰

For adult women who have been unable to obtain an education, literacy training represents a second chance to acquire knowledge, as well as a path to self-realization and a basic right. Experience in this field shows that literacy training in a strict sense — i.e., conceived as an end in itself that does not guarantee the acquisition of basic technical knowledge and skills with which basic needs can be met and the quality of life enhanced— ends in failure, however (Chlebowska, 1990). This training must therefore be understood and organized as a specific action that takes women's particular features and needs into account and that must be adapted to their daily lives. This will help in some way to improve the quality of their personal and family lives and will facilitate public participation in their community, as well as their entry or re-entry into the labour market.

Non-formal educational activities have gone through different stages that exhibit certain similarities to the various development strategies for women and to the cultural changes that have altered their image. At first, starting from their traditional role, women were trained primarily in techniques related to their household chores: cooking, sewing, embroidery, childcare, handicrafts, nutrition and primary health care. When women's potential role in the production system and in community management began to gain recognition, workshops, courses and seminars tended to focus on subjects such as home-building, business education and appropriate technologies. These actions often failed to address the situation of women in general and the gender system in which they live, and it was unclear how women could use the elements provided to develop an autonomous life plan with well-defined goals in terms of both family life and work.

In recent years, educational and training programmes incorporating the gender perspective have been launched in a wide variety of areas. The adoption of this approach is intended to reveal the various forms taken by women's subordination, on the assumption that discrimination against women can be stopped if they become more aware of their situation and more active in developing their capacity to generate alternatives for change as builders of new societal models. In general, activities have been geared towards promoting group solidarity, personal development, assertiveness and attitudinal change, as well as creating conditions in which women can express their demands in a way that reflects their situation in terms of class, ethnic origin and gender. These efforts consist mainly of complementary training courses based on an integrated conception of women's development which are designed to tap their potential, build their self-esteem, deal with the prejudices and difficulties they may encounter and engender a suitable appreciation of their aptitudes and interests. Such workshops form an increasingly close link between poor women and the ideas generated by the feminist movement.

¹⁰ In 1980, 19.2% of Brazilian women living in urban areas were illiterate, compared to 48.0% of those living in rural areas. In Ecuador, the percentages for 1982 were 8.0% and 33.1%, respectively. In 1981, 21.6% of female city dwellers in the Dominican Republic were illiterate, while 42.4% of women living in the countryside lacked education (Chlebowska, 1990). The contrast is even more striking in countries such as Bolivia, where one out of every four women is illiterate (Montaño, 1993).

Some women's organizations and non-governmental organizations have also carried out training activities that focus on consciousness-raising from a decidedly feminist perspective. These workshops and "schools" use innovative methodologies, based on the experiences of women themselves, that take a political stand and seek to build a distinct female identity and a women's social movement. However, despite these creative and critical efforts, there is sometimes a significant gap between the core principles of feminism and the training methodologies in actual use (Hee Pedersen, 1988), which are sometimes quite markedly hierarchized; this limitation constitutes a formidable challenge, to which some organizations have already responded.¹¹

Currently, one of the most pressing problems of women in low-income urban areas is the lack of job training. In non-formal educational initiatives, job training is being given increasingly high priority because it represents a way of meeting practical gender needs, such as getting a job and earning a better income. At the same time, however, the extent to which this approach also meets a strategic gender need must be evaluated, and this will depend on the type and orientation of the training provided. For example, training in non-traditional activities broadens women's job opportunities and, in the long run, can become an important tool for simultaneously correcting occupational segregation — which stems from the sexual division of labour — and increasing women's autonomy.

To enhance social equity, the region's women must acknowledge the need to discover and strengthen their capacity to exercise power. Based on that conviction, steps are being taken to train female political, neighbourhood and community leaders and so as to expand their roles as citizens and increase their public influence by stimulating their capacity for leadership and social participation. As one part of such initiatives, women are being taught a series of techniques to help them optimize their qualifications (development of self-confidence, stress control, self-expression and public speaking, time management, assertiveness training, conflict resolution and new ways of negotiating and forming alliances with other social actors) without losing sight of their gender-specific qualities.

One very interesting process that has arisen from the need to multiply training activities while at the same time increasing women's leadership role is the training of community monitors. These monitors are women who work with grass-roots organizations and who, despite their lack of specific professional training or a great deal of schooling, perform technical functions, participate in various development and local management initiatives, act as facilitators, train and support the women of their community and serve as a link between the latter and development organizations. These monitors, who do all of this as volunteers, are agents with the capacity to replicate training efforts and to guide the organizational and social dynamics of the groups with which they work.

Training workshops on women's rights, which mainly target working-class sectors, are intended to inform women of their legal rights as individuals and citizens, train them in the day-to-day exercise of those rights and provide them with the tools they need in order to deal with problems of domestic violence, child custody, separation from or abandonment by their spouses, loss of employment, entitlement to maternity benefits, etc.

¹¹ The teaching proposals of the Dominican Republic's Centre for Women's Research and Action (CIPAF) and Peru's "Flora Tristán" and "Manuela Ramos" centres represent a liberating educational alternative for women in the context of community education (CEAAL, 1986).

In view of the exacerbation of environmental problems in the region and their relationship to poverty, training workshops have been held in which the important role of women in managing natural resources and achieving sustainable development is recognized. In seeking alternatives for overcoming the environmental crisis, these workshops provide women with information on new ways of using and taking advantage of resources, encourage them to think about consumption patterns and home food production, and train them in the use of alternative technologies. In the case of peasant women, appropriate technologies also help to counter their displacement from certain jobs owing to the mechanization of agricultural food production and processing. However, one of the greatest limitations of these experiments is that they reinforce the performance of activities traditionally carried out by women instead of changing the gender-based division of labour and roles.

Training activities have also been undertaken in the area of health care (mainly reproductive and mental health), with emphasis on the analysis of female sexuality, the meaning of motherhood and gender socialization, among other topics. Recently, other subjects of increasing interest have begun to receive attention, such as the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, occupational health and the effects of environmental pollution. These workshops give women a chance to exercise their right to take decisions concerning their own bodies, protect their mental well-being and demand health services that are suited to their interests and needs.

The type of non-formal education defined as "popular" represents an important methodological innovation, since it uses anti-authoritarian techniques that promote active, participatory group learning and take advantage of women's knowledge, relating it to the material being taught and to women's everyday problems. One of the main features of this type of education is the flexibility of its programming, which allows for the incorporation of material or actions in response to unforeseen needs or factors as they arise. The structure of training programmes, workshops and seminars usually includes the transmission of certain messages and information by specialists or monitors; in addition, the participants share their experiences and analyse the relevant topics as a group. At the same time, there are ludico-recreational and affective elements that help the women get to know each other, establish relationships of trust and feel more sure of themselves. All of this translates into an interactive educational process that has a strong impact on the beneficiaries and on society's human capital.

As a result of their situation of poverty and low level of education, the participants have specific needs and aspirations that have been shaped by their life experiences and particular ways of acquiring knowledge, and, accordingly, they also exhibit specific characteristics as students. Consideration of the particular features of these women's situations when planning any non-formal educational activity is important to its success.

Moreover, much of the female population is in need of information, which may be understood as a form of power and a means of enabling women to "handle" their surroundings and become integrated into society on a more equitable basis. Since the creation of information systems, centres and networks is seen as another way of providing training in subject areas of interest to women and of informing them about specific benefits, this has become a new priority for non-governmental organizations and for Governments.

These mechanisms, which are readily available, free of charge and staffed by trained personnel, give women direct access to information on issues related to their daily lives, on forms of participation in their communities and on organizations or persons to which they can turn for help in solving their problems.

The women who go to these centres are usually motivated by a need for legal information, and, given the importance attached to legal equality during the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), most such systems have specialized in this area. However, changes in production structures have turned job-related information and guidance into vitally important instruments that can provide valuable assistance to young women seeking work for the first time and to women who are re-entering the labour market. Advisory services thus need to place more emphasis on job counselling and to offer women information on existing training alternatives and possibilities for gaining access to them, guidance on the options available in the labour market and help in finding employment.

c) *Education in the gender perspective*

The theoretical and methodological progress of studies and knowledge on the inequity, subordination and discrimination that affect women in the region's societies has led to the introduction of a new topic in human resources development: education in the gender perspective.

As part of the process of redefining work to take account of women's participation, many non-governmental organizations in the region have held gender workshops for representatives of community groups involved in various projects. The purpose of these workshops is to compare experiences, identify problems and coordinate actions and to try to incorporate the gender dimension into all the activities to be undertaken; to that end, the women who participate are given information on the operational aspects of the gender-based approach.

The issue of female human resources development concerns not only training for women, but also the training which everyone (both men and women) needs in areas directly related to the structuring of the existing gender system and possible ways of changing it with a view to enhancing social equity.

The agents involved in the transmission of knowledge can play a very important role in perpetuating prejudices and sexist stereotypes or, conversely, in helping to overcome and eliminate them. It is important to remedy the dearth of training in the area of women's studies and gender studies among those who currently carry out such functions as the education, training and retraining of the labour force in the region so that they may become active agents of change, both in the production structure and in the cultural values and models that impede women's equitable integration into this process. To that end, efforts have begun, though still on a modest scale, to train the trainers who work in technical education institutions, the outreach workers in charge of the technical assistance provided by non-governmental organizations, and public officials in various ministries.

In some countries, the recognition of the need to adopt a gender-sensitive development planning strategy¹² has led to the implementation of training activities for male and female department heads and professionals working in regional, provincial and

¹² Chile's National Women's Service (SERNAM) and Office of the Under-Secretary for Regional and Administrative Development organized a seminar for public officials entitled "Gender in development: Theoretical and methodological instruments for planning". At the international level, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has also created training modules for staff who participate in development projects.

municipal governments. The object is to ensure that the people in charge of designing and executing social policies take into account the gender perspective and the specific, gender-differentiated needs of women.

However, non-formal education has not been the only area open to this topic: undergraduate and postgraduate training in gender studies is becoming a requirement for specialists in various professional and technical fields, and universities and specialized centres have already begun to offer courses on the subject. These courses impart theoretical and methodological frameworks which, through multidisciplinary analysis, contribute to a better understanding of the region's societies, help incorporate the gender perspective into professional praxis, contribute to the analysis of development problems, and stimulate research and the generation of data disaggregated by sex.

C. WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

One of the most notable and dynamic features of Latin American and Caribbean societies since the 1950s has been the entry of a huge number of women into the labour market as a result of the constant increase in the need for women to contribute to household income, their growing participation in social and political life and the changes occurring in women's images. Despite the economic, social and cultural importance of this phenomenon, its long-term effects on women's identity, their vocational and job aspirations and the gender system, based on a redefinition of their relationship with men and society as a whole, have yet to be determined.

However, even though the proportion of women in the total workforce has increased, figures for women still lag behind those for men. In addition, the participation of women in the workforce is characterized by concentration in the informal sector, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, occupational segregation and a marked degree of wage discrimination. Consequently, despite the changes which have occurred, the structure of employment in each branch of activity has scarcely varied; nor have skill levels or technical training of women increased significantly. Although a whole range of economic, social and political factors may favour the integration of women into gainful employment during certain periods, traditional views persist in which the female labour force is regarded as a secondary workforce that is highly unstable, lacking in the necessary skills and restricted by maternity and reproductive responsibilities. Despite these problems, current trends indicate that women in Latin American and Caribbean countries remain in the labour market once they have entered it.

Despite the obstacles which still prevent women from gaining access to work on an equal footing with men, women feel that once they have entered the working world, they gain in terms of feelings of personal worth, independence and autonomy. Their increasing willingness to participate in the working world constitutes a challenge which calls for articulated, innovative responses that will make possible the appropriate development of these currently underutilized human resources. It is important for us to ask ourselves, within the current context of change in the productive sphere, whether it is best for the economic development of the countries for such a significant — and increasingly qualified and skilled — sector of the population to remain on the fringes of the labour market.

Women are concentrated in a limited number of branches of activity and in a restricted number of occupations, primarily domestic service; administrative office jobs; community, social and personal services; commerce; restaurants and hotels; and, within

the manufacturing industry, the garment and textile sectors. National case studies carried out within the framework of the International Labour Organization (ILO) regional project entitled "Regulation of female labour in Latin America" note *inter alia*, that there exist insufficient mechanisms in the field of education or vocational training to promote the integration of women into occupations in which they are underrepresented. The supply of educational services and workforce training courses geared to women still concentrates on traditional occupations, which is a reflection of the structure of demand in the labour market.

These features of the female labour market have begun to change somewhat during the last decade, although its dominant characteristics remain the same. Since the use of computers has become widespread, the presence of women in the financial sector has fluctuated between 5% and 7%; their presence has only recently begun to be felt in the transport, storage and communications sectors, where they make up 1% to 2% of the workforce. Similarly, slow growth has been observed in fields, such as metallurgy, electronics and engineering, which up until now have been out of bounds for women, although women are more likely to perform administrative duties in these industries than specifically operational or technical ones (Silveira, 1993).

Over the last 20 years, the higher educational level of the new generations of women joining the labour market has been reflected particularly clearly in the high-growth occupations linked to the modern services sector and non-manual sectors in the rest of the economy. According to information collected in six countries (Brazil, Panama, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile and Paraguay) over the period 1960-1980, the fastest growing occupational category for women is directors and managers (between 150% and 200% in Brazil and Panama), followed by secretaries, office workers, saleswomen, professionals and technicians (ORIT, 1991). Nonetheless, it bears repeating that female workers' employment profile continues to be dominated by the traditional occupations.

Thanks to the fact that education has become widely available throughout the region and to women's high level of participation in the educational system, the women in the economically active population, taken as a group, have attained a higher level of formal education than the male population, both employed and unemployed.¹³ Nevertheless, there are two clearly identified problems in this area. First, despite the fact that education and vocational training are key factors in obtaining a job, many women remain unemployed even though they are highly educated. Second, women's higher level of education and their growing presence in non-manual occupations have not translated into an increase in income; indeed, there are significant differences between the wages men and women receive for work that is of equal worth and involves an equal investment in terms of human capital (in education, experience and training).

Income levels are highly sensitive to economic conditions. During the economic crisis of the 1980s, it was found that the higher the level of education, the greater the adverse income gap; in other words, income differences between illiterate men and women were significantly smaller than they were between men and women who had

¹³ In 1980, in seven countries within the region (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama and Uruguay), the percentage of employed women who had received 10 or more years of schooling (secondary school and university education) was much larger than the percentage of women with three years of schooling or less. At the upper end of the spectrum, women surpass men by between 40% and 125%, whereas at the lower end, there are 20% to 60% fewer women than men (ORIT, 1991, p. 20).

undertaken university studies (Arriagada, 1990; Parada, 1991);¹⁴ such differences lessened when the economic recovery began in several of the countries (ECLAC, 1993). Within the region, the income of women with up to nine years of education is lower than that of men with up to five years of education (ECLAC, 1991), which indicates that, the above notwithstanding, wage discrimination against women in different income brackets is an across-the-board phenomenon.

This situation does not affect all women in the same way. Studies of the different stages of people's working lives indicate that wage discrimination increases with age. This increase in educational level is evident among women under 35 years of age, but older women do not have the same education or skills, and their qualifications differ substantially from those of men; as a result, they perform less-skilled jobs which are less stable, poorly paid and more vulnerable to technological and productive changes. Men's skills levels generally increase with age; in contrast, given the nature of the skills required of women working in factories —for example, fine motor function, dexterity and quickness— as women get older, they often become increasingly less skilled and face greater unemployment. Thus, for women, there is a direct relationship between increasing age and lower educational levels, less training, greater unemployment and greater occupational segregation.

According to some authors, the qualitative differences which exist in regard to both the supply of and demand for labour, indicate that, actually, men and women are not competing in the same market, but are instead subject to different requirements in what amounts to two sub-markets for labour —one for female workers and another for male workers— with gender-differentiated socio-occupational structures (Silveira, 1993); this has significant implications from the point of view of gender analysis.

The integration of women into the labour market and their vocational training and professional development are marked by structural characteristics and specific gender-related difficulties that have been inherited from the past; this picture is further complicated by the addition of the various aspects of the current productive and technological development process in Latin America. These characteristics are becoming increasingly influential and complex, and any effort to understand them therefore requires a non-linear reading of the situation; consequently, a variety of social factors will have to be brought to bear, in an active, concerted manner if such characteristics are to be changed and improved (Silveira, 1993). An analysis of the education and job-related training received by women thus permits a fuller understanding to be achieved of the problems that women face as human resources and of the measures which are necessary to promote their development.

1. Education and job-related training

The swift rate of technological change, increasing international competition, the growing complexity of markets and the increasing sophistication of demand create a need for constant renewal and change in the system of production, including its human resources. González contends (1993) that productivity can increase in a variety of very different ways; one such way involves what the author describes as policies that act upon factors

¹⁴ In Chile, between 1960 and 1985, on average, women earned only 68% of what men did (Arriagada, 1990, p. 97). In Bolivia, women with a higher education earn 73% of what men do (Montaño, 1993).

which precede involvement in the labour market or fall outside its bounds. González feels that such policies can have a huge impact on future labour productivity and should focus on a series of areas in need of improvement in the public policy sphere (education, health, nutrition, vocational training); these policies should be supplemented by the introduction of measures based on a State-sponsored gender strategy which would ensure equality of opportunity for women.

The new model of industrial production —whose mainstays are the use of flexible technologies and new methods of management suited to heterogeneous, changing markets— also alters the nature of work and of the qualifications required. These changes, whose effects are added to those of structural adjustment, vary by occupational category, sex, level of educational attainment, country and level of industrial and technological development and modernization.

Due to the unequal value attributed to men and women (a product of the dominant gender system), women face a series of obstacles in their attempts to gain access to professional and job-related training, in the application of the skills so acquired (or, in other words, access to work and production resources), and in regard to working conditions and their chances promotion once they have honed those skills (Ulshoefer, 1991). The training of the workforce is a crucial element in business competitiveness and development. Nonetheless, the kind of training that women generally receive is not geared to meet the demands of businesses; this has a negative influence on women's integration in the workplace and career growth. Situations also arise, however, where appropriately qualified women do not have access to jobs that they are suited to perform.

The main problems related to the development of female human resources for the labour market are: inadequate vocational training, a shortage of qualified female workers and a lack of motivation on the part of the labour force. As a result of gender socialization, the gender-based division of labour and a lack of awareness of alternative forms of training, women usually choose to train for traditional occupations to which the labour market attaches little worth, thus limiting their incomes.

Generally speaking, the non-formal technical courses which working-class women tend to choose, bear little relation to the jobs they in fact perform in the labour market, which generally involve domestic duties. In a study conducted in makeshift settlements in Buenos Aires, it was observed that, with the exception of women who had studied dressmaking and could therefore work as seamstresses or dressmakers, women who had received training had been unable to make use of what they had learned. Women who had attended courses in hairdressing, cosmetology and manicuring were unable to apply their training or met with failure after having gone into business for themselves because, among other reasons, there was no clientele for these types of services in the areas where they lived and "ecological marginalization" prevented them from gaining access to jobs in suburbs where there was indeed work (Gallart and others, 1992).

The interests and aspirations of young women adapt to the supply of training services and existing job opportunities, and they therefore end up in the same types of jobs as their predecessors. Whether out of cultural tradition or as a means of avoiding problems, most young women agree with the societal stereotypes about "work suitable for women" and "work suitable for men" and share the conviction, derived from naturalist and essentialist concepts, that there are certain jobs for women and others for men. Only rarely do they question this schema; instead they tend to adopt the beliefs espoused by their parents, their teachers in primary and secondary school, vocational training institutions, their boyfriends and their peer groups, all of which influence them and reinforce prevailing cultural norms concerning what is "the right thing to do" in terms of a woman's career choice.

Based on an analysis of enrolments in vocational training institutions in nine countries of the region, a study carried out by ILO within the framework of the project entitled, "Promoting the participation of women in technical and vocational training" found that women made up 47% of the student body and that their numbers were growing slowly but surely. Nevertheless, the distribution of female students indicates that their participation varies in direct relation to the specializations in question and that it reaches its lowest levels in the case of disciplines considered to be "male preserves".¹⁵ Women opt for technical-professional training in similar numbers to men, but they do so on the basis of "traditional" disciplines or occupations which, in terms of integration into the workforce, are associated with a lower level of pay, fewer skill requirements and limited prospects for career development.

Vocational guidance can broaden women's career choices. A good example of this is provided by INATEC, which, since 1988 and in conjunction with the Nicaraguan Women's Institute, has been conducting training programmes for women in non-traditional fields; these programmes have been well received, and the women involved have shown particular interest in programmes on household appliance repair, welding, the rebuilding of engines, automotive electrical systems, industrial electrical systems and automotive mechanics (INATEC, 1993).

Quite apart from the decisions made by women, the labour market and the system of training mutually reinforce their effects in terms of segregation and discrimination. Many of the institutions which currently offer job training differentiate between men and women as regards the courses offered, course contents and requirements, and learning methods. A lack of motivation, in turn, is a considerable obstacle to training initiatives for women, whose need and desire to learn more does not automatically make itself apparent in their daily lives. Paradoxically, however, the low self-esteem of many women is shared by those who are highly qualified; thus, despite their qualifications, such women never feel they have the necessary training to perform certain jobs or assume certain responsibilities. As a result, their constant striving for higher levels of training is reinforced by the fact that, even with these skills, there is generally no guarantee that they will have the same degree of access to appropriate employment as men.

Even when a woman qualifies for a non-traditional occupation or one generally considered as "man's work", she is not necessarily able to gain access to better jobs. This means, on the one hand, that a man and a woman with the same level of skills are valued differently, and, on the other, that the concept of "quality" is regarded as being synonymous with the "inherent" characteristics of men (Ulshoefer, 1991); consequently, a gender analysis must be applied to this situation in order to formulate realistic strategies for the development of female human resources.

Follow-up studies on women graduates of vocational training programmes also show that training alone is not a sufficient condition for obtaining employment. A study in Venezuela found that of 40.2% of the women who graduated from a commerce and services programme, only 17.16% had found work. This low figure could be due to: i) a

¹⁵ According to the data, the female participation rate fluctuates between 4% in areas related to electricity, plumbing and water – compared to 96% in the case of males –, 18% in the building trade, 55% in administration and services, and 65% in finance, commerce and handicrafts. As regards enrolments, 70% of female students are concentrated in finance, administration and services, while 8% opt for industrial programmes, 5% for commerce and computer sciences, 2% for building and business development and 0.3% for electrical studies; there were no women studying disciplines related to mining (Silveira, 1992).

lack of absorption capacity on the part of the labour market in the commercial sector; ii) market saturation in some occupations; iii) deficient training; and iv) low priority given to the incorporation of women into employment (INCE, 1992). These results point up the need for specific studies to provide information on other factors, in addition to whether or not the trainees found jobs and to analyse employer attitudes towards hiring women. Just as professional training is often not adapted to the needs of the labour market, the frustration factor is heightened for women when they are trained but cannot then apply their knowledge or remain condemned to underemployment.

The social construction of skills and their valuation shows that certain characteristics, such as physical strength, authority and leadership skills (typically considered masculine) are more highly valued in the labour market than manual dexterity, sensitivity and the ability to listen (found more often among women). When defining aptitudes and job requirements, this attitude contributes to the establishment of hierarchies with regard to jobs, wages, and workers themselves.

When women do, however, choose a technical profession and find a job in that area, many employers find their work equal or better than men's. When put to the test, women are not judged to be under-performing or to be unsuitable for such work; on the contrary, the presence of various "feminine qualities" are found to make a positive contribution to the performance of technical tasks. These include fine motor skills, which are especially important in microelectronics work; a sense of responsibility and clarity as to goals and objectives; strong managerial skills and experience in handling unexpected or problematic situations; a capacity for dialogue, compromise and interpersonal relationships; aptitudes for personnel management and the direction of work teams, and a more participative style of work (Silveira, 1993). This could help to promote a view of women as human resources that are well suited to a more flexible, creative and less routine work structure and that come closer to matching the kind of worker profile that is increasingly in demand today. Moreover, the internalization of social demands leads women to constantly demonstrate their skill and dedication to their work, which has direct positive effects on their productivity.

These studies bring out the fact that it is not enough to increase women's participation in the vocational or technical educational system; it is also necessary to take steps to strengthen the diversification, relevance and functionality of the subjects being taught. Women need to be provided with up-to-date forms of training that take account of technological innovations, provide ample opportunity for experimentation and practice (given women's general lack of familiarity with machines and equipment), and enable them to acquire know-how and skills that fit in with the technological changes taking place. In addition, new employment policies for women need to be adopted, or existing ones need to be broadened, so as to provide a basis for affirmative action in the areas of education, training, career orientation, and job guidance and placement services. In the world of today and in the type of dynamic labour market that is now taking shape, both initial training and the subsequent updating and recycling of job-related knowledge are obviously essential tools for finding employment, maintaining that status and seeking promotion.

Women are not faced with legal obstacles when seeking to obtain an education or training; instead, the problem lies in the differences between *de facto* and *de jure* equality. This is an area marked by the contradictions between an equitable body of legislation and the actual situation, which, based on the prevailing culture and gender system, discriminates against women and limits their development options. While it is true that a growing demand exists for multi-faceted human resources — whether male or female — with training in different fields, with a solid foundation of scientific knowledge

and a continuing ability to learn and adapt to change, the fact remains that the discriminatory cultural elements that influence women's training and qualifications interact with one another and are actuated by the combined effect of a range of corporate mechanisms.

A study conducted in the electronics industry in Brazil found that firms place little value on the training that women obtain with a view to increasing their usefulness as human resources. This fact is reflected in the following circumstances: i) the absence of higher pay levels for more highly educated or trained women; ii) a lack of recognition for the abilities employed by women workers which have been acquired in the domestic sphere; iii) a lack of appreciation for the greater discipline and patience exhibited by women in waiting for official acknowledgement of their qualifications in the form of pay raises or promotions; and iv) a lack of recognition of experience and know-how acquired in previous jobs, with the result that women's entry level is at a lower rank than would otherwise be the case (Hirata and Humphrey, 1986). It can be shown that the mechanisms by which women's subordination and gender inequalities are perpetuated operate just as actively in factories and offices as they do in other types of institutions.

Given the heterogeneity of the female population and the diverse forms taken by women's participation in the labour market, job training programmes should be specifically designed for different groups in line with their differing problems, qualifications and needs. The following target groups should be identified: young women seeking work for the first time; women workers affected by restructurings, those who suffer from a lack of training or education, and underemployed women; unemployed women; and women who are re-entering the labour market following a period of inactivity.

2. Working women: training, retraining and redeployment

The worker training and redeployment activities undertaken by firms in the region are quite limited in terms of both the number of such courses and their funding. This is true even in those countries in which the State offers financial incentives for training activities (ECLAC/UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1992).¹⁶ Even when businesses do provide training, mid-level and senior personnel generally benefit more than operational workers do.

Negative stereotypes of women workers that depict them as unfit for certain activities or jobs are still a factor in Latin American and Caribbean societies, and they influence corporate recruitment and screening policies as well as corporate training programmes. Given the segmentation of roles in industry, women generally work at operational tasks; they occupy technical, executive or management posts only in exceptional cases and therefore rarely receive training. Supervisory and executive positions are held mostly by men, who also have greater access to training courses that allow them to learn about technological advances and their uses.

Even in firms concerned engaged in activities that are traditionally viewed as being "women's work", such as dressmaking, food preparation, etc., few women have

¹⁶ In Chile, businesses that are classified in what is known as "Category 1" may deduct their staff training expenses from their tax payments each year, up to a maximum of 1% of total wages or the equivalent of three minimum monthly wages, in the event that such expenses exceed the 1% limit.

access to training, and what training there is does not usually cover the use of new technologies; this problem is no doubt all the more serious in firms engaged in activities where women are in the minority.¹⁷ When they do have an opportunity to take retraining or refresher courses, women workers usually choose courses relating to their personal development rather than to subjects that would help them move ahead in their own field or profession; this attests to a certain lack of motivation or, perhaps, a belief that it is very unlikely that taking a course will help them obtain a pay raise or promotion; this situation is compounded by the fact that most working women have no time for studying or recreation, owing to their double workload. Thus, such courses offer them a form of recreation and a way to meet other women outside the bounds of their routine duties.

Some authors question whether industrial and technological modernization has actually had any positive effects for working women; some even argue that statistical information clearly demonstrates that, due to the changes occurring in the production apparatus, job rankings for men and women are diverging further, with more and more men occupying the higher-ranking posts while women account for increasingly large percentages of operational staff and manual workers. It would appear that traditional jobs which called for skills requiring characteristics exhibited by many female workers — such as manual ability, dexterity, attention and visual concentration — are declining in importance and their place is being taken by other types of attributes, such as confidence, responsibility, a capacity for abstract thought and formal education.

In any event, it is not the same thing to be a skilled male labourer as to be a skilled female machine operator, since the latter is still asked to perform repetitive, segmented, production-line work under the supervision and strict control of higher-ranking — usually male — employees. Women workers' identities are shaped in the course of a process of differentiation involving elements that structure the relationships between men and women within the workplace and between women workers and their employers, which clearly places such women at a disadvantage.

When women do receive training, they usually acquire new attributes that affect their behaviour as manual workers (self-control, responsiveness to quality standards and the demands of teamwork, inventory control) and that complement such traditional traits as dexterity, attention to detail and quickness. As a result, they begin to become multi-faceted, as today's circumstances demand, but without obtaining any increase in pay or bettering their chances of promotion (Rangel de Paiva, 1993).

Interest in offering in-house training programmes for women is only now beginning to be expressed; however, some organizations are beginning to regard such programmes as a part of their sphere of activity and to identify ways of putting them into effect. In order to promote the integration of women into the industrial development process in new areas related to the development of human resources for industry, the Integration of Women into Industrial Development Unit of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is planning to prepare a bi-level needs assessment which will be broken down by gender. The first level will involve an analysis of human resources and an evaluation of the countries' needs in this regard, with special emphasis on

¹⁷ A study of skilled machinists in São Paulo, Brazil, found only one woman in the 311 jobs within 48 different occupational categories which were analysed. This finding conforms to the general profile of skilled personnel in this sector, where female employees account for a scant 5% of the total labour force, as opposed to an average figure of 25% for the industrial sector in São Paulo as a whole (Leite, 1992, p. 150).

gender-based differences; the second will focus on the development of training programmes for specific groups of women in various subsectors. The latter process will be more difficult to carry out, however, because UNIDO does not systematically apply uniform training criteria when preparing needs assessments for use in developing training programmes, identifying institutions, designing curricula or carrying out programme follow-up (UNIDO, 1993).

In order to identify the obstacles confronting women in their role as human resources within a corporate framework, as well as the mechanisms through which they are discriminated against in relation to their workmates, it is important to analyse various aspects of business practice, including recruitment methods, job and wage structures, staff performance assessment systems, the existence of training activities, the implementation of job-stability policies that provide (fe)male employees with certain guarantees, the execution of participatory programmes and the provision of support services to (fe)male workers. All these elements have an essential role to play in achieving an equitable integration of men and women into the labour force in the near future and in developing human resources in a manner that takes into account the kinds of changes that have taken place.

3. New technologies and women workers

The region's industries and business enterprises are marked by a high degree of technological heterogeneity, and a majority continue to exhibit an outdated industrial structure. Few have as yet incorporated new technologies or new organizational forms, and among those that have, most have done so in a piecemeal manner, placing priority on sectors they regard as being of strategic importance. Moreover, striking differences exist as a consequence of each country's differing degree of development and modernization. Nonetheless, as we look to the future, it is essential to consider the impact which the introduction of new technologies has already had on women in terms of the need for their integration into the more advanced sectors.

The changes now taking place in the production apparatus of the countries of the region indicate that a systematic, comprehensive modernization strategy requires the introduction of new equipment and machinery, as well as a redefinition of corporate organizational patterns and a new human resources profile to permit the assimilation of innovations. This calls for a distinction to be made between new organizational and new production technologies. The former consist of techniques, procedures or systems for organizing and managing production resources, equipment, labour and information which incorporate such concepts as the flexibility and integration of the production process and which place importance on the versatility, commitment and participation of workers. This set of elements is seen as constituting a model that is regarded as being of key importance in achieving industrial competitiveness; however, because it presupposes substantial changes in the "corporate culture", it has sparked considerable resistance on the part of senior personnel. New production technologies, on the other hand, act as a vehicle for modernization through the use of microelectronics, microcomputers, computer networks, and monitoring, measurement and inspection equipment and instruments which are of greater interest to businessmen.

Both types of innovation place new and greater demands on workers in terms of education and job training (formal and non-formal) and in terms of their attitudes and experience. This distinction takes on even greater validity in view of the fact that the combination of these two types of technologies with the gender

variable and the specific situation of women yields contradictory –and, in many cases, paradoxical– results, thus posing new challenges in terms of the achievement of equity.

The impact of new technologies on the division of labour and the organization of work varies from one sector of the economy to another; furthermore, these technologies affect different processes in the same sector in different ways (e.g., the female versus the male labour force, workers of different ages, etc.). Since the labour force includes both men and women, technological change can only be understood if the gender perspective is taken into consideration. The research conducted to date on how new technologies are influencing the composition of the labour force does not, however, provide a great deal of data on the employment and development of female human resources, although it has raised a number of interesting issues that merit further study.

It has been observed in recent years that, within today's new production frameworks, the talents and skills traditionally thought of as "feminine" are beginning to be regarded as valuable, and there is a growing recognition of the fact that women are very well equipped to play an integral part in the new organizational systems that are emerging in the workplace by virtue of their particular management skills, which include greater social sensitivity, a marked degree of creativity, and a tendency to take consensus-based decisions. These skills are reflected in management methods that are more in keeping with the desired style of leadership than are those employed by many men (Ulshoefer, 1991). This opens up an excellent opportunity for encouraging the adoption of these types of attitudes as a component of educational and training programmes designed for male human resources, as well as for reinforcing self-esteem and a positive self-image in training courses geared to women. By the same token, it points up the need to alter the way we define the concept of qualifications or skills so as to deconstruct the cultural perception of women as being inherently unsuited to employment and the exercise of power and to introduce new elements into the structure and regulation of the gender system within the workplace.

It is also important to bear in mind that in companies which deal extensively with the public, such as finance companies and various sorts of agencies, women employees are expected to display characteristics associated with a "modern institutional image", i.e., they are expected to be young, good-looking and friendly, to smile, to know how to listen to customers or clients, to be patient and to be hard-working. A study conducted in Ecuador found that sex appeal or a motherly appearance were the main criteria on which senior personnel based their decisions when employing female workers, whereas the professional and technical skills possessed by women job seekers were relegated to the bottom of the list (San Ildefonso, 1990).

The idea, which became quite widespread in the 1960s, that, by doing away with the need to perform dirty, unpleasant work, new microelectronic technologies would permit the achievement of true equality between men and women, was later disproved by the inescapable observation that the differences that perpetuate the gap between the skilled work performed by men and the unskilled work done by women are continually being reconstructed (Abramo, 1990; Rangel de Paiva, 1993). Informatics, systems engineering and computer programs have led to a huge boom in women's employment in the tertiary sector, and this field appears to be one of the few areas in which modern technology is not placing too many hurdles in women's path as they strive to move ahead, partly because these activities may be thought of as derived from or complementary to administrative tasks. Kergoat (1984) contends that women's reaction

to the advent of the computer age takes the form of a two-stage process. The first stage is marked by the interest and expectations prompted by women's belief that they are acquiring a broader range of knowledge; the second, however, is a phase of disenchantment when women find that their work skills are becoming less valuable because their possession of new types of knowledge is overshadowed by the fact that their previously acquired areas of knowledge have been taken over by the computer.

At the same time, as a result of the incorporation of new technologies, sweeping changes are taking place in the profiles of the administrative personnel being sought by corporate employers. This phenomenon is generating unemployment which, in the case of many women, can be attributed to the fact that their professional training and skills are becoming obsolete, which renders them unable to meet the types of needs that are now emerging. This market is also an overcrowded one, since a large part of female employment demand is concentrated in this field. This, in turn, is attributable to the fact that women are inclined towards administrative jobs because this is one of the areas with which they are most familiar and because it is regarded as being a socially acceptable occupation for women.

Flexibility is clearly one of the components of the emerging model of industrial organization. In the case of women, such flexibility usually takes the form of an intensive use of atypical forms of employment, such as short-term contracts or part-time jobs; some authors feel that these arrangements are satisfactory because they allow women to reconcile the domestic chores that society demands of them with gainful employment. Nonetheless, this optimistic interpretation of the situation should be tempered by the evidence provided by initial studies on the subject, which indicate that such arrangements facilitate women's incorporation into the labour force but do not significantly alter the negative relationship between women and the labour market or the nature of gender relations (Arriagada, 1991).

The new technological paradigm is associated with product improvements, ongoing skills acquisition and versatile workers who have a grasp of the entire production process, can perform a variety of functions and are equipped to participate in creative teamwork. Women, however, like other categories of subordinate workers, have been shut out of leadership roles and positions of responsibility and have been discouraged from moving into new areas that would allow them to gain an overview of the flow of work (Portocarrero, 1991). This means that, although women possess certain traits that are regarded as adding to their value as human resources, the fact that they hold low-ranking positions, in combination with the segmentation of functional roles within the workplace (whereby they are relegated to the lowest rungs on the ladder), hinders their training and retraining and thereby impedes their development and growth.

We should be wary of the idea that the mere incorporation of new technologies will automatically bring about changes in the structure of employment for women (jobs, wages, training) because their impact is influenced by the organizational structure and the socio-cultural norms observed by corporate managers, owners and human resources directors, most of whom are men. These people usually put up resistance to, and place restrictions on, the entry of female employees based on the existence of regulations designed to protect working women (especially in connection with maternity leave and childcare), a belief that women are "fragile" and other stereotypes; these are the individuals who, in the final analysis, determine what opportunities each worker will have to gain access to information and learning situations that will enable him or her to acquire expertise in areas of technical progress.

4. Training for women in the informal sector of the economy

The available information indicates that women make up a large proportion of the informal sector of the economy in all the countries of the region.¹⁸ This sector provides the less educated members of the economically active population with a means of earning a livelihood. Starting at a very early age, these women mainly work either in unstructured family-run production units, which demand less organization and fewer skills, or on their own in some capacity that does not require vocational training. The scarcity of production resources other than their labour (capital, technical know-how, management skills) is one of the reasons for their low productivity and incomes.

During the 1980s a significant increase was seen in the number of training programmes organized by non-governmental organizations, international agencies and Governments. These programmes backed up the existing labour strategies devised by women's organizations or promoted the formation of new groups to engage in income-generating activities. In addition, the existence of a large number of women heads of household in Latin America and the Caribbean¹⁹ who need and want to find a stable form of gainful employment, but who lack skills, has prompted some countries in the region to launch technical training programmes as a means of equipping these women to engage in income-generating activities.²⁰

Income-generating production projects for low-income rural or urban women were also launched for the purpose of gathering together groups of women, teaching them a craft, and providing them with the necessary resources to allow the group's members to use what they had learned to produce marketable goods or services that would boost their incomes (Buvinić, 1990). Many of these projects did not achieve the last of these objectives; one of the reasons for this failure was that some of the courses trained women to perform certain types of time-consuming activities (sewing, cooking, knitting or weaving, fashioning handicrafts) that are actually geared more towards using what little free time such women have rather than providing them with genuine opportunities to start up or expand a competitive, income-generating production activity. Furthermore, most of the institutions in charge of these projects were women's organizations or

¹⁸ For example, in 1989, 49% of the workers in the informal sector in El Salvador were women, and 32.83% of them were heads of household (Vásquez, 1992).

¹⁹ Households headed by women make up 34% of the total in Jamaica, 23% in Peru, 22% in Honduras and 29% in Venezuela (Vickers, 1989).

²⁰ Some of the activities of this nature that were initiated by non-governmental organizations were later taken over by State agencies responsible for ensuring equality of opportunity for women. Chile's Pilot Plan in Support of Low-Income Females Heads of Household is one example. This comprehensive plan includes a vocational training module which is backstopped by support programmes in the areas of mental health, dentistry and ophthalmology; legal services; housing improvements; and child and infant care. Before these women were provided with the actual training as such, they attended meetings which prepared them for the forthcoming occupational change by giving them general instruction, personal development guidance, and information about the specific area of work concerned. To date, 31 training courses have been given through the National Training and Employment Service in such non-traditional skills as construction and the upkeep of parks and gardens, arc welding, the manufacture and repair of fishing nets, and the production of smoked and salted fish and seafood. Upon completion of the training course, agreements are reached with businesses for the graduates' internships and subsequent hiring. In all, 89% of the members of the first few graduating classes are working (SERNAMEC, 1993).

development agencies which, although they did have experience in the field of social development, did not have enough expertise in terms of the technical skills needed to conduct production, management and marketing activities. These agencies did not prepare adequate feasibility studies and failed to take vital factors into account, such as these women's actual access to credit, marketing channels and technological advances. In addition, their efforts were directed towards ensuring the survival of these women through "minimalist" economic activities of a marginal nature rather than towards making a place for them in profitable, competitive business activities; moreover, highly dependent relationships were formed with the sponsoring organizations, especially in relation to the marketing of the groups' products.

Nevertheless, these educational activities have had positive impacts in terms of the participating women's sense of identity and psychological autonomy and can boast a number of achievements in such areas as the ability to organize, an enhanced sense of self-worth, personal growth, the opportunity to share experiences with other women, the chance to break down barriers of social isolation, and the acquisition of techniques and knowledge that has enabled these women to produce goods for domestic consumption and make some improvement in their quality of life. The activities have enhanced their self-esteem and their image in the eyes of others. These production-oriented training initiatives for low-income women may not have significantly increased the participants' productivity, but they did contribute to their development as human resources, in the broad sense of the term, in that they enabled these women to regard the performance of an economic activity as a real possibility, to gain more self-confidence and to participate more actively in social and political affairs.

Micro-enterprise projects have generally met with greater success because they are designed for women who work in independent workshops that are already marketing their products, and therefore all they need to do is to increase their productivity and earnings and acquire more management and marketing expertise. These projects benefit women in the informal sector who own small manufacturing, commercial or services enterprises in which they work alone or with a few employees. Given the fact that the establishment of such micro-enterprises is part of a survival strategy but clearly provides little opportunity for business development, in these cases training is oriented towards the systematization of the women's on-the-job experience, the institutionalization of the know-how they have acquired and a broadening of their knowledge in the areas of investment and marketing (Yáñez, 1990).

Many of these training projects proved unsustainable over time and failed to boost the competitiveness of the women who participated in them; thus, when external sources of programme funding dried up, some of these initiatives were discontinued. The situation is different today, because training organizations are striving to make their projects sustainable and to ensure that participants will become increasingly independent so that they are able to become more fully integrated into the overall production system.²¹ The

²¹ "Manos del Uruguay" ("hands of Uruguay") is an example of a successful effort to improve the living conditions of a group of poor women living in the country's hinterlands. The project, which was launched in 1968, focused on the production and marketing of a very attractive and carefully designed handicraft product. The "Manos del Uruguay" organization, which began as an action-oriented social movement that relied heavily on volunteer work, has grown into a large enterprise. The training efforts undertaken in recent years have enabled female artisans to play an important role in the organization by assuming more and more new responsibilities in the areas of planning and production control, financial management, the selection of raw materials and the

training and backstopping provided to women embarking upon an independent business venture include: instruction, market identification, feasibility studies, finance and management, as well as psycho-social and formative elements that help women to develop their ability to innovate, to assume risks and to decode market signals, with the ultimate aim being the establishment of a successful business.

In simplified terms, we can say that individuals possess three main factors of production that permit them to engineer their own form of employment and undertake an activity on their own: labour, management skills and capital. The first factor is relatively abundant in the case of low-income women, but the other two are in extremely short supply; in order to promote the latter two capacities, it is therefore necessary to conduct an ongoing, comprehensive training process that focuses on production techniques and management skills and on the personal development of all the women taking part in such self-employment projects.

The number of women entrepreneurs in the middle and upper classes has also risen; in most cases, these women are clearly oriented towards running small businesses rather than companies. Even though these women are more highly educated and trained, however, in practical terms their occupational profiles do not afford them many advantages in dealing with the organizational challenges that arise in the course of their business activities because they lack specific skills in the areas of management, organization and business administration as such. These women need technical assistance and training to help them solve the organizational, financial and management problems they face and to enable them to embark upon more innovative, specialized and competitive business ventures. Training in specific areas is not enough in and of itself, however, because women also need to gain an understanding of the entire "corporate culture".

D. PROPOSALS AND CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis indicates that the training of female human resources should form part of the mainstream "gender in development" movement. Within the framework of changing production patterns in the region, it is also felt that this will promote the countries' development, help to reduce poverty and contribute to the achievement of greater social equity.

A variety of measures and policies need to be implemented with regard to various aspects of training praxis and a number of social actors, including government institutions, professional associations and groups, non-governmental organizations, industrial associations, municipalities, academic and research institutions, public

execution of community outreach activities; they have also begun to play a leadership role. The personal development and cultural changes experienced by these women over the past 25 years are reflected in their attitudes regarding society, their willingness to take the initiative, their ability to find different ways of resolving personal conflicts, the way they raise their children and their status in their community, whose members rely on these women's experience and knowledge when they wish to undertake collective action. Their training, in combination with the introduction of technological changes and the organization of production, has also boosted productivity significantly. Whereas in 1975 —when there were 100 artisans in "Manos de Uruguay"— sales amounted to US\$ 800,000, in 1991 —when the number of artisans had risen to 700— sales totalled US\$ 3 million (Terra, 1992).

enterprises and private firms, technology-transfer and cooperation agencies, and families themselves. Without making any attempt to provide an exhaustive list, some of the most important measures that might be adopted will be outlined below.

The reform of the educational system, which should encompass all its levels (preschool, primary, secondary, vocational and higher education), calls for sweeping changes in terms of content, methodology and attitudes about teaching. Methodologies and curricula also need to be updated and aligned with the region's development needs and the cultural conditions existing in the various sectors of its population, as well as being subjected to an ongoing re-examination from a gender perspective. The aim is to ensure that all institutionalized educational processes incorporate a non-sexist perspective that will permit the existing situation to be rectified. To this end, it will also be necessary to promote research efforts to generate basic types of socio-cultural information to serve as a foundation for a realistic gender-based educational process geared to the needs of the various groups within society. As part of this process, it would be useful to evaluate existing experiences with the incorporation of the gender dimension into formal and non-formal education, both for men and for women.

The new challenges to be faced concern the adoption of strategies for broadening educational coverage, improving the quality of education, and ensuring that women stay in school and continue to make academic progress. However, this needs to go hand in hand with a systematic effort to eliminate female illiteracy and put women on an equal footing with men as regards their access to basic knowledge, beginning with reading, writing and arithmetic. Raising women's general educational level is therefore of vital importance, since training is no substitute for a basic education and cannot fully compensate for the shortcomings exhibited by any person who has been unable to complete his or her education.

Youth is a key stage in the life cycle from the standpoint of equal opportunity policies. Sound vocational guidance needs to be provided on a system-wide basis, and this guidance needs to be of a sort that will rectify gender stereotypes and emphasize women's technical and scientific abilities and aptitudes, since cultural prejudices against women's involvement in these fields have inhibited their participation. Women need to be supplied with sufficient and up-to-date information on job prospects within the context of the economic and social processes taking place in their countries and the development style those countries are seeking to adopt. The job training that women receive also needs to fit the new profile of employee qualifications sought by the firms of today.

Technical education and vocational training programmes also need to be expanded to cover non-traditional occupations and technology-intensive activities as part of an overall human resources development strategy. It must be borne in mind, however, that women who receive training in non-traditional fields may find themselves confronted with a vast and complex array of socio-cultural difficulties which should be neither ignored nor minimized. Consequently, information and sensitization activities for employers should also be carried out in order to prevent sexist stereotypes from blocking the recruitment of women in what are commonly regarded as "masculine" fields. The role to be played by vocational guidance and job orientation is a fundamental one, but such guidance must be properly coordinated with training and placement services in order to achieve positive results.

Policies need to be adopted both general education and job training to ensure that women will be able to acquire relevant skills and knowledge that will enable them to overcome the gender-based forms of occupational segregation found in the labour market. To this end, cooperation agreements should be reached between public-sector vocational training institutions and business firms under which the State will provide subsidies or tax

incentives to such firms to offer training, internships and, subsequently, jobs to young women.

Apart from its purely technical aspects, job training should incorporate the following elements: a) the gender dimension, including specific considerations relating to the conditions and situation of each group of women; b) information on the job market, economic conditions and the labour situation; and c) stimuli that will help motivate women to discover their capabilities, aptitudes and qualifications. Training is a corrective economic and social tool and a strategic component of any ongoing human resources development process; therefore, steps should be taken to create conditions that are conducive to women's participation in training and retraining courses (schedules, transportation, infrastructure, enrolment, authorizations, scholarships) and to set up information and vocational guidance services. Governments should actively promote vocational training for women as an integral part of their modernization policies for urban and rural areas.

Within the framework of the production apparatus, work assignments and the qualifications they require need to be re-evaluated, taking into account women's experiences and characteristics, in the light of the new occupational profiles that are emerging. Along the same lines, the State should support and promote a change in cultural patterns and employers' attitudes that will permit a greater appreciation of the economic and social value of the knowledge acquired by women workers, their qualities and their specific traits. Within the workplace, policies to promote further training of female staff should be adopted, criteria for promotion should be defined so that qualified women can move up to executive positions, and equitable parameters for wage increases should be established.

Programmes need to be set up to provide training and retraining in new technologies to women workers affected by restructurings and technological change in order to safeguard them against the negative impacts of the introduction of microelectronics. Given the specific nature of the gender system, however, the training provided to women workers should not be confined to given technologies. Subjects forming part of a comprehensive occupational training module should also be included, such as the integration of women into the organizational flow of the workplace, their rights, and the gender-based problems they may encounter in work relations and in their personal development.

Similarly, the development of the female population, in terms of its identity as a social asset suited to the demands of the modern age, should also be accompanied by the design and execution of gender-focused training programmes and the organization of seminars for the analysis of issues relating to the social status of women; such seminars should target educators, civil servants, professionals, technicians and instructors in public and private institutions as a means of involving them actively in innovation processes.

The training and development of human resources are closely tied in with the future of society; for the women of the region, they can also serve as a means of attaining greater autonomy and improving the quality of their lives. Education and training will undoubtedly contribute to the advancement of women, but they are not in themselves a panacea; they must instead be linked up with changes in the cultural model and the power structure. Accordingly, attention must be devoted to possible inconsistencies between an integral body of theory and more limited practices in which human resources development is confined to training while ignoring such aspects as living conditions, socio-cultural factors and the processes whereby society builds and rebuilds gender identities. This is obviously an open-ended issue that should be addressed as soon as possible within the framework of a society-wide debate.



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